



No.232 JULY 2001

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NSCC

The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

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EDITOR

Brian Rogers
27 Paige Close
Watlington
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE33 0TQ

Tel/Fax:- 01553 813090
e-mail:- editor@nsc.co.uk

TRADE ADVERTISING AND WEBSITE

Alan Slade
The Old Schoolhouse
Bridgefoot
Strathmartine
Angus
Scotland
DD3 0PH

Tel/Fax:- 01382 828670
e-mail:- sales@nsc.co.uk
webmaster@nsc.co.uk

Fog in Channel - Continent cut off

A classic newspaper headline from the days when Britannia ruled the waves; it was heartening to see the National Press greeting the return of Bentley to Le Mans, after seventy one years, in similar fashion.

Page after page was dedicated to the triumphant third place achieved by our brave "Bentley Boys" with just the odd paragraph acknowledging that the German Audi team came first and second, several laps ahead. You had to search the small print to discover that the legendary British marque was now owned by Volkswagen and contained an Audi engine.

It has always puzzled me slightly why the most sought after Bentley, in real and model form, is the 4.5L "Blower" as it falls into that exceedingly large category of "Great British heroic failures". True, Bentley works cars won Le Mans five times including four in succession from 1927-1930 but none of them fell to a supercharged car. In fact the supercharged 4.5 never won a race of any significance; it suffered a series of mechanical failures and brought the firm into disrepute. Its fame rests on one magic moment during the 1930 race - lap 4 - halfway down the Mulsanne straight - Rudolph Carraciola in a Mercedes SSK is leading when a car overtakes him with two wheels on the grass. The British Racing Green car, with a huge chunk of tread missing from one of the tyres is the 4.5 litre supercharged Bentley driven by Sir Henry "Tim" Birkin. A legend was born and all the toy companies, including Scalextric, ignored the Speed Six models which won Le Mans three times on the trot in favour of the Birkin machine.

And Finally - W.O. is probably spinning in his grave at this very moment as the Bentley EXP Speed Eight contains a twin turbo German V8; never mind though, its a beautiful machine and most of it was constructed in Norfolk. So how about it Hornby - time for a new Bentley slot-car methinks. Don't let the Spanish firms beat you to it!

Till next month
Brian

*Adrian Norman reports on current news
from the Scalextric Headquarters in*



FACTORY FOCUS

Seeing red

The Williams Red 5 and Piquet No.6 cars from the 80s had different moulds for the front wings. This completely escaped me until my son pointed it out. The Piquet car has squared endplates whilst Mansell's car has rounded ones. Another one for Roger Gillham's book!

See Fourteen

The C14 Matra from way back has been seen with 'Beltoise' stickers along its side just in front of the driver windscreen differentiating it from the normal 'Scalextric' sticker issued as standard. The Beltoise version is also in a powder blue body mould slightly paler than the normal version. The French version seen was from a French set.



'C' everything - Roger Gillham's revised book

The enthusiasts reference book providing answers to 'life, the universe and everything Scalextric' is well on its way to being published this year. The 5th edition of the book is going to have as many colour photographs of each model as possible. Several NSCC members took part in a marathon photo shoot around the country to capture colour images of as many cars and accessories as we could, to grace the pages of Roger's book. It really is going to be the best yet. =>

Whilst we are looking at new releases it is also good to take a look back at some of the unusual things that may have escaped us.

I.C., therefore IBM?

An NSCC member sent in a picture of a handheld, electronic Scalextric game from about 1990. Not exactly an IBM computer, this 5 inch square-ish toy could, 20 years ago, probably have run a small business accounting system with a sizeable memory to match that of a fish.

With a picture of the multi-colour Benetton B189 and a Ferrari 643 under the Scalextric logo on the fascia, the simple electronic game is operated by 'move left' and a 'move right' buttons with which the player must avoid colliding with cars on the three lanes thus overtaking them. If anyone can throw any light on where this electronic game was sold, or any information on similar Scalextric branded games, etc. I will be grateful.



See the light

The Autumn brings a few more releases. The Subaru is an all new body. C2341 & C2362 are WRC 2001 liveries with the new high intensity LED lights which give a far more realistic illumination. C2340 is also due for an August release with a third livery. The exact specifications will be reviewed in later issues.

C for coupé

The new Astra V8 DTM cars will get you far more excited than watching the (in my view) lacklustre British Touring Cars series on TV on Saturday afternoons.

Get your track up and running and try out the new Opels. I think they are great. The detail is fantastic with many chemically etched metal components such as grills, brake discs and badges etc. I know I raved about this car in the last issue but it deserves it. The raceability is

marvellous, the best car from Scalextric. They just get better, and that's good for the hobby.

See inside

The new NASCAR body has been brought up to date to match the new range. The new interior now has a full length driver and in-car detail. The body is a new mould design with improved detail components. The motor will be mounted transversely.

Seaside

Don't forget to check-out the invitation elsewhere in this issue to the Special Hornby/NSCC Weekend 2001 at the seaside in sunny Ramsgate. Speak to the guys who design the cars, join in some friendly competitions and have a good social weekend. Looking forward to 'C'-ing you at Ramsgate.

Now, if my memory serves me right, I put that electric 5 inch fish over here somewhere..... ■

A 'Day In The Life'

Part 7 - mass production

In simple terms the factory processes are fabrication (plastic moulding, metal pressing), decoration (painting, printing, plating), sub-assembly, final assembly and packing.

In plastic injection moulding, the mould is fitted into a machine of the right capacity. Plastic granules are loaded into a hopper on top of the machine whence they drop into a heated chamber and are melted into liquid. A hydraulic ram forces this into the mould where it will cool and set. After an appropriate interval, the mould will be opened and the moulded component, dislodged from the mould by ejectors, drops into a bin below.

Several types of plastic are used depending on the type of component being moulded. Gears may be moulded in nylon and bearings in acetal resin for their tough and self-lubricating properties. Window shells are made in styrolux and bodies in ABS for a sparkling finish and good impact resistance, whilst track bases are made in polyethylene for toughness and flexibility.

