



### Contents

Swapmeets.....2  
 Competition Winners.....4  
 Diary Dates.....5  
 Chairmans Chat.....6  
 Messages From Margate.....7  
 Traders Travels.....11  
 Ninco News.....12  
 Flying High.....15  
 Shipment From Spain.....17  
 Carrera Corner.....19  
 Toy Fair 2004.....21  
 Norman's Conquest .....27  
 Challenger Review.....29  
 Pre-Add Added to.....31  
 Vanquish Lotus Review.....32  
 Ninco Review.....37  
 Greatest Slot-car Ever.....39  
 Alfa Romeo 12C.....40  
 Adverts.....42

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### Brave New World?

Take a look at your mobile phone - how many of its myriad features do you use? Not many I would guess. Most people use one to make phone calls and/or send text messages; the fact that you can play games on it, connect to the Internet (sort of), take pictures, play the theme tune from 'Thunderbirds' and (probably) make a cup of tea with it is largely irrelevant to everyday life. It suffers from the usual technological overkill and, in effect, becomes less useful for its primary purpose.

Which brings us round to the current obsession with digital slot-cars and the question that comes to my mind is - why? What exactly is wrong with the current products? At the moment we have total inter-brand compatibility which is about to be superseded by (at least) three conflicting digital systems with only Hornby showing a bit of common sense and dovetailing the new system into the old.

On the face of it the facility to run several cars on the same lane with proper overtaking is an attractive one but has anybody considered the cost? Quite apart from the car wrecking possibilities of multiple rear end shunts SCX digital prices in Spain would appear to be at least a third higher than conventional stuff and the manufacturers will need very large sales volumes to offset the development costs. I have my doubts whether this will be achieved.

Remember Bernie Ecclestone's digital F1 coverage? State of the art technology but a commercial failure because the average viewer wouldn't pay for it. I have a horrible suspicion that digital slot-cars could suffer the same fate but then I don't possess a mobile phone either!

**And Finally** - As this month's issue is largely dominated by various reports on the new products emerging from recent trade fairs I have held over a number of contributions till next month. Don't panic if your piece has not appeared yet - normal service will be resumed in the April edition.

*Till next month*

*Brian*





As we come out of the Christmas euphoria or, in my case stupor and jet-lag from an Australian visit, collectors' thoughts turn to that first event of the year, and for many of us that means the Milton Keynes swapmeet run by Nigel Copcutt. Therefore I trekked "all" the way north up the M1 travelling quite a bit slower than that famous E-type on one of its first test runs on public roads.

As we were manning the club table in the hope of either giving away our superb NSCC/Hornby weekend GT40 or selling them for club funds at mightily inflated prices I arrived quite early at about 09:30. I was amazed at how many people were already in the hall with a lot of the tables in full flow but with others being loaded with varied goodies by their stallholders. This for an event that was due to start at 10:30? I realise that many stall holders have, and indeed need, assistance but although there were a lot of tables I had some difficulty in associating several people in the hall with stall holders.

Turning to the event there were all the new cars from every manufacturer available although some of them were in rather short supply, particularly the Red Bull Dallara, the black Mercedes CLK Challenger and of course the sister car to our weekend car, the Retailer car, although one was available at something over £200! There was a good attendance from overseas collectors with representatives from Holland and Spain and therefore plenty of choice for all present.

A horde of enthusiasts came through the door although I am not quite sure why there was a facility for non-NSCC members to be allowed access to what was an NSCC event. The committee questioned this and we did gain some

new members but we will be raising it with Nigel as to future NSCC events. We will also be asking questions about the toilet facilities and I understand, not from personal experience I can assure you, that the female toilets were unusable even before the event started but I can personally state that the male toilets would certainly not meet any expected standard of cleanliness. I am sure Nigel will be raising this with the venue managers as this is neither acceptable to the NSCC or indeed to any who attended.

Regrettably we gave away all our weekend cars to the fortunate attendees so no increase to club funds although there was much interest in the car from those who had not been able to attend. I was also saddened to see that one is already being offered on Ebay at a starting price of £350; the intention of the NSCC in running the event is to enable members to interact with Hornby, enjoy a sociable weekend and perhaps do some racing and is certainly not to benefit financially from the free car provided by Hornby. Perhaps it is just a reflection of our modern world that always seems focused on money and profit.

Talking of our Hornby/NSCC weekend your committee is planning a new type of event for next year, not to be held in the Hornby homeland of Thanet, but at a new type of venue with a varied range of activities for participants. We are already in discussion with a number of manufacturers and distributors as well as other interested parties but we would welcome any ideas from you as to what you want to see and also where you would like to see such events held. This is important to us all so please let us know, whether by letter, e-mail, telephone or even pigeon post if you have a spare pigeon! ■



Not much to report yet this year although with nearly a hundred new items on the roadmap for 2004 they should be arriving at eight new items a month. It is going to get very hectic later in the year.

### Toyfairs

The start of each year is a very busy time for toy manufacturers with huge shows in London, Nuremberg and New York and smaller events elsewhere too. With so many new products to show off this year, Hornby have been especially busy and have made a large investment in bringing their product range to the attention of the trade.

They had a large stand at the London event held at Excel in Docklands, 29/01/03 – 01/02/04. Scalextric dominated the stand with only a small section dedicated to railways, and most of that to the live steam locomotives. For Scalextric retailers there were four tracks to play on together with a display of many of the reliveries we will see in the earlier part of the year.

The first and biggest track was reserved for Sport Digital. Digital allows you to run up to 6 cars on the same track and to change lanes, enabling overtaking with a huge potential for colossal accidents. Although only a prototype, the Scalextric system was working well and providing lots of fun for a steady stream of =>



*The Hornby stand at Toy Fair*

visitors. The control box enables several modes of use from time or lap based racing, to a pursuit competition. The lane changing mechanism works well when a small button is pressed on the hand controller. Another button allows the slot-car equivalent of left foot breaking whilst the throttle is still firmly depressed. We shall all have to learn some new driving techniques. More details next month when I have had a chance to carry out a less hectic evaluation at Margate. A double-sided A4 flyer gave some details of the proposed range of cars and accessories but I will wait until nearer release time before I list these as I am sure changes will be made in the next few months. I understand that the digital cars will not have new liveries.

Moving around the stand you came to the Sport World track. Where to start describing Sport World? - Well, it is RMS on steroids – lots and lots of steroids. Sport World does everything RMS does and so much more. To start with it is a race management system just like RMS. However, not all of the six cars that can race at once need to be on the same track and some can be connected across the internet. Sensors positioned around the track enable the computer

to calculate where the other cars are in the race and show them in full 3D on a virtual model of the circuit. You can even choose the camera position from which to watch the race too. Then it is a track design system, in full colour 3D and you can drive around the virtual circuit to see what it will be like to race on. It is also a database so you can store details about your personal collection. If some user definable fields were added, and an output facility it would satisfy the needs of many serious collectors. Then it is a telemetry system to review your performance. A left/right plot of the circuit can be overlaid with throttle position and different laps compared to see where you varied the speed. You can then alter the response of the hand controller to your own specification so it can be different for different tracks or different cars. Response can be non-linear giving different acceleration and top speed – the permutations are endless. A second track on the other side of the stand enabled racing at remote locations to be demonstrated. Again, a more reasoned description will follow after I have had chance to explore the software in a slightly less fraught atmosphere than a trade fair.

Next stop around the Hornby stand was the MotoGP circuit. Several bikes were available to try and a new small motor seemed to propel them with appropriate performance. They are fun to race and the rider falls off when you crash. Although the bikes don't lean they do look brilliant, with so much detail available at 1/18<sup>th</sup> scale they are sure to attract new followers to slot racing. The MotoGP organisers are working



hard, together with Hornby, to promote the new product: World Superbike champion Neil Hodgson was at the event on the Thursday and photos of him and the Scalextric bikes featured in several papers that week. A new catalogue was also available detailing the new MotoGP sets and the bikes and riders that will be released during the year. Several of the bikes were on display and attracted lots of attention.

Next stop was the display of new releases for 2004. Many of the new liveries were present including some Minis, Mercedes and Opel touring cars, Porsche GT3Rs, TVRs and Corvettes. The only completely new mould was the dramatic looking Lister LMP which should arrive in the shops during March.

The Hornby range of kits is also being extended - a big display promoted these and the existing items available. The new kits are:

- K2007 Ford GT40 JW Automotive Gulf
- K2008 AMG Mercedes CLK-DTM Works
- K2009 Chevrolet Corvette L-88 1969
- K2010 TVR T400R Eclipse
- K2011 Mini Cooper
- K2012 Caterham 7 Gulf 2002

A single sided A4 flyer is available describing these new models and interestingly they are all described as coming complete with glue, paints and brushes.

If any of you have any questions about any of these new developments please let me know and I will endeavour to find answers for you.

## New Cars

### C2576 Ford Mustang '69 "No1"



This is a very attractive blue livery with mainly white detailing of the earlier Ford Mustang. For the first time this car comes with printing on the crystal case. On the front, printed in yellow is "Ford Boss 302 Mustang", the Ford licence statement and logos for magnatraction and sprung guide. So now serious collectors need to ensure that they have the right cover for each box.

### C2606 Dallara Indy "Collectors Club 2004"

The second new car to arrive is the free car for members of Scalextric's own Collectors (or Enthusiasts) club. It is finished in purple with yellow decoration and a yellow rear wing. Scalextric logos adorn the sidepods with the racer logo on the rear wing.



## NSCC Club Car

For those of you anxiously waiting the new NSCC club car there is good news. Hornby have promised to give this some attention and I hope to have more information very shortly and you can all start placing your orders.

## Messages from Margate Email

Don't forget you can get Messages from Margate by email giving colour illustrations and up to the minute news. Send me an email to be added to the distribution list. ■

# Traders travels

By Robert Learmouth  
(Westwood Models)

The battle commenced at Excel Toy Fair in late January with Scalextric, SCX and Carrera all showing digital systems. In case you're not sure what this means, it's basically a way of having more than one car per lane and the ability to switch between lanes. That's a very simplistic view - these systems potentially represent a defining moment in slot-car evolution with the very real possibility that one day all 'leading brand' systems will be built this way as standard. Each system has good and bad points and it will be fascinating to see how each system is received - the manufacturers are clearly putting a lot of emphasis on the success of these products.

I'm sure the new products from Scalextric and SCX at least will be covered in the journal elsewhere but perhaps not Carrera and Revell so here goes. Carrera have extended their James Bond tie-in and will be producing a silver Aston DB5 and pair of Ford Mustangs as featured in the film Goldfinger. In addition there will be a Goldfinger set. The Aston will also be modelled in yellow racing trim and should be a very popular model. The other new items include Ferrari 575 and 512, Lamborghini Murcielago, Ford Torino, Audi A4, Subaru and Peugeot 307. That incidentally is the 3<sup>rd</sup> 307 alongside Scalextric and SCX and you have to wonder if someone will pull theirs before release. Revell have also made positive moves to capitalise on their success in 2003 and will release Jaguar E-Type, Porsche 550, Mustang and NSU models. Congratulations to both these manufacturers for what I would say are, by and large, well thought out and eminently saleable ranges. Now if only those tasty looking Carrera buildings were made available in the UK too!

