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Contents

Swapmeet.....	3
Diary Dates.....	5
Factory Focus.....	7
Start Of An Obsession.....	8
Square Magnets.....	9
Book Review.....	11
Westcountry Rambles.....	12
Return To Middle Earth.....	13
Letter From America.....	15
Letters.....	16
Roger's Book - Trader's Views....	18
Ninco Track Tests.....	20
Wheelspin.....	23
Holidays.....	27
Bits And Pieces.....	28
Chaparrals.....	29
Race Report.....	31
Home Circuit.....	32
Lead.....	35
Members Ads.....	38

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The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

Tracks R Us

A new year and a new front cover for the Journal; Kevin Myler has provided one based on a piece of Scalextric track without realising that the original version was about to be consigned to the dustbin of history.

Yes, after forty odd years Hornby have finally come up with a revised version, henceforth to be known as 'Sport Track'. Unfortunately the news came in too late to include full details this month but it is a complete new track system, which is much easier to assemble and dismantle - new track surface, deeper slot, and many new exciting track sections. Adaptor pieces will be available to connect with 'classic' track, as the original version will now be known. There is no mention of a pitstop section as yet but who knows what the future might bring?

No doubt more details will be forthcoming in the February issue but 2002 is already shaping up to be a wonderful year for slot-car enthusiasts; Hornby have an impressive line up of new cars and buildings as well as the new track and, if rumours about the FLY track are true, then we will at last have a choice of racing circuits to match the ability of the current generation of cars.

Pity the full size version of the hobby can't match it; with the notable exception of Rockingham Motor Speedway the British racing circuits are firmly stuck in the 1950s with minimal facilities for spectators and competitors alike. Silverstone has decided it doesn't want the paying public at all really; Brands Hatch is rapidly becoming a slum and Snetterton's major achievement in the last few years has been to demolish its one remaining grandstand! Still, model motor racing has at least one thing in common with its full scale relative - after forty years it still refuses to provide toilets for its plastic spectators!

And Finally - the article bank is getting extremely low so next month's issue is liable to be a little on the thin side without some extra input. I look forward to hearing from you.

Till next month

Brian

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



What's the buzz? As you read this column, the Scalextric HQ is abuzz, much like your thoughts of the new cars and accessories that might be released this year. During the last six months the hive of industry that is Hornby has laid out plans to produce a large selection of sweet tasty morsels to get you swarming round to your local shop. The busy bees at Hornby Hobbies are now proudly showing off their new product range for 2002 - and what a delicious pot of honey there is!

The catalogue's swarm of worker bees come in the shape of more Cadillacs, Beetles, Focus', Astras, Imprezas and Porsche GT3Rs. A completely new car to the range will be a Mitsubishi Lancer. The long awaited F1 cars, the McLaren and Williams, will also be released very early in the year.

European bees

Traditionally, German beer was sweetened with honey. German peasants were required to give their feudal lords a payment of honey and beeswax. Similarly, Scalextric Racer magazine is offering a limited edition of 500 pieces each, two Porsche GT3Rs. A fistful of groats and you can be the happy owner of these two road cars. C2360 and C2361, fittingly in black and yellow paint jobs (respectively), both have the Porsche logo emblazoned on the bonnet.

In the colony

Our friends in OZ can enjoy the good nectar too. A TVR for the Australian club has been commissioned in the form of C2452, a blue TVR with the Australian national flag draped across the car and will only be available to its club members.

White man's flies

The continued leaning to the North American market is evidenced by the introduction of Camaro and Mustang muscle cars. These particular cars will be released with various body changes to reflect the cars' evolution over the years. Like the European honey bees introduced to the U.S.A nearly 400 years ago, the now annual clutch of NASCARs will yield a dozen or so variants. These modern day "white man's flies", as North American natives called them, look splendid droning round any NASCAR oval displaying their new liveries.

Potted honey

C2368 Porsche GT3R WSC C1070 Argos set
C2369 Porsche GT3R WSC C1070 Argos set
C2387 Subaru Impreza Gamleys 2001
C2388 Porsche 911 GT3R Collectors Centre
C2390 TVR Speed 12 Modelzone
C2452 TVR GT A.S.S.R.C.

The Queen

There can only be one queen, of course, and we may have to wait a little longer for the summer to arrive before we are allowed to discover what crowning glory lays beneath the honey and beeswax! With this article being written before the new product launch in January it's not possible to give all the information as to what's new. But if all goes to plan, there are a lot more surprises just around the corner!

Let's hope the new developments are on track and ready for release in the next issue of Factory Focus. The full details of these will hopefully be spread over this page next month like honey on bread.

Enjoy this year's nectar! ■

The start of an obsession

BY NEIL DUNHAM

Having been one of the quiet members of the club for the last couple of years I decided it was time to contribute something. A few articles slithered to mind (that being how slow the creative process was) and I thought the old 'How I started in Scalextric' chestnut may be the best way to break the duck, so here goes with the first.

Scalextric started for me at the age of 10 or 11 when a friend had what Roger Gillham's book tells me was a 300 set with two Mini Clubmen (Clubmans?). A group of us had great fun taking it in turns rallying around the world while those not racing were battling for the Ashes on the do-not-iron 'Test Match' pitch downstairs. The years passed with no Scalextric set of my own, competing on friends' layouts occasionally until one fine day when my brother said something like, "What shall we do with all that space in the loft?" The surprise reply came from my brother-in-law, "My Scalextric set would look good up there". It turned out that several years previously he had got the bug before moving on to more sensible things like buying a house and furniture. I was amazed to find that he owned the 4 lane 600 set, loads of extra track and 20 boxed cars as nice and shiny as the day they left the factory. My brother's version of Monaco was soon being thrashed by a crowd of guys that should probably have been out clubbing and chasing girls.

Fast forward a few more years to 1997 when I happened to look in a newly opened second hand toy shop near my home. There I found an unused Porsche Power set for £25, BINGO! That was the spark that lit the fuse. Now living in my own house I had the loft boarded within a week, recovered the old sets from my Mum's house and built a huge four lane circuit which barely left room in the loft for the drivers - one had to sit on a very uncomfortable support strut, not a lot of fun for the Le Mans 24 minute.

This is where the racing obsession turned into a collecting one. You see the circuit really looked bare with just one ugly yellow Pit

building and three pink pit crew. It needed spicing up. By this time I was also a budding Internet surfer, so why not have a look for Scalextric on there? Up to this point I had no idea that they had produced that wonderful range of buildings and trackside accessories in the 1960s; it was great discovering them one by one. Then the brother-in-law came up with another surprise, producing a first edition copy of Roger Gillham's 'bible'. Should a grown man be overwhelmed by the sight of the Refreshment Kiosk for the first time? Anyway, I managed to get hold of some of these dream items from a stall in the local market as well as a good few 1960s cars.

Then I discovered three web sites that would

- Make me a very happy Scalextric collector;
- Make my bank balance much smaller and;
- Make me have to sneak much more stuff past my wife.

The first of these sites was that of Gary and Phil at MRE; both guys very helpful and knowledgeable and willing to fuel my habit. The second site was eBay. Known to many NSCC members it was a huge gold-mine of 1960s items. The third one, and probably the best was an understated site for a certain collectors club that basically said, please join, you'll like the magazine. It took a few days to work up courage to join, but was a move that I now recommend to all slot-car fans I come across.

My collection is now probably far too big, but also not big enough. I have in excess of 200 1960s cars, over 70 1960s buildings and around 80 other cars. In pride of place are: a lime green Mirage, a mint boxed yellow Auto Union, a blue Bugatti, a yellow Alfa, a pair of James Bond cars and, sad but true, 16 different Lotus 16s.

I have recently moved to a bigger house with no water tank in the loft (attractive feature) and built an even bigger track. My current ambition is to light the whole thing with Track Lights. Some people may say that ambition should be to travel to far flung places and see the world. Well, I've already done that, albeit in a Mini Clubman in my mate's bedroom. ■

It's hip to be square

BY ADRIAN NORMAN

The new shape Subaru Impreza was launched in late November 2001. The first 5000 were supplied with the special ProDrive outer packaging. You probably ordered yours right away or dropped some big hints as to what the perfect little Christmas present would be when you invited Granny to stay for the festive holiday. After all, you wanted to do more than listen to her never ending complaints about her new stainless steel hip replacement. Trying out your new Scalextric Subaru would probably make it almost bearable. Christmas came, Gran and Grandad arrived, the parcels under the tree were unwrapped and the tinsel dropped from the tree every now and then seeming to follow a mystical flight path towards the present Granny has for you. Strange!

Grandad is shoved reluctantly in to the 20th century with the promise that his son's digi-camera photos can safely be stored on a floppy disk for him to take home to view. Whilst the family poses for the family digi-photo album you test both cars on a two straight oval (4 standard straights, 8 curves), and with your younger brother's new digital stopwatch you timed the cars on the inside lane. Granny wobbled past for a rest on the settee after an exhaustive photo shoot but had time to marvel at the Subaru's livery and interior detail. Not that Gran knew it was a Subaru, or indeed the latest offering from Scalextric, but as she melted in to the comfy cushions she placed it beside her on the settee arm and noted that it was a very nice shade of blue that complemented her blue rinse very well.

