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NSCC

The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

Owls must be caged!

My life seems to have been dominated by books this month. It all started with a trip to London for the launch of Roger Gillham's new edition.

As the train from King's Lynn pulled into King's Cross station I discovered platform 9 had disappeared and been replaced by platform 9^{3/4} complete with notices about parking your broomstick and instructions for boarding the Hogwarts Express; if you are in the vicinity it really is worth a look.

Then, on returning home I received a letter from Graham Smith (bless him!) about the Hornby model of the train so I was beginning to suffer from Harry Potter overload. Surely Adrian Norman would come to my rescue with Factory Focus and news of normal Scalextric items - no, he has been at the funny tobacco again and has departed to the realms of Middle Earth with the "Lord Of The Things" pantomime. He assures me, however, that he can stop any time he wants and normal service will be resumed next month.

Elsewhere in this issue we have a Christmas tale from Max Winter which is well worth a read and, of course, the annual competition. You will have to do a bit of work for this one but there are three superb prizes on offer so have a look at page 21 for the instructions. As it is done in the style of a well known quiz show you are at liberty to phone a friend but the 50/50 option is excluded!

Ah well, the Journal is done for this year; must go and write my letter to Father Christmas - I could do with "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets"; there is a new Discworld novel out, not to mention that slot-car book.....!

And Finally - spare a thought for the editor as you are doing the Christmas shopping; I really don't want to be compiling the Journal on Boxing Day so please send any contributions for the January edition as soon as possible. I have nearly caught up with the backlog of articles so more are needed.

*Merry Christmas all
Brian*



The Lord of the 'Things' Christmas pantomime.

1) A long expected party

The eleventy-first shopping day until Christmas had long since passed in the Shire when, upon opening this page, your thoughts of buying some presents were suddenly thrust to the fore. "Only ten shopping days until Christmas. OK, then let's check out what 'things' we can buy for ourselves."

2) The Shadow of the past

In the Superslot range, C2385 is shown as the Pontiac GP 2001 M&M thus promising that this car could now be due for release. In the standard range, the much awaited F1 Williams and McLaren cars are now due for January 2002, and the US muscle cars in the Spring. "Yes, but I need seven 'thingies' for the big party! "The C2387 Subaru Impreza 'Gamleys' livery was released in November. "Great, I'll have one!" The car is red.... "Oooh, Christmassy!"with a four colour tampo ("BEHIND YOU!") print advertising 'Gamleys 2001' and quite a collectable car..... "I'd better have two thingies then!" as this will probably be the last Subaru of the original body type. ("BEHIND YOU!" - come on Audience, join in!) "What's behind me? There's nothing there! What else can I buy?"



3) Three is company, nine's a crowd.

The Collector Centre special Porsche GT3R (C2388) is available in a rather fetching shade of gold. Beware! The Nine from Nascar are amongst us too.

(BEHIND YOU!) "Where?,What? Stop mucking about. OK, so I'll have a Subaru, no, two Subarus, two NASCAR cars and a gold Porsche. That's five things.

Nearly there. What other 'thingies' are there?" Well, you could..... no, it's too horrible even to mention. (BEHIND YOU!!!) "What? There's nothing there! No, go on. What's too horrible to mention?" If you're brave, and your will is strong, you could treat yourself to... to..(BEHIND YOU!!) No, I can't, it's far too terrible. "Stop saying 'BEHIND YOU!', Now tell me. Pleeceeeeeease!"

Well alright, but I must warn you, use it wisely. Its power is strong and will ultimately destroy all those that would make it their own."What is it, this fearful device?" A PC! With one of these you can steal your way into all things Scalextric. But beware its power is great and it will corrupt you!

4) The Ford and the Brandy-wine.

"A PC or not PC, that is the..(Did you join in, Audience? More Brandy wine to get you into the spirit of it all)....Bah, humbug. I'll buy one of these PC things. They can't be that bad!" Oh, No?! You can go anywhere you like, unseen in the night. Take a look at the new Scalextric website. It has been totally revamped and relaunched; the new site starts with sound and movie action (you can skip it if you wish) before presenting you with the main page. =>

Among the the usual selection of topic buttons are some ‘interactive’ sessions. “Corresponding with enthusiasts” makes interesting reading, you can send your questions to Hornby about the products, traders can also talk to them. The news page, at the time of writing, explains that Scalextric’s Ben Collins enjoyed a thrilling ride in a Ford Rally Ka, courtesy of World Rally Champion Colin McRae. The Sun newspaper is sponsoring Rob Gill in conjunction with Scalextric, to drive in this year’s Ford Rally Ka Championship. Before you ask, No, Scalextric aren’t producing a 1/32nd scale Ford Ka! Additionally, the product range is viewable and there is a report on the NSCC/Hornby special weekend.

5) At the sign of the Prancing Jamie

If your will is strong enough to return to the light, you can see Scalextric on TV too. It wouldn’t surprise me if you see Jamie Oliver crashing a Scalextric car in the kitchen and getting upset over a trifle! (Boom, boom. I thank you.)

“Well that’s great. Six thingiesss on my shopping lissst for my preciousssss. One more thingy and I’m done.” Now, choose carefully. The six ‘things’

you could buy are fearful enough.

There’s one more thing that’s even more dreadful. One thing to rule them all, one thing to find them, one thing to buy them all and in the darkness bind them, in the Land of Ford-or where the Shadows lie. The longer you have it, the more you are in peril, for the evil Taurus from Ford-or will find you all the more easily. Even now, the nine thing-wraiths from Nascar are abroad and the evil one, whose name we dare not utter, senses your whereabouts. “Never mind that, I wantsss one. What is it. Tell me. What’s too terrible to mention? Tell preciousssss.”

News Flash: Taurus, the dark one knows what you’re getting for Christmas! He’s felt your presence! (Boom, boom. I thank you.)

6) The Great River

Are you sure you want the seventh thing? Here it is. One completely free lifetime membership to on-line auctions. Buy as many Scalextric Shadows from across the Great River as you like. (BEHIND YOU!!!) “On-line auctionsssss, Wow. Thanks. What’s behind me then?” Just your life!

Happy Christmas all. ■

Scalextric - Cars and equipment, past and present. 5th edition By Roger Gillham

Way back in 1981 an A4 sized red book was advertised in the Scalextric catalogue and this was directly responsible for my sad decline into a second childhood (although some people believe I never left the first one!)

It was, of course, the first edition of Roger Gillham's Scalextric "bible" which I still have to this day, together with the three subsequent editions; indeed, the earlier copies are becoming collectors' items in their own right. It was not a well made book; the pages began to fall out in a short space of time, although my constant rereading of it may have contributed to its sad state! It did, however, contain more information than any sane person would need about our hobby and I was off on the never ending search for those little toy plastic cars that fascinate us all. Subsequent updates appeared over the years but, because of printing limitations, it remained essentially the same book with a few extras and eventually became seriously outdated.

All this has now changed; the 5th edition is available and is virtually a new book. Roger and his publishers were kind enough to invite Chris and myself to the product launch at Waterstone's in Piccadilly and Daft Idea Animal managed to convince us that an evening trip to London would be a good idea. Four hours on the train for a two hour stay in London, returning after midnight with work the following morning; another cracker!

The evening was highly enjoyable and included some Scalextric racing - please note that the editor put up a respectable performance for once and did not finish last! Because the publication date was very near this month's copy deadline I was obliged to read the book on the train home so this review is very much a first impression and not a full scale critique.

Overall I am highly impressed with it; although the chapter headings and layout will be familiar to anyone with an earlier edition it has

Book Review



been completely revised and only about 10% of the original survives. It is as up to date as possible, bearing in mind publishing deadlines, and is now a full colour publication. Nearly every photograph has been specially commissioned for the book and it features cars from various NSCC members' collections.

There are several new chapters covering aspects such as Mexican cars, French/Spanish sets and home tracks but the heart of the book contains, as always, the collector's delight - a complete list of all the cars made under the Scalextric brand name. It is important to remember though that this book is aimed at the wider public, not just the die-hard enthusiast, so it does not delve too deeply into the realms of obscure tampo errors and the like. Commercial considerations mean that a large sales volume must be achieved to make it worthwhile; our membership alone is not large enough to justify the production costs.

Personally I would have liked a bit more on the history of the brand, particularly the early Triang days, which were the golden age of British toymaking but that is probably nitpicking. No doubt a few minor errors will have crept in, despite Roger's best efforts, but the average collector will find virtually everything he needs within its covers. There is no longer any excuse for missing catalogue numbers in members' adverts - 99% of them are contained here!

In conclusion, this 5th edition should be on every NSCC member's bookshelf; without doubt it is a considerable improvement on the earlier versions and Roger is to be congratulated on his efforts. Mind you every now and then my hands stray to that original dog eared red copy which started it all off. Just think - if I hadn't thought it was a good idea to buy it somebody else would be editing this magazine. Roger Gillham has a lot to answer for!! ■

What! No mention in the NSCC journal?

BY JOEL THURA

I thought we had done everything correctly, covered all the angles made all the right moves, etc... But obviously, no, I was wrong!

On September the 30th, the Evesham swapmeet took place, as ever, well organised by Steve Pitt and family. This year, as last year, the Southend Slot Racing Club (the most active slot club in Essex) had arranged to display a large collection of slot racers. (Obviously for the sole purpose of getting a mention in the journal; for any slot person, a place more revered than the Honours List).

