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The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

Debris on the back stretch!

It is a well known fact that NASCAR racing is prone to somewhat dubious full course yellows whenever the field is getting a little strung out.

It would also appear that our own version, ASCAR, is beginning to learn from the Americans as the support races to this year's Rockingham 500 seemed to suffer an abnormal number of cautions whenever someone was threatening to run away from the field. Mind you, when the race entered its final five laps the officials didn't seem remotely bothered that two of the cars had collided on the main straight and were dropping bits of bodywork all over the track! The famous phrase "debris on the back stretch" never even passed their lips and we were treated to a no-holds barred race to the flag.

Perhaps Scalextric racing would be improved by following a similar policy; remember the Stock Cars which had bits designed to fly off on contact with a rival? Why not fit similar items to the current NASCAR range and bring back the starter on rostrum? Just fit him with double waved yellows instead of a chequered flag and bottom drawer racers like myself can at least get back on the lead lap!

Once again the whole Rockingham 500 weekend was absolute sheer bloody magic and I cannot believe that the mind blowing Indycars only attract a third of the crowd that attends the apology for a race known as the British Grand Prix. It was also very pleasant to bump into a few NSCC members in the paddock; I am glad I am not the only one who thinks that toy plastic cars are great but the real thing is better!

And Finally - Many thanks for your contributions this month; probably enough for a 60 page issue. Sadly the clock has beaten me yet again so apologies if your article has not appeared - I will hold it over for the next issue.

Till next month

Brian

Departures, promotions and the committee



As you are no doubt aware the elections for a place on that select body called the NSCC committee are once again due. However very recent events have meant that the normally smooth process has once again hiccuped, this time through events outside our control.

As many of you will know Adrian Norman, our Hornby liaison officer, has spent his working hours at Pfizer. However, through circumstances called “outsourcing” his long and happy employment was no more and Adrian was forced to look for alternative employment. Now if you asked Adrian what he would like to do and for whom, I suspect his answer would be something like, “Working for Hornby Hobbies promoting Scalextric”. Well it just goes to show that the Scalextric fairy is alive and well as that is exactly what Adrian is now doing. Although we must congratulate him on this outstanding piece of career development it has meant that he can no longer act for the NSCC in his current role as this would place him in a very difficult position with its obvious conflict of interests.

We do not want to lose Adrian from the committee so, although he will be stepping down as liaison officer, I am sure we can find him something else to do.

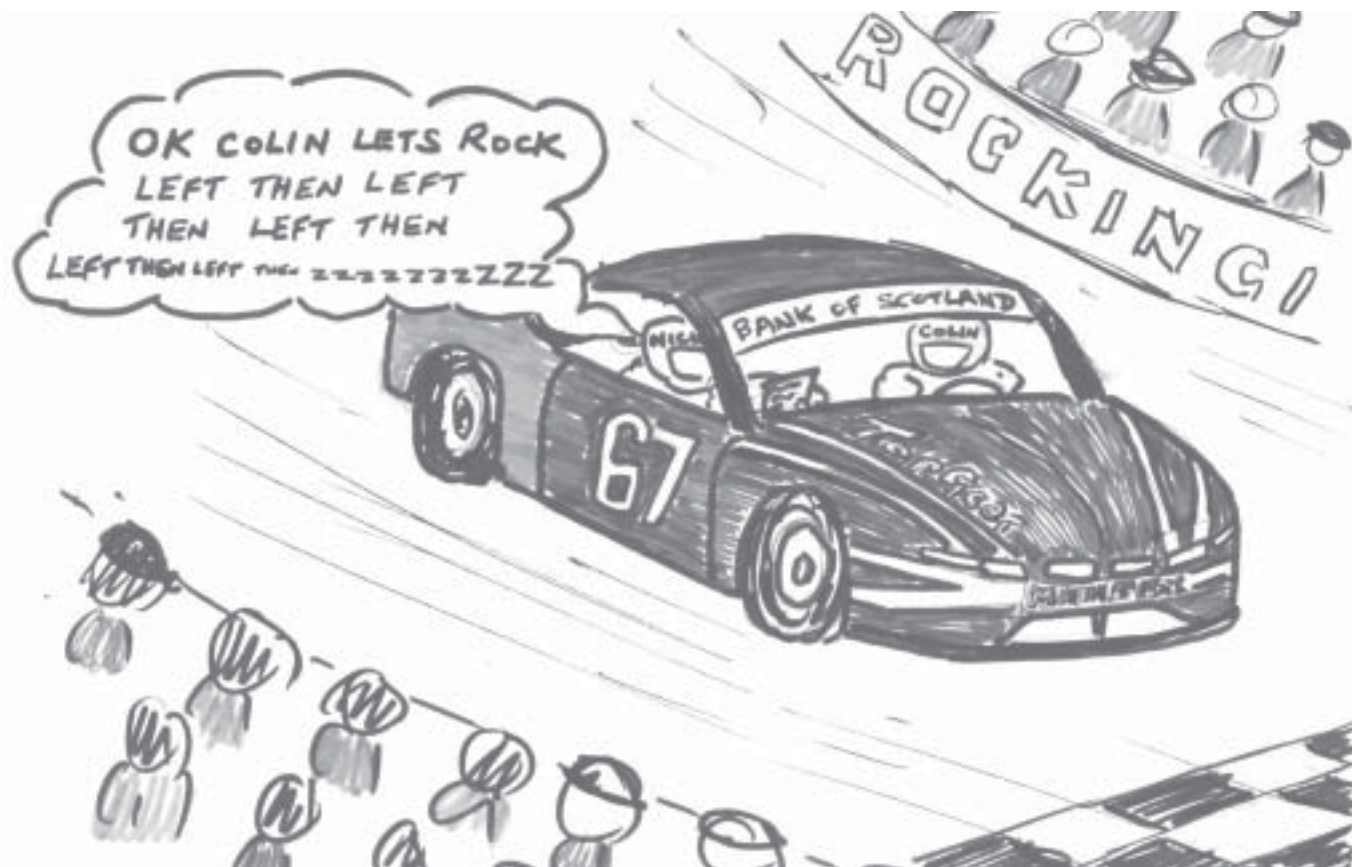
This leads me onto the next committee change. For as long as I can remember, well perhaps not quite that long, Alan Slade has been involved with the NSCC in many roles but mostly as editor and more recently as webmaster and “advertising manager”. He has been on the committee since 1988 and in that time has helped the club grow from a domestic, almost

local organisation, to one that has members all over the world. However, with Alan being domiciled in the far reaches of Scotland it has not been easy for him to contribute as much as he would have liked to the club in recent years and he has decided that now is the time for him to step down from the committee. I would like to thank Alan for all that he has done for the club, which I am convinced would not be in the position it is today if it were not for all his efforts, knowledge and time.

As Alan had carried out two roles as well as helping Bob with the membership database his skills will be difficult to replace but, fortunately, we have had two willing, and therefore slightly insane, members put themselves forward for non-specific places on the committee. It will thus be necessary for us to review the various tasks and roles and determine how these are best filled. Part of this review will be to introduce a clearer structure with responsibilities for such activities as the NSCC/Hornby weekend, swapmeets, the Journal and other functions to take the club forward and enable members to benefit more fully from being part of the NSCC.

Apart from the above, all the present committee are willing to stand again and thus, without any other nominations being received by the due date, the existing officers are re-elected. After the next committee meeting we will publish a revised list of members and their functions.

I look forward to receiving any views or opinions you may have, either through the Journal or direct to myself. ■



Colin McRae goes ASCAR racing - By Dave Yerbury

Westcountry rambles

BY VINE FENNEL

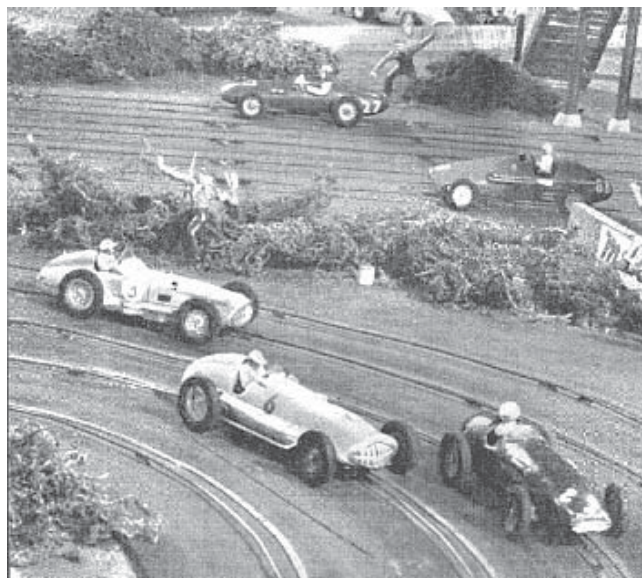
Electric rail racing international championship. Model Maker - November 1956.

The Southport M.E.S. can justly claim to be the prime movers in the fast growing sport of electric model rail car racing, and first produced a track in public at their 1955 Exhibition when the opening Southport Grand Prix took place. That event was won by C.R. Sinclair's ERA, a car which was subsequently sent out to New Zealand to start off enthusiasts "Down Under" and has since returned to England. The self same car was the basis of early articles in Model Maker, and was featured again in "America's Young Men", serving in large measure to promote this style of racing in the USA.

The second annual event, staged once again by this enterprising club, comprised two races as previously announced in Model Maker. The Sports Car 100 involved 100 laps of their 58-foot track, and the International Grand Prix took place over no less than 200 laps. Highlight of the event was undoubtedly the participation of an entry of four cars from the Model Auto Racing Association of Kalamazoo, USA, in the Grand Prix. These were superficially identical models of the Mercedes Benz Type W196, individual entrants being Tom Cook, Bill Haynes, Duane Coleman and Bill Johnson, whose efforts on their home track have already been reported in our columns.

As the Southport track permits only five cars to operate at once, eliminating heats took place daily during the week of the exhibition, the fastest five in each class qualifying. As might be expected, members of the home club were generally much faster than unattached entrants, though two of the four American cars duly qualified, run by proxy drivers.

The Sports Car 100 was won in a record time of 14 minutes 47 seconds, for an actual distance of 1 mile 173 yards 1 foot, Walkden Fisher's Mercedes Benz 300 SLR crossing the



Scene during the Southport Grand Prix.

line 10 laps ahead of C.Sinclair's Aston Martin DB3S, driven by H.Griffiths. Third was A.E. Jones' Cooper 1100.

The International Grand Prix again fell to a Walkden Fisher entry, this time his Mercedes Benz Type W196, again in record time of 31 minutes 5 seconds, for a race of 2 miles 346 yards 2 feet. Second, was Tom Cook's similar Mercedes Benz model, proxy driven by Brian Crusham. Third, was H.Griffiths' Vanwall, and fourth, another American entry, driven by Ted Crusham.

Much of the attraction of a meeting such as this, however, lies as much in looking at and talking over the latest improvements as in the actual contest programme. Naturally, the cars from overseas excited particular interest, and it is only fair to say that the organisers stretched the rules in the friendliest possible way to accept these cars. A glance at the photographs will show that the visitors' cars were substantially larger than the home entries, built to a strict 1/32 scale. As it happened, the Americans were all identically-bodied Mercedes Benz W196 cars and could therefore be directly compared with

winner Walkden Fisher's similar car.

Apart from being obviously somewhat out of scale, probably for good reasons of using available made-up parts such as wheels, it can have made very little difference to performance. In the race it was clear that the larger, heavier cars had an advantage on straights with their better roadholding properties, but this was lost on the bends, probably also due to their absence of any swivelling steering mechanism.

