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Motor racing - what motor racing?

It is awfully easy to get sidetracked on your first visit to the Goodwood Revival meeting as we found out last month.

Having slowly negotiated the car parks stuffed full with classic cars of all types I immediately came across the Scalextric roadshow where Adrian Norman forced me to play with the new Vanwall and Maserati. Full marks for presentation Hornby - they are superb and I have bought both of them. However, "nil point" for marketing - special Goodwood packaging, 103,000 potential customers and only 200 available for sale! Bit of a cock-up in the production schedule was there?

Anyway, having progressed to the actual circuit, I then spent the next hour pointing at buildings saying, "Control Tower - got that one; Marshall's Post - got four of them; look, fence palings and gate - catalogue three!" Other people had told me about it and they were right, the place really is just a giant Scalextric circuit.

Next stop - Mark Scale's stand for Roger Gillham's book signing where I seemed to meet half the NSCC membership and spent another hour chatting. It was at this point that my good lady threatened me with physical violence if I didn't go and watch some motor racing; she is eternally patient with my slot-car obsessions but I think I was pushing my luck a teensy weensy bit!

So, some four hours after we got there it was on to the main event - real racing cars. Highlights for me were eight GT40s lined up in the paddock; Grant "Sideways" Williams putting a Mk1 Jag round corners at angles of attack I had previously only seen on a slot track and, best of all, Martin Stretton in a 250F taking Madgwick corner in a full four wheel drift using just the throttle to steer - motorsport heaven or what?

And Finally - We met a lady who used to go to Goodwood in its heyday who waved her programme at the end of the race - apparently the done thing then. Wonder if she was the original of that well endowed little plastic spectator?

Till next month
Brian





Not a lot of activity in the last few weeks with the most significant new releases being the Classic Grand Prix cars.

The Boxster and TT models are arriving thick and fast. The other two solo cars are now in the shops. These are **C2479 Porsche Boxster "Yellow '04"** and **C2507 Audi TT "Blue '04"**. The Porsche is yellow with red and black decorations and the Audi a nice metallic blue.

Another Porsche has made a surprise appearance in Toys-R-Us. This is **C2608 Porsche Boxster "Yellow '04"** a plain yellow livery that was only supposed to be released in C8306 track pack. However it is available in Toys-R-Us for £24.99 or free with any set costing over £50.00. Please note that the same description is given to both C2608 and to C2479 on the barcode labels.

The first reliveried McLaren is **C2555 McLaren Mercedes F1 MP4-16 #6 'Kimi' 2004**. Remember that this is a relivery of last



year's car and not a new mould as described in Catalogue 45. C2554 'David' should follow soon but there will not be any Sport versions of these cars. That privilege will go to the new walrus nosed Williams due soon.

C2588 Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VII WRC No105 is a white, orange and blue livery disappointingly not complete with the lamp pod as shown in the photo of the real car in the catalogue.



Highlight of the month though is the new Maserati 250F classic grand prix car. Visitors to this year's Goodwood Revival Meeting will have seen both C2551A and C2552A resplendent in their Goodwood coloured Sport boxes. However these were flown in specially from China to meet the deadline and are due in the shops soon. The first version to be on general sale is **C2551 Maserati 250F 1957 No1** the standard crystal case version. The detail on this model is >>>

fabulous, especially the interior with a detailed cockpit where the instruments and chassis rails can be seen clearly. The suspension details and brake drums are also a work of art. To create such a difficult body shape it is made out of several pieces which are then stuck together during assembly in China. The crystal case box features a new sleeve too. In addition to the normal screw attachment to the base the Maserati is also held down by a tie around each front wheel.



A new **Race for Real** leaflet is in the shops. This is Issue 10 and has bikes on the cover.

Coming soon

Disappointingly some of the new models scheduled for this year are slipping into next year's schedule. According to one of the main dealers the new Maserati Coupe, Dodge Viper, Peugeot and Dallara will not be seen now until 2005.

C2619 Subaru Impreza white

Another white car will soon reach stockists in mainland Europe. This is a plain white version of the latest Subaru Impreza. Limited to just 500 units this may be quite hard to find. More details to follow as they emerge.

Erratum

Despite my best endeavours errors do creep in occasionally. Set C1145 is Speed Machines – an Argos exclusive set containing two Audi TTs C2506W and C2617W not Road Rivals as described last month. Thanks to the ever vigilant Roger Gillham for noticing this.

NSCC club cars 2005

In this issue of the Journal is an order form for the new NSCC club cars. These are two versions of the new BMW Mini Cooper S, one in yellow and blue and the other in white and green. Hornby have done a fantastic job designing these for us and we are very lucky that they have managed to fit our tiny order into their busy production schedule. The designs have gone to China and they will be built soon for delivery early in the New Year. So now is the time to send in your order and your money. The new Minis are a limited edition of 500 in each colour and will be supplied in a Sport box complete with certificate.

It is difficult to predict exactly how many of you will want these cars so we are planning a ballot if necessary to ensure everyone gets a fair chance. Priority will be given to members ordering a pair of cars and you are initially limited to one pair only. The deadline for returning the order form to me is the 3rd December 2004. Please do not leave it until the last minute. If there are any cars left unsold you will have the opportunity to purchase extra ones.

Please send your cheque or credit card details with the order. However this won't be cashed until you have been successful in the ballot. There is a wide variation in the cost of postage outside of the UK. Please let me know on the order form if you would like basic, recorded or insured postage and I will find the cost for you.

It would be much appreciated if you would arrange to collect your cars, either from the Milton Keynes Swapmeet, at another event, or from me personally. ■

From Peter Solari

There are some great new products announced by Ninco this month, so sit back comfortably and I'll begin...

New, new, new!

A totally new rally car - the Peugeot 307 WRC (50351) - is released, based on the model that competed in this year's WRC Rally of Mexico. A new addition to the WRC calendar, Mexico is a gravel circuit with approximately 80% of the roads being quite smooth and fast with the remaining 20% being made up of loose rocks and stones - *a great circuit to reproduce using Ninco Raid track!*

When designing the full-size car, Peugeot managed to achieve a lower centre of gravity and improved weight distribution than that of its predecessor, the successful 206. As well as this, the engine was tweaked to give more torque at lower revs. Marcus Gronholm piloted his 307 to win the two final stages in Mexico, leaving the Impreza, Focus and Xsara to fight for second! Ninco's 307 introduces a whole new suspension system, "ProShock-2", featuring new shock-absorbers and bushings. For maximum grip, it has 4-wheel drive and is powered by the higher torque NC-5 motor.

Proshock-2 will be fitted to all new models featuring suspension and also has the facility to change between soft, medium and hard settings. Existing models such as the Clio and Pro-Truck will continue with the original ProShock system.

12th Rally-Slot

Each year, the Rally Catalunya attracts more than half a million people to the Spanish town of Lloret. A percentage of those are Rally-Slot fans too! To commemorate this event, Ninco have released a limited edition rally car - the latest in a succession of special "Catalunya - Costa Brava RACC" cars produced by Ninco



for more than ten years. This new Clio Super 1600 (50353) is painted in metallic grey with precise yellow graphics on the roof, bonnet and rear quarter panels and matching yellow door mirrors and rear spoiler. The Rally Catalunya takes place on the asphalt surface of the roads around Lloret de Mar and with the event being held on the last three days of October, the chance of rain in Spain may result in some very slippery action!