This year's theme: "Le Mans" slotracers. Four members made the trip, David Lawson, club champion and editor of the 'Slow Tracer' magazine; Chris Pomeroy, Gareth Evans and your humble scribe. We met at my house, loaded up 150 cars into 1, and set off on the 150 miles journey from Essex, arrived mid afternoon

Saturday. We settled down in the B&B, met Steve at the hall to help with the layout etc... In the evening we went to a restaurant for the now traditional pre swapmeet meal. We said hello to all the NSCC dignitaries, and enjoyed the evening. Back at the B&B, had a nice chat with Adrian Norman and his wife, and then fell asleep watching practice for the US GP. In the morning, we set off early, except David, who was in a different B&B, sent there with the express instruction to knobble Brian Rogers (the NSCC editor).

So far I thought this is worth at least half a page. We laid out the tables with flags, posters, books and of course the cars, including lots of scratch built stuff and 35 post war winners. It looked good. Finally we set up a laptop to show off our web site:-

<http://www.thura.fsbusiness.co.uk>



I thought, this is it, we'll get a whole page. David arrived, having had a chat over breakfast with Brian. The day went well, many people came to look at the cars, and took away copies of our club journal. (thank you for your support) We all bought lots of broken cars, in the mistaken belief that one day we would turn them into wonderful looking superfast slot-cars. On his way around, Brian stopped by for a long chat with David and myself, we exchanged views on cars, desktop publishing software, and printing, in particular the drawbacks of B/W, Brian took away the last copy of the Slotracer (as it is really called) in glorious colour.

We packed away everything into the boot of my little car and headed for the Essex coast. On the way back, I thought, this has to be worth 2 pages at least, I dreamt of slot-car fame for the SSRC; I even thought of offering to print the odd page in colour for the NSCC. That night, I went to sleep with a warm glow in my heart, my ears buzzing to the sound of small electric motors.

Two days ago, my dreams were shattered. Having rushed home from work, I feverishly opened that little brown envelope, read from cover to cover, NOTHING! Not a word about our little display. Not in the editorial, not in Julie Scale's swapmeet page, NOTHING! I thought of writing to the Sun "Scoop - Four invisible men spotted at Westcountry swapmeet", but they would not believe me. I thought of exacting terrible revenge on all concerned, by lowering their traction magnets so they would be accused of cheating. Worst, I thought of goading Graham Smith, a long standing SSRC member, into writing a 'nice' letter to the editor.

But in the end, with my tongue firmly in my cheek I decided: if they won't write about us, I will do it myself, sadly, I am not a prolific writer and I could not squeeze two pages out of my word processor.

If you missed this year's Evesham meeting, make sure you go to the next one. We will. ■

WOW!

BY SINCLAIR TROTTER

I have just come home from my first visit to an NSCC swapmeet, the one at Bishops Stortford, and I think I'm still on a Scalextric 'high'.

I've been an NSCC member since 1993 but have never before had the opportunity to attend a swapmeet. Thanks to fellow member Ian Thompson, and the advent of reasonably cheap flights between Belfast and Stanstead, this has now been rectified.

Six of us from Northern Ireland had the pleasure of a visit to Bishops Stortford last weekend. We flew over on Saturday and spent a relaxing evening strolling round the town centre, having a nice meal and then returning to our hotel to ensconce ourselves in the bar for the consumption of a few lemonades, fizzy water and an unusual black liquid with a cream coloured head that the barman tried to pass off as Guinness!?! It's also the first time I've ever seen a barman plead for his clientele to p*** off to their rooms (something to do with the bar closing at midnight; a quaint English custom?)

Sunday morning really couldn't come soon enough, especially for Ian who discovered it would have been a good idea to have adjusted his watch for the time change on Saturday evening!

Please let us in

Anyway we duly found ourselves in the queue outside the Rhodes Centre, where 11.00 came and went and we were still standing in the queue outside the Rhodes Centre (come on don't these people realise there are folks out here with money to spend and wants lists to try and fill?). After waiting an eternity the doors finally opened; at 11.04am, and the line slowly shuffled forwards. At last we got inside at 11.06, surely by now all the good stuff would be gone? But we weren't in yet, we were only in the foyer, it took ages to get to the admission desk, pay our fees and get our tickets (about 2 minutes), and then we were in. WOW!

Brain seizure

Anyone looking at me as I entered would probably think I'd taken a brain seizure. I literally was stopped in my tracks I'm sure my mouth actually dropped open, and my first thought was where on earth do you start, in this hall full solely of things slotcar? Suffice to say we have nothing of this scale in NI, one or two tables hidden in the corner of a toyfair, if you're lucky!

I think I spent the best part of the first hour just wandering around the hall, trying to take everything in. It was obvious that the 'good stuff' wasn't all going to disappear in the first few minutes, as just about every table I looked at had at least some 'good stuff' on it. Then it was down to the serious business of the wants list and acquiring whatever was to be had, taking into account both wallet and flight bag capacity.

Price differences

I was amazed to find so many items we would consider rare on offer, and also the difference in asking price between tables. I found four examples of one car I was after on various tables with sums between £32 and £50 being sought, but on reflection I have decided that trying to track down the 'bargains' is all part of the experience.

It was great to be able to meet and put faces to people like Sean, Mark and Robert, all dealers I've dealt with in the past, but who until now had just been voices on the other end of a telephone. It was also incredible to see in the flesh examples of cars which I'd only ever heard about or seen pictures of.

With one short pitstop for a liquid lunch (Coca-cola; honest!) the four hours of the swapmeet seemed to fly by. I don't know how many times I walked around the hall but on every lap I found something new to tempt me; what fool invented the credit card?

The other fascination was watching Brian Walters run an amazing auction to round the

afternoon off, I've never seen anything like it.

Then it was all over; we said our goodbyes, wallets much lighter, bags much heavier (must remember to pick up something at the airport to ease the explanation of reduced bank balance to she who must be obeyed) and we headed back to our hotel for a bite to eat before the flight home. My sincere thanks to Ian Thompson, who arranged our travel and booked the hotel etc.

Congratulations to Brian Walters on what must have been a mammoth task organising an event of such magnitude, and which ran so smoothly. Thanks also to Brian for advising us on the accommodation, it was great.

In closing can I say to anyone who hasn't been to an NSCC swapmeet yet you should make the effort to go to one and have a WOW! experience. We'll be back! ■



We tend to get a bit blasé about swapmeets so thanks for reminding us how good they are Sinclair. Enjoy your Scale Models prize car: A97 Panoz LMP1 24H Le Mans 2000.



A good idea at the time

BY DON SIEGEL

Before getting into the world of Daft Idea Animal (which is a very good idea and should be applied to corporations throughout the Western World), just a quick word on the last issue.

Like the editor I got a big kick out of Steve Westby's article on ebay addiction. He really hit the nail on the head, and gave me a good laugh, mostly at myself! In fact, at my house it's gotten so bad that if my wife is about to surprise me on ebay, I can quickly switch to a screen of naked women and show her that I'm just doing normal websurfing..

But back to seriously daft ideas. My own nomination for perhaps the silliest idea of the last 45 years is front-wheel drive slot cars!

Think about it: you've got a guide in the front with two pickups that have to be springy to maintain good contact. And then you want the front tyres to get enough traction to pull the car around, while still picking up the juice - virtually impossible!

I can think of two guilty parties in the commercial world, starting with the Scalextric Mini - a very cute car, and a natural for front-wheel drive. But did anybody ever get one of these things to work?

And in the United States, in mid-1966 a small company called UHP bought up a bunch of AMT brass chassis, turned them around front-to-back, added a drop pickup, and then mounted a hard plastic 1/24 scale Jo-Han Oldsmobile Tornado body. Oh, I almost forgot, these cars also possessed a "positive action differential", which I have yet to identify on my own Tornado.... UHP also released a Mako Shark, but doesn't seem to have made much of a mark on the history of slot racing!

Oddly enough, a lot of 4-wheel drive cars seem to have done really well, especially in British clubs back in the early 60s, but I don't think I've ever seen any FWD models in the winner's circle...

I have a couple other candidates too, which I'll just mention. One is "hypoid" gears, which are cut to be able to place the motor under the axle centre line. This seemed to be a good idea when tyres were still large and you wanted to lower the centre of gravity, but I could never get mine to mesh correctly, so I personally consider this a daft idea.

And my last nomination is ... any kind of horse racing slot track! If I have to explain this one, you've obviously never raced your "Jump Jockey" set for more than 15 minutes! ■



Dear Brian,

Great idea to put the pictures of Ken's track on the web, so much easier to visualize and a great adjunct to the magazine, not a substitute.

All the best,

Stephen Farr-Jones

Several members have written to express their approval of this idea so we will try to make it a regular feature in the new year. The current tally of members who have advised me of their email address is 152 so we are making progress. I hope to start a small email update next year as well, so if you wish to receive this and have not already advised me of your address I suggest you get in touch in the near future.

Dear Brian

Looking through the Sunday Colour supplements I found a full page advert for the "Harry Potter Hogwarts Express" an authentically crafted working OO scale model train made by Hornby (they make trains as well?). This special edition is finished by hand using over forty eight 18ct gold plated components. It costs £153.80 including postage (yikes!) and comes in a pretty box.

So, what's this got to do with us - the Scalextric fraternity? Well, considering they are already working on the second film, I wondered if we might get a model next year. How about "Harry Potter and the chamber of secrets" light blue flying Ford Anglia complete with figures and owl? Perhaps we could have a set complete with a flying leap and cardboard clouds. Ah well, maybe not!

Yours sincerely (honest)

Graham Smith

As it is nearly Christmas and the season of goodwill I've included this one from Graham as it is nearly sensible! Incidentally, Hornby have sold a million pounds worth of the "Hogwarts Express" which may partly explain why Hornby's share price has eclipsed that of Railtrack recently - at least Hornby trains run on time!

