



No.242 MAY 2002

BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY

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The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

🎛️ Dream, Dream, Dream 🎛️

It would seem I maligned Hornby Hobbies last month when I suggested that they should fit removable nose cones to their current F1 cars. I have been informed that the new Williams and McLaren do, in fact, have that very thing. Perhaps I should have listened more closely at Ramsgate last September when Mike Walters was proudly demonstrating his prototypes. I will now write out 100 times: "I must pay attention in class!"

However, it would appear that the quest for realism has been taken one step further by Scalextric; I have discovered that my "David" version of the new McLaren is consistently two tenths of a second slower than the "Mika" version! At first I thought that this was due to slight differences in the motors but, when I swapped the drivers, there was a sudden drop in performance of the previously dominant car. I await the release of the Kimi Raikkonen version with interest!

If this trend continues we shall have to be careful which cars we buy; should Scalextric ever bring out another Ferrari I would strongly advise you to avoid the Rubens Barrichello version as it will hardly ever complete a lap without expiring in a cloud of smoke. Moreover, in the unlikely event that it looks like winning a race, it will inexplicably move over and let the Schumacher version through into the lead.

With FLY about to take one step further by producing a car with working suspension, adjustable roll bar and rear wing it is surely only a matter of time before we cross the final frontier - real engine sounds.....

And Finally - "Dear Santa, I would like a Scalextric BRM V16. It should, of course, arrive at the grid after everyone else has started the race; take fifteen minutes to start; produce the most wonderful engine noise in the known Universe; last three laps before starting to misfire and then expire spectacularly in front of the pits, showering the spectators with tiny pieces of 1/32 scale piston!"

Till next month

Brian

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

FACTORY FOCUS

Hornby Hobbies have heard your requests for improved availability of spare parts for cars. Not since the mid-1960s have Scalextric ventured in to selling each individual part of a car.

Here they go again, another milestone to go along with last months! The new range of Sport Formula 1 cars will have an almost complete range of spare parts available. This includes the front and rear wings - probably the most commonly asked items - as well as all the running gear, suspension, cockpit detail, etc. Every part except the main body (2 pieces for the Williams and McLaren); a welcome return, I think. The spare parts range will cover the 'Sport' range of cars only. This means that if you have purchased a standard car, you will be able to buy the components you desire to upgrade the car to your own specification. Why did Hornby decide to do this? Because they listened to requests from Scalextric enthusiasts. There you are, it does pay to write in with suggestions! Now you can run the Spanish F1 GP. and have all those spare wing assemblies ready to pop straight back on the car.

A bit scary.

By the way, if any of you were wondering what 'Schuey' was saying whilst he was having his Sunday afternoon drive in the Spanish GP, go to www.ukslotcars.co.uk website and then to the Viking club site and check out the Ferrari 'sanity test'!

A bigger bit.

A new boxed set is available in Toys-R-Us. Set C1088 is a Mercedes touring car set with a pair of Mercedes C-Klasse DTM cars. These are the old blacked-out window cars from a

couple of years ago which have since departed from the catalogue range. The lightweight cars are fitted with silver F1 front hubs as fitted to Ayrton Senna Williams car. One car is black (C2438W) and the other silver (C2439W) and both sport a large Mercedes insignia across the body with little other decoration, the imagery hinting at the Mercedes McLaren race livery. Thanks to Rob Smith for spotting this one.



Digital bits.

Scalextric RMS System - Computer controlled race program - and more! Due for release later this year, the bold venture in to the I.T. arena marks another milestone in the Scalextric product range family tree. I was invited to the factory for a demonstration and review of the RMS system.

The RMS system, with its funky graphics, voice sound-bites, movies, track planning, driver and car listing is primarily aimed at the home-racer and may also be used quite easily by the club racer. The race heat management with its qualifying and practice modes is a piece of cake to use. The system is easy to operate with the bonus that you don't need to do anything but →→

select 'Race' if you just want to get straight into a duel with your opponents. The big deal is that we now have the basis for enthusiasts around the World to speak the same language (so to speak) in being able to communicate between each other using RMS. More of this later.

The software's functionality is excellent and well thought out. Although there are many different ways of holding races using other software or manual methods, all of which are perfectly valid, the RMS system simply gives you another easy to use choice. Straight races or more involved heats with qualifying on up to six lanes is possible. A championship of twelve drivers, on six lanes can be set up. It is possible to also run, say, five heats with just two lanes and two drivers for a 'Best of Three!' challenge. You don't have to work out the heats, it's all done for you. The possibilities are endless. The race heats can be edited to include the driver's name and the car that is used. They can be run in any order you choose and when all is done you can even save the data to disk and upload the data to your friends computer to continue the championship on a different circuit.

Pit stops are an excellent feature of the software where the driver is warned that he needs to bring the car in to the pits on the next lap for refuelling. A nice on-screen graphic of the refuelling takes place whilst you are in the pits followed by an audible alarm to send you on your way. A penalty lap will be automatically added if the driver pulls out of the pit too soon!

Although the RMS software is aimed at the home-racer it is possible that some clubs could utilise it. I suspect it will be used by some clubs looking for an easy entry-level option to serious club racing.

Back to 'speaking the same language' and a new dimension! The enthusiast can use RMS to select a specific track, perhaps a specific car, run their best practice/qualifying heat or a race, then save it to disk. The racer can then email the results files to their friend in Outer Mongolia so that their friend can upload the files and run their heats! This way, two people can run time trials against each other, on the same track and with the same car type. Who knows, maybe this

can be used as the basis of a virtual global challenge to find the best drivers on a pre-specified circuit and car! Perhaps then, the top twenty drivers can be brought together to hold the grand finale on the same circuit that all the drivers have practised on, all with the same pre-specified car. An easy way to hold a worldwide competition.

Would it work? Well, only if you promise not to keep running a guide blade through the sensor to 'record' lap times of 0.001 seconds! I'm sure Scalextric school-kids will be emailing their results files to each other, swapping information and even holding virtual racing sessions. It may not seem at all viable to you or me but PC literate enthusiasts nearly always find an alternative way of using software other than that envisaged by the programmer! Trans-global racing: fact or fantasy? ■

Brief guide to - Drivers' heads

BY FEEL ETGOOD

A common misconception by most Scalextric collectors who look at the "big headed" Lotuses and Vanwalls is to think these are the oldest Scalextric drivers, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The originals were far more realistic and detailed than people give them credit for:- the first drivers were made of rubber and came in two sizes to fit the original tinplate cars. The realism was perhaps unintended, as the drivers were missing both their forearms and feet below the ankles, presumably as a result of persistent crashes which abounded during this era:-upon rolling the Maserati/Ferrari, the rubber driver would realistically be separated from the car, get hurled across the grass verges and bounce over hay bales into the spectator area. The hapless racer would invariably then have to reunite driver and car in the First Aid Hut, whilst shouting: "Dad, quick, quick! She's catching up!".

