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If I have any language talents at all they are confined to the written word and not the spoken one. So, it was with some trepidation that I approached my recent talk on the history of Scalextric.

Faced with the possibility of an hour long presentation I decided that cars speak louder than words and assembled an array of items for the audience to view; many thanks to Richard Winter and Steve Bradley for the loan of some extra goodies. Also, as the audience consisted of electricians, I took the safe route and provided a selection of Scalextric motors for technical discussion.

However, I completely forgot to allow for the fact that the child lurks just beneath the surface in most grown men! The first part proceeded quite normally as I demonstrated the early Scalex cars and there was a good deal of interest in the electrical characteristics of the original RX motors. The rot set in when I placed some cars on the track for them to play with; within minutes my carefully prepared speech was drowned by cries of "Come on, don't hog the track," and "You took me off - it was my corner."

In short, twenty adults turned into squabbling children; they had a glorious time and the talk was judged a huge success. Scalextric is truly an extraordinary toy! Interestingly they split into two distinct camps - the boy racers who loved the modern magnet cars and the traditionalists who preferred the tail out slides of my race tuned BRM. No change there then!

There was an added bonus to the evening as two people approached me afterwards and offered to retrieve some Sixties stuff from their attic; perhaps this could be a new way to find those hidden treasures. Anybody want an after dinner speaker?

And Finally - several people have suggested that I am gifted with psychic powers after the May editorial; perhaps you would care to look at the Jim Bamber cartoon on page 5 - dated 1999 when Barrichello signed for Ferrari. Now that is foresight!

Till next month

Brian



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



All at 'C' Over the Seas

A few more details on the Australian cars. The V8 cars will have one-piece bodies with a new underpan. The windows will be tampon printed on the one piece body but to a much higher quality than the old black window DTM cars of a few years ago. They promise to be light weight rockets although first reports are that the body shells are similar in size to NASCAR bodies. More news on these later in the year.

Seize the opportunity.

The DTM Opel Astra will be revamped later this year. Hornby Hobbies are seizing the opportunity to update the body to follow changes in the real DTM series. This comes along with early reports of a Mercedes to match the Astra. No more information at this stage but expect this to come to fruition at the tail end of the year.

More 'C's

Following last months news of a Mercedes set for Toys-R-Us. there is also an F1 style set. The new set, C1089L, has two high nose Team cars. C2440W being a red high nose car with Xerox and Pioneer livery with racing number 1. The second car is rather Williams-esque in blue/white with Minolta and Castrol sponsorship and racing number 2. In-line motor and double round magnets between engine and rear axle with the old style solid hubs and slick tyres complete the entry-level specification cars.

Scalextric sees 40.

Our favourite little cars' fortieth anniversary passed a few years ago but there's another celebration of '40' due in a few months time.

The much anticipated Ford GT40 is still on schedule for later this year. There will be at least

two versions released reflecting different body stylings.

Seeing double.

For those collectors who simply must collect everything, you will probably look forward to seeing double when the Renault and Toyota F1 cars are released. Of course, they will be in standard and 'Sport' specifications!

See the light.....

.....er version of the catalogue. It's just around the corner. Some of the cars described above may well be viewed for the first time anywhere in the twice-yearly fan-fold leaflet due out in July! 'C' you next month! ■

Westcountry rambles

BY VINE FENNEL

You would be advised to be very careful about what you think. Why? Well obviously The Ed has powers that only a few other people on this planet possess.

“What is this idiot talking about?” I hear you all mumbling. Cast your minds back to last month’s editorial and his prediction that Rubens would yield to the great God Schumacher. Obviously written prior to the Austrian cure for insomnia taking place, he can only have had what can be described as a vision in predicting the outcome. Then again, maybe not. Perhaps it was common knowledge. The bottom line of it all though is:- What a complete farce.

Hope you enjoyed the article that was spread out over the last couple of months. And yes, I did get a mention in it. Stay tuned for more interesting stuff gleaned from a friend’s collection of old magazines.

Here’s a picture for all you Rail Racer fans. It was featured in a 1990 copy of Autosport and is apparently the Southport Circuit from some time in the 1950s.



Nice to see that Scalextric are now doing spares. As it’s only for the ‘Sport’ range of cars does this mean that I still won’t be able to get Caterham or Cadillac wheels. I also seem to remember ‘Service’ sheets for individual cars and in fact about 12 or 13 years ago I ordered a part for a Rover Vitesse direct from Hornby. Cost was about £3 if my fading memory is right.

Can’t remember what the part was though, but it was a fairly major component, body or chassis, something like that.

It’s interesting reading about all of you who are working on your scratch built kits and various other bodies, lovingly turning out your own personal dream machines, only for one of the manufacturers to mass produce the car and so render your efforts wasted. OK, not wasted, because if you’re like me then you probably get more pleasure from doing the work than from putting it on the track and finding that it’s totally uncompetitive and handles like a pig. Well most of mine do, but boy do they look good.

I’ve a cupboard full of projects waiting to be built (can’t get the wheels though!) and quite a lot of them have been rendered obsolete! Airfix Porsche 917 (thanks Fly), Monogram Ford Mustang Mach 1 (thanks Scalextric) I could go on but there are far too many to mention. Hundreds in fact.

Mole in April mentioned metal VIP track and its use with the dreaded magnets. Tune in next month for some almost 40 year old technology.

Now on to the boring bit:- Fly listings. Lister Storm this month.

LISTER STORM

- A 101 Blue Datasonix # 52 Le Mans 1995.
- A 102 Newcastle United # 14 Silverstone 2000.
- A 103 ???
- A 104 Yellow # 25 Donington 1999.
- A 105 Black/Silver # 32 Brands Hatch 1999.
- A 106 White CSI # 20 Silverstone 2000.
- A 107 Black Michelin # 1 Donington 2000.
- A 108 MRW #2 Spanish GT Championship ’00.

LIMITED EDITION

- E 101 Maroon Gagemaster.

SPANISH GT CHAMPIONSHIP

- PA 3 Black El Mundo # 1

Anyone know what happened to A 103? ■

CK1

BY TIM AINSLIE

The beginning of my addiction to slot-cars came about, as I am sure it did for many whose childhood occurred during the 60s, with a set 30. The red Lotus and blue Cooper formula junior cars only serving to whet my appetite for the wonderful array of cars to be found in the Scalextric catalogue for 1966.

I was not particularly interested in real cars until more recent years, but there was something about the little powered models that captivated me.

My collection slowly expanded to include a C37 BRM, Porsche FI, Vanwall and Mercedes 190. Most of these were purchased from Holloway's in Hounslow, West London. This was a real Aladdin's cave of a toyshop that served my toy fantasies until we moved in 1971. It was run by two old men who stocked just about every toy imaginable, the shop was tiny but used every available inch of space. I always wondered how they managed to avoid falling from the rickety wooden step ladder they used to reach the items stored up near the ceiling.

It was on my route home from school and I would often stand looking at the Scalextric products haphazardly displayed in the window; I can remember the front-engined Offenhauser catching my imagination. They had all the desirable but unobtainable cars such as Aston Martins, Auto Unions; unobtainable because it would take forever to save up for these on pocket money that amounted to 6d each week

Fantasy could sometimes be fulfilled though, usually around Christmas or on my birthday. I certainly believed in Father Christmas the year I opened a parcel to find that I now possessed a CK1 AC Cobra.

This was for me the ideal present as I loved making the model kits turned out by Airfix, Revell and Frog and I also liked to tinker with my cars (I had by this time converted the 190 Merc into a hard top and replaced the rear end with one from an Airfix Mk1 Cortina !)

The CK1 was brilliant, it came in a big box

as a kit with all manner of extra bits and pieces, these included different ratio metal drive gears, spare wheel hubs, spare tonneau, to allow either right or left hand drive versions to be constructed and best of all it contained a decal sheet that had sufficient decals for three cars. The kit required most parts to be painted and glued but it had screws to attach the chassis to the body, it also had a self-centring guide blade courtesy of a rubber band that attached to the chassis and the end of the guide. It also came with what seemed to me at the time to be the most awesome motor ever produced, (could have something to do with the massive size of the final drive gears supplied with the kit). The car almost dug grooves in the Plexitrack as it roared along the straights, it never went round the bends with the same power but when it came to a straight section it became a snarling beast seeing off any of the opposition in a race.

As the staple story seems to go I discovered girls and motorbikes and the Scalextric was carefully consigned to the loft, (Thanks Dad).

Time passes

Ten years later I was still into girls and motorbikes, but after one evening in the pub with my group of mates we discovered that we all had a cache of Scalextric in various lofts or under beds somewhere. So we put together a composite circuit with a twenty foot straight as part of the design. For six months this became regular post pub entertainment and is a prime example of why one should not drink and drive 1/32. The Cobra was still in mint condition and still possessed the power to outstrip anything on the twenty foot straight. Unfortunately its ability to get round bends had not improved and I have vivid memories of the car crashing regularly with bits of bumper or lights flying up into the air as the car flew over the crash barriers at the end of the straight. Fortunately we eventually got bored and the cars and track returned to their previous resting places.