Hi Brian

Just to say thank you for awarding me the prize car in last month's Journal. It's certainly a fine incentive to try and think of some new ideas for articles.

The only problem is that so far I've managed to avoid buying almost all of the modern Fly or GB Track cars, sticking to the classics. This model is very nice though, so if I get addicted to them, I'll make sure Shelley knows it's all your fault!

Thanks again.

Steve Westby



Hello Brian,

I am a member of one year's standing (my renewal cheque is in the mail) and I just wanted to let you know that your magazine is one of the most eagerly anticipated among my subscriptions - largely due to the style and content of your editorials. I've meant to write before but your British GP comments (November 2001) finally got me off my bum.

Personally I haven't been to Silverstone since 1969 (Rindt and Stewart banging wheels for over half the race, and no chicane at Woodcote!) so my interest in F1 is minimal these days. A good CART race will easily surpass F1 for spectacle and excitement - i.e. overtaking. Ecclestone must be a very clever man to have as big an audience as he does for the "24 cars in one slot" that passes for World-class motorsport.

I have been out of slot cars for about thirty years having reached the pubs and girls age in 1970. My folks gave me a Scalextric set in 1962 - one of the last of the rubber track sets, sold with two C63 Lotuses. After a couple of years of home racing I sold it, bought a Revell SL300 Merc and an MRRC controller, and went off to the Bristol 450 Model car Club. It was in a Nissen hut in the old BAC works at Filton, Bristol, almost certainly now demolished. When I got there it was a four-lane 100' Airfix track, but this was soon replaced by a 120' 4-lane wood/hardboard effort. I was about the only kid there, but had a great time for several years watching all those serious aero engineers building and racing. I wonder what happened to them?

There's not a lot of fellow enthusiasts out here in the wilds but the 1/32 scale scene is alive and well in Seattle. Sorry to have run on so - do keep up the good work.

Best wishes

Jonathan Taylor
Washington, USA

.....

Dear Brian,

I recently looked at the American Scalextric web site www.scalextric.usa.com and found a special Viper 'United We Stand' painted in the stars and stripes and in a commemorative box. I e-mailed the site and was put onto a Dealer, Bruce Welcker, on pascr@tenforward.com

He is handling this car and is selling them for \$59.99 plus about \$10 postage. Some of the money goes to the disaster fund. It is a good looking car and a chance to give something to help.

Regards,
Ashley Morris

1938 Auto Union D-type rail car

BY JEFF DAVIES

Over the years I've been extremely fortunate to amass a considerable model car collection of which I'm extremely proud. This consists of all scales and kinds of models, including radio control, die cast, white metal, slot-cars and rail cars of all scales.

A considerable number of these have been prototypes or pre-production models, for example I have the Corgi Landrover that was used to shoot their catalogue, which was a completely different model to the one finally produced. But if someone asked me what was my absolute favourite model in my collection it is an easy choice. The model was built by a company that builds models with passion foremost and commercial consideration second.

It was one of almost certainly the smallest ever production run of any 1/32 electric model with only eleven models leaving the factory. It would be a small number for a colour or decoration variation but it was the complete run of this model.

It is a Slot Classic Auto Union 1/32 rail car. These models were produced to commemorate the 2001 July rail race. This is easily the most accurate model I've ever seen, with every line, vent and grill faithfully reproduced. The model fits exactly on top of the 1/32 plan in Model Car and the shape is completely accurate, even down to the steering wheel, fuel cap and the metal springs and hooks for the front and rear body panels. I have studied a multitude of pictures of this car and every one from every angle possible just goes to confirm how extremely accurate was the modelling of this particular car. The car is painted, if you can call it that, as the finish is so deep it is almost like being enamelled, in exactly the correct shade of silver, has three piece split rim wheels of the right proportion with metal knock off spinners as on the real car. But best of all this is the first ever rail car to be produced by

a slot-car company. Rail racing preceded slot racing and was started in the early fifties. By 1964 the last of the rail racing clubs converted over to slot racing. So that it's possible to show a continual history from today's Slot Classic cars straight back to the start of rail racing. Some of the earliest rail car clubs are still slot-car racing today, a classic example is ARRA of Southport among whose earliest members were people like Charlie Fitzpatrick, Walkden Fisher, etc.



Rail cars run on a raised guide rail with two brass or copper shim wipers which pick up the current from the raised rail and a flat piece of earth wire positioned 3/8" to the left. The chassis on this car is made out of resin and is inscribed with the words "Brooklands 2001" and a number, which is stamped both underneath the chassis of the car and on the engine.

The two models I have are marked No. 1 and 'P' for prototype. The remaining nine cars were distributed amongst some of the largest and most dedicated collectors in the world, four to America, four in Britain and one to the United Arab Emirate. Every single person who was lucky enough to have one was absolutely thrilled with their model. Next year's model has already been agreed and will be produced in both rail car and slot car form. I would really like to express my deepest thanks to César Jiménez Carrasco of Slot Classic, without whose co-operation and enthusiastic participation this project just could not have been made. ■

Competition time

Yes it is time for the Christmas competition - but first an apology to our overseas members.

Unfortunately there was a small problem at the posting stage of last month's issue and several overseas members received their copy too late to enter the draw for the Ramsgate car. It is only fair, therefore, that the deadline should be extended so I will accept entries until Thursday 24th January 2002. If you sent me an email or fax entry rest assured that those will be included as well. Incidentally Cumbria is not generally regarded as overseas so Rod Moore's entry is invalid - even if it was allegedly sent by Fifi his French cat!

Anyway, on to the next one - you should have received two competition entry forms with this month's issue. These are Steve Baker's abortive Ramsgate quizzes (see last month's issue).

Thanks once again to the generosity of Hornby Hobbies I have two unique models available as prizes - pre-production evaluation versions of the Cadillac.

The first quiz is Scalextric related and the second is about motorsport in general. In both cases most correct answers will win, with a draw in the event of a tie. Archie is, as always, ready to do his duty if necessary so don't forget the usual bribes!

However, all is not lost if you don't know all the answers as every entry will then be entered into a draw for the third prize of a Ramsgate weekend car; Rod Moore will be happy because he won't actually have to get any questions right in order to be eligible for a prize!

Please note that people who went to the Ramsgate event will not be eligible for this part of the competition as they already have one of the cars. Committee members are also ineligible so Young Clive can save himself the cost of a stamp. One day I shall run a competition for editors only so I can win something!

**Closing date - January 24th
next year - good luck.**

BITS AND PIECES

Scalextric more popular than the Beatles

A list of the top 10 searches from the home page of Ebay UK suggests that Scalextric is sought more often on Ebay than the Beatles! And it keeps pretty good company with some of the other items on there too. Currently residing at #7 in the charts - will it make the coveted #1 slot in time for Christmas?

Robert Learmouth

Any members in Afghanistan?

A sight to gladden the heart; Trevor May and Russell Sheldon have sent me a newspaper cutting showing large numbers of children playing with a giant Scalextric set in the Kabul Market Place - just four days after the city had fallen to the Northern Alliance.

Scalextric a dangerous sport - official

3 Brits die each year testing if a 9v battery works on their tongue.

142 Brits were injured in 1998 by not removing all pins from new shirts.

31 Brits have died since 1996 by watering their Christmas tree while the fairy lights were plugged in.

22 Brits are injured each year as a result of testing if a kettle filament is still hot.

19 Brits have died in the last 3 years believing that Christmas decorations were chocolate. British Hospitals reported 4 broken arms last year after cracker pulling accidents.

5 Brits were injured last year in accidents involving out of control Scalextric cars.

Max Winter and Peter Morley

WHEELSPIN

MAXI-MODELS McLAREN M6A REVIEWED BY PETER NOVANI

If, in a quiet moment of contemplation, you find yourself wondering what constitutes an historically important race car of the Sixties, what would it be? In terms of sports car racing, the 1967 CanAm McLaren M6A might be a consideration for those of you with good enough memories. It's certainly one of my favourite race cars, and one that a new British slot-car company, Maxi-Models, have chosen to release as their inaugural 1/32nd scale offering.

The Bruce and Denny show

The original McLaren team was quite different to the Grand Prix Formula One (F1) team that we know today. Back in the mid-to-late Sixties it was run by its founder, Bruce McLaren. Prior to that, McLaren, a New Zealander born and bred, was a proven Grand Prix race winner and a notable member of the Ford endurance racing programme, with whom he scored a memorable victory at Le Mans in 1966.

However, he had already started to channel his vast experience into the fledgling company, McLaren Cars, based close to London at Colnbrook. An integral part of the team's philosophy was to design and race two-seater roadsters as well as a succession of F1 single-seaters. The roadsters (spyders) were built mainly for the new Group 7 regulations embraced by the recently announced Canadian-American Challenge Cup (CanAm) sponsored by Johnson Wax.

A series which reflected the mood of the time by catering for 'big banger' cars with unlimited engine capacities, and a minimum of bodywork or weight restrictions. Undaunted by a lack of success in the inaugural 1966 CanAm series, the team re-grouped to develop a pair of McLaren M6As for the following season. They

were campaigned by Bruce McLaren, and new recruit and fellow Kiwi, Denny Hulme. The M6A superseded the M1 series of sports cars powered by Oldsmobile V-8 engines. Penned by Robin Herd, the conventionally designed M6A was powered by a 5.8-litre Chevrolet V-8 engine and took a mere eleven weeks to build from drawing board to test track.