How the car came to be in her hand went unexplained. Exactly why the 'expensive' gold bracelet you purchased from the local market for Gran's annual Christmas present trinket rolled along the settee's arm to hide, like a snake seeking shade in the midday sun, under the new Subaru went unnoticed; as she hoped the now near empty bottle of sherry beside her also would.

Performance then, you remind yourself, distracting yourself away from the endless camera flashes from the photo shoot in the kitchen. You have a nicely run-in old shape Subaru, which you use to set a benchmark time on the short Scalextric track oval in order that you can test the Magnatraction effect of the cars' performance. The old Subaru Impreza, with brown bar magnet, manages a steady speed yielding 2.72 seconds per lap.

This is not a dynamic throttle on, throttle off lap, but simply the highest constant trigger position the car can manage before the lap times fall due to sliding on the corners or rolling off the track. OK, so 2.72 is your benchmark. The new Subaru Impreza is tested with its new silver bar magnet in each of the three chassis positions and finally with no magnet at all. These are the results: 2.81 magnet OUT 2.65 magnet front 1.41 magnet middle 1.15 magnet rear (default box standard position)

Straight out of the wrapping paper and box, the car is more than twice as fast as the old Impreza at 1.15 seconds! Wow! Mind you, Granny fell asleep and claimed later that it was due to her getting dizzy watching the car whizz round the track. The sherry bottle, as if in sympathy, also fell over! You wonder if the stronger magnet detracts but, no, it's just a different racing experience. But at least you can take the magnet out, if that's your preference. The three magnet positions worked well too. There was no tendency to de-slot considering the high speeds and the motor didn't appear to suffer or get over heated, unlike Grandad who was glad the camera batteries were now as flat as the beer. Mum's 'absolutely essential' family album poses were stored on floppy disks ready to download when Grandad got home. Mum insists on putting his digital Christmas memories, safe and sound in to his lower left-hand jacket pocket, in case he forgot! Oh, how he wanted to get home, he thought privately, as he dozed off beside his wife. Randomly, the rest of the ⇒

family, one by one, fell, tripped and stumbled in to what can loosely be called relaxing positions on or around the lounge suite to watch, with eyes open or closed, the Star Wars film, again! During which, of course, you noted the Subaru's excellent morning test results and you somehow find yourself saying, 'Hmmm, the force is strong with this one!' Emerging from his forty-winks, Grandad checks out the new Subaru. Squints and looks for his glasses in his breast pocket. Doesn't find them. Forgets why he was looking for them as the film end credits roll over the TV screen. He falls asleep again, the car gently dropping between himself and the slightly less than original leg he married fifty-one years ago.

You are delighted that the silver bar magnet is a better driving aid than the dot magnets used by other manufacturers because of the magnetic effect being spread more evenly across the back of the car. As a sanity check you clock your race prepared Fly Venturi at 1.10 seconds - more or less the same time as the Impreza's best time. The Impreza is a little higher and generally heavier above the centre of gravity than that of the Venturi. Quite a feat for a comparatively high car and due in part to the pretty strong magnet! Dot magnets can take a back seat, square magnets are hip! Dad shakes you out of your daydreaming of your next race victories with the command to get Gran's suitcases. You lose sight of your shiny new Subaru. Dad gets

the Volvo out of the garage and shoehorns Gran and Grandad in to it. You are dragged along too! You all wave a 'Goodbye' at the train station and return home. The car radio blasts out an old 80's song, "It's hip to be square." Dad whistles along believing he's hip! Back home, you haven't seen your new Subaru for a while. The magnet is strong, you remind yourself. You check the back of the coal scuttle and ornamental metal fire guard in the hearth. It could have bounced. You check the video player chassis and any other metal fittings around the room. Your brother's PC hard disk appears to be still intact. No super-magnet Subaru near there then.

Granny could not settle in her seat on the train. She complained to the carriage attendant about the state of the train and particularly about the lumpy stuffing in these second rate seats causing "a good deal of gip in my right hip". Grandad is unaware that the floppy disks in his left-side pocket nestle neatly against the Subaru, immersed, as they were, in the Subaru's strong magnetic field. The Subaru in turn clinging securely, as it had done since the Star Wars credits rolled across the TV screen, against his "nearest and dearest's" right hip. Mum's digital photo record of this years festive season family get-together was, not unlike Grandad's own grey matter, only a few more train stops away from holding little or no useful recoverable data! ■

Scalextric - The Story Of The World's Favourite Model Cars - By Rod Green

Yes, it's waiting for the bus time again; no Scalextric books for years and then two come along at once! Hot on the heels of Roger Gillham's fifth edition comes this one published by Harper Collins.

The publicity blurb promises "the first full-colour, in-depth celebration of everything that has made Scalextric a constant favourite for nearly half a century." This description is a tad ambitious as I can think of at least two colour publications which have preceded it and, as there is hardly any mention of Spanish, French or Mexican Scalextric, the "in-depth" tag hardly applies.

Before I get to the contents it is necessary to don one of Peter Novani's spare anoraks and discuss the actual layout of the book. The production is of high quality, especially the pictures, but the type itself is very strange; a combination of too much white space, a sans serif font and appallingly bad spacing of the justified text make the book very difficult to read. The words are so far apart that the eye just cannot follow the sentence structure with the result that I had to force myself to finish it. There are also several strange indentations in the text which are probably the result of planned photos being removed; this is unforgivable in a work from a major publishing house.

Right, anorak removed, what about the contents? The author, Rod Green, is a journalist and the book is written in a journalistic style which is easy to absorb. It is basically a stroll through the Scalextric catalogues from 1960 to the present; each year's new releases are discussed and pictured. Incidentally, the vast majority of the cars featured are from NSCC member Chris Gregory's collection and very good they are too.

Rod also includes details of the full size cars, together with a discussion of events in the outside world and he puts the whole thing in context by listing the relevant competition in the

Book Review



By the editor

toy market at the time. This is where the book scores over

Roger's work as it puts the history of Scalextric in the framework of the industry as a whole. In our obsession with this hobby we often tend to forget that Hornby are a toy manufacturing firm living in a highly commercial world so it is interesting to note how sales have performed in relation to other products.

The author, just like many of our members, received his first set as a birthday present and then had to wait some considerable time before his father stopped playing with it. He is obviously fascinated with Scalextric and really ought to join the NSCC and contribute to the Journal!

As I mentioned earlier the overseas products bearing the Scalextric name are not really included unless they were available through the British distribution network so this book is really an "in-depth" look at the home-grown items; hardly surprising as 'Racer Magazine' and Hornby Hobbies are listed as collaborators in the publication. If I were Simon Kohler I wouldn't be too interested in mentioning the continental factories either!

It does contain a listing of all U.K. catalogue cars but, overall, it is not really much use as a reference book, nor is it intended to be. It is firmly aimed at the general public who have nostalgic memories of opening that giant Scalextric set on Christmas day and conducting their own Le Mans 24 hour race on the carpet; in this it succeeds extremely well.

In conclusion, a well written book with excellent colour photos which is let down by deficiencies in its production. If you can only afford one book at the moment then buy Roger Gillham's 5th edition as it remains the definitive work on Scalextric but, if you are fascinated by all aspects of these wonderful toy plastic cars, then buy this one as well - it is a worthwhile addition to the collection. ■

Westcountry Rambling

FROM VINE FENNEL

Sorry about my absence last month, but the wife wanted her kitchen rebuilt and I got a bit sidetracked. Mind you, it's still not finished. We've got a rather nice and expensive wood floor installed now but I'm not allowed to rout slots in it! Still a way to go but she wants it finished by Christmas!

Haven't really had time to think of anything to ramble on about this month (sigh of relief from everyone). I did mention a chrome Marcos though so I'll tell you a story (the wife has already mentioned it so it's not really news).

Almost four years ago (is it really that long?) we were on honeymoon in Spain (Nerja to be precise) and on our first evening there we were having a stroll around town and happened on a toy shop - hooray! Looking longingly in the window I spotted aforementioned Marcos on display and remarked that it would be a good buy, so the following day we returned and purchased my new toy. (About £25 if memory serves). The best bit of the whole story though is that madam paid for it on her card; before the days of me having my own!

Anyway, on to the FLY Marcos listing.

Marcos LM 600

A21 yellow # 81 Le Mans 1996

A22 blue # 70 Le Mans 1995

A23 white # 56 Brands Hatch 1997

A24 yellow # 0 Donington 1997

A25 yellow Azlan # 77 1st Spa 1998 -

Brit GT Champion

A26 blue # 71 Le Mans 1995

A27 orange/blue/green # 30

Jarama 4HR 1998 - Fly sponsored

Limited edition

E21 maroon # 69 Gaugemaster

E22 gold # 98 Autopista (Spanish motoring mag)

E23 green (1000) Les Cars (Belgian Dist)

E24 chrome silver (1000) Spanish shops

E25 red # 1 UK Marcos Mantara Challenge
1998 Mini Auto

E26A # 10 Autosport International

(Autosport International Racing Car Show & Demon Tweaks) 1000 made

E26B # 33 As above - Competition Prize

E28 blue/maroon # 10 Barcelona FC IBB
(Spanish shop)

E29 orange/black # 21 H&T Racing (German)

Telefonica Spanish GT Championship

PA1 white # 8 Sharp

That's all for this month. Hopefully the brain will be back in gear in time for next month's waffle and I might get some time to concentrate on something other than the kitchen. Hope everyone got all the toys that they wanted from Santa! Although that would probably be impossible! ■

The Silmarillion

BY STEVE WESTBY

Never one to shrink from ‘borrowing’ somebody else’s idea, I was inspired by Adrian Norman’s recent article to tell you a little about the various breeds of slot-car collector, as found in the histories and legends of Middle Earth.