The advent of plastic cars and the setting up of production across the channel gave rise to the "big head" drivers. An unfortunate mix up between inches and centimetres resulted in drivers heads being the scale equivalent of one foot across, but as everyone thought it was faithfully modelled on Alain Prost, the manifest error went unnoticed for many years. In reality, when correctly scaled, the heads were still 3cms too small to match the little Frenchman's boundless humility. Still available separately from the fan club, they come mint bagged as "W712 Têtes de pilotes grandes". (A quick glance shows that these cars are in fact all labelled as being 1/30 scale anyway.)

The next memorable contribution is that of the vintage drivers:- Bentley, Bugatti and Auto Union. It is little known that the original C71 Auto Union 1936 had a completely different driver figure:- similar to the Bugatti and Bentley mannequins, the main difference observable was rather than having a bent right arm over the steering wheel, the Auto Union pilot had an extended right arm pointing upwards at 45

degrees. Presumably the additional tooling costs were not justified and this never reached production.

Another great relic which seldom circulates at swapmeets is the original "F301a Drivers and Mechanics". Aptly named, this elegant boxed set is modelled on the Ferrari pit crew and contains one smug driver (punching the air) and thirty visibly animated red suited individuals. The set needed this many mechanics to capture the wide range of hand gestures observable weekly at race weekends. As an aside, the even rarer F301b was modelled on the Minardi pit. Painted black all over, this contains one standing driver with head in hands and thirty mechanics all with hands on hips or pointing sideways at each other as if saying: "It was his fault!". Both sets were withdrawn quickly as they were uneconomical to produce. Despite this, F301a sold well in Germany.

Like the Grande Bridge, the tooling now moved over to Spain and Mexico where tiny local variations are to be observed:- the Mexican driver has a distinct moustache. Whether this is simply poor quality control in the selection of the plastic or added realism has been argued over endlessly and I won't further add to the debate, but it helps to consider this when looking to see whether a Mexican car has been 'doctored' to bring it up to 'mint' condition.

The 1980s saw a drive for more realistic driver figures in the F1 cars - i.e. ones where the racing driver has no peripheral vision. This was by design, as by now the yellow helmet in the C423 Lotus was actively barging cars off the track left, right and centre, a feat equalled only by the 1995 and 1997 releases of the Benetton and Ferrari models respectively, faithfully showing the driver's steering on full lock to the right during the last rounds of those respective championships.

Part two will cover the Power Rangers and Hornby's greatest ever challenge:- the complex moulding of the turtle heads.

Feel Etgood will return. ■

Westcountry rambles

BY VINE FENNEL

Easy this article writing isn't it? Just reprint a previous one! Following on from last month, here is the second instalment of the GQ article of 1992.

"Quite plainly, this is not child's play. Hornby's Simon Kohler may tell you about the school in Stoke-on-Trent for children with learning difficulties where Scalextric is used to develop eye/mind/hand co-ordination. He'll also mention the headmaster who's written to him with the commercially blissful suggestion that it should be put on the national curriculum because it teaches kids about kinetic energy. ("Do you know why that car came off? 'Going too fast, sir.'") But to refine Scalextric's first principles to their full competitive potential - and for its clientele's disposable income to be seduced at source - takes grown-ups. Kohler seems not to have considered targeting the affluent middle-aged baby-boomers who, growing up from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties, constituted Scalextric's market at its zenith.

For such men, if Scalextric is to be bought for the kids, it is emphatically not to be wasted on them. Twenty quid squeezed out of the piggy bank for a new Mercedes C9 is no way to buy Scalextric. Like full-size sports car racing or Formula One, it needs big money to do the job properly: not pocket money but plastic money. The seriously acquisitive adult, indeed, cannot afford to play around. To invest in an institution of 30 years' standing which has changed hardly at all in its essentials, but incessantly and with glorious intricacy in its models and accessories: this might require hundreds of pounds - for a single car. Like the Dinky die-cast, Scalextric has now become extremely collectable.

Usually, the most collectable cars represent Scalextric's least successful and shortest-lived concessions to fads and gimmickry. The Porsche 911, twelve years in production since its launch in 1979, is not collectable; the James Bond boxed set, however, which over-complicated the basic racing appeal with ejector seats on the Aston Martin, and a Mercedes 190SL coupe that hit a

trigger in the track and rolled its baddies over, never sold well and now go for £600 (editor's brackets - I wish!) if you can find them.

Go further back, and Scalextric collectables memorialize the product's infancy: no one seems to hoard sections of the old track, but a "gimbal wheel" to run along the slot instead of today's braided pick-up means original Minimodels. Similarly, if a car is not plastic-moulded but tinsplate, like its Scalex predecessors, it must have been made before 1960.

Cast further afield, and models made under licence abroad cause a frisson when one finds its way over here. A red Sierra Cosworth rally car with a "Fletcher Steel" advertising logo along the offside front wing is Margate bog-standard; the substitution of "Palmer Tube Mills" means Australian - one teeny transfer decal hiking the price to a premium. Rarest of all, the model every collector covets, is the Bugatti Type 59; out of a mere 600 produced, a handful survive today, and change hands for four figures.

"It's like having Airfix models that do something," says BMW's Scott Brownlee, whose collection runs to some 70 cars - though your fastidious National Scalextric Collector's Club members, of course, would as soon risk an original front-wheel drive Mini Cooper on a layout as you'd uncork and quaff a priceless wine. "There are two camps," explains Richard Bremner, deputy editor of Car magazine (200-strong collection). "There are the racers, and then there are people like me, who amass large numbers of the things and put them away in dark cupboards."

"In one of the collectors' magazines," recalls Brownlee, "there was a Spanish-made Formula One Ligier from 1979 going for £60. When it arrived the pleasure was taking it out of the box and being very delicate with it. I realised," he confesses, "I was far too frightened to put it on the track..." A friend of his, he adds, even has six Formula One Marches, identical models, not only never taken out of their boxes but still hermetically sealed together in their

factory shrink-wrap. "He could never cut that plastic, because then they wouldn't be special..."

Ageing visibly before such anal-retentive pathology, Hornby's Simon Kohler is far more persuaded by the commercial advantages of putting lights in cars because kids love racing them in the dark; (My brackets - they go out when you need them though - in the corners!) of Magnatraction, an under-chassis magnet to assist incompetent drivers by holding the car solidly on the track; (My brackets - see Rambles - Feb 2002) of enabling an Escort XR3i to negotiate banked curves by tipping it so far back on its pick-up that its front wheels dangle high off the ground - exquisitely offensive to serious adult racers; and of the Scalextric Nigel Mansell continuing to drive a Williams-Honda, even though he last drove one in 1987 and won the 1992 World Championship in a Williams-Renault. (Kohler's rationale? Well, the Williams-Honda still sells in Hamley's.) Indeed, "because I'm a bit perverse, me", Kohler has been known arbitrarily to release a few hundred red versions of a vintage blue Bentley, (?) or the "Demon Tweaks" BMW M3 with its roof logo round the wrong way, just in order to give the car collecting fraternity orgasmic heart failure.