Fifteen years later, married, with two children, and the motorbike consigned to hibernation we decided to buy a bigger house with a loft, (well that is how my wife remembers me making the decision that the house would meet our requirements). Buying the house coincided with my parents reminding me of my childhood items in their loft; it is amazing how quickly I acted when they threatened to put the lot out with the rubbish if I did not collect it.

I discovered that Father Christmas was still alive and kicking as the first year in the house brought with it NSCC membership from my wife as a joke present (little did she know!) Talking to another member I discovered that the Cobra had taken on a new status during the time I had owned it; he was horrified that I was actually considering using it on the track. Reflecting on this conversation forced me to take a long hard look at the car, with its few missing chrome parts and the cracks in the chassis that happen with normal use as the motor has too much torque for the plastic chassis.

Missing parts

I replaced the missing parts with the excellent reproduction items produced by BTS mouldings and superglued the cracks in the chassis so that it is back to something like its former glory.

There is, however, something that prohibits me from wrapping the Cobra in cotton wool and turning it into a static exhibit and I take it out of its box and give it a few laps every so often, not at full bore, but just to be able to remember what it is like.

It remains one of my all time favourite Scalextric cars and has to be ranked as one of the more classic Scalextric products of the sixties. There have been several new versions released in the last two years but to me none have come close to capturing the raw power of the real car in the way that the CK1 managed thirty years ago. ■

A forty year cruise on the good ship Scalextric

BY DAVE YERBURY

It's not always been a smooth passage but, over this period, our favourite tiny company has conjured up a varied array of products. Much has been written on the 'C' numbers, variations in colour decorations, most of it captured in Roger Gillham's book. Scalextric cars to me are like a good Malt Whiskey, I like it straight, in other words, I just like the colour they are supposed to be. But I am perverse.

On this cruise there are many interesting sights, most of which are recommended with a view to purchasing a few souvenirs whilst at the attraction. The Tin Age was very interesting with a varied array of gizmos to be used on the tables and floors as the slot had not yet arrived. One starry night whilst walking on the poopdeck Fred has a brain wave: "Let's put a slot in the table and a motor in the Tin ones and race them." Lucky he was at sea when the blinding flash came to him or he might well have been escorted to the local sanatorium and there would have been a serious delay with the slot.

He carries out this job but batteries and an on/off switch don't really catch the imagination. Very soon after this he is transformed and gets his controllers to go plastic as we are approaching the swinging 60s and everything will indeed be shiny plastic.

It turns out to be a great idea; the early sights on the cruise are very true to life, unlike the tin ones. My favourite views were of Vanwall and the Lotus; these were added to the lumpy Lister set. On further sightseeing trips the merits of Cooper and BRM on Route P25 were viewed and swiftly added to the growing collection of souvenirs. I must have nodded off for a while and missed a few sights for the next view I get is of red and blue; although not very large these mementos of a visit long ago, have given hours of pleasure - notably keeping the hands warm on a Saturday morning race meeting in the

garage with friends. I speak of course of the land of the Formula Juniors, which seem as popular souvenirs now as they were then. The sight of Bentley and of Alfa Romeo were viewed as a bit fly in those days but unbelievably were not purchased on that visit. The next leg of the cruise was to be the highlight as our next port of call was Bugatti; a new port just being built. Unfortunately overnight storms had caused damage to the buildings, the programme was halted and our visit was cancelled. This was disappointing as to this day I have never been able to afford a return trip to Bugatti. I am aware that a few fortunate people who were building there managed to spirit away a few examples of their labours, mostly in blue, the port's natural colour.

How Quant

There were a couple of special GT trips available but the wallet was getting thin so the chance to get a nice couple of souvenirs was passed up, mainly as I thought it was a maths lesson as someone was talking that night of 250 + DB5 being the question. After a few days passage the sun was out and it looked as though our available cash at this port of call was convertible. Doubly convertible actually, one in white and the other pillar box red. So my two companions who returned to the ship with me were a Mr A. Healey and Mr. Mercedes who was a large chap weighing in at 190sl's. Sailing along at night, we were promised more sights in the near future of very different appearances. Apparently, one was to have its rear axle mounted at the front covered by a sump guard and named after a Quant young lady and her skirt or indeed lack of it. I steered sway from this view; back to the ship with a lack of souvenirs.

Things were getting exciting, as our next port of call was to be Hong Kong where some⇒

new sights had just been built. This new sightseeing trip was being led by an American called Lionel who informed us, that from now on, all the souvenirs would come with a complimentary can as this was the future. On our trip we had to cross a ford on the Grand Turissimo road 40 on the way past the snake zoo where all of the Cobras were being reskinned after a trip from A.C in England. Also at the zoo were some snake handlers, the Offenhauser brothers from the States. A pair of good looking fellows, but I could not entertain anything with self-adhesive tattoos. The next part of the trip was a Triumph as I was feeling a little blue in the autumn cold. We had gone to the main zoo to look at the newly born Yellow Tigers which were a sight to behold. Our pounds were easily convertible into the purchase of these two wonderful souvenirs.

Race tuned

We have been cruising for a while now and most of the sights have lived up to expectations. Overeating was causing a problem so a run around the deck was in order. Those taking part were after a few days beginning to get Race Tuned. We had a pet show on board one night where a Mr. D.Type showed us his pet Jaguar, and a Mr. Porsche his Spyder. My two old friends A. Healey and Mr. Mercedes also attended. The captain offered to steer the ship back to Bugatti to see if we could visit but this was not allowed. A group of car workers from Germany were represented by their Auto Union but they did not have any spare samples or swaps. It was rumoured that Sean Connery was on board to film a scene for the latest James Bond film

We saw a catalogue of pictures but the cars were nowhere to be seen. Our next port of call was going to be a novelty as, although most of us were competent skiers, we had never seen the new sport of sledging. I think some of the fellow passengers were in rehab as they talked of people at home who they had seen taking part in this new sport of sledging. It begins to sound like a Cynthia Payne farce as these people

apparently were able to use these new sledges indoors on black rubber, the only difficult bit was the apparent necessity to keep it slotted! The mind boggles. The French on this trip to the mountains got Piste first as they had a car waiting called an Alpine Renault. Their bosses had already travelled there before them using the company Matra Jet. They stood at the mountain peak as we climbed up giving us a 2 finger salute which, after dinner, they admitted was a greeting sign known to them as the Europa Vee. Some of the non-skiers tried to organise an outdoor sports day but the only thing they could find was a Javelin. They returned to the bar to be entertained by the local belly dancer called Electra who surprised them all with her impressive ever-changing arches. The hotel's pet Panther was admired but we would never be able to sneak that on board as a souvenir. The Quant young lady with the car named after her skirt had a new model on display with a roof light and the rear axle at the rear. At the last evening meal at the hotel, before we returned to the ship we noticed the lovely Lotus flowers on the table. The proprietor informed us that these were flown in from Indianapolis daily. I wanted to buy one of these nice flowers but was firmly told that they would not last.

Bollards

At our next port of call we set off on the P4 route to Ferrari and a souvenir was definitely in order of this successful car. We carried on to Lamborghini; a nice sight but I think that yellow would have made me seasick. I did find out later that this was not the worst colour as a batch had been returned to its country of origin. I asked at the local toy store and they told me they had been taken Back in the USSR. On the way back to the ship we had to cross another ford, no problem as this was just 3L wide. My driver's feet were getting tired so I said I would operate the pedals but You Steer round those silly bollards.

Another day and another port of call. No coaches were available this time and would we all Team up in a car. I looked at my agreement

with the cruise line but there it was in black and white - cars can be substituted at any time for coaches. We soon Darted off from the quayside for a trip to the mountains. We were warned on the way that there was a small Cougar loose in the hills but it probably wouldn't be there long. In the back of the car we had a couple of keen archers who had brought along their equipment. These gentlemen of Italian persuasion seem unconcerned by the Cougar and mentioned if it got too close they would kill it with their Scalletti arrows, without a quiver.

Spain

Our next port of call was to be Spain. I missed this trip as I had to fly home for an appointment. I was told later that the new sights in Spain were so popular, people were going there on a 2 week holiday just to get their hands on these new souvenirs. The country was so overwhelmed that

they decided to export all these new souvenirs into the UK and other places in an attempt to keep collectors out of the country, so they could enjoy the sights themselves. It transpired this only had a limited effect. Unfortunately I was not destined to cruise again after this, but never mind, as I have heard from other cruisers from this period that when they tire of their souvenir collections they place adverts in newsagents windows. I have even heard of one chap who regularly gets up early on a Sunday morning and sells his old souvenirs from the back of his car in a field. I think he had too much sun on his cruise.

I did enjoy my voyage and I still have a few of my souvenirs left. Although it doesn't matter if you lose or sell them as some kind chap brought out a book of the cruise with all the souvenirs in glorious colour. It certainly solves the old storage problem. ■

The bluffer's guide to scenic modelling

Part one

BY MAX WINTER

Like a lot of people who get (back) into slot cars, at an age when they should really be enriching their lives with seemingly far more mature pursuits, the first intrusion into my mind of this terrible little addiction started with that innocuous little oval of track with its mesmerising little cars whizzing around, that arrived one Christmas.