It featured a beautifully curvaceous glass-fibre body, unadorned by aerodynamic aides prevalent at the time, save for a discreet vertical rear tail spoiler. Painted in a distinctive papaya orange-yellow colour, and with an equally distinctive green tinted windshield, this was a memorable race car. And as proved to be the case, success in that financially lucrative CanAm series ultimately sustained McLaren's embryonic F1 race programme for the 1968 season and beyond.

Only a final round victory by the semi-works Team Surtees Lola-Chevrolet T70 MkII, driven by reigning CanAm champion John Surtees, thwarted McLaren's efforts to whitewash the six race series that season. Bruce McLaren was duly crowned champion by virtue of his superior finishing record, scoring two wins compared with Hulme's three. The pair continued to dominate the series for the next two seasons, prompting journalists to coin the "Bruce and Denny Show" epithet. That is not to say they didn't have strong opposition.

Their achievements were all the more remarkable when you consider that race car manufacturers such as Chaparral, Ferrari, Ford, Lola and Porsche, amongst others, were all in with a shout during that period. For the most part, lady luck favoured the highly professional and well prepared McLaren racing team. Yet their luck eventually ran out during a test session

at the Goodwood circuit in 1970, when Bruce McLaren fatally crashed an M8D. Even without their erstwhile leader, the team continued to enjoy considerable CanAm success throughout the 1970-71 seasons.

New kid on the block

With production limited to just 300 examples in total, (approximately 100 built ready-to-runs and 200 kit versions), the Maxi-Models M6A was always destined to be a sell-out. With that in mind I succumbed to the temptation and ordered both versions from Pendle Slot Racing. Considering the retail price of £103 (kit) and £199 (built), this was a purchase that warranted some drastic open-wallet surgery. That aside, I'm now the proud owner of Maxi-Models' entire repertoire to date.

Sometime later, I was asked if I could review the M6A for the NSCC Journal. Although flattered, there was no way I was committing my treasured built example to an arduous test session, not even for an esteemed publication such as this. Clearly, without a suitable car to test I faced something of a dilemma. Thankfully, Max Winter, who has masterminded Maxi-Models' rise to prominence, solved the problem by offering to supply me with a review car. I appreciated the gesture, especially when you consider that his labour-of-love would be subjected to one of my warts-and-all appraisals. Moreover, the test M6A is one of only four pre-production cars in existence, distinguishable only by a tiny flaw to the mould. Yet, Max's pursuit of perfection dictated the scrapping of that mould in favour of a 100% perfect production version.

Top bloke that he is, Max suggested I visit his Buckinghamshire base to try the car around his impressive two lane scenic Scalextric layout. I didn't need to be asked twice! Spending an afternoon in the company of someone responsible for the production of slot-cars is not an everyday occurrence. Not only did it afford me an insight into his motives for entering this fiercely competitive market, but it also gave me an understanding of the processes involved in producing the M6A. As transpired from our

conversation, this congenial character hit upon the laudable idea of marketing niche slot-cars. That is to say, high quality slot-cars based on race cars that might otherwise have been overlooked by the mainstream volume producing slot-car manufacturers. And as was evident from the large and diverse model car collection that he owns, Max's interests, besides slot-cars and motor racing, includes static handmade miniatures. Therefore, it is no surprise to find elements derived directly from that genre of collecting included on the M6A.

Unlike several other specialist brands, this isn't a mere transkit/bodyshell conversion for an existing chassis. Everything about the car is unique, except for proprietary components such as the motor, gears, axles and guide blades. And by no means can this company be described as a one-man-band. Over the past few months, Max has tapped into the creativity of a small group of talented craftsmen, including one of Britain's top model pattern-makers, John Shinton, to ensue the success of this brave new commercial venture.

The slot-car

So, does this slot-car live up to all the hype? Various materials, including resin, white metal, vac-form PVC, nylon and steel photo-etching combine to make this a truly multi-media product. Not satisfied with that, Maxi-Models provide an individually hand numbered certificate of authenticity, a diorama display plinth (optional on the kit version) plus an audio CD. The latter provides the listener with the thunderous sounds of V-8 engines at racing speeds. Although it is questionable whether 20 minutes of that repetitive sound is all that merited – nonetheless an imaginative idea.

When considering the wealth of innovative detailing lavished upon the M6A, the term artisan readily springs to mind. Without doubt, it transcends anything that rival specialist slot-car companies have produced thus far. Reservations about the retail price soon fade once the car is in your possession. Then you'll be left suitably impressed by Maxi-Build's acumen and ingenuity. Components for the kit are ➡

neatly contained within polythene bags packed into a sturdy cardboard box adorned by colour photos of the built version. Collectors lacking the necessary reference material will welcome the comprehensive and unambiguous colour illustrated instructions. Although these are written in a distinctive style, a brief race car synopsis is conspicuous by its absence.

All production kits and builds are based on Denny Hulme's #5 car, which retired with a blown engine at the fourth round of the 1967 CanAm series, held at the legendary Laguna Seca circuit in America. Max thoughtfully supplies a pre-painted resin bodyshell and photo-etched tail spoiler, both superbly painted in that difficult to match colour. An equally impressive photo-etched panel sheet contains over 30 individual pieces.

That sheet enables you to replicate the side fuel pontoons, dashboard, radiator grilles, steering wheel boss, foot pedals, plus many other seemingly insignificant ancillaries – an object lesson in how to do things properly. Also worthy of mention are the excellent cast white metal parts. The green tinted windshield moulding is a further reminder that beauty is in the detail. Meanwhile, the non-magnetic resin chassis, which requires painting, is powered by a sidewinder Mabuchi motor. That suggests the handling of this heavier than normal slot-car will be of the attention grabbing variety.

I chose not to build the kit, preferring instead to display the parts and mechanical components alongside the built version. But, having built many 1/43rd models similar in concept to the Maxi-Models M6A, I can vouch that anyone possessing a modicum of model-making skill will find assembling the kit a relatively trouble free experience. No expense has been spared with the presentation of the ready-to-run built version. The M6A certainly belies its slot-car origins as it sits upon an evocative (Laguna Seca) diorama plinth covered with a perspex lid. Casting a critical eye over this version reveals that Maxi-Models have done their homework. The proportions of the full-size car have been captured with authority, as have the subtle nuances only to be found on Hulme's

race car. For example, the asymmetrically positioned mirrors, taller roll-over bar and windscreen, smaller sill air scoops and dark green roundels with white numbers. Even the full length drivers figure is superbly hand painted in the correct off-white shade and comes complete with Hulme's open face helmet. Just remember to glue on the tail spoiler as that has been packed separately to avoid any possible damage whilst in transit.

It could be argued that a fuel line on top of the engine should have been included (easily replicated with fine gauge fuse wire). Tiny silver 'rivets' on the lower edge of the windshield are also missing. The exhausts should protrude further out from the tail section and the gearbox was in a slightly lower position. The single circular vent looks to be in too high up on the front bonnet 'fender.' But, those comments do not overly detract from the otherwise impressive visual effect Maxi-Models have managed to achieve.

An important factor on any model car is the accuracy of the wheels and slot-cars are no exception in that respect. Again, full marks to Maxi-Models for the authentic looking turned aluminium wheels, white metal centres and photo-etched brake discs. They complement the well proportioned custom made tyres which have the correct Goodyear decals. In a similar fashion, the decal sheet includes the twin stripes for Hulme's helmet plus the McLaren Car trademark livery markings of that period; the drivers signature text and Kiwi logos on the flanks. And no, the number roundel on the tail section isn't missing, that's how the M6As were liveried that season.

In theory, it is possible to build Bruce McLaren's #4 Laguna Seca race winner from the kit. Decals are included for both team cars plus an additional drivers head featuring McLaren's alternative helmet design. But, a word of caution. The #4 race car had some minor detailing differences. The most obvious being the bodywork 'blister' to the right of the front number roundel, larger sill air scoops, a lower roll-over bar and windshield, plus one of the mirrors was located in a different position.

On track impressions

Incidentally, the eagle-eyed amongst you might catch a glimpse of the 35ft four lane track layout used for 'Wheelspin' test sessions in Roger Gillham's superb new Scalextric book just published in full colour by Haynes. Much like other review cars, I was keen to gauge the pre-production M6A's capabilities by testing it to its limits around that particular layout. Yet, I was mindful of M6A's rarity value and my lack of experience racing resin slot-cars.

As for selecting a car as a comparison, there seemed little point in using a magnetic slot-car. And you'll appreciate why companies fit magnets as standard once they have been removed for racing purposes. I eventually decided upon an SCX 'Vintage' Chaparral. Although somewhat primitive, it still managed times of 6.3045 seconds for a single lap and 2 minutes 08.5408 seconds to complete 20 laps. In contrast, the M6A felt more assured, if a little noisier, as it circulated around the layout to set a fastest lap of 5.7898, and complete 20 laps in 1 minute 58.6105 seconds.

It is a matter of taste how you like your slot-cars to perform. Yet one thing is certain, the M6A was not designed to thrash the opposition at your local slot-car club. And in contrast to the type of cars I normally rave about, the M6A needs to be driven with a certain amount of circumspection. That is not to say it isn't a great deal of fun to race, quite the contrary in fact as the powerful motor is blessed with more than enough low speed torque to cope with the car's additional weight.

Enthusiasts with a propensity for tail-out cornering will delight in the way the M6A handles, although a by-product is an inevitable increase in tyre wear. That said, Maxi-Models intend to offer a spare parts facility and the guide blade problem encountered by the NSCC editor (September editorial) can be swiftly dismissed; that part has now been suitably modified. Yes folks, here at long last is an authentic looking non-magnetic slot-car that delivers the goods in almost every respect. The cars' relatively sedate pace and exciting handling are entirely commensurate with the historic nature

of the race car it is purporting to represent. Only the hefty price tag will dissuade many enthusiasts from enjoying those on-track attributes. Anyway, at least we have a M6A slot-car to drool over, if not to actually race.

