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THE INDEPENDENT CLUB FOR SLOT-CAR ENTHUSIASTS

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It seemed like a good idea at the time - episode 242

Bloody Daft Idea Animal strikes again! It all started so innocently at a committee meeting earlier in the year - Gareth Jex had offered the NSCC rally track to Roger Barker for use at the Newark swapmeet. Unfortunately he couldn't take it himself so Shaun Bennett and myself volunteered for the job.

I arranged to borrow the works van on the relevant weekend and Gareth brought the track with its associated bits and pieces up to our house the week before the event. At the time we were refurbishing the living room so it was easy enough to store the stuff there. Having spent a pleasant evening thrashing Gareth at the local slot-car club (crap racer - moi?) I casually asked him the following morning when he would be returning to collect the track. "Ah", came the reply, "I shall be in Australia for a month so you've got it till Christmas!" My good lady was highly pleased.

The following week I thought it best to do a dry run assembly of the circuit so all would go smoothly at Newark - just as well really - the thing was a nightmare to put together. Firstly I had no track plan, just a few photographs to work from and, after spending two hours trying to assemble it, I discovered that the hand controllers were cream crackered and the power supply didn't work! It transpired that Gareth couldn't get it to run at a previous event.

After much head scratching though I solved the problem - memo to Gareth - if you have a single lane rally track with return loops it is necessary to remove one of the wires from the power supply or you get a dead short! After that everything went smoothly and we had a great day out at Newark, apart from having to threaten Shaun with violence if he didn't stop playing with the cars.

Which left one teensy weensy problem - where to store it for the next two months? Well - if you visit the trade counter of an electrical wholesaler in King's Lynn in the near future don't be surprised if you find the customers trying to set fastest time on a Scalextric track - work is a lot more fun at the moment!

Merry Christmas one and all
Brian





MotoGP Yamaha

Another MotoGP bike – the Yamaha - is now available. As described last month the bikes now come in a new design of crystal case. Some of the previously released bikes are also available with this new packaging too. The metallic blue livery of Valentino Rossi is especially effective.

C6005 Valentino Rossi / Yamaha
C6006 Carlos Checa / Yamaha
C6017 Marco Melandri / Yamaha

The bikes now come fitted with the weight across the stabilising wings as standard. From the feedback I have been getting this must work well and the bikes are developing quite a following. More are due shortly.

Four Wheel Drive

The new WRC rally car for 2004 is the Skoda Fabia and interestingly it features 4 wheel drive. This is achieved by the use of a belt on the near side with the pulleys on each axle against the wheel. The belt fits neatly between the interior and the bodyshell.

Although they have similar liveries the two cars represent different rallies. C2486, the number 15 car, has Rally Deutschland 2003 plates and C2487, no 14, has Rallye San Remo plates.

C2486A and C2486 Skoda Fabia WRC Works 2003 #15
C2487A and C2487 Skoda Fabia WRC Works 2003 #14

Whilst on the subject of rallying, this year's releases of both the Subaru Impreza and its rival Mitsubishi Lancer are now available in the shops. Disappointingly the Subaru is identical to C2531W – the Argos exclusive set car from earlier in the year. The reason for the new C reference is the updated chassis with the new guide and digital fittings. The Mitsubishi chassis has not been updated, perhaps signifying the end of the line for this model.

C2587 Subaru Impreza WRC Works 2003 #7
C2588 Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VII WRC #105

Indy Cars

Sources for this column are much wider than information officially provided by Hornby. However I was still surprised to see a posting on the web about an Indy car in Germany which had never been mentioned before. Hornby were quick to provide the rest of the details. At the beginning of November there was an electronics trade fair in Germany called Electronica. One of the exhibitors there was a company called Microchip. Microchip are the designers of the electronics in the Sport Digital system and they had a track on their stand where you could race to win a special liveried Dallara. 1000 of these cars were made and were given out during this extremely busy trade show.

C2627 Dallara Indy "Microchip" #1



Australian V8s

All four of the new Australian V8s have now been released and many of them have already found their way back to the UK. With their excellent new liveries this is hardly surprising. They are based on new moulds too and the new chassis has the new round braid disk and the fittings for a digital conversion when required. The four versions are:

C2612 Holden Commodore VY "Castrol" #11

C2613 Ford Falcon BA "Pirtek" #1

C2614 Ford Falcon BA "Caltex" #9

C2615 Ford Falcon BA "Caterpillar" #6

Children in Need

Once again Hornby auctioned several prototype cars to coincide with the Children in Need charity fund-raising. Nearly £600 was raised in total. The cars auctioned were:

- Ford Focus Police Car prototype
- Black Mercedes shell from a prototype Challenger
- Black Mercedes Challenger prototype – complete
- GT40 prototype
- Black Mitsubishi Lancer prototype
- Pale blue Ford Falcon prototype bodysell
- Red MotoGP bike wheel prototypes



Audi TT

The fourth pack with hairpin and a red Audi TT is now available. The pack is C8309 Race+ Hairpin and Side Swipe Pack

C2611W Audi TT Red

USA Classics

A Scalextric-USA only set has been released containing two Chevrolet Corvettes. The first is C2566 – the white, open top car previously released but the second is C2622 a red, closed car unique to this set. The Set is C1142 USA Classics with a T3 track layout.

Hamleys Christmas Car 2004

The toy retailer on Regents Street in London is doing another special liveried car this year. This is C2618 TVR Tuscan 400R in two shades of red. The livery was designed by one of their staff members. At this stage no other Christmas specials are known about but that will probably all change.

Club Cars

600 cars have now been ordered. This means that we will not need a ballot and everyone will get what they ordered, in fact if anyone would like extra cars, please let me know.

The proofs from China were perfect and immediately approved. As I write they should actually be being made in time to get the December boat from China – unfortunately this won't arrive until the end of January.



Ferraris and Batmobiles

Extremely good news for most people is that Hornby have signed a licensing deal to produce Ferraris. Along with excellent half year results this news was reported in the national press on Saturday 13th November. The agreement is to produce both modern and classic Formula 1 and sports cars. Therefore look out for some exciting new models next year starting with the current F1 car. News on other models to be produced will follow in due course. Any requests? – actually it is probably easier to list the Ferraris that would NOT be wanted. The same press release also mentioned a tie-up between Hornby and the latest Batman film. Have a look at www.batman.com. The mind boggles.

We thought that the order form was fairly clear but several of you have got the postage amount wrong. It is £4.50 PER CAR. If you didn't send the right money with your order, please send me some more. I also must draw your attention again to the following paragraph from last month. To date we have only identified 7 out of an estimated 30 orders that went astray.

“Unfortunately our post was stolen from our postman on Wednesday 20th October and the orders that would have arrived that day have been lost. Could I ask any of you who you think your order might have been delivered on Wednesday 20th to please call me (+44 (0)1276 479440) to check. Those who sent credit card details should check their statements carefully to ensure that no unauthorised payments have been taken.” ■

Ebay watch

Welcome to my half of the Ebay buyers' guide to everything slot-car. Ebay is without doubt the largest auction site on the web and usually has around 3500 slot-car related items up for grabs at any one time. The first rule to learn is "Buyer Beware". This is something I have occasionally learned the hard way.

Always remember that a seller's description of "Mint", may not be the same as yours! I have found that "Rare" is the most commonly misused word in a description. Here are some recent examples of "Rare" misuse: Scalextric F1 Walter Wolf racing car reached £10.00+ p&p, Scalextric boxed Goodyear Bridge VGC "Rare" and Scalextric March Ford 721 1970's F1 boxed and "Rare". Funnily enough the seller had two of these rare items!

It is very easy to be fooled or misled by descriptions. For example - a fairly nondescript purple Audi came up for auction described as "Purple Audi, good condition, no box". Having searched through Roger Gillham's book for further information I couldn't find a match and, thinking it may be a customised car, I didn't bid.

By Chris Arlow

However, shortly after, another identical car appeared. This time it had a more accurate description. I discovered the car I missed out on was actually a fairly rare NEC event car! As this seller had taken the trouble to compile an accurate description, his car reached four times more than the previous Audi.

On a lighter note, I have purchased around 100 cars via Ebay and only five turned out to be a disappointment and not "as described".

Recent auction prices

C69 Ferrari Berlinetta green	£80.87
C68 Aston Martin green	£74.00
C462 F1 McLaren Honda MP4/4	£82.00
C32 Mercedes 250sl M/B	£265
NSCC Red Alfa Romeo	£400
James Bond Mercedes 300sl	£302
Subaru plain grey	£42.50
VW pre production Beetle	£34.20
L/E Vanwall signed by Sir Stirling Moss	£77.00
ATS truck with a low loader trailer	£62.00
Jersey Vectra Police car (no sleeve)	£35.55

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. ■

Not really a shipment from Spain this month more of a document from Down Under! - Three weeks away on holiday hasn't stopped me from completing some of my slot duties!

After the relatively slow pace of releases over the last few months Tecnitoys have finished off the year with six new releases and the theme is definitely RALLY. With the release of the Peugeot 307 WRC Ref 61610 'Gronholm' and the Ford Focus WRC Ref 61470 'Martin' you pretty much have a complete 2004 WRC line up to play with.