There's no Magnatraction at Quorn, of course, or at St Mark's Church Hall in Wood Green, North London, where the London Scalextric Club meets. The idea of such craven, robotic adhesion only makes Steve Carter nostalgic for old-style motor racing, when Fangio used to powerslide a 600 horsepower Mercedes round Donington. "Massive sixteen-litre engines, pipes out the back, huge great steering wheel like on a bus," says Carter, "and there was the thrill of seeing someone wrestling a car to stay on the track when it's wanting to be somewhere off it - it was much more of an art in those days. Nowadays, it has lost some charisma - you watch someone like Nigel Mansell and it's like he's got Magnatraction..."

Scalextric racers such as Carter are after that hallowed artistry - and in any case, they have far more charismatic ways of improving handling than a dumb magnet. The London

Club's rules list 32 permissible means of "fettling" a car; visit its "Thundersports Class" evening for its fastest cars - scale average speeds of 200mph, so this is quicker than the real thing - and you're at the cutting edge of Scalextric technology.

For the next round, a dirty white, oddly tatty sports car is squatting on the grid and its driver mounts the dais, a cumbersome contraption like a wooden water pistol in his hand. "Drivers, watch the lights" - and Derek Moore's Aston Martin Nimrod skates away from the field, is already devouring the back straight in a single teetering hover, and wins the three-and-a-half-minute race by scale miles. Hardly surprising, since Moore, with eighteen years' electronics experience fault-finding for British Telecom, has equipped his home-built hand throttle with alternative rheostats for different acceleration options and an independent power-braking system, has fitted powerful cobalt magnets in the car's motor, substituted a high-performance Parma armature, ball-raced the engine at both ends, all in scale with its two-millimetre drive shaft, "played around with the timing to give it more torque, less speed - but I wasn't using the speed anyway, and I was getting a power surge at the end of the straight just before I needed to brake," modified the rear axle gearing, and then put a paper-light, hand-crafted Lexan body on the thing. To make this electric dragonfly stay on the track, Moore has also glued four Formula One tyres together in two pairs to give him double-width on the back - and then built out the wheelarches, enabling him to stay within the club's 3mm wheel clearance regulations.

"Hornby think this is a toy," says Moore - like all Scalextric racers, his quizzical tone knows exactly the limits of its own seriousness - "we say it's a sport." Adult motor racing, then, in all its technological intricacy - to a scale you can fit in your living room. At last, surely, we have literalised its metaphoric appeal. And discovered why Fred Francis really invented it? "Wasn't the slightest bit interested," he declares. "Back then, motor racing cars were all so badly designed you could have got a Ford Zephyr to go faster." ■

BITS AND PIECES

It's a boy!

Mark and Julie Scale are pleased to announce the birth of Samuel Harry John Scale on the 17th April 2002 and would like to thank every one for all their good wishes.

Scalex car

Many thanks for all the offers of the loan of a Scalex car for my forthcoming talk on the history of Scalextric. There were too many replies for me to acknowledge individually but it is now sorted and the next problem is actually preparing the presentation. I don't suppose anyone would like to write it for me?!!

Garage needed

ITV recently ran a competition to win a Williams FW20 show car and the lucky winner was Dave Yerbury's brother. Unfortunately he doesn't have a garage to put it in! Both Dave and myself have offered to take it off his hands for a tenner but, for some strange reason, he has declined - I hope his wife doesn't mind moving out of the dining room!

Where's my article?

Several of you may be wondering why your contribution has not appeared in the Journal yet. The reason is simple - for once I am in the luxurious position of receiving more articles than I have room for! The situation has not been helped by the fact that I have a heavy cold at the moment and have only had time to produce a 40 page issue this month; it is quite difficult to do this job when you are sneezing all over the keyboard!

Normal service should be resumed next month so please be patient; as always, I promise to publish everything eventually so do keep sending them in.

Ken Elston home circuit

You may also have noticed that part 5 of Ken's series about "Silver Hatch" has yet to appear.

This is totally due to incompetence on the editor's part; it is a complicated discussion of Ken's software and I have been struggling to transfer it to print. However, as it may have limited appeal to our less computer minded members I have decided to put it on the website instead.

Please go to: <http://www.nsc.co.uk/elston.htm> for full details.

Wacky racers

Those of you who attended last year's Hornby/Ramsgate weekend will no doubt recall seeing the wonderful array of modified slot-cars produced by Tigger. An example is reproduced below - it may look weird but what else can you do with a Metro apart from throw it in the bin!



★ May prize winner ★

The winner of this month's prize car - the last of the Scalextric "Motor Show" Ferraris - is Feel Etgood (aka Marek Hermaszewski) for his piece on drivers' heads. He wins partly for making me laugh, but mostly for being rude about Alain Prost!

Unfortunately I have run out of prize cars for the time being, but I would like to continue offering this incentive so I would be pleased to hear from any manufacturers, distributors or dealers who would like to become involved.



Dear Brian,

As this is the first time I have sent anything into the journal, I would like to thank you and all the regular contributors for a job well done.

I used to race Scalextric etc. at the Riverside Raceway in the North East, but unfortunately this has now closed down. There is a wooden track in Longbenton, Newcastle, that may be starting up a Scalextric evening shortly. I would be most grateful for any information on other clubs in the north east area as I cannot find any listed on the Internet.

I also thought some of the other readers may be interested to know about a new (to me anyway) Airfix kit I have just purchased. It is only a skill level 2 kit of a Ferrari 250 lm, but more importantly it is in 1/32nd scale. I haven't checked on the quality of the kit yet or how easy it would be convert into a slot-car. I am inexperienced in this although I will be giving it a go. There is also apparently a Porsche in 1/32nd scale although I have no idea which model.

As there are virtually no 1/32nd kits produced now and older ones are becoming rare, I thought this may be a good starting point for beginners.

Keep up the good work,
Simon Baker

.....

Hi Brian,

I am organising 5 fun events over here in the Isle Of Man, raising funds for the RNLI. I have contacted 5 manufacturers for support, and would like to know if a report or 5 would be welcome by the magazine.

Manx Slot Cars (Isle of Man) are providing a four lane Brands Hatch Circuit slot-car layout to help raise funds for the RNLI at Port Erin and Port St. Mary Open days, and probably also Douglas, Ramsey and Peel Lifeboat stations, to be confirmed. The Manx Slot Car Club are organising an event at the Tynwald Day Festivities in July.

Prizes have been kindly donated by Monarch Lines, Hornby Hobbies, Nic Picot of Slot32 UK and Manx slot-cars. If anybody wishes to help please contact me at chris@manxslotcars.com.

Regards,
Tigger

Dear Slot-Car Racers,

I am writing to your club concerning an upcoming television programme that Carlton are working on called *Short Circuits*. We are making this programme under commission from the *Discovery Home and Leisure* channel.

The series is based on slot-car racing. Racing will take place on *Scalextric's* new "Sport" track. We are looking for teams of slot-car racers from around the country to compete on miniature interpretations of existing racetracks over a ten-part series culminating in a grand finale with trophies, champagne, a special prize, and all the trimmings! We plan to give the show a contemporary and lively feel, as each week our overall-clad competitors will battle it out on a different world-renowned circuit showcasing many types of motor sport.