The new swapmeet season was launched with a bang at Milton Keynes. As big as ever and as busy as ever. The last two years I've hardly managed to get away from the stall but this year I managed it as I had an experienced helper (thanks Andy). One of the most talked about

items seemed to be a mint/boxed Race-Tuned Porsche Spyder. Bearing in mind these things are not cheap I've never heard so many people kicking themselves for not picking it up. The apple green Race-Tuned Austin Healey I had also attracted considerable attention despite only making a quick appearance to be handed over to its new owner who was collecting it. This is a very, very difficult car to find with very few known to have changed hands in recent years.

MK was rapidly followed by an open swapmeet in Rotterdam. Dutch swapmeets are usually SLN club events that have a similar feel to their NSCC counterparts. But this one was very different and appeared largely to be servicing a local contingent that were there on a casual and curiosity basis. All the English dealers were receiving offers, for already reasonably priced items, which bordered on the offensive. But the day rallied late on and there was plenty to buy with the highlight being Derek Cooper picking up a very rare French Entrance Building with red roof and base. Architectural highlight of the customary Saturday night half-cut walking tour were the totally bizarre cube houses in Oude Haven that are built on poles and mounted at an angle on their corners - bizarre!

I will leave you this month with an example of how batty Ebay is... Scalextric C8222 Pair of Converter Straights. Until 1 Jan 2004 £2.25 at Hornby RRP. Now £3.99 at RRP - still a modest amount even at the higher price and available discounted and/or with free postage from on-line stores. In January, someone managed to get £10 for such an item plus £1.25 P&P (UK) and plus 5% for Paypal. Yes, more fool the person who bought it. But the starting bid was £4.99 and the seller goes on to say "still not widely available in all the shops yet and represents a truly unique opportunity to add a hard-to-get-hold-of item to your Scalextric circuit". It must only be a matter of time before the government comes down hard on Ebay and sanitises the whole thing. ■

## A new world record!

Did you know that at the end of last year a new world record was set for the longest slot racing track? This was established in Sant Fruitós, Barcelona, using 2000 metres, yes Two-Thousand-Metres of Ninco track (*that's 1¼ miles in English!*) The power was supplied to the track by a standard Ninco transformer – the same as the ones supplied in sets. Proof indeed, that the Ninco Track System has the highest level of electrical reliability.

## Pros and cons

One of the first new products from Ninco this year follows the success of the “ProRace” Subaru released just before Christmas. Another Subaru (50328) - this time based on the New Zealand WRC No.8 car driven by Tommi Mäkinen - features race tuned components such as hardened axles, double band driven 4WD, ball-race bearings and the mighty NC-6 “Crusher” motor. The white ProRace Subaru (50322) released at the end of 2003 is widely rumoured to have been a limited edition run of only 1000 pieces. If any reader has paid a small fortune for one of these, I suggest you go straight to the next paragraph... This is NOT the case. The car is hard to find because of its great success among competition enthusiasts; racers not collectors!

An identical model is also due for release but with standard components fitted. It will be painted with a muddy effect and carries the part number 50330.

## Good show!

February is when 2004 really starts for Ninco with the Nuremberg Toy Fair being the platform for announcing new products or innovations; true to form, Ninco had both.

The Raid track range is enhanced with a new “Dune” extension kit (10506). Clever design of 2 concave and 2 convex track sections allow this kit to be assembled giving either a dip or hill to a layout. These mud-coloured sections include clip on obstacles, stone wall barriers and track supports. In addition, a totally new white “Snow Curve Extension Kit” (10507) will soon be available. Each set increases circuit length by 1.6m and 1.84m respectively and includes graduation straights - fading from black to mud or snow effect - enabling them to be seamlessly integrated into existing layouts. The standard black track now includes “Chicane” (10509) and “Change-Over Curve” (10508) kits. (*If you need a reminder of all the benefits of the Ninco track system, just take a look at the rear cover of this journal!*)

On the big red Ninco stand, prototypes of the Ford Ranger were being put through their paces on a Raid circuit and models of the new Porsche 934 were on display. The 934 is destined to set the benchmark for slot cars this year. Four versions are scheduled for release (50331-50334) each fitted with NC-5 “Speeder” motors, exclusive wheel hubs and ProShocks, making them the first GT cars with suspension. To enhance the already high standard of quality and finish, they also include engine detail and soft rubber bumper sections.

## New sets for 2004

There are two new sets in the line-up this year. The popular figure of eight layout is now offered as the “Champ” set (20119) with two CART/Champ series cars and two 55 ohm throttles. The largest circuit (*formerly DTM or GT-Max*) will now be the “GT Turbo” set (20120) and will include two new Porsche 934s, 55 ohm throttles and a Sprint lap counter.

## P-pick-up a ProTruck

Another new release for 2004 is (50326) the BF Goodrich sponsored Ford Ranger Pro Truck. This complements the Raid range of Pajeros and also includes the ProArm guide, ProShock suspension and NC-7 motor. This truck is only 2 wheel drive and is fitted with the yellow "hard" suspension struts. Detail is quite amazing with the open rear of the truck housing two spare wheels fitted with chunky off-road tyres, as well as shovels and ramps for digging your way out of sticky situations! Later in the year we can expect another popular 4WD; the BMW X5. *(Will this lead to a new set entitled "School Run Challenge"?)*



## Beautiful TTs

Also new this year is a re-liveried Audi TT-R. The "Belcar" (50327) Audi is the first car in the DTM range to be fitted with the 20,000rpm NC-5 Speeder motor. The white body colour makes quite a refreshing change from the very popular yellow, blue or black race cars. As before, this TT is fitted with the 1500gm button magnet, soft slick tyres and spring loaded guide blade.



## Ninco Club News

Last year saw the birth of the Ninco Club. Already, the club has over 17,000 members and continues to grow. Joining is free and only takes a few moments online to register. As well as receiving updates via email throughout the year, membership entitles you to enter special competitions and purchase an exclusive club car. There are also member only areas where screensavers and other great pictures can be downloaded. Log on to [www.ninco.com](http://www.ninco.com)

## And finally...

Congratulations to Ramón Dalmau and Enric Oller, drivers of the CAT Dakar Team who successfully finished the Paris-Dakar 2004 in 23<sup>rd</sup> place overall. A fantastic result for the first private Spanish team to finish what is perhaps the best known "Rally-Raid" in the world. This race took place over 18 days and covered more than 11,000km *(that's over 7,000miles in English!)* with Ninco being one of the partners to the CAT Dakar team! ■



# Flying High

## An occasional series of Fly and other news

from Aaron Foord of Gaugemaster Controls

At the time of writing this, in mid-February, I am wondering how up to date it will be by the time this issue 'hits the streets'. One of the not so great factors of this business is that it can change from month to month as far as availability and new releases are concerned, and so much can happen in such a short space of time!

Over the last couple of months we have seen some excellent new body shapes from Fly, namely the Ferrari 365GTB, BMW 3.0CSL and Ford GT40 MkI and MkII. Two Ferrari liveries have so far been released, and the next ones are the 'Carrefour' version, Fly reference A653, and the special edition 'Classic Cup' version E652. In the BMW CSL range, we shall shortly be seeing the version with the extended rear wing, reference A682. Other cars that have appeared in the last month have been the yellow Corvette Convertible (A562) and a couple of limited edition models; the Miniauto sponsored GT40 in silver and black (E181) and the fabulous German special Mercedes Benz 'Bus-Stop' truck (e-truck 22).

Fly Racing models are becoming more and more popular, and the Fly 06 Saleen in black and red is the latest addition to the stable. Lolas are also planned in this range to accompany the Saleens, Capris and Porsches already released.

So what's next? Can Fly surprise us by bringing out even more new body shells? The answer is yes, with a pair of Alfa Romeo 147s due in at any time. It is a long time since Fly released this many new body shells in such a short space of time – in fact, I don't think they have ever released this many, but it does show that opinion from the market place does make a difference and so we will not be seeing quite so many reliveries as we have done in previous years. There is always a place for the older cars to be re-released, but not in large quantities. The projected release list for the next few months (in no particular order) is as follows, but bear in

mind that this will not take account of all the limited editions that will appear. The five-figure number after the regular number is the new numbering system (don't ask me to say that in a hurry!) that some dealers are now using, but generally use the A/C/E type prefix.

### Fly Cars

A169 (88103)	Porsche 917/10 Gulf Livery
A183 (88087)	Ford GT40 Le Mans 1969
A184 (88100)	Ford GT40 Le Mans 1966 Ickx
A205 (88109)	Viper Petit LM01 No19
A364 (88102)	Marcos LM600 Fly BGTC
A508 (88096)	Lola B98/10 MGM green
A545 (88099)	CorvetteC5-R Stanford
A623 (88090)	BMW 320 Belgium GT
A623L (99007)	BMW 320 Belgium GT(lights)
A624 (88107)	BMW 320 ETCC Macau



A653 (88089)	Ferrari Daytona Carrefour
A654 (88111)	Ferrari Daytona No 38



A682 (88086)	BMW 3.5 CSL Le Mans 1976
A683 (88095)	BMW 3.5 CSL Le Mans 1976
A684 (88110)	BMW 3.5 CSL Coca Cola =>

A721 (88082)	Alfa Romeo 147 GTA 2003
A722 (88083)	Alfa Romeo 147 GTA 2003
A723 (88112)	Alfa Romeo 147 GTA
A741 (88093)	Alfa Romeo 147 GTA (Street)
A741L	Alfa Romeo 147 GTA (Street version with lights)
A743 (88105)	Alfa Romeo 147 GTA White
A762 (88091)	Ford GT40 Mk11 1966 No3
A763 (88106)	Ford GT40 Mk11 Le Mans
A781 (88108)	Alfa 156 GTA ETCC 2003
A84 (88104)	Chrysler Viper Oreca
A84L (99008)	Chrysler Viper Oreca (lights)
C101 (88092)	Porsche 908/3 Lufthansa
C40 (88098)	Porsche 908/2 Sebring 1970
C72 (88097)	Ferrari 512S LM70 Red #6
C88 (88101)	Porsche 917K Sebring 1970

### Fly Racing

00 (07028)	Porsche Gt1 Racing & Pro Hand Controller
07 (07033)	Saleen
23 (07027)	Ford Capri
24 (07029)	Ford Capri
41 (07030)	Lola B98/10 White
42 (07031)	Lola B98/10 Yellow
43 (07032)	Lola B98/10 Tampo Printed

### Special Editions

E282 (96043)	BMW M3 Spanair
E651 (96031)	Gaugemaster Special Edition BMW 3.5 CSL & Ferrari 365 GTB
E681 (96034)	H&T German Special Edition
E781 (96041)	Alfa 156 GTA Limited Edition
S200 (496033)	Alfa 147 + 2004 Catalogue
SM4 (96037)	Porsche Evo S.McQueen
Team07 (96040)	Team Oreca
W07 (96039)	Winners Brian Redman

### Trucks

Truck11 (08027)	Sisu Evs 2004
Truck22 (08025)	MB DEA-DKW Silver #7
Truck43 (08024)	Man Truck Haldex
Truck48 (08023)	Man TR1400 Truck
Truck49 (08026)	Man Hasseroder Yellow

The shrewd amongst you will also have noted that many of the cars above do not have specific liveries attached to the description at the moment. That is simply because we don't have all the details, and often we will not be absolutely sure until a month before release. Rest assured, as soon as we know the information will be posted on [www.gaugemaster.co.uk/fly.html](http://www.gaugemaster.co.uk/fly.html) and also sent to the NSCC in a future article. Those who have been collecting Fly for a long time will also notice that the infamous A84 has appeared on the schedule once again.

