

Got Friends MSFS F4F-4 Wildcat full review

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11 min. de lecture

There are a small but growing collection of WWII warbirds in Microsoft Flight Simulator these days and the newest among them is Got Friends' F4F-4 Wildcat. Just released, the Wildcat takes us back to the days of 1942 and the carrier battles of Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal. Is Got Friends simulation of the F4F-4 Wildcat worth a look? Read on for the full review!

Disclaimer

Got Friends sent me their F4F-4 for Microsoft Flight Simulator in exchange for a review of the aircraft. As always with these arrangements, I like to make certain that my readers are aware of the exchange and that Got Friends has not

exercised any editorial control over this review.
They get to read it when you do.

A bit of history

The Wildcat was Grumman's first monoplane fighter design and it saw stiff competition in the late 1930s for the US Navy's fighter procurement process at the time. Competing against it was Brewster's Buffalo fighter which was slightly slower but found to be more maneuverable and deemed to be the better fighter. In the modern era, that would have been the end of it, but in the 1930s Grumman continued with development despite the initial loss. This proved fortuitous for Grumman, for the US Navy, and for the course of WWII.

Significant revisions to the design including new wings and upgraded engine led to the successful launch of the F4F-3 Wildcat into service. This coincided with the US Navy souring on the Buffalo as production problems with Brewster as well as performance issues with the Buffalo compounded.



Although slower and less maneuverable than the Japanese Navy's A6M Zero, the F4F Wildcat was considered sturdy and well armed.

Wingman tactics including the use of the infamous Thatch Weave enabled US Navy pilots to fight on equal terms.

The F4F-4 variant differed from the earlier model through the addition of two extra M2 .50 calibre machine guns and, critically, Grumman's folding wing system which enabled carriers to sport larger numbers of aircraft than before.

Wildcats fought with some success at Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal before gradually giving way to a new generation of fighters with Vought's F4U Corsair and Grumman's own F6F Hellcat.

Even with the Wildcat out on the main fleet carriers, the fighter found a niche flying from the dozens of light escort carriers. These "Jeep Carriers" were smaller than fleet carriers and the Wildcat's smaller size and shorter takeoff

run made it an ideal fighter for operations there. Wildcats also fought in the Battle of the Atlantic and in North Africa flying with American, British, and Canadian forces.

Visuals

I'm extremely impressed with the visual work that's been done here by the Got Friends team. They have made the Wildcat come to life on my computer screen in some impressive ways.

That starts on the exterior where we have impressive detailing all across the aircraft. Cowl flaps, navigation, recognition, and moving landing light are all detailed. There's the complex landing gear system, the folding wings, and the beautifully textured surfaces of the aircraft. The dull matte paint really "shines" (pardon the pun) too with the appropriate amount of reflection and wear for such a scheme. Of course the later gloss blue does shine a bit more. You can get really close up with the F4F and the details still hold together well. Very impressive!







That attention to visual detail goes into the interior of the airplane too with a beautifully modeled cockpit, a realistic looking functioning reflector sight, and great textures, lighting, and modeling work all over the place. The instruments are both authentic and very readable weaving a careful line between authenticity and functionality.

Got Friends even went a little bonkers and modeled the interior of the Wildcat behind the pilot! There's a whole section back there that we rarely ever see in photos but its there complete with control cables.







There's more! Once you start this airplane up you can see plenty of great work on the vibration of the airplane. The Wildcat shudders and shakes with the engine running in a very convincing way. That even goes to the engine itself which shakes around on the mount slightly independently of the fuselage. These extra levels of details show the care and attention lavished onto this airplane. I wasn't expecting this feature but I love that its there!

There are eight liveries in the package and an extra one featuring Kermit Week's F4F if you buy from the Got Friends website directly.







Sounds

The sounds are very good here too. There's an appropriate amount of drone and rumble from the engine although maybe a bit too much drone at some points. Still, it has the right flavour of a Pratt & Whitney R-1830 engine. Switches and buttons in the cockpit give off the appropriate sounding noises too and the overall

soundscape, done in the usual Wwise technology for MSFS, is quite good.