Most interesting was the American chassis construction, which embodied built-up tubular construction and front wheel drive. In this way any necessity for swivelling steering was avoided provided bends were not too acute, as rear wheels were trailed, though, of course, at the expense of considerable slip. With adequate steering it is probable one or other of the American cars would have won. Their bodies were also of technical interest, being apparently of some form of fibreglass material, though of a nature rather finer in texture than is available on the British market.

Many of the Southport club members have now a background of nearly two years' work on

these little cars. During that time they have found out a great deal by trial and error, and can now design a car that has few, if any, operational problems in the matter of getting round with a minimum of breakdowns. They are thus able to devote more time to such refinements as all-metal bodywork, opening bonnet panels, and almost "watchmaker" precision in moving parts like steering mechanism. Research on suitable electric mechanisms has also gone on apace. Last year any ex-00 motor was welcomed without distinction, with perhaps a preference towards the Tri-ang replacement motors on the score of cheapness and simplicity. However, the "unfair-to-motors" treatment they received made strengthening of brushes and other working over desirable, so that, where hard work was demanded, a somewhat more robust design was required. The most nearly ideal solution has, it is claimed, been found in the Ks motor. This is, of course, a precision type not made in very large quantities, but is well worth waiting a week or two for should that be necessary. In the same way the original hard brass worms have proved too soft for prolonged use and now



Crossing the line in the Sports Racing Car Event. Could anyone ask for more realism and detail?

Precision Model Engineering are producing a suitable steel worm of virtually unlimited life.

What must be one of the most striking developments over the past year is surely the great changes that have taken place in the track itself. The guide rail remains unaltered, but a wide flat positive strip is now laid providing an adequate current pick-up. Brushes continue to be of spring steel strip arms, with flat phosphor bronze or hard brass wiping blades. Background scenery which was confined to a few boards, straw bales and a stand or two, has now blossomed out into complete pits, drivers, crowds, hedges, and every conceivable track building. The figures which look so much in keeping are mainly toyshop plastic figures which started life as cowboys (now bereft of their horses), cowgirls, Red Indians, railway porters, soldiers and the like. They look much happier in their new form, and have almost forgotten their

humbler beginnings. Prime mover in this scenic development has been C.R.Sinclair, whose pioneer work in rail racing has already been acknowledged. Illness has recently prevented him from taking part in the excitements of actual racing, but his skill has been happily turned to decorative purpose. He also served in both races as track marshal in charge of derailments - which proved hardly the most restful work for an invalid!

In thanking all those who participated with varying degrees of success, the Southport Club do wish to stress the desirability of keeping to certain track and car standards so that international and club meetings can be easily arranged through the post. To further this practical wish we are reprinting the Southport Standards which will, we hope, continue to be the basic dimensions followed.

"Southport" standards

Cars

- 1) All model cars must be built to 1/32 scale.
- 2) The cars can be fitted with any type of electric motor capable of operating on 12 volts D.C. and suitable for the required scale.
- 3) No car must exceed the maximum overall width of 2 3/8in.
- 4) No projections are allowed beneath the car other than the steering guide and contacts.
- 5) All cars must be scale models of full size prototypes.
- 6) All cars must carry drivers.
- 7) All cars must bear their official racing numbers clearly displayed on both sides. The numbers to be not less than 3/8in. in height.

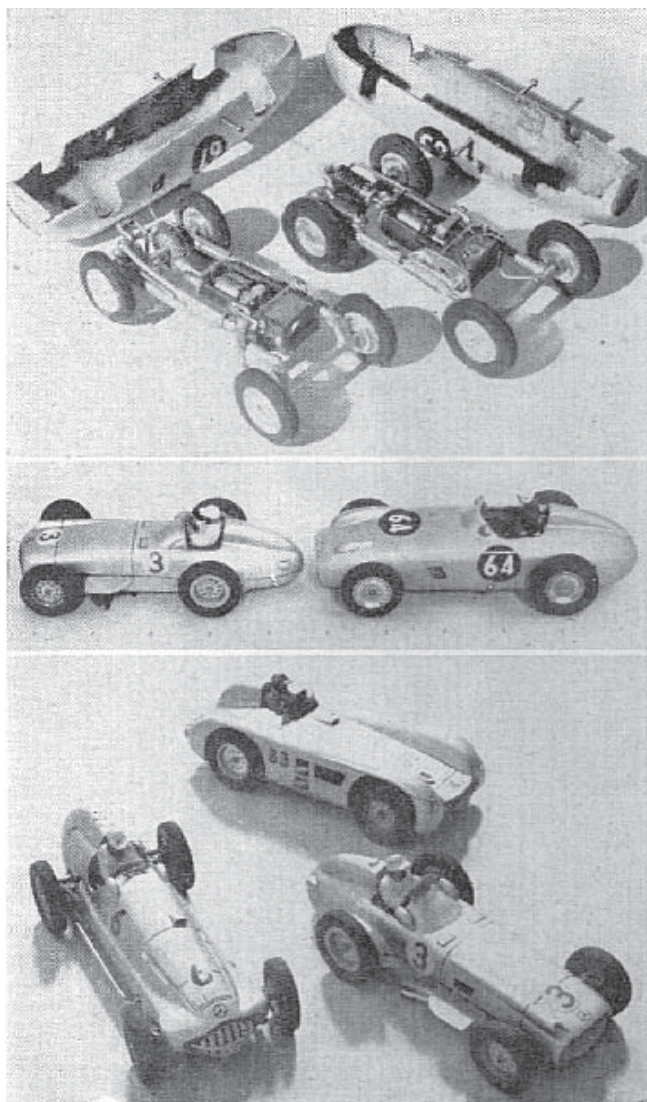
Track

- 1) The track guide rail which also acts as the live rail is 3/16in. high.
- 2) The track earth return rail is 3/8in. away from the guide rail on the left hand side and fitted on the track surface. ■

Top left: Two American entries: note fwd and variety of drives, one employing bevels.

Centre: Comparison of sizes of British and American cars.

Bottom: Walkden Fisher's amazingly successful team of cars.



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



They are out there somewhere!

Avid collectors of Scalextric don your deerstalker and eyeglass and track these culprits down:

Exhibit 1: A boxed C206 Pit Lane set. Not the item referenced C190 as issued in 1983, but C206 as illustrated in the catalogues for 1987-88. Information leading to the apprehension of said article will be most grateful.

Exhibit 2: C2334 Williams F1 car was spotted in possession of a printing error. This car should be “race No 5. R.Schumacher” but has apparently been seen sporting Montoya’s name, still race No 5.

Clearly black or white

C281 & C282 Motorbikes have two versions. The rider and “passenger” helmet visors can be black or white. When released in 1980 they had white visors for two years whilst in their final and third year they donned dark visors. I have recorded them as Type 1- white visor (catalogues 21-22) and Type 2- black visor (catalogue 23).

If you can help with shedding some light on the above villains and assist in unveiling the truth, your fellow enthusiasts will be forever grateful in the knowledge that they can sleep peacefully in their beds! As agent Scully said to her dentist after losing a molar, “The tooth’s out there somewhere”

Finally, after years of ‘meaning to get around to it’, I have put together a list of Superslot references and their equivalent Scalextric ‘C’ number. I have not listed the later ‘H’ conversion as the English number is identical apart from the initial letter.

Superslot

C0001
C0002
C0003
C0004
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C0012
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C0038
C0039

Scalextric UK

C0408
C0411
C0427
C0455
C0456
C0428
C0407
C0321
C0189
C0468
C0272
C0463
C0486
C0382
C0418
C0137
C0142
C0358W
C0370
C0256
C0309
C0319
C0426
C0434
C0461
C0467
C0123
C0124
C0169
C0175
C0188
C0125
C0093
C0094
C0099
C0150
C0305

Superslot

C0040
C0041
C0042
C0043
C0044
C0045
C0046
C0047
C0048
C0049
C0050
C0051
C0052
C0053
C0054
C0055
C0055
C0055
C0056
C0163

Scalextric UK

C0306
C0097
C0098
C0095
C0096
C0127
C0283
C0296
C0310
C0238
C0239
C0385
C0386
C0228
C0229
C0200
C0232
C0447
C0233
C0424

Superslot

C0299
C0312
C0313
C0318
C0320
C0322
C0326
C0331
C0332
C0336
C0337
C0341
C0342
C0343
C0344
C0345
C0346
C0363
C0375
C0376

Scalextric UK

C0357W
C0290
C0291
C0450
C0451
C0283
C0462
C0280
C0203
C0204
C0316
C0184
C0195
C0257
C0350
C0351
C0352
C0483
C0488
C0491

That little lot should keep you busy till next month! ■

C74 Austin Healey reborn

BY GRAHAM D. SMITH (YES HE!)

Gaugemaster recently sent me the Pink-Kar Austin Healey (CV044 - red) as I wanted to do a track test and compare it with its ancestor, the C74 Triang model.

Then I realised that one club track was no more and the other was closed for the summer! Anyway, how do you compare a new model with one that is 33 years old? So a descriptive comparison will have to suffice.

The Scalextric model was released in 1964 with a medium driver's head and full width bumpers (ping!) in red or green. It is one of those classic slot-cars that most collectors want in their collection; I have three of them.

Looking at the Pink-Kar version in its box you initially can't spot any difference from the original although it is the narrow bumper version. For those of you who don't have a Scalextric car here are the only variations:

Body - the first thing you see

- 1) 1960s Spanish driver's head; the original car was available in Spain but I don't know whether they used their own head.
- 2) Tonneau cover; I find the Humbrol paint chart useful to describe colour variations - Pink-Kar - 93 matt desert yellow
Scalextric - 63 matt sand.
- 3)er!?!; that's about it really, apart from the body colour being a bit lighter than my own cars and the "Austin Healey 3000" boot moulding being poorer than the original.



Innards

- 1) A small black clip in the base contains an E18 type Mabuchi motor and there is a low power magnet glued in the front.
- 2) A grey version of the black G5 guide blade is used which is very useful. The Healey and Mercedes. 190sl were the only Scalextric cars to use this guide so we now have a source of spares for restoration jobs.
- 3) The rear of the car, inside the boot area, has the Pink-Kar emblem instead of the original trademark.

Yet again, that's it, except for minor things like numbers, contrate and axle bushes. Take everything out of both cars and you can do a straight swap. So what do I think of this latest release? Brilliant, illustrious, glorious! - Yes I did use a Thesaurus! Anyone owning an original who is worried about breaking expensive bits should buy this and have some fun; I have no idea how it runs but who cares?

Dear Pink-Kar can we have some two tone versions apart from the plain white, green and yellow ones due for release? Their next model will be the original C75 Mercedes190sl; black James Bond car anyone? While they are at it how about versions of the Porsche Spyder, Aston DB4GT, TR4A or Sunbeam Tiger?

Just as a matter of interest can anybody enlighten us as to how the Pink-Kar replicas are produced? Do they use the original mould or work from an existing model? Is it done with Hornby's permission? If the original mould is used why don't Scalextric do it themselves? It would also be interesting to know who owns the rights to the original RX motor and whether it would be possible to bring out a modern version. ■

*Comments: The NSCC has a lot to answer for! Since joining in 1992 my collection has grown dramatically (as has the hole in my bank balance); I have a loft filled with stacking boxes of track and buildings and I have met and dealt with some great people. I have been introduced to the joys of the Goodwood Revival Meeting (thanks Adrian and Clive) helping out on the

NSCC track a few years back. I have returned every year since for the entire weekend - six of us went from our club this year.

I was contacted by another member to join the local slot-car club and I now help to run it. I also attend the Bishop's Stortford swapmeet every year to lighten my wallet a bit more. But, above all, it has been fun and I look forward to the next ten years of membership.

BITS AND PIECES

Load of rubb-ish

F1 Giants Michelin are having a toy town season - and now they're turning to toy tracks to try and win races.

The rubber firm - who are getting burned off big-style by Bridgestone - are in secret talks with Hornby to supply Scalextric model cars with tiny 1cm-high tyres.