Not content with the big boys of WRC? Then how about the two new cars from the Junior World Rally Championship (Super 1600). Citroen C2 JWRC Ref 61660 and Ford Fiesta JWRC Ref 61620.

All too modern for you? Try the long awaited classic Lancia Delta Integrale Ref 61570. I saw a mock up of this new model a while back and the finished article looks pretty good. I suspect that this will be one of the more popular SCX releases this year and I hope it's an indicator of further classic rally cars to follow. ➤➤



Last on this month's line up of new cars is the Opel Vectra GTS V8 DTM Ref 61650. This is the first time we have seen photos of this car in the flesh - all previous images have been artists' impressions.



Full reviews of all the new cars will follow early in the new year. Recent news has also surfaced of some additional new track sections for SCX digital. Details are tricky to get confirmed but I have seen some images of

proposed additions including: a Le Mans Start type section, a suspension bridge and a pit lane. At this time it's not clear if or when these items will be released in the UK.

An entire new collection of re-released cars has also been offered for sale in Spain over the last month or so. This time the company selling the items is not Altaya but another magazine/collectors company called Planato Directo. This collection is a limited edition of twelve cars sold in one case (early orders also received a watch). While I was away mine arrived from a friend in Spain, as with all of these releases it's Spain only! - photos next month.

Well that's all folks! - a busy year for Tecnitoys. I'm looking forward to next year's releases, of which I have no idea. We will have to wait for the rounds of Toy Fairs for a better indication of what to expect.

Seasons greetings to you all and I hope to see you all sometime next year - preferably at our 25th Anniversary weekend on May 21st/22nd, where the entire SCX range will be on display.

All the best - Gareth. ■

Traders travels

By Robert Learmouth
(Westwood Models)

As I write I'm busy packing for the SLN swapmeet in Utrecht, Holland. It seems like ages since the last trip out to Newark at the end of October. And, as regards UK swapmeets, with the demise of Leeds we now have to wait for Orpington just before Christmas before the next national event and February for an NSCC swapmeet (PS don't forget Swindon in January!).

Something is indeed not right with our swapmeet calendar. However I think the time is right for me to shut my trap on the matter and let others have a chance to air their views now. If you, as a member, have any ideas about the future of swapmeets in the UK I would strongly recommend you make your views known through the committee and/or journal.

A rather smashing electric tinplate Healey set pitched up on Ebay during November. My top bid of £600 (well they were missing screens/surround) was duly well topped by a bid of £1000. I thought that would be the last of it. But hang on a minute. A guy in Belgium (Liège) mails to let me know he has an identical set and would I like to buy it for my bid of £600. Could I have some pics first please? No, don't worry sir my set is identical to the set in the picture. Okay, (as luck would have it) I'm in Holland this weekend – could I pick it up then? No sir, I wouldn't want to trouble you with a detour. Pay the money into my Western Union account and I'll cover shipping. Gee this guy is generous. Okay, well if you're going to send it I want to make sure it has the all important driver figures with re-positionable arms that can be raised into the air in victorious celebration. Yes sir! Mine has that important feature! Ooops. How about my German policeman friend who happens to live 15 miles across the border comes round and collects it in person. Strange silence...

I'm a rare buyer on Ebay. I recently ventured out with the purchase of a lot consisting of a Track Ace and Track Champ in dark blue, complete with original, if opened, packaging. Now I knew the Track Champ, albeit a very rare beast had a broken front wing but I'd bought the lot really for the packaging. So I wasn't best impressed when the seller had thoughtfully returned the cars to their packaging and bound it all up with copious amounts of highly adhesive sticky tape... thank you. Next up was a Scalletti Arrow. Why you may ask? Well this one was dark blue. The very, very rare dark blue of which I haven't even seen one before, just heard of. Sadly it was only the abysmally underexposed (with hindsight) picture that was dark blue. The car that turned up was a distinctly light blue complete with scratches and repro chipped aerofoil. Will I ever learn?

Way back Jon bounced the question of how many Scalextric Digital sets to buy in for Slot City off me. I told him at that price with tinpot cars and a needless over-development of the slot racing concept to get two. Fortunately he didn't listen to me (he never does, wise individual). I have thus been blown away by the success of Hornby's Digital based purely on initial set sales. Every last set Hornby made in the initial pre-Christmas production run is now sold out – one month before Christmas. For every happy kid for whom Father Christmas managed to obtain one there could well be an unhappy kid who won't be getting one. If these early sales develop into follow-up sales of more cars and accessories then Hornby stand to re-write the slot-car concept. Digital could indeed be the only way in the future.

And Finally - 2,500 Bart Simpson Micro sets were half-inched from the back of an artic at services on the M2. Hornby's comment – "D'oh!" ■

From Peter Solari

Super Coupé

As we enter the last month of 2004, there are more new releases announced by Ninco. For Porsche fans, there is a new design of the popular 911 Coupé (50348). This time it does not have the rear spoiler as fitted on the turbo model but just a plain grille as part of the engine cover. It is powered by an NC-5 and is fitted with the medium setting ProShock suspension. It is part of the "Road" class and is finished in a high-gloss red body colour with black trim.

Rally Mania

Two special effect rally cars are due for release, the first being a "snow" effect Peugeot 307 (50359) and the second a "muddy" effect Subaru (50345). Both of these will also be produced as ProRace editions without the dirt (50358 and 50357 respectively). Both ProRace cars will be fitted with the awesome NC-6 motor, hardened steel axles, ball-race bearings and double belt 4WD. The 307 is based on this year's car driven by Marcus Gronholm in the Monte Carlo Rally and will also have the ProShock 2 suspension system with medium (blue) shocks on the front and hard (yellow) on the rear. The Subaru is modelled on the Group N car driven by Alistair McRae during this year's New Zealand Rally; both are fitted with OZ Racing wheels and grooved tyres.

Absolutely Gorgeous!

The most striking release this month just has to be the new livery of the highly sought after McLaren F1 GTR. I have only seen the picture on the current brochure but that is enough to secure my advanced order! This car is absolutely gorgeous... with new wheels and low profile tyres this is sure to be as good to race as it is to display.

Stocking Fillers

I was lucky enough to see all the new products arrive into the UK last month and even luckier to be able to assess some of them. The new Hondas and Peugeot 307 are fantastic and "Track Tests" have been submitted for publishing. The curve sets would also make great stocking fillers this Christmas for those of you wishing to expand your home circuits. Both the chicane and change-over curves come complete with the new safety wall/fence accessory which is also available as an individual item (10220). This kit of six wall/fence assemblies makes a refreshing change from the standard crash barriers and really looks the part on high speed Indy Circuits.



For Rally fans, the Snow Curve is a must - The 180° curve takes the form of a Chicane curve with the surface being mainly smooth with snow effect ridges on the inner and outer edges. The smooth surface has slight undulations giving the sort of unpredictability you would expect from ice.



Christmas Specials

For this Christmas, Ninco have reduced the price of their F1 Arrows car to around £15. This makes it the best priced F1 slot-car on the market today. With full front wheel steering and removable super magnet, this car is unbeatable value. It's even worth getting one to re-paint in your own team colours... *In fact, a brand new 2005 edition Ninco car will be awarded to the best re-liveried Arrows submitted before the end of February. Send your pictures to me, Peter Solari, via e-mail, headed "Arrows Competition".*

As well as this special price car, all Ninco sets will be on special offer this Christmas, so look out for some great bargains. For the ten main advantages of the Ninco track system, take a look at the back cover of the Journal or log on to www.ninco.com.

2004 Review

Over the past twelve months, Ninco have produced no fewer than 33 cars, a third of which were based on entirely new models. The ProRace series has increased with three new Subaru Imprezas, a Mercedes CLK and this month's Peugeot 307. With the introduction of the Raid class last year, three versions of the Ford ProTruck and two of the BMW X5 now line up alongside the Pajeros from 2003. Perhaps the most exciting new products have been the

ranges of Porsche 911/934, Reynard Champ-cars, Honda NSX and Peugeot 307.

To complement the new cars, there are now more wheels and tyres available in the spares range as well as new gears and motors. The impressive NC-5 has now become the standard motor for the majority of the Ninco classes and the NC-6 "Crusher" has certainly lived up to its name. Both NC-2 and NC-3 motors will no longer feature in the Ninco catalogue.

The track range has also been extended with the introduction of new special curve sets and the fantastic Raid sections. With Rally cars making up a large portion of the Ninco range and the advances made with the suspension systems, these tracks have become increasingly popular.

Looking forward to 2005, it is certain there will be more new models and innovations from Ninco including the launch of their new Digital system!

Happy Christmas!

Thanks to all of you who have taken the trouble to contact me with questions and suggestions. Ninco and The Hobby Co. are always keen to receive feedback about their products and service so feel free to contact me regarding anything Ninco related (ptsolari@aol.com). I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! ■



By Colin Spark

Welcome to Carrera Corner. Not an entirely new section of the Journal as it was originally produced by Steve Baker. Unfortunately, due to lack of time, Steve has had to relinquish this post, so thanks to him for his past contributions.

With increasing interest in this company's products along with better distribution (more dealers are now stocking Carrera) and recently some superb cars, it's time it was given a bit of space alongside the usual suspects.

So, before I invade your quiet little corner where you sneak off to read the Journal I should make some kind of introduction.

