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BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY

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The

NSCC

www.nsccl.co.uk

The independent club for slot-car enthusiasts

Hero to zero

I haven't seen a Formula 1 car in the flesh for some time now but a combination of two things led to a visit to Silverstone for Friday qualifying this year. Firstly I had a burning desire to see a certain J.P. Montoya drive and, secondly, my Octagon season pass would get me in for free!

I also took along a friend, Rhona, who is a raving David Coulthard fan but had never actually seen a real F1 car. Following an excellent breakfast at the Grove transport caff near Huntingdon (if you are in the area give it a try, the fry-ups are amazing) we arrived just in time for the morning practice session.

Now I know that the first time anybody gets near an F1 car on full song it is an experience they will remember for the rest of their life so I led Rhona in the direction of Copse corner. We stopped just before the braking area and I stood her right by the fence and waited for the reaction. Five minutes later she had a grin from ear to ear and I knew she was hooked. I don't like much about F1 these days but the sound of a Ferrari screaming down the pit straight still sends a shiver up my spine and Rhona was blown away by it all.

She was, of course, wearing the full Coulthard regalia - teeshirt hat etc. and cheering every time her hero passed; somehow I had never been able to convince her that he isn't quite a top drawer driver and that Mr. Montoya could eat him for breakfast. However, the afternoon qualifying session would perhaps change her mind.

We watched at the awesome Bridge corner - Herr Schumacher duly set the fastest time of 1 minute 19.4 with J.P. not far behind. Her hero was 1/2 a second off the pace in 7th place and, as his time went up on the screen just one word passed her lips, "TOSSER"! Quite made my day; wonder if she has bought a Montoya teeshirt yet?



New cars

Quite a few new cars released this month with several more imminent. One of the best liveries is the AMG Mercedes DTM. Now available in Sport and Standard versions:

C2392 Mercedes CLK DTM "AMG" No2

C2392A Mercedes CLK DTM "AMG" No2 Sport Version

Also the Standard versions of the Opel V8 Coupés:

C2474 Opel V8 Coupé "Team Phoenix" No7

C2475 Opel V8 Coupé "TV Today" No8

The first of the Indy cars has also been released in a bright yellow livery:

C2442 Dallara Indy "Pennzoil" No4

The eagerly awaited Goodwood set is also available through your local stockist. Here is the set and the individual reference numbers for the cars.

C2529A Goodwood Festival of Speed 2003 Le Mans 1966

C2463AWD First Ford GT40 427 MkII Amon / McLaren

C2464AWD Second Ford GT40 427 MkII Miles / Hulme

C2465AWD Third Ford GT40 427 MkII Bucknum / Hutcherson

The first BMW Minis have also appeared in set form. The set is C1112 John Cooper Challenge. These Minis will be available as solo cars in Sport and Standard versions very shortly.

Reference numbers

On the Scalextric-USA website you may have seen various sets described with a T suffix. I asked Hornby what this meant and discovered a real nightmare for those trying to record set production.

Here are some of the suffixes used on set reference numbers. It's not exhaustive.

T 110Volt	N Index	P Europe
K Argos	S Australia and NZ	
L Toys-R-Us	M Mail Order	G Asda

This means that the same set can be suffix T (which is 110v 60hz for the US) or P (with a European plug) or K (for Argos) depending on where that particular box will be sold. What other ones have you found ?

Likewise for cars:

A - Sport version

Nothing - Standard version

W - Set version with lower specification

However this does NOT mean that all cars are available in three levels of specification or that set cars are always a lower specification than the standard release. It just depends.

Is all that clear - no, I was afraid not !

Store cars

All these reference numbers become important when you consider the number of major retail outlets now carrying Hornby products. From what I can see there is going to be a deluge of special sets sold through the likes of Argos, ➡➡

Index, Toys-R-Us and major supermarket chains including Marks and Spencer later in the year.

At this time exactly what is being produced for which outlet seems to still be in a state of flux as many of the sets are aimed at the Christmas market. However, I would go and camp outside Argos soon as they seem to be getting several sets with unique cars - look out for BTCC liveried Opels, special TVR440s and special Minis. Their new catalogue comes out in August too. One of the Argos TVRs is pictured here.



Several solo cars will be available too. Look out for a Mustang from Modelzone this year and the Scalextric Collector Centres will have a yellow/black GT40.

I must stress that this is all subject to change. I will report further as items actually get produced but please let me know if you see anything special in your local stores.

Under development

Many cars that were just rumours a few months ago are developing rapidly. The remodelled Corvette has just gone off for approval from Chevrolet. The front end is much lower and the car features huge side exhausts. Liveries are still being discussed. The Renault F1 car is looking good too. The body is a very complicated shape complete with all of the small aerodynamical appendages that you see on the current F1 grid. Hand finished liveries are currently with Renault



for approval. You can see a small picture of the Renault F1 in the accompanying picture. Also in the picture is the new Subaru Impreza. The rear wing is really something. The first version of the Subaru will be a Petter Solberg version. See www.swrt.com for more information about Petter. A special set - C1132P Petter Solberg Rally Sport is being produced for sale in Norway only. That should provide a collecting challenge.

Kits

Many people have asked about the kits being produced by Hornby this year. The latest information is that all six will be released together in September.

Goodwood

The Goodwood Festival of Speed was a great success for Hornby and over 3500 people raced up the hill against the clock. The fastest time of the weekend was 5.41 seconds and there were prizes given for various categories. Many celebrities had a go on the track including Juan Pablo Montoya and Jenson Button. The photo shows Adrian Norman and David Lubliner of Hornby teaching Juan Pablo how to drive - apparently he needed it. See the Hornby web site for more pictures.

As part of their sponsorship deal Hornby will be at the Revival meeting in September with a replica of the Goodwood motor racing circuit.



Club car

Thanks to all those of you who responded with ideas for the next NSCC car from Hornby. There were many weird and wonderful ideas but two models were way out in front in popularity. Discussions with Hornby are underway and hopefully I shall soon be able to announce what it will be.

Thanks also to the huge numbers who returned the club survey. It is not too late to send your form in and an analysis of the responses should appear soon. It is giving us plenty of food for thought. ■

Trader's travels

BY ROBERT LEARMOUTH
(WESTWOOD MODELS)

The month of July was predictably quiet with no swapmeets since Madrid in June. This has been compounded for me personally by an extended summer break from Westwood Models' activity to adjust to life around our second child, which as I write this is now 4 days overdue. By the time you read this we'll be back in business and I sincerely hope the baby will be born! I'm looking forward to getting back on the road during August, it will probably be a welcome break from nappy changing!

The November Barcelona swapmeet has been cancelled and it would appear we just have the one event there now in April. What a great shame as this event has been an enjoyable and, in my view, successful one in the past. Bearing in mind the enormous and widespread passion the Spanish have for slot-cars I'm amazed there are not more events. Perhaps there are - please let me know and I'll be there!

In case you haven't seen it yet, Scalextric Tecnitoys (ie Spain) 6133 Seat Leon in Scalextric sponsored livery was available from around June time. This is worthy of mention as you won't see it in SCX packaging as an official import. This is due to the licensing arrangements of the brand name Scalextric in each country - Scalextric Hornby is Superslot in Spain.

Keen collectors of Scalextric ephemera will want to know about the promotional pack Hornby have just released to dealers. This features a very nice A3 poster of the Goodwood GT40 set.

I recently got a sneak preview of some of the material that will in due course be incorporated into the next edition of "Scalextric Past and Present". Roger has had much better support with contributions this time around although I'm sure he would welcome more still. Some of the material was new to me and I'm really looking forward to the eventual release.

Ebay Watch has little to report this month. Nothing spectacularly expensive though I would have been quite pleased personally to have got

£283 for a Grande Bridge even if it was boxed. Also worthy of mention is the legendary Fly A15 Venturi that put in a rare appearance complete with what looked like production packaging. This fetched a cool £620.

Spirits do not seem to have been badly dampened by the introduction of VAT on Ebay fees. However if my fingers have hit the right keys on the calculator this could mean you are now parting with £3 of a £15 sale (ie 20%) if you use a reserve price auction and take payment with Paypal.

Still no sign of the Fly GT40 which rumour has it is down to problems with the mould. But I have had an idea. Why not borrow the Hornby mould? Job done... ■

Ebay or not Ebay- That is the question

BY ANDREW DAVIS

As one of the silent majority of this club, I have finally been made to feel guilty for not responding to Brian's frequent pleas for articles for the journal. It was with this in mind that I decided to share my thoughts concerning Ebay with the readership of this journal. Now I realize that most of you will probably switch off at this point, quite rightly concluding that the subject has been covered to exhaustion. Being an unimaginative kind of chap I could not think of anything else to write about in my first venture into literature, so I hope that some of you will make it to the end without falling asleep.

I am accustomed to spending rather more time on Ebay than is probably healthy, and certainly more time than is conducive to an active social life. However, in my opinion, it is an addiction to rival the most potent of narcotics. There is little to match the adrenaline rush experienced in the last few minutes of an auction (I don't get to go out much, as you can probably tell!). An incredible amount of excitement often can happen in those last minutes. I have lost count of the times I have been in the seemingly comfortable position of being the highest bidder with five minutes left to run on an auction. In the last six days, twenty three hours and fifty five minutes no-one else appears to have seen any worth in the item that I am bidding on. I cross my fingers and hope that this item is invisible to the rest of the bidders. With two minutes of the auction left to run I mentally make a space in my display cabinet imagining where the car will fit perfectly. I while away the time to the end of the auction by examining the description and the photograph of the car in minute detail.

Suddenly, I notice that a new bid has been placed which, horror of horrors, is higher than my maximum bid. My heart begins to pump furiously and my palms begin to sweat. I know it is time to think fast and type even faster.

Should I stick to my maximum bid and forget about winning and get on with my life? After all, like buses, several other identical models will be along sooner or later. This would be ideal if it was not for my competitive spirit which tends to surface at times like these. Winning becomes my primary objective and at this point, against my better judgement, I often decide to bid a few more pounds. When there are only seconds to go before the end of the auction, I believe I am in a position of safety again. Then in the dying seconds, there is not one more bid, not two, but more usually three or more. I am beaten by these faceless enemies, their true identities hidden behind apparently meaningless pseudonyms. Then I experience the comedown after the excitement of those last two minutes and my disappointment is clear for all to see (especially when the keyboard is thrown from one side of the room to the other!).