Metal pressing produces the conductive track rails and other electrical conductors. Coils of tinfoil or phosphor bronze are fed into power presses accommodating the appropriate press tools. As the metal reaches a 'stop' in the tool, the 'punch' of the press tool is forced down into the 'die', shearing the metal and squeezing it into the desired shape. Metal pressing is far quicker than moulding as there is no heating and cooling and thus thousands of pressings can be in an hour.

Sub-Assembly

Various semi-automated and fully automatic assembly processes for standard components are running just ahead, in terms of time, of the scheduled production run. Guide blades, wheels, axle assemblies and wiring harnesses are dealt with in this way. Because the volume of such items is substantially greater than that of any

BY ADRIAN NORMAN

single car it makes economic sense to set up sub-assembly equipment for them rather than to assemble them as part of a particular car assembly. Thus there is a special purpose machine for many standard components.

Helter Skelter

Mounting tyres on to the wheel hub is one of the fully automated processes using one of the most unbelievable mechanical machines I've ever seen. (It has to be seen to be believed.) A hopper feeds loose wheel hubs down a spiralling mini Helter Skelter where, at the bottom, the randomly tumbling hubs are automatically selected if their orientation is correct. Down a tube they go where they meet a clamp holding a tyre that is thrust on to the hub.

Revolution

The wheel hubs are mounted on the axles with a semiautomatic press. The axle is placed in a groove on a saddle-block with the axle ends protruding. The operative places one wheel hub in each of two blocks either side of the saddle. The blocks are then pneumatically brought together but stop at a preset distance apart having pushed the wheel hubs on to the axle ends. This ensures that all hubs are pushed on to the axle with the same pressure and at the same distance apart.

Guide blade manufacture is also a fully automatic process; the machine simply threads two reels of braid through the slots in the guide blade, folds and crimps them off. This machine would often run twenty-four hours a day during peak production.

The plating of wheel hubs and other components requiring a 'chromed' finish is also undertaken. These parts are electroplated using aluminium anodes in a vacuum chamber to give a metallic finish. They are then sprayed with lacquer that is tinted to simulate chrome, gold, bronze and other textures. ■

WHEELSPIN

FLY (C53) PORSCHE 917K REVIEWED BY PETER NOVANI

Whether the Porsche 917 really is the “Greatest Racing Car Of All Time” is a moot point. However, that was the conclusion reached by a distinguished panel of 50 motoring pundits. What is not in doubt is the fact that the 917 is a motor racing icon. Therefore it richly deserves to be modelled as a slot-car and appraised as such in the Journal.

THE LEGENDARY RACE CAR

It's worth recounting the reasoning behind the 917's conception. The new 1968-71 Group 5 sports car regulations required that manufacturers build at least 25 identical examples of a race car if they wanted to power them with an engine capacity of 5-litres – the maximum permissible. Prototypes were restricted to a meagre 3-litres, in an attempt to deter racing teams from building powerful one-off Group 7 cars with large capacity engines. Something that had been evident prior to 1968. However, Porsche opted to circumvent the regulations by building, at considerable cost and with more than a little guile, the prerequisite number of air-cooled 4.5-litre flat-12-cylinder sports cars. The objective of this colossal undertaking? To win the ultimate sports racing car prize – the prestigious Le Mans 24 Hours race, held each June in France.

Unfortunately, during its debut season (1969), the 917 proved to be a recalcitrant beast with attendant handling deficiencies and an ineffectual aerodynamic body shape. Consequently Porsche enlisted the services of renowned endurance racing specialists, John Wyer Automotive Engineering, who ran the factory 917Ks (kurz or short) coupé and the alternative and more nimble 3-litre 908/3 prototype spyders. Throughout the next two

seasons, JWA's involvement was augmented by surreptitious factory support for the Porsche-Salzburg (Austria) team in 1970, and the Martini International (drinks) sponsored team in 1971. Following a concerted development programme over the winter period, JWA transformed the 917 into a car capable of reducing the opposition to mere also-rans. Remember, keeping Porsche honest at that time were arch rivals Ferrari, who remained heavily committed to sports car racing. So it was almost inevitable that the famous Italian marque would follow Porsche's enterprising initiative. With suitable funding from parent company, FIAT, Ferrari set about building 25 examples of their potent, yet ultimately unsuccessful, 5-litre V12-cylinder sports car, the 512S. Ironically, the regulations conspired to produce two of the most memorable seasons in sports car racing's long and illustrious history.

Photos suggest that the 917 is a relatively big car. Yet it is far smaller than expected. For example, when compared to another legendary race car, the Ford GT40, which is 40 inches high (hence the name), the 917 is lower still at a mere 37 inches. It has the performance to match the purposeful looks, with 0-100 m.p.h. in 5 seconds and 0-200 m.p.h. in 20 seconds. Breathtaking statistics when judged by today's standards, let alone those of some thirty years ago.

Arguably the most famous version is the one that scored Porsche's inaugural outright victory at Le Mans in 1970 (Fly C53). A steady drive netted victory for the Hans Herrmann and Richard Attwood driven Salzburg 917. Both Porsche's second-string teams (Salzburg and Martini) would embarrass the more experienced and favoured JWA outfit by scoring back-to-back victories at Le Mans in 1970/71. That was ➤➤

the start of an unsurpassed record of 16 victories, spanning three decades, almost twice as many as Ferrari. However, Porsche's Le Mans participation, which included numerous class wins, can be traced as far back as 1951. The 917 concept (which won 15 of the 21 endurance championship races entered) embraced other derivatives. In fact, over sixty 917 chassis numbers can be accounted for, in one form or another. Without doubt, the ultimate manifestation has to be the turbocharged 917/10 and 917/30 spyders, developed in collaboration with Roger Penske's American racing team, for the 1972/73 CanAm series.