Ent

These are the oldest of all living creatures. Slow to rouse and softly spoken, they blend into the background and rarely reveal themselves to ordinary mortals. Ents are the old masters who have competed in rail and slot-car racing since before the invention of the wheel. They hew detailed precision bodies of classic cars from the living rock with their bare hands.

Wizard

Master of all the arcane knowledge and arts of slot-car racing and collecting. Vacuum forms bodies from his own moulds, builds motors from scratch and can quote from memory the page references for any Scalextric model in all five editions of Roger Gillham’s book. Beware though, the lust for knowledge can lead them down dark paths and it is rumoured that some have dabbled in 1/24, static models and other temptations of the malevolent one.

Nazgul

Once noble and innocent racers, these poor creatures have been warped by their craving for victory until they fell under the spell of the evil one known as the Slotmaster. Now they are totally in thrall to him and measure out their lives to one ten-thousandth of a second. If they should de-slot they can be seen in terrible pain gibbering, foaming at the mouth, screaming and leaping up and down until their car is on its way again. It is said that at the winter solstice the nine Nazgul meet at midnight to sacrifice a Scalextric Bugatti by racing it to destruction.

Dwarf

They have delved long in the darkness of the attic and the boot sale, searching out the fabled and mystical items which are now locked away in their treasure houses and rarely see the light of day. They have their own secret language to describe their hoards. Some of the more common terms such as *Gold* (Scalextric) and *Platinum* (Airfix) have passed into the knowledge of men. Others such as *Mithril* (VIP) and *Electrum* (Wrenn 152) are believed to be no more than myths.

Elf

Above the concerns of the mortal races, Elves have no interest in the mundane world of ordinary Scalextric. Instead they seek out the celebrated models of Revell and Monogram. They journey to far lands in search of the legendary Mexican dragster. Then they return to their halls to sing the old songs of the time oft foretold when they will set sail across the great water in the west to seek out the fabulous Cox Gurney Ford.

Hobbit

The most recent addition to the races of the collectors. They were devotees of the art of slot-racing in the forgotten time known now as “The Sixties”. In those days they raced Lister Jaguars and Lotus 16s and spent many hours gazing at pictures of the fabled Bentley and Alfa Romeo in the books of lore known as “The Catalogues”. Then for long years they wandered from the path, and sat by their firesides, lulled into forgetfulness by the box-in-the-corner. In those dark times, only the Wizards and the Dwarves preserved the knowledge of the true way. In recent years the Hobbits have returned to the land of their youth and undertake quests to seek out the treasures they remember from the catalogues they studied many aeons ago. ■

Letter from America

BYJIM BUTT

During some recent correspondence Brian mentioned that he receives hardly anything about the hobby from this side of the Atlantic so, with apologies to Alastair Cooke, I will have a try. I can't say much for the entire country, of course, but I'll have a go at the local scene.....

For the past six years or so there has been a group in and around the Baltimore, Maryland area racing semi-regularly at each other's homes. There isn't really a "club" as the UK members are used to, but a more loose knit group that gathers occasionally. About two years ago, there was a bit of falling off of interest. One of the regulars (who was the main organizer) moved house and dismantled his Revell 4 lane track. Another took his Scalextric track down for replacement with Ninco track, and was down for over a year. I also moved, and had to take down my track. For the past year, it has been just a handful gathering once or twice a month, on a social level, with some informal racing thrown in.

Recently, there has been an upsurge of interest again. Alan Schwartz has had his 4 lane Scalextric track running all along, which is where we have been meeting. We had the first real organized race for quite a while there several weeks ago. There were about 11 racers present, and several more whom expressed interest in getting going again, but had other obligations that day. Bruce Strachan has his 4 lane Ninco track up and running, and we will be having an organized race there the first weekend of December. My new track has now been completed (well, it's race ready, they're never REALLY finished of course), and I will be hosting the next organized race in January.

My new track is 77' lap length 4 lane Scalextric, and is a very "fast" track. Todd Brace, the "organizer", has been active again, and is talking about building a 3 lane Strombecker track in his new house.

Alan's, Todd's and my tracks all have computer controlled race management systems. Bruce's track uses a Di Slot (I think) lap counter setup.

If we can keep the momentum going, hopefully we will be back to the schedule we had going several years ago, which was an organized race every 4 to 6 weeks, rotating locations. It makes it quite fun, with the tracks differing widely, from fast "speed" tracks, to tight, twisty drivers' circuits, and the ones between. Also, with the varied manufacturers tracks in use, the surface changes from one course to the next. Some of our group favours running no magnets, some prefer box stock setups, and some like the "open" type classes. At the organized meets we try and run a stock type car for one race, so that the guys with only one or two cars can run their cars. We will usually run a Fly car or similar strong magnet car class, preferring vintage endurance cars like the Fly Lola. If time permits and enough people have them, we will also frequently race a vintage class.

What usually appears in these races are Atlas, Cox, K&B, Monogram, etc. sports racers from the mid 60s. A few of us are collectors also, but enjoy running the older cars.

I'll take a few photos from the meet at Bruce's and send them along with a brief race report if you would like. Also, once I get my scenery a bit further along, I'll give you a photo tour of my new track. ■



Dear Brian

Having surprised myself by winning the 'Star Letter' accolade in a December issue of Autosport magazine, I was delighted to receive a superb Proslot Porsche 'Supercup' GT3 as my prize. Therefore, through the pages of the NSCC Journal I'd like to express my thanks to Colette Clarke at Monarch Lines, for her generosity in supplying the slot-car. Indeed, Monarch Lines' weekly collaboration with Autosport is an enterprising initiative which should be applauded. Not only does it help promote her distribution company, but also 'our' hobby to a wider audience of motor sport enthusiasts.

Cheers!
Peter Novani

.....

Dear Brian,
I am writing a book on the "History of Rail Racing" and if anyone used to rail race or has any old cars, pieces etc, can they get in touch with me as soon as possible.

Thanks,
Jeff Davies

.....

Dear Brian,
In the December issue, under the heading "a good idea at the time", Don Siegel asks whether anybody got a Scalextric front wheel drive Mini to work - well I have to say - Yes, and very well too.

I own two of these cars which both perform well; I have also raced these successfully with others belonging to NSCC members. You need excellent front tyres; correct adjustment of guide and braids and a good fast motor.

So all you C76 Mini owners out there who reckon these cars are useless, try the above tips; you may surprise yourselves.

Yours faithfully
Ray Chambers



Hello Brian,

Regarding the article in December's NSCC Journal entitled What No mention in the NSCC journal?
By Joel Thura.

An interesting article with one point I didn't agree with and feel I should point out before too many people are misguided. It stated: "Southend Slot Racing Club (the most active slot club in Essex)". This, I feel is wrong. GT Raceway owned and run by Graeme Thoburn has had club nights with up to 18 people turning up. He has also organised successful birthday parties. Then more importantly he has hosted one of the Interclub Challenge 2001 heats on Sunday 25th November (of which GT Raceway is now champion) with 34 entrants. On December 2nd the London GT Challenge was also held at GT Raceway of Southend with 15 entrants. This seems to me to be a very active club, if not the most active in Southend, Essex. The first Proslot Challenge he hosted had the local paper turn up along with over 40 entrants. The Ninco Karts he hosted also had a full house and to top it all, Monarch Lines and The Hobby Company found these events good enough to donate 6 Karts and 6 Toyota GT1s.

GT Raceway is set up permanently and is 6 lanes of superior Ninco track, which, in my opinion, is the best plexy based track you could have. GT Raceway has open doors to anyone who wants to turn up whereas SSRC has "members only" and has hosted none of this type of event. I feel it should be stated that GT Raceway is "the most active slot car club in Southend, Essex" and the events he's hosted says it all. I hope this clears this matter up.

The best club in the universe is 'BRANDS HUTCH'. After all, why would it be featured on a television programme? Why? Because it is the best. So if you don't see it on telly, check-out the longest running club in Southend, Essex at, www.brands.hutch.btinternet.co.uk. A full account of the night the telly men turned up along with what we get up to at BRANDS HUTCH will be with you shortly.

Yours sincerely
Doug Graver

**Mmmm..... could this be the same Graeme Thoburn who, in the November issue, was bemoaning the fact that less than 12 people turned up to GT Raceway club nights?
I know that not all the bickering between the various Southend clubs is completely serious but it really doesn't encourage new people to come along; just think what you might achieve by working with each other for a change.**

Roger Gillham's 5th edition

The trader's view from Mark Scale and Phil Smith

This long awaited book has finally arrived, and I have to start my review with the comment that it is definitely the best so far, boasting colour photographs throughout.

Unfortunately whilst I appreciate the work that has gone in to producing such a detailed book, I have to say that the number of mistakes that jump out on just a first flick through disappoints me.

My main criticism has to be that Roger has approached only collectors for his information, and whilst many of the collectors within the NSCC have a vast knowledge of the subject we all love, their knowledge tends to be based around the cars that they have amassed over the years. Dealers in the product, by the nature of our occupation, see many examples of the same models over and over again, and can build up a far more detailed knowledge as to what is correct from original production, and what has been changed or amended by previous owners.