Never mind that I was far too young and clumsy to really get to grips with controlling those cars and that my dear father and the family cat were the ones really obsessed by this new toy. Still it managed to work its magic on me, as I grew a little older. On occasional trips to the Hamley's toy store, to acquire yet another car or accessory, that increasing desire was fed by the sight of the wondrous scenic layout that they had installed there. If only my track could look like that. It also didn't help that around the corner from my home a certain little thing known as the "Model Engineering Exhibition" was held on an annual basis. This kid just used to look in jaw dropped awe at all the amazing scenic railway layouts on display each year, with their intricate attention to detail. Perfect little worlds that you could lose yourself in. Wow! If only I could make a Scalextric layout like one of those. However, while there was some space available at home, there were neither the skills nor the pocket money to turn this young lad's dreams into reality. Anyway, I was not the sort of child that would have the patience to gradually build up this edifice. Unstinting patience was not a virtue I had inherited from my father. I was the more impetuous (some might say petulant) type, much more like my mother they said.

Fatal mistake

Now approaching my 'teens around the late 60s, on a holiday visit to my grandparents in

Southend-on-Sea, my grandmother made the fatal mistake of parking her dear doted upon grandson at "Hamlet Court Raceways". Yours truly is totally smitten and his interest takes a three year detour into the heady world of "1/24th" racing. Slot-cars with a real speed of 70 mph! And long, long track lengths. I also develop an additional interest in US auto-racing to go along with it. Back in London I started to seek out the available local "commercial" tracks and settled on one to the north of where I lived, easily accessed by the newly opened Victoria tube line. Door to door service, how convenient. While the camaraderie at the regular weekly racemeets at "Tottenham Model Raceway" was welcome, I realised that out and out competition wasn't really my thing. That and the sheer cost of approaching any level of competitiveness. But it was scale accuracy and the detail that really fascinated me. The ability to recreate in perfect miniature your heart's desire. My interest in actual slot-racing waned and I found myself heading towards the world of static models to satisfy my addiction to those miniature worlds that you could create to suit your tastes.

To cut a long story short a little thing called raging hormones took over in my life not long after and that was it. Erase all trace of geeky childhood past and as they say, "Hello Girls". Well almost, I still couldn't totally get rid of that gnawing fascination with all things small and shiny with little wheels that whizzed and whirred. Annual secret pilgrimages to the "Model Engineering Exhibition" were my one illicit concession.

Window display

Wind forward twenty years. Now established with own home, partner, and the happy situation of a modest amount of disposable income; ⇒⇒

I've just finished work for the day and head down St Martin's Lane. For the first time ever a certain small model shop, with a window display of exquisitely detailed model cars, registers in my peripheral vision. The company car and those following get a serious brake test. Dive into unfeasibly convenient parking space and saunter into shop. Shrewd shop owner spots a lapsed addict and works his charm and I stroll out quite a while later and quite a few £'s lighter. Wind forward a couple more years, hand-built model car collection a-growing and I spot an article in classic car magazine about "old" Scalextric cars. Oh dear, those old desires have been reawakened and must be satisfied. I now have slot-cars but no way of really appreciating them. Partner has already re-enacted Christmas from long, long ago and supplied required track which family cat, like its predecessor from a previous generation, is equally engrossed with. Engrossed to the point of going into paroxysms of delight at the mere sight of a section of Plexitrack being taken out of its box; play time! Even the cat had got the idea, "wouldn't it be nice to have a permanent "electric mouse" run". History is starting to repeat itself. But things still have to wait - no space. Sadly, partner departs. I don't think it was anything to do with the growing car collection, she always thought that little obsession was one of my more endearing features. But now, big plus, serious pocket money available to realise long lost dreams.

Step 1

Negotiate purchase of loft area above the flat from a freeholder in timely need of readies.

Step 2

Employ statutory required architect to draw up plans for loft conversion. He isn't let in on the plot and is most aggrieved that I summarily reject his wildly creative plan. He intends to provide me with a galleried living room with a wide chasm to provide a wonderful view down to the floor below. The chasm is exactly where in my mind's eye the Scalextric track of my dreams will be. "No, no you don't understand, I need the maximum usable floor area," I plead.

Step 3

Commission a couple of sympathetic, although initially bemused, builders who are in on the plot and interpret the architect's grudgingly reworked plans into a real live loft conversion. It now has a totally open plan design with no possible available floor space wasted. You see, the intended layout is set low enough to make use of the normally redundant space under the eaves. Loft - 1/3rd layout, 2/3rds new living room with a previously unexploited view right across London. Nice one!

Six weeks later a fully decorated shell with shiny new floor surface is complete. The builders have thoughtfully brought in the required materials for the baseboards for the track and cut them to the exact sizes needed. 1 of each, a 9 x 4, a 7 x 4 and an 8 x 4 foot sheet of 1/2 inch chipboard for the surface. Plus, 2 inch x 2 inch finished timber, to provide the support framing, cross bracing and legs. Glue and screw each individual baseboard and hold the individual bases together with a few coach bolts for stability. Just in case, into the end of each leg I've inserted some mammoth sized screws so the whole lot can be levelled. Important bit this, all the baseboards have been checked for size so that if the desire to move arises they will be able to pass through the flat's tortuous exits to come along for the ride with their owner. And that's the key to this whole layout and its entire method of construction, everything is demountable with no waste of material or need to risk damage to "valuable collectors items".

Track layout

Bases done, what sort of track layout did I want? I'd been carrying one around in my head for a while. Two lanes were all that was required; who wants a load of track to get in the way of some lovely scenery, for heaven's sake. It must have a long, long straight. A big wide-open fast corner to get a car into a controlled tail-out slide all the way. I hate boring constant radius corners so we'll play about with the track sections to make them interesting. Got to get the maximum track length in, so a figure of eight with a flyover is the way to go. And it's got to have a proper pits and

Le Mans start and a “Goodwood” chicane. Finally work out and test a configuration that’s fun to “drive” and flows nicely, with all the track borders and barriers in place. Happy that I can live with this track configuration I go on to the all-important bit of my grand plan. We’ve got to get the layout looking like a real live racetrack in miniature.

Scenic backdrop

As it was right at the back, a scenic backdrop was required to be placed in first. I’d by chance come across some end of line rolls of “clouded sky” wallpaper being sold off in a model shop that was perfect for the job. This is the only bit of the track that couldn’t travel but it was by far the cheapest, literally pennies, and would be the only concession I would make to my guiding principle. I would have loved to have seen the look on the face of the chap who bought my flat when he moved into his pristine new abode and looks round and finds a 16 x 3 foot strip of sky plastered half way up the sloped side wall of his open plan loft. This was replaced when I moved out to the country by some of PECO’s, model railway, printed backdrops. While the sheets are quite small, there are a number of individual scenes that are designed to be sequenced in a row to provide a realistic pastoral backdrop. They also produce an add on sky section to increase the overall effective height but, beware, a lot of the time they didn’t match the colours from panel to panel at the printing stage. This oversight was overcome with a deft bit of work with a cheap Badger 250 hobby spray gun. All that had to be done was the blending of colours and disguising of some features at joints between panels. As I didn’t want to plaster the country scene to the wall of my new home I had a couple of sections of hardboard cut to the right size and got a couple of lengths of “U” section wooden moulding screwed onto the two rearmost baseboards for them to slot into. Then I mounted the prints onto the hardboard with “permanent fixing strength” photomount. I’ve also seen some rather nice US made backdrops, that can be used as an alternative to PECO’s, that appear to be made to offer a larger area

coverage in one panel. A little tip now, take a good look round an artist’s materials or graphic design shop or catalogue some time. You’ll be amazed at the useful items you can find there for all aspects of modelling.

It’s worth pointing out the possibly obvious, although all the individual layout building tasks are separated here in reality you should be gradually working from the back of the layout forward putting all the elements together as you go. That is assuming the back of your layout is butted up against a wall. It saves a lot of teetering on tiptoe later and stretched tendons and pulled muscles. It’s all in the planning and preparation as they say, just like cooking a Chinese meal and it’s almost as fast but it doesn’t leave you wanting more after half an hour. The finished layout is also remarkably easy to work on for maintenance purposes, possibly due to its non-permanent construction rather than in spite of it.

Buildings

I’d seemed to have acquired rather a lot of old and modern buildings, scenic materials and track accessories (like a forest of 16 old Britain’s trees picked up in a junk shop and a complete Grand Bridge) in anticipation of this day. I’d even scratchbuilt a “scrutineering bay” from plasticard, with a working rolling road as a fun feature, to compliment the collection of original 60s Scalextric built and restored kit buildings. This lot was all placed on a “dummy” layout to make sure I could get everything on that I wanted to and could build in the scenic features that would make the track just a little bit different. As the track is a figure of eight, there was a neat natural division, one side of the Grand Bridge old; the other side modern. I also checked, as the layout was going to be quite deep, that I could actually get at cars when they de-slot on any part of the track. There are a couple of “dead spots” but this was overcome with one of those long “third hands” designed for getting items down from high shelves in shops. Thank heavens John Sword’s SRA range of resin buildings were not available when I originally built the track or I might have been ⇒

tempted to go for an all modern contemporary style of track rather than the more “classic” style I’ve ended up with. I’ve even seen some stuff in the military modelling world that would be perfect for someone trying to recreate the flavour of the Targa Florio or Villa Réal circuits.