THE SLOT-CAR

And so to the slot-car version of the 1970 winner which Fly have introduced in a somewhat ad hoc fashion. Confusingly, early releases feature the distinctive 1971 high-fin tail treatment while later releases have the earlier 1970 flat-tail – the review car (C53) has the latter. Thankfully the red/orange hue Fly opted to paint the slot-car closely resembles the real thing. And with its striking white tampo printed stripes, the car looks as if it is travelling fast just sitting there on the plinth. What also impresses is the way those stripes flow over and into the hollow vents across the top of the front wheel arches. Due in part to the tampo printing process which requires each 'mask' to overlap, the white colour around the lower headlight area is uneven in depth.

It would be churlish to expect every minute variation from car-to-car – it is after all 'only a slot-car.' Yet (C53) has all the NACA ducts and vents replicated exactly – and in all the right places too. Having said that Fly again managed to include some glaring errors. All of which pertain to this particular version.

Anorak alert! There should only be one Shell logo on the rear buttresses, the nearside 'passenger' side. A rectangular identification (ID) light unit ahead of the driver side rear wheel arch, plus small ID illumination race number lights are also missing. Tiny black arrow markings above all four wheel arches have also been omitted. A more obvious error is the black engine cover which should be red for this

particular race version. Almost forgot, the silver ignition 'cut out' switch on the front panel should be fluorescent red. As for the Shell logos on the tail, are they oversized? I did warn you! Those livery irregularities are offset, to an extent, by some subtle detailing. The additional wheel/tyre tucked away under the rear deck is just one such example. Regulations at the time dictated that sports racing cars should carry a 'spare.' By the way, it's Hans Herrmann represented in the correctly painted seat. As for the shiny driving gloves, they look incongruous and should have had a matt finish. Finally, the driver names, race result and relevant year are thoughtfully included on the plinth.

As ever, standard Fly Classic components can be found beneath the bodyshell. That is to say, treaded tampo printed tyres, sidewinder Mabuchi type motor, and of course a very powerful cylindrical magnet. Prior to a head-to-head out-of-the-box comparison track test, the usual running-in process was adhered to. Those of you familiar with Fly products will be accustomed to the sure-footed handling and sheer power, not to mention reliability, of these highly detailed slot-cars. In that respect Fly's rendition of the 917K does not disappoint. Yet when compared to GB Track's 917/10, the Fly version was not immediately on the pace. Although, since the track test was undertaken, both cars have improved their times slightly. But, in my experience, the 917/10 still has the edge in the handling stakes.

FLY Classic (C53) Porsche 917K

Fastest lap = 4.1835 sec

20 laps = 1 min 30.3106 sec

GB Track (GB1) Porsche 917/10

Fastest lap = 4.0929 sec

20 laps = 1 min 24.8305 sec

OTHER FLY 917K RELEASES

As a brief recap of the range is merited, I have listed the releases in chronological race order.

(C59) Salzburg 917K – Daytona '70

The 917K made its debut at this famous American 24 hour race. The Porsche-Salzburg entered flat-tail version was driven by Elford/

Ahrens. Painted white with red stripes it should have a 'window slit' cut into the leading edge of the roof. This increased the field of vision for the drivers when negotiating the steeply banked Daytona (NASCAR) circuit, which utilised an infield road course. The car retired following assorted mechanical problems.

(SM3) Gulf 917K – 'Le Mans' film

Previously reviewed in the Journal (Sept 2000). Beautifully presented in a special presentation case as part of Fly's Steve McQueen Porsche trilogy. This 1970 flat-tail 917 was the focal point of the 1971 epic starring Steve McQueen as fictitious race driver Michael Delaney.

(C56) Salzburg 917K – Öster'ring '70

The white striped flat-tail Salzburg entered 917, this time on a blue colour scheme. Driven by Ahrens/Marko, a fuel miscalculation thwarted their efforts, causing it to run out of fuel on the final lap of their home race – a race it would otherwise have won. It was classified sixth.

(C55) AAW 917K – Watkins Glen '70

Sixties jargon such as far-out-man and outta-sight could accurately describe this outrageous psychedelic 917. However, Fly's interpretation of the overall colour scheme is questionable. Research shows the colour to be much too light. Entered by the Finnish AAW team it finished ninth in the hands of Larrousse/van Lennep at this North American circuit.

(C81) Gunston 917K – Kyalami '70

The David Piper entered flat-tail car repainted for this race in the gaudy colours of Team Gunston (cigarettes) for the Kyalami 9 Hours, the South African championship round. With Attwood/Love at the helm it eventually retired.

(C54) Martini 917K – Sebring '71

Elford/Larrousse took their silver Martini 917 to victory at this classic American 12 Hour race. However, it retained the original 1970 flat-tail rear deck for this particular race.

(C52) Gulf 917K – Monza '71

The Monza race winner driven by Rodriguez/Oliver featured the distinctive vertical tail fins for the first time on a 917.

(C57) Martini 917K – Monza '71

Another silver Martini entered car. The high-fin version with yellow identification markings

painted around the front oil cooler surround and rear trim spoilers. Elford/Larrousse raced the car but it retired after suffering a misfire.

(C58) Usdau 917K – Nürb'ring 1971

The Auto Usdau 917 was one of the ex-Solar Productions 'Le Mans' film cars. Repainted in yellow and green and fitted with the high-fin tail for Joest (now overseeing Audi's sports car racing exploits) and Kauhsen. Although the car was never a contender on this circuit, it finished sixth overall and first in the Group 5 class.

(C51) Martini 917K – Le Mans 1971

With Marko/van Lennep at the helm, the white painted Martini high-fin version took an easy, and unexpected win. However, this was no ordinary 917 but one fitted with a special 5-litre engine and lightweight magnesium chassis in anticipation of Porsche's CanAm assault.

(C82) Martini 917K – Öster'ring '71

The most recent addition to the range, and another high-fin version sponsored by Martini. The white #28 car, driven by Marko/Larrousse, was well placed until it retired. The main claim to fame of this 917 was the fact that it featured an early racing development of the anti-lock braking system now used on road cars.