Quite a few of you know me as you've purchased Ortmann tyres from me. I am a regular racer with a multitude of skills ranging from consistently last to occasionally not crashing. I'll race anything but my particular favourite is vintage 1/24. I've attended Medway, Viking and, recently, Ian Newstead's fantastic new track at Tottenham.

I have a reasonable collection of cars ranging from vintage right up to current releases, but it was the arrival of American Nascars and 1/24 cars from Carrera that really hit the spot. A Plymouth Roadrunner with ridiculous rear wing just had to be purchased, along with something to race against of course!

Since then I've collected most of the Carrera range of American classics and then added the British classics as well, along with quite a few of the 1/24 range. Over the past year I've been cobbling together various sections of Carrera track and now that I've moved house I will be able to build a Carrera circuit in the New Year. I'll report on that as I go.

Enough about me, let's get on with the subject in hand. Carrera.

The bombardment of new cars from the big four (Scalextric, SCX, Ninco and Fly) is fast becoming a bone of contention with most collectors. Once upon a time we could put the blame squarely on the shoulders of Fly but Scalextric seem to have followed suit, closely followed by Ninco. Not to be outdone, Carrera have been busy over the past year or so, but they have managed to follow a different route. Instead of deciding which manufacturer's BMW M3 GTR to buy Carrera have given us a fresh side to collecting and again, in my view, this is what sets them apart from the big four.

Before starting this initial attempt at entertaining you I thought I would have a whizz around the Internet to see what information I could gather. Smart move? No!

I would need all this month's Journal space to catch up, so I think I'll just make a lucky dip for now and then, over the coming months, I'll look at past releases as well as current and future ones. I'll also try and put some lists together of various series of cars and point the finger towards any collectable or limited editions.

Smooth, Dark And Sexy

No, it's not a Halle Berry calendar. It is one of the latest releases from Carrera, the Ferrari 575 GTC in matt black. Catalogue No.25752.

I tested this car on Medway's 100ft mdf track and was amazed at how smooth and quiet it was, straight out of the box. With very bright, working, head and tail lights it looks stunning whispering along the main straight and took the wiggly bits with ease.

The quality of this model needs to be seen to be believed. The tampo printing is faultless, easily as good as current Scalextric/Ninco and better than most Fly that I've seen. For example,



the Ferrari badge on the front of the bonnet is perfect and yet it is no bigger than a pinhead. How do they do that?

This car was raced at Monza in 2004 by JMB Racing and has some quite technical sponsorship decals, all of which are reproduced perfectly. The interior is good, although the driver is only half the man he used to be and he does look a little worried. I'm not sure if that's because of the sheer power of this car, or because he can't reach the brake pedal.

Moving back outside let's take a look at the wheels. Again, these are perfect 15 spoke alloy wheels with brake disc detail as well and they look good against the matt black of the body. On closer inspection I noticed that as well as the brake discs being detailed so are the callipers. No wonder the driver looks worried, if my brake callipers were spinning around with the discs I'd be pooping myself!

The printing on the tyres "Michelin Pilot SX" is as good as on the body but alas, the tyres do seem to be made of wood, they are so hard. If I had to find a common fault with the brand this would be it, tyres. No, to be precise, tyre

compound. Visually the tyres seem fine. They run true and have a good flat contact area with the track but grip isn't that good and I found that they easily pick up dust from the track surface. Naturally I replaced the tyres with some Ortmanns and the car was transformed into a silent missile.

The only other fault I found with this car was that the rear wing was very loose and literally came off in my hand. Now I know a lot of reviewers say that this is unacceptable, but let's be honest here, how many race cars do you own with firmly fixed rear wings that are now broken? I'm happy to be able to remove the wing for racing and replace it for display. OK, it doesn't look so good when it's circumnavigating the club track, but does it look good with only the centre section of wing and both ends finishing in jagged bits of plastic?

Magnetic Attraction

Still not about Halle Berry I'm afraid, but if you like magnets then you won't be disappointed because it's got two. One is fixed under a small screw-in bracket, SCX style, just in front of ➡➡

the back axle, while the main one is in a central channel so that you can slide it fore and aft to adjust the Magnatraction and consequently the handling. Sliding it to the rear brings the magnet closer to the track. If, like me, you think magnets belong on the fridge door then you'll be pleased to know that they can be removed without taking the car apart. The main one needs to be slid along to the front position and then you can lever it out with a small screwdriver, while the rear one comes out when its bracket is unscrewed.

Had my review car arrived from Nikko then I'd have been able to give this a thorough test but as this one was borrowed I felt it wasn't fair to start pulling someone's model to bits. Thanks to Peter Solari, he of Ninco News, for lending me this car. "Ninco man buys Carrera car". Say no more!

If you're in to all things Ferrari then you'll be glad to know that upon inspection of the underside of the new style display case there is a holographic label that guarantees that this is an official Ferrari licensed product. So, come the office Christmas party, you wouldn't be lying if you said that you actually owned a Ferrari 575. Just don't offer that sexy new girl from accounts a lift home!

Mattel have all manufacturing rights for Ferrari models of any kind so you'll have to put up with a Hot Wheels logo in the bottom left hand corner of the base. On the plus side, there is a lovely Ferrari badge in the top right hand corner and, with the car in position, reflecting in the mirrored section of this perfectly sized display case, it definitely says, "I'm going bloody fast!"

New Releases

Other new and recent releases to look out for are shown below:

1/32nd scale

- 25725 Ferrari 575GTC Road Car, red
- 25726 Ferrari 575GTC Estoril, red
- 25752 Ferrari 575GTC Monza, matt black

- 25734 Subaru Impreza WRC #8 Mäkinen, Rally GB 2003, blue & mud effect
- 25733 Subaru Impreza WRC #7 Solberg, Rally GB 2003, blue
- 25731 Peugeot 307 WRC #5 Grönholm, Rally Monte Carlo 2004, red
- 25732 Peugeot 307 WRC #6 Loix, Rally Monte Carlo 2004, red and mud effect
- 25787 Plymouth Roadrunner, Highway Patrol, Limited Edition
- 25738 Ford Torino Talladega #17, Champion '69, blue with gold roof
- 25740 Ford Torino Talladega #98, Winner '69 Daytona 500, white

1/24th scale

- 20491 Audi R8, Sebring, Limited Edition, black
- 20433 Porsche Carrera 6, Nurburgring, white
- 20434 Ferrari 250 Berlinetta Road Car, red
- 20435 Ferrari 250 Berlinetta Race Car #7, black
- 20436 Jaguar E Type Racing, light blue

Carrera have also released an excellent range of modular trackside buildings and several selection boxes of spectators. More details on these next month.

Hopefully Nikko will catch up with me by next month so that I can give you up to date news and really get this underway. Until then, Merry Christmas. Oh, and before next month can you tidy up this corner? We could get a few Carrera D Type Jaguars on that shelf.

Stop Press!

Carrera will be releasing two Limited Editions in time for Christmas:

- 25789 - This is a Formula style car called "Phantasie" in the 1/32 Evolution range. It has a limited run of 3500 worldwide and retails at £29.99.
- 20492 - Porsche Carrera 6 "Nurburgring 1000km 1968". This is in the Exclusiv 1/24 range and has a limited run of only 2500 worldwide. The car features working head and tail lights. ■

NSCC Newark Swapmeet #3

By Roger Barker

The days leading up to a Swapmeet for those who organise them are, to say the least, frenetic. My mobile phone bill will be astronomic, what little hair I have left is now turning grey, and we haven't even got to Sunday morning!

So to the weekend; in an attempt to save time the tables are erected in the hall and most of the direction signs are put out the previous evening. I then make the early (very early!) morning trip round to check them - only to find the "Sign Fairy" has taken a fancy (yet again!) to the one situated on the A46 at Farndon. So far we have lost this one every year, quite what people do with them is beyond me. So, with that replaced, onwards to the Grove Leisure Centre where I arrive about 07.15.

As usual some early birds have already landed, notably Mark Scale, looking remarkably fresh, having done the general toyfair at Sandown Park the previous day, along with Phil Smith and Derek Cooper, who had flown back from a meet in Stuttgart to attend the event. The support of the swapmeet by these guys is very much appreciated.

My co-organiser Steve Cannon had also arrived along with our trusty band of helpers, we all entered the hall to finish setting up before we "Opened for Business".

At around 08.15 the doors opened and the stall holders commenced their frenetic activity of unloading their wares into the hall. I have to make mention here of Andy Carmichael, whose Nissan Micra took on the dimensions of a Tardis, as I have never seen so much slot stuff disgorged from one tiny vehicle into the hall of a swapmeet in my life before.

Tracks

Also arriving and being built on the day were two tracks, one being the new SCX digital system, kindly brought up from the deep south, by Westwood Models and one of the NSCC

tracks, brought by our editor Brian Rogers and his team. These tracks were very well used and appreciated on the day, I know Brian was running a "Fastest Lap" competition which was well supported. To both parties a big "thank you" for taking the time to support the event in that way.