Speedy Tunisie

The latest Raid car is a new version of the Ford Ranger Pro Truck (50349). This differs from the first two as it is fitted with a rear cover to aid aerodynamics. This truck is modelled on that driven by Gache and Gauthier during the Rallye Optic 2000 Tunisie - one of two organized by NPO that make up part of the FIA World =>



Cup (car) series. It is painted mid-blue with a white front end and carries the logos of the Speedy Quick auto repair service (now part of the Kwik-Fit group). Special “desert dirt” effect paint gives a raced appearance as would be found on the real thing after tackling the sands of Tunisia. As with other Raid vehicles, an NC-7 Raider motor, ProArm drop guide and ProShock suspension are fitted as standard.

Angle-winder with wings

The highly popular BMW M3 GTR is released this month in the striking “Red Bull” (50350) livery. The beautiful metallic blue paintwork is nicely complemented by the gold BBS wheel hubs. This is the eighth racing version of the angle winder and with the benefit of an NC-5 “Speeder” motor giving out 20,000rpm with 290g.cm torque, it’s not just the main sponsor that gives it wings!

Kitted out for Christmas?

With only two months until Christmas you may want to start thinking about what set to buy for

yourself, er... I mean, for your children (*or nephews, nieces, grandchildren, neighbours' kids, whoever - just as long as you make it clear that you will help set it up and look after the sets for them, so bits don't get lost*). As well as the current range of sets shown in the catalogue, Ninco have released two more. The entry level oval layout is now available as a “GTI Cup” set (20121), featuring two unique liveried VW Golfs powered by NC-5 motors. The set includes two new 55 Plus controllers, barriers and banking supports.

Next up is the “Xtreme Rivals” set (20122). This figure-of-eight circuit includes exclusive decorations of the Callaway C12-R and Porsche 911 GT1. Again, the cars are fitted with NC-5 motors and the set includes 55 Plus controllers, complete bridge, barriers and banking supports.

To recreate the Rally of Mexico, Tunisia or the Paris-Dakar, kits like the Off-Road Curve and Dune can be added to any layout. Obstacles such as mud and stones are included in the kits to make the track surface even more challenging to Rally and Raid category cars. ■



Shipment from

Spain

by Gareth Jex

Another relatively quiet month on the SCX side. Tecnitoys are now back from their holidays and working on the releases for the 4th quarter.

This month sees the official launch of SCX Digital Powerline, a full review appears in this journal. I will be attending the official UK press launch in September and will report back any updates.

No new SCX releases to inform you about this month; however I felt I must mention one new car. I don't normally talk too much about Tecnitoys Spanish only releases as,
a) they don't send them to me and
b) there are problems with the brand name.

That said, I paid good money for this product and I thought you might be interested.

Ref 6158 Séat Cupra GT

This Spanish only model is based on the prototype car Séat launched in Barcelona. The real car is a prototype developed exclusively for the race track and its final version may make its debut in the Spanish GT Series. Séat claim the car projects an image of their future models and is in line with the brand claim "SÉAT Auto Emocion". That is all well and good, but what we are looking at here is an Audi Powered V6 producing over 500bhp and in my opinion it looks like sex on wheels!

The Tecnitoys model looks identical to the photos I have seen of the real car, finished in a deep red with silver skirt. The model sits very low to the track. An RX-42 motor sits in a ➡➡



rocking chassis assembly (similar to the Dome), Xenon lights, sprung guide, return to centre guide and adjustable magnet.

This model is only available in Spain and is not an SCX branded car. I'm sure this is a licensing issue or maybe Tecnitoys don't think there is a market for a Séat Prototype outside of Spain. Either way I don't think they are right. This is one of the nicest looking slot-car models I have seen for a while now and judging from the brief track time I saw it will perform well also.

In for a penny; in for a pound, this month also sees a new release from the magazine company Altaya. Their new series is entitled *Duelos Miticos* and features pairs of arch track rivals (or so they say).

Again this magazine is only available in Spain and subscriptions can only be taken out to a Spanish address. For those of you not in the know these cars are sold in kit form; each week you receive one of four parts making a car. The parts are sold in newsagents, but you can also subscribe, in which case you will receive an additional two cars. 16 cars in total. All re-releases of classic Exin and Tecnitoys models

they include: Mitsubishi Lancer vs Toyota Corolla; Brabham BT46 vs Ferrari 312 B3; Ligier JS-11 vs Williams FW07; Chaparral 2E vs Ford GT 40 MKII; Ferrari 333SP vs Porsche 911 GT1; Porsche 961 vs Ferrari F40 LM and Porsche 935 K3 vs BMW M1. Subscribers will also receive the Lancia 037 & Ford RS200. All the liveries are unique to this edition. Particularly nice is the Brabham and the BMW M1 in BASF livery. For full details and colour photos log onto www.altaya.es. If you do have a Spanish address and don't mind ordering two sets, get in touch! – Please!

News also reached me this month about another Altaya magazine series. This one was released under the SCX brand in France. Details are sketchy, but it appears it was released as a trial run somewhere in France. According to Tecnitoys there are no plans to release any other SCX in France. Thanks to Henk Pijpers in Holland for this information.

Well that's about it for this month. Hopefully next month we will have news of the 4th quarter releases including the Lancia! ■

Traders travels

By Robert Learmouth
(Westwood Models)

The 'Too many swapmeets?' debate has popped up again - this time on SlotForum (a popular Internet message board). That said, whilst the message thread started off with this question, it only really had one person agreeing that there are too many events and in fact turned into a very productive round of 'suggestions for improvement'. The timing was around the late summer Milton Keynes event (MK2) and it's true that a number of stallholders commented that they had not had a good day. Does this make it a bad event? Does this mean we have too many events? Not in my book, in fact I thought it was a good event. As always there were plenty of very happy buyers and of course plenty of happy stallholders too. And at the end of the day what about the name - 'swapmeet'? We all have bad days from time to time but swap a few cars, buy a few cars instead or even push the boat out and talk to someone about slot-cars! Swapmeets are not just about selling!

I was one of the louder voices in pushing for more swapmeets. My main motivation was that eBay was getting a very large chunk of the action amongst the new enthusiasts in the hobby and these people were not aware of the fun the rest of us have had for years at events. Ashford, Worthing, Orpington, Slough and MK2 have, in my view, been a resounding success in terms of attracting this new generation of collector. And a good number have joined the NSCC as a result. MK2 was the first time myself and Jon had promoted the new Swindon event next January and of all the people we spoke to everyone was very positive about it (okay Brian, maybe one person wasn't...) and that's on top of all the other new events!

The slot-car world has moved on rapidly in the past 3-5 years. I remember at one time I would say for every enthusiast in the NSCC there was another one not in the club. Well that 1:1 ratio is now probably 1:20,30 or 50 - take your pick. Yes, we used to have a very exclusive

little club and were, to all intents and purposes at the centre of slot-car collecting in the UK. Events like Evesham, Liphook, Loughborough and Leeds, i.e. the more geographically extreme or difficult (for significant numbers of us), weren't a long distance to drive in those days wherever you were. Once upon a time, a 2½ hour drive for me to Loughborough felt like just 1 hour as I was positively wetting my pants at the opportunity to be involved with slot-cars, as I had no other means for the previous 2 months since Milton Keynes. Life has changed now! It's called the Internet and eBay. A lot of people don't want to travel more than an hour to an event and all the new events help to support this wish. Yes, I am disappointed that Evesham has not been run this year but I do not agree it was simply pushed out. If someone pushes me out of a queue then the least they can expect is to get pushed back. The new events all exploit something else to make them a bit different. Ashford has a very large targeted audience in the antique/car boot centre, Orpington is the only event inside the M25, Slough was well-positioned and had several slot-car circuits (to say nothing of 2000 leaflets being distributed in the orders of several larger dealers to promote the event), Worthing is one of the hottest spots in the country for collectors (I joke not) and the mecca which is MK is now available to all and not just NSCC members. Swindon is in a good spot on the M4 and the location has been chosen to provide four local family attractions within a 10-minute walk, i.e. the whole family can have a day out and not just the slot fanatic.

