

The following is a basic review of the latest Heng Long Panzer III tank with smoke and sound.

I purchased a number of these Heng Long Panzer III tanks. I was duly impressed when I ran one, out of the box the tank looked decent and ran with enough control (on bare wood floor) to be controllable. The sound effect of the engine running is clearly copied from the Tamiya Sherman.

I did not attempt to fire the pellet gun.

The smoke unit was tested outside of the tank, in other words, the smoke unit was removed from the tank and tested with a battery. The smoke unit produced a generous amount of smoke to be visible, though outside of the house in the yard or on the scale battlefield, this effect may be totally lost. Indoors, in calm air, the effect may be interesting enough to enhance visual effects. The pump mechanism is very delicate but it worked. If the quality (reliability) of the smoke unit was higher, it would make a great upgrade part for other projects, anything where smoke effects are desired.

Now for the complaints. One of my tanks had a cracked drive sprocket, and it was cracked out of the box. The drive sprocket was split at the drive hub in numerous places and will likely fail in use after an hour of running on dirt. I would not recommend tall grass for these vehicles in their unmodified state, the stress might be too much.

This same tank had a gearbox loose on its mounting, with one mounting screw missing and one indexing boss (alignment pin) was broken.

The cracked drive sprocket and damaged gearbox mounting is serious enough to warrant attention to anyone who encounters them. Replacement of the sprocket with a metal casting is probably the only choice, as I don't see an easy solution to repair with an upgrade. The gearbox mounting problem is an engineering upgrade I can probably handle. The plastic mounts and indexing pins are probably going to fail if any flexing is encountered, such as driving over rough terrain or climbing hills.

The road wheels are mounted on plastic arms, which are spring loaded. They appear to flex but I do not know how well they will hold up under rigorous use in dirt, sand, and gravel. The road wheels are molded plastic, with tires that are just painted black.

The level of detail in the tank is very good, with decent representation of the unique features of a Panzer III. It appears to be a good starting point for scratch-built projects which use Panzer III chassis, especially self propelled weapons and utility vehicles (munitions carriers, cranes, etc.). Don't expect long term mechanical reliability out of the box, as some parts of the tank are somewhat fragile and will break under stress. The drive sprockets, gearbox mounts, and some exterior cosmetic details are among these items.

If you intend to paint the vehicle, I recommend a tear-down of the vehicle, washing everything in soapy hot water, rinse, and let dry. The tank has oils and lubricant residue all over it, some of it is the lubricant used on the roadwheels, some of it is the smoke machine oil, which will migrate over the parts and contaminate any surface it touches. This will prevent paint from sticking.

Overall, I like the tank, and it is a good starting point for a full-option Tamiya style upgrade if you are willing to beef up some weak mechanical areas and remove the bulky

smoke device and pellet shooting mechanism. I do like Heng Long products, and for the money, they are ideal for adding diverse tanks to your collection without the expense of high-end models. I intend to convert one of my Panzer IIIs into a serious competition level tank, but it will be above and beyond what is reasonable for the average tank builder. With that in mind, if you keep the work you do to your tank simple, the Panzer III will look and perform well alongside other tanks that cost much more. Thanks for reading!