Spares only

We had 50 tables booked for the event, but on the day we topped out with 47, due to some late cancellations. However the hall looked splendid, teeming with all kinds of slot stuff from very rare cars and buildings, to a multitude of spares and restorables, the like of which I have not seen at a swapmeet for some time. This was obviously helped by several stallholders taking advantage of the "Spares Only" tables offered at the event. I have to say that despite the onset of Ebay and all that it offers, NSCC members are very privileged to have these events exclusively organised for them, as there is so much, not only that they can buy, sell or swap, but as a place to meet like minded people in pursuit of a great hobby.

Anyway, back to the meet, the doors opened at 10.30 and it was good to see a queue of people waiting to come in, the hall filled nicely and the event took on the familiar "swapmeet hum". Some traders reported good business, others not so good but that is the way with these events. Over 100 people through the door during the day, which is around the same as the previous year. I believe three people took advantage of the discounted membership scheme offered at this event, which is less than previous years. (Interesting thought... 100 people equates to around just 10% of the membership).

Those who made the journey (some from as far as Devon!) to the meet were also entered into a free prize draw that was drawn at around 13.00 which featured two superb prizes - one courtesy of Robbies Hobbies which was a ➤➤

series of their superb track side buildings, won by the Rt. Hon. Martin Davis Esq. The other prize being a Scalextric Sport Set donated by the Really Useful Spares Company who are now producing a superb range of plastic repro parts for obsolete cars. This set was won by a local NSCC member.

A number of high quality pieces changed hands, not least a lovely pair of "Bond " cars and a quite superb red Lotus Indianapolis. This demonstrates the beauty of these events as you can get your hands on what you are looking at and have a haggle with the vendor to get the best price, as opposed to viewing something on a screen and bidding for it. Not that I am knocking Internet auctions as I use them myself, but there is no substitute for a good swapmeet!

Conclusion

In closing, a huge thank you to all who had tables, your support is really appreciated, the same goes to those members with their guests, who attended to make the event a success once again. Events like these will die if they are not supported by stallholders and members alike; remember we have lost Evesham and Leeds this year, both nice events with their own charm, but in the case of the Leeds event closing this now leaves Newark and Loughborough as the most northern meets in the NSCC calendar; surely there is a member in the north who fancies having a go at organising an event. They are very rewarding - hard work - but very rewarding. I will certainly have a table, maybe two. Go on whoever you are, have bash at it. Just pick up the phone - you might just enjoy it! I do. ■

Monogram

By Osvaldo Pace

There are names that will always trigger some kind of boyhood memories and Monogram is certainly one of them. Now, this is a company that played a leading role on the slot scene of the mid-sixties. A huge experience in producing injection moulded static kits of aeroplanes, ships and cars must have been one of the key factors which led the then management to carefully assess the market and approach it in the correct manner.

Monogram always took very cautious steps, never relegating the core of their business - mass production of static kits - to a secondary level. So, when the slot-car fad was gone, it was simply a matter of resuming the main activity. The 1/32nd scale Plastikitty Forty-Niner and PC series, as well as the regular 1/24th scale cars, were just part of Monogram's vast kit production in the early 60s. They decided to enter the burgeoning slot-car market after realizing that the American newcomers to this hobby, enthusiastic scratch-builders, were converting bodies from these kits into slot racers.

1964 - The beginning

Monogram entered the slot-car market in October 1964, one year after Revell, its major rival in the static kit business. Nevertheless, it did it in grand style, launching nine models at once! This new entry on the market was reviewed by two major American slot related publications in those days. The October 1964 Model Car and Science issue featured a test of these nine new models, the catchwords on the cover being - "Monogram roars into slot racing", an allusion to the roaring tiger in Monogram's line of "Tiger Slot Racing Accessories".

The November 1964 issue of Model Car and Track also published an article on the same subject. Nine models at once may seem a lot by standard practice, as most manufacturers used to launch one or two new models at a given time.

But Monogram's procedure was very clever - mass-producing what scratch-builders had been doing before, that is, adapting bodies from already existing static kits, and coupling them with newly designed slot racing parts. The bodies of the seven 1/24th scale cars were taken from static kits. Only the two 1/32nd scale cars had been originally designed for slot-car racing purposes, mounting posts being moulded into the bodies. These were a roadster version of the MGA, and a 1932 Ford "Deuce". The "Deuce" had a rather crude, non-adjustable stamped brass chassis, and the pick up was located behind the front axle. Model Car and Track stated in its review article that it "handled poorly". On the other hand, the MGA was equipped with the new SR1603 brass chassis, a finely stamped adjustable wheel base chassis, one of the nicest ever made. Both were powered by the Mabuchi-made 16D motor, dubbed Tiger X-100 by Monogram. These models have become highly collectable and are very hard to find nowadays.

The seven 1/24th scale models introduced were a pair of 1934 and 1936 Ford Coupés, a 1955 Chevy Hardtop, 1958 Ford Thunderbird, 1940 Ford Pick-up, 1934 Duesenberg Torpedo Phaeton and Mercedes 540-K. These were the bodies of their static kit counterparts, converted to slot racing by the addition of interior plates and mounting posts. A factory conversion indeed. The large open areas of the T-Bird's minimal interior plate, for instance, were reminiscent of a static kit full interior. But all models had a well engineered, adjustable wheel base brass chassis, machined aluminium wheels and good grip tyres with finely detailed sidewalls. They were powered, at first, by the same motor used in the 1/32nd scale cars, the Tiger X-100, earliest versions being painted in metallic red. This motor would later be replaced in the second series by the more powerful 36D version called Tiger X-200.

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1965 - Consolidation

Following these models, Monogram issued in 1965 a Porsche 904 Carrera GTS, a Cooper Ford, a lovely Lola GT, and two Ferrari body styles, the beautiful 250 GTO/LM and the 1964 Le Mans winner 275P.

These five cars were produced in 1/32nd scale and were offered as kits. All were equipped with the SR1603 chassis and powered by the Tiger X-100 motor. The Porsche 904 GTS and the Ferrari 275P were also reproduced in 1/24th scale, the third car in this scale being the superb rear-engined Nassau winner Scarab. They were powered by the Tiger X-200 motor, fitted in the SR1604 "sled-rail" adjustable brass chassis. All three were offered as kits. Quality of injection and detail was superb. Earlier models were still available, the 1/24th scale cars now being equipped with the newer motor. The boxes were unchanged, but a small bright red sticker was affixed on top of them, specifying that these kits



Cooper Ford (first issue body in light blue)

were now powered by the more powerful Tiger X-200 motor. As of 1965, Monogram stressed in the catalogues that, in addition to being "lightweight yet tough, brass chassis could be soldered for modifications". This was probably an allusion to Cox and Revell's chassis, made of magnesium and aluminium respectively, which would not allow this kind of operation.



Porsche 904 Carrera GTS

1966 - Expansion

1966 was a very prolific year for Monogram, with the introduction of the “Combination Slot Racers”, new RTRs and traditional slot-cars with injection moulded bodies. A total of eighteen options was offered, a number that, in fact, could yield nineteen different cars. Each “Combination Kit” was offered with two vacuum- formed bodies, three of these being also used in RTR cars. In comparison with the previous year, the 1/24th scale models offered in 1966 outnumbered the smaller scale now represented by four models only. Monogram’s offer of nine different vacuum-formed bodies was a logical move, perfectly synchronized with the new context of demand for higher speed, and the extensive and increasing use of vacuum-formed bodies by smaller companies. The “Combination Slot Racers” included a Cobra Daytona Coupé and a Lola T70, a Ford GT40 and a Ferrari 330 P2, a Mustang 350GT and a Chaparral 2 and, finally, a Ford GT Roadster and a Ferrari 330P/LM. Strange combinations indeed, in which some cars, like Ferrari and

Ford, were arch enemies in real life! These “Combination Slot Racers” were offered as kits with painted and pre-trimmed bodies. The Cobra / Lola and Ford GT40 / Ferrari 330 P2 kits shared the SR1607 in-line chassis with brass front-end, zinc-plated steel motor bracket, spring loaded steel wire drop arm, additional brass brackets to attach the bodies and were powered by the Tiger Super X-220 motor. Interestingly enough, the real Cobra Coupé which was reproduced in the Cobra / Lola kit was never completed in the Sixties. In fact, it was to be called the Type 65 Cobra Le Mans. A Colorado businessman purchased it in 1979 and with Peter Brock, designer of the car, as a consultant, had it finished by early 1981. It is a one-off racing car. The Mustang 350 GT / Chaparral 2 and the Ford GT40 Roadster/ Ferrari 330P/LM shared the SR1608 brass ladder type sidewinder chassis with weighted steel wire drop arm, plus additional aluminium brackets to attach the bodies, and were powered by the new 8-volt Tiger Super X-220S motor. The vacuum-formed bodied RTRs in the Tiger-R-R Series ➡



Ferrari 158 from the 1966 range



1964 - it was a very good year for slot-cars

1958 Ford Thunderbird (above)

1936 Ford Coupé (below)





1934 Duesenberg Torpedo (above)

1940 Ford Pick-up (below)





Lotus 38 - also available in kit form

were the Lola T70, Ford GT40, Ferrari 330P/LM, and the Vampire, the new “thingie” car from Monogram. These cars were equipped with the SR1659 aluminium sidewinder chassis and 8-volt Tiger Super X-220S motor. All were fitted with the Cooper style Scarab wheel inserts.