This all said, I have my criticisms and these were mostly echoed on SlotForum (please note that these were general comments and not necessarily specific to MK2); advertising for open events is vital to ensure it's not just NSCC members who turn up and get spread too thinly. Make swapmeets different by having racing circuits etc. Note for traders - put visible prices on your cars, there aren't many people who =>

can be bothered to ask any more (if you don't know how to price some items email me with plenty of warning and I'll help - Phil Etgart was kind enough to do that for me and I'll happily recycle the favour). Another note for traders - look happy and join in the fun, don't sit moping if it's going bad (I know that person's feedback wasn't aimed at me 'cos I'm not at my stall half the time - too much talking to do elsewhere!). Organisers should get together and try to spread events out better - well how many times have I said that?

And finally, for those who are claiming prices are too low due to all the swapmeets - not true in my opinion. The manufacturers have put out too many new releases this year and people can't afford or don't want them all. Some (not all) dealers decide to take it on the chin on behalf of the manufacturers who have made this mistake and sell off cheaply to move on from the problem. Like I've said before in this column, make the most of it as those still around next

year will not suffer the same problem again. Also, eBay has enormous amounts to answer for as every Tom, Dick and Harry is dealing now and prices are all over the place. Swapmeets merely exhibit the visible signs and are not the cause!

But yes, I do think we have enough events now - though perhaps if we could just make a bit more room by spreading the current ones out better...

Finally, congratulations to Roger on the new edition of what is now known as 'The Definite Guide'.* He has answered his critics superbly and produced a wonderful book. I'm sure there will be errors in there but that's part of the fun and yes, I know my name is spelt incorrectly in the credits, The Slot City/Westwood Models number is wrong and I now have to get used to people ringing me at home again after that number was published!

*Got me own back - it's 'The Definitive Guide' really... ■

Vanquish, and other musings

By Gary Clift

I finally got around to actually setting up a track over here in Canada and had a chance to test all the new goodies that I have bought in the past 24 months. I know everyone has their own views about all types of car, ones they like, ones they don't, etc. But still, my underlying belief is that magnets suck, and I don't mean the car to the track! Trouble is, take them out, and the handling is suddenly transformed into something resembling a mattress on a swamp. Solutions to this vary, depending on make/model of course, but one make stands out as being pretty good straight out of the box, sans magnet, and that is Vanquish.

Yes I know they're out of sorts scale wise, and the drivers get a nose bleed driving in such an elevated position. But on my Scalex 124 track, which is beautifully smooth with big radius curves compared with Plexytrack, they handle superbly. A good combination of speed and road holding, but can slide the cars through long sweeping bends at a good pace. The diff then comes into its own, and will pull the tail back in, at which point can accelerate a bit more. A different technique from the norm, but great fun on long, open radius curves. I can imagine this is not quite the same on tighter circuits, though.

Looking forward to getting my Lotus 72, and later on the Surtees and March 761. Both the Lotus and March models could also have a vast number of different liveries, from what is my own personal "schoolboy hero" era of motorsport. Just imagine...Gold Leaf Jochen Rindt (or if you can't wait, re-livery them yourself using MRE decals)...JPS Ronnie Peterson...possible 72 E versions from later seasons, including Jacky Ickx. Who can forget being on the outside of Paddock Bend at the 1974 Race of Champions at Brands, in the pouring rain, and seeing Ickx pass Lauda's Ferrari...on the outside!!!...in the bloody rain!!! Memories of fish tail parkas, Emmo sunglasses,

sideburns and afghan coats come flooding back! On the 761 front, a Beta orange version, as driven by Vittorio "Monza Gorilla" Brambilla has to be a must, surely?

Other classics that we could hope for from this golden era could include: McLaren M23 (1973 Yardley, 1974-6 Marlboro), with Hulme, Revson, Hailwood, Fittipaldi, Hunt, Mass.. another endless list. How about Tyrrell 003/005/007, Lotus 76/77/78/79 or Ferrari 312, 312B, 312B3, 312T, 312T2, 312T3, T4, 126K, etc, etc...

Is your mouth watering yet?...This is just the F1, let alone all the sports cars!

With this many possibilities, does the out of whack scale really matter, other than the two obvious drawbacks of possibly being too wide for plexy track (dump it!), and differing size to rest of collection (run 'em on their own, and display separately!). Yes I know I'm dreaming, what with all the licensing rhubarb these days, but you surely get my drift (pun intended) of the possibilities?

I for one look forward to hearing what they plan to produce in the future. The track is now partially assembled under the bed in spare room, so it can be set up at minimal notice!

I have not done an exhaustive "test", ie timing to the nano-second, comparing with other makes, etc. These are purely my first impressions of these particular models, and with the proliferation of different manufacturers these days, you pays your money and takes your choice really, don't you? I am not suggesting people go out and buy an all new track system. I use both plexy track (classic), as well as the 1/24th stuff. The smaller scale provides a different challenge, ie bumpy, warped sections, as well as chicanes, tight corners, etc. If you're racing at club level, then each track provides its own different challenges too, in that some use routed wood, plexy track, Ninco, etc.

⇒→

Carrera is popular here, with the recent rebirth of interest in slot racing in North America. People that are either getting back into it after years of non-slot activity, or are simply new to the hobby, find the Carrera track to be good value, as well as wider than the other brands available, ie Scalextric Sport, Ninco, SCX.

Hopefully the photos will illustrate the following points:

The difference in width of track overall, and space between slots, of Scalex plexy and 1/24.
(below)



The difference in widths of "proper"1/32 cars, in this case Fly, and Vanquish (which I think is around 1/28), on both types of track.
(above and top right)



Just how "flexy" the "plexy" is!
(below)



One other point regarding Vanquish cars is that their overall width is the same as early 90's Scalex F1 cars (Williams FW11, Lotus JPS/Camel, etc) rear axle width. Of course the F1's body is not as wide, but all the wheels are exposed, so again there are different challenges. The Vanquish bang bodywork, whereas the F1 bang wheels and leap over each other. So they can fit plexy track, but make for really tight racing.

Not an exhaustive test here then, more of a first impressions thing. Needless to say, the Vanquish sports cars got the most running, with magnets removed. I briefly ran other stuff, like Monogram Cobra, Slot.It Porsche 956, etc, but not to an extent where I could really fiddle with them by removing magnets, and testing with lesser powered magnets, or weights, etc.

Another car that really impressed, especially with its low price, was the Scalex IRL Dallara. A good looking, well detailed single seater, with “proper” race liveries. It goes really quick, but remove the magnet totally, and it’s a bit all over the show. However, put a “chocolate bar” magnet in, which does need a slight amount of the upper body filed (no more than 1mm) to accommodate it, and it’s much nicer to drive. Slower lap times of course, but fun, rather than the stuck-to-the-track-tion characteristic of a magnet which is far too powerful. Who really wants a magnet so powerful, that it not only lifts

up the track if you try and pick it up, but also pulls your carpet tacks out?! This is a debate that will run on and on, no doubt.

You will see that I tend to now only buy what are my own favourites from the full size world, rather than “anything that’s a slot-car” mentality that used to prevail, in the pre-boom days. They are bought because they’re relevant to the sheer love of full size motorsport, and to then have the model enhanced by having the box signed by the relevant driver is a real buzz too. If you’re not into the full size version, pray tell what is the point in collecting the scale version? After all, I have absolutely no interest in cricket, which is why I passed up the opportunity to buy a signed cricket box on scratchsniff.com recently!

Happy racing and collecting.