Every auction item I bid on always seems to end this way. There appears to be buyers who are prepared to pay any price for an item rather than bide their time to find a similar one at a lower cost. Obviously when there are two such bidders bidding against each other the prices that Robert Learmouth referred to in his recent article are reached. Why is it that when I bid on an auction the whole world appears to bid against me, pushing prices out of reach? However, on the occasions that I sell treasured items from my collection I am inevitably greeted by mass apathy from the buyers. I know that you are thinking, "That's what you get when you sell rubbish". I, however, opt for descriptions that actually reflect the condition of the item in question. At least this way I will not disappoint a buyer just to make a few pounds. Some sellers claim that their item is "mint", missing only mirrors or bumpers. Others say the cars have only been used at club meetings a few times and are as close to perfect as they can be. ➡➡

These descriptions are sometimes accompanied by seemingly intentionally fuzzy photographs often presenting evidence to the contrary. As a buyer I know all too well how it feels to be on the receiving end of an item that was described inaccurately or the description was deliberately evasive. I know all too well the disappointment to find that my new “mint” model has driven more miles than the average repmobile Ford Mondeo covers on the M4 in a year. Do these sellers have no conscience?

Whilst on the subject of sellers, I am often appalled by the way that paying customers are treated. You honestly do not want to know the number of times that I have won an auction and sent my payment (always the next day); I wait for a confirmation email that it has been received. When no communication is forthcoming I have to check with my bank account for when the payment has been debited. I then know that an end to my waiting for delivery will finally be over. I have learnt from experience never to expect a courtesy message to confirm shipping of my model. Sometimes the wait for the postman is long and unrewarding. After what feels like weeks (and in one case was over a month) I receive a parcel which is inevitably poorly packaged, despite paying an extortionate sum for post and packing. Come on sellers, treat us like the paying customers that we are.

My advice is to get to know who you will be buying from. On Ebay it is important not only to read the feedback that has been left for the seller, but also the feedback that the seller leaves for others. Boy, can that be revealing! Often it is difficult to assess a seller accurately, as sometimes buyers, me included, are not totally honest with the feedback they leave for poor service. I do not say I have received good service when I haven't, but I have left positive feedback when I should really have left neutral or negative feedback. “Why have you done that?” I hear you ask. Well, often sellers do not leave any feedback for the buyer until some has been left for them. This is so that if you are honest and leave fair, factual but uncomplimentary feedback the seller will leave retaliatory negative feedback against you. Who needs that?

I am, of course, being grossly unfair to all the good sellers out there. There have been many that have impressed me with their attentive and considerate service.

A few weeks ago I rediscovered a different way of buying slot cars. The way it used to be done. I was bidding on an auction for a mint boxed Scalextric C375 Ford Escort XR3i “Palmer Tube Mills”. This is not a particularly rare or sought after model, so I was surprised that other people wanted it so much that it finally sold for over £36. Immediately I decided to check Phil Smith's listings on his website and was pleased to find an identical condition Escort listed for just £10! So pleased in fact that I examined further the listings and selected another car with the money I was saving. Two cars for the price of one! The next day whilst at work I telephoned Phil (saving on personal ‘phone bills, shame on me!). There I was talking to a seller who was friendly, informed and actually treated me like he wanted to sell me his models and not like I was something he'd just trodden in. Phil must have run to the post office immediately after the ‘phone call because the car arrived the following day, which was great service. It makes me wonder why cars on several dealers' websites often appear to be listed for months at much less cost than the cars are being sold for on Ebay. Dealers must wonder what they have to do to shift stock!

If you are still reading this long, poorly disguised whinge, then I guess that you also have had similar experiences on Ebay. The answer is simple. Don't be pressured into making hasty decisions in the excitement of the auction and bidding more than you know the items are worth. Take your time, have a cup of tea, look at the websites of established dealers and make a calculated decision on how much to pay for items and from whom to buy.

In conclusion I wish you a fulfilling time buying or selling, and above all make sure you enjoy yourselves. As I wrote at the beginning, it can be fun.

By the way, I am currently selling some top quality items on Ebay..... ■

Eric Fox's rail racing Cooper 500

Model Maker October 1959

FROM VINE FENNEL

My idea of building a racing model of a 500 Cooper seemed to be either jocularly scoffed at or else squashed as being an impossible feat, but I fostered the notion since first becoming a model car racing enthusiast some two years ago. I have been successful, though some of many who knew my idea were quite right in that the resulting model is not quite to 1/32 scale, but is as small as I was able to make it. When placed beside a Formula 1 car it really does look like a Cooper 500 by comparison.

My method of building did not present many difficulties, but the fact of not having any plans did retard progress somewhat as did my quest for suitable materials. Wheels, too, presented a problem as Dinky Toy wheels do not permit the Eldi gear to clear the guide rail and S.M.E.C. wheels were contra to this, being too large. Having a lathe of my own I made my own using some aluminium and stretching Dinky Toy tyres to fit, the finished product being smaller than an S.M.E.C. wheel but giving a 1/32in. gap between gear and guide rail.

The next objective was, of course, a suitable motor and finding the old faithful Triang to be too large, giving my model the look of a Cooper Formula 2, and not coming up with any bright ideas, I shelved the project for quite a time.

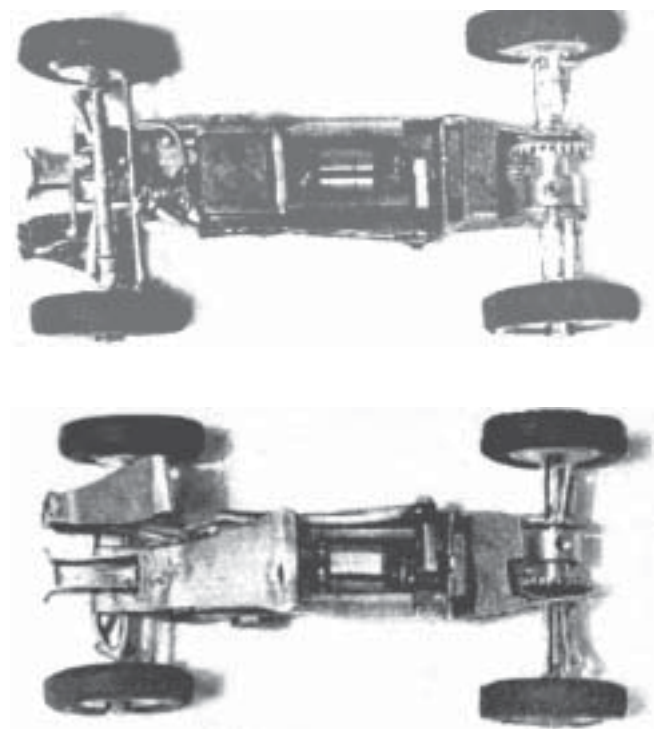
Some weeks elapsed and, whilst browsing through back numbers of the Model Maker I came across an article by Doug McHard in which he describes his T.T. gauge Tram Car, this being a model of no more than 3in. long yet powered by a Romford Terrier motor, which would surely fit my 3 1/2in. long Cooper. I duly bought a motor and restarted the proceedings.

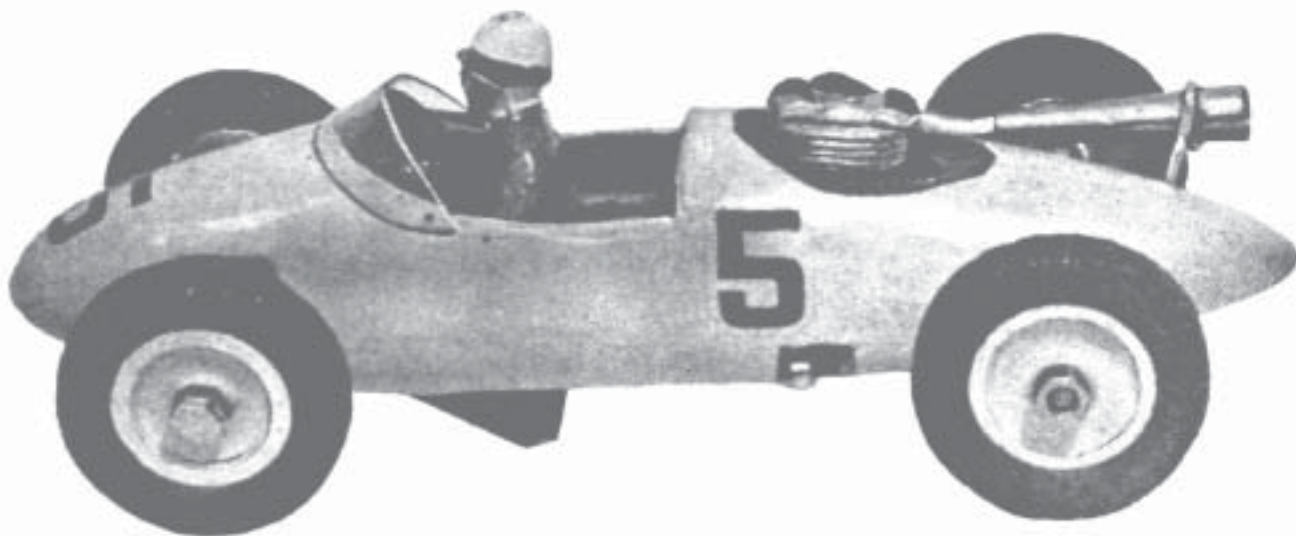
Digressing a moment, I would point out here that, whenever possible, I and my fellow club members use 8BA nuts and bolts, thus facilitating ease of work with S.M.E.C. wheels

and Eldi gears, both these being tapped 8BA, and the axle rods too are 8BA rod lengths so that wheel, wheel axle and gear changing are done quickly and simply. My Cooper has fittings accordingly.

On to the brush end of the motor, either side of the shaft, I soldered two long "U" shapes, using paper clip wire. This unit holds the Eldi gear, which I first screwed on to the 8BA rod and lined up with the pinion, the gear then being secured in this lined up position with pieces of brass tube which were then soldered to the two aforementioned "U" shapes, giving a neat compact unit. To the magnet end of the motor the front suspension, built from paper clip wire with dummy transverse springs of tin and dummy shock absorbers of brass tube, was added, being mounted on an angle plate made from sheet brass.

Shim brass is used for the pick-up at present but later I hope to modify this and fit a spring loaded hinged type. To allow for a wide pick-up the guide shoe is offset slightly.





Running trials were held and observations noted were that the track holding proved to be good, pick-up tension was critical and the front wheels oscillated rather badly. This latter fault I cured by fitting a light spring to the track rod thus creating a self-centring action.

The first body I carved from balsa wood and depicted the Mark 7 car, having the engine enclosed, and is in fact smaller than the present Mark 9. Due to the lack of strength the body suffered many repairs and its style, that of a car of 1953 manufacture, caused it to come in for lots of confused comment, the last being when a youngster was heard to say that "the Auto Union was a bit under scaled". My ego suffered quite a dent, with the result that I went ahead and made a body to suit the Mark 9.