On the other hand, scale detail fanatics could take delight in assembling the new kits with injection moulded plastic bodies. These were, in 1/32nd scale, a pair of Formula 1 cars, the Lotus 33 and the Ferrari 158, graceful little models which stand among the nicest slot-cars ever made, the Ford GT40 (Richie Ginther’s car, DNF, 1964 Le Mans), and a Ferrari 330P/LM. The two Formula 1 cars had a new “slim-line” brass chassis, the SR1605, and were powered by the small Mabuchi FT13UO motor, dubbed Tiger Super X-88.

The sports cars were equipped with the new SR1606 chassis, consisting of a stamped brass front end coupled to a zinc-plated steel motor bracket, and a spring-loaded steel wire drop-

arm. Power came from the new Tiger Super X-110 motor (Mabuchi FT16D). This chassis replaced the previous “Series 1” SR1603 brass flat pan chassis. These new kits were fitted with wider rear wheels and moulded black sponge tyres. Previous bodies were unchanged, with the exception of the Cooper Ford, now being injected in dark metallic blue and sporting open rear wheel arches to accommodate the wider wheels and tyres.

Still in the injection moulded arena, the new models offered to the 1/24th scale enthusiasts were the Chaparral 2C, McLaren Elva, Ford GT40 Roadster, Midget Racer, and the 1965 “Indy 500” winner Lotus 38, the latter being offered also as an RTR with a different chassis. Although being reproduced in 1/24th scale, the Midget was small enough to use the same running gear as the 1/32nd Formula 1 cars. Lots of chrome-plated parts made it stand out. The Indy Lotus-Ford 38 in kit form had a new “slim-line” aluminium chassis with drop arm and was



sidewinder transmission. It was equipped with the SR1607 inline chassis and powered by the Tiger Super X-220 motor and, although not being an officially authorized model like its Cox counterpart, it was truly magnificent. On the other hand, the “ultra low profile” Ford GT40 Roadster, as it was described in Monogram’s ➤➤

powered by the same Tiger Super X-110 used in the new 1/32nd scale sports cars. It was truly a fantastic model, with superb suspension details and beautiful Lotus four-spoke wheels inserts. The Chaparral 2C with “moustache”, as seen during the 1965 racing season at Watkins Glen, Laguna Seca, Road America and other circuits, was mechanically quite conservative considering that most cars of this period were moving to



Ferrari 330 LM



Chaparral 2C

catalogue of that year, and the sleek McLaren Elva were powered by the new and faster 8-volt Tiger Super X-220S fitted as a sidewinder in both cars. The Elva was the only model with injection moulded body that used the SR1659 stamped aluminium chassis with drop arm, whereas the Ford was equipped with the more conventional SR1608 ladder type sidewinder chassis.

1967 - Thingies

Monogram tried to postpone as much as possible the unavoidable new trend but the die had been cast and, eventually, it succumbed to the “thingies” plague. Two of these 1/24th scale would-be cars, the Snake and the Assassin, were introduced in 1967. Both were equipped with the aluminium sidewinder chassis and the Tiger Super X-220S. They were fitted with sponge rear tyres and the Cooper style wheel inserts. But, for the nostalgic slot-car racers, there was also a 1/24th scale hard bodied Chaparral 2D Coupé. It was offered as a kit and was the last 1/24th scale injection moulded slot body produced by Monogram. It featured an operating small spoiler mounted on fender fins, as seen at the 1966 24 Hours of Daytona, and a full-bodied driver. It was equipped with the aluminium sidewinder chassis and powered by the 8-volt Tiger Super X-220S. Unfortunately, the timing was wrong although it was offered at a much lower price than most of the vacuum-formed bodied thingies.

For the 1/32nd scale fans, 1967 was still a good year, with the launching of the wonderful Lola T70 in kit form, available also as an RTR. The Cooper Ford was the other model offered as a kit for that year. The Ferrari 330P/ LM, Ford GT40, Chaparral 2, and the Formula 1 cars, Lotus 33 and Ferrari 158, were issued as RTR versions. With various Home Sets being manufactured since early 1966, Monogram was probably betting on this segment of the market, hence the larger number of RTR models. Interestingly enough, the 1/32nd scale RTR sports cars did not share the same chassis as the “Home Set” ones, the first being stamped brass and the latter stamped aluminium. Also, the

Chaparral 2 was never produced as a kit, the only two versions being the RTR and the “Home Set”. Chassis were different but both were fitted with pressed-on plastic wheels.

The last slot-car made by Monogram was a 1/24th scale kit of the McLaren Elva. It had a vacuum-formed body and used the running gear of the previous beautiful hard bodied version. It was then issued also as an RTR.

1968 - The end?

A last attempt was made in 1968, when a 1/32nd scale RTR Corvette Stingray was shown at the February 1968 Annual Hobby Industry Association of America Trade Show in Chicago. It was fitted with the RTR Lola T70 pressed-on plastic wheels, but chassis and motor were not disclosed. This model was never produced.

Monogram produced “America’s Widest Selection of Quality Slot Racers in 1/24 and 1/32 Scale”, as stated on the front cover of the 1966 / 67 Model Car Racing catalogue. In fact, Monogram manufactured many wonderful models in both scales and these are highly praised and cherished by collectors nowadays. Unlike most companies which dumped their moulds, someone with a keen insight and wisdom had most of these wonderful moulds carefully kept in the factory, a decision that made possible the reissuing of some great cars of that period. It is noticeably the case of the 1/32nd scale Ferrari 275P, Ferrari 250 GTO/ LM and Chaparral 2C which have been reproduced by MRRC with Monogram’s authorization. The Porsche 904 GTS and Cooper Ford are due to follow.

And finally, the good news for all slot-car fans was the announcement of Monogram’s return to the slot scene after a long 35-year absence. Models already released are the legendary Cobra Daytona Coupé and the mean Greenwood Corvette. ■

Osvaldo is a Brazilian member of the NSCC with a huge collection of the lesser known makes of slot-cars from the 60s. If you would like to see more of them then visit his website:

www.paceautorama.ppg.br

BITS & PIECES

Toys R Stolen

The Toys R Us exclusive V8 Super Cars set as featured in the November issue is on offer at £49.99, a saving of £30. The Holdens are a bit basic with blacked out windows etc, but the set is good value at the above price.

They also have a GT Pursuit set at £29.99, a saving of £20, featuring a couple of Porsche GT1s; only an oval track with corner crossovers but a cheap way of expanding some sport track and increasing the car collection.

News from Toys R Us Ipswich branch - three of the new Scalextric Sport Digital Lane Changing sets were stolen from the store on the 18th November, so watch out if you are offered or see any of these for sale, they may scorch your living room carpet.

Nic Ayre

Swindon Swapmeet Sun, 9th Jan 2005

Collectors' tables are available at this event priced at £10 for 3 foot. Why not book a table and sell those unwanted cars and other items? This is an open event and sales potential is good.

January is historically a very high spending month. Having a table also gets you early entry into the event before the main doors open. Call Jon on 01793 497778 for more details.

Robert Learmouth

Rally event

A multi track Rally event will be held on Sunday 16th January 2005 at Bricket Wood - 5 minutes from the M1. Start time is around 11.30am. Licensed bar at lower than average pub prices! There will be two categories - magnet/novices and no magnets/ experienced competitors. All cars must be WRC rally. Entrants will need to pre- register as places are limited. There will be trophies and prizes. Anyone interested should contact Nic Picot at Slot32UK - phone:- 020 8421 5922.

Hornby hails landmark deal with Ferrari

Model railways and Scalextric group Hornby, already enjoying strong sales of Hogwarts Express and Batmobile models, yesterday hailed a licensing deal to make miniature Ferrari cars as it said its profits had raced ahead by a fifth.

Chief executive Frank Martin said it had secured the rights to produce Scalextric versions of road and competition cars, including Formula One, made by the prestigious Italian marque.

He added the deal was one of a number that he believes will underpin further growth in Scalextric sales in future financial years, as he revealed a 20% rise in half year sales and profits, broadly in line with City expectations.

The Scotsman Saturday 13th November 2004

submitted by Alan Slade

R/S Slot Racing update

Due to a charging error by our supplier the HO tyres on our new price list are incorrect. Please note that these tyres are now £1.50 per pair and not £3.00. I feel this represents a much more realistic price.

More new tyres have arrived this month. We can now supply racing tyres for Scalextric BMW Mini and Porsche Boxster (front and rear), Ninco AC Cobra (rears) and Carrera 1/24 Ferrari SWB. In the pipeline are tyres for Autoart cars plus a range for scratchbuilding with "Good-Year", "Dunlop" and "Firestone" markings in various sizes. We are also beginning to get our collectable cars, body shells and vintage repro parts together for sale. These, along with all the new tyres, will be added to our website over the coming month, so that January should see www.rsslotracing.com up to date.

I'd also like to thank all our customers for their business over the past year and Brian, Tony Secchi and Bill Grigg for their honest reviews of our product in the Journal recently.

Merry Christmas - Colin Spark

NINCO

track test

Honda NSX "ARTA" (...or, the best thing since sliced bread)

Review by Peter Solari

From the moment I saw the first pictures of Ninco's new Honda NSX cars, I wanted one! In fact I wanted both of them! These cars are among the most beautiful GT cars produced by Ninco and after hearing many opinions from racers and collectors alike, I believe they are here to stay.