PS: hands up all those who tried searching for scratchsniff.com! ■



Sir,
With regard to recent innovations and developments by Hornby there have been a few negative comments made by one or two of your members in the letters section recently.

Reference has been made to “an ageing demographic for the hobby”. Where has your correspondent who made this remark obtained his information from? Surely he would agree that if he is right then Hornby are doing the right thing to innovate to address this situation.

A comparison has also been made between Hornby and SCX rally cars and the use of 4WD or lack of. How many of your members actually believe that SCX 4WD does improve the slot-car experience? Your correspondent has also overlooked the fact that Hornby are about to produce a 4WD rally car although it remains to be seen whether it will “improve the slot car experience”.

When your correspondent referred to the “Sport” branding he overlooked the fact that it is an extra £3 and not the £4 stated. For that you also get metal bushes and ground axles which are individually machined to ensure a precise fit. Club racers will be able to inform him of the benefits of this additional specification. All this is in addition to the chassis badge, limited edition numbered card and the display box with some background information about the car. When properly displayed I am confident that your correspondent would agree that the Sport packaging does enhance the presentation of the car and cars do actually spend more time on the shelf than on the race track, even though many of us would prefer the reverse to be true!

If Hornby offered the ‘race tuned’ cars requested then they may well place Scalextric retail prices on a par with Slot.It and Fly at £33 to £40; I for one would not be willing to pay these higher prices and I suspect the typical Scalextric customer would be unwilling to also.

As for digital and the “dodgem” comment, your correspondent has not even had a go and he is already a one man judge and jury! There is a lot more to digital than lane changing and those who have tried it, including members of the NSCC editorial team, have all said that it is fun which is, after all, the name of the game.

The ‘editorial team’ you refer to consists of myself and a large black cat. As far as I am aware Archie has not expressed any opinions on the latest Scalextric innovations and I certainly haven’t said that “Digital is fun”. (Brian)

Then there are the comments about the MotoGP bikes. I doubt that your correspondent has actually had a go with one using the new Scalextric banked track that comes with every MotoGP set. And Scalextric have always, from day one, made the point that the MotoGP bikes will not handle like cars. Your correspondent goes to some lengths to describe how they actually handle and lo and behold, he is describing how full size motor bikes handle! Yet he sees this as a negative. Please ask your correspondents to stop comparing these with cars as they are incomparable.

I am not in the habit of directing anybody as to the content of their contributions. Members are free to express any opinion they wish about =>

any slot related subject. This is an independent magazine, not a subsidiary of Scalextric "Racer" or any other manufacturer's publicity machine.
(Brian)

They are really a stand alone product with a specific and new target market although existing enthusiasts will also be drawn to the MotoGP bikes as being something different and innovative to race with.

Hornby make the point on the packaging of the MotoGP sets that the purchaser may have an interest in other forms of motor sport and if they do to visit the Scalextric website to view the full range of cars. Folk who purchase a MotoGP set would normally be expected to have an interest in bikes and the statement on the packaging clearly anticipates this.

The magnet/no magnet argument also rears its head again. Your correspondent forgets to mention that Hornby cars perform better with magnets than their SCX or Ninco competitors. I like my Hornby cars as they are thank you very much and please may we have more like the Starsky and Hutch cars and the Vanwall and Maserati classics recently released.

Your correspondent refers to a "number of poor handling characteristics" that Hornby cars have when they are raced with the magnets removed. I suspect that if your correspondent was to list these characteristics then many of us would also see these as being characteristics of SCX and Ninco cars in box standard form also when the magnets are removed!

Finally, the "hard core" NSCC enthusiasts who are so positive about Digital and Sport World are condemned by your correspondent. Again, although not having any experience with these products, he is able to act as judge and jury not only on the Hornby innovations, but on fellow members of the NSCC!

Your members can be the judge and jury on this occasion. However, better to wait until you have all had a go with the new products and then decide!

I am, yours etc,
Gary Leigh

Sir,

I couldn't help but laugh at your article about pensioning off Scalextric spectators.

If you looked round our club room on a Friday evening you'd see they are all doing well! Quite a few of our club members (Larkfield, Kent) move about just as much and with as much vigour as our old static friends - especially when there's a job needs doing! I'm sure most other clubs would agree. Feel free to print this, I've said it lots of times and had many agree with me. Keep up the good work.

I am, yours etc,
Dave Smith

.....

Carrera James Bond Ford Mustang convertible

Reviewed by Neil Dudman

When the email came through from NSCC HQ about reviewing a Carrera slot-car I thought why not? Having just come back in touch with scale racing since my childhood, what could be more exciting? Then, when I picked up the car the realism of my task kicked in, followed by sheer panic! Being a mere whipper snapper my James Bond knowledge was less than vague, couple this with only just finding the sport again - I was in trouble! Next time I have a bright idea, someone please wake me up!

The car I am reviewing is a replica from the movie Thunderball which was the highest grossing Bond film of all time and starred Sean Connery as the man who needs no introduction. Also in the film was the gorgeous and delicious Luciana Paluzzi as Fiona Volpe, (who is the figure modelled in the car). Looking through the various websites I think I will have to purchase a copy of this movie as it seems to have the best line up of Bond girls to date!

Enough dreaming of 007's girls, now on to the real thing. A 1964 Ford Mustang Convertible packing 2300cc under the hood and a whopping 150 bhp it did not hang around either, topping over 150 km/h. I can almost feel the vibration from the exhaust note as I type.

Not having brought a Carrera car in the past, my first experience was one of attention to detail. Looking at the car through the quality clear hard plastic box you could see the intricate detail of the car. The bumpers, side skirts, front grille and even the air dams on the side of the car were chrome effect, couple this with the white roof and the smooth sky blue coachwork the car looked stunning.

Being a father, your nightmare scenario is your child opening up the gift and finding it wedged in place with dozens of plastic coated wires and never a pair of scissors in sight. We have all been there at least once. But, to my delight, the car was held in place with one fixing screw, which could be undone via use of the fingers with no hunting for the dreaded lost screwdriver. Well done Carrera, not only does this mean the kids can play quicker (who said anything about kids having slot-cars!) but it also allows you to safely store the car away after careful adult use.

Editor's note – the wires you refer to were actually removed for photography prior to sending you the car – sorry.

Box aside and now I have my mitts on the cars itself. How does it feel? My first impression when looking through the box was that this ➔➔





could be quite a fragile car, turns out that it feels rather solid and chunky. There is little flex in the body and the chassis is tough and rigid.

Looking at the underside, the first thing I notice is that the car has two magnets. A fixed one just in front of the rear axle and another, which can be moved into three positions and mounted mid way on the car, is located just in front of the motor. It has a huge (in relation to Hornby/SCX) guide, in fact I doubt it would run on a Scalextric/SCX track as, without the brushes in the guide, it measures just shy of 8mm in depth. As normal with a Carrera car it has the reverse polarity switch so you can drive the other way around you track if desired.

Moving the car up the right way and bringing the bright pastel coloured body back into view, the car looks stunning. It will more than compliment any collector's cabinet or pit box. However, I am saddened to see the front bumper move and wiggle freely up and down and in and out, perhaps it's just this model but considering all the cars are out of the same mould, I think a lot may do the same.

The interior is white in colour (same as the roof) and is well kitted out with detail and complete with steering wheel, gear stick and instrument panel. The car comes complete with the Blonde Bombshell, with a nice little pony tail, she is even wearing a colour coordinated blue top - classy.

After my initial thoughts of the car being fragile, my thoughts have turned to reality. Whilst handling the car one of the windscreen wipers has come off in my hand. Whether it was loose or semi broken beforehand I do not know. Also, I think the aerial and the wing mirrors would not have much staying power, the same could be said for the roof and the thin rear window if it got in the wrong hands.