All lit up

The track was to have its own full lighting system as well as the original Scalextric set I’d acquired. This system was to light all the buildings and marshals posts on the track. A trip to a dolls house specialist produced a ready made safety fused 12 v wiring system, literally plug and play, which could be attached to the underside of the baseboards. It was then just a matter of linking a number of 12 volt “grain of wheat” bulbs, positioned in the buildings on a variety of supporting widgets, to this ready-made set-up. Once this was done, the required holes were drilled in the baseboards to allow the wiring from the lights through to the loom underneath. The four power transformers, to cope with this little lot and the two lanes and a “Permalite” system, were also set in place and any other necessary holes drilled to accommodate them and attendant wiring. Any trailing wires that, of necessity, were still visible on the layout were disguised with some suitable scenic material (see below).

The need for ultimate relocatability from the confines of my flat had knocked out any notion of large finely crafted and detailed landscapes made from expanded aluminium gauze covered in the railway modeller’s favourite, “Modroc”. But I had wisely been trying a few experiments on my “workbench” beforehand having raided the local specialist model railway shop. It’s amazing what you can find to adapt to a slot-car application from that world. I found it was perfectly possible to achieve aesthetically pleasing and realistic results without the need to create any permanently fixed or glued down structures. As all the scenic materials were being used on a much larger scale than originally intended by their manufacturers good old gravity was going to be of greater use on these materials than in their traditional much

smaller model railway scaled home. Even better, for someone like me with no landscape building knowledge whatsoever, was somehow achieving these satisfying results with relative ease. All it took was a little imaginative application of the standard materials at hand.

Basic scenic work

With the track already laid with all its borders and barriers fitted, power connected and with temporary supports for the bridge in place, I double-checked and ran cars on both lanes to make sure everything was functioning properly. Now it was a case of laying the basic scenic surface. I laid sections of “Grassmat” using the weight of the track and its borders to hold it in position. As the track had these borders for nearly its full length all I had to do was remove them, use the actual track as a cutting template, which as a result produced the correct sized sections of material required for this idea to work. I made sure that at the edges, where the material was to attach to the extremities of the baseboards, enough material remained so that it could go round the edge and be tidily secured in place with easy to remove bayonet tacks. Where any joins were required in the material, these were made with Duck tape on the reverse. Right way up now, if any tape showed through gaps all I had to do was sprinkle some fine “flocking” material, in a similar hue, onto the exposed tape to hide it. Now I added copious quantities of lichen and clumping material to make all the visible track edges and crash barrier mounts disappear. Remember no glue is used on any of the scenic stuff, you virtually throw everything on.

Don’t forget the cat

Buildings were then put into place; their respective lighting fixed in place beforehand, with the trailing connecting wires passed through the pre-drilled holes to connect to the wiring loom underneath the boards. The buildings’ bases were then merged with the surface they were on with either some “clumping” material or lichen. A bit of scale railway ballast was used to blend in the edges of

the track and buildings around the paddock area with the Gravelmat. The ballast material also gave me the idea of some real life gravel traps on the bends. Then I thought, “Think again, we have a dear little kitty cat living here too”, and she might with her own unique (and superior) feline logic assume, “Oh, how thoughtful of the human; not just a permanent electric mouse run but an en suite cat litter tray too.” You think I’m joking? Try this on the subject of cats and tracks; remember to provide a viewing place on your layout for your feline friend. I forgot and was reminded in no uncertain terms when the cat surveyed the “dummy” layout and promptly shuffled some buildings out of the way to claim her own favoured viewing space beside the track. It remains, unviolated to this day.

Trees weren’t too much of a problem, remember the ones from the junk shop? I believe you can still get Britain’s ubiquitous oak tree, I did. If you are lucky you might still find some of

the others they used to make but I’m reliably informed that, seemingly like all other childhood “toys”, most of them have become highly collectable, really? For a bit of variety look no further than SRA’s range or to the model railway shop, there are some quite large ones made for “OO/HO” gauge. The German firm Heike make an excellent range of larger trees for the “O” gauge market (as well as just about any scenic material you could imagine) and LGB make some which normally go with their large scale narrow gauge stuff. To avoid permanently fixing a tree to the layout I used a bit of old wire coathanger, cut off a small length, drilled a short way up into the tree’s trunk and fixed the wire in and then drilled the baseboard and popped it in. Big problem with trees, they keep on growing, in numbers that is.

Next month - bridges, people, cars and accessories. ■

NINCO *track test*

50211 Arrows A20 F1
50254 BMW V12 LMP
"F.A.T."
50259 Porsche 911 GT3R
"Interviu"

A bumper selection of goodies from Ninco this month, courtesy of the Hobby Co. I have received several applications to join the review team but the offer is still open, so get in touch if you want the opportunity to test drive future items.

The most interesting of the three cars reviewed this month must surely be the Porsche 911 GT3; simply because of the tampo printing. The livery is based on the cover of the Spanish publication "Interviu" which appears to be their equivalent to the 'Lads' magazine "FHM". The first thing that catches the eye is the picture of a scantily clad Laetitia Casta (a Spanish film star) but, the following words are also tampo printed on the bonnet "Usted lleva cocaina en la cartera." Roughly translated this means "You are carrying cocaine in your wallet" and is a reference to the fact that the use of banknotes as a straw to snort the stuff is now so widespread that a large proportion of the world's currency is contaminated with it. I really hope that the "Toy Police" can't speak Spanish; still, perhaps it is only booze and ciggy references that are banned from toys and drugs are ok!

Anyway, before I start to contemplate the true meaning of 'universal joints', on to the reviews:

50259 Porsche 911 GT3R **reviewed by Ken Elston**

The following is a review of the Ninco Porsche 911 GT3. That's the easy bit done!

How does an "out of the box" racer review a new product that is informative and relevant to all the membership? Answer - you can't, but what you can do is to review it by the criteria you review any new car you buy off the shelf.

The look

If I see ten cars on the shelf that I don't have in my collection I will always buy a car that actually raced in the paint scheme or, failing that, if the decals really stand out as being different from the usual. Well in this case having a young lady on the bonnet and a combination of orange and blue as the main colours make this car irresistible to me! So it's 9 out of 10 for presentation for me..

The real thing

A search on the Internet has revealed that this car competed (albeit not too successfully) in the Spanish GT Championship in the hands of drivers V. Saez Merino and J. Ugalde.

On the track

Details of the circuit used for this review can be found in an earlier edition of the Journal but basically the track averages 22.5 metres per lane, has 3 long straights and a twisty infield section.

So out of the box and on to the track for 40 familiarisation laps (10 on each lane). First point to note is that although I wasn't attempting to find a limit the car only de-slotted twice which leads me to conclude that this model would make the novice racer competitive if not the fastest. The Hornby version certainly de-slotted more on initial runs.

On to to a 'proper' qualifying run - 24 laps - 6 on each lane. As the car was put under more pressure the tail began to swing out considerably on the faster corners so a compromise had to be found between top straightaway speed and a good cornering technique.

The rules of our club allow a Porsche 911 GT3 to race in the Touring Car and GT groups. The table below shows a section of the group relevant to the Porsche after its first qualifying run.

MODEL	LANE 1	LANE 2	LANE 3	LANE 4	QUAL TIME	LAPS
SCALEXTRIC PORSCHE 911 GT3	8.29	8.51	8.78	8.79	8.5925	192
SCX MITSHUBISHI LANCER	8.73	8.67	8.73	8.62	8.6875	144
SCALEXTRIC PORSCHE 911 GT1	8.84	8.73	8.95	8.95	8.8675	216
SCX SUBARU WRC	8.46	8.46	9.17	9.39	8.87	24
SCALEXTRIC MERCEDES CLK	9.12	8.73	8.95	8.9	8.925	216
SCX PEUGEOT 406	8.89	8.85	8.95	9.11	8.95	216
NINCO PORSCHE 911 GT3 INTERVIU	8.9	8.84	9.01	9.22	8.9925	24

The next table shows where the Porsche qualified after a further two runs:

MODEL	LANE 1	LANE 2	LANE 3	LANE 4	QUAL TIME	LAPS
NINCO PORSCHE 911 GT1	8.02	8.29	8.24	8.68	8.3075	72
FLY PORSCHE 908	8.57	8.35	8.07	8.51	8.375	24
SCALEXTRIC MERCEDES CLK	8.63	8.35	8.62	8.04	8.41	216
SCX TOYOTA COROLLA	8.51	8.4	8.35	8.57	8.4575	192
NINCO AUDI TT	8.4	8.46	8.52	8.56	8.485	24
NINCO PORSCHE 911 GT3 INTERVIU	8.63	8.46	8.46	8.57	8.53	72
NINCO CALLOWAY C12	8.57	8.51	8.4	8.73	8.5525	168
FLY FERRARI 512S	8.62	8.46	8.51	8.68	8.5675	264
SCALEXTRIC PORSCHE 911 GT3	8.29	8.51	8.78	8.79	8.5925	192
SCX MITSHUBISHI LANCER	8.73	8.67	8.73	8.62	8.6875	144



Summary

In conclusion I would say that the model is a very user friendly racer in that the tyres, motor and magnet combination allow for fast speeds but also for a level of skill not required when racing the Fly models.

