



The Lockheed P-38 Lightning

Warren M. Bodie

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Warren Bodie's book is a marvel of completeness, including photos of all series and one-offs, and favorably presents what was arguably the best all-around fighter of World War Two. All the subjective criticisms of the famous Lockheed twin-boom plane are clearly discussed in their proper historical context, with ample support from the main historical actors. The book also demonstrates that the P-38, as a good child of Clarence "Kelly" Johnson's genius, was several years ahead of its time both in its technology and in the capacity of air strategists and pilots to fully exploit the advances it had over current aviation designs, as well as to foresee its potential. For example, the P-51 Mustang was a pig (and used the same Allison engine of the P-38) before being refitted with the famous Rolls-Royce Merlin engine which made it the masterpiece we know; just imagine a P-38 with two Merlins, something that never happened but that could have dramatically changed the air war before 1944 in all theaters. Bodie demonstrates that the P-38 was already the long-range fighter the Allies needed a couple of years before the P-51D and P-47N, but was stupidly underused and underdeveloped; its firepower was overwhelming and almost unparalleled throughout the war; it could turn with any enemy fighter and outrun most of them and, finally, having another engine was a priceless safeguard in the long flights over the Pacific Ocean and the Mediterranean. Highly recommended reading about my favorite fighter plane.

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