With the above in mind I have come to the conclusion that if this car was put in the hands of a careless driver I doubt it would survive in one piece. Which brings me to a point; this car is not for the racer amongst us but more a static model with the occasional concours d'élégance, run. In the wrong hands it could become a bit of a mess and a wasted model. Never the less, it is a stunning model and bound to be one that we will all want to own, even if it's to imagine us in the car being driven by the lovely Luciana! ■

Goodwood Revival 2004

by Gareth Jex

To steal an immortal line from Stirling Moss *"Give me Goodwood on a summer's day"* - pretty much wraps up this quick event report really. Hot weather, excellent venue, some of the greatest cars in the world, dressing up in fifties gear, display of the new Scalextric Historic range, good company and not too far from home.

Due to other commitments I could only make the Saturday, but one day is better than none and an excellent day it was.

For the first few races we camped ourselves around Woodcote corner with a good view of the famous chicane. Pre War racers getting their tails out was a sight to see.



This was the third year I have been to Lord March's race track to watch pre 60's race cars go wheel to wheel around a great open flowing circuit. Don't mistake this event with the Festival of Speed (see Sept journal) where some of the cars give demo runs up the hill. The Revival is a real race weekend!

The format was changed this year to include races (as opposed to qualifying) on the Saturday and Sunday. Previously Friday and Saturday were practice and qualifying for races on Sunday only. In my opinion this was a considerable improvement. I was lucky to travel down to the track with fellow slot enthusiast Jim Moyes; this meant we could use Jim's GRRC pass to park close to the track.

The car park itself is worthy of mention as a finer collection of sports and classic cars you are unlikely to come across. Ferrari, Lotus, Jaguar, Caterham, MG you name it, it was there!

After a couple of races we moved to watch an historic BMW motor based race from just before the start finish straight, not as good a view but close to the action.

The motorbike action (which does not appeal) and lunchtime gave me a chance to pop into the period shops area where Scale Models had a stall. Roger Gillham was signing copies of his latest reference book (which is a huge improvement on his previous excellent books!) I met up with Brian (our editor) and several other NSCC members and slot enthusiasts. Roger kindly signed a copy of his new book for the NSCC 25th Anniversary weekend which we will give away as a prize or auction for charity. A number of people had brought copies of all Roger's books to sign! Thanks to Mark and Julie Scale for arranging this book signing. ➤➤

Goodwood



Scalextric Historic Vanwall



How about this one next
Adrian?



Daytona Cobra - drool, drool!

Scrapbook



Tail-out action



Is that our illustrious editor with Roger Gillham or the original of "country gent with stick"?



Beautiful - or what?



Playtime at the roadshow Adrian seems to have done a runner again



Little and Large

While the racing was stopped we popped over the bridge to the exhibition area where Scalextric had their Roadshow trailer. We met up with Adrian Norman from Hornby who showed us the new Historic range and let us have a quick race on the four lane track inside. Must say the cars look excellent and drive very smoothly, no doubt a full review will follow elsewhere. The cars had only just made it to the event and only approx. 200 of each were available on the day having been sent on a plane from China!



Adrian and some very friendly ladies were on hand to exchange cash for slot.

After saying goodbye to Adrian we returned to Madgwick corner (with a small detour via the bar) to watch the rest of the afternoon's action. Finding a spot in the shade proved tricky with hundreds bunched under the trees. This is one of the better spots to watch the racing with the cars flying past the start/finish straight in to the first right hand bend. Fantastic racing with an assortment of open sports cars, Brooklands racers and 50's saloons including a huge Jaguar racing a tiny Austin A35.

One of the major attractions, to me, of both Goodwood events is the access to the paddock areas. With GRRC membership and, most important, a jacket, shirt and tie you can wander around the paddock area and get really close to some of the cars of your dreams. Eight GT40s lined up, Lotus 16 racers, Merc streamliners, Ferrari, Cobras and probably best of all..... a wonderful Austin Healey Sprite in Écurie Écosse blue on a fantastic transporter.

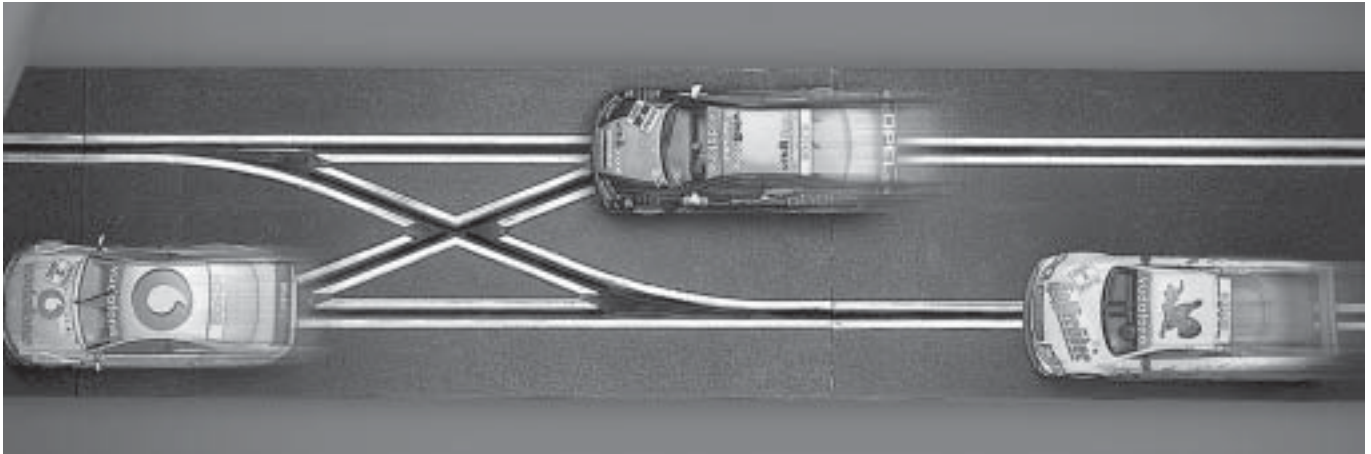
I understand that next year's event will also be an advance ticket only event, so put it in your diary! ■



Review



SCX Digital Power line by Gareth Jex



About this time last year I was invited to Barcelona by Tecnitoys for an advance preview of their new Digital system, between then and now I have been avidly awaiting the release of this new system in the UK so that I can tell you all about it.

As some of you may already know Tecnitoys kindly gave us a prototype set earlier in the year for NSCC members to use and evaluate, this was the system we took to the Slough event in May. A number of you may also have had experience of the original system at the London Toy Fair. The original system was released in Spain (Tecnitoys home market) for Christmas 2003.

Between then and now the system has been updated, improved and feedback from their customers has been incorporated into the SCX release. The system is now called SCX Digital Power Line and there are some differences between this and the Spanish version, more of this later.

Normally when I sit down to write a review I can write with the knowledge that those reading the article will have some knowledge (normally more than me!) of the basic product. On this occasion however I felt that it would be best to start from scratch as this is a totally new product in terms of cars, track, controllers and the very way the system is used and raced with.

The basics

SCX Digital racing is based on new technology and enables up to six cars to run independently on a single two lane track. Cars have the ability to switch to/from any one lane by pressing a button on the controller (overtaking). Race information is displayed in real time via a digital lap counter. Scale 1:32. ⇒



The track

1:32 scale track moulded in light grey coloured plastic. Track dimensions and lane spacing is virtually identical to non digital track, but the two systems are **not** compatible. You can't combine non digital SCX track (or Classic Hornby track) with SCX digital.