Conclusion

Surely, with their M6A, Maxi-Models are in danger of entering the realms of miniature automotive art! Not only does it possess a distinct charm, it also reflects a true appreciation and understanding of the subject. And lest we forget, it's a British made product too – something of a novelty these days, as I'm sure you will agree. More to the point, this trendsetting debut release can be considered my 'Wheelspin' slot-car of the year. Take it from me – it really is that good – and it needs to be if Maxi-Models are to succeed.

So, is it a specialist slot-car aimed at the handmade model market, or a handmade model aimed at the specialist slot-car market? Most probably both. In truth, the M6A is aimed squarely at the discerning model collector who, regardless of price, fully appreciates the exquisite detailing provided by this pioneering newcomer. On this evidence, rival companies may find themselves having to play catch-up if their assiduous efforts are not to be eclipsed.

With sales exceeding all expectations, Maxi-Models are confidently embarking on an ambitious forward programme of releases to tempt eager collectors. So, what next? Having seen a master of their next release, expect a continuation of the CanAm theme. Currently being readied for release early next year, is a version of the unique Team Surtees developed high-wing Lola T160 which John Surtees raced on occasion in 1968. Also in the pipeline is a version of the STP-Paxton turbine powered Indy car which so very nearly won the 1967 Indianapolis 500. An unprecedented level of innovative detailing is being promised for that particular single-seater. I, for one, cannot wait.

Finally, a big thank you to the man himself for his generous hospitality – a real gentleman. Cheers Max! ■

A Christmas tale -

The best laid plans of "electric mice" and men

BY MAX WINTER

It was 1990, the post-yuppie era of recession and negative equity was about to dawn. Some of us just turned thirty some-things were still buoyed by the heady arrogance inducing 80s. My then partner, Kim, and I were fed up with family Christmases. Familial power plays, settling of old scores and the sheer downright misery of it all. This year to hell with families it was going to be friends only, no bickering, and no sniping, just good old friends having a good old friendly time.

Invites to the like minded went out and were duly accepted, presents thoughtfully bought and the ingredients of the Christmas meal and festive paraphernalia brought in, All was set for a Christmas day we agreed we were finally going to enjoy. No families!

No amount of persuading would make Kim reveal the nature of my present from her that year, not even the wildest promises of fulfilling a woman's desires would prise the answer out of her. All I could get was "Oh it's just a fun little thing".

Come the appointed day and time, Kenny and Julia, Simon and Mags and Jos and Debbie arrive proffering gifts and exuding festive bonhomie. Drinks, chitchat and the Queen's speech out the way, time for lunch. Smoked salmon followed by Turkey and all the trimmings, Christmas pud, the works. Our recently arrived Tortoiseshell kitten, Ezzie, got her first taste of real food. She greedily accepted all of the titbits offered by her cooing admirers but turned her nose up at the Harrods caviar. You missed out on some bragging rights there little kitty.

Lunch over and done with it was present time! All were handed out, gleefully accepted by everybody and generally felt to be very thoughtfully bought. Just one package to open, the biggest, my present from my dear very tight-lipped but now smirking partner. I shook it, a little bit of a rattle, hmm! The box has got a bit

of give so its not a king-size brief case, filled with the latest techno-gadgetry that no self-respecting yuppie would be seen without. Rip off the wrappings. Oh yeah! A real boy's toy, my very own Scalextric set and a top of the range job by the looks of it too. The dear girl has really got it right this year. The clues were there, Autosport every week, Motorsport, Supercar Classics, Classic and Sportscar and Car magazine every month. She noticed!

Cue four lads instantly regressing deep into childhood frantically putting together the Scalextric track. Jos acting as the foreman giving out instructions, myself and Kenny acting as his labourers assembling the bits, Simon was already lost, commentating on an imaginary race, in full Muddly Talker mode," And - There - Goes - Senna - And - There- Goes - Prost - LOOK AT THAT! Senna's taken Prost off the track." " Er, Brundle and Bell old boy, it's a Le Mans set" I expertly interject," " Know it all!" comes Simon's terse reply. Cue also four women observing with that look, which only women can give, when their men do the regression bit. "I think we'll leave the boys to their toys, shall we girls?" Kim should have realised the effect that this gift would have.

Ezzie, warily at first, looked over the new contraption with the two little cars whizzing round it. It must have been her instincts that took over, "They move about with quick, sudden jerky movements and they appear to have four feet, Yippee, they must be mice!". As far as she was concerned this sure beat Ping-Pong balls, rolled up silver paper and the odd unsuspecting spider in the play value stakes. Us lads take great care and indulge little Ezzie's instinct to chase the "electric mice", to the point of exhaustion.

After a while I notice the girls are paying ever more attention to our play, the withering looks have gone replaced by those of a more inquisitive nature, "Let us have a go boys, you can't have all the fun," says Mags, "Yeah' go on

let us play, weren't you taught to share your toys", says Julia in a mock scolding voice. Us lads make the usual chauvinistic remarks about women drivers as we watch their faltering attempts to get the cars round in a clean lap. "I know, why don't we have a race" says Julia. "OK, teams of partners, just to make it fair," says I." No, individuals against each other, a knock out contest. Winner takes all sort of thing," she responds.

I should have suspected there and then. First race, me and Kim. First corner, Kim neatly nerfs me off; at the long chicane she rams me off from behind - while lapping me ! It must be the drink. I'll forgive her. After the first round of heats, partner against partner, the lads have been wiped out and relegated to marshalling duties. It was at this point that I had one of those sudden sobering moments of clarity, this lot of sassy gals all grew up with brothers. They're all old hands at this Scalextric thing aren't they! And they've had a lot less to drink. Us lads have been set up!

Semifinals time, women only now remember, the barbed comments start to fly between Kim, Julia, Debbie and Mags, Track marshals are barked at, "Get that thing back in the slot quickly!" Well, we are the competitive ones aren't we girls? Not to mention a touch Freudian. By this time Ezzie has decided to go into hiding. She can sense a cat-fight brewing and rightly reckons, even at her tender age of four months, that discretion is the better part of valour.

Finals time. Julia and Mags try to psyche each other out at the start line, trading put downs. Comments about lines of the facial, bikini and visible panty variety all get a mention, not forgetting cellulite and body parts heading south. This is getting serious and the track action would indicate that these two will have had a hand in teaching Herr Schumacher a thing or two about race tactics in the future. What am I going to do before we end up with the biggest Christmas bust up ever? Families or no families.

Brainwave, I check the clock, check the Radio Times. "Laydeez! Eastenders has just started. It says here it's the climax to the Dirty

Den and Angie saga". It was if someone had magically hit a reset button. In a moment a group of vicious vixens suddenly reverted to their normal sane selves, forgot the race and rushed en-mass for the sofa in front of the TV. A masterstroke, every one of them was a soap addict." Oh well, we'd better leave you boys to your toys then. We girls have much more important things to do."

Situation saved, normal service resumed. The girls now glued to the box oblivious to anything else. The lads now back in charge of the new toy, or so we think. Ezzie reappears and decides to hold a sit down strike in the middle of the track. No amount of gentle nudging with the "electric mice" is going to move her, "Aw, Ezzie, come on give us a break, shift dear. We wanna have a race," pleads Kenny, as if she could understand him. She just sits there and glowers back. The thought in that little furry brain is writ large like a neon billboard above her head." So you think I haven't worked out how this little game works yet." The kitten lets out a hiss and growl unbelievably low and threatening for one so small. She's decided that she's taking over possession of this new toy. It's her territory now and we can play as and when it suits her. Well there's only one answer to that sort of attitude, I reach down to pick Ezzie up and place her beside the track

Author's note : I don't know how they do it, you know, fell an assailant fifty times their own size but they can. How much pain and damage can a little feline bundle of fluff inflict when it is moved , against its wishes, from the place it has chosen to sit in? I was about to find out the answer.

"Argh! Eeooow! Owowwowwowwow! Stopit Ezzie! Nooo! Eeek! Yeowooow! OK sit there if you must kitty." Ezzie resumes her place in the middle of the track and gives me that "Don't trifle with me, infidel!" look that only a cat can give. After a few minutes she gets up and takes a position beside the track. She has made her point, she is now in control, play can resume. She proceeds to gleefully perfect her hunting techniques, the preferred method being to hook the cars (electric mice) by their aerofoils (tails),⇒⇒

drag them to a stop and then chew at their tyres (feet) and give them a darn good “killing”. Us lads dare not refuse to indulge her now. Ezzie eventually tires of this game and goes over to her chosen human, me, to sit on and curl up for a good sleep, exhausted. The other lads finally get to race.

Veterinarian’s note:” Tortoiseshell coloured cats, ah yes: - Always female, normally of sweet and affectionate nature and highly intelligent too. Like to get their own way though, rather feisty characters in general. Oh, and they really do know how to throw their toys out of the pram if they don’t get what they want, its in their genes you know.”

Evolutionary note : Not until the subspecies of “electric mouse”, SCX-SRS 2 Jaguar/Mazda did the genus evolve an effective counter-measure to Felis Ezzia, a gecko like detachable aerofoil. And lo they did prosper in this violent land, well for a short while at least.

After all this commotion I needed some fresh air. I took a little walk outside of my flat and looked out at the view over London on this clear and frosty Christmas night. Just then I swear I heard the sound of jingling sleigh bells

go by overhead and a baritone chuckle, or was it a mocking laugh, drift away into the distance. Dear Santa you do have a wicked sense of humour.