Unfortunately most of us have never had the time and dedication to write a book and we have to take our hats off to Roger for his efforts; but I am sure that most of the reputable dealers would have been pleased to cast an eye over the proofs and offer their knowledge to ensure that the final print was as accurate as possible.

Personally I have had nearly all the cars featured in the books through my hands at some point over the years, as well as many others that have missed inclusion, and the same can be said of many of the other dealers. The repeated handling of the models is what gives us the knowledge and feel for what is correct.

I am sure I speak for many of my fellow dealers when I say we would love to have corrected the following: -

Page 71 C124 Ferrari- it looks great, but it never came in that livery. The model pictured has had the Airfix decals applied. When supplied

by Scalextric it only had 3 number roundels and two Ferrari Badges. This may seem insignificant to many, but the reason it matters to me, is next time I send a mint boxed example of this car to a customer, I may well receive complaints that it does not have the correct decals. I have had this problem for years with this particular model as in the last edition it was shown in a black and white photograph.

It is also worth a mention that the Mercedes on page 117, beige with a green roof, is not correct. The roof is a reproduction made in Spain, in various colours: green, burgundy, black white etc.

More subtle is the Bugatti on page 60, (the race tuned version the bottom of the two cars) has been 'detailed up' and it looks very nice – the badge on the Radiator has been painted red, the drivers scarf yellow, and the wheels painted black, behind the spokes, are all non factory finishes and therefore incorrect.

On page 83 the Ferrari 643 is pictured and detailed as Rare Race #28- the car is indeed very rare, but not because it is a number 28 (that was the set car) the black tampo printing in front of the cockpit is the rare detail.

Sorry I am on my soapbox, and in danger of sounding like Phil Egart – knowing every tiny tampo difference!

There are dozens more details through the book, which could have been noted. I will endeavour to make a list and forward it to Roger in case he ever gets round to a 6th Edition!

It is a whole lot easier to criticise than to produce, and obviously an awful lot of work has gone into this book, it still remains the best reference book available, and a must for any collector. I just want to say, be warned, because you read something in print, it does not mean it is correct.

Mark Scale

So, finally the new revamped and error free Roger Gillham book has arrived. I must say I had been looking forward to this for some time as the old books had always given all of us traders a great deal of trouble!

As everybody treated the books as 'The Bible' people were always asking for cars that did not exist or said the car sent was wrong "as it wasn't like the one shown in the Scalextric book" The classic example being the C124 Ferrari 312 shown wearing Airfix decals!

So you can imagine my surprise upon opening the new book to see that it still shows the same car, only now in full colour! Ok, a little annoying but one mistake is all right, so let's check out the other classic mistake. The C48 Tyrrell 002 :- check the UK section, it says 'not released in the UK', check the Spanish section 'sold in UK' and in the text of the Spanish section 'very few were imported, if any at all' ! This is exactly the same as the previous editions! Of course we now know that although the car was shown in the UK catalogues, it was never sold here because the UK company did not want to have to keep in stock the special guide that this car uses.

Now I am starting to get more than a little annoyed, these are two long standing and well known errors from the previous books and there seems to have been no effort made at all to rectify them. So I check out the rest of the book; cars are shown in colours that are not listed (a C7 Mini type 5 yellow/black roof with no mention of this in the list) or that did not even exist (a beige Merc 250sl with a green roof!). Some of the examples shown are very below par in condition (a C22 Porsche with the rear wing very badly painted in white) and the cross-referencing is abysmal (the first car listed, C1, cross-references with no sense whatsoever and it gets worse from there). In the listing not all the colours are mentioned: French C55 Vanwall only in red when all four colours were made, I have a blue one in stock as I write this. There are so many mistakes it would take a whole issue of the NSCC newsletter to list them.

It seems that Roger has only consulted collectors, and not meaning to be rude, what do

they know? They simply do not see the amount of cars that someone in the trade sees and all the variations etc. that there are. I would say that in the last 10 years I have sold at least 30,000 cars and seen probably 50 times that amount, that's well over 1 million cars! and that is not all new stuff as my business is mainly obsolete sixties Scalextric. Just about every car listed in the book has been through my hands. With all the trips I make to France, Holland, Germany and Spain I have seen all the variations from overseas as well. My knowledge alone is vast! Put that with the likes of Mark Scale, Sean Fothersgill, Derek Cooper, Brian Walters, etc and you have one huge database just waiting to be tapped! Even the colours in the book look wrong, it is far too bright, all the yellow cars look like lemon yellow variants!

If anybody does need a good reference book that you can update year on year and can easily have any wrong entries corrected, then I would recommend you contact Henk Pijpers in Holland. Henk produces a loose-leaf reference book that is 99% correct and lists all the cars produced. He responds to mistakes and every year you get an update with all the new cars and any errors rectified.

I was not going to write this as I did not want to come across as a know-it-all complaining trader, but on speaking to others at the recent NEC meeting I realised that we all felt the same about the book. Roger has worked hard and done a great job but it would have been so much better if the facts were correct, and they could have been, simply by contacting the people who know Scalextric inside out - the traders not the collectors.

Phil Smith

Having had time to study the book a little more closely I have to agree that it contains more errors than I would like but it is worth pointing out that it is easy to criticise after the event. I published at least two letters from Roger requesting information during the writing of the book - I wonder how many of the aforementioned traders responded? ■

NINCO *track test*

50244 Volkswagen Golf tdi

50250 Mercedes CLK DTM

50251 Audi TT-RABT
Overview by the editor

Ninco news has been somewhat lacking in the Journal of late so the arrival of a large parcel from the Hobby Company containing three of their recent models was most welcome.

It is easy to forget that Ninco were the first to move the quality of slot-cars up a notch. Born out of the embers of the original Spanish Scalextric company they quickly found a significant niche in the market with the cars from the original DTM and soon expanded the range into the glorious GT Cars; the Gulf McLaren F1GT remains one of my favourite models. They were also the first of the mainstream firms to indulge our nostalgia by producing "classic" cars such as the Ferrari 166MM.

However, they then made a brave and extremely expensive decision to manufacture their own track which seemed to hamper their efforts on the car side; I bet that seemed like a good idea at the time! They were the last to switch over to tampon printing and, with the demise of both the DTM and the GTs, they struggled to find a theme. An abortive attempt at F1 produced six handsome cars but it was the Go-Karts which showed that the original spirit of Ninco was still alive and willing to try new directions.

The cars provided for review were the Mercedes CLK and Audi TT from the latest version of the DTM plus a Volkswagen Golf which I suspect emanates from a one make racing series but I have been unable to find the source of the real car.

There is really no such thing as a bad slot-car these days; the general standard is so high that buying decisions are usually based on one's personal preferences for collecting or racing and whether the real car appeals to you. These

models are no exception and it is difficult to find anything to criticize. True, Ninco have been left a long way behind in the interior detail stakes but is it really sensible to pay an extra £10 for something that you can only view by dismantling the car and examining it with a magnifying glass? I strongly suspect that the new generation cars from FLY are too expensive to play with and Ninco's policy of competitively priced, useable cars will provide handsome returns.

The Audi TT was my favourite of the three; it really is a beautiful car and, to my mind, looks more like a 'Beetle' than the 'New Beetle'! It also carries booze advertising so I hope the 'Toy Police' aren't too knowledgeable about German lager! The Mercedes is equally good but the less said about the Golf the better - nothing wrong with the slot-car but the real thing is so boring it will probably only appeal to Graham Smith as a replacement for his beloved Toyota Corolla!



For some reason Ninco cars have never been considered very collectable; I really don't know why as they have produced some gorgeous models. The racers, however, seem to love them so I decided they were the best people to conduct a track test. I therefore forwarded these three to David Lawson at the Southend club for his verdict. Ninco cars really need to stretch their legs on a decent sized track and my meagre test circuit is just not up to the job.

The racer's view - from David Lawson

NINCO

track test

This track test all happened in a bit of a hurry. Brian 'phoned to say that he was going to put some cars in the post and could he have a report back by 20th December. Even though I've never done a review before I immediately agreed although secretly wondered how to go about the whole thing.

Three days later the Ninco Audi, Mercedes and the Golf were delivered and taken that same afternoon to the 107 feet Southend Slot Racing Club's track where, apart from a drop of oil on the axle and armature bearings they were to be tested "straight out of the box".

50244 Volkswagen Golf TDI

The Caixa Renting Golf was the first car I looked at. The car looked attractive in its pale blue and white colour scheme with complex tampo printed logos and sponsors signage. This car is 4 wheel drive using a simple rubber band running between the pulley wheel on front and rear axles in a very similar way to Scalextric's system of a few years ago.

On track I immediately felt comfortable with the car - the powerful NC2 motor, the mid chassis mounted magnet and the four wheel drive set up producing a very smooth and driveable slot-car that had no handling vices or faults at all. I drove a total of 31 laps with a best lap of 9.55seconds and thoroughly enjoyed throwing the car into corners with very late braking and powering it out of both slow and fast curves in a constant tail out slide with perfect balance and grip. Considering the car was brand new and both I and the car would get quicker as we become more familiar with each other, its lap times were good. They compared favourably with my well sorted Scalextric Subaru with floating body, trued tyres and hard wired guide which has a best time on this track of 9.39sec.