CONCLUSIONS

Rightly or wrongly, I often preach the purists' gospel regarding accuracy. In truth, the Fly range is not without faults, due largely to poor research. Although comparisons are rather superfluous, seek out a Technitoys/SCX 'Vintage' Porsche 917 – albeit a slot-car based on an old Seventies mould. Importantly, it serves to illustrate just how far slot-car manufacturing techniques and detailing have advanced. And if a further reminder is needed, think back to when certain Formula One slot-cars looked more like 'collectables' given away in breakfast cereal packets.

As you will infer from my utterances in the Journal, I'm rather a devotee of this particular era of motor racing. And for my money, no other slot-car company embodies the spirit and passion of that period better than Fly with their Classic range. Put simply, these slot-cars are made by enthusiasts for enthusiasts. Enjoy! ■

Slot racing personalities - Don Siegel

BY JEFF DAVIES

This is intended to be the first of a series of articles about people whose names many of us would recognise from the world of slot car racing.

I first came across Don Siegel when drawing up a list of people who I wished to be involved with Brooklands. He originally hails from Chicago, USA and his initial interest lay in 1/32 and HO home racing. In fact, his first job was at the local hobby shop/raceway, afternoons after school. Don now resides in Paris, France with his charming wife and has what is possibly the world's most comprehensive library of slot car related material as well as a huge collection of the weird and wonderful models of slot cars.

Don collects just about anything, the weirder the better, and is principally a chassis man as this aspect of our hobby he finds the most interesting. He relishes the huge variety of manufacturers and models that the slot car industry has produced, a view I completely concur with. He once remarked to me he couldn't believe that Roger Gilham could write a whole book on Scalextric without one single chassis picture.

Initially I contacted Don about entering a team in the rail racing competition; I had also hoped to include Russell Sheldon, who not only builds some of the best slot cars ever made, but is also a very talented slot racer. Don immediately agreed to enter but Russell was unable to attend as he had family holiday commitments. However, he certainly made up for it by restoring Walkden Fisher's original rail racing car.

Don sent me photocopies of the early rail racing literature, urging me to build a challenging track. This included pictures of the early cars; people involved like Tom Cook and, most important of all, pictures of the original Southport rail track. The earliest international rail racing meetings took place on this track.

Upon seeing the pictures of this track I knew immediately we had to build a replica as I really loved the shape and the way it turned back in on itself to change direction twice on the final corner. I also asked Don if he had any suitable motors to build a couple of rail racers and he donated a pair of Pittmans 'to the cause' in his own words.

Don has no financial interest in slot racing, yet he is easily one of the most committed and dedicated enthusiasts I've had the pleasure to meet. He has written for a large selection of slot magazines and was involved in a major way in Philippe de Lespinay's book on vintage slot cars. He is also an accomplished slot car racer, racing in both X12 GTP and vintage classes in the French slot car scene.

I was really looking forward to meeting Don on the day of the event. I had spoken to him on the phone previously and meeting him in person I couldn't help but like him as he has an extremely pleasant and easy-going personality, with a keen sense of humour. He still retains the youthful enthusiasm for our hobby that so many people lose as they get older.

Don turned a Napier Railton shell I sent him into a very tidy rail car with which he raced in the opening race of the meeting and he won the Tom Cook memorial race, beating John Moxon into second place. The prize was a year's subscription to Slot Car Bulletin - which he already subscribed to! He kindly gave the prize to John Moxon.

Yves Chapoutier also won a race and I was very pleased to present him with a trophy. One of the highlights of the day was when Don, Yves, myself and my two children walked up the test hill and stood on the members' bridge, overlooking the banking. Don is a true gentleman, as well as a talented writer. Our hobby could do with more people like him. ■



Dear Brian

Just a few lines to thank certain people who have helped me to re-enact my childhood days.

It all started for me on Christmas Day 1968 with the arrival of a GP set complete with a green BRM and red Cooper; oh what fun over the next few years as new cars and track were added. As with most people I drifted away from the hobby at the ripe old age of 18 as work and marriage took their toll of my free time.

However, 18 years later it started all over again after a visit to a model shop; the attic was soon converted to take a fifty seven foot landscaped track and the hunt was on for the early cars. I also joined Pendle Club and attend most Wednesday nights. Anybody wishing to start club racing should contact Sean Fothersgill and come along; you will surely find it friendly and enjoyable.

In conclusion I would just like to mention Neil Robson of VRS Race Systems for his time and patience in installing my timing system.

All the best
Dave Jones

.....

Dear Brian

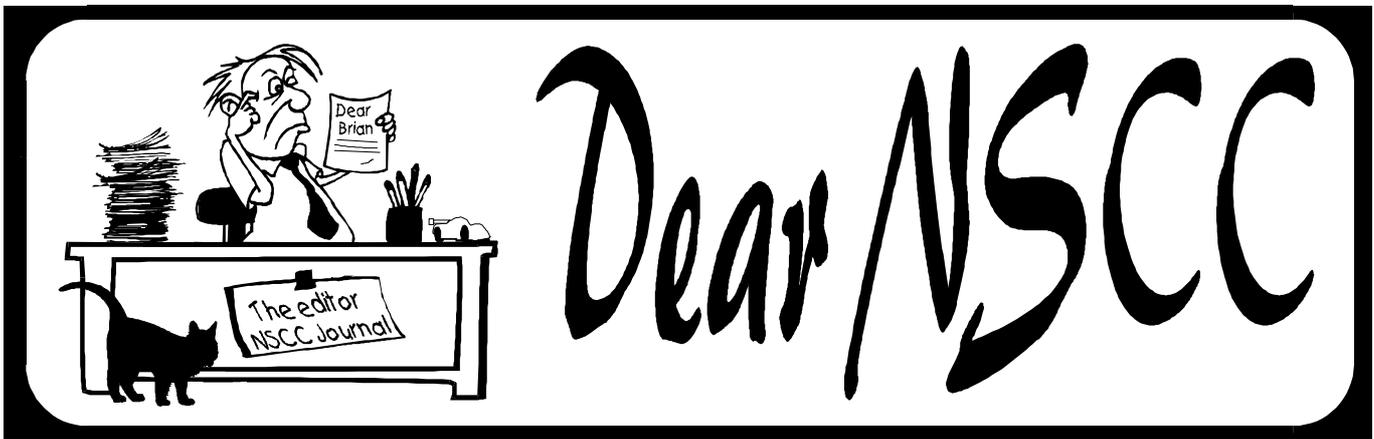
Two questions... I have a particular affection for racing power sledge cars. The trouble is keeping the tyres in good condition.