The Gaugemaster Special Edition this year is being limited to 1100 pieces, unlike previous years which have ranged from 1500 to 2200 pieces, and we have once again gone with the twin set of cars. Public opinion is very strong on the topic of whether we should have released two single cars or one twin pack, but is pretty evenly divided so we stuck with a formula that worked last year, and the Ferrari 365 and BMW 3.0 CSL will make up the set this year.

### Oops!

The Ford GT40 has been a great success, with one notable problem area – on the early releases, it was found that there were a number of problems with the chassis, and Fly have now released an upgraded one in the latest version of the model. If you have an old one and need a new one, please call 01903 881002 or email me on [aaron.foord@gaugemaster.co.uk](mailto:aaron.foord@gaugemaster.co.uk) and I can arrange a replacement. Also, if you have purchased a Ferrari 365 GTB, check and see if it has disc brakes. If not, it should have, so contact me for a free set.

Well, this is my first article for the NSCC, so I think I will leave it here. I will not be giving prices here as every dealer has their own price, and nor will I be 'reviewing' any product, as that would inevitably be biased, but I will endeavour to keep you up to date with developments.

### Other breaking news

Gaugemaster are now the distributors for Bumslot, Spirit and Racer cars. Contact your local dealer or see [www.gaugemaster.com](http://www.gaugemaster.com) for more details. ■

Shipment from

**Spain**  
by Gareth Jex

**A**s you may have noticed there has not been too much news over the last few months. As with all the other major manufacturers, TecniToys hold back any announcements and product update news for the round of toy fairs in London and Germany. So, lots to tell you this month. In fact more than I think Brian will let me fit in.

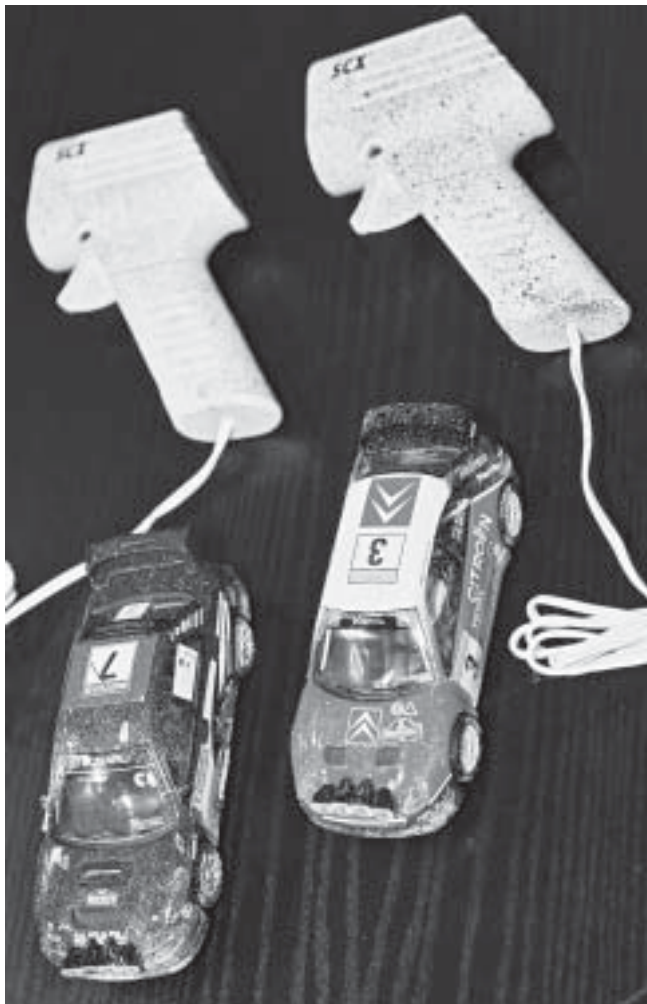
First up some very good news, our normal contact in Spain, Luca, is back. Luca is my day to day contact in Barcelona and I felt a little lost without him. Welcome back! We met up at the London Toy Fair and he went through TecniToys plans for the SCX range in 2004.

Obviously a major thrust of their efforts this year will be digital. However, TecniToys will still continue to develop new products for the non digital range and this is born out with the new products on display.

A major new product for 2004 will be the new 1000 Lakes Rally set. This set incorporates two existing sliding curve sections of track (see previous reviews) with the snow and mud effect. To complement these sections the remaining track also has the snow effect as do the two new livery cars (Subaru and Citroen). The snow effect also extends to the controllers! ⇒⇒



1000 LAKES SET



The cars on show were prototypes with stick on graphics, but talking to Bachmann they hope that the bonnet mounted light clusters will have working lights when they are released.

Continuing with the rally theme SCX announced the beginning of a new range of "Classic" cars starting this year with the great Lancia Delta Integrale. This model will be a brand new mould and feature four wheel drive. No available news on which cars will follow in the future, but I did plug for the Ford Escort MK1. In addition to the new "Classic" range SCX continue to bring us another of their "Vintage" series of cars reproduced from the original Exin, cleaned up, moulds. Last year we had the dramatic Corvette Dragster and this year its bigger brother the Ford Mustang will be made available as a limited edition, Ref 61480; final numbers coming to the UK are not known but expect it to be around 1000.

SCX are well known for their range of WRC Rally cars and this year we are treated to more new models; New Peugeot 307 WRC,

New Ford Focus WRC plus reliveries of the Peugeot 206. Look out for the new livery of the great little Fiat Abarth Ref 61460 in bright yellow!



It's not all rally cars though, SCX plan to release new models of the Jordan F1 and a new livery of the Jaguar F1. Also look out for new liveries in the DTM range of cars and a new Opel Vectra GTS V8 DTM. There will also be a new livery for the Dome LMP car.



On the track and accessories side SCX will be issuing a new section, "closing straight track"; this will help to finish all those track layouts you can't get to work. Also on display was their new "Turbo Speed" hand controller. The rest of the entire range of buildings, figures and crash barriers were also shown.

The rest of the SCX booth was dedicated to the launch of SCX Digital. Lots to tell you about this new system, but I will fill you in next month. There is no hurry - the UK launch will be May/June and the entire system is being updated from those on sale in Spain.

Release dates for all the new models will be known in a few weeks time and I will update you as soon as I have info.

See you soon, Gareth. ■

# Carrera Corner

By Steve Baker

Received recently from Nikko was the 2004 Carrera catalogue. The first thing that stands out is that there are two of them. The first is the regular catalogue, but the second is the "Evolution Pro-X" catalogue. On the cover it shows a Pro-X hand throttle, and four cars running on a two lane track, with one of them crossing between lanes on a one-way crossover.

As you've probably guessed by now this is for the new digital Carrera track system; as I've not seen any of the other manufacturers' digital systems I can't compare them. Initially there is only one Pro-X set shown, but it's quite large (track length 6.9m) and can be extended further using standard track pieces, it also operates a braking system.

The hand controllers are thumb operated, with an additional trigger button to operate a switch for the lane changes. The real brains of the system is the "Pro-X black box"; it controls all functions of the racing, the hand controllers plug into the back of it and it will also run one of the cars as a pace car, if you want, thanks to a 'pace car' button, though how it knows whose is which car it doesn't say.

The cars are a McLaren MP 4/17 (no. 3) and Ferrari F2002 V10 (no. 1), these have a much longer guide flag than normal cars, and have four square holes in them. You close one of these holes for each of the four cars that can run (presumably for a pace car you don't close any of them?). The last item to note on the cars is that when running a pace car the black box is adaptive i.e. it will learn your track to give optimum control.

The next two pages show all the available Pro-X cars, four Plymouths, two Dodges, and eight F1 cars - a pair of each for Ferrari, McLaren, Williams (2003 livery), and Sauber Petronas (2003 livery). These come in the usual Carrera boxes, but with VERY red plinths so it will be virtually impossible to confuse them with non Pro-X cars.

The last two pages contain the Pro-X accessories and show two very interesting additional items as well as spare guides and other replacement parts. The first is a pit lane track section comprising of six track pieces, three of which appear to be single lane straights from which you cannot enter the pitlane. The other three are an entry and exit section with another single lane straight between them. When this is included in a layout you can set a need for pitstops to refuel. The black box will also penalise you more fuel for erratic driving which will mean you need to stop more often, also the amount of fuel you take on depends on how long you spend in the pits - *Now that's clever.*

The other interesting item is an electronic lap counter, it gives every piece of info you could want about your car and uses an infra-red light mounted in the slots to measure speed, time, number of laps, race position and fastest lap. It can be set for either any number of laps (up to 999) or for a timed endurance race (up to 9hrs 59min 59sec).

## Main catalogue

Now onto the main catalogue which has a picture of the Carrera Ferrari racing along on the front cover. Going through it shows some very nice new cars which will be available this year, the first one is in the Exclusive (1/24th) range in a new "Grand classics" set, it's a Ferrari 250 GT SWB, the other car in the set is a new pale blue livery of the E-type jag. Further in you find that both these cars will be available separately with another "Street version" of the Ferrari in red. Also two 1/24th limited editions are to be announced.

Moving on to the Evolution sets (1/32nd) - the first one is a new World rally set containing a Subaru Impreza WRC (2003) and a Peugeot 307 WRC (2004). The next page gets even better with a "24hr race" set containing a Ferrari 575 GTC, and a Lamborghini Murcielago R-GT, =>

the production slot-cars are not shown, only pictures of the Ferrari, but these look like they will be something special.

The next set is another new one, a new James Bond “Goldfinger” set. This has two Bond cars, the infamous silver Aston Martin DB5, and a white Ford Mustang convertible. This is a different version from the current Carrera Mustang as it is the 289ci short nosed version.

All of these new set cars will be available separately (liveries may be different), but the list of new cars doesn't stop there! Continuing through the catalogue we find new Audi A4s in DTM versions. Two Lamborghini Murcielagos, two Ferrari 575 GTCs and, not least, two Ferrari 512LMs. There is also a racing livery of the Aston Martin DB5, and a hood up version of the 289 Mustang. Lastly, moving on to the American muscle cars, there is a new Ford Torino in two liveries.