I think that creating a Porsche Super Cup group containing only these GT3 cars would be good fun and would lead to some great races.

Would I part with hard cash for it? – yes I would. ➡➡

50254 BMW V12 LMP

Reviewed by Patrick Beane

Who, What, When, Where, Why? The classic cub-reporters mantra when reporting an event; plus find a cliché or a play-on-words to have as a headline, (better still a xenophobic headline, if its for a 'red-top').

Resisting a temptation to resort to 'FAT Kr**t crashes out', I pick, 'AUDI heck are we going to beat em?'

WHO? Dr Thomas Bscher, Jean-Marc Gounon & Geoff Lees. (last two are ex-GP drivers)

WHAT? An ex-BMW motorsport V12 5990cc (LeMans Prototype) was entered, this time liveried in fire-engine red, with white chin and white stripe across the width. Entered officially as Thomas Bscher Promotion, it is more widely known as 'FATurbo' Compared to the winning cars from 1999 (as depicted by DELL #15), a different roll over hoop, one centrally mounted rear-view mirror, instead of two, centrally mounted Rear Spoiler brackets, flattened nose between front wings. Side pods are kinda corrugated (almost ancient Citroen bread van, as seen outside of any major French metropolis), bound to be more to it than these obvious differences I suspect.

WHEN? Entered the 2000 Le Mans race. Best qualifying lap time was 3.47.9 for a grid position of 21st. Weather sunny. Completing 180 laps of the track (2448km), had a replacement clutch after 8 hours, major gear box problems at 14 hours, Gounon crashes out after 16 hours at Arnage.

WHERE? 13.6km Circuite de la Sarthe.

WHY? Because it's there, or, The old Auto Industry adage 'Win on Sunday; Sell on Monday'

Oh yeah, apparently AUDI got all three podium positions.

That is more than enough of the real thing, the model that Ninco have produced cannot be called an accurate reproduction though, looking

at the front of the model, the BMW Grilles are way, way too wide, covering some 70% of the nose width, not the 20% as per 1/1. A white horizontal band from chin to half headlamp height has black Goodyear decals on the 1/32, on the 1/1 those decals are white and are positioned on the red bonnet also, racing number 15 should be black on the white band, not white numbers on the red bonnet, (with me so far?). The single mirror really ought to be body coloured red, not black as modelled, though it is mirrored unlike the "Dell". Tyres used were Goodyear, Ninco use own brand, not detailed in yellow on the sidewalls.

HOW DOES IT GO? I had better let this out at the start, your reviewer is a Home Track driver.

The car comes in the usual big box, with no real documentation. The Ninco branded NC2 motor (red can, instead of black as per my #17 Dell) claims 18100rpm at 14.4v. My Scalextric transformers put out, at no load, an average of 16.2v. As I have no tachometer I cannot vouch for the claimed rpm, but, with the rear wheels in the air, it sounds revvy and has a smooth gear mesh.

My home track is a four lane scratch-built routed MDF and copper tape oval with dead-strip activated DS Lap counters. Lane lengths are 8.88, 9.36, 9.92 and 10.44m with ellipsoidal curves, to allow a slow-in, power out cornering technique. For control, Parma Economy 45 Ohm controllers with brakes, it is called Anglianapolis (being situated in East Anglia and emulating the US Oval).

It is of little use having a strong magnet fitted as standard with nothing to pull down to, but the wheels and tyres do seem to be rounder than others from Ninco that I have driven out of the box. When the car arrived in the post, I showed it to a colleague who is an experienced static modeller. He liked the detailed tampoing of the names and logos and the instrument panel, he could not resist comparing Y2K cars with the 1960s cars he played with as a child and commented these tyres are very soft; well, they need to be on the flat black painted track that I



run, and even after a stiff vacuuming of the track surfaces prior to running the car in, those tyres did pick up a lot of debris. The sprung loaded guide blade is an improvement.

Power delivery is abrupt, I have a 250 Ferrari with an NC1 motor which is easier to control, so, careful feeding in of power and, therefore, getting rid of wheelspin needs practice but braking effect is more noticeable with the wider tyres. These rocketship NC2 motors are, I suspect, more suited to Ninco track types with longer straights than my own. Lap times, after 200+ laps on each lane were, 1-(innermost) 4.107s, 2-4.331, 3-4.537, 4-(outermost) 4.866s. This gives average lap speeds of 249.1kph (154.8mph), 249.0(154.7), 251.9(156.5) and 247.2(153.6). Compare these times to an out of the box SCX Megane, average best lap times on standard tyres 3.7secs. The extra power that the NC2 delivers really does need longer laps than I am able to offer at home.

Racers hot-tip, via the Internet discussion group that I lurk on, (subscribe to it via www.topica.com - look for slots- you know it makes sense) is to replace the plastic wheels with genuinely circular Slot.It products, I have not had a chance to order the parts required, but others claim a real improvement in lap times.

Help was given in researching the 1/1 model by Anthony Bartlett and Roland Koehler,

via the above internet site. I have posted some pictures at:- <http://homepage.mac.com/patrickbeane/index.html>

Thanks also go to the Hobby Company for the test vehicle.

50211 Arrows A20 Reviewed by Bill Grigg

This latest Ninco F1 car is based on the 1999 Arrows A20, number 14, which was Pedro de la Rosa's car and the type in which he scored a point – and Arrows' only point that season – on his first ever GP appearance, in the Australian GP. I say 'based on' advisedly as arriving at a representative livery must be a slot-car manufacturer's nightmare. (I hesitate to be an anorak but, apart from anything else, even de la Rosa's mirrors changed from black to yellow during the year.) However, in this case Ninco have done a very good job and the tampo printing faithfully represents the car's typical appearance that season. (And if you must have yellow mirrors a tin of Humbrol will fix it in a trice.)

This Arrows is powered by the now well proven NC2 motor and, as it's a slim bodied F1 car, the drive is naturally conventional i.e. no sidewinder or shaft drive. There is a very powerful round magnet fitted in the usual ⇒

Ninco position between guide and motor, in this case just in front of the motor. Detailing is quite adequate but not excessive and the vulnerable parts like wings, camera mounting and barge boards are sturdy enough to put up with the rough and tumble of racing without appearing clumsy or gross. A nice touch is steering front wheels which, although they might not add to performance or even be discernable at high speed, always look good on an open wheeler.

So, it looks good, but how does it go? Well, having been asked to test a car rather than ramble on about how it suited my particular taste I realised the slot-car manufacturer's second nightmare: how to make a good all rounder? I'm a mainly carpet racer (when I first typed that it came out 'crapet' – Freudian slip?) and like a car that will flow round about 50ft of four lane Plexitrac with no ultra sharp bends and not too much in the way of straights. Club racers tend towards great long straights and a smattering of tight bends because of the need for six or eight lanes. So, to be fair-ish I set up a 55 ft long Plexitrac circuit with two 14ftstraights (one with a kink in the middle), out and back, linked at one end by 180° of standard curves and at the other (where I crouched) with a selection of variously radiused bends.

With the NC2 the Arrows' acceleration is very spritely and the car, which ran well straight from the box, was very fast along the straights, easy to control round the hairpin, made light of the kink and hung on well through the twisty bits. I've only got facilities for timing to a tenth of a second and my first attempt netted a 6.0 seconds dead. After thrashing around for a bit I got down to a 5.7 but could really only reproduce 5.8s with any consistency. (The 5.7s

were achieved by ultra late braking for the hairpin, from which I was discouraged by the seventeen ft. walk if I overcooked it.)

Now usually with a new car I can eventually knock off more than 2 seconds from my first exploratory times, after the tyres and running gear are bedded in. I think the difference is probably due to today's powerful magnets which take over much of the tyres' role in providing grip and roadholding – and the magnet doesn't need running in.

Anyway, 5.7 or even 5.8 compares very favourably with my entire fleet of racers of which only one, a sidewinder powered GT car, proved faster over the test track. So, given that the track was my attempt at achieving average conditions, this is a speedy slot racer, especially as I wouldn't expect a good single seater quite to match a good GT car due to the different configurations.

As with all cars fitted with powerful magnets the problem comes when you overreach the limit. There's plenty of power here so this is easy to do if you accelerate too early out of a bend when, like Asda's special offers, once it's gone, it's gone. Although I did manage to get the Arrows back from the brink after a couple of lurid slides it was definitely more luck than judgement. That said, the limit is very high and the car soon inspired confidence so that I could whistle off a string of 5.8s without any problem. Mind you, if I'd been racing my arch rival...

Lastly, I had to try it without the magnet and, as I expected a non-magnet F1 car would be, it was quite loose at the rear end but far from undriveable, though it took me a whole two seconds more to get round a lap and was about 0.3 seconds slower than my old SCX Minardi. A bit of weight would help and there is some space left in the slim body if required. However, this is a commercially available product made to run on commercially available track so let's not get into the realms of specialised modification.