Does anyone out there know of a tried and tested formula for either rejuvenating these tyres, the optimum temperature conditions to which they should be stored to avoid further damage – or at least, if there is a company out there reissuing them or their equivalents?

Also, being a keen admirer of the writings of Tony Secchi, I was wondering if he would consider writing a couple of articles: the first being how a slot car actually works (in layman's terms), this would go someway in understanding problems encountered.

Secondly, illustrating a diagram of a slot car and its parts – this, again, would be very helpful in understanding 'the universal language'. I remember joining the Club and not knowing the difference between a carbon brush and a copper braid...I still get fazed when desperately trying to tell someone the part I need; again, this would be beneficial to all.

Many thanks,
Mark Winwood



Dear Brian,

Anthony Clayden's article 'Hooked' prompted a memory of the deadly and frequently employed reset button on those early Scalextric transformers.

My friend Pete had a Scalextric set and his button made a noise like 'poggah!' as the button sprang out on its spring and hit the stop. Hence we coined the word 'pogger' and when you spun and shorted the braids you were said to 'have poggered it'. This grew into a wider usage within our select group and, at first whenever you crashed your slotracer (whether or not you set off the pogger button) and then whenever you made any error in life in general, you'd 'poggered it'. Unfortunately the word inevitably reached the ears of a wider audience, unaware of its correct slotty etymology, and when I heard my sister-in-law tell someone to 'pogger off' I knew the cause was lost and pogger was withdrawn from use before it could be further misappropriated.

Cheers,
Bill Grigg

.....
Hi Brian,

In answer to Holger Thor Nielsen's questions on the May NSCC Journal, Ninco did issue a Catalunya limited edition car in 1997.

It was a white Ferrari 166MM ref 50136, including co-driver with folded map in hand. This is by far the best Catalunya model (and probably the hardest to obtain, along with the earlier Clio version).

Regards
Tony Frewin

.....
Dear Brian

The Electric Rail Racing Association is proud to announce that to commemorate this year's summer rail race, to be held in Abergavenny on July 22nd, Slot Classic are producing a limited edition run of 12 1938 Auto Union D-Types. They are to be individually numbered from one to twelve. Two of these will be retained by Slot Classic for their own collection. They are being produced to commemorate Walkden Fisher's rail racing Auto Union D-Type. This was one of the most successful early rail racers and was raced in both the UK and America, being driven to a semi-final win in the Kalamazoo Grand Prix in 1959 by leading American rail racer Tom Cook. These are the first rail cars ever to be mass produced by a slot car manufacturer and I believe these are the first ever complete rail cars to be manufactured. These cars cost £150 + P&P.

Regards
Jeff Davies

Redditch Scalextric competition

BY JON SWORD

It's not very often that someone decides to put up a six lane Scalextric plexytrack in your local shopping centre is it? That's what happened this past weekend as the Event Entertainment Company organised an event on behalf of MotivActive. Superb driving prizes were the temptation to have a go and race and try and establish the fastest time for completing three laps of a twisting circuit, much used and with the requirement to dodge another five racers, as well as the grabbing hands of nearly a hundred junior spectators!

The phone call

It all started with a call from my eldest son, supposedly revising for GCSEs but finding himself lured into the town centre seeking inspiration in the computer and music shops. As soon as he told me about the location of a circuit I thought I'd see what was going on. Was it a Hornby event? Another local club perhaps? I hadn't seen any advertising. Neither of these two options, but sure enough a six lane circuit was sitting there in our shopping centre.

I spoke to Barry Leaver and he explained the deal. You had to put a Fly GT car, no magnet, through its paces around three timed laps. The fastest driver would win a WH Smith MotiActive Racing Car Experience weekend (?) and two runners up prizes of Karting weekends also tempted you to give it a try. I did consider having a go there and then and maybe telling the lads at the Phoenix club next week, well the rest of the lads probably wouldn't be interested would they?! However, I went to the club that night and told the guys what was happening. They received the information with little outward sign of any interest, funny I thought.

Daz was the first to crack. He rang me on Saturday and said he was on the way over. We dragged my lads Rob and Sam uptown with us,

pretending that we were taking them along to have a go (as you do). Daz had brought his box of cars and spares but no use, we had to use their cars as supplied. It was a real struggle beating all those kids out of the way but it had to be done as only the adults could win the prizes and, let's face it, slot racing is far too good a toy to be wasted on children! I realised that I should have had my go on the Thursday as by now the cars had been hammered and were mostly wrecked by the vast amount of frothing, rabid kids screaming at the two besieged organisers. Dan Kirwilliam the other attendant organiser had a look of despair on his face, the strain was beginning to show; after all these lads had three days of this and had long run out of headache tablets and sedatives.

A real challenge

We felt sorry for them and decided that they needed some help with marshalling and car and track repair/cleaning with moments of bodyguarding, as the cream of today's youth bombarded them with abuse. Mac Pinches turned up, dead casual, with a look that said, "well I always come here on a Saturday anyway!" (He lives about 50 miles away). After a while we decided that it was time to have a go. Interesting challenge this, the complete opposite of a club night. Cars that were on their last legs; track that had seen better days before being pulled apart by the crowds of kids and lastly having to drive between a bunch of apprentice future joy riders. Oh yes a real challenge. Some chap had earlier set a best time of 24 secs. Having at first scoffed at this we realised he had done well as the car spluttered around the track over dead sections and with braids barely visible beneath the collection of cat fur and 'Green-tac' that had been dripping from various children's noses over the past three days!