50250 Mercedes CLK DTM

I couldn't wait to drive the Service 24 Mercedes CLK which looked low, fast and brutal and that was while it was still in its box! The superb delicately moulded multi spoke wheels really set off the rest of the car with its high mounted wing, rear diffuser and body vents and it looked so impressive as it thundered round the circuit.



It has very good acceleration and cornering capabilities. The fat slicks, NC2 motor and the centrally mounted magnet provide smooth progressive predictable handling, there is none of that sudden letting go resulting in a high speed barrel roll associated with rear mounted magnets. Ninco have got it right in the great Magnattraction debate – their mid chassis magnet allows feel and control on the throttle rather than taking over and actually doing the whole job for you.

I could run 8.90 sec laps one after the other at will and after 22 laps turned a best of 8.78sec. Derek White the SSRC chairman and I then had a 10 lap dice, myself with the test Mercedes and Derek driving my own D2 CLK that was also brand new. We ran neck and neck for the whole ten laps and the extra competition resulted in me shaving my best time down to 8.73sec.

⇒

Once again, like the Golf, with the proviso that the car was brand new and will get quicker in time it still performed extremely well against other club lap record times which have been achieved with very well sorted cars as detailed in the accompanying chart.

Comparison of Lap Times on the Southend Slot Racing Club Circuit	
Car	Time
Ninco Golf	9.55sec
Ninco Mercedes CLK DTM	8.73sec
Ninco Audi TT ABT	8.85sec
Scalextric Nascar Ford Taurus	8.18sec
Scalextric Jordan F1	8.95sec
Scalextric Porsche 911 GT1	9.12sec
Fly Chrysler Viper	7.42sec
Ninco Alfa Romeo 155	10.22sec
Ninco Jaguar XK120	10.22sec
Scalextric Audi A4	8.85sec
Pro Slot Ferrari GT	8.95sec
Scalextric Subaru	9.39sec
Scalextric Cadillac Northstar LMP	8.84sec

50251 Audi TT-RABT

Finally, the Audi TT in its beautiful black Hasseroder colour scheme. Ninco have done a great job with the body moulding, all the aerodynamic body panels front and rear, cooling ducts and vents and the radiator grille are crisply

reproduced and result in a stunning looking slot-racing car.

The short wheelbase and wide track produced rollerskate type performance once again combined with very controllable high speed handling, I thought that it may be prone to mid corner snap oversteer due to its short dimensions but the powerful Magnatraction took care of that and after 22 laps I turned a best time of 8.85sec. The Audi was slower than the Mercedes in the test but the difference was just 0.12sec over a 107 foot lap which is obviously a negligible difference.

This was a brief test which gave the tyres very little time to scrub in and other components time to bed in and loosen up, so I would expect these lap times to reduce after further racing, but it was ample time to evaluate these fine Ninco products and ascertain that they go even better than they look.

Summing up I would say that Ninco are producing almost the ideal slot-car at present. The level of detail, build quality, accuracy of shape and the finish are excellent and the cars have plenty of grunt from the powerful NC2 motor, all three cars will make great home track and club racing slot-cars as well as gracing any collector's cabinet. ■



WHEELSPIN

FLY (A145) ZAKSPEED FORD CAPRI REVIEWED BY PETER NOVANI

They could just as easily have been described as ‘cartoon cars.’ Most, if not all of the cars entered for German’s popular Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft (DRM) championship (1978-82) were mere caricatures of the road cars that they purported to represent. The Zakspeed Ford Capri, which Fly Car Model have recently introduced, is really no exception.

Zakspeed’s wonder wagon

“The car you always promised yourself,” boldly proclaimed Ford’s publicity slogan for their sporty looking two door coupé, first introduced in 1969. Obviously that slogan left an impression on me, as in the autumn of 1973 I became the proud owner of a brand new MkI Capri 1600 XL. Painted in Sebring red and with a black vinyl roof it was, at the time, the epitome of good taste – honest!

Yet in later years the Capri’s reputation would be tarnished somewhat by yobmobile/boy racer imagery plus dubious appearances on TV cop shows. Contemporary race reports recounted the Group 2 battles between the MkI Capri and its nemesis, the beautiful BMW 3.0 CSL coupé. However, those reports left me with mixed feelings, as I also had a soft spot for BMW coupés. A fact later to become reality when I purchased a rare TWR prepared and Alpina equipped ‘Hallmark’ 6-Series coupé in the mid-eighties. Those were the days!

Anyway. Following the severity of the mid-seventies fuel crisis, Ford proceeded to close down its successful competitions department. This gave Erich Zakowski, (an East European refugee), and his Zakspeed race team, the opportunity to take over as Ford’s official on-track representatives. The original 1978

Zakspeed Capri, sponsored by Mampe, superseded the double DRM championship winning normally-aspirated Ford Escort, driven by Zakspeed stalwart, Hans Heyer. The 1978 MkIII hatchback Capri was the basis of the new car, and, therefore, shouldn’t be confused with the Group 2 Capri. Make no mistake, the Zakspeed cars were veritable thoroughbred racing machines.

The front engined Capri relied on a four-cylinder 1.4-litre Ford BDA, based on a road going block. That said, it required a turbo and twin intercoolers to deliver the kind of performance (380 bhp) that would ultimately blitz the opposition. A configuration which took full advantage of the liberal Group 5 regulations. They allowed teams to maximise their engineering ingenuity when plotting how best to beat the equally devious opposition, which included factory supported BMW, Lancia and Porsche’s turbo race cars.

Central to the structural integrity of the turbo Capri was a maze of aluminium tubing incorporating the safety roll cage for extra rigidity. Brakes were courtesy of Porsche. Actually, those originally designed for the 1970-71 Porsche 917 endurance sports cars. Wheels were the evocative BBS multi-piece type with magnesium centres and highly polished alloy rims. The ultra-light detachable bodywork was made from very strong Kevlar.

In an attempt to keep the 160 m.p.h. car glued to the track, the car had an ultra low front air dam, bonnet mounted aerodynamic ‘fences,’ an innovative rear ground effect tunnel plus the obligatory rear wing. When compared to its road going counterpart, the race car was an entirely different beast. Take the race car’s inflated exterior dimensions as evidence of that fact.⇒⇒

Incredibly, it was almost 10 inches lower, 12 inches wider, 25 inches longer than the road car, and considerably lighter too. For the 1980 season German legend, Klaus Ludwig, replaced Hans Heyer. Following further developments, which culminated in a 500bhp 1.7-litre 180 m.p.h. version, Ludwig duly won the DRM title outright in 1981, driving the white and red Wurth sponsored version.

The Capri could also be seen racing in the 1982 American IMSA – albeit re-bodied as a Miller Beers sponsored Ford Mustang. Although extremely quick, the car was unsuited to the longer U.S. race distances. Yet Ludwig still managed to impress by scoring a couple of race wins that season. Over the years many well known German touring and endurance race drivers competed in Zakspeed Capris, including Manfred Winkelhock, Klaus Niedzwiedz and Harald Ertl.

Following the introduction of the Group C sports car regulations in 1982, the Capri became more or less redundant as a front-line racer, although its racing life was prolonged by privateer teams who continued to campaign them in the DRM. After a brief flirtation with the ill-conceived factory supported Ford C100 Group C endurance programme and its DRM equivalent, the Zakspeed team set about developing the Capri turbo engine for what turned out to be an under-financed and rather lacklustre assault on Formula One. A project probably best forgotten by all concerned.

The slot-car

Pendle Slot Racing kindly supplied me with the #1 Jägermeister version for this review. As contemporary reports suggest, this year old Capri was normally driven in the 1982 DRM by a German lady, Lili Reisenbichler. However, reigning champion Klaus Ludwig, took time out from his Ford C100 exploits, to drive the car at the ‘old’ Nürburgring round of the DRM. Apparently, he found the car less than competitive during practice, yet eventually managed to secure third place in the race after an overheating turbo delayed him in the pits. Of the half-dozen or so Zakspeed Capris produced,

this bright orange version is possibly the most distinctive. Indeed, the car’s sponsors, Jägermeister (a drinks brand), have had an enduring association with motor sport. Therefore, it is no surprise to find that many model collectors base their entire collections on the plethora of model cars representing the diversity of Jägermeister’s involvement.

Initially, I was rather nonplussed by the overall effect Fly have managed to achieve, especially when the recommended retail price of over £30 is taken into account. Arguably, it should have been marketed as a GB Track product (as was originally intended) and priced accordingly. Don’t get me wrong, the Capri looks the part. And Fly have done well to match the orange hue of the race car. It’s only when comparing it with their sublime Chevrolet Corvette C5-R or Lister Storm, that subtle differences in quality become apparent.

As the Capri’s racing career spanned several seasons, Fly have had to make certain compromises with regards to the detailing. Yet, with a few exceptions, they have captured the feel of this turbo monster with authority. One of the main distinguishing features on the cars from that era of DRM racing were the unusually large diameter rear wheels. With that, and subsequent Group 5 releases in mind, and to keep things looking authentic, Fly have chosen to mould an entirely new wheel and tyre combination. In fact, the chrome wheels are the single most impressive feature on the entire car. Separate gold plastic centres are another notable feature – one of which dislodged itself during the test session.