Ninco have produced a very pleasing model of the Arrows A20 which is a good all rounder and should prove well capable of holding its own with the competition. ■



Pre-Add bodykits

BY JEFF DAVIES

Since I started the rail racing it's been apparent that there is a huge number of slot-car racers and potential rail racers who are very interested in pre-WWII 1930s GP single seaters. These cars were raced from 1934 to 1939 under the 750 kg Formula with cars from Auto Union, Mercedes, Alfa Romeo and Maserati.

What has amazed me is that the slot-car manufacturers have produced hardly any of these cars with the notable exception of the beautiful Slot Classic Auto Union D-Type and the out of scale Scalextric Auto Union. Today I was fortunate enough to be shown a whole series of body kits covering cars from this period; incidentally, my favourite personal period in GP racing when the cars were incredibly powerful with tremendous performance and speeds being reached, considering the narrow wheels and tyres available at the time.

The 1st series of Pre-Add Bodykits cover the following cars: Alfa Romeo P3B, Mercedes

W25B, Auto Union C Type, Alfa Romeo 8C (1936), Mercedes W125, Alfa Romeo 312, Mercedes W154 (1938), Auto Union D Type, Maserati 8CTF and Mercedes W154 (1939). These are being made in resin by Mac Pinches who produced the body for Mark Gussin's Concours winning Marconi proxy race entry. The kits comprise of a resin body, all metal components (exhausts, steering wheel, screen frame, mirrors, oil coolers, filler caps, etc.), driver and water slide transfers and can be used for either slot, rail or static models. I was really impressed by the detail incorporated into these bodies and they are a boon to fans of this era like myself. Details are available from Mac Pinches at email: preadbodykits@talk21.com or phone 01543 871849.

These kits, at around £15, represent brilliant value for money. It's really nice to see an NSCC member and original rail racer produce this sort of model. ■



Barcelona and blisters

BY ADRIAN LEGGETT

Can you imagine my surprise to find myself sitting outside a bar in Barcelona with my wife, Liz and good friends Rob & Lorraine Smith, enjoying cold Spanish beer, gin and tonics - consisting of half a pint of gin with a splash of tonic - and the warm spring Sunday evening. Especially as I was told that we were going ten pin bowling! It was all part of the surprise for my fortieth birthday, originally organised in January, I later found out. Rob made all the arrangements and my wife secretly packed a suitcase. Now some things became clear. That's why I was short of clean underwear!

Monday morning dawned bright and warm as we made plans to explore this fantastic city. Rob and I needed to visit all the slot-car shops we could while Liz and Lorraine wanted to see some of the amazing architecture and the designer shops. So off we separately trekked, us heading out of the city centre, stopping at every newsagents we found and asking "Scalextric coches miticos por favor?" (This is a weekly magazine that contains parts of a car, that over four weeks, makes up a complete model. After 48 weeks there will be twelve cars). Initially we drew a blank look from the vendors but we soon learned to persist and as our pronunciation improved- well Rob's did, my knowledge of Spanish consists of half a dozen words- we found out quickly if they had any or not. By the time we reached the first shop, we had only managed to find a GT40 base and two copies of Mini Auto magazine. The shop, Kit Car 43, didn't open until 10:30, so we thought. While we waited, we refreshed ourselves at one of the many pavement cafes and looked through the Mini Auto magazine. Only at the pictures mind as the text is Spanish, but it instantly became apparent that this is a much better produced publication than the American "Model Car Racing". Back to the shop and it's still closed. Our interpretation of the sign showing the times it opened didn't include the possibility that it

would be closed Mondays. Never mind, onto the next one, via every news kiosk of course. Now we found another GT40 base, a motor with wiring and a Ferrari GT330 base. We think the Ferrari is quite a find as it is issue number six, one of the early ones because they are now up to 31. The next shop on our list turned out to be a butchers! I accepted the responsibility for the mistake as map reader. The street name was only one letter different from the list we had. We were beginning to think that we wouldn't find any shops open but on our way to the next slot shop we found an ordinary toy shop stocking SCX, though of course labelled Scalextric. I bought the new "Gulf" Audi R8 for 30 Euros- about £18. Down the road a little way we found another Kit Car 43 shop and this one was dedicated to just slot-cars. It looked like a new venture for those involved but it was still closed. We just drooled through the window at the new Fly Team 02 set containing two 512 CLs.

Small world

Our next stop was "Slot Mania" and who should we see as we go through the door but Sean Fothergill with his partner, Carol. They had both attended the slot swapmeet held the previous day where there were plenty of "coches miticos". Not the kind of news we wanted to hear, especially as Rob had already apologised for not arranging the holiday to include the swapmeet, as he only found out himself after making the booking. Slot Mania was the first dedicated slot shop that I had come across with one wall full of display cases showing most of the Fly cars ever produced. They seemed to be edging out the Exin cars at the end of the display. It was well stocked with thousands of spares for the Exin range and plenty of new Fly, Superslot, Carrera and SCX, but alas no second hand cars. A short walk round the corner saw us at a large shop with a huge central display case full of new stock and some older Matchbox branded SCX selling cheaply. They also had =>

the new Fly Z01 Porsche 917 accident damaged car with quite astounding detail for a slot-car. The next shop had again loads of new stock but the selection of used cars was limited to a couple of Superslot trucks, Caterhams and Beetles and three very tatty Exin Porsches. They did have some interesting Exin accessory boxes but the only staff member was busy. As it was near lunchtime we decide to try and come back later. Most of the Spanish shops close for lunch between 2:00 and 4:00 in the afternoon so they open up later in the evening.

Rob had planned to meet his sister Jill, who lives just outside Barcelona with her husband, Simon, for lunch. Her excellent Spanish ensured we got what we asked for in the Tapas restaurant and we all had an enjoyable meal.

Suitably refreshed Jill and Simon showed us around the old Roman part of town and the harbour area. Our search of the newsstands continued but our good luck of the morning had disappeared and by now my feet were beginning to ache. Before making our way back to the hotel, we visited the main Palau shop, where we found some good second hand Exin cars, at last. I came away with two boxed cars, a very good condition green Lancia Stratos and a good example of a Porsche 917 in light blue that required a new set of tyres and some exhausts (thinks.... I must get back to Slot Mania before we leave on Wednesday) The two cars cost me 80 Euros - about £50 - very good value indeed. Rob acquired two C111 Mercedes, again boxed, for only slightly less money. We both looked longingly at the Mexican Green Porsche 917 and dark red Sigma but as our wives were with us, discretion and self preservation prevailed!

After returning to our hotel for a freshen up and to patch up my now blistered feet we wandered yet more streets in search of a good restaurant, plus of course the coches miticos. I snapped up another GT40 motor and a set of wheels for the Mercedes 250SL - issue number 28 - while Rob located the body top for the GT40 and a Mercedes base. Rob now had 1/4 of a Ferrari, 1/4 of a Mercedes and 3/4 of a GT40 while I had 1/2 a GT40 and a 1/4 of a Mercedes.

By now using our fluent Spanish (who am I kidding!!) we deduced that the next issue was due out on Tuesday, tomorrow! We were in with a good chance of getting one, or maybe two complete cars.

St George's day

Tuesday April 23rd - St. Georges day over in England, St. Jordis' day in Catalunya. The festival spirit is in the air for another sunny and warm day. The streets are full of stalls selling books and flowers and people dancing. The Catalans celebrate St. Jordis' day by the women giving their men a book and the men presenting their women with a rose. Apparently 60% of the books sold in Catalunya throughout the year, are sold on this day. We drift through the crowded streets soaking up the atmosphere and appreciating the city's fine architecture. We visit the Antonio Gaudi designed La Pedrera. An apartment block full of amazingly shaped rooms with fascinating details (okay, I know I'm rambling but you really have to see the many buildings he designed to understand why the Spanish are so proud of him).

After another excellent lunch we take one of the tourist buses around the south part of the city. So at least our feet and legs can take a rest. We pass many newsagents but feel that we may be pushing our luck if we tried to stop the bus at every one. If not with the tour guides, then definitely our wives! At the end of the tour Liz and Lorraine wanted to do some shopping. What do you think we did? Silly question really! Now I could go back to Slot Mania to get my neumaticos (tyres) and the tubos de escape (exhaust pipes). Unfortunately, only the tyres were available as they had yet to remake the exhausts. And yes, again we checked out every news stand we found on route (obsessive? us? Don't know what you mean), but had no luck at all. Not even wheels.

The following morning saw us up early, packed and out of the hotel. A short walk down the road gave us another opportunity to explore another of Gaudis' amazing designs at the Casa Battlo. A house with a roof the shape of a dragons back and balconies that looked like

skulls. This year is the 150th anniversary of Gaudi's birth and Barcelona has arranged all sorts of events to celebrate his life and work. Next it was a short walk back to Kit Car 43. This time it was open and on display were all the usual new cars and some nice, if a little dirty second hand ones. They even had an NSCC Jaguar XJ220 and a red C70 Bugatti. The assistant didn't speak English so we didn't feel confident enough to ask him about it. Examining it closely we decided, rightly or wrongly that it was a resin copy, possibly one of the Perris reproductions or the other version, whose name currently escapes me. Rob decided against buying the Exin Ferrari 312 as it was slightly too expensive considering its condition, while I was in a quandary over the BMW Williams set containing the two rare cars with "Veltins" printed on the cockpit sides. In fact he had two sets! Using my Spanish phrase book, hand signals, and a pen and paper, I managed to find out how much the set was and the cost of posting it back to the UK. He was very helpful and understanding, even ringing up the post office to get the correct cost. At least that's what I thought he was doing! So after all his efforts I thought it would be rude not to buy the set. Price not to be disclosed to protect the innocentand my wife!