Winning isn't everything It's just a whole lot better than coming second

I went first as I knew the other two were faster, basking in the admiration and limited appreciation of the assembled who now realised that it was more fun to keep the cars on the track, 21 seconds for the three laps. Daz blew me away around about 20 seconds, Mac did similar. Daz and Mac both went again, improving all the time. It was all very close but Mac clinched it with a 19 second drive which means that Daz and I will be going karting, whilst Mac will be

driving around in a GT car on some race circuit (poor bloke!). It was all good fun and we had helped the guys with the running of the event. It had been hugely popular with the kids and one or two dads too! As an NSCC member it was hard to take in the image of some very early Fly cars (very hard to obtain now) being bashed around the track, but I also appreciated what a hard wearing and robust bit of kit Scalextric track and controllers are when put through a real test like this. Excellent fun, be sure to look out for the Event Entertainment Company in your neighbourhood (I might even lend you my body armour and stun grenades!). ■

The allure of rubber!

Part 6 - Reassembly

BY PETER BOITA

Now that everything is cleaned and restored it is time to begin reassembly of the various bits.

Push fit the tabs on the metal rail loosely into the slots cut in the rubber track sections leaving the metal rail proud of the track surface. Now look to see how much metal rail protrudes over each end of the rubber track section. You will be amazed at how inaccurate these rails have been made from the factory! Most of mine were up to 3mm longer than the track section! No wonder the track sections never butted up accurately!

What you are after is approximately half a millimetre projection of track rail beyond each end of the rubber track section. All you want to feel is a slight protrusion of the track rail over the end of the rubber track section. This ensures that when the track sections are connected not only do the rubber track sections fit snugly against each other but also the metal rail ends will touch each other in addition to the connecting tags carrying the electrical current.

Here's how to achieve it. If one end of the track is all right then you are O.K. for now. More likely both ends will be protruding too much so the first job is to get the protrusion right on one end which will then only leave you having to cut the other end of the metal rail for a perfect fit. Turn the track over and see how much rubber track you have to "play with" at each end of the track as you are going to have to "slide" the metal rail one way or the other. Plan which way you need to slide the metal rail. This is usually easy to see as one metal end tag will have more room to move than the other one which would jam up against the end track rib before giving enough lateral play to give you movement you are after. Now you have decided in which direction the rail needs to be moved, turn the track over and gently remove the metal rail.

With your sharp pointed scalpel just cut a few millimetres extra "slot" in the existing rubber track tab slots in the direction you need to move the metal rail to.

Buy the right tools

Refit the metal rail, this time making sure one edge has just that half a millimetre overhang and the other end overhangs generously. "Spy up" and mark by scoring the end of the metal rail that needs trimming with your scalpel in exactly the right place. Remove the metal rail for the last time to trim it to the precise length you require. This is simple with the right tool. I used a Minicraft miniature electric drill with a variable speed mains transformer. Dremel also do a fine looking model too so if you don't have one of these amazingly useful tools yet I would recommend you check them both out, make your choice and pay your money! Either way you are going to need one to be able to make the precision cut you desire to trim the metal rails to their final size. A junior hacksaw blade will just not give you the fine, non distorted square cut that you require.

You need to use the small thin fibre cutting disc that mounts on an arbour. The disc and arbour usually come as supplied accessories when you buy the drill kit. As discs break / wear out you can buy a replacement tube of them that will last you ages. Once you have one of these tools you will wonder how you ever did without it! You will also need it later when it comes to polishing the small metal track connector tabs.

PUT ON YOUR SAFETY GLASSES!

These little discs will definitely shatter at some point and you really don't want to end up in casualty with fibre disc pieces embedded in an

eye because of a piece of Scalextric track! The disc will cut through the metal rail like butter. If it should leave a slight burr just remove it with a fine flat file or even a metal nail file. Before you fit the rail for the final time you need to clean and polish a small metal track connector tab. This is really simple with the small drill. Use a hard felt polishing disc mounted on an arbour. Hold the tab in your smooth jaw fine nosed pliers, as you don't want to mark the connecting tab in any way, and smear it with some metal polish or chrome cleaner. Apply the metal polishing felt quite firmly and the metal tab will be polished and clean up like magic! Continue until all of the tab is uniformly cleaned and polished. Without touching the metal tab with your hand (to avoid contamination with any perspiration) brush on a little WD40 and locate the tab in its slot at the end of the rubber track.

One final check - take a look at the inside face where it will be making electrical continuity contact with the metal connecting tab. If there is any hint of corrosion / dullness at this point, abrade it with your 3M non metallic scouring material. Once this is clean and bright get some "Copper Ease". This is available in tubes from any good car accessory shop. It is an anti-seize (copper paste) product and also, because it's copper, a superb electrical conductor. Just smear a tiny amount on the inside face of the metal rail, just where the tab will contact the rail, with a toothpick. Used here, the Copper Ease ensures perfect electrical conductivity and continuity whilst guaranteeing it will stay that way over time as corrosion/ degradation cannot build up at this particularly critical point.

Final assembly

Now you are ready for the final fixing of the metal rail. With the slot of the section of rubber track you are working on overhanging the edge of your worktop, push the tabs of the metal rail through the slots in the base of the rubber track and locate the metal rail snugly into the track surface. Be careful that the metal track connecting tab stays upright in the correct location otherwise you could end up distorting your newly restored metal rail as you lower it into its final resting place! Check that you have the very slight half millimetre or so projection of the metal rail nice and evenly at both ends, then turn the track over. Be sure you are working on a solid, level worktop or you could slip up on this last vital re-assembly step.