The first two liveries available are the Autobacs Racing Team Aguri (50355) and the Epson Nakajima Racing (50356) cars. Both have identical components, just different decoration. For the purpose of the review, I chose the ARTA model.

measure less than 1mm high, yet they are clearly identifiable. So too are the drivers' names – Katsutomo Kaneishi and Daisuke Ito – printed above each door.

Out the box

The car weighs in at 85g with the base of the chassis 2mm up from the track giving a roof height of 35mm. Compared to the full size car the dimensions are all within a reasonable tolerance.

An interesting feature on each front corner of the chassis is a small upright aerofoil. This



In the box

The standard Ninco case provides unhindered views of the car body from every angle. The "ARTA" car is a glowing red colour with a number of sponsor names and logos printed around the car. The print quality is absolutely superb; the "Coca Cola" logos on the rear of the car between the rear light strip and the bumper

doesn't appear on any of the pictures I have seen of the real car but it certainly looks cool! Detail continues inside the car with printed instrument panel and moulded centre console detail. The NSX is a right hand drive car and you will find a ¾ length driver sitting in a red sports seat with a detailed fire extinguisher occupying the left hand side.

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Looking at the under-pan, the distinctive NC-5 motor can be seen in the “angle-winder” position. This is the second “angle-winder” GT car that Ninco have produced and it is interesting to note that this time it is positioned to drive the right rear wheel as against the left rear as on the BMW M3 GTR.

Under the body

Removing two screws from the underside allows the body to be easily removed from the chassis. This reveals a very flat, plain chassis housing the pink-wrapped motor, bright-red gearing, brass axle bushings and the centrally mounted round magnet. At the rear is a simple exhaust detail and the front has the small aerofoil welded on each corner. The motor is fixed tight in its mounting with no rocking movement. The wires leading to the spring-loaded guide assembly are gripped in position just under the front axle. This is a clever design as it gives a “self-centring” effect to the guide. The wheels are a new six-spoke design and are fitted with slick tyres. The front tyres are noticeably lower profile and have an outside diameter of 20mm as against 21.5mm on the rear. One comment I received about the chassis was that it did not appear rigid enough at the back. It’s true that it can flex a little, and when compared to the BMW M3 chassis it is a fraction weaker, but my concern was with the leads from the motor to the guide

assembly. The position of the motor is such that the little resistor soldered to one of the motor leads is precariously close to the soldered joint of the opposite lead. There appears to be a real risk of these two wires coming into contact.

On the track

The car had its first shakedown during a practice session on a fast wooden circuit. Straight from the box the car was very smooth and also very quick. The new gear ratio (12-tooth pinion:32-tooth spur gear) certainly showed and initial lap times were comparable to that of other GT class cars. The low wide design allowed the car to corner particularly well. The following day I had the opportunity to compete with this car on a plastic track. The car was to be run without the magnet and the body was fitted loose on the chassis. With this set up, the front tyres would rub against the rear inside edge of the front wing as the body lifted causing the car to bounce. This was corrected by pushing the front wheels fully home and restricting the maximum gap to just 1mm at the front. It’s worth mentioning that the other Hondas running that night did not suffer from this and I have raced another one since without experiencing the same.

Experienced racers can complete a lap in the mid-16 seconds. I can manage 17-18 seconds (if I manage to stay on for a complete lap). As the car clocked more and more laps, the NC-5 seemed to be able to produce more and more power. With the NSX I was able to hit a 16.90; my first sub 17 second lap of the circuit! However, the big boys managed to lap their Hondas in 16.2, nearly half a second quicker than the fastest lap made during a recent GT endurance event on the very same track.

Buy one...?

It seems that the CLK GTR will no longer rule the race track during GT events. The arrival of the Honda NSX brings a true competitor to the GT class. With its sleek design and new gearing, it is definitely a force to be reckoned with. So don’t waste time asking yourself if you should

Review: A Plethora of Ninco Beauties

By Matt Tucker

It was a dark Tuesday evening and I was settling down to hot pie and mash. The phone shrilled and gave me a startle. "Hello, is that Matt Tucker", there was an unnerving pause, "It's Brian from the NSCC" – the call us slot addicts dream about got my heartbeat going a tad faster. I was asked to review some cars that had been tested to death but were re-paints. Re-paints? My mind was not at full speed and all I could conclude was that I was being asked to cast a critical appraisal on some highly skilled (or not!) NSCC members own lavishly applied garish colour scheme on what was previously a respectable slot-car! I immediately felt anxious. After further discussion I realised we were talking about 'old' cars with new liveries. I realise you were all way ahead of me but I thought I'd give you a worrying insight in to this slot addict's mind.

Get on with it I hear you cry, well Brian sent me 4 newly liveried Ninco cars:

- Fiat Punto Super 1600, Vodafone (50336)
- ProTruck Speedy 'Desert Effect' (50349)
- BMW M3 GTR, RedBull (50350)
- Renault Clio, Catalunya Costa Brava 2004 12th Rally Slot Ltd Ed (50353)

Our agreement was that I return three of the cars for use as competition prizes and keep one. Which one would you choose? If it is the same as the one I chose then maybe I don't need to worry, or maybe you do!

If you want to read a track test on any of these models you'll need to re-acquaint yourself with previous journals – if you only joined the NSCC after these track tests were published then you'll just to have buy these models to find out!

Fiat Punto - Vodafone

A 2wd rally car with the now standard NC-5 motor and sprung guide but no suspension; I prefer mine without. A bright and garish colour scheme immediately greets you – royal blue

makes up the base with a bright red bonnet and deep yellow stripes on the bonnet top edge and bottom edge of the doors. This deep yellow also adorns the rear aerofoil, mirrors and roof air intake. The tampo printing is really crisp and I was impressed with the rally number which had some very fine detailing that had no blur or fading. However, not all was perfect. The blue base colour can be seen through the white colour of the Vodafone logo on the bonnet.



Other details were present as usual in Ninco cars, including the standard no eyed driver and co-driver, a nice roll cage and highly visible photo etched disc brakes. If you like Super 1600 rally cars or are yourself a Punto driver then I'm sure this will be added to your collection. Also because of what are basically gaudy colours this would stand out from the crowd if you race this type of car – an aspect not to be over looked. However it won't be gracing my stable as it just does not hit the right spot.

ProTruck Speedy

The third ProTruck to be released, with the same mechanicals (NC7, 4 wheel suspension (yellow hard setting), drop arm guide, etc.) but is quite different. Gone are all the tools needed to get you out of that tight spot and instead you get a completely covered back. I can only presume is a set-up to aid aerodynamics and hence speed - I guess the main sponsors thought about what they were sponsoring! I have to say the tools details of the first two releases were ➡➡

outstanding, and while they did not help performance they made the models stand out. So instead of tools we get a desert effect which I presume is created by a Spaniard applying watered down brown paint with a tooth brush. The effect is rather good especially on the body and does add that touch of realism – these Raid vehicles are only really clean for about 5 minutes after being washed. However I don't like the effect on the tyres, it just does not look right to me. It is not helped by my previous experience with the desert effect Pajero which rubbed the paint off the tyres within two laps of my rally circuit. I did not test this car but the car has not got a sealing top coat let alone on the tyres so I can't see the effect, especially on the tyres, lasting.



The actual livery is really good. A marine blue with a white bonnet with the two main sponsors emblazoned on the bonnet (Mobil) and the sides (Speedy). However, like the Punto, the base colour blue can be made out through the white around the bonnet clips. Nicely detailed bull bars on the front ensure you don't lose any track time if you decide you can't be bothered to drive around that poor unsuspecting camel. There is only a stubby windscreen and as such the driver and co-driver are in full helmet to protect them from the inevitable dust. I like this model, I don't even follow the Raid series but it is alluring and if you have not experienced the ProTruck beasts then this would make an excellent acquisition. Also, without all the tool paraphernalia then it should have a slight performance advantage over its predecessors.

Renault Clio

Ten years ago Ninco produced a Renault Clio which turned out to be the first in what has become an annual limited edition run of cars to commemorate the Catalunya Costa Brava rally. Well for my own interest and those of you who don't know - the following are all the other releases in this series:

- 1994: Renault Clio "RACC '94" (50108)
- 1995: Toyota Celica "RACC '95" (50118)
- 1996: Peugeot 306 "RACC '96" (50128)
- 1997: Ferrari 166MM "RACC '97" (50136)
- 1998: Renault Megane "RACC '98" (50161)
- 1999: Seat Cordoba WRC "RACC '99" (50182)
- 2000: Toyota Corolla "RACC 2000 Costa Brava" (50202)
- 2001: Volkswagen Golf "RACC 2000" (50231)
- 2002: Citroen Saxo JWRC "RACC Dani Sola" (50266)
- 2003: Fiat Punto "Catalunya Costa Brava 2003" (50315)

This year's car is a metallic grey Renault Clio with bonnet, side and roof highlighted in primrose yellow. The rally plate is in marine blue and the essential (well, essential for a rally car made in Spain) Telefonica logo, again in blue. A red Club Ninco logo emblazons the windscreen (I suppose better than a Shaz and Kev), and the mirrors, rear aerofoil and roof air intake are in primrose yellow. Brake disks are highly visible photo etched metal and the Renault badge on bonnet and boot are nicely highlighted in metallic silver. I suppose for what is really a cabinet model the mechanics are irrelevant but if you are going to race this you'll find the NC5, 2wd but with suspension (red soft) on all four wheels. Overall a nice model with quite a distinctive livery – the base has printing on it to ensure you know you've got the real McCoy.