Our final venture for this all too brief holiday was a trip around a cathedral that originally began building work 120 years ago, the "Temple Sagrada Familia"; surely Gaudi's masterpiece. Work continued after his death in 1926 but progress was set back after being desecrated and damaged ten years later, during the Spanish civil war. Construction continues today as it is still not finished! Though they now have modern building techniques, construction materials and four tower cranes to hopefully speed things along. We climbed up and down some of the many towers' stairs to view at close quarters the skill and craftsmanship involved in this massive project.

After repairs to my now very sore and blistered feet and a lunch of paella - a Spanish speciality - we made our way back to the hotel to collect our bags for the trip home, yet again

asking at every paper shop we came across "Scalextric coches miticos por favor?" Our persistence paid off as we now had two sets of wheels for the GT40. At last! A complete car, nearly two! Now where can I get a GT40 body top?

On the flight home I reflected on what an enjoyable three days I had and I can't thank my wife and friends enough in helping me celebrate a birthday milestone in some style. If you have ever thought about visiting Barcelona, then may I suggest you do something about it this year. I can guarantee you won't be disappointed. There is an underground train system for those who don't fancy walking the length and breadth of the city but then there are all those newsagents above ground. Who knows what the next magazine collection may be?

The next big birthday in our family will be my wife's in 2005. What shall I arrange for her? Perhaps Paris, where we can visit the antiques markets she so likes to browse through. Maybe Mexico, to explore the land of the Incas. Or what about Australia, home to the Aborigines. None of these countries have any connection with Scalextric, have they? Little does she know..... ■

A day at the races

(Where the Southend Slot Racing Club goes across the channel)

BY JOEL THURA

As an avid collector (and not very serious racer) of all makes and scales of slot-cars, I am always on the look-out for unusual things to collect or scratchbuild, provided most of them are Ferraris.

In an effort to expand my collection, I will travel to swapmeets here, there and everywhere. I will even go as far as Evesham (probably the nicest swapmeet in the UK). This year, I made my annual pilgrimage to the Circuit Routiers (French NSCC) spring swap/racemeet in Paris.

Originally, the plan was for David Lawson, Chris Pomeroy and myself to travel on Good Friday, attend the race on Saturday and the “bourse” on Easter Sunday. As usual with these French events, changes are made at short notice, this year, the planned Fly Classic race was changed to two races, one for NASCAR and one for Jouef cars with only two weeks to go. Ouch! David had spent hours tuning and repainting his newly bought Fly Porsche 908.

Sadly, Chris has curtailed his slot racing activities this year and dropped out early, to make matters worse, two days before departure, David had to cancel due to sudden problems at work.

So I set out on my own at 3am on Good Friday, determined to fly the flag for the SSRC. I drove down to Dover, onto the 5:15am ferry, and 200 miles south, down the A16 motorway, through the most boring part of the French countryside you ever want to see. I paid the 15 Euros toll and arrived at my first overnight stop just north of Paris (my mum’s house actually).

I went shopping on Friday afternoon, got up late on Saturday, did more shopping, and made my way to the race meeting at Soisy sur Seine, just south of Orly airport.

I arrived just in time for the start of practice, or so I thought. But the whole thing was running a bit late, quite a bit late in fact. In a corner of the large hall was a bunch of people with

soldering irons feverishly building cars (Scalextric NASCARs without magnets and with added electronics). In the opposite corner, were the Jouef people. I had gathered from articles written by Don Siegel that Jouef people can be a bit “different”, now I know from personal experience, they are!! Don had also commented that Jouef cars are really slow, which I had always thought to be biased and very unfair, well, it isn’t! Don was right, they are really, really slow (just a joke guys, Jouef cars are the best).

Davic system

In the middle of the hall was the pièce de résistance, a large 8 lanes oval Ninco track with two 25 foot straights, two wide corners and fitted with a Davic system!

Davic system I hear you say! What on earth is a Davic system?

Well, these 2 guys in France have designed a lane changing system that actually works, and allows 12 cars to run in the same lane, should the drivers wish to do so. The system uses an electronic system similar to train controllers, hence the modifications carried out to the cars. Each individual car is controlled by a specific driving station, to activate the lane changers (they are just like a set of railway points), each driver is given a push switch, press it when you are about 3 feet from the points and your car changes lane. Move out a lane on the pit straight and in a lane on the back straight (I think).

I said hello to Guy Corriat, the human dynamo and thoroughly nice man behind Circuit Routiers. On his own, Guy edits the magazine and the web site, organizes the races and the swapmeets, listens to complaints, collects cars, is heavily into rock music, has a job, a family, and a proper hobby as well. In between, Guy finds time to be nice and helpful to idiots like me who have driven down from Southend⇒⇒

just to buy 'unusual' cars for their collection, and get beaten in a race by anyone who can stand up, (thanks Guy).

Practice eventually started, with all the hot-thumbs (somehow 'pouce-chaud' does not quite work) from the local club hogging the track. Looking on, it looked like utter chaos. I thought, perhaps I should join the Jouef crowd. I had brought a car just in case, and even found an old Jouef throttle in my mum's cellar the day before.

After about half an hour of mayhem, the track was shut for repairs, the hotshots dived in the bar for a bite to eat and a drink. When the track re-opened, I seized the opportunity to put in a little practice. By then regular English visitors Derek Cooper and Phil Smith had arrived.

To my absolute amazement, I found the track really nice, the lane changing was a breeze, with only two corners, it was easy to learn, I thought, hey! I can do this, even if the cars have no magnet.

Eventually, official practice started.

We used the middle 6 lanes, they were 11 drivers in the first heat, and 10 in the 2nd. Heats were 50 laps, finales 150 laps. Racing was great fun, we had rolling starts behind a pace car with flashing lights (honest!).

Just like real NASCAR, there were huge multi car pile-ups in the corners, cars collided when changing lanes, or coming out of the pit lane. Stop and go penalties were given for bumping from behind in the 'braking' zone.

Derek Cooper won the A final, beating all the local racers by about 4 laps! I finished 3rd in the B finale, 14th overall (I have never been much good without a magnet stuck under my car).

Derek Cooper, with his son and Phil Smith in tow went off to the hotel; I followed. After a rest and a shower, we crossed the car park to the restaurant, there we waited for Guy to return from taking the track back (a 50 miles round trip). He arrived with Paul Hamo and a few other French dealers. We ate, drank and talked Franglais late into the night.

Sunday morning, the clocks went back in France and in England (the 8 o'clock breakfast

was really 6 o'clock, very confusing this), I got up late again and made my way to the swapmeet. Yesterday's large hall was packed and looking rather small.

Good value

French swapmeets are full of unusual things going rather cheaply; don't expect to pay less for new cars, but 2nd hand ones are good value. I bought the usual mix of nice cars and total junk, including some very sticky tyres from Don Siegel, a resin Reliant Robin, made in France but sadly smaller than 1/32nd (Petit pois as Dell boy would say!); a very odd chassis with working rear suspension, a few more Ferraris for my collection, and a stunning vac-form Talbot D'arl Mart. I failed to sell the rubbish I had brought with me, but, I met Anthony Bartlett and a lot of enthusiastic French scratchbuilders who are all addicted to the SSRC web site. I had a long chat with Guy, gave him the powdered custard I had brought along especially, and, at 2 o'clock, made my way back to Calais and home (same boring motorway, same overpriced toll same ferry full of drunken booze cruisers).

So, if your better half fancies a romantic weekend somewhere, say yes. Forget the Lake District, take her to Paris. Just make sure the date matches one of the swapmeets at Soisy. There are two a year, one in March the other in September. Look up the date on the website: (<http://www.circuits-routiers.asso.fr>), speak to Guy if you need directions, his English is very good and he will make you feel very welcome (You don't all have to bring him custard either).

On the Sunday, send her to Le Louvre or the Eiffel Tower, and sneak off to Soisy sur Seine for the swapmeet. If you can, make sure you attend the race on Saturday and add to the usual chaos, it is great fun. If you go in March, the Southend Slot Racing Club will see you there, if you go in September, we won't, instead we will be at the Evesham swapmeet for our annual slot-car display.

PS: One day I might even tell you about last year's trip (Actually more like the average Marx Brother's script). ■

The Slot.it[®] HRS CHASSIS

BY MARK ROBERTSON

In the last three years, an Italian brand of aftermarket slot-car parts has become available and been used in increasing numbers by European slot-car aficionados. These products are marketed under the Slot.it[®] brand name, manufactured by the Reggio Emilia based Galileo Engineering, a firm of consulting electronic engineers.