Hold the track firmly down onto the worksurface to keep the metal rail in the track groove under pressure. I used a 3mm bladed screwdriver to bend back the delicate track rail tabs into their final position. Start with the middle tabs and work outwards towards the track ends not forgetting to continually hold the track down quite hard to the worksurface to maintain pressure and ensure a tight and even bedding down of the metal rail into its groove in the rubber track. This is critical to ensure you get the most even surface possible when you come to actually run the cars. Don't forget that the end tabs bend in the opposite way to the other tabs which bend onto little rubber platforms moulded as part of the track. Once you have all the refurbished metal rails and track correctly reassembled it is time to give the whole job a "concours finish". Time taken for this stage 40 minutes. ■

New product news

FROM RUSSELL SHELDON

Slot.it® universal chassis

Slot.it's range of superb upgrade equipment for Fly, Ninco, Scalextric, ProSlot, etc., home-set cars are already well-known and have raised the bar for the manufacturers even higher. We all know that Slot.it's ProAxle system is an essential replacement if you want your car to run smoothly!

Their V12/2 29,000 rpm and Boxer motors are already legendary, having added the Italian Championships to their long list of titles this past weekend, taking the top ten places!

The great news is that Maurizio Ferrari announced at the Italian Championships that a new universal Slot.it chassis will be soon be available!

With the new chassis, home-set enthusiasts can use Fly, Ninco, Scalextric and other manufacturers bodies, or motorise static kits, or even use resin or vacuum formed bodies. Combined with Slot.it's high quality running gear, including a new guide flag which is soon to be released, anyone will have the ability to assemble a scale model racing car which will have exceptional performance. For a preview of the prototypes of the inline and sidewinder chassis, see:

http://briefcase.yahoo.com/bc/russell_sheldon

The chassis will be fully adjustable, to suit almost all 1/32nd scale bodies:

- * Adjustable wheelbase, 72mm to 89mm through a simple screw lock mechanism.

- * Adjustable distance between guide pivot and front axle, 14.5mm or 18mm.

- * The front wheels can be mounted in one of two different positions.

- * Adjustable width: 64-62-59-57mm. Also, using one of the two different available ProAxle wheels, width can be changed further.

- * Either inline or sidewinder motor mounting location.

- * Universal body mounting through screws or side locks: fits most plastic bodies with ease.

- * Compatible with all Slot.it ProAxle parts.

- * Guides for plastic or wooden tracks will be available.

- * Innovative rear-axle bushing system.

MAXI-MODELS McLaren M6

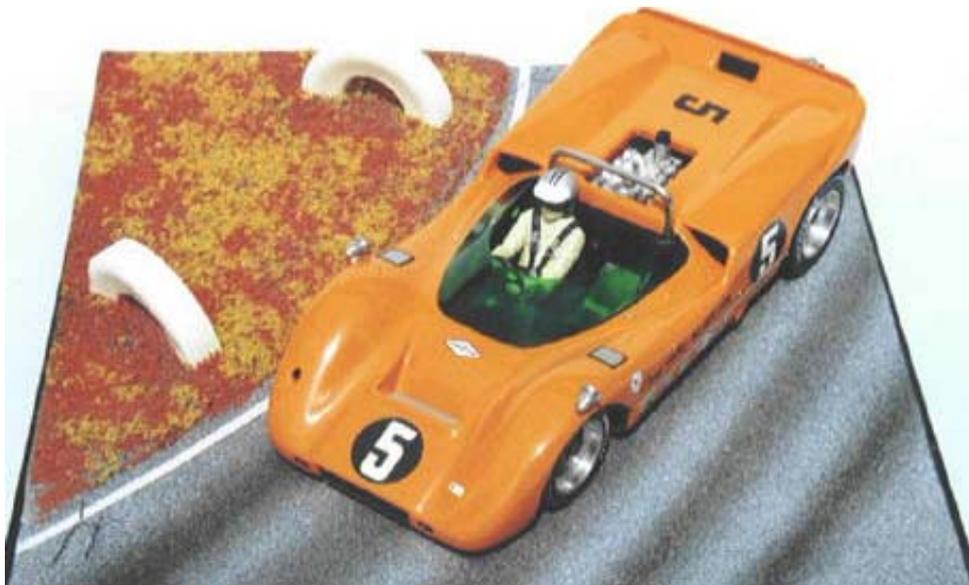
Also soon to be available is the new 1/32nd scale Maxi-Models McLaren M6. This superb first car from Maxi-Models will be available as both a kit and ready-built. The kit is described as Multi-Media, as it contains many materials and also an exclusive CD-ROM with racing soundtrack!

It will have a polyurethane resin body ready painted and finished, white metal castings, turned aluminium wheels, etched stainless steel detail components, vac-formed tinted screen, synthetic rubber tyres, Mabuchi motor, waterslide decals and a fully illustrated instruction sheet. Total 80 parts plus MRE decals, a diorama display base representing Laguna Seca, clear styrene cover, exclusive CD-ROM with authentic big V8 racing sounds with a 90 second lap time! Everything except the display base is included in the kit, but you do have to paint the detail items like the driver. Two heads with different helmets and choice of race



numbers allows you to build it as either Bruce or Denny. Designed to be simple even for a novice builder, and the ready finished body has polished paintwork in the correct colour.

Due to be available during July the maximum production will be 300 cars, 225 as kits and 75 as RTR models on demand. Price expected to be around £100 Kit and £200 built. All versions include the display diorama and CD. According to Gary Cannell of MRE, this model is probably the finest detailed slot car he has ever seen; better than a lot of



collectors' resin models but fully working and raceable. Serious customers are advised to place orders early, you WILL want to own one ! ■

Front end musings

BY TONY SECCHI

On examining Scalextric's latest innovation, the Cadillac Northstar LMP, I was impressed by the many original ideas incorporated into this model - the removable rear body section giving access to the engine and final drive (like the real car) - the variable magnet position - the new guide blade/pick up configuration and the divided front stub axles (this last idea taken from the 'Fly' range of models).