This body was also made from balsa in two halves, being somewhat like a torpedo shape prior to dissecting; the centre section was rolled from a tube of gumstrip and the three integral pieces glued together. When completely dry I applied two coats of sanding filler followed by four applications of pink filler, rubbing down between each application. An elongated hole was cut in the bottom and a hole cut in the top to allow for the fitting of the chassis and cockpit. Then after a final coat of paint to the body, the windscreen, dummy engine, exhaust pipe and driver were added to give the ultimate picture of

a Cooper Mark 9 model racing car which, although not as fast as some of the Formula 1 cars, is a joy to me and leaves me with a good little car to experiment with. Perhaps Formula 3 racing could be developed, providing, I am sure, interesting racing and enlarging the model racing field, notwithstanding which my car will still provide sport for cars of the bigger class. ■

BITS AND PIECES

A short Westcountry ramble

Having had an 18 month layoff from the joys of slot racing I'm pleased to announce that the East Devon Slot Racing Club is set to hit the tracks again.

After having spent a year racing on Plexi-track in Torquay and becoming completely disillusioned with the whole idea, as you know I jacked in the whole idea. Six or seven months (it might even have been eight) ago one of our members (Scotty) phoned me up to tell me that he'd found us a venue that would only cost us eight pounds a week to hire. We (the old club members) got together at the venue and decided it was a go, so Dave Stevens and I designed a track and I have just spent the last six months or so building it in my garage. The past three weeks have been spent putting the finishing touches (making sure everything lines up, laps counters work (after a two and a half year layoff) etc. etc.

Friday 25th July is (was) going to be the first full night of play on the new track so I'm quite excited again.

Brief details as follows: Four lane. Inside blue at 63.5 ft. Inside middle yellow at 65 ft. Outside middle red at 66.5 ft. Outside green at 68 ft. Non parallel lanes.

Hopefully I'll be able to supply pictures for next month (colour if the Ed can manage, if not B/W).

P.S. It's a proper track. MDF, Copper tape, Sandtex surface. Real racing at last!

An added bonus. We can store on site at no extra cost!

Meetings Friday nights 7.30ish onwards.

The Crypt.

St Pauls Church.

High Street.

Honiton.

Anyone localish who wants to come along can ring me on 01404 814859.

Vince Feeney.

(Damn, that's my real name out of the bag now).

Luxembourg racing car

John Carmichael is the first member to send in a picture of a Luxembourg racing car - actually he is the only member to send in a picture- it is a March 702 which was restored to its racing colours in the late 1990s (car colour: grey, number colour: white on red). The car was originally campaigned by Luxembourg car dealer Xavier Perrot, in European F2 racing in 1970-ish.



Shame it is a complete fabrication really - Nice try John but no green Beetle for you. Anybody else want to have a go?

Want a job?

Slot 32 UK need staff to run Scalextric race events all over the UK. This will be paid work; any one interested should contact Nic Picot at 020 8421 2500 or email nic@slot32.co.uk

New raceway

There is a new club in South Lincolnshire: Swaton Raceway, located between Boston and Grantham, just off the main A52. Contact Jason Wright on 01529 421151 or 07967 369980 or email jasonwright@telco4u.net

Have you phoned?

The answering machine threw a wobbly recently and wiped out a number of messages before I had time to reply. If you are still waiting for me to get back to you could you ring again please?



Dear Brian,

I was very interested in Peter Youd's letter regarding C88 Cooper type 51 and the different size filler caps.

Sorry I can't advise myself, collection sold, but I have already identified a C88 type 2 (in the 6th edition book, out Spring 2004), this is a non race tuned car, a rare blue colour believed only in a 'Hamleys' store set.

As C88 came out immediately after C58 ceased production I wonder whether a supply of filler caps were left over and used up for the new C88, or is there another model of the same period which used a similar filler cap and these were used for a time. Or of course the original filler cap was lost and replaced by a previous owner. All these have been done in the past - Scalextric production and quality control in the past was certainly not up to the superb standard currently obtained. If there is enough evidence of another type I would like to include it in the next edition of the book.

Thanks

Roger Gillham (roger@rogergillham.co.uk)

.....

Spanish Fly Trap

What a superb article, Four Long Years, from Colin Spark in last month's journal. Alas, you were not alone in being lured, then snared, by the expensive Spanish fly trap Colin. Like so many other slot-car enthusiasts, the Fly collecting route seemed so logical and affordable in the early days. Still, it's good to read that Colin escaped the trap with at least his humour intact!!

Nice one Colin

Tony Frewin

.....

Dear Brian,

In the latest edition of the GSR magazine I noticed an advert from Cartrix containing a Honda NSX; I looked at their website but found nothing about the Honda.

Some foreign websites list these new releases from Cartrix: Honda NSX-R, Mosler MT 900R, Opel Corsa S1600, Fiat Stilo Abarth Rally, Triumph TR4 and Mercedes B196W.

Gaugemaster, the UK distributor were unable to help but, correspondence with Diego Ripoll of Cartrix finally produced the information that the Honda NSX will be available in the UK in September.

Regards

Ken Elston

Dear Brian,

I really enjoyed reading John Watts' article about race car preparation in the July issue. I immediately thought that this is just the type of information required by newer members of the club. No doubt John has even more knowledge about getting the best out of older cars - more please!

You enjoyed the 2CV race at Snetterton because of the close nature of the racing - can this sort of thing be arranged with slot-cars and drivers of mixed ability?

On a different note - in the June issue there was a picture of the forthcoming SCX Corvette Dragster with the wonderful chrome engine block at the rear, not the front. this seems a bit daft to me; did they really race them like this?

Regards

Clifford Rustage

.....
Dear NSCC,

Is slot car racing more fun with or without a magnet? In my view, there are pros and cons to both; there is more to racing with a magnet than just gluing one in to the chassis and your car winning every race.

I race at the Hazel Grove Slot club and two seasons ago most race classes allowed cars to run with a magnet and the racer to move or change it in the chassis. A limit of two magnets was applied to certain classes, which was pointless as, try as I might, I could not get the two magnets to balance the car - tending instead to slow it down. The optimum height of the magnet above the track could be measured in fractions of a millimetre; too low and the car was slowed or the motor burnt out; too high and it was off at the corners and could not compete (I was beginning to cut up feeler gauges to adjust the magnet but the amount of Superglue used mattered just as much). A whole raft of factors led to racers having to make changes to the magnet height such as tyre wear, motor type, controller resistance, chassis flex and track wear. When you add this to all the other considerations - axle trueness, wheel/tyre trueness, gear mesh, motor line up, pick up movement etc. it made setting up a car an engineering challenge. Full on magnet racing did lead to some interesting grids and some challenging races. In some classes marshalling became easier as the cars were less prone to come off, but when they did they took some heavy damage, in other classes the speeds reached made marshalling more difficult as you lost fingers to passing competitors (no waved yellows you see). It was also impossible for a new club member to turn up and be competitive.

The last two seasons have seen most race classes move over to box standard racing with no alterations or additions allowed. This has led to more marshalling, lots of tail out slides and plenty of unprompted lane swaps. The cars take less damage in offs but one model of one manufacturer tends to shine so grids are getting predictable if you prefer to win. We still race one magnet F1 class and now an open class with no magnets but weighting allowed (we are still quite slow at this as most people are still learning so I will not comment apart from saying I fear a crash and burn race as no one will finish!).

So what's the point of all this; well a magnet in the boxed toy car is there to make the car usable for those youngsters opening the box for the first time so they don't get totally bored and get the Playstation out. Us racers have the ability to decide how we want to run the cars and as long as any class that is run has agreed specified limitations we can all have fun. By the way, I am sorry to say that it was not just the magnet that allowed everyone to beat me - the same people still shine most of the time!

Regards

Dave Sykes

Confessions of a crap racer

BY THE EDITOR

On a Summer Friday evening, at the end of a long hard week selling electrical goods, I like nothing better than to sit beside the pond in the back garden. With the aid of a good bottle of red and a few slices of bread I feed the fish, watch the dragonflies doing their ritual mating dance and quietly drink myself into oblivion.

Why then have I recently forsaken all this and driven to the local slot club in King's Lynn in order to stay stone cold sober and be soundly thrashed by one and all? The words "seemed like a good idea at the time" come to mind!

Now I am aware, from conversations with many of you, that there are "racer" and "collector" members of the club and neither is much interested in the other side of the hobby. There are also some people who aren't really interested in full size motor racing. Personally I cannot understand this attitude - if the hairs on the back of your neck don't stand up at the sight and sound of a pure bred racing car on the track then why do you collect miniature plastic replicas of them? Similarly, if you have no desire to race them, why not just collect 1/43 die-casts? - you can get a lot more of them in the display cabinet and they are much more accurate models than the average slot-car.

Anyway, for those amongst you who fancy having a go at proper slot racing but are a bit apprehensive about it, here follows my own experiences; perhaps I can persuade you to have a go. My own lack of talent is legendary but I am thoroughly enjoying my weekly visits to Mussel Bay Raceway in King's Lynn.

First a bit about the track itself - it is owned by NSCC member John Kelly and is located in an industrial unit where he runs his own computer business. For some strange reason the unit is actually twice as big as necessary for his needs so half the building has been converted into a commercial raceway - funny how an occasional visit during business hours usually finds John playing on the circuit rather than mending computers!

The track is about 100ft long, four lanes, wood and copper tape construction with Slotmaster race control. As can be seen from the pictures it is essentially a folded figure of eight layout incorporating two temptingly long straights - one ending in a tightish 180° bend and the other in a vicious 's' bend sequence. Both are traps for the inexperienced.



Races are run, on a rotating basis, for the usual three classes - F1, Saloon and Sports/GT - and my first visit coincided with the second of these.

Now my own collecting interests are mostly centred round single seaters and I don't actually possess many saloon cars but a rummage in the cupboard revealed a black Ninco Audi TT left over from some review cars last year. I arrived at the club with it and was confronted by a room full of people with five cars apiece plus all the relevant paraphernalia that a serious racer can't bear to be without - posh boxes containing ten different sorts of weird liquid and three sorts of glue; a toolkit perfectly capable of servicing a space shuttle and enough spare parts to start a shop!

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It was at this point I learnt my first lesson about racing - box standard cars are totally useless! My Audi had no grip whatsoever; it lurched down the straight, slewed sideways when the brakes were applied and promptly deslotted when it reached the first corner. All this was accompanied by horrible grinding noises from the mechanical bits. Without magnets to hold it down the thing was about as much use as an origami condom.