Continuing on you get to a section about the new digital Pro-X, which is followed by the accessories for 1/32 scale. This has a very impressive collection of buildings in it which appear to be modelled from an actual circuit.

The next section moves on to Carrera's GO 1/43rd scale cars, starting with new Mini Coopers - other points to note in this range, they have done Porsche 911 GT3s (why not in 1/32nd?), including a Polizei with flashing blue roof light (then again). The last page inside the back cover is a set of stickers, including two black and white chequered banners, number roundels and a set of Carrera advertising banners.

All in all this catalogue looks like Carrera will be building on the growing UK customer base that they have been developing in recent years. There are some truly stunning cars coming from Carrera this year many of which no other manufacturer will produce, the Ferraris being the obvious but by no means the only example. True, most of the new cars this year are Ferraris, but there are others and is that a bad thing anyway? When was the last time anybody saw a Ferrari that didn't look stunning,

or that they wouldn't give away their mother-in-law to have a drive of? Carrera are simply playing to their strengths, and rightly so as without them there would be no Ferraris at all currently available for us to play with, and it would be a sad day if there were no Ferraris for all of us who enjoy playing with small motorised bits of plastic.

## Spares

On a separate note, I received an email from Jon Burcham at Nikko with the following news on it:-

“For your reference, if customers ever require parts for cars or tracks we have a dedicated service centre, based here at our UK office that sends components and parts direct to either the retail store, or customers. Our service centre can be contacted on 01707-377767. These details can also be found on our website [www.nikko-toys.co.uk](http://www.nikko-toys.co.uk) For the future we are planning to publish on our website the spares and accessories available, but we are still evaluating some of the technical issues in doing this due to the sheer number of components available.” ■

# 2004 London Toy Fair Report

by Gareth Jex

Imagine if you will it's back in the fifties and you have just visited your first toy fair and seen the original Scalextric set on display. If, like me, you are mad keen on slot-cars you would have jumped for joy and tried to get as much info on this new product and picked up a few copies of the catalogue for the collection no doubt. Wind forward 45 years and this year's Toy Fair represented something close to the launch of something new and exciting! Well nearly – DIGITAL, DIGITAL, DIGITAL.

Carrera, Hornby and Tecnitoy's all had displays of their latest Digital offerings on display and the posse of NSCC committee members (Adrian Leggett, Gareth, Richard and Rob) all got their grubby little hands on them! Full details of the various systems will no doubt be explained by the various factory liaison officers (see Shipment from Spain, Messages from Margate).

It wasn't all digital, although you could have been forgiven for thinking so, the majority of non digital cars and accessories were pushed to the rear of the various displays from the big three. (Ninco, Fly, and Vanquish MG were not represented at the show).

In alphabetical order, here's a quick run down of the Slot-cars on display at this event:

## Airfix

I know they don't make slot-cars any more, but they used to and their range of 1:32 scale models can normally be converted to slots. On display were a few re-releases with promises of more to come. Alfa 1933, 4.5 Litre Bentley 1930 and a Bugatti Type 35.

## Auto Art

Tucked away in the second hall of the show was Auto Art. In their second year as a slot-car manufacturer they displayed a much enlarged display of new and prototype models including 1:32 and 1:24 scale models in addition to their fantastically detailed static model cars, planes and an interesting range of Auto Art Design products (brake disc clocks, carbon fibre table lamps, carburettor salt and pepper shakers!). The range of slot-cars has expanded from 2 to 15. And if Lamborghinis are your thing then this is the place to come! Murcielago, Barchetta, Gallardo, Countach and a lovely Miura are all new to the range and looked fantastic. No specific release dates were obtained for the Lambos, but expect to see them in various colours (metallic and plain). In addition to the Lambos there will be new liveries of the Subaru and Mitsubishi, Mazda RX-8, Nissan Fairlady Z, Porsche 911 GT3, Porsche 911 GT3R, =>



*Stunning 1:32 Auto Art Lambo Range*

Porsche 911 Turbo (996), Citroen Xsara WRC and two liveries of the Ford Focus RS WRC. All of the cars were on display although some were prototypes - all looked stunning!

Not in the catalogue, but shown to us were prototypes of their 1:24 range, including Lamborghinis and Subarus. Auto Art are also considering entering the track market, details were very limited and no confirmed info was given except that it would be suitable for both 1:32 and 1:24 scales! Subsequent to the London Toy Fair, Auto Art displayed a prototype track system at the German Toy Fair the following week. Early reports describe a track system very similar to Carrera.

The new UK distributor and Auto Art representative were very helpful and hopefully will be discussing closer relations with the NSCC in the future. (more news to follow!)

See [WWW.AUTOARTMODELS.COM](http://WWW.AUTOARTMODELS.COM)  
for more details.

## Carrera

Carrera is represented by Nikko in the UK and their stand displayed the full range of scales Carrera produce. Most prominent was a layout of their new digital system called Evolution Pro-X. A small layout with two electronic lane changing sections was shown and Richard and Adrian tried to destroy as many of the sample cars as possible by crashing off the end of the track, prior to the rep pointing out that the system was set to demo mode! F1 cars were being used to demo the new system, but the catalogue shows that the American muscle cars (Plymouth Superbird, Dodge Charger) will also be available.

In the non digital section was a display of the current range of 1:32 scale cars and a new James Bond Aston Martin car which will be sold as part of the "Goldfinger" set and also separately. Carrera will also be producing some new models this year including yet another Subaru Impreza and a Peugeot 307 WRC. It would also appear that they won the bidding for the rights to make the new Audi A4. Also on display were some



*Richard & Rob discover the secrets of Carrera X Digital*

stunning new 1:24 scale models including a fantastic Ferrari 250 GT LM. The UK Sales and marketing chap was extremely busy and unfortunately we ran out of time for a full chat. Hopefully Steve Baker will be able to fill in the news in his Carrera Corner.

Carrera are also expanding their range of 1:32 scale buildings. None were on display in London, but in Germany the full range was shown with additional prototypes. Buildings are mainly from current F1 type circuits and there would appear to be everything you could need for a modern European F1 circuit layout.

See [WWW.CARRERA-TOYS.COM](http://WWW.CARRERA-TOYS.COM)  
for more details.

## Revell Monogram

Like Auto Art, Revell tested the water last year with their releases of the Shelby Cobras; obviously they sold well because Revell returned



this year with a display of over 20 new cars or re-liveries and a new range of figures and performance parts. The new Corvette Grand Sport has already hit the shops and by all accounts performs well. On display were examples of the new Greenwood Corvette and it looked stunning! Look out for new models over the year including Ford Mustang GTs, Jaguar E-Types, Porsche 550A Spyders and, an interesting choice, the NSU TTS Racing! Revell plan to offer 3 limited editions (6000 worldwide) of the Cobra, Corvette and the Greenwood Corvette.



*Revell Greenwood Corvette*

The Showcase also had three new sets of painted figures: drivers, pit crew and race officials; they all looked well detailed and price lists indicate that they should cost in the region of £8 per set. I wasn't really sure if these were new mouldings or re-releases of older figures.

Slot-car Performance Parts were also displayed and included a full range of chassis, replacement bodies, interior, motor and gears etc. Also included in the listings were magnets and non magnetic weights!

In addition to their slot-cars members may also be interested in their range of static 1:32 scale kits including, Auto Union Type D and Porsche 935. They also have a range specifically designed for children called "EasyKit"; featured here were DTM and Rally cars.

See [WWW.REVELL.DE](http://WWW.REVELL.DE) for more details.

## Scalextric

As normal for the London Toy Fair Hornby had by far the biggest stand for slot-cars at the show. Their stand was split roughly 2/3 for slot-cars and 1/3 for their range of model trains. In terms of displays Digital and bikes were the main push!



*Scalextric Lister*

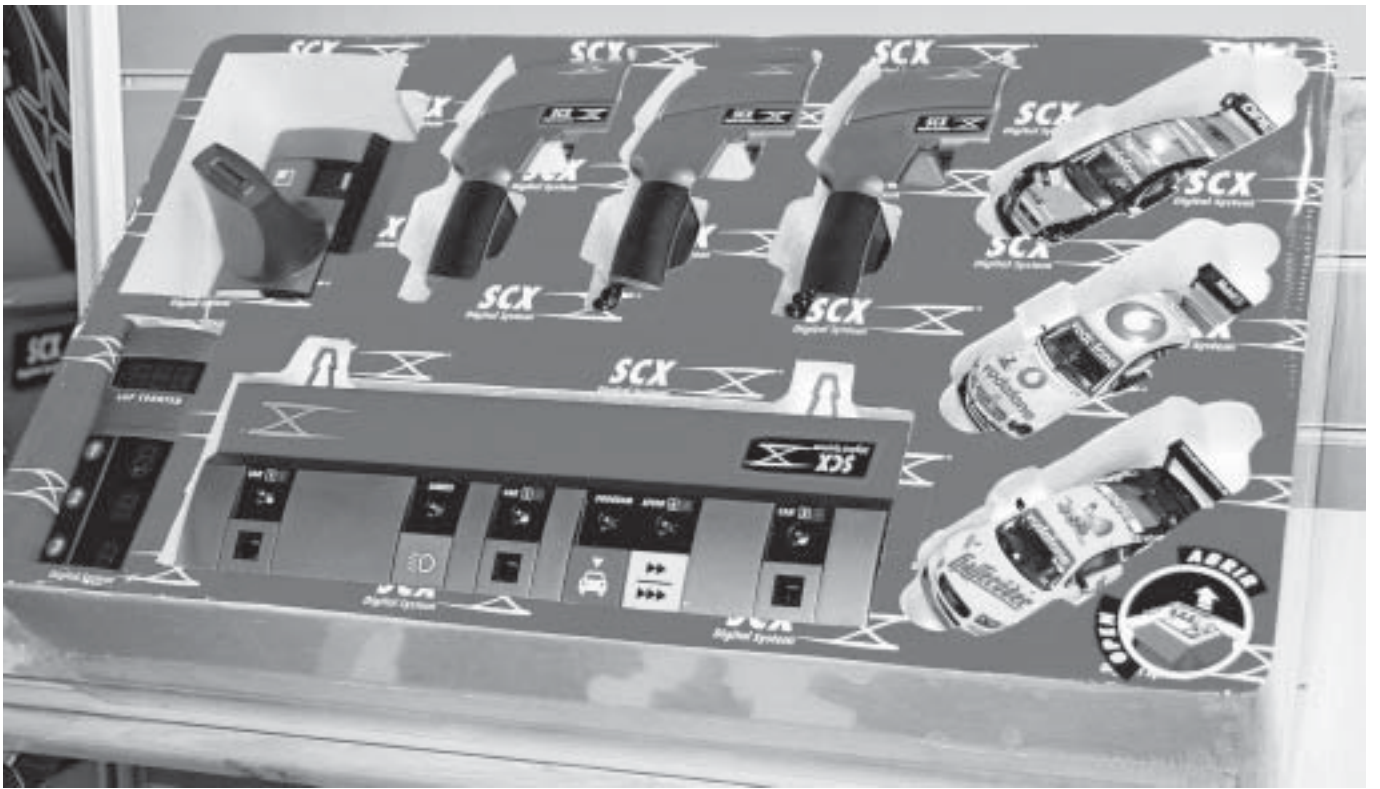
The prototype Digital system was displayed on a small layout at the front of the stand and we were given a full tour by Adrian Norman. Next was 'SportWorld' Hornby's new system for interactive Computer based racing (linked racing via the Internet!), next to this were the bikes! A full size motor bike was on display alongside the circuit and the full range of new bikes and prototypes was on display. Behind these was the full range of new products and of course, last but not least, the Simpsons Skateboard Chase set! Well something for everyone!