If you collect these then I've no doubt you have already got your mitts on this car already. If you fancy trying to collect this series then the Renault is a good start and with patience you should be able to complete it without having to part with too much cash. I noted that in the November journal a member was selling the 94 thru to 99 models for a reasonable sum leaving you only 4 more to collect.

BMW M3 GTR, RedBull

The M3 was first produced as a silver street version by Ninco, and this is their 10th livery of this iconic car. I won't mince about. This car oozes everything I like in a slot-car – the M3 shape is seductive and the metallic blue RedBull livery is stunning. Stunning is a strong word, but the mixture of a strong simple livery, striking colour and the knowledge that the company puts a lot of dosh into motor racing helping it remain healthy and exciting, makes stunning wholly appropriate.

The livery is simple – metallic blue, with a red bull and some sunset yellow highlights.

Details such as the gold BBS hubs with big juicy slick tyres, yellow mirrors and a red tow hook up front just help finish the look off. However all is not perfect – yet again the base blue colour can be seen through the white of the side number. Casting my beady eye over all the other tampo printing I concluded 10/10 for clean and crispness. Summing up this car is easy. It is a must have.

Conclusion

As I said in my title these four make up a plethora of beauties. They are not perfect and Ninco need to improve their application of white to ensure it covers the base colour fully. You should also remember that they lack a clear coat so if you are going to race them either protect them (I use Johnson floor polish after recommendations on SlotForum) or be prepared for scrapes. I would be extremely happy to part with my hard earned money for three of these models. However I'm lucky enough to be able to have one (leaving me to punish my credit card for the other two) but which one to choose?

No contest - the BMW M3 RedBull – stunning



Barry and Jason's Christmas

By John Dilworth

Barry loved to take Jason round Humleys just before Christmas every year. It kind of kick-started his holiday. Pushing down Oxford Street in the damp twilight, the seedy Christmas illuminations flickering and sparking overhead, Barry guided his son through the familiar glass doors, past the sales assistants buzzing the crowds with paper aeroplanes and sticky balloons, and up the escalator to the third floor; Scalextric.

'Well, what do you fancy for Chrissy this year, son?' asked Barry, his eyes wide and mouth twitching into a broad grin.

The times he'd been here as a kid himself, when his own Dad had barely two halfpence to rub together, had been sheer torture. Barry remembered gazing up at the shelves from knee-level, at the displays, the demonstrators, the massive train layouts, caught up in the excitement of Christmas, but with an acute pain in his stomach. 'Don't touch, son. Just looking. We'll make a Brabham out of cardboard when we get home.' The bus fare to Oxford Circus had been the limit of his own childhood Christmas treat. Now, as a well-paid city investment trust pensions and insurance retailer, his pockets were full (not literally- his American Express Platinum card barely disturbed the cut of his jacket) and he was determined to give his own son all that he never had. The pick of Humleys every year.

'Well, Jace. Anything new you got thoughts on?'

Barry had been so excited about their traditional little Christmas outing himself, that he'd failed to notice the sullen expression on Jason's face.

'Not really Dad'.

'What? You're joking! Look at this Classic Vanwall! Gorgeous!'

'Body's the wrong shape. And the wheels look daft.'

'OK, OK, if you say so- look! A new Ford GT livery! Beauty!'

'Got it.'

'Oh Wow! C'mere, Jace! Did you see these Motor bikes? Look at the detail! Blimey!'

'My mate Simon's got them all. They don't lean in the corners.'

'Maybe some more track, eh? What are these? Corner chicanes? Great! Didn't have them in my day- they'll look superb on your layout, won't they?'

'C'mon, dad. Let's go get a Coke. You're embarrassing me'

Barry felt deflated. There's nothing quite like a Christmas let-down. It really hurts. Saddened and disappointed, he sat down in a Carnaby Street cafe with a double-latte choco-whip extra grande, and an iced coke for Jason, the mere sight of which on this chill December evening made his teeth curl and sent another cold pain through his heart. He shivered.

'What's up, Jazza? I thought you'd be well pleased today. We're loaded! I sold a huge and totally useless insurance scheme to a hospital in Tring last month. The commission on that one alone will keep us in dosh for years! You can have everything you want. Not just anything - but everything! Just name it, Jace! I want to make this the best Christmas you ever had!'

'S'alright Dad. I got everything. We got more cars than Hornby. The layout's longer than the Nurburgring- we need field glasses to watch the cars through the turns at the far end...'

'Field glasses! Great! What about infra-red night vision ones for endurance races?'

'Got 'em Dad. Birthday.'

'Oh yeah. I forgot.'

'S'alright, Dad.'

Barry was getting desperate- desperate to rescue this first evening of the Christmas Holiday from gloom and despair. A small group of Carol singers gathered outside the cafe and struck up 'Once in Royal'. It did nothing to change Barry or Jason's mood.

⇒

'There must be something- some little thing we haven't thought of- something that would make your collection complete. Something that would make your Christmas, son. I only want to make you happy.'

'I am happy, Dad', said Jason through gritted teeth.

'What's on your mind, son?- you can tell your old Dad. You don't look happy.'

'Well, Dad-'

'Yeah? Tell, me Jace..'

'There is something I can't stop thinking about...'

Oh- oh. Girls, thought Barry. That must be it- the only thing that could possibly distract his son from his beloved Scalextric. Had to happen I suppose. This could get embarrassing. I'd better drag him home. Let Mum deal with this. Twitching nervously, he spoke to Jason. 'Come on then- let's find Mum and get back. Bit of a write-off this outing's been eh?'

'No Dad. Just a minute. I did want to talk to you.'

'Good lord- look at the time...'

'About Goodwood, Dad.'

'Oh- oh, right.' Barry felt relief wash over him, and the memory of the hot summer day at the track eased his cramped stomach a little. 'Yeah. That was great, wasn't it?'

'Yup. It's been going round in my head ever since, Dad. That was special. Stirling Moss. I never thought I'd see him in the flesh. And that car he drove. Jeez. Beautiful. What a cool set of wheels. And that colour! And the noise it made! Oh Dad! Oh man!'

Jason was getting some colour in his cheeks at last- a spark in his eyes that had been missing all afternoon.

'You want one of those?' Barry asked with a sigh of relief.

'Yeah. One of those. An Aston Martin DB3.' Jason spoke the words with an expression of righteous awe.

'Well what are we waiting for! Let's get back to Humleys before they close!'

'Scalextric don't make 'em.', said Jason, sliding back down in his seat, and the grey, dead expression returning to his eyes.

Barry's stomach knotted itself into a sliding fisherman's sheepshank. 'What the hell do I do now?' he wondered.

Barry's computer screen burned through the night. He googled every combination of Scalextric, Aston, Goodwood, Slot-cars - everything he could think of, anything he could find. And there was a lot. He emailed every hobby shop on the planet. He drank a bottle and a half of vodka, and fell asleep in the office, where his wife woke him with a double espresso at eight the next morning.

'Hell, Sheila. I can't do it! I can't let Jason down. All he wants for Christmas is a metallic green Aston Martin DB3. And I'm going to get him one if it's the last thing I do.'

'Yes dear. I'm sure you will.'

But only a miracle would do now. His search had revealed nothing. Energised by the coffee, Barry leapt out of his Parker-Knoll recliner and out into his car. The Porsche Boxster started first touch, and Barry ripped down the driveway. Without an idea in his head where he was going, Barry steered his way onto the motorway. All he knew was that he was on a quest. A quest to find a metallic green Aston Martin DB3 slot-car for Jason's Christmas. He peered at the road, at the sky, at every car he overtook- looking for some sort of sign or omen on a grey, overcast December day. The automatic wipers flipped themselves on to deflect the first flakes of snow. Barry kept his foot down and his eyes open. All he had left was his faith in the magic of Christmas.

He found himself on the road to Tring University NHS hospital- the journey he had been making regularly over the last months. Selling that insurance plan had been like taking cash from a bank machine. His own ticket to ride. Now, with his brain in automatic, his Porsche had steered him down high roads and by-roads, and finally down the bumpy and garbage-strewn drive of Tring Hospital. At least he could get a coffee there. He knew the staff canteen well. He slewed his Porsche into a parking space beside several rusty ambulances and a junior doctor's Trabant. Still looking for signs, he barged through the swing doors, which

stuck open, jammed with muck and debris. He strolled down the grey corridors, past weary orderlies and glimpses of tatty wards, some half-heartedly looped with dusty paper-chains and wilting mistletoe. He strode into the staff canteen and ordered an extra large double maxi latte bombe supreme. And was given a sachet of instant granules and a paper cup for the hot-water machine. For a brief instant, he wondered how on earth such a place could afford the vastly expensive insurance scheme he'd just sold them. But then he had laid some pretty persuasive arguments on them, he admitted to himself with a certain swell of professional pride.