I do think the aircraft would benefit from some rumbling and air moving past the airframe/canopy noises that I'm used to in warbirds in other sims as that would help the aircraft feel a little more connected to tight maneuvers and stalls. I also wouldn't mind a bit more noise from the gear and to hear some noise from the flaps which, so far as I can tell, are silent. I know all about the debates on if you'd hear it but from a flight simmer perspective I'd love some sort of non-visual feedback. A bit more impact sound as the gear touches down might benefit from the overall visceral experience too. As it is, there's not quite a good enough connection here between those movements and the sound to call this excellent but its well past adequate and quite good overall.

Flying the aircraft

Returning to the F4F Wildcat is a joy. The last few times I've flown the aircraft were in Pacific Fighters and IL-2 Sturmovik: Desert Wings – Tobruk. Going back even further, the F4F Wildcat was one of the very first warbirds I flew in a flight sim back in 1991 with Dynamix's Aces of the Pacific. Coming back to this aircraft feels a little like coming home.

I'm happy to report that the Wildcat's charms and foibles are all seemingly well represented here. In nearly every sim and based on reading and videos that I've watched, the F4F Wildcat was a good handling airplane and reasonably well behaved for an airplane of the era. Its thick and sturdy wings gave the Wildcat mostly placid handling although once stalled it tends to drop a wing violently requiring quick action from the pilot. Stall recovery is very quick here with counter rudder and neutral stick. It recovers extremely quickly.



Takeoff requires plenty of rudder work to keep it straight. This feels far more real than some of the other tail draggers that I've experienced in the sim. It tips, it teeters, and it fights you!

Flight model developer GotGravel working with Got Friends on this has managed to bring nearly all of the best capabilities that the MSFS flight model and SDK can muster. Got Friends have also implemented custom tailwheel code to make the tailwheel behave more realistically – and I am happy to report that they have

succeeded. This feels very similar to a tail dragger in IL-2 or DCS when taxiing and parking.



Now, its not all roses here as I think MSFS' model still holds back aircraft developers. The F4F feels appropriately well modeled yes, but its still not quite as fluid as an IL-2 or DCS warbird is. It still feels a little too stable around the nose and a little too quick to recover from a stall. Still, all things considered this is still top notch for what MSFS can offer and in all the practical ways this flies, feels, and behaves the way I expected it to.

Engine start-up does work with Control E shortcut if you want it and manual start-up and shut down work just fine following the provided checklist. There are even smoke effects that come off the engine when you start it.

Check out this video featuring a tour of the free Midway 1942 scenery and me thoroughly enjoying chucking the F4F around the sky.

Carrier ops and other suggested scenery

Seeing as the F4F is a famous carrier fighter, I went searching for some carrier experiences with this aircraft. Got Friends have ensured that the aircraft comes with Touching Cloud, Jay Shrike, and Supercarrier Pro support out of the box meaning that a variety of carrier products should be compatible with the F4F.

I tried out the MilTech Simulations USS Lexington (available via [various online stores](#) for about \$9-10 USD) which was by far the most historically correct choice for the F4F-4. Unfortunately, I'd rate the product as low to middling as the model and texture quality is not great. Still, it did provide a historically accurate carrier deck to land on.



Carrier physics in MSFS are simplified versus what we see in DCS World (particularly with DCS: Supercarrier) or even with Pacific Fighters. It just wasn't designed to support that kind of operation. Carriers do not move in any capacity so they are affixed in several choice locations

and the arrestor gear physics are extremely simple – if you touch the deck you will be captured even if you don't catch the wire. I do applaud Got Friends or whatever mechanism ensures that you get a nice pull back after you “snag the wire” so at least the feeling is absolutely there but the challenge is simplified. For some of you, that may be just what you're looking for. Others may find the simplification less enthralling. None of this can be blamed on Got Friends or the F4F as its just a limitation of the platform.





I still had quite a bit of fun running approaches and doing more than a few wave offs when running the approach. It wasn't the palm sweat inducing, heart rate raising, DCS: Hornet carrier landing experience but it was still good!

There is a catapult function as well. Flick the switch in the cockpit and in 3 seconds you'll experience a catapult like launch sequence that sends the F4F careening forward at speed. It was functional but it didn't feel satisfying. Seeing as the F4F can take off from the Lexington under its own steam, that was by far the better experience.