*Doh!*

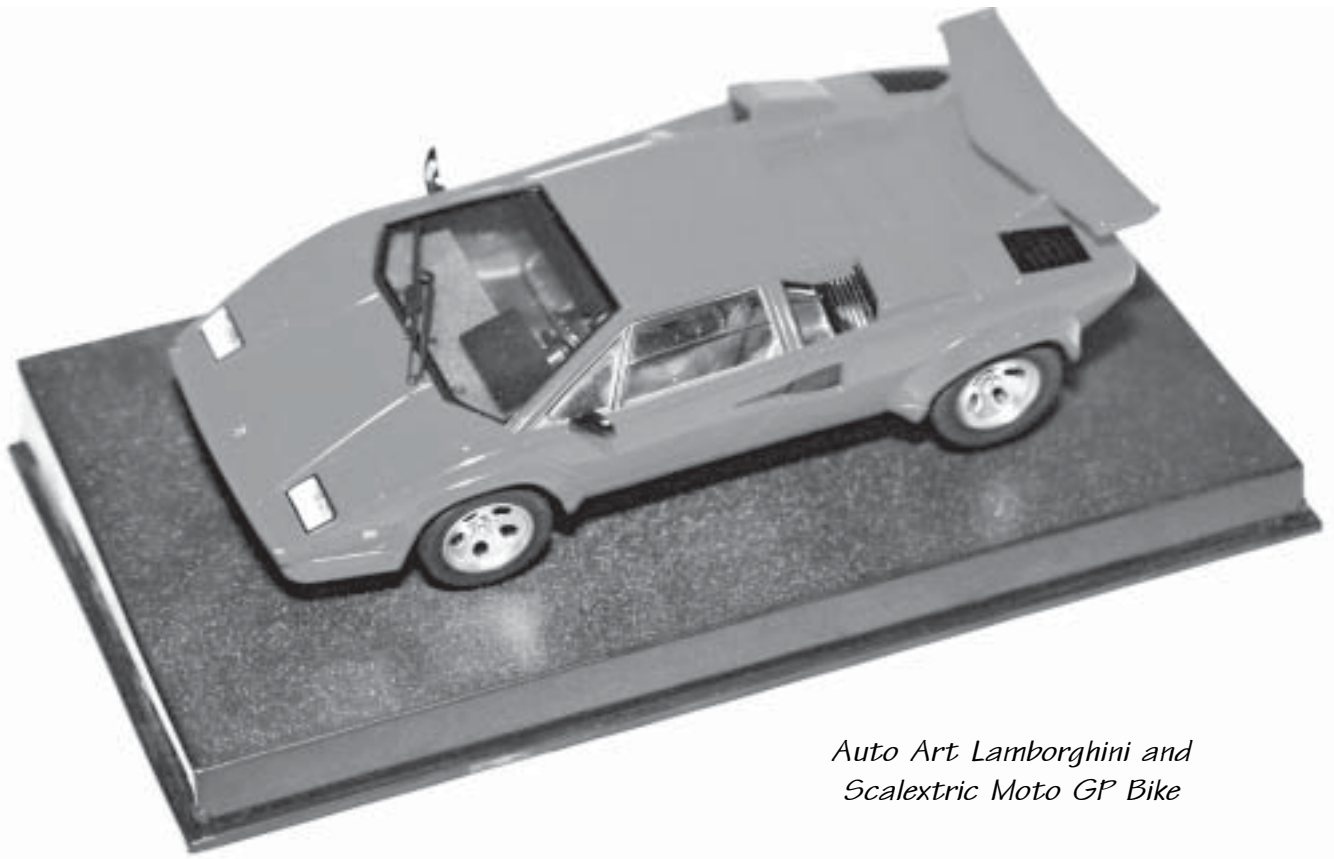
I wont detail all the new products and displays as I'm sure Rob Smith will keep us all up to date with a specific report in due course!

See [WWW.SCALEXTRIC.COM](http://WWW.SCALEXTRIC.COM) and 'Messages from Margate' for more details. ➤➤



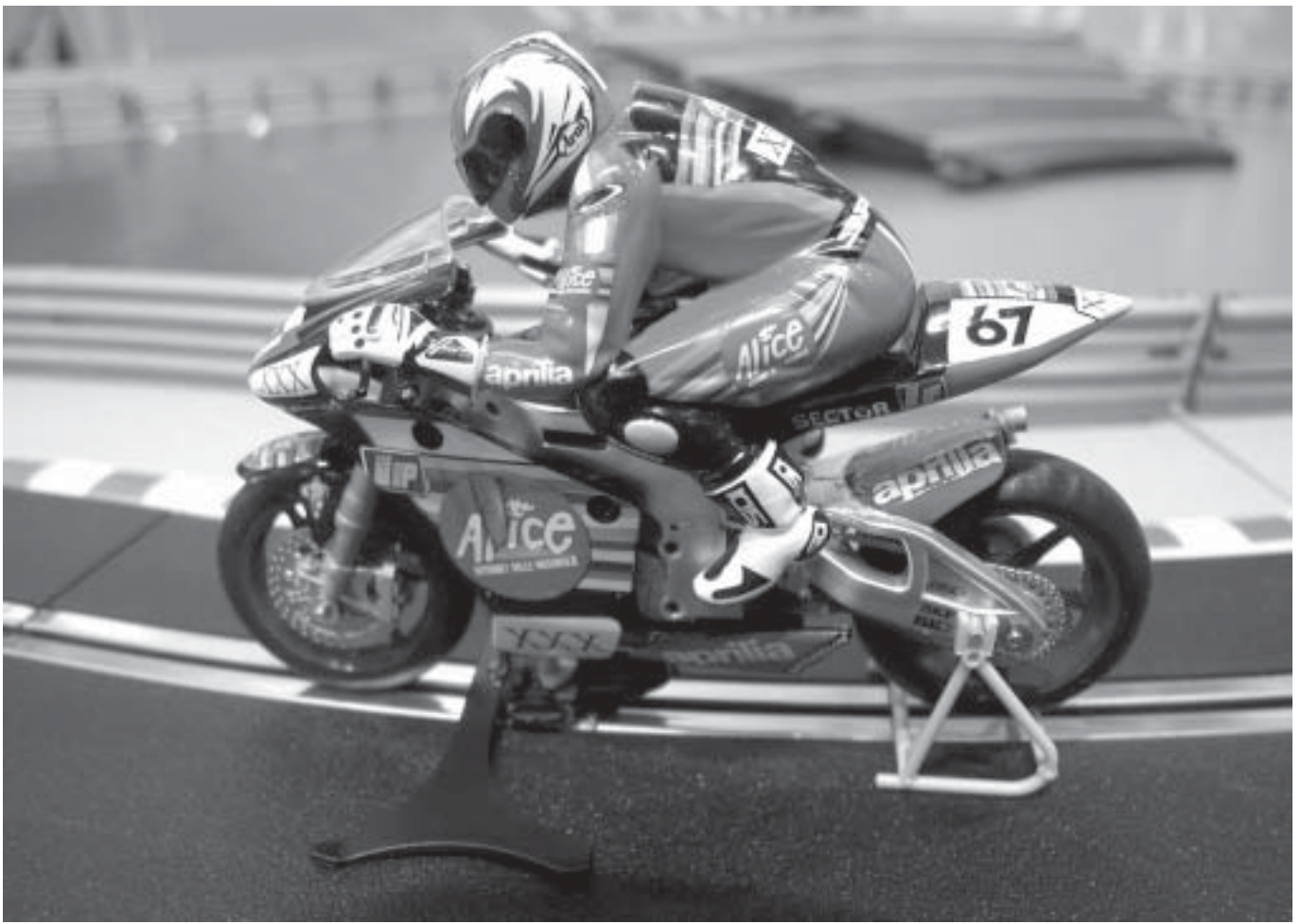
**Digital is here!**





*Auto Art Lamborghini and  
Scalextric Moto GP Bike*

## Best in show?



## SCX

Not too surprisingly SCX was the first stand I visited and a familiar face greeted me when I arrived! Luca sat me down for a coffee and a chat and went through their plans for 2004.

The front of the stand was dominated by a large SCX Digital track for all to play with and behind this was the full and expanded range of Digital track, controllers and cars. Another layout had a large F1 circuit and on the infield the new 1000 Lakes set with snow covered track! A total of 11 new non digital models were announced at the show with another 11 new liveries also shown.

Prototypes of this year's Vintage car were also on display and to pair up with last year's car SCX are releasing the Ford Mustang "Hot Rod" LE vintage in metallic red with yellow flames! Also announced at the show was the first in a new range of Classic car. SCX have decided that the Lancia Delta Integrale 4x4 WRC will be produced sometime this year!



*SCX New Classic Range*

Their full range of track and accessories was on display including the new "Closing Straight" track section so useful for finishing those complex layouts.

See [WWW.SCX.ES](http://WWW.SCX.ES) and 'Shipment from Spain' for more details

All in all a good day out and some excellent new products, obviously the big three are concentrating on their new digital formats, but I was pleased to see that none had forgotten the existing slot-cars.



*Richard and I check out our racing skills (or lack of!)*

Best of show? Well for me (discounting the digital systems for the time being) it was probably the new 'Auto Art' Lamborghini Countach 5000S. Hopefully, unlike the BBC Top Gear report on the real thing this year, this model goes as well as it looks! Top Trumps! Running a close joint second are the Scalextric Bikes and of course the SCX Lancia.. The bikes are very well detailed and even if they don't lean should be great fun to race. The Lancia? Well like the Countach it's a boyhood dream car! Just need to add mad spectators in the middle of the track for the real Group B action. ■



# Norman's conquest – revisited

**N**orman Griffiths – who oversaw production at Havant from 1964-1971 – continues with memories of his career. In this part, much of it previously unpublished, he recalls Scalextric production in Calais, and a surprise phone call.

Paul Strange reports

## Part 2 – The French connection

Norman glances at the first couple of Scalextric catalogues, and smiles as he recognises the clunky tinsplate cars, and rubber track. Now in his eighties, he casts his mind back more than 40 years ago to when he was a tool room manager for Lines Brothers in Margate, overseeing production of plastic locomotive bodies for Tri-ang's range of H0/00 trains. The arrival of Scalextric had had a devastating effect on the model train lines at Margate.