In order to spice up the look of circuits we have also decided to recreate the real environments of these renowned tracks at scale level, including some of the scenery, buildings and features unique to each one. We have a scenic artist on board who will be creating dioramas whilst **Jon Sword**, who you may know from the **SRA** (Slot Racing Accessories), will be tackling the modelling tasks and demonstrating to the audience how similar decoration of circuits may be attained at home.

Whilst we are keen to demonstrate good racing skills and competitive spirit in each of our shows we would also like the emphasis of our series to be on the *fun* involved in racing, rather than the intricacies of car modification. For these races, standard cars will be used on our "sport" track and adaptations to cars will be strictly limited and supervised by the aforementioned Jon Sword who will take the chief marshal's role of checking and weighing each car. This racing will be designed to look fun and be fun, and promote and celebrate the hobby of slot-car racing rather than act as a replacement for any national or international tournament, or club races. Any differences in the performance of these mass manufactured cars will be viewed as "luck of the draw" and the racing rules will be adapted to suit this requirement, rather than the using rules applied in club racing.

The ten-week competition will commence with 6 heats containing 6 competitors each, these 6 being made up of 3 teams of two. This means that we are initially looking for 18 **teams of 2** from around the country. From each of these heats the first three place winners will qualify and proceed to 3 semi-finals. From these the first two places from each will proceed to the trophy-filled final programme!

We are looking for a variety of teams who represent a large sector of society; therefore all keen racers with a sense of fun are welcome to apply. Our **approximate** filming period will extend from the 20th May to 20th June and any competitors involved will need to be able to travel to Plymouth, where filming will take place, for one day plus an overnight stay each time (if more than once) that they compete. We will provide overnight accommodation, but will not be able to pay travel expenses in view of the numbers involved. If you would like to apply or require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact us. Places are limited so please reply hastily if you wish to take part.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Hawkes

Production Junior

Daft Idea Animal strikes again! Anyone interested should contact Jo at:

Carlton Broadcasting

Western Wood Way, Langage Science Park, Plymouth PL7 5BQ

Email Jo.Hawkes@carlton.tv Tel 01752 333009 Fax 01752 333074

Alternatively phone Jon Sword on 07949 656577.



50256 Porsche 911 Rally

BY JON SWORD

I received the above new model from our editor to track test and review. The car came as a little surprise to me as I was not really aware that the 911 was ever rallied. But a quick glance at the drivers' names on the windows reveals a Germanic connection. I still run an SCX 959 in 4WD so I was very interested to put this car through its paces.

The model is bright and eye catching in its yellow Pirelli livery and looks solid and impressive. It is a band driven 4WD and NC 2-powered car that offers no frills and little in the way of extra details. No windscreen wipers to break off and end up on the floor! The wheels are large which has a direct effect on the speed and handling of any slot car and the two exhausts contact the body making it difficult to run the car loose. The tyres are hard and do grip well on Ninco track. They need to be hard to survive a race night as the track really does tear away at the tyres.

Test conditions

The test conditions for this review were to take the car around the Phoenix Club circuit and run the car against the favoured usual suspects. The circuit is Ninco and 140 feet in length and six lanes. No set of curves is the same and there is



also the infamous 'Bus Stop' feature to negotiate. Being a Ninco car on Ninco track would appear to be a good combination but in my experience all Ninco cars go better on Scalextric Plexi.

I ran the car still fitted with its magnet straight from the box without any modification as the manufacturer intended of course. If you use your cars on a home circuit using this set up then you will be a happy chappie because it does move along well and the power of the motor is tamed by the pull of the magnet. It is easily competitive with other makes, the only restriction in performance being a slight delay in both acceleration and braking due to the rubber band drive. (Sorry but it is a rubber band guys!).

Demagnetised

Having removed the magnet the car behaved very differently as one would expect. Impressive acceleration and top end speed (well surely its a GT car in disguise?) but a real handful on the curves and a nightmare through the twists of the bus stop. The motor is very powerful and the car runs light despite the weight of the motor, de-slotting easily in and out of curves. The rear axle bounces along like a mad man in the woods! (or Richard Welch at a swapmeet!!), with so much power now unrestrained minus the magnet. I got more than enough tail slide and excitement from banging into other cars around the curves but buried the opposition on the long straights.

Improvements?

So what did I do to make the car competitive and run better? To be honest I feel that with some work this model has a lot of potential and already runs better than the Ninco Golf. I ran the motor in without the gear fitted and glued

the motor and axle bearings and chopped off the exhausts to make it roll a little. Fitted Pink Kar skinny tyres to the front wheels and sanded the wheels first followed by the tyres, once refitted. Best of all I removed the rubber tree technology. Having done all that it ran like a GT car so you may ask why? Well in pursuit of finding that edge over your competitors I suppose. So did I achieve that? Well that would be telling wouldn't it?!! ■

Reviewers wanted!

BY THE EDITOR

I have also received a couple more cars from the Hobby Company for review; 50254 BMW V12 'FAT' and 50259 Porsche 911 GT3R 'Interviu'.

Unfortunately they arrived too late for this month's issue so the reviews will appear in June. I have also been promised samples of the Arrows F1 car but they must be selling well already as they appear to be out of stock.

It is my policy to send review cars out to members as I feel that an endless diet of the editor's own prejudices would soon become boring. Therefore, I am looking for more volunteers who would like to join the 'Review Focus Group'! If you would like to be involved, the qualifications needed are:

- A decent track to test them on - doesn't have to be a club track but a figure of eight set is unlikely to be sufficient!

- Timing facilities preferred.

- An ability to write an **objective** review - I am not interested in mindless praise just because the car is free.

- **Most importantly** - you must be able to produce copy on time and at short notice.

If you are interested then please get in touch; I only receive a small number of cars so I can't promise to accommodate everybody. A sample review of a car you already own would help your application and give me some extra copy! ■



SPECIAL OFFER LIMITED EDITION BINDERS



In view of the success of a certain manufacturer with vastly overpriced limited editions you will be pleased to know that I have commissioned some extra binders for sale. The full list, complete with the important 'C' numbers is:

NSCC 1 - Standard binder as page 4 - £5.

NSCC 1L - binder with lights - as standard but complete with a torch for reading your copies of the Journal under the bedclothes - £10.

NSCC 2 - UK special - plain blue with no decoration whatsoever - £20.

NSCC 3 - Belgian special - as above but chrome - £30.

NSCC 4 - Editorial disaster fund - as standard but in fancy box - all profits to editor - £40.

NSCC 5 - Chequered Flag, accident special - as standard but one corner chewed off by Archie the Editorial Cat; even fancier box than NSCC 4 - £100

NSCC 6 - "Pace" binder - as standard but comes with a "Pace" label instead of the year sticker - £700.

NSCC 7 - Committicos Bindericos Scorchio - hideous shade of yellow with picture of chairman on cover - 100 examples issued free to committee but £2000 reserve when auctioned on eBay.

NSCC 8 - binder collection - two standard binders with dates 2001& 2003 plus space to add 2002; absolutely enormous fancy box - £300.

NSCC 9 - Anniversary special celebrating the sale of 100 copies of overpriced old tat - consists of the front half of NSCC 3 and the back half of NSCC 5. Needless to add, it comes complete with an exceedingly fancy box - yours for a cool £10,000.