Fortunately John Kelly was at hand to sort things out; he took it over to the workbench and did the basics for me. On its return the motor and gears were nicely lubricated, the wheels and tyres trued and sanded, the braids trimmed and flattened and the body screws loosened. I now had a car which could actually complete a lap at something approaching a reasonable speed.

By this time I had been introduced to the other members - a mix of experienced and relatively novice racers, including several juniors. The man to beat (or be lapped by) was

John Watts whose article you may have read last month. I could also tell from watching practice that at least half a dozen others were very good indeed and, fortunately, there were also a few people who were around my own level of ability.

I wasn't expecting too much in the way of results from my first race and I was not to be disappointed - bog last and four laps adrift of the winner. My most obvious problem was an inability to keep the car on the track; in fact the Audi spent so much time on its roof doing an inverted turtle impression that I stuck a coloured sticker on the base so the marshals knew which lane I had come out of! By the end of four heats I realised what a mountain I had to climb - last in all of them, as expected, but I was even being lapped by the person in third place.

I had also made the acquaintance of the obligatory lippy teenager, Jack, who, although an abysmal racer himself, could beat me quite easily and made sure the whole world knew it - more about him later.





After the main event we then had a series of fun races and John Watts brought out his Scalextric C281 motorcycle combination to race against the modern cars. Now admittedly it was quite heavily modified but even so it was only just about manageable - guess what? He won the race with it and lapped my Audi in the process! Jack found this most amusing and reminded me of the fact at regular intervals.

The second week was F1s and my Scalextric Jordan received more of the same treatment although I did manage a third place when someone else broke down! However, by the next meeting - GTs - I had actually made some progress and managed a couple of thirds on merit.

The important thing, though, was that I was enjoying myself; the other members are a great bunch of people and only too willing to help a novice like myself. If my car broke down someone mended it for me and everyone gave me tips on how to improve my technique.

After a couple of months, aided by a few

sneaky practice sessions in my lunch hour, I am really starting to get the hang of the thing. I don't fly off the track so often and I am slowly creeping up the results sheet; at the latest GT meeting I had my best evening yet - two seconds and two thirds. Mind you the acquisition of a Proslot Porsche GT3 (Thank you Colette!) may have had a bit to do with it!

Remember Jack? I've beaten him two weeks on the trot now - he has gone awfully quiet! Needless to say I am still being left behind by the bloody motorcycle but at least I can stay on the same lap.

I have also bought myself a nice little plastic toolbox to carry the growing collection of race cars, weird liquids, glue, tools and spares - sad isn't it? Perhaps I should stay in more.

I am by no means a fully fledged racer yet but I could become addicted - watch this space! If you have never raced before why not give it a try? Yes, you will undoubtedly get thrashed for a few weeks but if I can improve then anyone can. ■



"Gulf" Fiat Abarth **BY JIM MOYES**

Let's face it! A coal bunker would look good in the Gulf livery. Or a site hut. Or a wheelie bin. There is something truly magical about the Gulf livery. It conjures up images of all conquering GT40s and similarly awesome Audi R8s dominating the Mulsanne straight. But on a lowly Fiat 600? Or in this case, Abarth 600? Surely the Gulf top brass would not want their corporate image associated with something as low tech and relatively unheard of as this. Well they obviously did, as this is not a fantasy livery dreamed up by SCX, but a model of a real car, and a very good one too!

The first thing I noticed when being handed the box was the long line of icons in the front right hand corner. There are five in total. Four I understand, one baffles me. Lights, magnet, sprung guide, unfortunately named ARS (automatic return system.), check. The fifth one appears to be either a view from the bottom of the car or from above the removed floor pan. What does it signify? That the car has four wheels, or that it has an inline motor? But then currently all SCX vehicles have four wheels and an inline motor. Perhaps there are side or angle winders in the pipeline. A visit to their website yielded no clues.

The car has, for me anyway, the right amount of detail for a slot-car that is going to be used for its intended purpose. I am not really one for marvelling at miniscule fire extinguishers or trying to work out what brand of trainers the driver is wearing. As long as it goes well and looks like the vehicle it is supposed to be when it is in action that is good enough for me. And this is definitely good enough! It has crisp tampon printed graphics, nice separately moulded front and rear light assemblies, metal etched wiper unit and a removable propped open engine

cover. The engine itself is again a separately moulded piece showing a full exhaust and a reasonable representation of a pair of Weber side draught carbs. Inside is a driver figure severed at the ribcage, a roll bar, a full steering wheel, gear stick, and an attempt at a handbrake and instrument binnacle.

Detaching the body from the under pan is achieved by removing one screw. I thought there was more because the front seemed to be holding fast, but this was just due to a very tight fit between the grille and its surround. If you like to run with some body "rock" this may cause you a problem. The underside of the body has metal strips running either side from front to rear ending in small PCBs for the lights. The front PCB has two doohickeys, while the rear has only one. As you can tell I'm not very clever where electricery is concerned.

Now, to the oily bits. Current is carried by the now familiar SCX "wireless" method of brass strips heat welded into the floor pan and ingeniously creating the spring of the guide by a cantilever effect. It has to be said though, that the power of the spring effect actually pushes the front of the car upwards. But, to be fair, I would put a little weight in the front of the car when running sans magnet anyway. And the sprung guide allows for a front axle with virtually no lift, something I feel is necessary in cars with a high centre of gravity, like saloons. The "old faithful" RX41 motor is fitted with the usual nine tooth pinion which in turn meshes with a 27 tooth crown gear. The rear axle snaps into the under pan via brass bushings and the wheel/ tyre combos are the same front and rear. The magnet sits between the motor and the rear axle. The magnet carrier is removable and adjustable via two screws. With it removed the motor can be



simply popped out by lifting the front and then easing it forward and down at the back. Some early SCX cars suffered from the motor popping up out of its mounts on hard acceleration, but this should not be a problem in this case as the rearmost mounting is above the motor. I wonder whether this is a fix by SCX or simply the result of fitting the magnet in this position. The guide is pleasantly smooth and free despite the cam and spring arrangement for self centring but does suffer from excessive sideways rock. The grooved tyres have a vinyl appearance to them.

Well, after all that, how do they go? I race at two clubs which are quite different. Liphook, which is a fairly fast open wood/copper tape track, and Farnham which is a tighter, twisting Ninco setup.

Test No.1 was at Liphook and the first thing I noticed was how good the lights are. They are very bright, with no bleed through the body work and they seemed to stay at one level all around the track, without the on-off effect that some lighted cars seem to suffer with. This could be down to afore mentioned doohickeys, I'm not sure. I was initially disappointed with the grip from the rear tyres but this got better as they lost their shine. The stiff front axle helped with stability and the RX41 motor propelled the car down the 20ft straight at a good speed. The only gripe I could come up with was a stuttering in corners caused by the guide rocking and the inside braid losing contact.

Test No.2 at Farnham and although I may be biased against magnets, I have to say that these are far too strong. The car hurtled around at a totally unrealistic speed and could be held flat out at all but the tightest of bends. I spent about 10 minutes trying to reverse the magnet in its mount as according to the packaging this would give less grip but I had to admit defeat in the end as every time I tried to lower the magnet holder back into place 180 degrees out, so to speak, it would clamp itself to the motor can. This didn't seem to be such a problem when fitting the magnet back in its original format.

In all, a great little car, and I will buy other liveries if they become available. I already have the first one SCX produced, along with a reproduction of their original 60s Seat 600 and an excellent, albeit in Spanish, reference history book in the 40th anniversary set that was available towards the end of last year. It could do with something to race against and I would like to see an A35 or A40 or a Minor or an Anglia. But these probably wouldn't mean much to punters in the rest of Europe, so Tecnitoys, I would be prepared to put up with a Renault 750 4cv or Dauphine or R8. Then there is always the Simca Aronde or 1000. And I'm sure the Germans would like to see an NSU Prinz or 1200TT. Here's hoping!

Now, I wonder if that wheelie bin is dry enough for the orange stripes.....? ■



Review



Opel Astra V8 Coupe "Sheider"

BY JULIAN COTTON

Xenon Lights

Your pupils dilate, heartbeat quickens and desire takes hold. We've all been guilty of a straying eye and who can really resist a sleek, sexy, hard-bodied lovely with peacock accoutrements, calling your attention?

Most of the readers of this journal know very well the quickening pulse and sweaty-palmed reaction to the sight of a new slot car. The Opel Astra V8 Coupe from SCX attracts some serious attention with its striking black and red colour scheme. The car looks sensual, brooding and ready to spring into action at the slightest hint of an itchy trigger finger.

Closer inspection of this 2002 DTM series car brings to light crisp tamponed graphics and true-to-life vent detailing on the wheel arches and sides of the car. The meticulously crafted rear spoiler is quite fragile and would probably not survive many nerfing incidents favourably. Then again you can't have it both ways kids! If you desire, however, the spoiler is easily removed for hard racing.

The overall finish of the car is excellent but not quite perfect. Although the large graphics are beautifully done, the finer tamponed printing is wearing off in places and could do with a covering of clear coat lacquer to preserve it. Furthermore, a few moulding lines are present, but unless you are particularly picky, these points should not present a big problem or detract from the model. The interior is on the minimal side, featuring a dashboard, steering wheel, roll bars and a half-length driver.

Upon opening the model, which is held together by three screws, there is a solid front axle, brass bushings to the rear and an RX 41 motor in an in-line configuration. The guide is the usual SCX sprung type (utilising the copper electric contacts) and is self-centring by a separate spring.

Also worthy of a mention are the smallest and neatest slot car lighting boards I have seen so far. Situated at either end of the car, the circuit boards are home to high intensity Xenon type lights. Even though these boards have no capacitors to keep the lights on when you let off the throttle, the lights are nonetheless excellent. SCX should be applauded for fitting Xenons as standard and hopefully the other big players will follow suit.

On the track

Enough about aesthetics, let's hit the track. The testing was done on my 52 foot Sport circuit, which has a healthy mix of different radius corners and can be viewed at www.hotslot.net. Standard Scalextric power is utilised along with a Parma 45 Ohm economy controller.

The V8 immediately finds good grip on the smooth track surface without having to true the wheels, while the soft compound tyres are sufficiently sticky to inspire confidence. My first few laps result in a fastest time of 5.8 seconds and after a further 50 laps drops to 5.3 seconds as I relax into my new ride. These lap times compare favourably with my Scalextric Sport Mercedes CLK, which has a fastest logged time of 5.4 seconds. I think the pair are going to have some fine battles over the coming months. The Opel feels balanced and torquey, suiting my twisty circuit well and making it a joy to pilot.