It set me thinking of a slight drawback to this system which affects some enclosed bodied cars incorporating these axles. It is the old enemy resistance which can, in the worst cases, chop off a fair amount of your top speed.

If you have a sluggish car just try running it with the front tyres removed - the increase in straight-line speed and cornering stability may surprise you. Of course, cars will even run perfectly well without any front wheels at all, but that is not pertinent to my case.

In my old days many slot cars ran on the pick up braids with front wheels intermittently touching the track. These days models are more authentic and reflect the lower front-end stance of real cars. Very few of these real cars lean on cornering in race trim so that consequently the running tolerances between the wheel and the arch can be at a minimum.

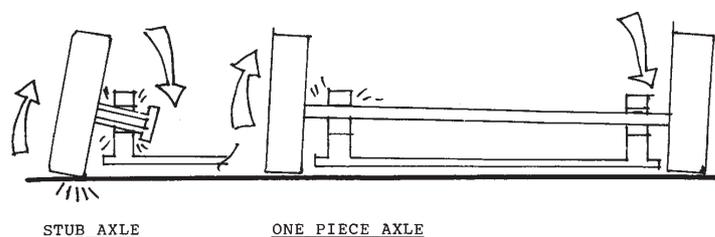
However, in the model world cars can and do 'lean' especially if you run with loose chassis to body connection to give a modicum of 'suspension'. Obviously, the axles and wheels are there to give the car front end stability and overall authenticity, although some old American models I have seen, and especially the Spanish Lexan bodied SRS1 models, had very out of scale, unauthentic, tiny front wheels with tyres of very small aspect ratio.

Anyway, if you are still in doubt about your car's stable performance, check out the front tyres and arches. You may find tell tale wear of the tyres and rubber dust coating the inside of the arch. This is a sure sign that your car's speed

is being compromised in this area. As previously stated, in today's quest for authenticity, the current range of modern enclosed wheeled bodied cars are lower and the front wheel to arch tolerance is less. This means that the vertical travel of the front axle is reduced, especially with the divided stub type.

As also previously stated, my understanding is that the front wheels should aid stability on bends allowing the car to 'lean' or 'rock' slightly; but if this happens on a contemporary model the above mentioned wear and resistance can occur, even on the straights. The solution to this problem that we employ on my home track is to fit smaller front wheels, or if your club rules do not permit this, smaller diameter front tyres to the existing wheels.

Pink Kar do 17mm overall diameter thin tyres that fit most fronts. We have, and still are, using them very effectively. This tweak gives the required stability and reduces the evil resistance to a minimum. You can also replace the stub axles with the old fashioned one piece item. This can reduce the angle of rise of the front wheel when cornering, which because of its more monolithic assembly pivots at the axle mount on the other side of the car not to the rear of the stub axle mount on the same side. (See diagram). On some of our more difficult cars, both the one-piece axle and the smaller diameter tyres are used.



As we can all see, in the real car racing world the current 'go-kart' adaptation of very low suspension travel has been reflected in the authentic model car copies made today. The low ground clearance and the three-quarter circular wheel arches on enclosed bodied cars virtually

girding the tyres means that in some cases front end flexibility has been severely compromised.

This compromise can not only affect resistance, but also the vital connection between pick ups and slot, and if that does not function correctly you ain't goin' nowhere nohow. Hand made circuits without many joints (or with smooth ones) can alleviate this somewhat, but track section assembled circuits like ours do accentuate this condition. If your club rules do

not allow magnatraction the use of ballast weight at the front end can give you a car with very little or no front axle movement, and that in the long run can spell trouble. As stated at the beginning of this article, the foregoing does not apply to all stub axle cars, most work very well straight out of the box, but if you do find one that is mystifyingly slow then hopefully what I have outlined herewith can go some way to obviate that. ■

BITS AND PIECES

Charity proxy race

Here's a chance to participate in an international 1/32nd scale slot car event, without having to travel!

The second Marconi Charity Proxy Race - which is being held on a purpose-built track at Buena Park Raceway, California, on the 10th of September 2001 - enables you to compare your slot car building and modelling skills with those of other enthusiasts, while you leave the driving to someone else!

The proxy drivers will include current and past US National Champions, including the legendary John "The Jet" Cukras and multiple USRA and USSCA National Champion, Greg Gilbert.

The track for this year's event, a six-lane routed track with Magnatech braid and an epoxy painted surface, is being specially built by Monty Ohren of "Best of the West".

The classes being raced are:

Class A: USRRC and Can-Am cars from 1961 to 1974

Class B1: Indianapolis and Formula One cars from 1935 to 1966

Class B2: Indianapolis and Formula One cars from 1967 to 2001

Class C: FIA sports-racing cars and GT cars from 1970 to 2000

All entry fees are being donated to the Marconi Foundation for Disadvantaged Kids. Last year's event raised \$1,200. The Marconi Foundation also maintains a fantastic motor

racing museum in Tustin, California, which was the venue for last year's race; well worth visiting on your next trip to the USA!

Details of the types of cars entered for this type of racing can be seen on my amateur website at:

http://www.geocities.com/russell_sheldon/

Russell Sheldon

Hornby Hobbies stay on track

Hornby shares jumped 15% to 155p after revealing a 24% rise in full year profits to £1.5m in spite of a fourfold increase in restructuring costs.

Chief Executive Frank Martin stated that three years of restructuring are now complete, with manufacturing fully outsourced to China. Although the reduction in costs has been minimal, the quality has improved, which has led to an increasing number of adult customers.

Daily Telegraph 14/6/2001

Want to be on daytime TV?

Do you live in Yorks, Humberside, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire or Notts?

The YTV programme "Family Values" is looking for people who have unusual hobbies or obsessions whose family think they take it all a bit too far. They ask them how they got into their hobby and whether it has taken over their life. Interested? Then contact Jo Maris on 0113 2228713.