“The interest in Scalextric was so strong that by about 1959 it put our train production on a three-day week,” he tells me, as we continue our chat at his home in Broadstairs, Kent. “They took all the senior staff out to dinner in a nice hotel, just to tell us that we were going on a three-day week! Scalextric had killed the trains completely dead. I was very surprised because I couldn't really see why this should be. But then, once I got to Scalextric, I realised you could have so much more fun with it than you could with a model train, unless you've got a really big layout.”

Norman's work load was increasing. By 1961, he had become a roving troubleshooter for Lines Brothers, offering advice and solving moulding problems throughout the firm's various divisions. “If they had a moulding problem in Ireland – we had a Meccano factory in Castlereagh Road in Belfast – I would have to go over there and sort it out.” He was also

heavily involved in the firm's expansion in France and had a particularly turbulent 14 months working in Margate on a Monday, Calais from Tuesday to Thursday, and back to Margate on Friday.

“Lines Brothers had just bought Hornby out and there were two Hornby factories – one in Paris, the other in Dijon. Production was going to be concentrated into a new factory in Calais. I went over there with another engineer from the main group – a fellow called Robinson – to set up a tool room and moulding shop at the Calais factory. We had a figurehead of a general manager – he used to sit in the office all day! – and we set the factory into full production, taking it from a bare, empty building and setting it up to make trains. There was a Scalextric section there as well, because I remember seeing French cars and track.”

At the time, French track was different to the British version, and had a sheen to it. “Instead of rubber, they used polythene, which you could get half-hard, soft-half-hard on the machine. Consequently it meant you could get a varying grade of sheen, according to the material. All the scrap was reusable; you put it in a granulator and ground it up. You'd mix a certain amount of virgin material and a certain proportion of recycled material, and depending upon how you mixed, you could vary the contour and the condition of the track.”

While in Calais, Norman helped to set up the first motor production line for the cars. “Lines Brothers were making a battery operated set. In the UK these sets went into Marks & Spencers. That's where the original Scalextric motor [the E2] originated. It was adapted from the train motor [the reliable Tri-ang Mk IV unit] and later on it was scaled down in size for the Formula Juniors. I remember we had all sorts of problems in Calais, particularly in making the motor stack. To build one, you put the shaft in

a holder, pushed it in, and then the laminations that built up into the armature were blanked out around it and then stacked at the correct height on the tool. Take it out, bang! That's your lamination. You could get away with about two-three tenths of a thou variation on the bigger motor. But you had to have quite a good quality of steel. At one stage in Calais, they bought a softer steel than normal, so as it was being bent, it just bowed up. We had about three-quarters of a ton of steel that was just wasted! I think they threw it into the Seine or something.

At that point though, I was a train man, and apart from the fact that I saw the Calais Scalextric division were using a similar motor to the trains, I didn't really get involved in volume production there. I set up the place and, once it was going, it was left to the others to carry on with it."

But Norman was destined to cross paths with Scalextric again, this time at a high managerial level.

"I never had any ambition to go into management," he admits. "By now I was the second highest paid man in the group. The

Scalextric side of things first arose when they wanted me to become general manager in Canterbury. I thought, 'No way, I get more money at the moment than a works manager, so why would I want that job?', and I told them I didn't want it. But one day I came back from Calais and found out that my second-in-command had been made up into my job. Top brass told me, 'Whether you like it or not Norman, you're going to be a works manager. What we want you to do is to get into the routine at Canterbury, and the first general works manager's job that comes along, we'll move you into it.' So I didn't have much option.

Lines Brothers believed if you were a senior employee, you toed the line. Part and parcel of their philosophy was that if your workforce started at 8am, you had to be there at 7.55am to make sure they came in at 8 and started work. They were very keen on discipline and their staff knowing what was what. And if you were a manager in one of their factories, you had to know your staff, so they put the manager's office right at the far end of the factory. Like it or not, you had to walk through the whole place to get to your office!

I was walking though the Westwood factory in February 1964 when out of the blue I got a call to see one of the top brass. I thought, 'Aye, aye, this sounds ominous!' And when I got there, he said, 'We're fed up with you Griffiths!' – and I thought, 'I'm going to be out of here before lunch!' And he said, 'We want you to go and be general manager at Scalextric in Havant.' I didn't even know where Havant was at the time, but it seemed an interesting job. I said, 'I'd better have a word with the wife', and the director said, 'You've got no time – we'll tell her you're not coming home. We've booked you into a hotel in Emsworth [just outside Havant] tonight, so we knew you'd take the job! You'll see the managing director – Mr Badcock – in the morning, and he'll sort out your salary.' ■



*Next month: the Formula Junior pile-up*

# Scalextric Challenger

By sheer coincidence I received the following report from Graeme Thoburn on the same day that a parcel arrived from Hornby containing a review sample of the Challenger system. We thus have a supermarket style review - buy one get one free!

## **Graeme's thoughts first:**

I eagerly awaited the arrival of this new piece of electronic wizardry from Hornby. My only previous experience with any type of pacer car system was with the SCX Trainer 1 system, which I purchased for my son Jack's birthday???

Unlike Trainer 1 the Challenger differs because the computer is actually in the car rather than in a box trackside. Hornby have shoe-horned the electronics into a Mercedes CLK DTM that has F1 Safety Car tampoed on it together with flashing roof lights. The car itself, although fairly plain, is actually very striking in black. The rest of the package consists of two strong cylindrical magnets mounted on a plastic strip about 3cms long, three plugs which fit in the various power bases and an unusually shaped "Control Tower"!

The car has a unique guide which combines with a gearing arrangement. The information the computer needs is picked up via this, I assume.

## **Track Test**

As I have a Ninco club circuit, I wired a 2 amp plug to give constant full power to my chosen lane. I placed the magnets underneath the track, positioning them so they are either side of the metal rails and placed the control tower next to the track, about 35 cms from the magnet.

My first few attempts at getting Challenger to work were disastrous. I could not get the car to move at more than a snail's pace and when I did get it to move faster, it crashed full speed to the floor. I re-read the instructions at home that night and realized that I had incorrectly positioned the car, control tower and the magnets. Is it me or have other users found the instructions a little confusing? I determined to try again the following day.

On my return to the track, I set Challenger up again, even using a tape measure to make certain I had done so correctly. This time, the car set off at a more reasonable pace on its two lap learning mode. After around half a lap (the club circuit is approximately 135 feet long) the car ground to a halt. Patience was running short and Challenger nearly went for a flying lesson. What I found (to cut a long story shorter) was that the car needs almost spotlessly clean track rails to function properly because, as it "learns", the car moves fairly slowly and any dust etc. will hinder this. I spent a long time track cleaning and eventually got the car to complete a lap. For some reason, possibly the length of the track, Challenger completed the first lap at a constant speed but about 6 feet from the end of the second lap, slows back to its learning pace. This happens every time the car "learns" and I can only assume that track length is the reason. Unfortunately, when you use the car in race mode Challenger uses the input from the second learning lap and consequently, slows down to crawling speed in the same place, every one of the 25 or 50 laps. That apart, the car drives round at a very brisk pace. Although I haven't raced against it, I have the impression that over 25 or 50 laps Challenger is going to be hard to beat on cornering speed, simply because it rarely makes a mistake, but it does not use its full speed on the straights and that is where I feel it can be beaten.

## **To buy or not to buy?**

In my opinion, it's a great novelty gadget and for like-minded people, or those with no one to race against, ideal but, be prepared to do some basic track cleaning and read the instructions fully until you understand them.

As for the slowing down problem, I am informed that Challenger has difficulty learning circuits over 120 feet (get that in your lounge!) and should be fine on shorter tracks. I would be interested to hear from other users and even Hornby themselves on that problem. Perhaps a memory upgrade may become available. ⇒

## **Crap Racer takes on the Challenge(r)!**

There really should be a large label attached to the outside of any piece of electrical equipment stating - "IF ALL ELSE FAILS READ THE INSTRUCTIONS!"

True to form, and just like Graeme, I assembled the thing in haste then spent ten minutes hunting for the discarded instruction sheet so I could find out what I had done wrong. In my case I had overlooked the fact that you need to put batteries in the control tower before you can start racing!

My own home set-up is a small layout of virtually brand new Sport track so, once everything was assembled correctly, the car ran perfectly. A couple of "learning" laps for Challenger and we were off - initially I sent it round for a couple of 25 lap stints so I could observe its behaviour.

My immediate reaction was to marvel at its consistency - lap after lap it turned in identical times; corners were taken at the same speed each time round and although it wasn't "ballistically" fast in a straight line I figured I would have difficulty beating it. After all, even if I could overtake it, my chances of staying on the track for 25 laps were a little slim!

### **How to beat it**

Challenger has, in fact, two speeds available - 'slow' - which isn't and 'fast' which is a bit quicker! I started off with the slower one and raced against it with the Ninco Audi TT which I use at the club. It is well sorted and, although it isn't the fastest car on the planet, I find it easy to drive consistently.

I quickly found out that Challenger is very easy to beat providing you:

- ① Jump the lights.
- ② Nerf the thing off if it catches up.

Being computer run it is incapable of cheating and, if it falls off, it sulks and trundles round at 'learning' speed for a while before giving up altogether!

Having taught the damn thing a lesson it would never forget I then tried to beat it legitimately. This was achieved after a bit of

logical thinking - as Graeme pointed out Challenger is very quick round corners but doesn't use full power on the straights. I soon developed the technique of staying as close as possible round the bends, without trying to overtake, then blasting past down the straight. Easy peasy! Needless to say I then fell off at the next corner and it whistled past me again. However, after a few (as in very many) attempts I had the measure of it and it was just a case of how many laps I could put on it.

### **Oh bugger!**

Encouraged by my success I then tried the faster of the two speeds - bad move - on the second lap it flew off the track! I tried again and the same thing happened. I retrieved the instructions from the bin once more and decided that the track and/or tyres had become dirty so I cleaned everything up and started again - same result!

After consulting the Hornby website I discovered the reason - the Challenger's tyres were not totally round - a quick trip to the sandpaper machine and all was well. Because the car relies on every corner of every lap being taken with the wheels in the same position the slightest grip problem means it forgets where it is and promptly launches itself at the scenery!

The faster speed had resulted in a small degree of wheelspin (one reason why the straights are not taken flat out) and its little computer chip had lost the plot. Having sorted that out I have to be honest and admit that I haven't beaten it on 'fast' speed yet - mainly because I have to try that little bit harder to stay in front with the inevitable result - Off! Off! Off!

### **Conclusions**

Challenger is an excellent product but the amount of maintenance required is probably a little daunting for the average buyer - it is not a good sign when Hornby are obliged to post a page of hints and tips on the website - I suspect most people would expect it to run properly without constant attention.