This story was based on real events, honest. The resemblance of any characters to those living or dead is purely coincidental. Except for Ezzie, she would like it to be known she is a very real cat who has her human very well trained now. She is also the proud owner of a permanently erected, 65ft, fully scenic “electric mouse” run. I’m allowed to play with it when she sees fit.

No dumb animals ,Kenny, Jos, Simon and I, were harmed during the writing of this story. However there are two, still traumatised and slightly battle-scarred, Scalextric cars that mysteriously manage to move themselves to the back of the cabinet, behind all the other slot cars in the collection, every Christmas day.

That disembodied mocking laugh has never been heard again but if you see a big guy with a white beard in red, fur-trimmed clothes, tell him I’m looking for him. Yes Santa that’s you I’m talking about, my place, any time, outside, if you think you’re hard enough. ■

Silver Hatch circuit

Part 3 - Racing and control

BY KEN ELSTON

Our 'World Championship' season lasts 12 rounds with a driver's best 9 scores counting towards his season's final tally. Each round is scored using the old Formula 1 system of 9,6,4,3,2 and 1 for sixth place.

For each round we race cars determined by class. Each of the 4 currently active classes comprises of groups of 25 cars. One group is raced per round. The list below shows the classes raced and the number of groups within each class:

Touring cars	13
Grand Prix	8
GT	5
Sports prototype	1

Some cars are raced in more than 1 class; for example a Fly Dodge Viper will race in the Touring car and the GT class. Due to the fact that the slot car manufacturers have all produced some great open sports cars a new group "American Le Mans series" has been created which means that for example a Ferrari 333sp will race in Touring cars, GTs and ALMS within the GT class.

For example our next round features Touring cars as the class and the group is what we have called Production saloon cars Group C. The list below shows the cars being raced and their respective qualifying times:

Pos.	Model	Q/Time
1	Lamborghini Diablo	9.98
2	Lancia 037 vs	10.00
3	Ferrari F40 'SCX'	10.26
4	Electra	10.91
5	BMW 320 'brown'	11.23
6	BMW 320 'green'	11.27
7	Ferrari GTO	11.32
8	Porsche Carrera	11.45
9	Datsun	11.50
10	Pontiac	11.56
11	Ford RS200	11.60
12	Datsun 'green'	11.65

13	Ford Sierra 'yellow'	11.65
14	Ford Escort mk 1 'Westwood'	11.83
15	Mini 'blue union jack'	11.85
16	Maestro	11.85
17	Triumph Tr7 'red'	11.86
18	Triumph TR7 'white'	11.87
19	Porsche Carrera 'green'	11.92
20	Ford Escort XR3i	11.93
21	Lancia Stratos 'le pont'	11.94
22	Toyota Celica 'Fuji'	11.95
23	Ford Escort mk1 'white'	12.00
24	Mini 'ha ha'	12.03
25	Metro 'Esso'	12.05

Each car is lined up on the grid in qualifying time sequence. Forty two (if 6 or 7 drivers are competing) or Forty Five (if 5 drivers are present) cars are raced each round therefore in addition to the 25 cars in the group being raced the 17 top qualifiers from the new cars which as yet haven't been allocated a group within the class are added to the grid.

Listed below are the current 17 top qualifiers.

1	Porsche 911 GT1 no 26	7.62
2	Porsche 911 GT1 'Le Mans 96'	7.67
3	Lister Storm	7.69
4	Porsche 911 GT1 'F.A.T.'	7.72
5	Venturi 'yellow'	7.73
6	Porsche Joest 'white 7'	7.74
7	Venturi 'Igol'	7.81
8	Porsche 911 GT1 'test 96'	7.81
9	Dodge Viper 'Rentacar'	7.85
10	BMW Z3 roadster	7.85
11	Chevrolet 'Du Pont'	7.85
12	Ferrari 333sp 'Lista'	7.85
13	Venturi 600 'Le Mans 95'	7.86
14	Panoz 'Motorola'	7.88
15	Porsche Joest 'blue no 7'	7.89
16	Marcos 'yellow 02'	7.92
17	Venturi 'blue'	7.93

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RACE CONTROL Monitoring

Each car is qualified by myself which ensures parity of performance. The qualification time is calculated as follows:

Each car has 6 laps on each of the 4 lanes. The fastest time for each lane is noted and the qualifying time is the average of these 4 times.

The cars are lined up on the grid (or a cabinet as it really is) ready for selection. For the first set of the evening drivers select their cars in reverse championship order, for the remainder of the sets drivers choose their cars in reverse current score sequence.

Each driver has 4 races with the selected car, one on each lane. The lane positioning is determined by championship position. The best driver flanked on either side by the next 2 and so on. Each race is 3 minutes long and points are awarded as follows: 6,3,2 and 1.

Points are awarded for those drivers who have completed at least 1 lap (deslotted cars are out of the race). Bonus points can be awarded for the following: 1 point for fastest lap (as long as the driver has completed at least 8 laps). With the exception of the race winner additional points are awarded for completing 11 laps (2 points) or for completing 8 but not 11 laps (1 point). The maximum number of points available for a race is 7.

To add a bit of variety to the racing if the first car selected has working lights then all the drivers must select a car with lights and the group will then be raced under "Le Mans" rules. For a lighted race the race duration remains 3 minutes however the middle minute is raced in darkness, all the other rules remain the same.

Due to the difference in ability of the drivers, whether this be 'talent' or lack of experience a handicap system is used to, hopefully, give every driver a chance of winning the championship. A driver's handicap is the difference between the average of the best driver's last six scores and the average of his last six scores. Thirty is the maximum handicap allowed. For example:

Best Driver 105,99,90,94,91,103 average 97
Driver 1 89,86,91,70,69,58 average 77
handicap 20. A normal evening's racing takes about three and a half hours.

Over the years this area has gone from being a major cause for concern to a minor headache. When the club was first started, because we did not know any better, the (C277) red mechanical lap counting sections of track were used. Pretty soon it became obvious that these were not up to the job as either the cars did not register laps or the cars left the track when they passed through the counter! A less obvious problem at the time was that no one could see how many laps had been completed!

Next came the electronic 'Think' and 'Fuel' tanks. Oh what fun - the fuel in the cars run out before completing 2 laps! and the Think Tank had the same problems as the mechanical counter. Not much thinking there then! A load of cash for Hornby and no satisfaction for us! Having a four lane circuit means that 2 of everything has to be purchased!

Next came the C273 the electronic lap counters (2 for a four lane circuit). Improvements on previous systems were that you could see the number of laps completed and the cars did not come off when they passed the sensor. Alas some laps were still missed. So now the buildings line the circuit purely for decoration.

Finally after seeing an advert in the Journal I downloaded a piece of race control software called "Slotmaster" written by Dave Lelieve. The software is written in such a way that it can be evaluated away from the circuit using keyboard keys as dummy sensors. I determined that the basic race control functions would do us just fine and so we had a whip round and purchased the software and ready fitted sensors from Dave. Around the same time I bought a new PC with Windows 95 making my 286 redundant. Not for long though as this was transported to the track and used thereafter to run the "Slotmaster" system.

All was not perfect however, the 286 did not have the capability to run Windows and as the 'paper and pencil' method of keeping score was also becoming a bit of a chore it was decided to score the event using a Lotus 123 spreadsheet. Luckily one of the racers had access to a

redundant 386 laptop which could run Windows so now we had 2 computers, one for race control and one for scoring! We could have used the laptop for both but unfortunately it had to be returned after each event.

Although not ideal this set-up suited us fine for quite a few years until my brother offered to get me a more powerful PC for the sum of £50. Lucky really because a week after getting it the 286 exploded and is now residing in the home for extinct and out of fashion PCs! So now we have "Slotmaster" running in the DOS window and Lotus 123 running in another, heaven!

Starting

Since the inception of the club only 3 means of starting a race have been used, each one has served its purpose well and has only been superseded by technical advancement.

The original method was the green and red flashing lights of the C275 Auto Start. This piece of equipment was perfect for our needs, the only drawback was that it wasn't in the best of condition.

The most realistic starting procedure came when I managed to get one of the C209 Start Line Gantrys. Clearly visible (as long as it was the right way round) to all the drivers, the only criticism is that Hornby only designed it for 2 lane racing and therefore we had to place it on polystyrene blocks so that it went across 4 lanes without interfering with the cars.

Finally the races are started using the lights generated on the SLOMASTER screen. The only design consideration here was the actual positioning of the computer screen such that all racers can see the lights.

In conclusion I would say that for clubs a decent race monitoring system is vital to the success of the events. Of course Hornby's first priority is to produce accessories as 'toys', however some of the problems mentioned above would be infuriating to people who do use Scalextric as a toy. It is a shame that the new Pacer and lap counting accessories only cater for a lap time of 10 seconds as it alienates the type of circuit us enthusiasts build.

Until next month when I will show an outline of our software. ■

TALES FROM A BOX OF STUFF

BY DAVE YERBURY

My hand was coming out of the box - two bodies this time (must remember to do the lottery), one a nice Blue American coupe with white stripes, but before I can retrieve it the box has taken it back. Hopefully it will emerge again soon, it has left me with a nice hand built brass chassis whose body is in a sorry state hanging on by the last body pin, but just about recognisable.