Michelin have splashed out a staggering £17.7 million this year to supply their rubber to six Grand Prix teams - Williams, McLaren, Renault, Jaguar, Minardi and Toyota.

But thanks to Schuey and Co they've barely had a look-in. So, copying McLaren and Williams - who have both signed deals with Scalextric to reproduce their 2001 cars - Michelin are looking at ways of actually winning some races.

Michelin UK's Sandy Muir said: "We are currently studying how we can improve the lap times of Scalextric cars," Just an idea, but it might be worth looking at the big cars first!

*News of the World 11/8/02
spotted by Vince Feeney*

Scalextric USA, Inc. announces changes

Frank Martin, Chief Executive of UK based Hornby Plc, the parent company of Scalextric USA makes the following announcements:-

1. "We are delighted to have secured the services of Ron Gibson to head up our sales activity in the USA as Vice President sales. Ron

is extremely well-known throughout the hobby industry and brings with him a wealth of experience, contacts and energy."

2. "Alan Smith, former CEO, is to cease full-time employment with Scalextric USA, Inc. Alan sold the assets of his business (A Day at the Races) to Hornby in October 1999. Since that time the business has traded as Scalextric USA, Inc. Alan has done an outstanding job in building the Scalextric business and indeed the hobby of slot-car racing in the US. However some 3 years after selling his business to Hornby, Alan wishes to have more time available for his other business interests. We are delighted that we will be retaining a substantial input from Alan in his capacity as Marketing and Promotions Consultant to Scalextric USA."

Press release sent in by Patrick Beane

Egg on face

BTCC Egg Sport drivers Matt Neil and Paul O'Neill recently took part in a charity Scalextric race at the Sports Café in London. The pair proved unbeatable in the event and so were banned from the final to give the other sports stars a chance! The event raised £10,000 for the SportsAid charity.

*Motoring News 18th September forwarded by
Dave Yerbury*



Prize Car



This month's winner is Gareth Jex for being brave enough to admit that he collects Metros!



Dear Brian,

Further to your editorial in the September Journal, I have also been to Davidstow. I stumbled across the circuit about five years ago while on holiday in Cornwall.

As I was staying on the fringe of Bodmin Moor, I was looking at my OS map one day for a short cut to a nearby town and spotted a disused airfield in the middle of some woodland. This intrigued me and I took the minor road to the area not expecting to find much. I was very surprised to discover several runways and a perimeter/taxiway with various Second World War buildings including the control tower. I looked around for sometime and went up into the control tower imagining what action took place here sixty years ago. Finally I “taxied” the car onto the main runway waved to the ghosts in the control tower and took off to my next holiday destination.

A couple of days later, a browse in a bookshop turned up an interesting book entitled, Davidstow, a History of Cornwall’s Formula 1 Race Circuit, Published by West Country Motor Books, this gave me all the history of this once very active wartime base that helped to defend the English south coast and to attack the German U-Boat pens during World War 2 and then went on to stage significant race meetings from 1952 to 55.

During it’s racing life, Davidstow had two circuit configurations of 1.84 and 2.60 miles and staged races for Saloons, Sports, Formula Libre, Formulae 3 - 2 and even 1 and many of the big names on the racing scene of the 1950s made their way down to the south west to take part. In fact the winner and lap record holder of the very last Formula 3 race was one Ken Tyrrell. Armed with this information I returned to Davidstow for a quick lap of honour!

Regards

David Lawson

.....
Dear Brian,

I went to a local Toy & Train Fair recently and got my first glimpse of the new Sport Edition Ford Mustang. A very attractive car and a wonderful set of wheels that are ideal for a number of my scratchbuild projects sat in the cupboard awaiting a return of enthusiasm.

A quick scan through the dealer websites to discover availability brought dismay. WHY have I got to buy a useless chassis simply to get my hands on a pair of front wheels. I’m never going to use it because it’s going to be crap without a magnet.

Any suggestions as to what I’m going to do with load of unwanted Scalextric Ford Mustang chassis. I suppose that I’ll have to add them to the pile of Caterham and Lotus cars (minus wheels and tyres of course) not forgetting the Cadillacs and then give them all a good soaking in lighter fluid and ‘accidentally’ drop a match on them.

Answers on a postcard please

Vince Feeney

Dear Brian,

In the name of all non English speaking members, I demand you to give Laurent Cheruy a prize for his amazing article "How to improve your English with Scalextric". It's a real bulls eye! Just ask Julie, Sean, Phil and all the other real nice guys I have tried to phone and mail over the last few years.

Even my "she who must be obeyed", who has no interest what so ever in our common hobby, couldn't help crack a smile over this article. Hadn't my talents with the King's English been so poor, I probably would have written this story myself. Thank you, Laurent.

On another point entirely, I fully agree with Tony Secchi (August Journal pg. 26) - I too find the historical research of Peter Novani more than fascinating. But Tony didn't do a bad job either with his interesting article on the late CanAm series. However, I have to correct him on one minor but important point: Jackie Stewart won two, not one CanAm races during the 1971 season. With his Lola T260 he won the 2nd round at St. Jovite, Canada as well as the 5th round at Lexington U.S.A. Also he wasn't the current world F1 champion when he did so, claiming his second title in 1972. Maybe now the new manufacturer Vanquish MG can help us race these horse power monsters on our own circuits; if only they would produce a Matra MS670 from 1973 with the unforgettable Francois Cévert behind the wheel! My personal wish for Christmas Eve.

Best slot car regards from tiny Denmark

Holger Thor Nielsen

.....
Dear Brian

I am writing to ask NSCC members for advice regarding the suppression of Radio Frequency Interference. Here's the problem. I have a large track layout in my loft, consisting of Scalextric and SCX pieces. Unfortunately when I run a lot of my cars (with the possible exceptions of Ninco and more recent Scalextric) they seem to cause interference with my neighbours' TV reception. Unfortunately their aerial is inside their loft directly behind the party wall - rather than mounted outside on the chimney - and this I know is part of the problem. I have tried screening the party wall with aluminium foil which of course, in hindsight, made the situation worse. That came down quite quickly.

The only alternative I can think of is to fit Suppressors to my most frequently used cars. What I need to know - in layman's terms please - is what specification of suppressors should I purchase and how should they be wired to the motors, e.g.: in series or parallel. Could any members with info and advice please reply via the Journal; email me at Christopher.Fenlon@btopenworld.com; or phone me on 01442-399822.

In response to other comments in the last two editions of the Journal, I have also experienced problems with Scalextric Sport track. In particular, the power rails being below the track surface resulting in poor electrical contact with guide braids. This has caused cars to stall frequently on affected track pieces. I have spoken with Hornby and was told I was the first person to contact them regarding this problem. They seemed genuinely interested and did listen. I was told that they had extensively tested Sport track, as you would expect, and they suggested checking the contact tabs which I did but it made no difference. Perhaps the problem might be with tool settings at their factory?

Have other members experienced similar problems? Like many NSCC members I think Scalextric has improved tremendously over the last 3-4 years; however, for the moment I will not buy extra Sport track until I feel more confident regarding quality control in this particular area. A pity, I do like the new lane layouts on the specialist track sections and I am happy to spend money on the most recent Scalextric cars.

Thanks

Chris Fenlon

Mole@nsc. co.uk



Mole has decided that maybe Applecross is not the most exciting road in Scotland, despite taking a bus load of foreign visitors over the pass in July. No – The Golden Road or the East Coast “main” road through Harris definitely has it until I find somewhere better.

The road does a rather good impression of being built(?) in a rock strewn swamp with all sorts of interesting hazards. Mostly it is only one and a bit cars wide with a maximum of 6” of verge before it disappears, and for added information you can tell the size of the drop from the road by the type of fence. No fence means up to a 50 foot fall before you bump into something; a wooden fence of doubtful strength and rusty wire means between 50ft and 90ft and Armco suggests it’s a long way to something nasty below, generally the sea. The longest ‘straight’ is probably only just over ¼ mile and it is hilly! Mull has a couple of exciting roads, but nothing to compare with this. There are numerous blind crests with steep inclines both sides and there are two very notable bends. One as the bonnet of the car comes down from pointing skywards the first thing you see is a mast and if you do not turn sharp left immediately then you will land on the deck of a fishing boat, or if you are going very fast you will probably go straight over it and land in the sea. The other one starts off the same way except that this time you see the roof of a house and it is time to make a right turn. The roof of the house is level with the road and has been recently replaced. The house is also for sale, but much as he likes the bizarre Mole was not tempted. Mrs. Mole declares it to be the most frightening road she has travelled on, and having spent 8 years driving up and down river beds and the like in Kenya, she should know! What is all this leading to? Well, put together a collection of bits of plastic slot-car track in any random order and

definitely not flat, and you can hold a rally stage on Harris. It is probably best if you cut off one lane though so that the width is correct.

There has been some discussion regarding the ‘road’ car versions currently being offered of touring cars, and whether they just another (successful) attempt to get us to part with our hard earned cash. As far as the regulations for the BTCC goes the manufacturers/teams have to provide a standard road car in the paddock at every round so that the scrutineers can check such mundane things as bodyshell dimensions, suspension pick-up points, engine position, etc.. Notice Mole said standard road car. It also comes in handy for proving that the required number have been built “Just wait a moment and I will take this one away and drive the other 4999 round so that you can see them.”

I should think that the latest offering from Ninco is anything but a standard road car, and I am sure that the large towing eyes rather conveniently mounted to spear pedestrians and side exhausts through the sill would raise a few eyebrows in the safety stakes. And surely a road car would not have the same engine as the full race version? Thinking of tracks just now, Mole has got to thinking about the new Hornby Radius 2 racing crossover. Are we going to see ones for the other three radii soon, and are there any plans to combine multi radius crossovers? The potential for multiple corner sections are endless. Can you imagine the fun of going from lane 1 to lane 8 and then back again. Think of all the potential for taking people out!!! Mole thinks that all tracks should be chicaned all the way round except for the start straight, then there would be just a procession of cars – just like the real thing. ■

The real truth behind the 'road' car

BY BILL GRIGG

Cynics may wish to believe that the 'road' car is just another money spinning variation on a body mould aimed at collectors whose collection would not be complete without it – but cynics would be only partially correct. In fact, and I have it on very good authority (which I'm afraid I'm unable to divulge), the 'road' car was originally an even more cynical product.

It seems that in the latter years of the 20th century a group of slot-car manufacturers commissioned Herr Dr Sigismund Slött of the Vienna - Kleinmodell - motorenkollektes psychologieforschungsinstitut (roughly, the Institute for the Study of the Psychology of Collecting Model Cars) to find a way of increasing sales of existing models without going to the expense of retooling the tampo printing machines for a particular model more than about a dozen times. (Remember, these were early days, though such a small number of variants may seem laughable to us now.) After eighteen months' research on a small group of carefully selected 'guinea pig' collectors Dr Slött came up with the 'road' car.

According to the original Slött theory it was supposed to work like this. When the standard number of 'racing' variants of a particular model had been manufactured the moulds would be used for the cheap to produce 'road' version. The collectors, already having say, twelve versions, wouldn't want to spoil their collections for a ha'p'orth of tar (as it were) and would be dead certs to buy the 'road' version even though on the face of it was dull and uninteresting and wouldn't appeal to the (admittedly very small) minority who wanted to use the cars for slot-racing. Bingo, sales increased by nearly 10 percent.

But, that was easy, the clever bit was the psychological effect the 'road' car was intended to have on the purchaser.