Also available - the NSCC binder catalogue 2002 - contains pictures of assorted binders from other publications but none of actual NSCC ones. Also contains list of spare parts such as stick on year labels and replacement cords plus upgrade extra strength cords - £20.

Pre-ordering is essential as production is strictly limited to the number that we think the mugs will buy. Hurry! Hurry! These products will just 'FLY' off the shelves! However, if you wait a bit you will probably find them in vast numbers, at knock-down prices, on traders' tables at swapmeets. Enquiries are welcome from dealers but I should point out that the retail price in Spain and Germany will be less than the trade price in England.

All the cars I ever wanted

BY JOHN DILWORTH

Ronnie Scott, of Jazz club fame, had a great line about being able to stop a runaway horse just by betting on it. I have the slot-car equivalent of that gift- I can get a major manufacturer to produce a beautiful model of a classic car by starting to scratchbuild one myself.

Well actually, I usually have to get to the stage of wiping off the third failed paint-job before some immaculate tampon-printed replica appears all-snug inside a box on the model-shop shelf. And by that time, I will have drunk a lot of unhealthy beverages, smeared indelible enamel paint across shirts which my wife claims to have some sentimental importance, ripped several fingernails, and dissolved into tears more than once. The final embarrassment, as a physically full grown man, is bursting into tears again inside the model shop at the sight of rows of shiny Cobras with all their stripes neat, glinting windscreens free of gluey fingerprints, numbers straight, and wheels pointing in the same direction. Not like the shambling mess on my desk at home, which was going to be a unique, precise hand-built replica of an unobtainable and evocative racer.

In order to try and circumvent this painful process, I thought I'd warn the major manufacturers of my future plans, so that they can get busy now. I have long nursed a list of cherished full size racing cars that I just long to see squirreling around my plexitrack in 1/32, which so far are unavailable except through that long and painful process of scratchbuilding. I guess everyone has a wish list of favourite cars that have never made it into Scalextric; it's a great pub conversation gambit. I did try to raise the subject at a sophisticated cocktail party I was mistakenly invited to- someone kindly fetched my coat for me shortly after. Cars get on and off my list for various reasons- personal nostalgia, historical significance, heroic success, failure, or just plain weirdness. However, my usual opening

move is to ask for nominations for 'most beautiful race car ever'. And the corollary of that is that the current crop of sports and F1 cars are actually the ugliest ever. Take any Panoz. Please. As far away as possible. Isn't that the most hideously offensive insult to taste and style that ever burnt rubber? Is that where the guy who designed the back of the Scorpio went after Ford sacked him? A lot of people would say looks are not important in a racer. But me and my mate Colin Chapman would disagree; if it's going to do right it's gotta look right. With all his obsession with weight-saving and engineering brinkmanship, he always managed to wrap everything up in a seriously sexy body. And what about the current run of GP cars, with their disproportioned pointy noses sticking up in the air, and bizarre bits of old fencing sticking out all over the place? I don't know how many slotsters managed to get to the Alfa Romeo exhibition recently at the Science Museum in London, but that, like Goodwood, was a sacred experience for me. The cars were presented as they should be, not just as feats of engineering, but as works of art, from the fab fifties GP cars and the almost mythical 'Disco Volante' to the latest production sports coupe. I spent much of the time there grovelling on my knees. The children do hate being embarrassed in public. A permanent exhibit elsewhere in the museum which my son loves is a McLaren MP whatever that Mika crashed out in. It's only there to show how strong modern synthetic materials are, having survived a high speed blow out. Aesthetics aren't in it. It's just a lean, mean piece of machinery. Which is maybe what twizzles some people's tuners, but it's not enough for me.

Now you know I suffer badly from nostalgia, and there's no cure. I guess one day a whole generation might look back at the 2002 season cars with fond affection, as shapes that have determined their entire aesthetic sensibility. By that time I'm fairly confident I will be pushing→

up daisies, but it will be a very ugly world. The cars, both full size and in miniature, that first grabbed my attention as a child in those halcyon years of the 60s remain the yardstick by which I appreciate form and design in absolutely everything else. A clean, graceful and well resolved line is the same whether it's in the wheel arch of a Ferrari, the span of a bridge, or a Henry Moore sculpture. There, who says Scalextric isn't educational? Anyway, cut to the chase. Here is my personal list of great and beautiful cars which have never been modelled satisfactorily by a decent manufacturer. So SCX, MRRC, TopSlot, Ninco, Scalextric, Maxi-Model etc., get cracking and save an old man a lot of heartache and broken fingernails.

Porsche Carrera 6

This is at the head of my list because of the impact it had on me. I managed to watch bits of the Le Mans race televised in 1966, and saw this formation of spaceships whistling round the track. I'd never seen anything like it. They made the other cars look like props from Doctor Who. That fighter-plane canopy, the low spade-like nose, boxed-in vertically paired headlights; no, it isn't the most beautiful thing ever, and yes, MRRC used to make one, but I love it, and you can't get one now. But I bet if I start to build one they'll re-release it.....

Ferrari 330 P4

This simply IS the most beautiful car ever built. There is no argument. I know Scalextric had a go, but come on, did they do it justice? Be honest. Even by the standards of the time it was released, I thought it was a disappointment; enough to send me off into the realms of scratchbuilding in the first place, in fact. And all those who carp about vac-form bodies, this is one car where the best way to make all that cockpit glass and those lovely big faired in headlamp covers look right, is with a clear vac-form. What a shame no-one seems to offer a good scale replica. There's the open Can-Am version too, which was, if possible, even more gorgeous.

Lotus 49

The most beautiful F1 car ever built. It can't be beyond the wit of modern manufacturers to fit a motor inside that sexy slim body without bulging everything out of proportion, as they've done to most F1 models.

Lotus 40

A really gorgeous beast. Not Colin Chapman's most successful racer, but that curvaceous body shell clung round the chassis like hot pants. And those cool yellow sperex exhausts whacked out of the rear deck remind you that it is a real power sled, not just a pretty shape. I've had to do it the hard way already with a Classic shell, and it's my own favourite slot-car by a long way. Even my wife likes it. But imagine a proper Fly model of it with sidewinder motor, full cockpit detail, and a little Jim Clark stretched out beneath that lovely wraparound screen.

Chapparral 2F

A bit more functional in shape, this car. Pretty boxy and purposeful, but still beautiful and dramatic to look at, especially with the big flapper. Heroic BOAC 500 winner at Brands-why has no-one ever made this one? We've got 2Cs and 2Es, ahh, come on Fly, go on, go on, go on.

Lola T70-Aston Martin Le Mans Coupé

I shouldn't be ungrateful, but I was a little disappointed when Fly announced the Lola MkIII GT. I always liked this earlier model much better; maybe it wasn't such a successful racing car, but the lovely rounded lines of the nose are much prettier than the later version. And the colours- I just love the old British Racing Green with the white Team Surtees arrow on the front deck.

Lola T160

Typical. Just like I said- I've had my Classic resin body in the drawer for a while, and just as I start to plan a chassis and whittle out the wheel arches, Maxi-Models announce it as their next model. I could carry on and save myself a load of money, but it's too galling to know that the kit

will be much better than anything I can do. You need to do proper justice to this musclebound Can-Am car. Those high wings do look fabulous sailing round the further corners of the track- More! More!