Having said that, though, I must return to the loft for a short while; I will beat it on fast speed..... I will beat it on fast speed.....I will... ■



# Pre-Add added to....

By Mac Pinches

The third series of Pre-Add GP body kits is now available and it picks up the theme at the start of the 2.5 litre formula.

Ferrari increased the capacity of the 2.0 litre to 2.5; the car was now known as the 625 and although the design was a little dated it still took first place in some races. Kit 16 represents the final development of this car.



While the 625 held the fort, great effort was made to make the 553 and 555 cars competitive, but only achieving one win, the Squalos were never a great success. It does however make an interesting model. Kit 17 shows the car as run at Monza driven by Castellotti.



Kit 18 depicts the Lancia D50, possibly the most advanced design of this period, but lacking development and slow gestation it only lasted for two years, never showing its full worth. With the lack of resources and the death of Ascari the whole team was handed to Ferrari. To my mind the most striking looking GP cars ever built and a must for any model car collection.



The W196! Everything has been said about this car, 2 constructors titles, 2 world drivers championships in 2 years with the 2 best drivers of the period, a hard act to follow . Kit 19 shows the car in its open wheel design of 1955.



The final car of this set is the 250F Maserati, one of the prettiest front engined classical GP cars ever built, driven by everyone who was anyone in this period, scoring many wins, and still seen today at retro meetings taking on the best.



Kit 20 is the mid point of its development, the 1956 car. The next series will see the end of the front engined classics and the beginning of the rear engined revolution. ■

# Review – JPS Lotus 72D – Vanquish

By Marc Abbott

Cast your mind back a few years, over thirty in fact, to 1972. That's when, as a young boy of twelve, I entered a competition in the Daily Express to win tickets to the British Grand Prix at Brands Hatch. All I had to do was say who I thought the best Grand Prix driver of all time was and why, send it in on a post card and wait anxiously for a month. Now my first choice was to write Jim Clark but for some reason my dad wasn't so sure, "I think it should be Stirling Moss" he said. I couldn't believe it, that bald bloke had never won the title, whereas Clark...

Suffice to say (thankfully), dad got his way and on a sunny July day, me, my brother and dad found ourselves sitting in the Paddock Hill Bend grandstand taking in the entire atmosphere and waiting impatiently for the big race.

This was to be my first ever glimpse of Grand Prix cars in the flesh, and amongst them was the sleek John Player Special, Lotus 72. Now I'd heard, read and seen a lot about this car. Motor racing was my favourite sport and I digested everything I could about Grand Prix. For some reason, I couldn't come to terms with this wonder of aerodynamics in Black and Gold. Now when Jochen Rindt had sat behind the wheel of the earlier versions, it conjured up an exciting futuristic design, but with Emerson Fittipaldi in it, the magic had gone. You know, some drivers you just can't connect to – they don't excite you. Fittipaldi was one of them for me, Stewart too. Now "real" racing drivers were supposed to be like François Cévert (Stewart's team mate) and Jo Siffert (BRM). All this corporate business like approach and professionalism was killing the sport surely! I like people that appear to be driving on the edge. Now don't get me wrong, I know Fittipaldi and Stewart were brilliant drivers, but I was a boy that needed a hero, not a publicity package.

I may be rambling on a bit, but I just wanted you to know that Grand Prix racing was the same then as it is now, a big circus with money driving it, and yet... there's always something special about the past and when I heard that Vanquish were to model the Lotus 72, I quickly placed an advance order for one. After all, this was the era when drivers did have to earn a living – none of this semi auto gearbox and traction control rubbish with pit-to-car radios – these were cars with too much power, huge slick rear tyres and not enough grip and were barely more than a mobile fuel tank. Great days!

So you can imagine how excited I was when the parcel arrived from 'Get Slotted'. I could barely contain myself as I ripped the brown parcel tape off, then the neat blue paper wrapper to find what appeared at first glance to be a very nice car.

I sat looking at it perched on the plastic and was pleased to notice some fine detailing. Even Emerson had his right arm raised as if celebrating another crushing defeat. However, I soon encountered problem number one as I attempted to remove it from the tray – one of the wing mirrors fell off. Then, the left front wheel nut came away. I was beginning to realize just how delicate this blast from the past was. "No problem", I assured myself, "nothing that 'super glue' won't fix. I proceeded with a bit more care from then on and just as well too. Everything on this car is ready to break!

Before going any further, I decided to retrieve my old Scalextric JPS Lotus 72 from the cupboard and sit them side-by-side. Well it hit then (and not for the first time) just how much of a 'toy' Scalextric cars used to be. Man, they were awful. The nose sat about a scale two feet in the air and as little detail as possible was included. In the older cars defence however, it was obviously closer to a true 1/32 scale, I



haven't any measurements available for the real car so that I could gauge everything, but I think Vanquish have chosen to do what they did with their other models like the Can-Am McLaren and settle in at about 1/28. Also on the new car the front wheels look ridiculously big. I studied a few old photos from books I have and sure enough the front wheels used to be tiny – so at least Scalextric got that right, even if they insisted on 'wet weather' tyres for years to come.

Looking around the car I marvelled at the detail compared to his older cousin – a battery sitting under the rear wing, nicely detailed exhausts, beautiful inlet trumpets under the air box...



Now to remove the top body section. I was surprised to find only one screw, sat just behind the guide. Frowning I removed this and the main bodywork came easily away. Emerson and the cockpit were sealed to it, so they went to one side too, whilst I inspected the innards. A nice touch here is a little fire extinguisher just in case Emerson catches fire. There is a Ninco-type magnet just in front of the small can motor. But try as I might I couldn't work out how to get to the rest of the inside and the infamous Vanquish rear diff – and I was reluctant to try, simply because of the way everything else seemed to be falling apart! Well I could come back to that later, I suppose, let's get it onto the track.

I have in my loft a 4 lane 65 foot Ninco track, with one fairly long straight and a series of bends which gradually get tighter and tighter as the lap progresses. Here's where major problem number two came to light. For this test I thought I'd simply put it on the track and drive – just as your average Mr. Public would do when he got home with a new model. The damn thing failed to

move an inch. I lifted it up and checked the wiring around the guide area then placed the nose back to the slot and lifted the rear wheels from the ground and pressed the trigger. Back wheels turned no problem. So I placed it down again and the cause of said problem became apparent soon enough – the magnet is so close to the rails it actually stops the car from moving – ridiculous!!

So I did what any self-respecting eager to race bloke would do – I gave it a push. It crawled around the first bend and came to a rest four feet up the main straight. Enough was enough; I had to remove the magnet before I burned the Cosworth V8 from beneath Emerson's back side. And what a revelation – with the offending magnet removed, the car shot away at a terrific pace. But "calm down" I said. "A few quiet laps first, to make sure nothing else falls off, then I'll go for it."

Well I gave it another quick once over just to make sure nothing was going to come off, then I really did go. Yep, this car is a joy to drive. Usually when you buy a new car, there's the obligatory loosening of screws, sanding of the tyres, gluing the motor and axle in place etc, but this needed none of that. After only 5 laps I was only a tenth of a second off my own lap record and in another three I was quite happy getting the tail out in controlled slides – now this was fun! This is a car you can actually drive, rather than the usual 'point and squirt' method you have to adapt to with more modern F1 cars.

Emerson was then called in for a pit stop, just in case. I've never owned a car from Vanquish before and I remember hearing horror stories about the rear diff and how people had to replace the system with a more conventional set up. Well everything seemed fine except a rear dummy disc brake, which had come loose and was banging around the rear axle. I pushed it back into place and set off again.

I completed 100 laps, on the pace and only came off once. Yes, this car (without magnet) is a delight to drive, but I couldn't quite get to the F1 record, although now only a hundredth shy and still no problems with the diff.

Curiosity got the better of me and I wanted to really open it up, so I decided to take it along to West London Scalextric Club and see what would happen on the long straights, especially as it was Formula 1 night! Now the club has recently had much of its track replaced, the old 'classic' pieces were becoming embarrassingly bumpy with cars launching without warning at the most annoying moment. The worst track pieces are resting in slot heaven and are replaced by some new SCX compatibles. However, my Ninco track is super smooth, so I was a little nervous of what would happen with this fragile beauty once I pressed full power exiting the last bend after a warm up lap.

At home I'd been using a 30 ohm controller which suited everything fine, but here, initially, I went for a more cautious 40. I have to say I was scared stiff, what with all the other open wheeled projectiles bombing around. Unfortunately, the next problem then came to light. With the added bumps of the West London track (and there's not many now) the car had terrible trouble getting good electrical pick up on the braids and also suffered de-slotting at regular intervals.

At West London (as everywhere else I presume) the old SCX Ferraris, McLarens and Minardis still rule the roost, but in order to try and get some modern machinery to be competitive we've allowed high nose F1s and Indy cars to run with ballast. So I did the same to the JPS. A small amount of blue tac in the nose section plus another small bit just behind the front axle line, then set off again. Result – a car that was beginning to handle well again.

Well racing got under way proper and I side-lined Emerson for the next couple of hours whilst I concentrated on coming a terrible 7<sup>th</sup> overall for the evening events. However, because we finished slightly early, it was decided to have a couple of semis and a final. So I took a deep breath, quickly unscrewed the JPS body again and inserted a tiny bit more blue tac and took my place on the grid amongst some SCX F1s and Ninco Champcars, much to everyone's amusement.

The lights turned green and I was pleased to hear that; "the JPS got the fastest getaway!"

I led into the first bend, through the 'bus stop', out through the next corner onto a long straight, where four cars simply zoomed past. At the end of lap one I realised that I was going to really have to drive in order to keep up and managed to get my times to within half a second off the pace of the leaders – but of course, driving every lap like a qualifier will always end in tears, but I was pleased to say it only came off twice in the fifteen laps, just about a lap down at the finish, and mighty pleased it was still in one piece!

So the conclusion is: if you're allowed to add weight at your club, you've got a very nice drivable car (remember I didn't really do any set up other than add weight), but you'll need to extract more power unless you have a tight twisty circuit. If you've got a nice smooth Ninco circuit at home you're in for a treat. Would I recommend buying one? Yep, it's gorgeous. But I bet you won't want to race it – you'll end up going home with a box of tiny bits! Personally, I can't wait for the March and Surtees to arrive – which I also have on order, and if Vanquish really want to make me happy they'll do a model of the Ferrari 126c2 (*Gilles Villeneuve's number 27 please*), plus perhaps a Renault and Alfa Romeo from the same era. Oh and do something about the mad position/strength of the magnet – please! (Has anyone else had this problem?) AND, I still can't work out how to examine the rear interior of the car.