If you don't want to spend any more money but still want some historical scenery options, you

should consider checking out two freeware scenery packages that will amp up your F4F Wildcat experience. Both Wake Island and Midway have been created in 1941-42 era complete with parked airplanes, PT boats, Liberty ships and more. The scenery isn't completely 100% historical (the B-24s parked there weren't there in 1942 during the Midway battle) but its good enough that you can happily blast around the area in the Wildcat having fun and enjoying the experience. I did!

[Download Wake Island 1941 here](#) and [Midway Atoll and Naval Air station 1942 here](#).

Other features

Got Friends seem determined to package a lot of extra value into their F4F-4 Wildcat and that includes some interesting extra features.

You can configure the amount of vibration and shake – 100% is my preference but I can see why some civil aviation fans might be used to and want a smoother ride. There's also the ability to change the way that the aforementioned landing gear handle operates working either like a conventional one or requiring multiple clicks to move through all 28 rotations to get the gear up and down.

The Wildcat comes with all of the recognition light systems that the real one did. Dull blue formation lights, white, red, green and yellow

recognition lights, extendable landing lights,
nav lights and so forth all work.



The aircraft's folding wings also work well here
too.





If you buy this from Got Friends directly, you'll also get bombs and working machine guns. The bombs are well modeled, visually represented on the wings and they even explode when they hit the ground. The physics are a bit off but that's ok because a combat flight sim this is not. The machine guns are also well done with heat blur effects, fire effects and tracers. They don't have any effect on target but this is a warbird and you occasionally want to pull a trigger and here the machine guns do their thing. They also apparently work in multiplayer so you and a friend could play a game of tag with tracers – hoping that one day Microsoft might make a combat flight simulator again.



Got Friends also put in an awesome little extra feature called the gun camera. This simulates the look and position of the F4F's onboard gun camera and that includes film effects light dust and flicker just the way a projected film reel would work. It doesn't add much but its absolutely fun, it's a nice little extra, and I love it!

A glitch or two

There's really not that much that's wrong with Got Friend's F4F Wildcat but I did run into one glitch and a usability issue.

First, the glitch. When jumping back and forth between the controls assignment menu and the airplane I once found myself in the position where the controls stopped responding, the pilot disappeared from the external view, and none of the buttons would work when clicked on. Got Friends were very responsive to the issue but so far we haven't been able to figure out how to repeat it. It may not be something that comes up that often but I mentioned it because I ran into it.

Second, a small usability issue with the cockpit canopy controls. I kept wanting to click the canopy as I do in some warbirds and various aircraft in flight sims and that's just not how it works here. You do have to use the canopy control itself which I admittedly spent longer looking for than I should have need. You also

need to use the scroll wheel on your mouse or click and drag to close it up. Its very obvious in retrospect but it confused me on my first couple of times out.

Final thoughts

I was pretty excited to check this airplane out when I heard that it was in development and when Got Friends reached out I knew I had to have a look. They asked me to be critical of this aircraft and frankly I can find very little wrong with it! The sounds are good but lack a little punch at times and there was that one glitch with the airplane which has otherwise flown well in all respects. Nothing showstopping in the slightest and nothing that stopped me from feeling a ton of nostalgia for being back in this classic warbird.

Got Friends have some very serious competitors. I have not yet checked out Flying Iron Simulations F6F Hellcat and Blackbird Simulations F4U Corsair but both do sport similarly impressive feature-sets and come from well regarded development teams. Got Friends seem to be well aware of the competition and have priced their F4F Wildcat to sell at \$19.99 USD – undercutting the competition by quite a bit.

Got Friends F4F-4 Wildcat sports extremely strong visuals, a great flight model, good sounds, fantastic animations and details, good

systems simulating this historic warbird. The great pricing, and enough extra features make this an airplane that feels like a labour of love and I really think it was! I can easily recommend this airplane to you if you love flying warbirds in Microsoft Flight Simulator and you want some carrier action to boot.

This has been an excellent experience and it both takes me back to some flight sim nostalgia of yester-year and makes me look forward anxiously to fly the Wildcat in a combat flight sim soon.

Got Friends F4F-4 Wildcat for Microsoft Flight Simulator will be [on sale through their website](#) and through other online stores for \$19.99 USD starting Monday September 25, 2023.

Screenshots



