Lancia D50

The one with the pannier tanks. I love all the front-engined GP cars, but this one has a powerful compactness and distinctiveness that makes it specially attractive, and would be a sparkler on the slot-track, especially with the beautiful wire wheels that all the manufacturers seem to be able to produce so nicely now. Think of all the other 50s greats to put alongside your MRRC Vanwall and Maserati; BRM P25 (or perhaps a novelty oil-dispensing V16?) Alfa 158, Connaught, Ferrari 156 Dino... And so to;

Mercedes 154

Frankly, because it's so phallic, I suppose. But the beauty is all in that super long profile, the silver colour and the lovely shaped radiator grill up front. Lovely to drive round the track with that long tail thrashing about across several lanes in (un)controlled slides and smashing your mate's precious Auto Union to bits.

Harvey Aluminium Special Indy car.

It looked endearingly like a squashed toad, but there used to be whole grids of them entered in F1 slot races years ago, because you could get a full plumber batpan anglewinder iso-fulcrum brass sheet and piano wire(?) chassis underneath it. I just loved the shape, but the real one turns out to have been the most reviled, unsuccessful and plain lethal machine ever to have hit the brickyard. And several other cars in a notorious multiple pile-up, apparently. So three slightly guarded cheers for the killer toad, then.

Lotus 11

O.K. another Lotus; but what a rocket ship! Another car that must have looked like science fiction when it first raced. There's something I like about those spats almost completely covering the wheels, like the Cooper Monaco, or the Lotus 19, or the later LeMans Jags. And it's

small; hard to build and tricky to handle on the track, but easy overtaking and good fun! By the way, after all those garish gimmicky chrome plated limited editions, here's one car that really ran in shiny polished metal finish- to save the weight of the paint I believe- how cool is that?

McLaren M8A

Of course. What better to go with the Maxi-Models M6A? Pure nostalgia for my old days at Southall, Southend and Tottenham Model Raceways, with whole startlines composed of fluorescent painted Maccas. The short wheel-base made them a bit twitchy in 1/32nd, so sports classes in the smaller scale were dominated by hideous Ford Mach IIs at that time. But now, with Fly Porsche 917s setting the pace, we get to see some proper mini-big banger racing.

On and on. I could plead for an Alfa T33, Graham Hill's Indy Red Ball special Lola, Autocoast Ti 33, Shelby Cobra Coupe, almost any Ferrari F1 before 1982, anything in Gulf colours, McLaren M9a, McLaren Mk 2.....but that would be greedy. Any other suggestions? ■

From Ferrari to Porsche

BY JEFF DAVIES

In 1954 the forerunner of all the present Scalextric cars was built by installing a Mighty Midget motor in a Scalex Ferrari, thereby creating the first Scalextric car. This was part of the experimentation documented in Model Maker at the end of 1954 and preceded Fred Francis creating the Scalextric brand. The original design planned for the first Scalextric track was a rail track, but the design was changed to a slot based system as it was felt at the time that the rail system would not be robust enough. (I'd be interested in any comments on the above from Hornby.)

Recently, my local Porsche dealer was kind enough to lend me a GT3 to have a little play with. The latest Porsche 911 GT3 edition is a gobsmackingly fast road car, having several times tested how fast we could get this car up to 60 it was a very interesting and enjoyable couple of hours.

Several manufacturers have produced a model of this car, including Ninco and Proslot, but by far the best model has been recently released by Scalextric who were kind enough to send me a sample one. The car modelled is the car that won the British GT Championship; it was sponsored by Paragon and Scalextric themselves and driven by Mark Sumpter and Mike Jordan.

The car has a light aqua green bonnet running into a darker blue main body colour. This model really illustrates how far Scalextric have come in recent years; it is the most highly detailed Porsche model I've yet seen. The grille is a work of art, being made up of individual pieces of photo etched metal of two different patterns for different sections. Five vents altogether are moulded into the front spoiler of the car.

The model has the correct wheels with gold centres, red knock on centre locking caps and chromed split rim. Photo etched disks are mounted behind the wheels. It has the nicest detailed exhaust system I've ever seen on a slot-car, showing all six individual pipes and mufflers, plus the bottom of the sump including all the nuts. It has Scalextric's most detailed interior yet, with a complete driver figure, with open face helmet, four point diagonal racing seatbelts, a full dash complete with the instruments and a fire extinguisher. The seat even has Recaro tampo printed on the headrest and side. The interior is in two different colours, the dash board, front seat and driver's panel is in black, with the rest of the interior including roll cage being white. This gives this particular model a really striking interior.

Mechanically the car is a side winder layout with slick tyres and the Scalextric self centring guide. The front wheels turn individually on their own stub axles, which are of better quality than most manufacturers' and much quieter in operation. It performs in line with all modern slot-cars, with excellent straight line speed and good cornering. A really brilliant effort from Scalextric. Nearly fifty years later with the introduction of the Scalextric sport track and cars range, Scalextric are yet again at the cutting edge of slot-car technology. ■



Sad or what?

BY ROBERT MCKEOWN

I am one of the lesser known members although I did take part in the Northern Ireland to Bishop's Stortford trip in October of 2001 (code-named WOW - December issue 2001) and can report that it was a very successful mission indeed.

Prompted and encouraged by friend and fellow member Ian Thompson of how I meet the description of Dwarf in the Silmarillion (January, 2002 Issue) I have decided to divulge some of my top secret strategy on the subject of boot-sales at the risk of court martial. My friends say I treat boot-sales like a military operation but for the life of me, I don't understand why.

Anyway PAY ATTENTION and memorise the following strategy as this letter will self-destruct in 5 seconds. Use the Code Breaker, if necessary, and then destroy evidence.

CODE BREAKER

HOSTAGE: SCALEXTRIC

HOSTAGE TAKER: BOOT-SALER

RANSOM: COST

HIDE OUT: CAR BOOT

NAME: Robert McKeown

AGE: 39

SERIAL NUMBER: 2532/99

MARITAL STATUS: Married

OFFSPRING: 3 Junior Operatives

SPECIALITY: Covert operations involving hostages

TOP REWARD: Negotiating the Ransom of a C69 Ferrari Hostage for 50p with no regard for personal safety.

The mission

1. Choose your mission carefully - gather as much intelligence as possible, times, dates, weather and for who or what these potential hostage takers are working. (Good intelligence is the key to a successful mission) - source the intelligence from local tabloids and keep your eyes and ears open at all times for careless tongues.

2. If necessary make a dummy run to ensure you have covered every eventuality and your times are precise.

Preparation and survival

1. CAMOUFLAGE - Always keep a low profile. Do not wear designer clothes as you are undercover and do not want to stand out in the crowd. (Good clothes can give a false impression of wealth and will ultimately increase ransom demands. Wear old jeans and sweater and loose the BIC for a few days previous.

2. EQUIPMENT - Enlist the services of a 10 year old - If you don't have one get one. These seemingly innocent junior operatives can defuse nasty situations and negotiate with the hardest of hostage takers.