He sucked at his instant coffee. There were prints of cars all around the room, he noticed. Askew, dusty, some merely blue-tacked to the speckle-painted walls. He put down the coffee, and started to look more closely. A Maserati. Nice. Lamborghini Murcielago- he had thought he might treat himself to one of those with his commission. Aah- a Ferrari GTO. And that one slipping down over the radiator? He twisted his head sideways. Green car. He got up, still with his head cranked over at an angle, and walked towards it. He read the faded legend at the bottom. 'Stirling Moss drifts his DB3 through St Marys, Goodwood Revival Meeting 1999'.

It was the sign- the sign he'd been looking for. His bones tingled, and it wasn't just the coffee. Something here- here at Tring University Hospital, would lead him to Jason's Christmas!

He rushed up to the serving hatch and yelled at the pasty-faced cook ladling grey slurry into a vat. 'Hey- you! These pictures on the walls! Who put them there? Whose are they?'

'Wot? Them racing cars? You want Dr Splint. Down the hall. First left. Knock quietly- he'll probably be asleep.'

'Right. Thanks. Do you take American Express?'

Barry burst into the office marked 'Splint', and indeed found a stubble-faced man in a white doctor's coat, leaning back in a chair with his feet resting on a mountain of paperwork, snoring loudly. He woke with a jerk as Barry knocked the paper Everest away.

'Hmm- wha? Eh? Been on shift since last week. Sorry. Was my pager switched off?'

Dr. Splint's red rimmed eyes focussed slowly on Barry. 'Ah! It's you! Nice to see you again. We're so happy with our new insurance policy. It's a relief to know that we no longer have to worry about plummeting whales. Dreadful to think that we'd been exposed to such risk all these years...'

'No- no- it's not about that... Are you responsible for the racing car prints on the canteen walls?'

'Yes- yes- I brought in a few from my private collection. I thought it might brighten the place up a bit you know. Needs all the help it can get.'

'So you're into cars? And the Aston at Goodwood...?'

'Aah- my favourite. Seen it several times. A bit of an obsession of mine. In fact...'

Dr Splint stood up and heaved another pile of papers and ring binders off his desk.

Barry gasped.

Mounted on a little mahogany plinth was a miniature Aston Martin DB3. Perfect in every detail.

'Where- where did you get that?' Barry almost screamed.

'Beautiful, isn't it? Exact 1/32nd scale- and believe it or not, it has a little electric....'

'Yes, yes, I can see that- where did you get it?'

'Dear old Mr Howmet in the geriatric ward. I fear it may be his last. Makes 'em you know, out of bits of this and that. He had a nice little bench area set up for him in the occupational therapy unit. The one we had to close down to pay the premiums on that policy you sold us. But old Mr Howmet didn't mind. When we couldn't afford the drugs to control his D.T.s his hands started shaking so much he couldn't handle a soldering iron safely anyway. The Bristols he made for Nurse Maserati... no, I mean the Maserati he made for Nurse... Anyway. Quite superb. We used to have a track for them all in the pediatric ward. But that got closed down when we had to pay for that other policy you recommended... I could take you to meet the old boy if you like. He doesn't respond much these days though.' ➡

Barry sat down with a thump. He felt winded. Outside Dr Splint's office 'Away in a Manger' crackled out of the hospital P.A. system. Through the window he could see a BBC van lumber into the car park, with 'Rolf Harris Meets the Kids' posters covering the sides. A man with a funny beard and a wobble board jumped out, followed by a camera crew. 'Blimey, it's cold in here', Barry thought.

Barry wasn't a bad man. Brought up tough, in a poor neighbourhood, he was a self-made success. And now he sincerely wanted for his son all that he'd been deprived of in his own youth. What he desired most for Jason was a happy family Christmas, and all he wanted for himself was the sight of his son's smiling face as he drew that Aston Martin from its wrapping paper on Christmas morning.

He had two options. He could make Dr Splint an offer he couldn't refuse, or....

A week later, he went back to the hospital as arranged. It was Christmas Eve. The snow was falling fast. His Porsche could be very tail-happy in these conditions, but Barry felt safe. He slipped his James Brown Christmas album on the CD player, and the headlights onto full-beam. No-one was going to get in his way today. He was on a mission. As he slithered up the hospital drive, his heart was in his mouth. The sight was almost overwhelming. All the lights were blazing- a warm, welcoming glow bathed the whole place. Red and green bunting fluttered everywhere. The walls were freshly white-washed, the doors swung smoothly open at Barry's touch. The staff bustled down the long, newly carpeted corridors with a smile on their face, a whistle on their lips, and quite frequently, a pair of tinselled disco bobbles on their heads. Barry scooted down to the geriatric ward, barely able to contain himself. At the end of the passage, he swung through the right-angle bend with his arm looped through a banister rail, just like Donald O'Connor in 'Singin' in the Rain'. He burst into the ward, where gold-foil angels bobbed from the ceiling, and exquisite young nurses in their crisp, tight white uniforms and black stockings busied themselves at the beds.

Old Mr Howmet was sitting up, while Nurse Bristols plumped his pillows. He had a double-O paintbrush tucked behind his ear, a pair of needle-nosed pliers in his perfectly steady hand, and a big, satisfied grin on his face.

'Did you- did you finish it?' gasped Barry.

'Of course I did son. My best yet, I reckon. Your Jason should be a very happy lad.'

On his bedside cabinet was the most perfect, jewel-like Aston Martin DB3, its flawlessly polished metallic green paint twinkling in the reflection of the brightly coloured fairy lights on the enormous tree that stood in the middle of the ward.

'I made the exhausts out of some old catheter tubing, you know. And I rewound the motor. There won't be much that can catch it on the track. My old patent reverse- isosceles flexo-frame handles better than I do these days.'

'It's-it's marvellous! May I?'

'Of course, lad.'

Barry picked it up and cradled it in his palm. He was in love. The front wheels steered. The back wheels moved fractionally up and down on tiny suspension springs. The body rocked slightly on its flexo-frame of burnished brass. The gears rolled seamlessly, the ball raced-rear axle finding resistance only in the strong magnetic pull of the motor. Every detail of Stirling Moss' car was perfectly scaled- including the full-length figure of Sir Stirling himself. Barry felt an immediate urge to get back home to the track, to thumb this little masterpiece past the miniature grandstands.

But Nurse Bristols tapped him on the shoulder. She had a mince pie on a plate for him, and the Hospital choir, conducted by Rolf Harris himself, was formed up ready.

'Stay, Barry- stay and sing with us. You've made our Christmas!' she said.

'Do stay- we won't keep you long, but it would mean so much to us all' said Dr Splint, who was wearing a crash helmet.

Barry couldn't argue. The Christmas spirit had reached him at last. He felt giddy, and a tear trickled down his cheek as he sung the tenor part of 'Good King Wenceslas', with the taste of

mince pie in his mouth and the little Aston Martin still in his hand. His eyes met old Mr Howmet's for an instant, and both men winked knowingly at each other.

The Aston rode in the Boxster's passenger seat, nestled safely in surgical bandage, all the way home. Barry stole long sideways glances, reluctantly dragging his eyes back onto the motorway to make tiny corrections on the steering wheel. He was thinking. He'd done the right thing. Dr Splint had needed a lot of convincing- Barry had done such a good sales job in the first place- that there was in fact a statistically minute chance that the hospital or any of its staff or patients were at risk from whales falling from the sky, or from glacial erosion. So the two insurance policies he had sold them only a month ago were quietly rescinded, the ten million quid the hospital had paid handed back and with it, Barry's fat commission. The hospital then had the money for a complete refurbishment, a completely new occupational therapy facility and pediatric unit, as well as the vital medicines to control poor old Mr Howmet's shakes. And Barry now had the car he and Jason had dreamed of. A true masterpiece. The most beautiful hand-made slot car he had ever seen. It was a sacrifice well-worth the making. He would earn back the money twice over next year anyway- he had some Local Government deals in his sights already. The Lambo would just have to wait a few more months.

So it was late on Christmas Eve, with Jason safely tucked up in bed, that Barry gave the sinuous curves of the little Aston one more tender stroke with his fingertips. He took out a magnifying glass and studied the breathtaking detail. How the heck had the old man managed to fit working pedals in the miniature cockpit footwell, he thought. Even as he put the lens down, he could have sworn- or was it the effects of the sherry?- that little Stirling actually winked at him. That does it, Barry said to himself. He took a slim package from the deepest drawer of his private desk, slid the Aston in its place, then closed the drawer and locked it.

'More sherry darling?', asked Sheila as she stumbled into the office with large bundles of wrapping paper and ribbon. 'Did you manage to find something for Jason?'

Barry smiled a smug smile.

'You know, Sheila, sometimes I think we spoil that boy. I begin to think it would do him good to know what we had to settle for in the old days. Pleasure doesn't come from money spent, you know. It is the thought that counts, after all.' 'You're too generous for your own good, Barry love', said Sheila. 'Well- I've got everything I want, that's for sure', he replied.

The look of surprise on Jason's face the next morning certainly was something to see. Crouched under the tree, Barry had passed him his present.

'I bet you havn't got one of these already!' he said gleefully.

'Er, no, Dad', was all Jason could manage to say as he peeled the robin and holly festooned wrapping paper off a very old looking 'Junior Hobbies Cut-and-Fold Build Your Very Own Cardboard Brabham' kit. 'Happy Christmas, one and all!', said Barry. ■