Slött found that with subtle hints (which he intended the slot-car manufacturers should incorporate into their advertising) the majority of his guinea pigs began to wonder just what effect that electric motor which gave the cars such a nice chunky feel was supposed to have and why the manufacturers didn't just fit a simple lead (or similar, this was technically a toy, after all) weight which, on the face of it, should have been a lot cheaper. He similarly made it known that track was available (obviously the collectors didn't have any of their own) and at first a few, then all, decided that it wouldn't hurt to try their 'road' cars, very gently of course, as there was no attractive decoration to scratch and they could always buy a new set of tyres and braids (whatever they were) to restore the car to pristine condition.

So, at first on sunny Sunday afternoons, they took their road cars for a gentle 'spin' (though, naturally, actually spinning was furthest from their minds) round Slött's carefully contrived tracks which contained no nasty humpback bridges, chicanes or sharp curves. The master stroke was putting full race motors in the allegedly 'road' spec cars and Slött found that with careful encouragement a full 85% of his guinea pigs began to drive faster and, eventually, even to enjoy it. They became so enthusiastic that they wanted the cars to look more like racing than road cars and as, obviously, they couldn't possibly race their 'racing' cars, they practically begged Slött to let them buy duplicates of the cars they already had so that they could race with absolutely no fear of damaging their collections. Most weren't content with just one 'racing' version and so Slött reported to the manufacturers that he had found a cheap and foolproof way of increasing sales by at least 20%.

Unfortunately, as we now know, the research was sadly flawed. The main problem was the ⇒

ready availability to the guinea pigs of Slött's 'doktoed' track. Ordinary collectors had access to no such thing and any track they might have in their collections was specialised stuff. When they tried their 'road' cars on a combination of hump back bridges, Goodwood and skid chicanes, leaps, pit stops, blow out track and hill climbs the results were predictably disastrous – especially with a full race motor. Many were the cries of, "Oh my goodness!", "How truly dreadful!" and "Deary me!" and the 'road' cars were quickly returned to their boxes, never, like their 'racing' counterparts, to emerge again.

Thanks for your various views on the reasons behind the production of "road cars". Most of the entries were very similar and revolved around

the need to attract the 'boy racer' into the hobby by providing drivers with reversed baseball caps, boom boom stereo boxes in the boot and 'No Fear' stickers in the rear window.

Bill Grigg's entry, printed above, was an interesting alternative view but the winner of the competition is Richard Downham who maintains that these cars are produced for the sole reason of populating the 1/32 scale access roads at Silverstone after the British Grand Prix.

Naturally you would need vast numbers of them to form a realistic traffic jam but the lack of indicators on the slot-car would add to the effect and, by removing the magnets, lane discipline would approach normal levels!

Your Saxo is on the way Richard. ■

1956 Lancia Ferrari

BY DAVE YERBURY

Starting life as a Lancia the Vittorio Jano designed D50 V8 was designed for the new 1954 2.5 litre season. Jano's V8 was available in either 76mm x 68.5mm or 73.6mm x 73.1mm, the longer stroke engine was the one adopted. Each block of four cylinders had twin overhead cams and four double choke carburettors providing one inlet to each cylinder. In this early car the fuel was carried in the outrigger sponsons on each side. With nearly 300bhp at 8000rpm claimed and being a small and light package much was expected.

With Ascari, Villoresi and Castellotti piloting it proved very quick but they could not seem to overcome the tendency for the car to swap ends when pushed hard causing Ascari's water splash moment at Monaco. Financial problems and the tragic loss of Ascari caused Gianni Lancia to cede the whole shooting match to Ferrari thus becoming the Lancia Ferrari. This car was destined to win Fangio his 4th world title in 1956.

The Lancia D50s were modified by Ferrari; fuel was moved from the side sponsons (which were faired in) into the tail of the car. The V8 also became a non stressed member of the chassis. Fangio was backed up by Collins,

Gendebian, Musso, and Castellotti. Again as with the 250F Fangio would give a new car its first win, although luckily in Argentina. Little known Menditeguy had not read the script and on taking the lead at the start in his private Maserati 250F stayed there for 43 laps before his rear suspension collapsed. Before that happened he was about to lap Fangio who cruised through to win.

In May, at the non-championship International Trophy race both the Ferraris of Fangio and Collins expired as Moss went on to win for Vanwall. On to Monaco - Fangio would find Moss in his way again; this time on pole in his trusty 250F Maserati. Fangio crashed on lap 3 and took over Collins' car but could not catch Moss.

In Belgium Fangio crashed and Collins went on to score his first championship victory in the Ferrari. At Rheims Fangio's car had been stressed fighting with Schell in the Vanwall so Collins cruised to his second victory. At the British GP Fangio, after an uncharacteristic spin, overtook Moss to win this race for the first time.

It wouldn't be a season in F1 without controversy (things don't change much do they?) although a bit of sportsmanship helps. Collins

led the drivers championship and only needed third to clinch the title; Moss had run out of fuel chasing the Ferraris and whilst coasting back to the pits he had received a gentle push from a Maserati colleague to help him get back in for fuel. Loads of protests but no disqualification (ring any bells?). When Fangio's car broke Collins, who was in third place and in line for the title, came in and handed over to his number one (I could just see Bernie allowing Rubens to come in and hand over to Schuey). Fangio eventually finished second to Moss and with those points claimed a lucky 4th world title.

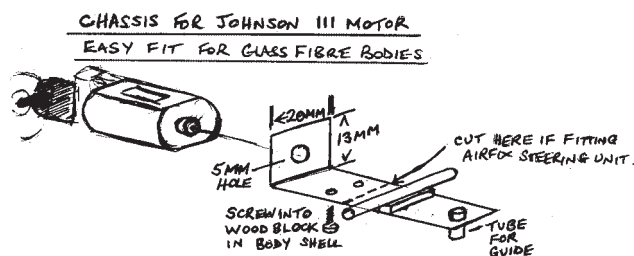
Ferrari won the title but the year will always be remembered for the epic duels between Fangio and Moss and the improvement of the British cars and drivers. Reliability was still around the corner though.



The Lancia Ferrari is one of the new releases by A.A. Bodies for their Nostalgia range. For a few years I was able to bring vac-formed bodies to the market before anybody else but technology and demand has overtaken me. I have, therefore returned to my roots and started making vintage bodies in glass fibre. I am only a small cottage industry mostly making cars for my own amusement but am happy to supply them to other people to recoup my costs.

I made this one because I like the car and the colour. This car would be a nice addition for the more scenic minded circuit owners who, with a water feature could re-enact Ascari's swim at Monaco. There is plenty of room for a variety of chassis, even a rail racer would be possible.

I have used a Johnson 111 MRRC motor with the axle carrier screwed on. At the front a securing mount and axle carrier was made by bending a 20 mm wide brass strip to 90 degrees and a hole made in the short 20mm tall end to slip over the motor shaft bearing and araldited to the motor. The longer piece is screwed to a wooden block in the body shell. The front axle is held in a brass tube glued onto the brass strip on its centre line. Neat and very easy to achieve



even for the most ham fisted of us. A Scalextric guide was used, mounting it in a piece of brass tube in a hole drilled on the centre line. Guide travel was restricted by gluing a couple of pieces of plastic to the brass strip either side of the guide. Wheels are SRM alloys with their ribbed tyres looking like a thinner version of today's F1 offerings.

Other cars available are Lister Jaguar, BRM V16 and Maserati 250F with more to follow. I can be contacted on 01254 875262. ■

Newark Swapmeet update

I'd like to thank all the members and traders that have called and emailed me giving their support to the Newark Swapmeet. Table bookings are almost full, so if you would like one please ring Roger Barker ASAP. Just to give a taster of some of the things going on during the day:- **Scalextric Sport Circuit** run using their new computer software; **'Bargain Hunt'** auction which will take place at 1.00pm. **'Spares Only' tables** at £10.00. Gives you a chance to sell your old spares and the opportunity to buy those elusive parts. **Prize Draw**. We have two of Roger Gillhams Books signed by the author to be given away as part of the prize draw. Plus much, much more.

See you all at Newark.
Steve Cannon

Scalextric and MG

BY GARETH JEX

With the, soon to be released, MG Lola Scalextric cars announced a while back it got me thinking about the other MG cars Scalextric have released and what we might see in the future.

My collecting of Scalextric goes back about ten years, but my love of MG Sports cars goes back further having owned a MGB GT and still own a Historic Road Rally prepared 1971 MG Midget. There have always been numerous numbers of models of MGs through the years and I'm sure there are collectors out there who collect nothing else, but there is a real lack of MGs in the Scalextric range, which I find very strange. I realise everyone has their own list of cars that they would love Hornby to make, but the MG range covers some of the most popular sports cars this country has ever made. The MGB was/is the best selling sports car made in the UK (open the flood of letters correcting me!).

So, what have we to date?.....

Scalex MG TF (circa 1957) available in Cream, Maroon, Red and Blue.

Made from aluminium due to the body shape being too complex for the normal tinplate, pull back and go clockwork mechanism pre runner to Scalextric.

MG Metro & MG Metro 6R4 released in 1982 Cat no. 23, these great little models at last offer something worthy of collecting. Again not really a real MG Sports car, but the 6R4 version was a competitive rally car until the powers that be felt Group B was getting too dangerous. 17 Standard models to collect in total with opening boots on most of the Metro models and sports trim on the 6R4s.

C303 MG Metro 'Datapost/Hepolite' white with blue.

C304 MG Metro 'McCain' yellow with red

C317 MG Metro 'black MG Logo' white

C318 MG Metro 'red MG Logo' white

C323 MG Metro 'Unipart' metallic blue

C324 MG Metro 'Valvoline' metallic green

C331 MG Metro 'Melitta' white with red and blue

C366 MG Metro 'Duckhams' white with blue and yellow

C392J MG 6R4 'BP' green with yellow skirt

C149 MG 6R4 'Computervision' blue with white skirt

C150 MG 6R4 'Computervision' blue with white skirt

C334W MG 6R4 'Esso' white with red skirt & blue wheels

C480 MG 6R4 'Esso' white with red skirt and flanks no. 87

C146 MG 6R4 'Navico' black with red skirt no. 27

C333W MG 6R4 'Navico' black with red skirt no number

C360 MG 6R4 'Ternco' blue with yellow

C214 MG 6R4 'Total' red with white skirt

C215 MG 6R4 'Valvoline' blue with yellow skirt

C150 was shown in cat 28, but never went into production which was a great shame as it featured a rear wing and looked much better than any of the other models - what happened to the mock up?

C360 this car can prove very difficult to find in MB condition, in fact I find it easier to find the factory error versions with only one number printed. Believed to be only 400 made.

In addition to the standard models above there are a number of Untampoed versions of C323 and C324 in metallic blue and green as well as the previously mentioned missing door tampo printing on the C360.

Most of the above models are relatively easy to come by at low cost, probably because they drive so poorly and the fact that they were in the range for quite a while. C331 'Melitta', C366 'Duckhams', C304 'McCain' and C360 'Ternco' are the exception; the first three go for

about £40 for MB examples while the C360 'Ternco' I saw for sale at Sandown at £200!

Chrome factory pen holder MG Metro C002/C602?

Recently purchased to complete (maybe not) my collection of MG Scalextric cars is a chromed MG Metro on a mahogany coloured timber base with a black pen holder, in a box marked C002 or C006 (slight damage make it impossible to tell). I have learnt that several of these were produced in the late 80s possibly early 90s either as gifts or with the thought they may form part of Hornby Hobbies gift 'Hybron' range. A small quantity of plinths were produced in the factory carpenters shop. I have seen one other at a Swapmeet ages ago, but never in a box. More detail than that I don't have, but any one who knows more please let me know.



MG Maestro, C310, C332 & C275/C276

Released in 1983 Cat no. 24 these are without doubt one of the ugliest cars produced to date (along with Dart and Cougars etc.), and were one of the shortest runs, each car only being shown in the catalogue for one year, possibly because of this they can be quite difficult to obtain in MB condition especially if you take the NSCC cars into account...