Track sections push together and pull apart and the fit is good. There are connections at the rail intersections as well as additional power connections to the sides for improved electrical connectivity.

Power to the track is a constant (or pulsed) 18 volts on both lanes, the power transformer supplied in each set is suitable to run up to three cars, an additional unit is required for more.

At this time there are four track type sections, Standard straight, half straight, changeover straight and a standard radius curve. There are moulded plastic track borders and barriers. Additional curves and track accessories will follow in the future. The new SCX Power line logo appears on all track sections.



The cars

The cars are smart. Each car has a memory chip in it that allows the car to be programmed to operate with any one of the hand controllers connected to the digital power base by carrying out a few simple programming steps. This configuration remains stored in the car unless the car is re-programmed, even when the power is off and the cars are packed away for weeks. To facilitate rapid identification of your car each set contains a quantity of stick on numbers to place on the cars.

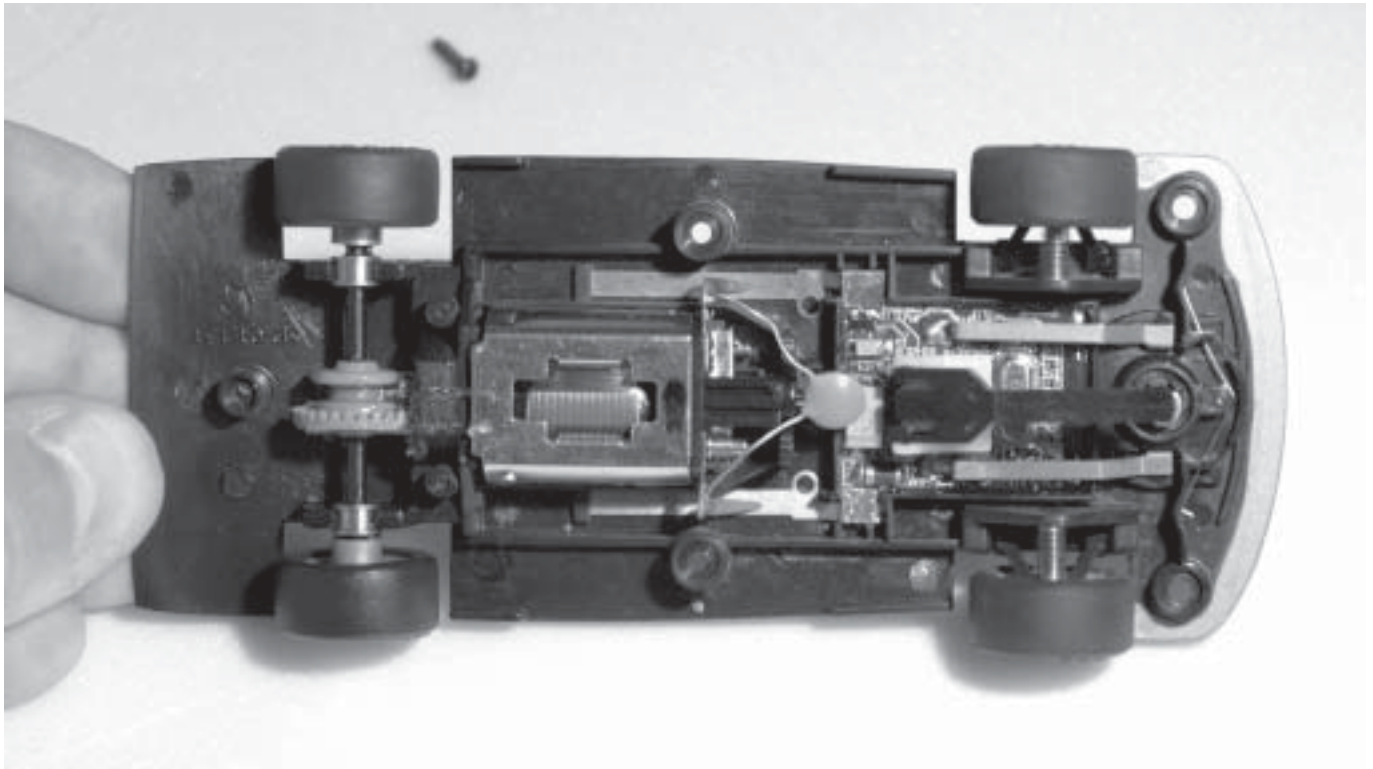
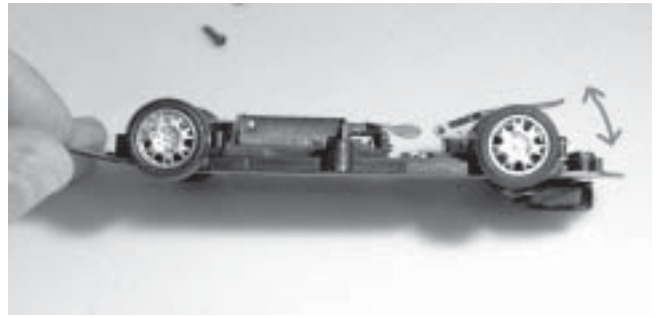


The first set to be released (ref 10000) contains three DTM cars, Audi TT-R, Opel Astra V8 Coupe and a Mercedes CLK. The second set Digital System Rally (ref 10010) will contain a Citroen Xsara WRC and a Subaru Impreza WRC. Individual cars planned for release in the near future include The Ford Focus and Peugeot 307 WRC cars along with different liveries of the DTM cars.

Non SCX digital cars will not work on the digital system and Digital cars will not work on standard SCX or other digital race systems.

From the outside the cars all look identical to their non digital SCX partners (all be it in different boxes). However, turning them upside down or taking the body off will reveal a very different story. The motor, magnet and general chassis are exactly as you would expect (RX 41 motor, adjustable magnet) all models come with Xenon lighting and SCX's trade mark hard wired electrical connections from guide to motor and lighting.

Inside you will find a small circuit board containing all the chips and switches to control the car. Without going into intricate electrics assume that pulling the trigger works the same way. To activate the lane change you press a button on the top of the hand controller, this activates an electromagnetic switch inside the car that pushes down a small pin located in the guide flag (see photo right).

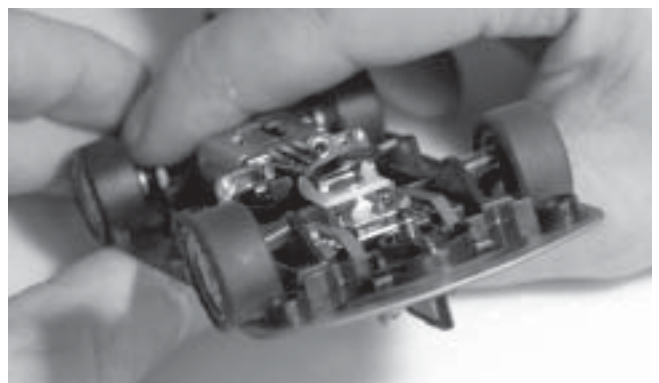


The electrics also send information back to the control unit each time it passes the start – to make the counter system work.

Lane changing is quick and simple, the blade in the cross over track sections are inert (i.e. they are not powered) the pin in the guide flag activates the blade to move sending the car over

or past the crossing point. As soon as a car passes over it returns to the pass position enabling a car behind to follow its own course. You can press the lane change button before you arrive at a cross over or wait until just before. Reaction seemed to be instantaneous.

Another point to note is the guide flag itself. Apart from having the extra pin there are also power pick up points on the sides of the guide =>



flag. These are there to pick up power as the flag passes over the change over sections. It also has self centring and is sprung.

To squeeze all the electrics into the chassis the front wheels are on stub axles that are sprung loaded to keep them in contact with the track.