At this point I feel inclined to mention again the lights on this car. They really are superb and driving in a darkened loft they light up the way with a large slice of style. The bluish-white front and rear, red LEDs add a further dimension of realism to the experience and give a lot of extra bang for your buck.

Downforce

The magnet set up on the SCX cars is arguably the best offered of any of the big slot-car manufacturers. The magnet can be lowered to your liking for improved downforce, but be careful not to lower it too far and ground out! You can also unscrew the magnet and mounting cradle, take this unit out and spin it 180 degrees before replacing it. This ingeniously allows you to raise the magnet higher up into the body than standard and gives a much looser ride.

For those that like to drive sans magnet the news is good there too. I removed the magnet altogether, and without adding any weight, I drove thirty laps straight without deslotting a single time. I am very much a rookie without a

magnet but with the smoothness and drivability of this car I quickly started lapping at the sub-nine-second mark, with a quickest lap time of 8.7 seconds.

Up until recently, I have not had a lot of experience with the SCX marque, mainly being a Fly and Scalextric advocate. In the widely competitive field of slot car manufacturing, SCX are raising their game and answering their critics' calls for improvement and at a good price for the consumer. I will certainly be paying closer attention to SCX's upcoming releases and if this model is anything to go by, they will no doubt be getting more of my money.

The future is bright. The future is Xenon! ■



BY PETER SOLARI

New releases for July/August include sets, cars and track.

The fairer sets

The three new sets you will find on the shelves this quarter have all been upgraded. Although the track layouts may be familiar, all cars are now powered by NC2 motors and two of the three sets include 55ohm throttles for better control.

First, the Junior Rally Set (20116) includes Super 1600 series Punto and Saxo. Next, the M3 Racing Set (20117) with two BMW anglewinder saloons and 55 ohm throttles. Finally, the GT Max Set (20118) which includes two Porsche GT3-R cars, new controllers and a Sprint electronic lap counter.

In the club?

The first of the Ninco Club Cars (50293) have now made their way across the Channel to the UK and yes, one of them is mine! This car is a beautiful 'Ninco red' Subaru Impreza. It is decorated as a Club Car and includes a detailed two-lane circuit made up of standard curves and various length straight sections that encompass the bonnet, wings and doors before disappearing into the boot.

Little red and yellow car graphics can also be seen 'racing' on the track. I'm sure that if we could open the boot we'd find a power base, throttles and transformers printed inside! The moulding is the same as the 2002 Subaru WRC previously offered in "RACC" and "Monte Carlo" liveries. All features such as NC2 motor, four-wheel-drive, spring loaded guide and removable super magnet are identical to these earlier offerings.

The car is available to order via the Ninco website and is sure to be collectable. If you haven't already sent off for your one, do it now!

Hang on a minute lads... I've got a great idea...

The cars offered include a very international line up of New Minis. A choice of flags from Canada, England, Scotland, UK and USA adorn the roofs of these "Limited Edition Flag Series" road cars. The metallic bodywork colours available include British racing green, Cosmos black and, (my personal favourite) Electric blue. Again, detail and print quality is superb – *chrome door handles, silvered mirrors, printed indicator lenses and 'MINI' logo badges front and rear* - with the whole car evenly coated in a high-gloss varnish. Now, not-a-lot-a-people-know-this, but Ninco's maxi-Mini line-up now totals eleven different versions (including the two set cars). The most versions of any one body style in the Ninco range? – *Answers on a postcard please!* These cars are great fun to race and their availability is sure to satisfy the expected "Mini-mania" following the release of the new "Italian Job" movie.

Just the Job...

Porsche is back in the Ninco range with the latest 911 GT3-R. This one is decorated in the colours of Alex Job Racing. In 2002, Alex Job Racing won five championships in the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) GT class. Their drivers - Lucas Luhr and Sascha Maassen - shared the driver's title, Porsche won the manufacturer trophy and Michelin - their tyre supplier - took the tyre title. Even their crew chief was awarded "GT Mechanic of the Year". Let's hope some of their success rubs off on the drivers of the 1/32nd scale version!

Women drivers!

The second of the "Raid" series cars is also on sale now. The livery is based on that used by Jutta Kleinschmidt during her 2001 Paris-Dakar

Rally victory. Since making history as the first woman driver to have won the Paris-Dakar Rally, the “Dakar Queen” is said to be the most successful woman rally driver ever. The Ninco car features 4-wheel drive, ProArm drop-guide, interchangeable Pro-shock suspension (*medium setting supplied*), NC7 Raid motor and ... wait for it, wait for it.... a man in the driving seat. Oops!

Off-road on-track

The most exciting release this month is Ninco’s “special stage” track extension kit. It includes six track sections, (*2 x half straights simulating a transition from an asphalt to a ‘mud’ surface, 2 x ‘mud’*

standard curves and 2 x ‘mud’ half-straights), twenty click-on ‘mud’ and ‘stone’ obstacles and four ‘stone wall’ barrier accessories. The 184cm (72 inch) track length extension kit is fully compatible with all standard Ninco track. A number of variations can be created with these sections adding special stages to layouts or just extending existing circuits. Only the Raid series of cars with their ProArm guide will be able to negotiate the obstacles but without these in place, the track is open to any series of car. All of the key advantages associated with standard track sections remain; ie extra track width, deeper slot and isolated rails. ■

NINCO
track test

**N50300 Renault
Clio super 1600
“elf”**

part two – the tarmac years.

BY ALAN SLADE

Seeing as how the original test came to a somewhat premature end I thought it only fair to test the car on a plastic/metal track.

But first it had to be repaired. On stripping it down I noticed extremely pronounced wear (pronounced - bad) on the axles. This was caused entirely by the heavy load exercised on them by the suspension units. Really, if Ninco insist on going down this route with future releases, and I for one hope they don’t, then they must fit ball race axle bearings as that will reduce some of the problems. When I rebuilt the axles I removed as much damage to the axles as I could and lubricated them well.

For this second test I paid a visit to the Dundee Slot Car Club as their track is, and I’m sure they won’t mind me saying this, not the smoothest in creation and a good test for a car with suspension. It is also very challenging to drive with lots of tight corners and well as some open ones and a couple of long straights. The first problem was that on the night of my visit they were having a bit of trouble with the electrical supply and had to rebuild two sections of the track.

This meant that I could not give the car as much of a test as I would have liked and to see

how close I came to the lap record. But I did get an overall impression of the car’s performance on Plexytrack. Because of the magnet there was none of the leaping about on acceleration that I had experienced the week before, but a slight hop was still evident on ‘coming out of the box’. On the straight section a very good turn of speed was noticed, but because of the electrical problems only one lane was operational so I could not go head to head with any other car to get a true indication of the speed, but then again this is a rally car and it is all about torque, acceleration and braking. On the very fast curves it held in well but would eventually sort of decide that it was not going to go any further round and de-slot. If I backed off and cruised round at half throttle all would be well, but that is not what you expect to have to do is it?

On the tight curves (inside lane of first radius curve) the hopping and skipping was back and it was impossible to go round them with all four wheels on the track at anything other than walking pace. I did not have time to try any changes to the specification. Two tests I had in mind were ‘borrowing’ the blue units from Alistair’s Mitsubishi to see what effect that had, and removing the magnet.

To go back to my conclusions from the first test, I think that I can change that “Maybe” to a “No” as well. All in all other than its good looks, there does not seem to be much going for this one. I will have to book an afternoon’s track time and then see what I can achieve. ■

NINCO

track test

50306 Mitsubishi Pajero "Masuoka"

**Reviewed by
PETER ZIVANOVIC**

I enjoy slot-cars generally but I'm a particular sucker for the off-road systems. Until now, only Exin has produced these. The original 4x4 system was sts, sold between 1985 and 1990. In 1991 the TT range was introduced and sold until just after Exin's demise in 1993. Both aimed to reproduce the thrills and spills of the Paris-Dakar rally.

Now Ninco have introduced the Mitsubishi Pajero as the first component of their new "raid" series of products, again based on the Paris-Dakar rally. This new Pajero has a number of the features that distinguished the earlier systems: 4WD, a guide mounted on a spring-loaded drop arm and (like TT) suspension. The car was announced at the Nürnberg toy fair in January and I've been looking forward to its release since then.

The car arrived in the post and when I'd finally removed all the packaging I was rather taken aback. The cars used in the rally were the short wheelbase version so the model is about the same length as Ninco's VW Golf but it is wider and about 15 mm higher. It looked much dumpier than I expected. Indeed, it looked like no other slot-car I've ever seen before.

In order to try and check the accuracy of the model I looked on the worldwide web and found Mitsubishi's excellent site. There I found a specification of the original car and a wealth of photographs of the car in action as it won the 2002 rally which I could use as my reference. The specification of the car gives the length, width, wheelbase and track. Measuring these dimensions on the model shows the differences between actual and expected as +0.3%, +3.0%, -1.4% and +0.7% respectively. The height of the model is a little less than its width. I don't have a height for the real car but the model's one seems spot on when looking at the photographs.

This seems to me to be a very accurate and praiseworthy effort by Ninco.

One final word about the specification I saw. Among the myriad numbers, names, etc. for the various elements of the car, the item that stood out was the capacity of the fuel tank - 500 litres! (That's 110 gallons in old money.)

Appearance

So what does the car look like? Comparing the model with the photographs, I struggled to find many differences between the liveries. Perhaps the most obvious are the adverts missing from the front face of the mirror housings and the red band at the top of the windscreen should be black. The middle segments of the rear light clusters are silver instead of yellow and it looks like there should be more black forward of the air-conditioning unit (?) at the rear of the roof. These and one or two other legends missing from the model are pretty trivial compared to the majority that are spot on. The photographs sometimes show the car fitted with 7-spoke wheels, sometimes with 14. The model's 7-spoke white wheels with chrome discs and fat off-road tyres look like a good match.

The exterior mouldings and accessories look good too. When I first saw the model I groaned inwardly at the sight of the four red mud flaps - yet more bits of detail to break off with use. In reality, these are made of flexible plastic so are unlikely to break. Better still, they are held in grooves in the chassis and retained by the body. This means they can be detached and replaced. The mirrors look quite robust but remain the pieces at most risk of breaking in use. They are staked into the body, above the heat-sealed driver platform so they can't be easily removed or replaced.

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There is quite a lot of detail inside the car; the white roll-cage looks right, the dashboard and fascia are well printed and the co-driver's clipboard has course notes on it. The driver's hands almost touch the steering wheel although the twenty to four position indicates that Mr Masuoka is a pretty laid back kind of driver. Perhaps he was parked, waiting for the others to catch up? As is often the case, the drivers are disappointing. They have moulded faces but no painting beyond a flesh tone. Helmets are plain red and, whilst the red harnesses have been

painted on, the red and black lines of advertising that should be across the chests of the drivers' overalls are missing.