C310 MG Maestro Race no. 4 blue with yellow/red stripes.

C332 MG Maestro gold with red/black helmet and stripes

C275/C276: Made as a limited edition range for the NSCC in association with Steve De Havilland in 1991, approx. 1000 no. of each colour were produced in red and black with a further 300 no. in green, white and yellow. I also

have a yellow car with an NSCC logo on the bonnet; I can only assume this was applied after by a member - any info would be great.

Using up unsold stock some of the cars were then tampo printed on the bonnet, (outside of the factory) by Phil Etgart and offered for sale at his "SlotSwap" event in April 1999. To my knowledge approximately 50 of each colour were produced and I have black, green and yellow, but no white. Does anyone have a white one?

Police car special

The origins of this car eluded me until I rang Traffic models to order one of their MG 1100 models and got speaking to Steve De Havilland, he explained that he made this car in white and black and produced approx. 10 of each, again from unsold stock.



Factory prototype:

painted in metallic green with very crude overlaid graphics of Scalextric and MG logos, never made it to production. Again any specific knowledge on this car has passed me by, but a chance conversation with Mark Scale at Sandown enlightened me slightly. Mark seems to recall a flyer/brochure with this model in it; I have never seen it and would love a colour copy if anyone out there has one. =>



Not in my collection, but I have seen photos on Adrian's web site www.slotcarportal.com is another factory pre-production model in blue and a chrome trophy edition. However the chrome version is believed to be an after factory fake; if anyone has any more info on this car I would love to know.

What else?

Well until the MG Lolas are released in, no doubt, lots of different liveries, that's it! Anyone after an MG Midget, MG B and MG TC has to convert the old 'Airfix', 'Monogram', 'Lindburg' or 'Revell' kits. 'VIP' did an MGA, 'Traffic Models' do an MG 1100 and a MG F in kit and made.

Surely it won't be left to one of the Spanish manufacturers to make an MGB in standard, GT, V8, Sebring, Le Mans special editions (no

doubt at the wrong scale with the body too wide!) The apparent appeal of the classic British sports car has not been lost on them and all of them have a good classic range on offer. So come on Scalextric, how about it!

Oh, and while we're at it, a Triumph TR6 would be nice also. Both the MGB and Triumph could come with limited edition hamper boxes on the boot rack or different colours of ladies scarves blowing in the wind!

I look forward to the new MG Lola release which I believe is now due for early 2003, just in time for me to buy a new MG to replace the Midget which sadly is up for sale, however, don't despair, it's making way for a permanent Scalextric layout of Brands Hatch in the garage. How understanding wives can be!

Thanks to Adrian and his web site and thanks to Mark and Julie Scale for selling me most of my 500+ Collection! ■

Evesham Swapmeet

BY STEVE PITTS

The 22nd September saw the arrival of the NSCC “Swappie wagon” in the Vale of Evesham. As is traditional the event commenced on the Saturday afternoon with the arrival of several participants at hostelrys around the Vale in preparation for the Pre-Swappie “Nosh In”, held this year in the conservatory of The Bell Inn Crothorne. The happy band dined and drank well into the night, and those lucky enough to reside at the same premises found their beds with ease compared to the travellers whose night disappeared into an early Sunday morning.

Mark Scale and his team won this year’s award for the “Early Bird”, waiting by the entrance well before any other trader’s arrival. The morning was dry and mild and Mark was able to do a brisk trade from the footpath 20 minutes before the hall opened. A number of eager purchasers snapped up boxed Black Bentleys for £85 which will surely awaken those who have in the past paid over £200 for these 60s classics.

Once opened, the hall was quickly filled with a huge array of all items slot-car from treasure laden vehicles now arriving. In addition to the usual stalwarts there were a number of new faces, some disposing of first class collections and others displaying scratchbuilt masterpieces.

Robert Learmouth (Westwood Models) was one who had recently purchased a large collection in the north of England including a number of items that were once in my own collection. The star being a MB 1/24th Alfa in red, which surprisingly was still available as the Swappie finished. Stan Rowbotham had a nice display, which included no less than seven Goodwood chicanes in various conditions which he had recently unearthed. Boxed buildings from the 60s were all available on Chris Georgiou’s table and many were in mint condition. He, like Stan, had unearthed a wonderful selection of vintage items and their

bright crisp appearance indicated that the previous owner had stored them away for many years.

As usual Mark Robertson was manning the NSCC table but managed to escape to the refreshment area on no less than four occasions during the course of the day leaving Bob (Dougal) Bott to cope with a steady flow of customers.

I was able to spend some time admiring the skilled handiwork of Max Winter and Mac Pinches who were displaying their ranges of resin/white metal kits. Max, who we all know trades under the name of Maxi Models, had a diorama display of his McLaren and Lola T160 models which have deservedly drawn many favourable comments. Detail is the byword here and the quality of finish on those ready constructed by Max was first class.

For fans of cars in the era 1934-1939, Mac Pinches is your man, his current range of 10 cars consists of 4 Mercedes, 2 Auto Unions, 3 Alfas and 1 Maserati. The models are made from resin, with white metal components and drew much interest during the day. The range is due to expand in early 2003 when Mac moves into the 47-51 era with a 4CLT/48 Maserati, 158 Alfa, 41/2 litre Ferrari, Talbot Lago and BRM.

One of the high points of this Swappie is the display of cars and memorabilia provided by Joel Thura, David Lawson and Gareth Evans who are now busy with their new Southend Slot-Racing Club. My family and I were well entertained on the Saturday evening with tales of their many ventures to Swappies and we were also impressed with their enthusiasm and knowledge of everything motor car. As a Swappie organiser, I have concluded that you need reliable and genuine enthusiasts to add that element of variety at an event and the Southend SRC certainly provide this. Thanks guys!

The theme of their display this year was ciggie advertising on cars and they brought a wonderful selection carrying Rothmans, Silk ⇒

Cut, Winfield, Camel and of course Marlboro. My personal favourite has to be the Rothmans Porsche (my first ever purchase). What a beauty she is!

Joel also had a rare Nitto kit of a Ligier JS2 and in this same sponsor area, a very pretty Renault 5 Turbo caught my eye.

Included in the models on display was a Tamiya McLaren Honda MP 4/7 in 1/20th scale which David had converted to slot status - a first class conversion if ever I saw one. Adorning the display was a complete year's run of Marlboro F1 event stickers from each of the Grand Prix held in 1978, a rare sight indeed. Joel had apparently picked up two complete sets at a car boot for the princely sum of 20p. As many of you will know I also have a small collection of F1 bits and pieces and Joel thrust one of his sets into my hand without hesitation.

These French guys aren't that bad you know!

Mention must also be made of a rare sighting of former editor Tony Frewin who had made the trek up from Essex. It is great to see that these NSCC stalwarts still have a passion for our hobby, though he did tease me with a Lancia 037 press pack which left tightly clutched in his hands. I am always reminded of a mind blowing trip with Tony many years ago, when he took me out on a night time sortie around the lanes of Evesham and its surrounding villages. We were in a L/H drive Sierra Cossie specially brought over from Germany. At the time my underpants came under severe pressure though I now remember the trip with much amusement.

Whilst member numbers were down on last year, most attendees left happy and the Vale of Evesham was the richer for this annual pilgrimage. ■

Evesham Swapmeet 2

BY JOEL THURA

One sure way of telling the onset of autumn, besides watching swallows fly south to Africa, is to observe various SSRC members around September time. They can be seen rushing around, having desperate telephone conversations about running out of Marlboro red; building models, painting, applying transfers, in truth, generally making a nuisance of themselves around the house.

And the focus of all this frantic activity? The Evesham swapmeet of course, what else?

This year yet again, three members of the Southend Slot Racing Club travelled to the Midlands to display a large selection of slot cars. Nobody counted them, but David Lawson, Gareth Evans and your faithful reporter amassed a collection of about 150 cars carrying tobacco sponsorship for the occasion.

As usual, we travelled on the Saturday, arriving just in time to help Steve Pitt arrange the tables and chairs around the hall, duly helped by Richard Winter.

We deserted the usual B&B, and instead rented rooms in the pub where the Evesham pre-swapmeet meal takes place. So this time, I too

could have a drink or two. After a quick rest, we went down to the bar to meet most of the NSCC committee; they sat together at a table talking computers and serious things. We sat with Steve and his family and talked motor racing, slot-cars, and, at times, complete nonsense. It was great fun, and after a couple of drinks nobody cared. Brian Rogers came to say hello and twist my arm for this article.

We woke up too early for a Sunday, had a terrific breakfast and made our way to the hall. We arrived in the middle of the usual scrum of dealers, unloading, doing deals in the car park etc..

As ever, when we unpacked, and in spite of the signs saying "display only", we had the odd dealer wrecking the display by picking up just about every car on the table as soon as we had found the perfect spot for it.

I don't think I am giving away any secrets, but generally all the bargains will have gone by the time the public is allowed in. Dealers will either buy from each other or clean up any member's table of the best cars long before you or I get a look in.



Once the display was set up, we took it in turn to go around the hall to look for bargains; unusually for me, I came back with very little junk this year. I have been buying a lot of stuff on eBay (hi-fi mostly) and finances were limited. I had several long chats with that great Ferrari fan and slot dealer Martin Davis, and met up again with Anthony Bartlett (another Ferrari fan), who came all the way from South Africa, via Paris where I first met him and now Surrey where he currently resides.

Just for once I bought a lot of complete cars, lots of cheap spare motors from Pendle's auction, and indulged in a "Racer" Ferrari 333 Daytona winner; as a swap, it was quite affordable. I even sold a couple of cars. Because it is a bit out of the way, there are always good deals to be done at Evesham, even on new Fly

cars.

Come 2pm, it was time for the boring bit, packing it all away. Its funny, how things never seem to fit back in the car afterwards, especially as Gareth had bought a complete Scalextric set! Ford Escorts! Yuck! I thought this will never work out, but somehow, and with help from David, it all went in. Off we went, back to sunny Essex. Unloaded the car in a hurry, and left everything in the spare room including Gareth's set, where it sits as I write a week later, waiting to be unpacked and put back in its proper place.



Still, its all good fun, if Steve Pitts does want us back, we have already chosen next year's theme, something to do with "Entente Cordiale"

If you did not go to Evesham, shame on you, we went, enjoyed it, and intend to return next year. ■



The Postman Used to Ring Twice

BY JOHN DILWORTH

We've had about five posties on our street this six months. I suppose it's the usual story of long hours and short wages, though I sometimes think it's my fault, wearing them out. But I'd dearly like to get to know the local jolly postperson, and thank them sincerely for the untrammelled joy they bring into my old grey life.

Yes; once a month it's the NSCC journal and then it's Motor Sport, then slightly less frequently it's the Carkits catalogue and a nice brown paper wrapped package from MRE or Pendle. Just like the Christmas and birthday pressies of my guileless youth, nothing excites the simple childish pleasures of anticipation and gratification like a brown paper parcel from the postman. I'd like to thank them, but each time I open the door it's a different face. And they only ring once. Get to the door too late and it's one of those annoying little 'We called but you were out' cards. I was thinking about this because recently I finally saved enough beer vouchers to order the new Maxi-Models kit, the Lola T160TS. Aaah. Beauty. But was I in time to catch one of the limited edition run? I began to wait on the doormat each morning like one of those sad Scottish terriers pining for his dead master. When would the next shipment arrive? Would it arrive....? Yes indeed it would. On a bright sunny morning after the wife had left on the school run (hence no embarrassing explanation about expensive toy cars) another new postman delivered the traditional brown paper package into my paws. Well, if I did go out to work, I would have called in sick. As I work at home, I just slipped into the workshop and put the answerphone on with guilty pleasure. After a few yogic deep-breathing exercises I made the first incisions into the packing tape with a no.2 scalpel....