In general the paint finish is to a high standard, as is the tampo printing. That said, on my example, the small body vents were not as well defined as they should be. While the side air apertures each have a photo-etched mesh grill, only half of the cockpit roll-cage has been replicated. Fly have also omitted the bonnet ‘fences’ and the rear ground effect tunnel. As a weight saving measure, teams tended to use just two of the four headlights, hence the blank outer ‘pods.’ The slot-car lacks any reference to the sliding side window panels or the quarter-lights

where the door mirrors would normally be located. The side exhaust pipe and rear light glazing look less than convincing. And didn't Ludwig race with blue stripes on his white helmet, rather than the plain version depicted? Given that the race car had an extremely low front air dam, Fly wisely chose to use some artistic license to increase the ground clearance. Thankfully, it doesn't greatly affect the overall stance of the slot-car. The main beneficiary of that approach will be enthusiasts who race on temporary layouts, which tend to be bumpier than the (nailed down) permanent home or club track.

The chassis features an in-line Mabuchi motor, front stub-axles, a rectangular magnet plus brass wheel bearings to add weight to the fairly light rear end. Although the motor configuration rightly mimics the full-size car, a full length prop-shaft couples the motor to the pinion by means of a spring. As I have mentioned in previous reviews, the point at which the plastic prop-shaft bearing is mounted, has an inherent design flaw. The tendency is for the bearing to 'pop out' of its mounting at the most inopportune moment – usually when accelerating hard out of a corner.

To pre-empt a recurrence of that fault, and to avoid any possibility of striping the gears, I suggest capping the bearing with quick drying epoxy resin glue before running the car. Strange that a company of Fly's undeniable pedigree should display an apparent indifference to this problem, and therefore, continue to incur the wrath of enthusiasts who race these otherwise impressive slot-cars.

On track impressions

Time now to see how well the car performs around my twisty (nailed down) 35ft four lane Scalextric track layout. As ever, I used the demanding inner 'blue' lane as that tends to reveal any roadholding/handling inadequacies. Originally, I had intended to run the car straight out-of-the-box. However, I had to reposition one of the rear wheels as it was allowing a tyre to rub against the chassis. Moreover, I found it

unusually noisy, prompting me to attack the appropriate components with my trusty 'Parma' PSE oilite oiler. Although the Capri set a fastest lap of 4.4009 seconds and completed 20 laps in 1 minute 31.9809 seconds, it was difficult to lap consistently, and failed to display the archetypal 'painted to the track' roadholding that I've come to expect from Fly slot-cars. Their Chevrolet Corvette C5-R (NSCC Journal review, October 2001) was far easier to control when setting a fastest lap of 4.1771 seconds and completing 20 laps in 1 minute 30.1006 seconds.

So, first impressions suggest that the Capri's handling will be rather lively. I can only assume that the introduction of the taller rear wheels/tyres are the main culprit for its tendency to slide excessively through corners. Essentially, that combination increases the gap between magnet and track rails, thus reducing the magnetic downforce and increasing the likelihood of the car de-slotting. Those shortcomings will have to be eliminated if the Capri is to compete successfully with other Fly 'GT' cars. Either with, or without the magnet, I'm sure club racers will want to replace the rears in an attempt to lower the ride-height.

Conclusion

Only the pernickety will fail to be impressed by this 'GT' newcomer. However, if the Capri is anything to go by, then aficionados of this well established range might have to re-evaluate their expectations and come to terms with the entertaining handling now on offer. Only time will tell whether that particular characteristic is destined to become *dé rigueur* on other Fly Group 5 type slot-cars.

What is a certainty, is that Fly will eventually release a whole raft of colourful Capris – some even featuring the much heralded lighting system. Aside from the prop-shaft problem and the questionable handling, the only other misgiving I have is that Fly were unable to replicate the race car's sensational flame-belching exhaust overrun as it entered a corner. Maybe some things on a slot-car are best left to the imagination. Cheers! ■

Family Holidays?

BY ASHLEY MORRIS

Reading a recent article I noticed reference to a slot event with a team participating from Irun in Spain, so I thought I would write a little note about this year's holidays near there, if you do not mind a travel report with a mention of slot-cars.

We were lucky enough to have two weeks holiday in the beautiful town of St. Jean de Luz in the south west corner of France, and be able to take four days to get there. Our crossing took us to Le Havre and the small step to Honfleur which is a good start to any holiday. Coffee and croissants for breakfast at the side of the harbour set us up a treat.

We had planned the trip down to keep the driving to about 3 hours per day with the afternoon spent in the small type of amusement park that are dotted through France. With an excited 5 year old boy and a 2 year old girl, this was just right. All the parks had been found from a map we had picked up on a previous visit to France, the hotels were from the Logis de France, and route planning on the Internet at mappi.com.

First major stop was at Le Mans, sadly not to wind the Citroen up along Mulsanne, but to stop at the amusement park at Papea City for the afternoon. Much playing on bouncy castles, train rides and roller coasters followed leaving us tired and ready for a rest, the kids were fine though. Next day saw a drive to the national French tank museum at Samour, well worth a visit to see the Tigers and Panther (not animals).

First thing I do when driving through a French town pretending to look for the hotel is to check out any toy shops, and luckily one was spotted just around the corner from the hotel. After throwing everyone out of the car I set off to explore, mentioning how pretty the town was on the way just to show how cultured I can be. On first glance the toy shop seemed to mainly cater for remote control cars, but a bit of investigating found a couple of last year's, very dusty Ninco sets at the back, half price. My existing Scalextric set has been built up over a

couple of years and mainly comprises of pieces from car boot sales. The problem of spending more time trying to get the track to work rather than using it was becoming too regular an occurrence, so the thought of a new track was already in my mind. Half price was too good a chance to miss so I walked out with a Speedway set complete with two BMW's and a GT set with a Merc and a Porsche. Although one of my favourite cars is a Ninco McLaren F1 with an NC2 motor, I was more interested in the track, especially after realising that two transformers can be fitted to the power base without having to buy a special section.

Onward the next day to the Aqualand water park at Gujan Mestras, at last the weather was hot enough to strip off. The final part of the drive down saw us getting to St. Jean de Luz on the Saturday morning, and I was already planning my trip across the Spanish border to Irun, but I had to realise we were on holiday as well. After a few days of sun, surfing and trying to eat and drink that corner of France dry I eventually got to go to my favourite toy shop in Irun, called Garbi. This should really not be considered a shop for children, as all mine did was to try and distract me from the serious business of spending money on myself. I had not bought a slot-car for a few months prior to this as the house needed a lot of work so I deserved a break (I told myself). My favourite era and type of car is the Group B rally car, and I had already bought and painted up a Sport Quattro and a Lancia S4 from Teamslot, so more of the same was at the top of the list.

Working my way down the boxes of cars under the counter with no ability to speak Spanish was interesting but with pointing, grunts and smiles I succeeded in finding a Peugeot 205 T16, mid engined Renault 5 and a Fiat 131 already painted up and decalced for less than £40 each which seemed good compared to what I had seen in Britain. These went into the shopping basket. Realising these cars are a bit easy to damage if driven to the limit I wanted ➤➤

a real racing car so got a Proslot Martin Brundle Le Mans Toyota for about the same as at home. Prices are not significantly cheaper unless you find a bargain but there is a good chance of seeing models before they come over here. I spotted the SCX Mini Cooper Vintage Car and Fly Lola T70 Magny Cours amongst a pile of boxes ready to go on display. It also has spare parts for Spanish built cars and track, so a couple of interesting Ninco track parts also went into the basket.

Also in the shop is a huge display of diecast models and I was eyeing up a superb Lancia 037 when my conscience pricked me (well she slapped me actually) and I came out of my trance to find the children demolishing a corner of the shop so we had to go.



Ashley wins this month's Scale Models prize car (SCX Arrows 2000) for demonstrating the true deviousness of a slot-car fanatic when planning a family holiday!



BITS AND PIECES

Offensive Scalextric?

**Advertising Agency: Lowe Howard-Spink
Complaint from 33 viewers**

The setting for the advertisement was a hospital maternity ward at visiting time. A father cradled a baby and said "Oh, you beautiful boy!" and described the fun they were going to have together playing Scalextric. A nurse said "Put their son down....", pointing to the child's real parents "...and play with your own daughter". The man reluctantly returned to his wife, who was holding their baby girl and looking upset. Superimposed text said: "Scalextric. It's a boy thing".

23 viewers complained that it was sexist, stereotyping and discriminatory. 10 viewers were concerned that it showed the rejection of a female child because it was not as valued as a baby son, thinking it would send the wrong message to certain cultures that reject baby girls. One said the man was handling the new-born baby in a dangerous way.

The ITC noted that the advertisement was intended to poke fun at grown men so attracted to the lure of Scalextric that they would seek any excuse to buy a set. It was nonetheless not

The rest of the holiday continued as well as it started, and we reluctantly left in the ferry but I was happy with my two tracks and eight cars. Now you know why we have a Citroen MPV; at least we didn't have to leave the children behind to bring our toys home, you see my wife is as bad as I am but with Ladro figures.

Having tried the track at home I am very pleased, for the first time my more powerful cars will wheelspin coming out of tight bends with very little pressure on the controller which can't be bad. Work on the house is coming to an end with the children's (my) play room completed, so the track can stay down for a few days at a time.