3. RANSOM MONEY - Do not draw attention to yourself by flirting large denominations - keep these undercover at all times using smaller sums for hostage negotiations.

4. CHOCOLATE - Perhaps the simplest but the most effective bargaining tool when requiring the junior operative to go to the front line when negotiations have failed.

Search and rescue

1. Synchronise your watch and arrive at your destination 30 minutes before the allotted time. Many undercover shenanigans take place between hostage takers at this time.

2. Scan the area quickly for obvious signs of hostages and then proceed in a clockwise fashion one hideout at a time taking mental notes of any reinforcements arriving late.

3. Carefully and meticulously, search each hide out keeping a clear head at all times. Do not assume your hostage will be clearly visible and labelled to draw your attention. Indeed your hostage could be in deep disguise hidden in binliners, shopping bags, cardboard boxes or even buried under less important decoys. Remember you are a highly trained probing machine.

4. If you uncover a hostage keep your nerve at all times. Do not hum, whistle or break into song as some I know would do but equally do not hesitate. (Many a good hostage has been lost through hesitation). Do not reveal your objectives but should your cover be blown, deny all knowledge and deploy the 10-year-old to the front line to finalise negotiations using the chocolate of course.

5. When bargaining with the hostage taker never refer to your hostage by its illustrious title but use undercover names such as “the little racing track” or “the little plastic cars” or this could cause the ransom to treble and the mission to be aborted.

6. On successfully negotiating a ransom for your hostage continue to keep a low profile. Do not transport your hostage around the remainder of the hideouts but take it to a secure safe location until your return just in case you have to spring into action again.

Retreat and debriefing

1. Remove your hostage from the danger zone to your safe house (headquarters) as quickly inconspicuously as possible.

2. Allow your junior operative to stand down and return him/her to base camp emphasising to them they can be called up for duty at any time.

3. Check out the health and well being of your hostage performing first aid where necessary. Remain dignified at all times and do not let your emotions take over (it is hard to watch a grown man cry even with excitement).

4. Finally, debrief your Commanding Officer (her indoors) giving as much information as possible (on a need to know basis only of course).

You now have completed a successful mission.

Over and Out. ■

The trials and tribulations of club membership.

BY STEVE JONES

It was with great interest that I read Adrian Norman's article in April's journal (How to increase club membership) and that led me to write this article.

About two years ago a few friends and I became interested in slot-car racing, eventually tracking down the only slot-car club in South Wales (Abergavenny) known as Aberstone Raceway. This club is about an hour's drive away from where we live.

Having enjoyed our club meetings and travelling back and forth to the club for about a year, we decided to build a track of our own and start up a club in our locality. We were very fortunate to be able to build the track at my colleague's work place and nine months of hard work nearly every Saturday afternoon and Sunday and about £500.00 lighter in our bank account we eventually finished the project. Believe me that was the easy part!!

Problem number 1

Not only did we have to find a venue to race at but also somewhere where we could store the track as well. Quite a few evenings were spent driving around our area searching for venues, Scout halls, Pavilions, Church Halls etc., jotting down contact names. Hours were then spent on the telephone talking to the various people who were in charge of renting these premises. Not many problems finding venues to hire on a weekly/fortnightly basis but the one big problem was finding a hall that also had storage to keep the track.

Eventually we found a smallish hall (council owned) with just about enough room for our track and pitting area, which also had a side room in which we could store the six large track sections. It had just become available due to a table tennis club folding up and the room was used for storage of their equipment, tables etc.

We explained to the committee that we were

a new club and were in the process of looking for new members and that we couldn't afford to pay too much for the hall hire. It would also be beneficial to the kids in the area, giving them some sort of interest to keep them off the streets! Hoping this would give us a preferential rate per hour to rent the premises. Two nights later they got back to me saying that we were welcome to use the hall and also the storage facility and because we were a new club, we could have the hall for £4.00 per hour.

We were very grateful and booked the hall on a Tuesday evening on a fortnightly basis to start. This would then be on a weekly basis if the club became successful. Our opening night was in two weeks, December 4th 2001- L.S.R.C.C. (Llantrisant Scalextric Racing Car Club was born!)

Problem number 2

Promotion of the club, how do we get other people interested? The three of us thought that this would be quite an easy task because Scalextric was a household name and that everyone had a set at least once in their lives, to be able to race on a large circuit would be a dream come true. We promptly had a number of adverts printed and set about putting them in Newsagents' windows on their advertisement boards. We chose about 6 different ones within a few miles of our catchment area. I also rang Adrian who very kindly took my details and included our club on his site. All we have to do now is sit back and wait for the numerous phone calls.

And wait we did!! No phone calls at all in the first week, this was to say just a little disappointing - not much fun racing with just the three of us. I then rang our local newspaper and was very fortunate in having a small write up in there. This did produce two phone calls asking about our club. One was a lady asking if she⇒

could bring her two sons along and a Dad and his son rang with the same request. At least this was a start. My son who is 13 years old also told all of his friends at school hoping that they in turn would tell their dads.

The big day arrived, we booked the hall between 6.30 and 10.00pm doors open at 7.00 this would give us 30mins set up time. Cars and controllers were made available on a short-term basis in order for any newcomer to have a go. The cost of racing was set at £2.25 for juniors and £2.75 for seniors per night. It was decided not to charge anyone on their first visit, we would subsidise this between the three of us. Five prospective new members turned up to race that night. (All children under 12) Have we started an upmarket crèche? Time would tell!!

Going back on how to increase membership, it's been a long hard slog getting new members The club has been going now for nearly five months, our club nights fluctuate between four and six racers, we have organised races and are currently running a seven week club championship with trophies for the top three racers, the majority being junior members.

Not that we are against juniors, in fact we welcome them. It would be nice to see some adults getting involved as well. We have just had some success with having our club on one of my colleague's daughter's work Internet site. This has produced another three interested people.

Our main problem is, although the council have been very understanding in letting us have preferential rates, we are still having to subsidise the hall hire between us and to date we have paid out about £20.00 to top up the cost of the hall hire. We are not a profit making club but it would be nice to be able to cover costs. I still cannot understand how more people are not interested in this exciting and fun hobby. It's fairly cheap and doesn't involve too much preparatory time. It's a shame after so much work, time and cost to produce a racetrack that we cannot find enough members to enjoy our efforts. Let's hope that more people will become interested in our hobby in the coming weeks and our club will go from strength to strength.

If not, does anyone want to buy a club circuit cheap?!! ■

Building a birdcage not for birds

BY TONY SECCHI

My favourite driver of all time is Stirling Moss, his versatility and all round talent in every sphere of motor racing is unparalleled.

My favourite sports car of all time is the Maserati Tipo (model) T60/T61 or 'Birdcage', which only ran for two years (1959/60) but won practically every event that it entered.

Put the two together and you have, in my opinion, a magic combination. This is the account of a slot-car construction as my personal tribute to both these icons.