In general, I would say that Ninco have done a very good job of representing the real thing as a modern 1/32nd scale slot-car.

Mechanicals

The chassis is attached to the body with two screws at the front and one at the rear. The new "Raider" motor looks like an NC2 and has similar performance parameters but it does have a much longer shaft. This allows Ninco to break with tradition by fitting a strong, rectangular magnet between the motor and axle. A standard 9-tooth pinion drives the rear axle via the usual 27-tooth contrate. Ninco's normal pulleys and belt are used for 4-wheel drive. The guide is a sprung one but it is mounted on a spring-loaded drop arm, which Ninco call the "Pro-Arm" guide. This gives a total vertical movement of about 12 mm compared to around 3 or 4 mm for the sprung guide alone. Four blue (medium strength) springs are located just inboard of each wheel. Ninco call this "Pro Shock Independent



suspension” but, since both axles are solid, it is not “independent” in the same way that you would understand with a real car. These are the basic facts of the car’s mechanical components but they have a number of implications.

I’m not convinced about the merits of 4WD in most slot-cars. TecniToys and Ninco provide this feature with their rally cars but Hornby don’t. I will leave it to others to establish whether there is any significant performance benefit but as far as I can see, its main purpose is to reflect the way the original cars work. I am not a fan of Ninco’s belt drive either. It works but it seems old fashioned in slot-car terms and belt drive has no relevance to the real cars at all. There are also a couple of millimetres of lateral play in the front axle because it is not fixed by the motor shaft and contrate.

It seems to me that the biggest problem with the belt drive is that *all* the drive has to go through a single pinion and contrate. According to my kitchen scales, the Pajero weighs 105 grams. In comparison, a Ferrari 166 (the heavier version with two drivers) weighs 60 grams. So the Pajero weighs 75% more, has a huge magnet

and is designed to go over bumps and obstacles, which will tend to stop the car dead whilst the motor is spinning under power. It would seem optimistic to me to put the drive from this much bigger motor through the same pinion and contrate and expect it to drive a much heavier load without failing. If this weren’t enough, the axle movement allowed by the suspension causes the contrate to move relative to the pinion, placing even more strain on it.

Notwithstanding all the above, 4WD very definitely has a place in off-road slot-cars (sts and TT cars would stop dead without driven front wheels to help them get the over the obstacles) so I am very glad to see it in Ninco’s off-road car.

Springs and things

The “Pro-Arm” guide is a simple arrangement. The arm is clipped into the chassis just forward of the motor. This clip acts as the pivot allowing the arm to move up and down. The arm is pushed downwards by a light coil spring between it and the chassis; its downward movement being limited by another clip. The hole for the standard sprung guide is about ➡➡



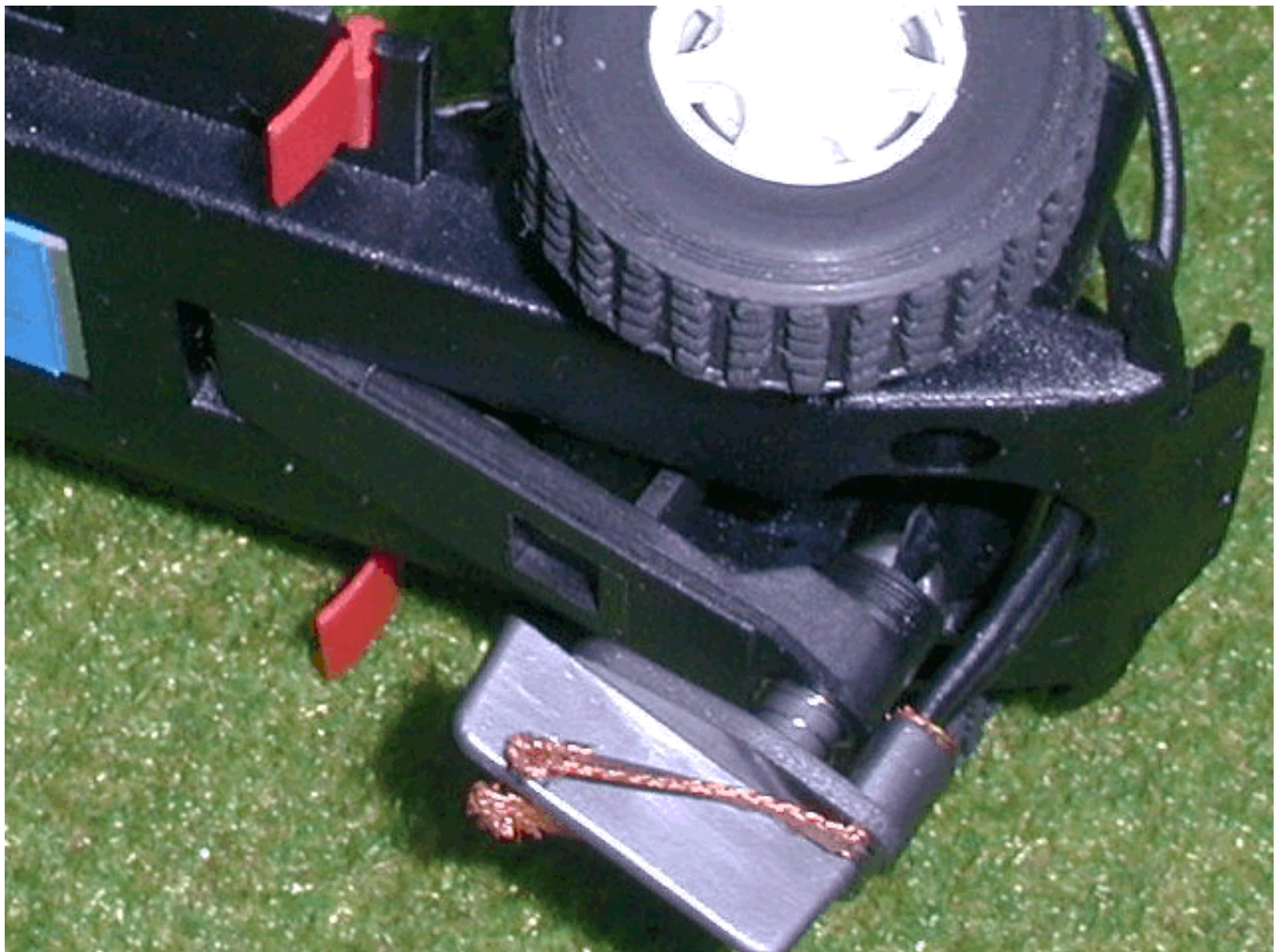
3 cm forward of the pivot. The only slight reservation I have about this arrangement is that the wires from the guide may touch the chassis as they pass inside the car to the motor. The resultant friction may stop the guide from dropping as much or as quickly as it should when the car is lifted above the track. Otherwise the arm is held pretty firmly in the chassis so there is a little more lateral play in the guide than there would normally be.

The Pro Shock suspension system is better than anything we have seen before. As on a real car, only the axles are un-sprung. All the other components (chassis, motor and body) are sprung and can move relative to the wheels. With TT cars for example, the chassis, motor and transmission were all solidly linked to the axles so only the body was sprung. Ninco also offer the choice of three spring settings – although you have to buy them as extras. This gives people like me, who like to tinker with their

cars, another opportunity to tweak and tune. The springs are also very easy to remove and fit and they are linked to the axles by brass, not plastic, bushes.

Axles

So far so good but I am less sure about the axle mountings. Since the car is sprung, the mounting clips holding the main axle bushes have to allow the axles to move vertically. I would have preferred to see the axles mounted from below the chassis (like Ninco's Minis) rather than the standard way from above. This would have eliminated any risk of the axle bearings popping out of the chassis after a hard landing. Also, to allow room for the pulley, the mounting clips are sited much closer together than they are on the new Clio. This means that the body can roll much more on the springs than if they had been set further apart, nearer the ends of the axles.



The in-line motor is positioned so that its shaft is roughly in line with the axles at the mid-point of their travel on the springs. This is perfectly normal for slot-cars. It means the motor and chassis are kept low so the centre of gravity is also kept low and the magnet is held down near the rails so the car handles better and goes faster. In Ninco's case, the low chassis also hides the drive belt. This configuration makes a better slot-car but real off-road cars need good ground clearance not good ground effects. The model's low ground clearance is probably the most disappointing aspect of its appearance, which seems to have been traded off against the need for a modern slot-car to go fast.

In fact the Pajero chassis is little higher than that of an ordinary slot-car. The tyres are pretty thick (not at all low profile) with a diameter a shade over 24 mm. This means that the motor and chassis are about 2 mm higher than normal. If the magnet were simply set into the chassis, the extra height would dramatically reduce its effect. To overcome this, the magnet is mounted in a separate carrier set about 1.5 mm below the chassis.

The final point about the magnet and suspension is that when the car is placed on the track, the magnet pulls the rear of the car completely down on its springs. This leaves no vertical travel at all, the only movement left possible being body roll. At least it is easy to remove the magnet and its carrier if you wish but that still leaves the chassis much nearer the ground than looks right.

Gearing

The large diameter wheels and standard pinion and contrate mean that the overall gearing is higher than that of a normal slot-car. This surprises me. The sts system used a very low-gear worm drive. TT cars had similar sized tyres and used the same 9:27 pinion and contrate but the intermediate drive shaft was geared down 12:24 so the overall gearing was reduced. This was quite deliberate as it gave the cars sufficient torque and the driver better control to negotiate the bumpy tracks and obstacles. The Pajero's gearing implies that it

will go fast on ordinary black track but the guide arrangement is clearly designed for the car to do more than that.

So what is Ninco's Pajero particularly designed to do? The normal gearing and layout of motor and magnet indicates that it is designed to go well on normal track. The Pro Shock suspension indicates that it should go well over rough "Off-road" surfaces. Finally, the 12 mm of vertical travel offered by the Pro Arm guide arrangement is clearly designed for the car to go over track where the it is raised well above the height of the conductor rails.

Where's the track?

Black track is available but what about textured track and obstacles? The answer lies with Ninco's new extension kit Ref. 10505 "Off Road Curve". Their June newsletter describes this as: "New track sections to enjoy the gravel and muddy roads, both useful to rally and raid races. The kit also includes interchangeable clip-on obstacles only available to vehicles featuring Pro-Arm guide." Summarising this and other information I have gathered I believe the pack contains 4 standard curves and 2 half straights of light brown (perhaps yellow) textured off-road track. By itself, this will exercise the Pro Shock suspension. The pack also includes some boulder type obstacles, which clip to the track. The car's wheels must travel over these so raising them well above the normal surface. This will exercise the Pro Arm guide. (I understand the pack also includes some borders and barriers.)