Yes, well. The kit did not disappoint. The first thing to check was the body, neatly wrapped

in protective tissue, and as gorgeous as any inanimate thing has a right to be. This Lola is just plain sexy; do take a few moments to appreciate and fondle this masterpiece of the model-maker's art. It'll never look this good again, after messy fingers have smeared it and the odd nerf on the race track has left its indelible scars. Svelt curves, aggressive flat low squared off nose, flaring wheel arches, and a beautifully finished and highly polished blood-red (as all good sports cars should be). Just a pity that as a totally accurate race model, it has to have the plug-ugly oil radiator box that the real car sprouted in pre-race testing, disturbing the lovely clean flow over the nearside rear fender. The other thing I was eager to check out was the new motor, advertised as a 26,000 r.p.m. job. Indeed, it is a hyped-up version of the familiar Mabuchi from Professor Motor, but with thicker windings (I think), stronger magnets (also, I think), and lots of extra cooling slots in the can and bell-end. It strikes me that the current incarnation of the ubiquitous Mabuchi is evolving in exactly the same way as the dear old 16D did in the 60s and 70s, with rewinds, stronger magnets, 'bullet-proof' endbells, thicker cans and so on. I like it. Luckily for me I was giving the thing a close and thoughtful going over before trying any revs on it, as I found one of the eyelets from the guide had found its way through the cooling slots into the endbell and was nicely positioned to lurch the commutator. Careful tweezer operations followed, but hey, Mr. Maxi-Model, a separate bag for the motor might be an idea. Well, having scored a cheap point over the manufacturer, I went on to check out the Chaparral-type high wing assembly; surely a particular challenge for the designer. Cool! Looks good, and resiliently flexible rather than strong and brittle in the inevitable scenery-bound roll. Resisting the temptation to fit everything together immediately by reminding

myself how much the blooming thing cost, I took the good advice written large on the instruction sheets, and Read The Effing Manual. And I'm glad I did. By now the tea had brewed, Woman's Hour was on, and I eased down in the workshop armchair to read. Well, it's worth the price of the kit alone. The long and colourful history of the car, really well written with enthusiasm and deep knowledge, had me reaching for my favourite books, Dave Friedman's 'Lola' and Pete Lyon's 'Can-Am', to cross check and mainly just gawp at Max Winter's (the real Mr. Maxi-Models) erudition and wit. Because basically, the Lola T160 was a pretty crap car. Literally; pretty, but sadly crap.

Anyway; to the build. You really do have to read and re-read the instructions, but this is no hardship thanks to Max's wry style, and then jump in. I'd learnt a lot already from building the previous McLaren model; the tips he gives about tools, glues and techniques are valuable to this old man who has not done much model-building since Petula Clark was in the charts (and they talk about the good old days. They must be mad). And despite the plethora of tiny pieces in diverse materials, there is really nothing to be scared of for anyone who has built the odd Airfix aircraft carrier. Decal-setting solutions, 'Krystal-Klear' and various other glues and adhesives are needed, and tweezers and small pliers, etc.- the normal modeller's kit. You will also need a set of micro drill bits; 0.4mm, 0.8mm, and other specific small sizes are required, along with a fairly steady hand to drill the wing supports. But the build goes exactly as it says on the box. Go slowly and have a few dry runs at everything, and you will be as pleased as I am. And that's pretty damn smug, I can tell you.

There are things that concerned me; the chassis moulding is a little weakened at the front end by a transverse channel which allows increased vertical travel for the front axle. In the end, the whole front end actually went through a radical rethink by Mr. Smartypants (guilty, your honour) after a little track testing. I just can't resist fiddling. What is the purpose of a kit, but for the fun of customising? If you don't

approve, buy the ready-built version. Anyway, I do have an obsession about high noses. I know it's generally safer to have the front end jacked up a bit to cope with lumpy track joints. This model is perfectly fine as it comes, but I wanted the nose even lower to match a few favourite photographs. In fact there is plenty of scope for this. A Fly guide to replace the one supplied helps immediately. Then I jacked the front axle higher into the body, by filing grooves in the moulded axle retainers. In fact, in the model as supplied, there is an incredible amount of vertical movement allowed for the front axle, and the clearance channel in the chassis seems unnecessary. I eventually filled the slot in the chassis for strength and epoxied a 3/32" i.d. brass axle tube onto the axle stays. This means the front wheels are now set rigidly for minimum front clearance and will run freely with the body screws loosened off slightly in the approved club-racer manner. I find cars handle very smoothly round my track with this sort of set-up; the rigid axle helps resist roll in corners. There is also room to set the front track a little wider than specified, giving a more stable racing set-up. Racing a £100 model? Yes yes yes; what else is there to do with it? Max Winter himself seems to sanction the idea of race-tuning his precious cars by including a neat little adjustable magnet. This I like also. I dream of one day seeing a whole 1/32nd Can-Am race series devoted to this expanding line of Maxi-Models. Being based on Can-Am rules, unlimited modification would be allowed. But Concours points would have to make up a big proportion of race scores. Anyway; back to real life. I'm glad to see that we now have a resin moulded lightweight Big John Surtees in the cockpit, instead of the previous white-metal Bruce McLaren sumo-wrestler. The cool aluminium wheels have a set screw fitting, and slide onto the axles very neatly. The engine and cockpit detail is superb, a little drop of matt-black is needed in the smart polished aluminium intake trumpets to finish completely, maybe a little wiring too, for those of you with infinite time and 1/32nd scale fingers.

It's a lovely car and a great model, a genuine development from the already groovy⇒⇒

M6A. The level of detail is phenomenal, from the helmet decals to the interior cockpit detail to the wheel inserts. It really does make an almost perfectly convincing scale replica; take out the guide flag, photograph it against a scenic backdrop and you couldn't tell it from the real thing. On track the performance is not shattering- the car is fairly heavy, although most of the weight is low down. Ready to race, my model tips the scales at a hefty 118gms. My M6A comes in at 114gms, but I have 'added a little lightness'; the difference is probably in the white metal body side panels on the Lola. By comparison, a Fly 908 weighs only 70gms, which is an awful lot less mass to slow down and speed up. The Lola motor has tons of grunt to push the car around though, and the weight and the magnet work effectively to keep the rubber down and the guide in the slot. Handling is nice and predictable, as long as you allow longer braking times; there's a lot of momentum there once the car gets up to speed. It will be nice to experiment with the silicon tyres and metal gears

that Maxi-Models now have in their rapidly expanding catalogue. Perhaps there are sufficient rich fools around to mount a no holds barred race series after all. Personally I just tremble at the thought of such expensive crashes. Meanwhile it makes a superb, if only slightly anachronistic companion to the earlier McLaren M6A model. The two cars never raced against each other- the McLaren is from the '67 Can-Am, whilst this car is from the '68 championship (hair-splitting competition anyone?). The Lola with its uprated motor certainly outperforms the M6A model, even though I've fitted my McLaren with a magnet. For realistic Can-Am race grids there's the '69 GB Track Porsche 917PA, which sadly will leave this beauty standing performance-wise, but otherwise I shall have to wait for the other mouthwatering models to come in the Maxi range- a Ferrari 612? Yeah! But where are the Chaparrals? Start saving your money now. I suppose getting back to work would be a good start! ■

Warning: Radio active

BY PETER NOVANI

Remember me? I'm the guy who can spot the tiniest livery discrepancy on a slot-car at twenty paces - check out one of my 'Wheelspin' reviews for proof! Contrary to popular belief, the Journal's editor, Brian Rogers, hasn't packed me off to an NSCC outpost in Outer Mongolia for sad old anoraks to convalesce.

Actually, I've been enjoying a sabbatical from anything relating to slot-cars. And as my enthusiasm for model cars is tempered by a sense of perspective, I'm currently reorganising my slot-car and static model car collection. That is to say, selling my entire autographed die-cast race car collection plus a selection of slot-cars. These days, I seem to be incessantly preaching the less-is-more gospel, much to the chagrin of my avid model collecting mates. However, a regular purge is good for the wallet, and appeases members of my family who do not share my enthusiasm for miniature cars.

Well known author, Nick Hornby, sums up my sentiments rather succinctly; "Tuesday night I reorganised my record collection; I often do this at periods of emotional stress...I pull the records off the shelves, put them in piles all over the sitting room floor, look for Revolver (The Beatles album), and go on from there, and when I'm finished I'm flushed with a sense of self, because this is, after all, who I am."

A momentary lapse of reason

However, by mid-August, I was abruptly awakened from my slot-car stupor by a phone call from Susan Pownall, the editor of Racer magazine. Apparently, she'd been approached by the BBC asking if I wanted to be a guest on a radio programme which promised a slot-car related segment. Why not? No doubt, vanity on my part, helped in the decision making process. Soon after, the BBC phoned to explain in greater detail just what my involvement would entail. The programme in question, 'The Big and Daft

Show,' is broadcasted on BBC London Radio 94.9 FM. My contribution was aired live on Saturday, September 7th, although the show has since switched to Sundays. I was on the show to discuss slot-cars with the three presenters, Ian Boldsworth, Rob Rouse and Jon Williams. All three just happen to be stand-up comedians in their own right.

With that in mind, it seemed prudent to tune into the programme on preceding weekends. It was only then that I started to wonder what I'd let myself in for. Needless to say nagging doubts soon surfaced. And when in doubt, there is really only one thing to do W-O-R-R-Y! It transpires that the programme features regular forums on all aspects of collecting. And having discovered what subjects were discussed on the previous two programmes, my prospects of validating our hobby to a potentially apathetic panel, increased considerably.

And 'psychic' Brian wasn't joking in his August editorial about a bloke who collected 1,000+ (unused) aeroplane sick bags. On the preceding weekend's programme they had a guest who owns a more modest 300 bags. Think that's daft? They recently had as a guest the chairman of the National Fancy Rat Society. Apparently, at one time he had 120 of the creatures in his care. So, if your 'other half' moans about the ever increasing number of slot-cars dotted around the house, threaten to quit slot-cars in favour of either (or both) of the aforementioned hobbies.

I now had three weeks to reflect on my rather hasty decision, and to ponder whether I was knowledgeable and confident enough to conduct an interview with these guys. Although I profess to know little about each and every colour variation on a given slot-car, I seem to have acquired an appetite for self-promotion in recent years (delusions of grandeur?). Be it, using my four lane 'exhibition' Scalextric layout to raise funds for charity. Writing reviews under my 'Wheelspin' monicker, plus articles for the ➡

Journal, and on occasion, also for the Racer magazine. Then there's the limited edition Crystal Classics Jaguar XJ220 I commissioned from Hornby Hobbies for the slot-car event I organised for Barry Potter's Sandown Toy Fair last year. At least I'd convinced myself that I had enthusiasm in abundance, if not the prerequisite knowledge, to bluff my way through the impending radio broadcast.

If you don't ask, you don't get

As this was another of my non-profit making activities, I wanted a company to donate a competition prize, or prizes. Soon I was mulling over the idea of obtaining a copy of the new Scalextric book by Roger Gillham. In its latest updated 5th edition guise, the informative chapters on the early history are complemented by some superb colour photography by top motoring photographer, John Colley. I'd met John when he visited me to take photos of my track layout, buildings and cars. Some of which can now be found in the new book.

As part of his remit was to photograph the expansive 100 foot six lane layout at the London Scalextric Club, I offered to act as his navigator through the rush hour traffic to the club's location in Wood Green, North London. Having raced at the club in the past, I was able to introduce John to various club members including Steve Carter who runs things there. Judging by the quizzical looks on their faces, an explanation was required as to why we were both interrupting their all important pre-race practice session. It was worth the effort, though, as that club track also appears in the book.