I am looking forward to the holiday next year, and hope that someone will build a Le Mans Bentley and a Gulf Audi by then. ■

surprised that the visual device of a father apparently wishing he had a son rather than a daughter had upset some people, although it did not believe that the improbable illustration, set in the context of a toy car racing set, would have been taken seriously by most viewers. The ITC did not consider that the man was handling the baby in a dangerous manner. The complaints were not upheld.

Found on the Advertising Standards Agency website by John Carmichael who really ought to have better things to do - mind you so should the people who complained!

New world record

The longest slot-car track in the world has been constructed at Fordpark Raceway in Sussex. At 1052.19 metres it beats the previous record of 777.25 metres; consisting of 2731 pieces of Ninco track it took a team of six people eight hours to build and amazingly worked first time!

Derek Bell, five times winner of Le Mans, competed in the first race and was beaten by thirteen year old Stuart Payne. The lap time was 4 minutes 27 seconds.

Chaps

BY JOHN DILWORTH

As a long time fan of Chaparral cars and Jim Hall himself I was pleased to see the Journal review of the Chaparral 2D kit from Top Slot, soon after the review of the MRRC Chaparral 2C. For too long have I have had only the slightly bizarre SCX 2E/G for company.

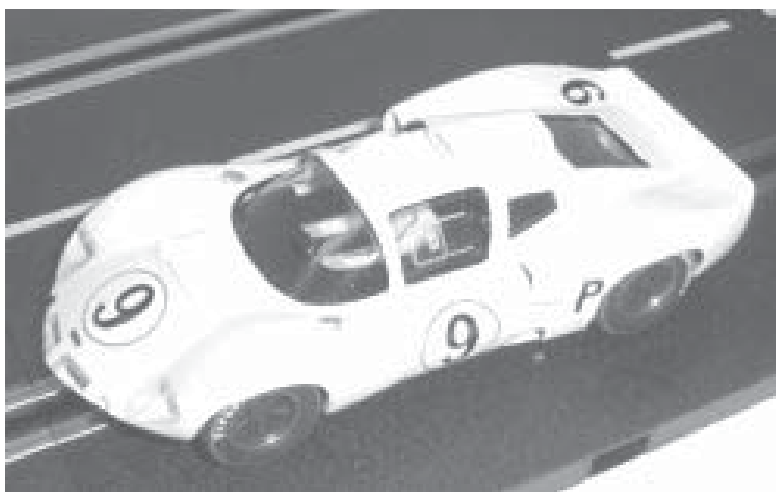
My best memories of the 70s were those fabulous Cox Chaparral models in 1/24th, which I could never afford. One of my most successful racing models of the time was a vacform bodied 2F (from G.T. Models of Beckenham- whatever happened to them?) with working flipper. It was hooked up to the motor, which was left loose to pivot in its mountings and swivelled the wing up and down during acceleration and braking. It was a fast model, but you had to be quick to spot the wing twitching.

Anyway, I seized gratefully on the MRRC 2C, sent to me swiftly as usual by MRE, which has that beautifully moulded Monogram body, and turns out to be a real mover on the track. A second chassis becomes the basis for the lovely Top Slot 2D, and hey presto, after years of drought, a whole fleet of beautiful, classy cars.

There are one or two problems though (multiply that by ten for the SCX thingy). The most obvious is the old high nose syndrome. Nothing ruins the appearance of a slot car on the track like the front spoiler of a seriously neat looking racing car wallowing about, several scale feet above the track. File down those body mounting posts! Shim down the guide! Throw away the chassis of the SCX car! But best of all, change the wheels. Jim Hall has more racing car design breakthroughs to his name than Colin Chapman (and I'm not at all sure about that either) and one of the most enduring was cast magnesium wheels. The ones that come with the MRRC car are pretty cool, but not at all right for the model (great for a huge number of other '60's models that I'd love to build though).

The nearest approximation I could get come from a Fly Porsche GTI; they're not perfect, particularly the low-profile tyres, but with a brush of silver paint over the spokes to give that dull alloy look, they look great on all three Chaparral models. What's more, the lower profile tyres help to seat the car lower on the track for improved appearance, and on the MRRC car bring the magnet lower to the track for truly amazingly improved performance. For a slot-car, if it's a question of precise scale accuracy against the appropriate 'look' and 'feel' of the car on the track, scale precision goes out of the window every time, for me. The wheels may not be exactly right in style or size, but they are a major improvement on the MRRC ones, which are definitely staying in the bits box.

It would take a whole chapter to describe the other work that needs to be done to the SCX car to give it the real on-the-track look of a Can-Am contender, but it's well worth it. In the meantime, a Fly Chaparral 2F would be nice.



As an afterthought, following the release of some really fine cars from MRRC (the Cobra really is one of the best models of the year), I'd love to know a bit more about the company. I know they have a very long history- is it unbroken? And who is making the very wise decisions to bring out such a fine array of models; where to next? Can anyone enlighten us? ■

Slot-Tech Porsche open challenge (round 2)

Phoenix club 18th November 2001

BY PETE MURPHY

Steve Rigg and I arrived on the Saturday for the practice session to a very warm friendly atmosphere. First impressions of the track were 'WOW'! What a good track layout and I wondered to myself about that bus stop only to find out later it was quite an exciting drivers' section that I really came to terms with.

I set my car up in no time at all - no problem. (Not saying that I am an expert but I just don't know what the hell to do and it only took me a minute or so to work that one out.) So after a couple of hours practice, we were soon back at the Hilton NEC for swimming, sauna, jacuzzi and steam rooms. Well that's what racing's all about innit lads?

Sunday race day

Fantastic turn out of drivers, Forty-four booked into race, with some ten spectators. I can see this Challenge being around for some time to come. The Phoenix club races on a 140ft six lane Ninco track, with computerised lap counting and timing. Unfortunately the computer was not detecting the brown lane so the races were run on 5 lanes only.

All the heats were run over ten laps with points awarded to the final positions. The race was run in two separate sets of heats, one for the seniors and one for the juniors; all were fast and furious with drivers trying to accumulate as many points as they could in order to qualify for the final and get a trophy.

The Junior Final (20 Laps)

The junior final was a close run affair with our boy James Yardley doing justice for the sport in more ways than one. If memory serves me right I think he was in the lead at one point with the now famous 6 wheel drive car which was a worthy prize winner for the most innovative car. And everyone has to agree it went absolutely

fantastically. I did get a chat with his dad after the race and he told me James was in his bedroom for a month designing the car. The bodywork extension was moulded out of plastic using the hair dryer. Top marks James, a worthy winner. Just think when he leaves University maybe we will be driving one of his designs on the highway. Look out Bertone, competition is on the way.

The final was won by young Chris Darby who was also holding fastest lap overall of the day. He set a standard of pace that was so consistent everyone else buckled under the pressure

The senior final (20 laps)

Well what can I say? Nick Hirst what were you doing? Leading the race almost to the end and well I suppose, that bus stop. Bet you had nightmares that night.

I have only been racing for a year now and this has to be the most nail-biting final I have ever seen. You could have heard a pin drop. Time stood still. The world could have ended outside and no one would have noticed, (except me because I was having a crafty ciggie.)

The race was won finally by the well-deserved Darren Hampton (alias The Iceman), with Nick in second place (the highest placed visitor) and Paul Darby in third place.

Paul put in a storming few laps whilst the battle for first and second was taking place. By snatching the lap record from his son at least twice he took the trophy for fastest lap of the day in 13.484 secs.

Overall it was a very well organised race day and top credit to Jim Brown for making this happen. Also to Jon Sword for hosting the event. It suddenly dawned on me the amount of preparation and work on the day that these people do for us all. ■

Silver Hatch Circuit

Part 4 - Software

As previously mentioned our race monitoring is done by the "Slotmaster" system and race scoring is recorded via a Lotus 123 spreadsheet. Surely two systems where only one is really necessary?

Absolutely, however the problem is that the "Slotmaster" system is an execution only program which means that access to the source code is not possible. There is no way to amend its processing to reflect our needs.

On further investigation it was discovered that the results.txt file output from the system can be read. Studying the file it became clear that all the event's race information could be accessed from it and an automatic scoring system created from this file.

Hours of coding and testing later the program was ready. The Lotus 123 spreadsheet method was consigned to the bin and the new program used.

At the end of each group or sequence as the monitoring software refers to it as the results must be saved. This ensures that the results.txt file is updated with the previous groups results. The scoring program is then run and the current scores are displayed on the screen.

The data displayed on the screen is shown below:

Scalextric Grand Prix - analysis program

Date: 24/10/2001

Class: Formula 1
Group 5

Driver	points	handicap	total	laps	choice	results
Marc	55.0	42.0	97.0	38	3	0 3 1 4
Graham	55.0	42.0	97.0	62	4	1 1 3 1
Cobus	60.5	23.8	84.3	84	5	0 0 1 1
Martin	44.5	39.2	83.7	58	2	2 2 0 0
Ken	83.0	0.0	83.0	122	6	0 3 2 2
Phil	29.0	42.0	71.0	34	1	0 2 0 0

BY KEN ELSTON

The points column is the number of points accrued by the driver before his handicap is applied to it. The handicap column is the driver's handicap for the event.

The handicap figure is calculated for an event with 5 groups, this event had 9 so the true handicap for Marc is 30 ($30 * 1.8 = 42$).

The total column is the total of the driver's points plus handicap. The Laps column is the driver's total number of laps covered in the event.

The choice column is the selection order for the next group, this is determined by the Points column. For example Phil has the lowest score (29) therefore he will select first in the next group.