Meanwhile back at Brands Hatch 1972, that sleek black and gold car came first of course, but not before he'd had to fight all the way with a certain Jackie Stewart in a Tyrrell and Jackie Ickx in a Ferrari. I went home that day more in love with Grand Prix than I'd ever been. Then on the way home, my dad told me that the company he worked for (The International Wool Secretariat) had sponsored the Grand Prix the previous year at Silverstone and had designed some overalls made of wool for Jackie Stewart. Alas, he didn't think I'd be interested in going and being in a hospitality tent meeting the drivers and watching from the pits... ■

# **NINCO** *track test*

**50320 VW Golf Policia  
50321 VW Golf Polizei**

**Reviewed by our man in the pointy  
hat - Mike Harvey**

**H**aving only recently joined the Mussel Bay Slot-car Club at King's Lynn I was somewhat surprised but very honoured to be asked to write a review of two VW Golf Ninco Police Cars. I suppose in a way I can understand Brian's (Hon. Ed.) reasons for asking me as I have just retired from Cambridgeshire Police Traffic Division after thirty years in the job. It was very reassuring to know when track testing the Spanish car that when I crashed it I would not have to fill in countless forms, get a rollicking and then wear a funny pointed hat for three months whilst they decided if they would let me drive again or risk my crashing another patrol car.

Having started on Traffic in 1978 and seen all the changes over the years to Police vehicles it was refreshing to see Ninco had gone to a great deal of trouble to replicate the models in their most realistic form. The Spanish car having slightly more detail than the German version. Each of the two cars reviewed, the German 'Polizei' version and the Spanish 'Policia' carry two driver figures (obviously foreign Police Forces are overstuffed as we used to patrol single crew!)

It was disappointing to see the Spanish crew did not have moustaches, as I thought this was mandatory with Spanish Police Officers. Obviously, the 580 numerals on the roof of the German car is used to assist the helicopter when the ground crew are chasing the bad guys and look very realistic. The Spanish car has a somewhat smaller roof logo, this being R245, that again denotes the call sign for use by the helicopter on a pursuit. Use of tinted glass on each model helps to achieve authenticity as to

the real car and also hides the fact that a pair of rally drivers have hijacked it - pity the mould budget couldn't have stretched to a pair of real policemen!

I particularly liked the crisp body lines shown on each model which clearly defined each body panel and on the Spanish model the additional 'Policia' vehicle call sign logos on the nearside and offside wings of the car. The red and white chequered band across the bonnet and roof and along each side of the lower edges of the doors helps to brighten up the body shell, as the doors and rear quarter panels are blue in colour.

Both of the cars are fitted with NCI motors, which rev to 15,700 revs, quite suitable for this model of vehicle. Brass oil-lite bushes are fitted to the front and rear axles with the usual brass pinion and nylon contrate gear to the rear. A small magnet is fitted just forward of the motor to assist handling on plastic tracks. A tiny circuit board is bonded to the underside of the bonnet, which controls the illumination of the amber headlamps and the flashing blue lamps on the strobe lamp bar, which looks most impressive when the vehicle is in motion. Standard plastic six spoke alloy wheels are fitted to each model. The chassis of the car is black plastic with single mounting posts to the front and rear thus allowing for body rock adjustment, which on some tracks may make the car handle better and allow it to keep up with the bandit car it is chasing. The guide blade has an upward and downward springloaded motion, invaluable to keep the guide in the slot on uneven slot depths, the copper braids are nice and long too. =>

Mussel Bay Raceway meets on Friday evenings (club night) at their plush new premises in Bergen Way, King's Lynn. I thought it would be an ideal opportunity to track test the car straight out of the box. Apart from oiling all the bearings and guide it was run 'out of the box'. The track at Mussel Bay is a wooden track with copper tape so it was quite a test for the car not to run on a plastic track and make use of the fitted magnet. The car handled and performed admirably; even in the tight esses the car was unphased and negotiated the turns well. A straight line speed was adequate for the model



of car with the NC1 motor fitted and lap times of 11secs were achieved with 8secs the norm for the fast guys with the usual hot machinery.

Jamie Kelly 'the quick kid on the block' used his Ninco McLaren F1 GTR as the bandit car and a pursuit ensued. The police car provided the blue flashing strobe lamps and headlights and I provided the 'na na, na na', sound effects to everyone's amusement. Guess who got away? At least crashing the car was free of a discipline charge this time.

The car is a cracking little model but the downside is the rrp of £42.00 which is a little expensive I would have thought. ■

# The greatest slot-cars ever!

Thanks for all your nominations in the Christmas competition. I received about 200 entries so the results are probably not statistically significant. Modern cars were also at a disadvantage as they come in so many liveries and therefore tend to get a split vote. Nevertheless I had some distinct surprises when I totalled up the votes:

## SINGLE SEATERS

- 1st - Scalextric 1/24th scale Lotus Indy
- 2nd - Scalextric 1/24th scale Ferrari F1 (only 1 vote in it)
- 3rd - SCX Ferrari F1/87 (some way behind and no votes for the English version)

## SALOONS

- 1st - Airfix/MRRC Lotus Cortina (clear winner)
- 2nd - Ninco 50104 Alfa 155
- 3rd - Scalextric C2391 Mercedes CLK

## GT/SPORTS

- 1st - Scalextric C2403 GT40 (substantial number of votes for other GT40s as well)
- 2nd - Ninco McLaren FIGTR 'Gulf'
- 3rd - Revell Cobra Daytona Coupé

## RALLY

- 1st - Scalextric C52 Escort Mexico white (clearest win of the lot - absolutely miles ahead of the rest)
- 2nd - Scalextric C145 Lancia 037
- 3rd - SCX 4055 Lancia Stratos

## BEST EVER

The largest total of votes was cast for various versions of the Scalextric GT40 but the best individual car was again the C52 Escort Mexico - I suspect Hornby's design man will now go out and hang himself!

Amazing isn't it - the current standard of slot-cars is light years away from that of previous decades yet only one modern car made the #1 position; well done Hornby - the GT40 is a true

classic. It is also worth noting that the glorious 'Gulf' livery features on the top two of the GT category

The other surprising aspect of the voting, particularly in the GT/Sports class, was the absence of any significant support for Fly products. I know they are out of favour at the moment and many people, including myself, hold their 'limited editions' in utter contempt. However, they have produced some absolutely stunning models in the recent past and I would have expected stronger support than the measly 15 votes they mustered overall.

In the single seater class the two Scalextric 1/24th scale cars were runaway winners - nothing else came close - they may have been a commercial failure but even today you would be hard pushed to find cars of the same quality.

Two legendary Fords - the Lotus Cortina and Escort Mexico came out top in the saloon and rally sections. Nearly everybody who voted for them had similar reasons:

- 1) They were spectacular to watch in real life.
- 2) Jim Clark drove them (as with the Lotus Indy). I think this may prove something about the age of the entrants as very few recent recruits to the club are old enough to have seen him three wheeling into Paddock Hill Bend!
- 3) No major manufacturer has made them since the original versions came out; therefore the Scalextric Escort, with all its faults, is still the best example available.
- 4) An awful lot of you seem to have been introduced to the delights of the opposite sex in the back of one - the real thing not the slot-car!

So, the greatest slot-car of all time is the C52 Ford Mk1 Escort Mexico - Adrian Norman informs me that it is also the most requested release on the Hornby website as well - about time they listened to the voters and brought out a new one methinks.

**And Finally** - no prizes for guessing worst product ever - Turtles - nothing else got more than two votes! Still It was only a bit of fun. ■



# A very limited edition - Alfa Romeo 12C

By Bill Grigg

The recent articles about slot-cars based on 'home made' (as opposed to factory mass-produced) moulded body shells by Daves Yerbury and Sykes prompts me to introduce the Alfa Romeo 12C with bodyshell courtesy of my friend Chris Hutchinson.

Others in our small group of carpet racers had built a few resin bodied kits from small volume suppliers and after studying them Chris, who loves experimenting with new techniques, reckoned he could build his own. The first problem, as I'm sure the Daves will agree, was finding enough drawings and/or photos to get a reasonably accurate plan of the car in the first place. That's why the Alfa was chosen, it was the first suitable car of which Chris managed to find

a three view drawing, though since then we've found a source of plans on the Web. It was then a simple matter (though rather him than me!) of transferring the dimensions at the right scale to make a master. He cut an armature of the side elevation in plasticard and another of the plan view. The two were joined at right angles at the appropriate height and then profiles of the cross section at various points along the body were added like the ribs in a model aeroplane. The resulting skeleton was filled with Das modelling clay and carved to the correct body shape. This master was then used to make a mould in silicone rubber for casting a resin body.



He initially intended to mould the body in one piece using a rubber inner filler to give a hollow core for the works. Our friend Derek said he thought running and walking should be tried in a different order and was sceptical about the ability to remove the master from the outer mould without either breaking the master or splitting the mould. Fortunately the Alfa 12C has a chassis line that is raised in relief from the panel surfaces above and below and Derek suggested moulding in two pieces, above and below the chassis line, then cutting the 'halves' to the convenient reference line that the chassis provides and gluing the top and bottom together with resin to give a hollow body. Cut outs for the motor etc to poke out could easily be made later. So that's the way it was done.

### **Pour it quick**

Of course, it still wasn't that easy as a suitable 'bath' had to be made to hold the silicone rubber (thank goodness Chris's boys have grown out of their Lego; I hope) into which the master was dipped. Then, when the moulds were ready, inner formers were fashioned which were to be suspended inside the upper and lower body half moulds when finally casting, so that he didn't end up with two solid lumps of resin with no room for the works. This was done by lining the master silicone rubber mould with Plasticine to represent the thickness of the finished body shell and casting another mould inside. That done it was necessary to jig the inner and outer moulds accurately and he was finally ready to mix the polyurethane resin for the finished item! The resin goes off in about five minutes so you've got to be speedy and efficient when pouring it. Not for the faint hearted.

As he'd gone to all that trouble it seemed silly to produce just one moulding, said I - so he kindly made another for me. The Master Mouldmaker's car is fitted with a can motor and a rather sophisticated rear axle mounting made from brass tube but for mine I found that an old Airfix Slimline motor in the spares box would fit quite nicely. That meant it was impractical to glue the upper and lower body parts together as above and still be able to get the motor out so my base bolts to nuts epoxied inside the upper shell and helps locate the inner works at the same time.

### **Other bits**

The wheels are Ninco Classic and I secured a driver and steering wheel from Mac Pinches super series of resin kits as Chris's driver, using a plastic kit Bugatti driver as a master, looked a bit scary; Mac also supplied the Ortmann tyres. The other bits are home made including the (rather larger than scale but please pretend not to notice) oil coolers of which I'm rather proud, fashioned from an old screwdriver handle. All finished off by a spray job with an acrylic aerosol and some transfers from the spares box, and from the end result I reckon Chris did extremely well, especially since it was his first effort. Now I'm just hoping he'll fancy making a Connaught - or two (I've found him some drawings!), an E Type ERA or something else I'd really like.

By the way, the real Alfa 12C was, unfortunately, largely an also ran as it was introduced in 1936 when the Mercedes and Auto Unions were in the ascendant. Only the genius of Nuvolari enabled the 370 bhp V12 to harass the German cars and even win on a couple of occasions during the year but the writing was on the wall and from 1937 the Silver Arrows had it all their own way. ■