In early prototypes of the system I used I felt there was a 'lag' or slight delay between throttle and action on the car. This seems to have been improved on the final SCX release and the response seemed good.

It's worth noting a small point regarding the cars. As soon as I got them I took them apart and lubricated all the normal points I would do in any car I wanted to drive, axle, motor, guide flag pin, etc. Just like any other car a bit of prep will help the performance and longevity of your cars. It's easy to assume because it's new technology that as soon as the car begins to slow or comes to a halt it must be something to do with the electrics. Every time we had a car stop during testing it was either fluff on the pick ups or (after a heavy off) the guide flag not sitting in its position correctly. It's important to ensure the guide flag is back in the correct position and firmly anchored with its retaining clips.

Digital control unit

This is the heart of the system where all your throttles, power and accessories connect to.

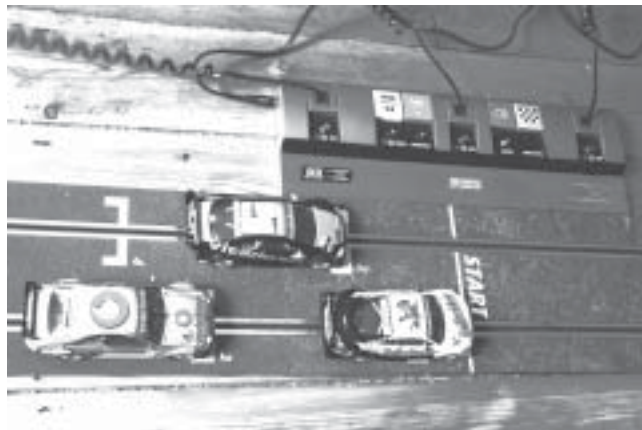
There are three throttle plug points (RJ45 type), three power connection points, another RJ45 connection to the right hand side for additional digital control units (for 4 cars or more), a sliding clip reveals another connection (not sure what it's for?) and four buttons on the top.

Starting on the left you have a green button with a chequered flag design, this is called race start and basically remotely resets the lap counter system. Next to this you have a blue button with a headlamp symbol, this gives you the option of driving with lights on or off. On the right hand side are the program buttons; the red button with a car shape is used to program each car to a throttle, the yellow, with plug and

fast forward symbols is used to set the power output (you have the option of full or half power settings or as SCX call it, Expert or Junior).

The instructions supplied, at first glance, look complex, but in fact once you get the hang of it it's a pretty simple process to use.

The entire unit slots into the side of the main start/finish track section which has a start line and grid positions (1-6) printed onto it.



Digital lap counter

In each set you get one digital lap counter capable of counting up to three cars; an expansion module (ref 25010) is available for use with four or more cars. The top section of the tower shows the number of laps completed (by the leading car) or the number of laps left depending on which route you prefer. Below are three (or six with expansion module) numbers, these indicate first second and third positions, the LED numbers to the side of this show the corresponding car number (for example in the photo showing the cars on the track in first place is car 2, second is car 1 and third is car three) again it takes a bit of getting use to, but works well. It didn't appear to miss a lap during over 200 laps of use. An additional feature of the lap counter is it will indicate when you are over one lap down by flashing a small dot after the car number.

The unit can count up to or down from 999 laps. The unit can be placed anywhere around the circuit for easy viewing from the driving position near the power base.



Digital controllers

Similar in appearance to the normal SCX controllers, moulded in plastic with a softer grip section for your hand. The throttle is finger operated, leaving the thumb free to push the lane change button on the top rear of the unit. The cable from the throttle to the control unit is of the coiled telephone type with an RJ45 connector. In testing I tended to use the throttle two handed, but each to their own. Each controller has a different colour lane change button, blue, white and yellow.

Borders and barriers

Again a new style. According to SCX they are 'Washington' style barriers (must take a look next time I'm in DC) not really sure what this means but basically they are in two parts. One horizontal simulating the border in green with a blue and white rumble strip and the other vertical in grey to stop the cars flying off the track. They do work well and simply push fit into the sides of the track. Outer curves, quarter straight and leading in tapering borders/barriers are available.

Because the barriers do work you may find yourself approaching an off car very quickly, of course this happens in normal racing, but bear in mind it might be in the same lane! You can always change to the other lane to avoid the accident if you're quick. Remember cars can be replaced in either lane after an off.

Summary

I deliberately didn't help unbox, set up the track and program the cars during testing as I wanted to see just how easy it was or wasn't, (or that's what I was saying!) The three guys helping out had no problems setting up the track and it seemed to go together well, nice and flat. Programming the cars also went remarkably easily.

We began our testing racing all three cars at full power (you can individually set each to full or half power) and completed over one hundred laps. As I stated before the only problem we experienced was the guide flag twisting out of its mounting after a big off.

All of the testers were experienced racers (of differing ability) and it took some getting used to. In my experience I tended to think that each time I passed the changeover track section that I would swap lanes (like a crossover) regardless of my actions. I also felt that everything happened very quickly. Reaction to the changing lanes and the possibility of the car in front doing the same thing takes getting used to.

After about 100 laps I re-oiled and checked the cars and we decided to race at half power (or Junior speed). Now call me an old fart, but this was much better. The racing was much closer, you had time to consider lane changing and were able to follow the action and plan your racing. I have never been one for max speed on slot cars and prefer a slower but closer race. I would suggest that the first few times you use the system you set it to half power to get the hang of it.

SCX gave us the larger set to test with and we initially made the circuit as shown on the box. We also had the older prototype set and decided to combine the two to make a larger =>



circuit. This was much better. Having a variety of curves and straights really added to the experience and brought the extra possibilities of digital racing out. We didn't add any further lane change sections.

As I mentioned before there are some compatibility issues when using a Spanish system and the new Powerline systems. The track basically is compatible, but you can't interchange the control units and lap counters.

Conclusion

This year we have seen, heard or been promised Digital systems in one form or another from all the major slot manufacturers. Which is the best, most popular, time will tell. SCX is the first off the shelf system to hit the streets and I'm pleased that they decided to make improvements from the first generation systems sold in Spain.

The system works very well, takes getting used to and is great fun to use.

During the testing of this product we decided to make a video of the system. This video will be available on the NSCC web site for you to download as an MPEG file. The video shows the programming, set up and racing of the cars in more detail than I can describe in words.

The track will also be made available to members at as many swapmeets as we can take it to. We also plan to have a Digital display of all the systems at our 25th Anniversary weekend next May. So try before you buy.

Thanks to Bachmann for supplying the review set and to Tecnitoy for answering some specific technical questions. My thanks to Rob, Jim and Julian for helping to review the system and special thanks to Julian for filming, editing and hosting the video production, (oh, and for making coffee!)

If you have any specific questions regarding SCX Digital Powerline, please drop me a line and I will try to answer your queries. ■

Subaru Impreza "Imola"

Reviewed by Mel Turbutt

I always look forward to receiving a telephone call or email from our esteemed editor offering me a car to track test, and recently I was doubly pleased as Brian had on offer not one, but two cars to sample. These are the latest incarnations of Ninco's 2003 specification Impreza World Rally Car, 50346 Subaru "Imola" and 50344 Subaru ProRace "Imola".