If I won the lottery this is the car I would have. Built in 1937 on the type 57 chassis. The market was heading away from sports cars into sophistication. The 57SC came after a long line of 57s and this showed the French Coach builder at his best. It also differed from all the other 57s as it was fitted with a super charger, which gave it a dazzling performance. A daring shape for the times, the Atlantic was certainly one of the best looking pre-war designs. Its flowing lines suggested speed; the doors cut into the roof are similar to those on the Merc. 300 SL of 20 years later. The long sleek bonnet tapering to the classic Bugatti radiator. The power plant was the successful 3.3 litre engine. A straight eight with double overhead cam shafts and was fitted with a Roots type blower. This gave the engine an output of 5,500 revs per minute with a top speed of 125mph, good for a pre-war car. The gearbox was mounted integrally with the crankcase and a single plate clutch in place of the normal Bugatti one.

There are a lot of variations on the body



style and it's hard to say whether they were prototypes or altered by their owners. They are all fitted with knock off hubs on either disc or spoke wheels. For the time of its manufacture its unusual not to have bumpers. This car was only in production for one year, due to its high cost of manufacture the chassis price in 1938 was £1000 but obviously the coach work was very expensive. With very few produced the Atlantic would be very expensive if one ever came up for auction. I think this is the most striking Bugatti produced, some might argue for a case for the Royale or others, but I'll keep doing my 6 numbers and hoping.

The clear one-piece body had seen a lot of service on my home track a few years ago. It was one of my earlier vac formed bodies before I moved onto plastic card shells with separate windows. The other day I was vacforming and remembered to run off a shell for this project. All that was left to do then was to cut out the window apertures and fit the clear windows. A coat of light blue was then applied and the bodylines picked out with a black marker. I'm still looking for a period driver to set it off. The body was then remounted using the 4 body pins in to the tubes on the chassis.

This chassis is a favourite of mine made some years ago by Graham Windle. I suppose you will call it a rocking type with a semi drop arm for the guide made from brass sheet and rod. Power provided by rewound Johnson 111-angle winder driving Revell hubs fitted with MRRC soft diamond tyres. Fronts are MRRC brass freewheeling hubs with thin hard tyres fitted. It's a great handling chassis with a large tail out attitude (not a car to be on the outside of in a corner) on a 97mm wheelbase. As my home track is non existent at the moment it may survive for a while this time. ■

Toys?

BY JOHN DILWORTH

The October journal oozed with interest as usual, but a few items seemed particularly helpful to me in trying to work out quite where I fit in the wacky world of grown-up boys that play with slot-cars.

I intended this article initially to be a paean of praise for Maxi-Models and their magnificent McLaren, having read Peter Novani's article naming the man responsible as Max Winter. I couldn't find a name on the kit box, or an address to write to, so I depend on your august publication (or whatever month you might print this) to pass on my deep gratitude. Whoever he is, may the sun shine on him, and the rest of his life be balmy summer. I've had more fun from building and racing (oh all right, playing with), his superb kit of one of my very favourite cars, than from almost anything else of late in my obviously sad and increasingly childlike middle age.

The nature of the kit also raised several questions in my mind as I spent the darkening hours after my own children's bedtime, nursing a G and T beneath the Anglepoise, and quietly assembling my expensive model car. I still haven't admitted to my wife how much it cost. It is no small part of my present reflective mood that this is by far the most expensive single item of slotware I have ever indulged in. Perhaps I still hear my mum's voice telling me 'If it costs more than two shillings, it's too expensive. Think about the poor children in Africa'. I swore then that when I grew up I'd spend as much as I liked, but the poor children are still with us. You can't put a price on pleasure though, especially such a private and harmless indulgence, evocative of irresponsible days of boyhood and the thrill of watching great racing cars and heroic drivers. It beats filling in tax forms of an evening.

Then the Journal came to the rescue of my troubled conscience too. Two articles side by side about auctions, and the prices collectors pay. I hope they get the same satisfaction from gazing at their mint-boxed Auto Union as I do from

building my M6A. Collectors can justify the huge sums spent because they are intended as a serious investment which should yield a profit one day. But it seems a very fragile investment to me. It all takes too much cold-blooded thought and planning. I respond to instinct; run 'em till they're nicely bedded in, then race 'em till something faster or prettier comes along. Philosophy was never my strong point.

But then to my next thought; who else buys these beautiful models? For me, it is a particular car that I had to have, a favourite of my long-lost untroubled youth (if anyone sees him, contact your local social services). It is not available from any other source, as Dave Yerbury said about his handsome MkVII Jag. The choice of prototype must be all-important for Maxi-models; it must arouse powerful passions to persuade the likes of me to part with so much of the hard-earned. I wouldn't spend it on an Austin Maxi, however well engineered the kit and however fast it went. But then, as Peter Novani points out, the Maxi-kit is a peculiar mix of static kit and racer. I have never seen the point in collecting static models, when you can build a racer. Twice the fun for half the cost (well, it was until now). The Maxi-kit is a hybrid, with the precision of a top-quality static but a motor to drive the back wheels. But who races a £100 model? Well I want to, or there is no point to it. Mine will never be a mint-boxed collectors item in years to come, even in the very precarious hope that it may actually be worth an antique dealers interest in 2050. What do other builders do with theirs? Wire up the motor and park it on the mantelpiece? I ask because the running gear supplied with the kit is not in the same league as the body mouldings, and why of all things, a cast metal driver?

A lot of the attraction of the kit is the quality of the cast and etched metal parts, but throw away the driver and substitute a plastic Fly chappie, and the all up weight falls by almost a third. Several other cast metal bits could easily be replaced with fabricated plasticard (which

also avoids the potential short-circuits that the kit instructions warn of), and the lump that makes up the gearbox/exhaust can be filed down easily to less than half its bulky weight. The good bits are great though- wheel inserts, wing mirrors, carbs; I wonder if they could be produced as a range of spares for us modellers? But I was also disappointed to find the nice turned-ally wheels a very loose fit on the axles. Lots of careful filing and jiggling was necessary to make them run vaguely true (or was it just on my kit?). I also fitted a magnet. There is plenty of room between the cockpit and the motor to drill an 8mm hole for a round Fly magnet without disturbing anything. If only from the point of view that my expensive car is less likely to leap from the track and destroy itself against the wall if it handles in a predictable way, these seem reasonable modifications.

I defy anyone to build a realistic model of one of the beefiest road racers ever, just to nudge it around at half throttle. The thumb will

overrule the mind eventually. Lastly, with the Scalextric guide supplied, the kit fails my one hard and fast rule about scale accuracy and appearance, which after all is what this model is about. The nose sits a tad too far above the track. Luckily, substituting a Fly guide is a simple short-cut to a suitably aggressive on-road pose. I can now whizz around my track, pitting it against my rather pitiful home made Surtees Lola 70, rerunning Laguna Seca '67. I haven't yet reached the depths of playing the soundtrack CD while I do it though. I still have some pride. Personally I prefer Soft Machine or Pink Floyd.

Sorry if I got a bit critical there. It's only because I love my McLaren fiercely, and I desperately want Mr. Winter to carry on and make all my other favourite cars- a Ferrari P4? A Chapparral 2F? Any other Can-Am type you care to think of.... I'll only be able to afford one a year though; that will safely leave me with two bob to spend on the children's Christmas presents. My Mum will approve of that. ■



No new BTCC cars from anyone this year and no wonder. How times have changed, not so long ago the BTCC was acknowledged as being the best tin-top race series in Europe if not the world, and now look at it. Even the BTCC website has been hijacked by the Beetle Cup - AARGH!!

I do not think Vauxhall will want to make much of winning this year as it is not hard to win the Constructors Cup when there is only one make of car in it, and how anyone can want to be the 2001 Champion with only four cars in the 'championship' is beyond Mole's understanding.

The whole thing has just been a joke. Why, when they came to Scotland 3 of the cars retired with failed power steering (doesn't say much for the cars does it?), but with only 4 cars in the event surely the drivers could have made the effort and carried on and racked up a few more points (doesn't say much for the drivers does it?). Maybe they didn't take the extra salt with their porridge in the morning!

Mole log 1626:201001. Dada-Dada-Dada-Dada-Dada-Dada-Dada-Dada-Dada-Dada- Dada - Chairman.

Other than looking at the Batman film in the Audio/Visual section of a downtown Grantham furniture superstore while Mrs. Chairman went elsewhere, what was our esteemed Chairman doing that far East of the M1 and on a Saturday? Is there any truth in the rumour that he had misread someone else's letter and went up the A1 instead of the M1? Had he visited the Peterborough passport office to check that it was OK to travel further north on the A1? Had he taken lunch at a certain well known railway hostelry in Peterborough? It seems to Mole that it is rather a long way to go just to look at Nicole Kidman (What's that? You had not noticed Nicole Kidman - Oh - Pity really) on a video.

The whole episode went out live courtesy of a passing AWAC, the wonders of modern science and a bored molerespondent (who had

been persuaded to take Mrs. Molerrespondent for some 'serious shopping') and he had just got to the Good-News-Bad-News bit. Mole knows what the good news was, but what was the bad news? Please ring back.

If anyone in the nearby USAF base testing out the latest Bin-Laden locating device can furnish Mole with any other information you know the address to send it to.

Looking at some video footage of the 1996 BTCC Mole was reminded just how good the BTCC used to be and that there were three vehicles seen in the video (quite often actually) not produced by any of the manufacturers. Namely the safety car, doctors car and fire car. There are also other vehicles seen around the race circuit which, unless your name is David Wisdom, do not appear on model race tracks. How about it you enterprising manufacturers, you are very willing to take vast sums of money off us for super detailed race cars that in all probability will be repainted anyway, when are we going to see some of the these cars?

This eavesdropping and spying stuff is really scary. There was Mole just writing about the lack of non- racing vehicles for model race tracks when the Molephone rings and yet another molerespondent starts talking about the limited number of Doctors cars that Hornby Hobbies have made for their special customers. They also appear to have made a fire car and safety car for the same customers. How they found out and could make them that quickly is somewhat worrying. If Mole writes about them again will they make some without the F1 logo for the rest of us please (using a much more appropriate car this time)?