"Birdcage" - perhaps the oddest name for a successful racing car. It conjures up evocative sixties racing images like no other for me. The Maserati Tipo T60 was introduced in 1959 when the factory had got into financial trouble and officially stopped racing, so instead of financing a team, Maserati decided to build and sell racing cars to order. During the winter of 1958/59 Maserati's designer, Guilio Alfieri created a new front-engined car. Whilst the 1.9 litre engine was a development of an existing unit, the body and chassis definitely were not. Using two hundred delicate metal tubes welded together, Alfieri produced a light yet strong frame - it weighed in at 661lb (30kg).

Because part of the frame could be seen beneath the shallow perspex screen, in the cockpit and underneath the bonnet, the car soon earned plenty of nicknames (Maserati Spaghetti the spiders web etc. etc.) but one stuck and is still used today - "Birdcage".

The alloy body was the work of Carrozzeria Allegretti and is a collection of curves, rising and falling over the engine, wheels and rear mounted fuel tank. It was impossibly low for its day because the engine was set at 45 degrees; Allegretti was able to produce a very low aerodynamic nose, which was overshadowed by enormous front wheel arches. All up it weighed 1287lb (574kg) - The Mini, which appeared in

the same year, was heavier at 1337lb (607kg)

Moss tested it after the '59 Monaco Grand Prix and was so impressed that he raced it in a sports car event at Rouen, led throughout from pole position, set fastest lap and won with ease. Over the next couple of years, the Tipo T60 was unbeatable among European sports cars but with only 1.9 litres capacity the "Birdcage" was not eligible for the favoured and lucrative American 2—3 litre series.

The result of this was Maserati's 2.9 litre version, the Tipo T61. With this car, Stirling won the Cuban Grand Prix and the 1000km at the old Nurburgring (partnered by Dan Gurney "the best co-driver, along with Fangio, I think I ever had").

In 1960 the Camoradi team entered two T62s for Le Mans. These were basically T61s with long tails for straight-line stability and had a very distinctive swept perspex windscreen designed by Alfieri. It ran from in front of the driver's nose down to the front axle line. It must have been the biggest windscreen ever but it was hugely effective, the cars regularly exceeding 170mph on the Mulsanne straight with a maximum run of 187mph (I know this for sure because I was there with my little Timex stopwatch).

Camoradi was the brainchild of a Miami promoter called Lloyd 'Lucky' Casner and the name an acronym -(CASner MOtor RACING DIvision). The number 24 car, driven by Masten Gregory, led for a bit and was up with the leaders before succumbing to gearbox failure.

Anni Minni produces Any-Slot models out of the "Electric Dreams" model company of Costa Mesa, California. This company is run by Phillip de Lespinay, the author of "Vintage Slot Cars", a book well worth having. To my limited knowledge they are the only company to produce both T61 and T62 models in 1/32 scale at present. However, with the current⇒

vogue for elderly cars perhaps Ninco or Fly will do something in the near future.

At the last Milton Keynes swapmeet (Feb 2002), two new T61s and one new T62 were available for sale, but at a price - £85.00. This may be OK for the serious collector, but I compete and I wanted a Birdcage to race, so I decided to build my own. I could provide, obtain, or make everything from stock except the bodyshell; some problem! However, my old friend at "Car Kits" of Southend on Sea again provided the answer. Browsing through his fifty-two page comprehensive Catalogue, I came across an 'Autohobbies' fibreglass bodyshell for £10.

On receipt of this fragile but highly detailed shell I was ready to start. Fibreglass, as we all know, is glass so careful working is mandatory. The shell had wheel arch blanks which had to be removed and the cockpit in a recessed flat area below the dashboard, so no full length drivers or interior, but then neither do the Ferraris, Alfa Romeos, Matras and Chaparrals it will compete with. It did have, however, details of the tubular frame showing behind the dashboard so the real heritage of its nickname could be mirrored in the model.

The body, due to its nature, is rather heavy so I decided to build the chassis around a reasonably high powered engine.

My good friend Sean Fothersgill at Pendle Slot Racing supplied me with a Fly front engined chassis and motor so that was my starting point. My usual modus operandi when fitting a chassis underneath an independent body is to cut, join and modify the proprietary item as laid out in the article I wrote for the Journal in November '99. Due to the shortness of the wheelbase (73mm) the front-engined configuration was the only solution. An in-line engine would have projected into the cockpit area and a sidewinder similarly so. As it was the engine only just fitted due to the bonnet line being slightly higher than the cockpit recess. Anyway, this solution mirrored the real car's power layout so was neatly satisfying.

Tyres and wheels were problems; the real items reflecting the times by being of slim width and large diameter for the car's size. I could not, in any case, replicate the exquisite Borrani wire wheels exactly but I managed to find some suitable (more modern) items from stock. They are slightly wider than the real ones but as the width is biased inwards they pass muster. The body came without a windscreen, which at first also posed problems, but by rifling through my 'all sorts' box I came across a full length one-piece clear acetone saloon car interior (front, side and rear windows). By cutting out and profiling the rear sloping portion I managed a pretty good replica screen. It was too wide for the body so it had to be cut and joined in the middle, but the real car's screen had a narrow vertical metal strip from scuttle line to the top of the screen for mounting the rear view mirror, so I was able to use that as a cover strip.

The particular car I decided to model was the Camoradi entry that Stirling used to win the Cuban sports car Grand Prix in Havana during 1960. This car was coloured white with a black nose trim and carried Stirling's favourite 'lucky' racing number seven - very apt I thought. The cutting and sanding of the fibreglass was taken very carefully as the material is brittle. The Car has an inverted 'U' shaped driver's roll bar and I made that up from a large metal paper clip end cut to suit and glued into two pre-drilled holes.

The driver figure was the biggest problem. Stirling's penchant for horse jumping style crash helmets at the time making it very difficult to model. In the end I used a head with an open-faced helmet and this was sanded down to shape, the sides cut to suit and painted brown. A scrap profiled plastic peak was superglued on and goggles were added with a dense marker pen. Throughout I used as a guide the Carrera Mercedes 300SLR which has a reasonably accurate figure of Stirling when he won the 1955 Mille Miglia at an average speed of almost 100mph (my fellow racers and mates called this piece of model making "authentic cheating") but when mounted on a white painted upper

body and placed in position with a large diameter wood rimmed steering wheel, it looks the part.

The chassis was mounted into the bodyshell as per my article on that subject mentioned earlier. The tuning and set up were carried out just using the running chassis and when this was right the body added and because of its low configuration needed little further work. This is not always the case, but then, as in real life, this car is a 'gem'. With very little overhang front and rear, a wheel at each corner, a short wheelbase, a low body profile and a powerful inline front mounted engine just behind the axle, the model car sticks like glue and goes like a bat out of hell. I have since added a Scalextric brown bar rear magnet, which has very low power and is just right for balance.

Sod's law being what it is, Ninco or Fly are now certain to bring out their own "Birdcage" and if so it will be interesting to see how it compares with mine. But, as I have said on a few previous occasions, the act of building, setting up, painting, racing and sometimes winning with your own car can exceed the pleasure of using an out-of-the-box, ready to race model anytime.

So give it a try with your favourite non-available car. You will gain a great deal of pleasure from the construction process and you may pleasantly surprise yourself. ■