The race results columns are the positions the driver finished in his races in the group. A zero figure means that he did not complete one lap in the race and therefore was unclassified.

In addition to the monitor display the program produces a file which gives a race by race analysis of the event. A sample 'race' lifted from data supplied by the results file output from the monitoring software is shown below:

Time 10:52 Heat 3 Race Length 3 minutes
Fastest Lap was 12.85

Driver	Pos.	Laps	Average	Best	Points	Total
Ken	3rd	1	15.270	15.27	2.0	2.0
Cobus	2nd	3	13.567	12.91	3.0	3.0
Marc	1st	3	13.347	12.85	6.0	8.0
Phil	dnf	0	n/a	n/a	0.0	9.0

The first line shows the data relating to the race itself, time, heat number within the group, race distance (3 minutes) and the fastest lap recorded within the race. The remaining lines show, in lane order, the data relating to the driver for that race.

If the position is shown as DNF this means that the driver did not complete a lap and therefore does not score any points. The display also shows laps, average and best lap time and the points scored in the race. The driver's current total score is also shown.

Data relating to individual cars is held on a Lotus 123 spreadsheet. The spreadsheet is divided into pages, 1 page per group. The data held against each car is shown below:

POSITION: Qualifying position within group

TYPE: Hornby, Fly, SCX, Ninco etc.

MODEL: Car

TIME 1: Qualifying time for lane 1

TIME 2: Qualifying time for lane 2

TIME 3: Qualifying time for lane 3

TIME 4: Qualifying time for lane 4

QUALIFYING TIME: Average of the 4 times

LAPS: Total laps run in qualifying

LAST RUN: Date car last qualified

NQ: Not qualified indicator

LIGHTS: Whether the car has working lights

An example is shown here:

POSITION: 1

TYPE: E

MODEL: FERRARI F40 'SCALEXTRIC'

TIME 1: 9.95

TIME 2: 9.56

TIME 3: 9.72

TIME 4: 9.56

QUALIFYING TIME: 9.6975

LAPS: 120

LAST RUN: 28/12/2000

LIGHTS: L

The next logical step forward was to create some software that would combine the functions of the spreadsheet and the scoring systems. No doubt about it this was a large undertaking and would take many hours of coding and testing before it would be completed. However never one to back away from a challenge (unless violence was involved!) I set about creating the ultimate in slot racing software!

The first stage of any design is to identify the requirements. The functions I arrived at were as follows:

1) To produce a set of processes which would interrogate the results from the Slotmaster system and display the data in the format dictated by our set of race rules.

2) To create and maintain a set of qualification times for each car.

3) To produce a set of processes which will allow selection of cars for a group and then to update the Slotmaster system with the selected cars.

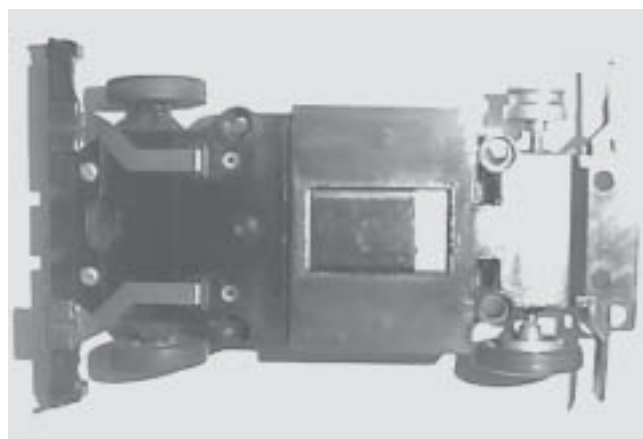
4) To create and maintain a handicap calculation system.

5) To create and maintain a championship table incorporating the 'best 9 of 12' scores and 'countback' procedures in the event of a tie.

Could it be done? Well next month we'll see what has been produced so far. ■

Mystery chassis

Can any member help identify this recently discovered slot-car. It appears to have some form of geared steering linked to one end of the motor by a pinion and a horizontally mounted gear. There is a spring across the front axle and



the pick-ups are brass and fairly wide as per the pictures. Please get in touch with Brian Steptoe at the Eastcote Scalex club if you have any ideas. email:brian.steptoe@concert.com

Take me to your lead(er)

BY TONY SECCHI

Circa mid sixties - Christmas day - little Billy opens his huge present whilst parents (particularly Dad) look on with anticipation and excitement.

Tearing off the wrapping paper little Billy reveals a Scalextric set - figure of eight circuit and two cars (possibly C66 Cooper and C67 Lotus). Father takes over, assembles track and connects the transformer to the mains. Little Billy and father start to race and at the first bend both cars fly off into the furniture. This scenario is repeated every few seconds for the next hour and only by going very slowly can inexperienced hands, young and old, keep the cars on the track. It is boring and very unexciting and by Boxing Day the set is put aside; by the New Year it is dismantled and put in a cupboard to become in future years a source of demand from collectors.

Circa today - Tony Secchi receives a Fly Panoz LMR1 ordered from Sean Fothersgill of Pendle Slot. He unpacks it, puts it on his home track and straight out of the box it goes like a bat out of hell and sticks to the circuit like glue. The difference, of course, is that today's cars have more powerful engines, a lower centre of gravity, much better tyres and most importantly, Magnatraction. I have recently written a comprehensive account on magnets, which Brian was good enough to publish, therefore it is not the hub of this dissertation. The point of this article is what we did to keep cars on the track and improve the roadholding before we had magnets. From Christmas presents to real club racing was (and still is) a big jump. One of my regular competitor mates brought along a friend who had purchased a Scalextric set for his kids and had become quite proficient on it himself. He thought that those skills were easily transferable to a bigger circuit but when he tried mine, he soon found out the difference between a 4m figure of eight layout on the carpet and a 20m complex layout in my spare room. We have not seen him since. So how did we, in those far off days, go from virtually minimal roadholding

to the very good adhesion that we had at club level? The answer is lead. Well, not only lead, we used plasticene to hold it in position. The sources of this material were manifest in the sixties - lead roof flashing; lead plumbing pipes and even lead toy soldiers; but our main source was from clip-on wheel weights. Before tubeless tyres became the norm along with self-adhesive weights, wheels were balanced by curved, profiled lead weights fixed to the wheel rim by means of a metal clip on the back. We cut these up with a hacksaw and fixed them to the inside of the bodyshell with plasticene as most cars did not have an integral chassis; a lot of trial and error and model dismantling was needed.

Our cars ran with pin type guides and the first weight was generally put in the nose to keep the guide in the slot. On a wide nosed car plasticene alone usually sufficed, but on single seaters a small cut and profiled lead fragment was added. Because of the chassis type in use very little central weighting was used so the next place to investigate was behind the rear wheels. This was universally plasticene and a large chunk of lead. This configuration gave a 'tail out' oversteering form of roadholding which was characteristic of the real racing cars of the day. However, the single seater format could not accommodate big amounts of rear end lead, which were essential to our version of good roadholding. This possibly, contributed to the virtual demise of open wheel racing in our club; the same ethos may be in force at some current clubs today. Some of my fellow members tried putting weight inside the bottom of the sills on either side, but being that far out from the car centre line it had little or no effect except to speed up the frequency of 'roll over' de-slots. Later, when models became available with full width chassis we started to experiment by hammering the lead weights flat to a thin sheet (approx. 1-2 mm) and cutting it into profiled pieces to suit specific cases. This was then glued (Bostick or Araldite) directly to the underside ⇒

of the chassis. A point here; because of the glues available and amount needed, this lead sheeting was often difficult to remove if in the wrong place, sometimes ruining the chassis in the process. Today, with two-way adhesive tape, lead sheeting can be attached and removed easily before being finally fixed with Superglue. The most common method used with lead weighted only cars is to start with approximately 1/2mm thick x approx. 30mm x 10mm sheet at mid chassis and then add a smaller, lighter similar sized sheet just behind the rear axle. If that gives the car a light front end we usually add two small pieces; one either side of the pick up just inside the front wheels. When experimenting with weight, it is best to start with slightly thickish sheet and then file it down as required. You can start thin and add layers as you go but we find the former method easier to ensure fine control. Lead weight, like magnatraction, can give quicker stopping and later braking into corners, but beware - if you like a loose running gear set up your car could run on past the apex. The answer is to test and try. A few laps and a few mods. should give you a stable, late braking car which you can 'drift' into the corners, using the power to control it.

Finally, in our 'Formula Libre' series we allow the use of both magnets and lead. These 'free formula' cars have very powerful engines, lightweight bodies and sometimes two or three magnets which keep the centre and rear glued to the track but make the front end too 'light'. Sometimes the 'one piece of lead either side of the pick up' technology from the past times of lead weighting solves the problem.

Any form of added roadholding, whether lead or magnets, will slow the car down, but it is necessary for quick and stable cornering. Without any form of added adhesion a really fast car would have to be braked earlier, driven slower round bends and have the power put down later on exiting. All this will slow the car down more than one with added road holding which be able to brake later, traverse the bends quicker and accelerate sooner out of them. In any form of competition you have to finish to win, so there is very little point in the upgrading of a car to go faster in a straight line if it is slow and unstable in the turns. Much better, I think, to sacrifice a modicum of that speed and have the benefit of stable control giving faster times and less chance of deslotting.

Happy Tuning. ■