The founders have successfully expanded their interest in slot-racing into a company, producing a wide range of aftermarket motors, axles, gears and precision-turned aluminium wheels. These allow home and club racers alike to upgrade existing models to improve their performance or create new “specials” with different dynamics. At its simplest level, Slot.it[®] allows the slot-car racer to replace the model’s (frequently) egg-shaped plastic push-fit wheels supplied, with truly “round” ones, which, being secured via Allen-headed grub screws, won’t fall off the axle when the first few drops of tyre cleaner drop into the wheel’s boss! I’m sure we’ve all had that embarrassing “three wheels on my wagon....” feeling when our modelling pride and joy decides to shed one quarter of its “track adhesion system” (that’s a wheel to you and me!) three corners away from the finishing line of the deciding final race of the club championship!

Rumours that Slot.it[®] were introducing a revolutionary 1/32nd. scale chassis into their range, were circulating from Spring 2001. But so what - many manufacturers sell chassis from their complete models separately - the only problem is that Slot.it[®] didn’t make complete models. No, this product was to be the first aftermarket-only plastic-style chassis, designed from the outset to offer adjustable wheelbase & front-axle position and accept a motor in either the “in-line” or “sidewinder” configuration. Hmm.....different, for sure, but a very difficult challenge to master correctly. So, when I was asked by Colette Clark of U.K.-based Monarch Lines (Slot.it’s premier European distributor) to test an early example, I jumped at the chance.

First impressions are good; the packaging follows the now familiar Slot.it[®]-branded white, yellow & red card, from which hangs a clear polythene bag containing the components. The part number (SICH01) is clearly printed on the front side of the card and follows the written description Starter Kit HRS Chassis. In Slot.it[®] speak, this means that the base components required to make up a complete chassis are contained, but not all the available optional parts. In fact, this part number relates to a complete in-line chassis kit - that wasn’t initially clear from the description. The matt-black components of the chassis show through the bag against a white paper instruction sheet. All clearly laid out then. But I had been wondering about the meaning of the initials HRS and upon reading the instruction leaflet all was revealed. At first I thought this was another example of Colette’s legendary sense of humour but she assures me she is not responsible - for this at least! In typical Road Runner cartoon style, our Latin friends have denoted this adjustable universal chassis as..... Hot Roddicus Supersonicus.....words fail me, but at least these guys can have a laugh! The leaflet also shows an exploded view of the chassis assembly although a microscope might help in reading the 2 point font-size instructions! What you get is:

- * One main chassis (black resin plastic).
- * One guide and front chassis component (dark grey resin plastic).
- * One in-line motor mount (black resin plastic), incl. one rectangular neodiminium magnet and two brass rear axle bushes pressed into position on the mount.
- * One guide flag (black resin plastic).
- * Two small gauge brass nut & bolt sets to secure the front chassis component onto the main chassis and give wheelbase adjustment.
- * Four nickel alloy bolts to secure the motor mount onto the main chassis.
- * Four body outrigger post semi-circular endcaps (black resin plastic).

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Assembly

Once located within the front chassis, the guide flag offers up to 78° of rotation in each direction from the chassis centreline, ideal for fishtailing the rear end of the model! From a practical viewpoint, this would also allow a large degree of sideways driving before a model de-slots; many modern slot-cars will cater for no more than a 45°-55° rotation which is not enough for that style of racing. The front chassis component has locating lugs to keep it square with the main chassis slots when extending the wheelbase. The brass nuts supplied sit in hexagonal recesses in the front chassis which stops them from turning when the brass bolts are tightened to lock the front chassis to the wheelbase length required. Two side-by-side upright elongated slots on both sides of the front chassis locate the front axle in one of two locations, altering the guide centreline to axle distance by 3.8mm. These slots also allow a suspension travel of up to 2.6mm. per axle side. I noted that the colour of the front chassis component was somewhat lighter than the main chassis & motor mount and its surface finish somewhat more mottled - this didn't seem to affect structural rigidity at all. When taking into account the extremes of the front chassis component location, wheelbases can be set between 71mm. and 89mm.

Main chassis

The main chassis is a conventional rectangle of black resin plastic, except that it contains two slots forward, to locate the front chassis and rectangular cut-out, Ninco-style, toward the rear axle position in which the motor mount is fitted. The first thing I notice about this chassis is that despite lack of obvious cross-member ribs, this component is very loath to twist! That's excellent news for those wanting to put higher rev motors into the chassis - it's built to take them. I didn't work out what the curious notch to the left of centre on the front of the main chassis was for - could this be a rudimentary four wheel-drive contrate locator slot?

The inline motor mount supplied within the kit has a "keyhole slot" within it, to allow the completed model to be locked onto a Ninco/

FLY/Pro Slot/Policar-type box base. The magnet fitted unobtrusively, and felt to have just the right strength to gently hold a car to a plastic track with steel rails, without welding it to them! The mount fitted perfectly within the main chassis with no trimming required - unlike other Iberian manufacturers, using a similar concept for in-line motors, I could mention! The bevelled edges of the motor mount undoubtedly helped in optimising the fit. The four semi-circular resin plastic bodyshell holders provided are really only going to be used by those of us building a car from a static model for home track use, as opposed to club racing; they need glueing into the inside of the bodyshell to locate and hold secure the outrigger posts. Racers would find that these inhibit the "rocking" effect desired between the chassis & the bodyshell. I elected not to fit them to the main chassis square-section outrigger posts. Once completely assembled with other Slot.it® components, such as the V12/2 29,000 r.p.m. SIMX03 motor and SIKK01 Pro Axle system and a set of GOM Super Racing tyres, the chassis was ready for road testing.



Track test

I first tested the unbodied chassis on the Quorn Slot-car Club track in Leicestershire, a Sandtex-painted, copper taped, routed slot wooden track 108ft. in length and with a fair number of twists,

turns, straights and gradient changes. Bearing in mind that all the components used were brand new and not yet run-in, I achieved more than acceptable lap times against a well sorted standard Pro Slot Toyota GT-One chassis with Evo 3 motor (the quickest GT solution to date around Quorn).

The flexibility of the Slot.it® concept proved its worth when I was able to quickly interchange a wide variety of can drive motors from Pro Slot, Policar, Carerra, OZRace, Scalextric, FLY, SCX & Ninco. The rigidity of the motor mount was so good that the usual necessity of hot-glue gunning the motor in place (to stop torque twist on acceleration) was dispensed with - this is really going to be beneficial to racers who may need to make quick motor changes between races/heats. I also tried the chassis on a Ninco circuit and confirmed that the magnet's strength is just enough to help the model, without making it boringly fast to drive and totally dependant for its handling/adhesion upon the magnet, on this type of home track.

Who will buy it?

So who is this chassis kit going to appeal to and where will it be most widely used? I looked at this from three points of view; a collector, a model maker and a racer. Many of us enjoy collecting different or unusual models and converting 1/32nd static kits into slot-cars. Until now, we've had a large number of fixed-dimension, largely in-line, chassis to choose from. Personally, I don't consider it appropriate that the only option for me to motorise my Monogram SnapTite 1971 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray bodyshell is to stick it onto a rather ill-handling Scalextric 1989 Ford Fiesta XR2i chassis, because that's the only one I can find with the correct wheelbase! With this Slot.it® modular adjustable chassis system, you can mix components, drive configurations and dimensions as you like and they are not cast in stone. The wide range of wheelbase and width dimensions available to you allows all but the smallest bodysells to be fitted onto this chassis. The racer will appreciate the preferred twin in-line mounting posts that are best for allowing the

bodyshell to "rock" on the chassis and that motor changes are quick and easy. For those racers on a more modest budget, it is even possible to use the same well-honed chassis in a number of different bodies! I don't pretend that the Slot.it® solution will suit the die-hard racers - it will probably be too much of a compromise for getting the ultimate in lap speeds. This elegant adjustable chassis solution would suit the mass majority of medium-large body GT, Sports, Rally, Touring/Saloon, NASCAR bodied models; the high degree of deflection from the centreline makes it especially suitable for those of us who like to make models of rally cars - love that fishtailing! It is not suitable for open-wheel formula cars such as F1, CART, IRL, etc. It is the static kit converter's dream and should sell very widely into that market and have good presence in the out-and-out racer's realm as well.

Downside

I haven't received the sidewinder components to review yet, but have no doubt that they will be of the same high-quality as the in-line version. To look for a downside in this solution really would be nit-picking; the rear axle bushes' tolerances are very tight when using other Slot.it® axles (I'd suggest just a touch more slop between these parts by increasing the bush's internal diameter in production), but these would bed-in further with time. Critics might also question why the guide flag hasn't been made adjustable relative to both axles - having seen other less successful commercial efforts, I can see why they haven't done so! In summary, Slot.it® have produced a home-set compatible plastic chassis system which will allow excellent results to be achieved on club circuits.

Many thanks to Colette Clark of Monarch Lines (Tel:- + 44 (0)1903 885065) for submitting the review sample and I thoroughly encourage you all to check out the relevant website for more detail (including a snappy graphic) of this very neat solution; www.monarchlines.co.uk

Who knows, one day Slot.it® might even fit their chassis to their own car.....now that would be something! ■