In fact, Haynes Publishing invited me to the Scalextric book launch in London's West End, last November. A fantastic evening's entertainment was laid on, including a not too serious slot-car competition on a superb four lane (not mine!) scenic layout. Receiving a complimentary copy of the book was a bonus. Mingling with NSCC luminaries, including Roger Gillham, who signed my copy, plus members of the press and racing driver Perry McCarthy, were other noteworthy moments.

And if you haven't read Perry's autobiography "Flat Out, Flat Broke," you are denying yourself an often hilarious account of the behind-the-scenes machinations of the sport, and the sacrifices, both personal and financial, it takes to get a Grand Prix drive. It was at the book launch that I met Rebecca Nicholls, Haynes' charming Chief Marketing Executive. So I took the liberty of phoning her office with my suggestion. Without hesitation, she generously agreed to supply me with six copies.

And as, on this occasion, I wanted to promote the collecting clubs, I secured six copies of the NSCC Journal plus membership application forms, courtesy of Bob Bott, the membership secretary. In addition, Fiona, the membership organiser at the Racer magazine, agreed to supply six copies plus membership forms. The publications were bundled with the books for six lucky winners to enjoy. Not bad going, considering this was all last minute stuff.

However, just days before the show I secured yet more prizes. By chance I'd stopped by the Harrow Model Shop (020 8863 9788), located on the outskirts of London, to buy a couple of pots of modelling paint. I was surprised to find their slot-car department completely updated. A great improvement as you can now see all the cars properly, albeit, secured inside locked glass cabinets (see my 'retail' article, October 2000 issue).

Inevitably, conversation turned to my imminent radio debut. Suddenly it occurred to me, as these guys had donated a slot-car set for one of my charity shows in 1999, why not get this leading London based stockist involved again? It would be mutually beneficial, as I'd get to have some slot-car products as prizes, and they'd get a name check on the programme. It seemed inappropriate to just give away cars to someone who may not have a set to race them on. So, the Harrow guys decided to offer a complete ready-to-run Scalextric Formula One set with the all new Sport track system and an electronic lap timer. Blimey! That's worth £100. What an incredibly generous (and spontaneous) gesture. Besides the set, I was given carte blanche when it came to choosing 'sample' slot-cars to

take with me. A couple of Scalextric Sport cars would do nicely, just to illustrate Hornby's current marketing strategy and production techniques. I chose a McLaren-Mercedes MP4-16 and the brand new Ford GT40, which had arrived that morning. They were complemented by a cumbersome looking GB Track 'Esso' Super Truck (or "lorry" as one presenter called it) complete with lights. And from my own collection I took a limited edition Fly Porsche 917K, complete with authentic looking race damage. Yes, at almost £100, it is somewhat expensive. That said, this unusual Porsche has attracted an unprecedented amount of attention from non slot-car collectors that I know – even if the presentation packaging suggests that a precious item of jewellery is secreted within it!

Keeping the faith

As the presenters are professional comedians, a number of collecting mates forewarned me that they might, in some way, try and pour scorn on the hobby. Well, if I hear one more "grown-ups playing with toy cars," I'll get violent. Yet, even the lion has to defend himself against flies. Sure, we collect and/or race 'toy' cars. So what!

I'm proud of the fact that I've entertained the public with a 'toy' track layout at major motoring events. Give sceptical Joe Public a go on a decent size layout, and he'll soon change his tune. So, any such negative comments should be swiftly dismissed. I doubt very much whether singing legend, Rod Stewart, concerns himself with the fact that his passion for model trains and railways is in the public domain.

And slot-cars can turn up in the unlikeliest of places. Take the stately home, Brockett Hall, once owned by the infamous Lord Brockett. He's the gent who, in his wisdom, chose to cut up priceless Ferraris for insurance purposes. Following his incarceration, the hall was turned into a conference/hotel complex. Various forms of indoor entertainment are on offer, including racing on a large two lane Scalextric figure-of-eight layout. Continuing my observations. What about those TV adverts featuring slot-cars for Yellow Pages, a mortgage lender and the overtly laddish efforts for Sainsbury's by the self

appointed king of 'pukkaness,' Jamie Oliver? Whether intentional, or not, those adverts convey a rather 'cool' image of slot-cars. To reinforce my comments, here's another example, one that my teenage son spotted on the MTV 2 channel. In amongst the imagery for Idlewild's 'Theses wooden ideas' single, was a bedroom scene depicting slot-car action. The group were seen racing GT cars as they knelt beside a double bed, upon which they had precariously balanced a two lane figure-of-eight Scalextric layout – the significance of which escapes me!

And at the beginning of October, Hornby Hobbies (Scalextric) decided to get amongst all the latest technological wizardry by booking themselves a stand at Stuff magazine's prestigious Gadget's, Gear and Technology Show, held at Earl's Court in London. And if that's not enough high profile Scalextric exposure. During a recent trip through Knightsbridge, my ever vigilant son spotted several Scalextric track layouts hanging vertically behind some male mannequins in the window of Gieves & Hawkes, a top men's outfitters on the corner of Sloane Square in Knightsbridge. Curiosity dictated that I find out more about their motives for erecting such a novel display. The company's creative director, James Wisham, revealed to me that as the mannequins were wearing expensive driving gloves, he decided to pose them with slot-car hand-controllers connected to the sets.

James, who isn't an slot-car enthusiast, confirmed that the concept was aimed directly at men aged over forty years old. This certainly wasn't a Hornby promotional stunt as Gieves & Hawkes as he had to buy the sets. Apparently, the window display (now dismantled) will soon feature props based on another sixties icon, the plastic Airfix kit. Who said nostalgia isn't what it used to be? So, all-in-all, I had plenty of positives to take with me into the studio.

Radio Ga Ga

Visually, there isn't much to get excited about on a radio programme. But in this instance a webcam facility was installed for those with Internet access to see just what goes on in the studio. ➔

In any event I was asked to bring along a couple of 'special' cars from my collection. I already had my Crystal Classic Jaguar XJ200 to talk about. And of the current crop of slot-cars, I consider Max Winter's £200 Maxi-Models hand built 1967 Can-Am McLaren M6A, to be the ultimate indulgence. And lest we forget, I nominated it my 'Wheelspin' slot-car of the year (December 2001 issue). Therefore, it merited inclusion. By the way, check-out Max's new web site (maxi-models.com) for some rather novel trackside accessories and a fine selection of items suitable for the keen scratchbuilder.

Finally, the big day had arrived. And it was with some trepidation that I set off for the BBC London Radio studios in Marylebone High Street, accompanied by my son. He didn't want to miss this unique occasion, even if that meant skipping his beloved weekly guitar lesson. The relatively small entrance to the main building belies the fact that, once inside the building, it is absolutely massive. I almost got lost just going to the toilet! The main guest on the programme was none other than weather presenter, Iain McCaskell. Surely, even slot-cars must seem a more interesting proposition than the weather!

At the allotted time I found myself ensconced within the small (cosy) studio, with my son seated in an adjoining area. This was bizarre. One minute I was waiting outside the studio in a car hearing my name mentioned at the top of the show. Next minute I'm face-to-face with the presenters. Having the prizes with me (as a peace offering?), certainly helped create a relaxed atmosphere, even if I did feel a bit like Father Christmas! Nonetheless, the prizes were well received. Now wearing the obligatory headphones, I settled into the 'hot seat,' for what could be a very public grilling of a life time. I promised myself that I wouldn't get phased if they attempted to wind me up.

Anyway, with about twenty five minutes of air time; what could possibly go wrong? The fact that a large part of London, and those further afield on the Internet, could hear (and see) our conversation, shouldn't have been a concern – but it definitely was. Now for the moment of truth. Thankfully, the big build-up and

introduction given to me included pronouncing my surname correctly. Although for a laugh, Rob suggested I was Peter 'Nirvana' (after the 'grunge' band Nirvana) and played the opening chords of one of their hit songs on his guitar – much to my son's delight.

The presenters were extremely affable, while the atmosphere remained cordial throughout the interview. And it soon became apparent that this wasn't going to be an in-depth discussion. Phew! That was a relief. Yet, given the programme's laddish overtones, I thoroughly enjoyed the studio banter. Although at times, it was difficult to know what to expect next, as the chat was interspersed with songs, the news headlines and the listener phone-ins. Surprisingly, I refrained from stuttering words like s-s-s-s-slot-cars or s-s-s-s-Scalextric. Enthusiasm, and a liberal dose of adrenaline, can do wonders in such trying circumstances. That said, I was nervous, and to a certain extent, rather circumspect. And as for the anticipated grilling of a lifetime? It never materialised.

Toy stories

Prior to my arrival in the studio, it had been pre-arranged for the main prize to be the Scalextric set. It was, therefore, no surprise to find it mentioned throughout the programme, giving the brand name a useful 'plug.' To win the set, listeners were invited to phone in with a story about why they were denied a particular toy when they were young. I was entrusted with the task of judging the best story.

Amongst a motley selection (including not being allowed a Barbie doll because they had breasts or Evil Knievel stunt action figures because they were dangerous) was a tale of poverty recounted by Bruno, the eventual winner. As a young lad he was denied the opportunity of enjoying the types of toys that others took for granted. He proudly proclaimed that the set would be given to his grandson to enjoy. During the broadcast the presenters readily acknowledged the contributions made by the various companies and clubs who donated prizes. Incidentally, the books and club publications were given to the finalists who

called in with their tales of woe. On a different tact, I was asked whether slot-cars were scrutineered for racing, and if racers used subterfuge to gain an unfair advantage. I couldn't resist recalling the time my hand controller mysteriously failing to operate just as I was about to start a race at one particular Scalextric club. It emerged that some dastardly fiend had surreptitiously cut one of the controller wires. Naturally, the presenters endeavoured to establish the perpetrator's name, so as to name-and-shame him live on air. Luckily for the culprit, it still remains a mystery.

Putting aside such (untypical?) shenanigans, you can rest assured that the NSCC was given several mentions, including one for the web site. In addition, the web site of fellow NSCC member, Adrian Norman (slotcarportal.com) was also mentioned. That provides information that I simply didn't have time to impart on air. And when asked what my most unusual car was for racing purposes, I ended up waffling on about (go) karts of all things. As for the appeal of slot-car racing? My response was a rather perfunctory 'it's a cheap and safe form of motor racing!'

I was also asked which slot-car is my favourite. I was torn between my Crystal Classics Jaguar (for purely selfish reasons) and the exquisite Maxi-Models McLaren. I opted for the latter, as it represents one of my all-time favourite race cars – once an anorak, always an anorak. The presenters must have been impressed by this British made product as it was the only car they asked me to place in front of the studio web cam facility. Paradoxically, they suggested that slot-cars should be raced rather than used merely as static display models.

Fast women and fast cars

With a twinkle in his eye, Rob spied some photos of a shapely blonde 'Page Three' girl in my slot-car portfolio. Even I'm impressed by the people I've met through all this slot-car racing malarkey. Now there's a thought, slot-car racing as a babe-magnet! So, what was she doing there? In truth, I'd asked Maria to make the prize draw for a slot-car event 'raffle' I organised awhile back.

That's the only reason she's in my portfolio – honest! It was just as well the prize wasn't a date with the lovely Maria, as the winner turned out to be a nine year old boy from Bracknell. His prize? An incredible half-an-hour ride in a Ferrari, through the country lanes surrounding Egham, in Surrey. And it was no ordinary Ferrari either. It just happened to be a £150,000 Ferrari F40 capable of 200 m.p.h. My belated thanks go to Mike Wheeler at Talacrest (01784 439797), Europe's leading Ferrari importers, for donating that amazing prize. Given the choice, which would you choose – the girl or the car?

I digress. Sadly, the broadcast was over all too quickly. And, it was only then that I realised I'd completely forgotten to mention my Crystal Classic Jaguar on air. At the end of the programme, we had our photos taken for publicity purposes. And as we shook hands and bade our farewells, the producer gave me a audio cassette containing a recording of my performance. That's something I will treasure, although I'll cringe when I hear the playback.