Sadly the new raid pack is not available yet so the only Ninco track I can test the Pajero on is plain black track. However, the car should run well on ordinary TT track so I will try it on that too. (The Pro Arm guide is not long enough for the car to go over the TT Ramp Jump or Elevated Track.) Because of other personal commitments, the test has had to wait until next month.

So far, Ninco have produced a good-looking model spoilt only by the low ground clearance needed by a fast, modern slot-car. It looks like it should go well too but we'll see for sure next month. ■

The Revell Shelby Cobra Daytona Coupé

BY BILL GRIGG

I first became interested in motor racing in the early 1960s and my number one hero was Dan Gurney. In 1964 some friends took me to Goodwood to see the TT and there were Gurney and Phil Hill driving two pale metallic blue Daytona Cobra Coupés like the ones that had run at Le Mans earlier that year. Dan finished third overall and first GT and I have never forgotten the sight and sound of those beautiful, rumbling V8 powered machines.

The Daytona Cobra is very, very high on my list of all time favourite cars. So when Brian asked if I'd like to review the Revell (in the UK, branded as Monogram in the US) slot racer version you can guess that I only grudgingly agreed... And the bad news was that he could only offer me the 'grey' version (he obviously has no soul), a model of the one raced by Gurney and Bob Bondurant in 1964 at Le Mans. It was possible, of course, that it could have been in Monogram's other scheme, the rather sexy dark blue version with broad white stripes as raced at Daytona in 1965. Attractive as the dark blue finish is, it's the 'grey' one for me every time!

When it arrived I was not disappointed: the standard of finish is very high, the pale metallic blue (Brian please note!) seems just right, the

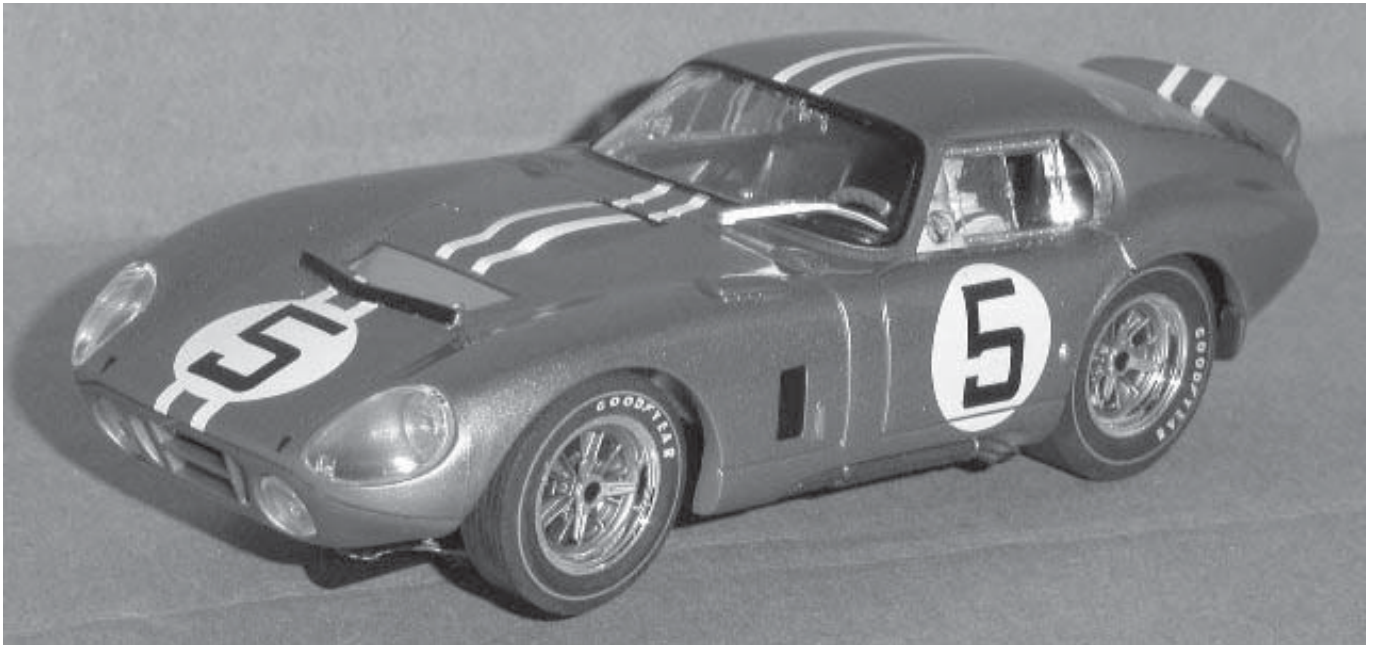
numbers and stripes are in the right place and the correct shape - and the driver has a black helmet like my hero's (he (it?) even looks a *bit* like him). If I had to nit pick it's a shame they got the parallelogram wiper wrong, it should be vertical when parked, not horizontal. The only other obvious minor anomalies I could see are that the prototype of this car never had a 'fence' in front of the radiator outlet on the bonnet top and the funnel like air scoops in the nose aperture are missing. However, if you're going to make a basic car destined for several liveries it's never going to be absolutely right for all of them so, except for the wiper, that is nit picking.

So, I love it as a representation of the real thing but, just a mo, it's a slot-car so, dragging myself back from 1964, how does it perform on the track? Well, when I turned the car over I confess my enthusiasm waned a little when I saw the motor was just behind the one piece front axle (which has no vertical movement), and I could see the spring connecting it to the pinion through the 'screw to the box' hole in the bottom. Then there's a moveable bar magnet (à la Carrera) just in front of the rear axle. So it's of the ilk of a Fly Dodge Viper which meant, all things being equal, it would hang on like a leech



The Real Thing

The Slot-Car



on a steel railed track until throwing itself at the scenery at high velocity when it finally reached the limit of magnetic attraction.

Maybe just idle speculation, so, although I almost hesitated as I feared for its lovely finish, I tried it on the track. But, I'm almost ashamed to admit, I did put some bubble wrap on the outside of the bends to protect the coachwork. Off I tentatively went and the first impression is that it's amazingly smooth and very quiet. If they ever make a Rolls-Royce slottie it should sound like this. And the wheels and tyres were as near as dammit round and true straight out of the box. Admittedly the crown wheel and pinion were well greased but it didn't rattle and bounce along with the guide nickety-nacketing over the joints like many another slot-car and it feels 'solid'. I really don't know how you can 'feel' a slot-car through the controller when you're not physically joined to it in any way, but you know you can. What's more it goes very fast and sticks to the track like - a slot-car with a very powerful magnet.

I started with the magnet in the furthest aft position and then decided to try it at the furthest forward. As the magnet's 6mm across (front to back) and its slot's 15mm across in the same direction, it didn't move far and I didn't expect it to make much difference. As far I could tell it

didn't make any. But I was getting confident and pushed harder and when it did break away it rolled instantly, not of course on a bubble wrapped bend, and slid along the Plexitrack on its roof - Aaargh! Suspicions confirmed. However, the limit is high and I'm sure that's the kind of performance most people would expect from a slot-car these days. Not the best of fun for those of us who like to 'drive' them but, much more important from a marketing point of view, not frustrating for those who don't like coming off at what they see as the slightest provocation.

So I had to try it with the magnet off, easily achieved as the plastic 'box' containing that invention of the Devil just clips in to two lateral slots in the base of the car. Suspicions again confirmed, very tail happy but still smooth and controllable and quite good fun though much, much slower round a lap and absolutely no match for a well balanced magnetless machine.

Overall, this is a current state of the art slot racer finished to a very high standard and able to hold up its head amongst the other leading manufacturers' products. Now, if they'd make one with a conventional motor position, or a sidewinder, with a less powerful magnet between the front axle and the motor, that'd be some car!

Though I'd be quite happy with mine just sitting on the shelf to be gazed at nostalgically. ■

Vanquish MG Shadow Mk II

BY TONY SECCHI

Those of our esteemed membership who read my frequent ramblings (or rubbish, as the case may be) will know that I have a real passion for the long lost but not forgotten Canadian-American series which ran on both those Continents from 1966 to 1974.

I have already done a couple of articles previously on this subject, the last of which was an in-tandem review of-the Vanquish MG-Lola T260 along with John Dilworth's excellent similar item.

From both of these sources the reader will, I assume, be familiar with the Vanquish set up; i.e. that the company are an offshoot of the 'Fly' organisation, that the model quality is superb (if not quite accurate), that the cars are big, being nearer to 1/29 than 1/32 scale, that the cars are heavy, being up to 50% more than an equivalent 1/32 racer and that the most radical innovation is the rear differential system.

Both John and myself expressed doubts over whether this unit lived up to the 20% increase in cornering power claimed by the publicity and we both came to the same conclusion that on a big commercial track this claim may have some credence, but on a small home circuit the benefits were dubious. I run a Can-Am series of twelve cars at my home circuit and collective and subsequent experience bears out that theory.

Since that initial track test on the T260 we have run a full 20 race series including these cars and a few salient points have come to light. We found that the cars were not very smooth in the transition between power on and power off, skitting and weaving around violently prior to de-slotting. We finally traced this aberration to two places - the rear differential and the tyres.

We noted that on freewheeling the rear wheels there was a certain amount of friction in the differential so we removed it from the car, pulled it apart and found that it was stuffed with a huge amount of lubrication grease. We removed most of this and gave both halves of the unit a squirt of WD40 before reassembly. This gave a smoother handling car overall.

However, we did have a more serious problem with two of the cars. On the Lola T260 and the McLaren M8D the running gear made a high pitched rattling, whirring noise; not at all normal. Finally, the T260 ground to halt in mid lap and on opening it up we found that the Crownwheel had stripped most of its teeth and had to be replaced. Similarly, the M8D was in the process of doing so, most of the points of the teeth being broken off.

It was only when I was changing the Shadow differential for a standard Fly rear axle (see later) that I discovered what I felt, as an ex-engineer, was a design fault.

Due to the construction of the gears the crownwheel half of the casing fits over the other half, which means that the toothed ring is very thin. This, combined with a brass pinion, a very powerful motor, strong magnet and a heavy car means that this component is, in my humble opinion, not man enough for the job in the long term. Once again, on a long commercial circuit where one is in 'top gear' most of the time this may not be such a problem, but on short home layouts like mine where the car is braking and accelerating most of the time it has proved, to me at least, a real problem. Comparing the build strength of the Fly crownwheel to that of the Vanquish, I would say that the former is some 2/3 times thicker and therefore better able to handle loads and stress. Having, as part of this test, already replaced the unit on the Shadow with a Fly rear axle, I feel that we must be prepared to do the same again with any other of these cars that show this fault in the future.