Wherever you are never far from modern technology, so let Mole know who, where and when, but do not use a laser pointer as you never know what might come through the door. ■

Time and wear wait for no car

BY TONY SECCHI

I have always felt that the similarities between real and model car racing become more and more apparent with use. Banging on again about my past and recollecting the time when I used to pursue both pastimes (by racing a real car at weekends and a slot-car during the week), I was taken then, and still am now, by those similarities

After all, both machines have engines, wheels, tyres, bearings, crown wheels and pinions which have to be maintained in order to minimise wear and enhance performance.

Anything mechanical, whether a washing machine or a slot car has a performance parabola - thus, it beds in, gets more efficient, reaches a peak and then deteriorates with wear. The object of this article is to help prolong that peak.

The biggest difference between the real and the model is in the use of oil. Real cars need it as an engine lubricant; models as a final drive and bearing lubricant.

Like a real car our slot car models have to be “run in” before they achieve optimum performance and have to be checked, cleaned and maintained if that performance is to remain high. The model needs regular attention in certain basic areas Like your real car, models should be “serviced” at regular intervals and checked for any wear continuously during a championship run.

So let us take a light-hearted comparison between real and model worlds and see how those similarities I spoke of earlier compare.

Front wheels and steering

If steering exists, the moving joints should be lightly oiled and checked for excessive wear. Most cars do not have steerable front axles, but if they do any stiffness (or looseness) will cause the car to deslot or lose speed. Cars without steering should have a light application of oil to the stub or one piece axle mounts. In both cases checks should be made to ensure that the front

tyres do not rub against the wheel arches. As I have said before in previous articles, slot-cars do not need front wheels for actual stability, the front is held and steered by the pick up guide and the slot. The wheels can and do, in some cases, provide friction. The best way to set them up in my modest opinion, is to have them just (and only just) clear of the track when the car is stationary so that they just (and only just) touch the track on cornering.

Guide and pick up braids

Both of these wear with time but generally settle down to give good performance after a short while. However, at the start some guides can be a bit deep in the slot as the braids flatten and the car’s nose becomes lower the guide can “bottom”. You can hear this as the car circulates. The bottom of the blade can be trimmed very slightly to compensate for this. Actually, lowering the guide into the slot is not a bad thing; it helps to keep the front end from jumping out and allows you to brake later into the corners. A very small amount of oil on the pivot post of the guide helps the mobility of the car in tight turns.

As stated, up to a point the lower the front the better the guide depth in the slot, however this must not be at the expense of braid wear. Braids are the primary conductor of power to your engine and although generally taken for granted must be checked and kept clean at all times or else your car will slow dramatically. I use cotton buds soaked in lighter fuel and clean them after every 10 lap race. Just omit this simple task and see the amount of gunge and dirt that accumulates and how the performance of the car suffers. The braids also need replacing at regular intervals - I do this when they are about half worn.

Whilst in this area please do check the connection in the guide between the braids and the motor leads. Under any prolonged usage the friction twixt the braids and the rails can (and certainly does) slowly pull the braids out and⇒

lessen the contact to the motor wires. The wires themselves are very fine and subject to breaking under stress. The result is, once again, a drop in performance. If your car has brass eyelet connections either solder the wires in or allow a generous amount of “turnback” on the bare wire when inserted into the eyelet. When pushing the eyelet into the guide make sure that the braid does not move down with said eyelet and reduce contact area; also make sure that the wires do not lose any strands (soldering the wires into their eyelets avoids this and is strongly recommended).

With Scalextric’s unique “quick change” system, wear and loss of contact can easily occur. I have already covered this in a previous article but will briefly summarise the salient points here. The braid portion on top of the guide can flatten and start to lose touch with the spring contact protruding through the chassis to the inside of the car and has the motor lead contacts attached to it. You can get a real loss of power here. Both the braid portion and the spring contact may need to be re-profiled to return power to the norm. Sometimes just changing the pick up guide can restore performance. Because of this unreliability lots of racers replace this system by using eyelets as described above. From my own personal experience I find that the system either works well or it does not.

Finally, go inside the chassis and check the mounting of the spring steel contacts. They are held by heating a plastic protrusion over the contact base and if this becomes loose it will seriously impair performance. If loose, carefully superglue back in place.

Motor and leads

As with the pick ups, the leads to the motor can work loose, this time where they are soldered onto the motor contact. The wires turn and twist every time the car is cornered and a generous run of wire is needed to accommodate this. Make sure that the wires are well soldered, that they do not become trapped and that they are not too short or tight. Any of these can cause the wires to fracture at the contact point. The ubiquitous “can” motor itself can be very

difficult to check and maintain by the average racer. It is impossible (without dismantling) to clean the commutator and brushes or ascertain wear.

With older “power sledges” it can be done quite easily. On both types the power will increase as the brushes begin to wear and adopt the profile of the commutator, which will become more polished and conductive. But with the passage of time the “commi” profile becomes worn and the pole dividing gaps become clogged with the residue of the brushes. Unless you know what you are doing with a “can” you have no option but to change it if performance drops. However, the wearing process does take some time. Another thing to watch out for is heat. This is the one very big enemy of engine performance. Overheating will knock the guts out of both real and model cars and the main causes of overheating are friction and lack of cooling. We will come to the drive train/rear axle later, but suffice to say at this time that any misalignment or stiffness in this area will cause friction and your engine will have to spend some of its power to overcome this excess. Ventilation in “power sledges” is not a problem but please make sure that the slots in “can” motors are kept clear of fluff, gunge and dirt. Model “can” engines are air cooled and if not venting properly will overheat. You can check this by touching the underside of the cover where it protrudes from the chassis pan. If, after ten or so laps, it is hot to the touch check it out. Slightly warm is OK - very hot is not.

Finally make sure that the engine is secure in its mounting. The plastic locating lugs can break or wear loose and, if this happens, your engine will move about and not be able to transmit its full power to the rear wheels. This will also give you a “jerky” power on/power off syndrome which will not help your car or your driving skill.

Final drive / rear axle

Apart from some bizarre and not very successful configurations the relationship between the pinion gear on the motor and the crown wheel gear on the rear axle in this country has

remained the same for years. Like real cars with rear wheel drive this comprises of the two gears at right angles to each other with profiled teeth to transfer the drive. Our American friends have also used “anglewriter” and “sidewriter” set ups for years and the latter is now becoming popular here with both Fly and Scalextric due to the usage of fully detailed interiors.

By putting the engine at the back parallel with the axle line a full depth cockpit and a driver with legs can be incorporated. Wear, checks and maintenance however, remain the same and it is here that the dreaded ogre of friction mainly raises its ugly head. To function properly and efficiently an “in line” set up must have the centre of the armature shaft in line with the centre of the rear axle to ensure correct meshing of the gears. A certain amount of free play is fine but avoid any excessive looseness or (more seriously) stiffness in this vital area. That is why it is of paramount importance to keep the engine firm in its mountings. The factory set up between pinion and crown wheel must be correctly maintained - a light oiling at the point of gear contact and a check for tooth wear should be a regular task. As the engine and final drive bed in, the car will become looser, running on longer when the throttle is released allowing deeper entry into bends and smoother transfer to throttle on. However, too much wear will result in a sloppy feel to the car and it will become difficult to control running on too far. You will have to brake earlier and therefore lap slower. Too tight meshing of the gears will result in friction and heat and in some cases loss of teeth (of the pinion gear that is - or possibly yours if you lose control and put somebody out of the slot). Final drives have ratios; i.e. divide the number of teeth on the crown wheel by the teeth on the pinion and you have the final drive ratio. This is generally 3 to 1 with inlines - overwear to the gear teeth can alter this and your car's speed (note lower gear ratios give more top speed and less acceleration - higher gear ratios give the opposite, less top speed but more acceleration).

As previously stated “sidewriter” engines are placed parallel with the rear axle and

transfer drive by means of a large spur gear on the rear axle. The number of teeth on the pinion and the spur are greater but ratios generally the same; maintenance is as before. The rear axle runs in plastic/metal bearings push fitted into chassis protrusions and a little light oiling does not go amiss here.

One point that is often overlooked in the “area of wear” are the rear tyres. As these wear their circumference reduces, affecting the final drive ratio. This means that the car will begin to accelerate quicker, but if the tyres are left to wear too far the engine can bottom out on the track (in line) or the same malady will affect the spur gear (sidewriter). On this last point keep a sharp eye on the diameter of the rear tyre. It is only slightly larger than the adjacent spur gear and damage can occur to car and component if left unattended. Unless you have a track with very long straights resist the seemingly obvious solution to replace the wheels/tyres with larger diameter options; once again this will affect the final drive ratio.

There is also a point about the treaded pattern tyres found on older cars. As these wear they will eventually become “slicks” giving a better grip until worn out completely. Finally, tyres are a good indicator of any misalignment. Grooves worn in the tyre can mean that they are touching the wheel arch; regular checks and replacement are necessary here. The slot-car manufacturer has worked out the optimum case and in most circumstances I suggest that you stick to that.

As I said in the beginning, this article is not about modification; it is about maintenance. Of course cars can be made to go faster and stay on track better if modified, but what I am trying to say is that with a little bit of care and attention you can keep the standard peak performance of the car at its best for a longer period of time. It will have a longer “competitive” envelope during a championship and extend the time before your car inevitably goes “over the hill”

Whether you belong to a club, have a home circuit or just put down a standard layout to race the kids, the foregoing will apply.

Happy tinkering. ■