Irritatingly, after the broadcast, I was left with a sense of; I should've said this or that, or maybe that I should've just shut up. But overall, I felt that I gave a good account of myself (and the hobby). That said, my nerves often got the better of me. And should I ever venture back into racing at public events, they'd be happy to promote it on a future programme. Top blokes! Soon we were out of the main doors and back to our chauffeured limousine (actually my dad in his Volvo). It was time to punch the air and grab a well deserved drink....mineral water of course. Now I could reflect on yet another unique experience that could be directly attributable to a seemingly insignificant 'toy' called Scalextric. The originator of that particular 'toy,' the late Fred Francis, has much to answer for.

I'm extremely grateful to all the team on 'The Big and Daft Show' for their hospitality, and to the Harrow Model Shop, Haynes Publishing, plus, the NSCC and Racer collecting clubs. Without their generosity, the day might not have been quite such a success. Right, now where was I? Ah, yes, that sabbatical. Until the next time. Cheers! ■

NINCO *track test*

**N-50270 BMW M3 GTR
"Motorsport" No. 42
N-50269 BMW M3 GTR
"Road Car"**

Reviewed by Ian Thompson

This month sees the release of Ninco's BMW M3 GTR, available in race liveries nos. 42 and 43 and 'road car' versions.

The race liveried car is a real looker. Basically a white car with the now familiar red and blue chequered logos of the BMW Motorsport team the tampo printing is of a high quality. Amber headlamps set off the front of the car and the wide wheel arches give the model a real meaty look. Large 10 spoke alloys with low profile slicks add to the sleek side view leading to the large rear spoiler. Internally the driver has a new improved helmet complete with visor and detail has been added to the dashboard along with a fire extinguisher and gearstick. Even the driver's seat appears to curve round his shoulders. Lookwise the only thing I didn't like were the chrome effect wheels. I believe matt silver/grey would have been more authentic.

Road car

The road car version differs from the racecar in that the windows are tinted and the driver has a 'normal' head rather than a helmeted head. Because of the dark tinting you cannot see any further detail. Again I think the wheels should be matt as opposed to chrome. The body colour is silver but then for some strange reason they have given the car a black painted roof presumably to represent a vinyl roof? This to me gives the car a strange look. The various and plentiful air intakes and exhausts show much better on the road car some, being hidden in the decals of the liveried version.

Anglewinder

The big difference is only noticed when you turn the car over and see the NC-2 motor. Other than

the Ninco go karts I have no experience of anglewinders, but somewhere in the distant past I think I remember reading that the theory anyway is that they deliver smoother and increased power to the drive. Certainly if you rotate the wheels with your thumb it does appear to be smoother and with greater area of mesh between the gears presumably it does deliver increased power.

The only other reason I can think of is that by turning the motor you can bring the magnet back a few millimetres and this would improve handling. Anyway the only thing to do is track test.

Track test

My home circuit is constructed of Scalextric and SCX track on a table 16' x 6' featuring all sorts of corners and chicanes. Three of the corners are at least 180° to allow for plenty of tail end slides. Older Ninco cars can sometimes seem very clattery as the deeper guide hits the bottom of the slots. The M3 fitted with a sprung guide was quiet and rode the few small joint bumps very well whilst running in. After about 50 laps I was running at about 75% of full speed and the car was holding the track well. It has a nice balance to it and as I picked up the speed the car began to slide nicely on the long bends. I was really enjoying myself. It was so nice after ultra strong magnets to again drift the car around the circuit that I almost forgot about timing myself.

A quick clean of the tyres and into a few timed laps the car was doing about 12 second laps; barriers were getting the odd thump but the car was staying on. Pushing the car however led to the rear end letting go a couple of times so I was content at around the 12 second mark. My Ninco Audi TT which is well run in also settles



around the 12-second mark so the cars are competitive with each other. I can't say I noticed any great increase in performance from the angle winder but this may not show on a smaller home circuit. The BMW did seem smoother to drive, and held the track better than the TT but again this could be due to its being new.

Any improvements? Apart from the wheels which I have already mentioned the only other thing I would suggest is the inclusion of lights. The amber headlamps look like they may be ready to receive them in a future issue and I believe it would enhance the car.

To sum up I think this is a very good car both in looks and performance. Ninco do seem to put more thought into driveability of a car with a moderate magnet rather than just sticking an even stronger magnet in to overcome handling or grip deficiencies and this I believe will make it a very good choice for anyone racing on non magnet tracks. Also their magnets seem to be of reasonably similar strengths so cars of the same class run well together. As for me well I'm looking forward to the beginning of the race season here and will be suggesting a DTM class to see some close racing between the Audis, Merc's and BM's. ■

Ferrari and Fly (b)eater

Scalextric GT40 review

BY TONY SECCHI

It was the final nail-biting hour of a gruelling round-the-clock race. The uncatchable Porsche 917 that had led for 18 hours was out with transmission failure.

Now two slower cars fought for the lead - Jacky Ickx's Ford GT40, in the light blue and orange colours of JWA Gulf, nose to tail with Hans Herrman's ailing Porsche 908. The 5.0 litre Ford had more power, but the 3.0 litre Porsche was lighter and more nimble. After 3100 miles Ickx, drawing on all his reserves of stamina and talent, snatched victory. The 1969 Le Mans had been won by little more than the length of a cricket pitch. It was the closest finish in the 24 hours history. It was also the GT40's fourth consecutive (and last) win - and the second in a row for Gulf and John Myers's J.W.A. team. This famous victory marked the last chapter of an era rooted in Ford's decision to end its ban on racing for publicity.

Making up for lost time, Henry Ford took to the race tracks of the world with a vengeance and a huge budget in the 1960s. Indianapolis and Le Mans were the biggest prizes. As stated Ford won at the Sarthe circuit four times - 1966 with Bruce McLaren/Chris Amon; 1967 with Dan Gurney/A.J. Foyt; 1968 with Pedro Rodrigues/Lucien Bianchi and in 1969 with the two Jackys - Ickx and Oliver).

Ford's first line of attack on the 24 Hours had been to buy the outfit that kept winning it - (six times in a row from 1960 to 1965) - Ferrari. When Enzo pulled out of that venture at a late stage Ford adopted the only other pragmatic approach - if you can't buy 'em, beat 'em. But how? Lacking in-house expertise, Ford sent a shopping party to England, at the time the place to buy advanced race car technology. Colin Chapman of Lotus fame was considered as a possible collaborator, but it was Lola's Eric Broadley, working with Ford's Roy Lunn who got the job of creating a winning car. From this association sprang the Slough based Ford

Advanced Vehicles (F.A.V.) and the genus GT40 - now prized as one of the all time greats of Sports Car racing.

Broadley drew on his experience with the Ford V8 powered Lola GT, the GT40's precursor and John Myer, who had masterminded Aston Martin's 1959 Le Mans victory and world championship would head F.A.V. - which was to become Myers own JW Automotive in 1967.

The first Ford GT prototype - known subsequently as the GT40 because it was just 40 inches (1020 mm) high - left Slough in 1964. The last, 133 cars later, was built in 1969. Most of the GT40s had semi-monocoque tube and metal sheet chassis carried by coil and wishbone suspension.

Bodywork was a mix of aluminium and glass fibre. Engines ranged from a 350 bhp pushrod 4.2 (in the original prototype) to the 7-litre, 530 bhp monster in the Mk.4. Early cars had 4 speed Colotti gearboxes which were not strong enough for the job, later ones had ZF five speeders.

Speeds of up to 230 m.p.h. were recorded by GT40s on the Mulsanne straight - though not before instability (cause of the first prototype's destruction) was cured by a new nose job. Initially, reliability was a problem too - if the stock block pushrod engine did not fail, the transmission invariably did. Of the nine cars entered for the '64 and '65 Le Mans, none finished. In fact, of the 46 GT40s entered for the 24 hours in six years, only nine lasted the distance, Mind you, of those nine, four were winners.

The GT40's first Le Mans win was in 1966 as a 7-litre Mk.2. After a 7-litre Mk.4 won the following year, the big block monsters were rendered obsolete by a 5-litre limit designed to lower speeds. The old Gulf sponsored GT40s resurrected for the next two races (68 and 69) were off the pace but outlasted faster opposition to score memorable victories.

Correction, one did. The GT40 driven by Rodriguez/Bianchi in 68 and by Ickx/Oliver the year after, won on both occasions - the only car in history to win Le Mans twice. It is the model of this car that is the subject of this review.

The Scalextric version

I recently bought this model from my friend and supplier Sean Fothersgill of Pendle Slot Racing and it is a little cracker. It is part of the latest new releases by Scalextric (covered by Brochure edition 43) and is an endurance racing series of limited edition sports specification models fixed at 4000 worldwide. The model that I purchased was the C2403A Ford GT40 JWA Gulf race no. 9 version raced to victory in 1968 by Rodriguez/Bianchi. The appearance of the model is superb, well up to (if not better) than the latest Fly offerings and I do not exaggerate. The body colours are accurate, the tampo printing terrific and the overall detail is sharp and eye catching including the wheels which are little masterpieces. I am not usually overcome by the finish of a model, being a racer rather than a collector, but this little beauty took my breath away.

Inside things are simpler with a well detailed 3/4 length driver authentically helmeted, and a plain interior with simple dials marked on the dashboard and two bucket seats. Not very elaborate but it does have a proper placed gear lever to the driver's right hand. The whole interior is in one piece and very light (3 gr). The car has working yellow LED headlights and chromed double exhaust pipe segment correctly hollowed out.

The body top is in two halves, the rear engine cover hinged upwards on the removal of two screws. There are four more screws fixing the remainder of the body to the chassis.

As in real life the car is very low, being 33mm high. It is 132mm long, 55mm wide with a wheelbase of 75mm - it weighs in at 83 gr. Starting at the front of the chassis the pick up point is 22mm back from the nose and the front axle centre line 12mm further back. The pick up is spring loaded to allow self centering. The front

axle is mounted with a minimum of vertical movement - a surprise here. The front wheels (including tyres) are 20mm in dia. and 8mm wide. Just behind the front axle is a circular cavity for the thin Scalextric round magnet (supplied but not installed).

At the rear of the chassis is the sidewinder mounted Mabuchi "sport" engine with an eleven tooth pinion. There is a 'Proslot' type bar magnet fitted just in front of the motor. The rear axle has a crownwheel with 36 teeth so that the final drive ratio is 3.27 - very fast acceleration on a small track like mine. The rear wheels/tyres are 22mm dia and 9mm wide. Both front and rear tyres are authentically treaded and the rears give excellent grip on my standard Scalextric track despite not being slicks. With its low weight, and centre of gravity this car should be very stable and nimble. With its gearing and special engine it should be quick.

This proved to be the case when I gave it a test on my track. As stated in previous articles, the very fastest cars do a 10 lap stint in 38/39 secs. with an average of 40/42 secs. The GT40 was on the pace from the word go. After a very few attempts with virtually no deslotting, I got a best run of 42.66. This is extremely good for an out of the box car that has not been run in or 'adjusted to suit'. The magnet and the rear tyres give great roadholding and the power curve is smooth and strong.

Conclusions

By nature I am not easily satisfied with mass produced products, but slot-cars (due mainly to Fly) have been getting better and better over the five years that I have been racing my home track. This latest offering from Scalextric is, in my humble opinion, one of the best yet. It seems that in this instance at least, Hornby Hobbies diversion of its design department in the UK and its manufacturing plant in Hong Kong is working well.

At £28.00 the car ain't cheap, but I personally think that it is worth every penny - go buy one and race it. You will get immense pleasure and satisfaction - of that I am sure. ■