Finally, we found that the T260 differential was completely bone dry and devoid of grease (a manufacturing oversight?) We would advise any owners of these cars to carefully check or even remove and strip down the diff. before embarking on a championship series - you have been warned.

John noted in his review that the cars have little grip at the back and lots of wheelspin which rather negates the benefit of the differential. I

also noted in my article that the tyres are so big and wide that a replacement upgrade from my stock was not viable. John approached and solved this problem with the addition of lead weight beneath the drive shafts and I engineered the same effect with a small, not very powerful, magnet under the exhaust pipe extensions at the rear. I also cut a similar sized circular hole in the underpan beneath the central magnet that sits in the sub chassis at the front of the motor. This allows a slight increase in downforce.

Thus modified, the cars give a quicker, comfortable ride without sacrificing the 'tail out' cornering attitude that makes our slot-car racing so entertaining. Mind you, the cars are so wide that if you are on the inside lane of a corner you can 'lean' on your opponent's car all the way round the bend. This also helps with your roadholding if not his.

Anyway, we race four of these Can-Am models - McLaren M8B and M8D, Lola T260 and my own black liveried A.V.S. Shadow MkII. We have applied these modifications to all of them and they are now pleasurable to race. However, due to their size and weight they are not always as competitive as some of the other cars in this series.

Brief history

The original AVS (Advanced Vehicle Systems) Shadow Mk I was a remarkable vehicle. This astonishing car was no more than a large wedge shaped go-kart with 10-inch (250) diam. front wheels, 12 inch (300) diam. rears, a huge rear wing, and a 427 cu. inch Chevy V8 at the back! The wheels were so small that Firestone had to make special tyres for them. It was originally scheduled to race in 1969 but aerodynamic problems delayed its debut until 1970.

During that season it usually qualified in the top half dozen but neither of its drivers, the American George Fullmer and our own Vic Elford, could get it to the finish, the tiny tyres making it hard to drive. After just three races AVS boss Don Nichols withdrew from the series to devise a more improved version for 1971. This was the MkII, which sported a low profile body; bigger wheels and a Chaparral built

Chevrolet engine

This car was now painted in black in honour of the team sponsor UOP (Universal Oil Products). With Jackie Oliver driving it proved to be fast but unreliable, running in the top three or four in races but only finishing in the points once from eight starts. This was for third place at Edmonton and that particular car is the subject of this review - a white liveried AVS Shadow MkII which on that occasion actually led Denny Hulme's McLaren for twenty-four laps behind Jackie Stewart's Lola T260.

Eventually the Mk II was replaced by the Mk III for 1972/3 but once again only had a couple of finishes each season. However, in 1974 with the series in decline, the Shadow DN4 (DN for Don Nichols - AVE boss) won four out of five races in a reduced championship to take the title, again with Jackie Oliver driving.

Tests

These were carried out as follows:

- (1) Against the other Vanquish Can-Am cars in our series.
 - (2) Against a Fly Porsche 917/10 Can-Am.
 - (3) As above using the subject car with the differential replaced by a standard Fly final drive but keeping the Vanquish rear tyres for parity.
- As all the Vanquish cars are built to the same system, I modified and tuned the test car as stated previously. Also to get running parity with the other participants I ran in the Shadow for 100 laps before embarking on the tests. The results are listed as follows and the times logged are based on a best run of three 10-lap sessions. Just to recap, my track is a two lane, 55-ft, Scalextric Sport layout and my controllers are Parma Economy with 45-ohm resistors and no brakes.

CAR	TIME	
Lola T260	42.36	
McLaren M8B	42.22	
McLaren M8D	42.70	
AVS Shadow (my car)	43.01	
AVS Shadow (test car)	44.47	
Fly Porsche 917/10 Can-Am	40.59	
AVS Shadow (test car with Fly Final drive)	43.74	⇒⇒

So, summing up the test it was clear that the slightly modified Vanquish cars were evenly matched for speed and roadholding, the Lola's time being sandwiched in the middle of the two McLarens. These are quick times on my layout and although a bit of a handful at times, the cars are fun to drive.

The AVS Shadow was the slowest probably because it did not have as many race laps under its belt but my own version of this car was only slightly faster. A case for a bit more tuning perhaps.

The surprise was the time of the test car with the standard Fly final drive. It was three quarters of a second faster over 10 laps than the standard AVS and with a little more practice I felt that I could have got it to go even faster. It goes some way to confirm the original feelings of John Dilworth and myself that these cars were designed to run on large commercial tracks. However, if one follows the pointers that my mates and I have established from our experiences with the cars you can have a great racing series on a smaller domestic layout.

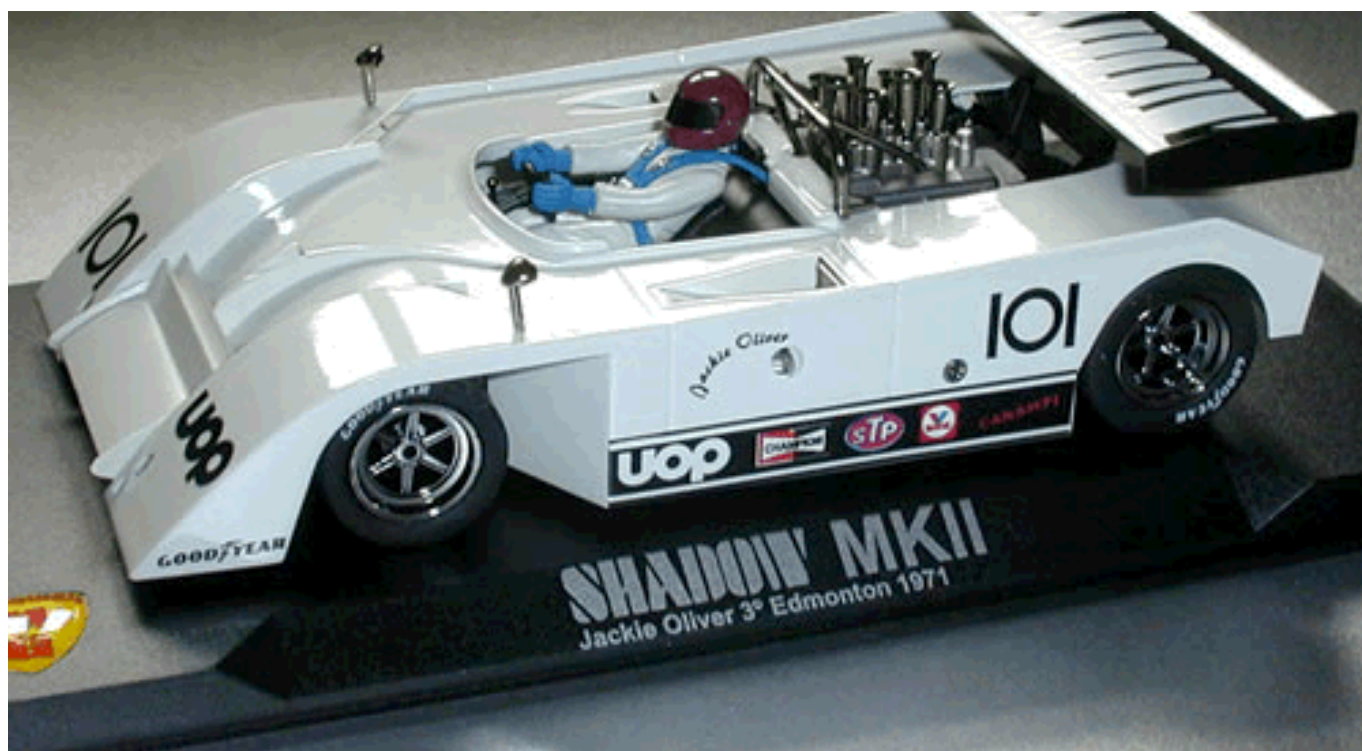
Then we come to the 917/10. Fly cars are always fast and stable out of the box and this example is outstanding - 40.59 is bloody fast for us and the grip is fantastic. It has a Fly/Mabuchi motor, sidewinder drive, smaller narrower and

treaded tyres yet it is nearly two seconds faster than the fastest Vanquish model. It is much lighter, not having the double chassis, double interior of the Vanquish which accounts for about 50% more weight. It is smaller, being a near true 1/32 scale so that it is more nimble and compact. The power transfer is instant and controlled and with the addition of a small slab of lead between the rear wheels it is mind blowing to drive. It makes one wonder why Fly did not keep the Vanquish staff and develop the range of Can-Am cars to the scale, weight, and configuration of the 917/10. Now that would have been something.

However to a Can-Am nut like me any model by any company from that era is a joy to own and race. I understand that future models in the Vanquish pipeline include the BRMP154 and the March 707. Despite the hiccups that I have highlighted I have placed my pre order with Sean at Pendle Slot and I can hardly wait for these and any other models in the series to become available.

Despite the problems with the final drive/diff. which can easily be overcome, I like owning and racing these cars.

A certain amount of tuning, repair and modification is necessary but we all do that anyway, don't we ? ■





News Update from Pendle Slot Racing

Following the successful release of the first two cars to be produced by MRRC in China MC001 & MC002 the next two releases are eagerly anticipated as one is a brand new venture for MRRC.

This is an unusual choice of the Toyota Grp5 Silhouette racer which was based on the Toyota Celica Liftback heavily modified by the Schnitzer company more famous for their work with BMW. It was entered in the DRM during 1978 and will fit nicely into the collection alongside the Capris and Lancia Betas released by Fly.

MC003 Toyota Celica Grp5 #56 is an all new tooling and has many features which have now become the expected standard in slot-car manufacturing. The sidewinder chassis will allow for a fully detailed interior and will have three separate positions for locating magnets. The motor will be from the new range of red-can Scaleautos rated at around 28,000rpm, upgrades of 35,000rpm are also available from the same range. New compounds of rubber will suit the racers with soft wide rear tyres (which incidentally fit Fly Capris/Lancias) and hard compound low profile front tyres. MC005 Shelby Cobra 427 Team Shelby Replica '00' blue/twin white stripe is the latest of the 'old favourites' given a new lease of life with the added detailing and fantastic paint and tampo printing which has become the standard set by far eastern production and spraying techniques. Should be available from your local stockists by the time you read this.



Competition time

Want to win the limited edition Cobra as mentioned last month?

Questions - who founded MRRC, when and where?

Answers to the editor by 25th September - postcard, fax or email. ■