When I first saw these advertised I wondered why Ninco had chosen to name a rally car after a Formula One circuit, but when they arrived it became obvious that these cars (or should I say THIS car as it's the same one only built to a different specification) are sponsored by Imola wheels. The only difference in livery between the two models is that the standard car is mud splattered. It even includes the ProRace logo on the roof although it's not to that spec. The tampo printing is to a very high standard although the colour scheme isn't really to my taste. The nose of the car is orange (strangely, the bonnet is white) turning to yellow from the front doors back with the characteristic Impreza WRC multi element rear wing also in orange. In fact this part has obviously been moulded out of orange plastic, and it shows. A fragile looking aerial sits in the centre of the roof with the silver transponder to its left. Many people think that this is a camera, but in fact it is a regulation piece of safety equipment fitted to World Rally Cars to enable the organisers to track the competitors and warn them if a car has crashed inside a stage. As to whether this is an authentic colour scheme, the answer is I'm not really sure. No driver's name is visible (although it does say "Barro" on the standard car's box) and despite an extensive trawl through both the Internet and my collection of rally reference books, I couldn't find any pictures of this particular car. It also

says "Subaru Impreza Cup" on the bonnet. This is a competition that runs within the national rally championships of France, Italy and Spain, but is for Group N cars. I think that the most likely explanation is that a car does run in this colour scheme, but it's a Group N Impreza and not a World Rally Car.

Inside the cockpit we have the standard Ninco ¾ length rally crew surrounded by a roll cage (strangely still in the standard Subaru blue) with a fire extinguisher behind the co-driver's seat. Although there is a location pin for a spare wheel in the back, the wheel is missing. I can understand that with the ProRace car (as a means of saving weight) but was disappointed by its omission from the standard one. So outwardly the cars are identical. It's only when you remove the bodies that the difference in specification becomes apparent.

The innards

Actually, the first difference comes when you remove the body. The standard cross head screws (two at the front and one at the back) have been replaced on the ProRace car by three very trick brass ones with slotted heads. So you racers out there may have to replace your faithful Phillips screwdrivers! With the chassis laid bare it soon becomes obvious what makes these cars so different when you get them on the track. The standard one has the garish pink NC5 Speeder motor and four wheel drive operated by a flimsy single black drive belt operating on the left side of the axles. On the ProRace car we have the NC6 Crusher (great name!) motor with four wheel drive provided by two beefy red drive belts operating on both sides of the axles. I'm not a great fan of belt driven four wheel drive (as you may have gathered!) preferring SCX's twin ➤➤

drive shaft approach, but this ProRace system is the next best thing. Why? Well, when you turn the front wheels of the standard car the rear wheels (together with the crown wheel and pinion) don't revolve. The drive belt just slips on the front pulley. And if it does that when you turn the front wheels with your finger, it'll do the same thing when you need the front tyres to bite on the track. Spin the front wheels of the ProRace car and the rears follow suit. Of course there's no chance of anything slipping with twin drive shafts, but as I say, this is the next best solution. More on this subject later.

The ProRace car benefits from hardened steel axles that turn through ball bearings rather than the usual brass bushes. These bearings incorporate spacers that all but eliminate side-play in the axles. Both cars have the standard Ninco round magnet mounted directly in front of the motor. I must admit that I was surprised that there is no facility for adjusting the position of the magnet on the ProRace version. I know that many club racers would appreciate such an adjustment to suit their driving style. I was also

a little surprised that there is no appreciable difference in the weight of these two cars, the standard one being the merest tad heavier. I'd always imagined that these ProRace cars were ultra lightweight pocket rockets with bodies that would flex when you pick them up. OK, enough of the car's appearance. Let's get down to the nitty-gritty and get them on the track.

Race track

Both Subarus were given a quick oil and braid adjustment prior to a few running-in laps of Oakwood Park. I have to admit that I couldn't feel much difference between the two with the magnets fitted. As I've said many times before, I'm not a big fan of magnets in rally cars. And with my standard Scalextric hand throttles and Classic track, both were flat-out pretty much all the way around the circuit. Perhaps it's my inexperience with such things, but I can't tell much of a performance differential when driving cars fitted with magnets. The only difference I seem to come up with is the magnitude of the accidents when I get it wrong!



So, having run them in a bit, it was out with the magnets, and now it's a different story. I still couldn't feel that much difference between the performance of the motors. Perhaps it's my standard hand throttles again, that and the fact that the longest straight on Oakwood Park is only about eight feet long. Maybe the NC6 in the ProRace car would get the opportunity to pick its feet up on a commercial raceway. No, the big difference is in the handling department. The ProRace car was so smooth and sure-footed. My driving style is to brake very early and get the power down as smoothly and quickly as possible. And the ProRace Subaru does this beautifully. Its more efficient four wheel drive system leads to better braking and plenty of grip to power out of the bends with the minimum of fuss. In comparison the standard car twitches and slides around the corners like a speedway bike. After ten timed runs with each car I managed a best of 18.52 with the ProRace version (well under the existing lap record for a magnet-less rally car, 18.77 with a well sorted SCX Citroen Xsara) compared to 19.35 with the standard car.

Why is it quicker?

I should add that I don't "play" with slot-cars much during the summer months and both of my circuits were in a very dirty and dusty condition for this test. So what makes the ProRace car so much quicker? Is it the engine? The axles turning in their smart ball bearings? Well all of these features obviously help, but I'm convinced that it's that better four wheel drive system that really helps on a home circuit like mine. Just to prove this point I removed the drive belt from the standard car and tried a few laps in two wheel drive mode. Hey presto, a best time of 19.30 on my second attempt! Only five hundredths of a second quicker than before and the lack of drag from the drive belt could account for some of that, but it proves that single belt four wheel drive is about as much use as a concrete parachute.

Rally stage

Next it was on to the Penmaendyfi rally stage. I very much doubt if the engineers at Ninco ever designed their ProRace car to run on a circuit as twisty and bumpy as this, but its sure-footed handling once again came up trumps with a best time of 19.53, a tenth of a second faster than the record set by an SCX Toyota Corolla. The standard car (back in four wheel drive trim) put in a respectable 20.18. Not bad considering the amount of detritus on the track.

Which one?

So the question is, would I buy one of these Ninco Imprezas? And the answer is yes, but which one? Well, perhaps surprisingly, I'd plump for the standard one. And the reason? If I included the ProRace version in my rally championship, nothing else would stand a chance. Much as I admire Michael Schumacher, I'm not about to introduce his sort of dominance into my loft! However, if I was competing in a club championship for standard "out of the box" cars, then the ProRace Impreza would be my weapon of choice. After all, those brass body screws are sooooo sexy! Or is that just me? ■

The particular model under review here is Ninco part number 50334. The full size car was entered in the 1977 Le Mans, sponsored by Burton – Kremer and driven by Wollek, Steve and Gurdjian. It managed to finish a creditable 7th overall and 1st in group 4.

Dealing first with the presentation, the car comes in the usual Ninco large clear plastic case with black plinth. I am becoming increasingly irritated by the plethora of manufacturers who seem to be producing bigger and bigger cases for their cars. Please note Ninco, Carrera etc, the bigger the case does not mean the better the car and this is not a competition in who can make the biggest box for their slot-car! If it was a special edition or a truck I could understand, excess packaging springs to mind, it's just not necessary!

The base colour of the model is pure white and has blue panels on the bonnet, roof and flanks which are highlighted and detailed with simulated stitching in white. This theme for those of you perhaps outside of the UK is because Burton is a retail chain of men's clothing shops.

An amusing detail on each side of the car is the outline of a driver figure that, when viewed from side on, looks as if it's connected to the driver's head in the car.

The tampo style printing is good and fairly sharp, average for the quality of modern slot-cars but not as sharp as perhaps that of Hornby who do seem to set the standard. The body

detailing is good, complete with mirrors, twin wipers, light and indicator lenses and the traditional rear red reflector with Porsche printed on.

Of particular note are the plastic inserts for the cooling grille in the rear wing and best of all the black plastic bumpers and the corrugated crash impact sections set in the bumpers. Underneath, there is a small amount of engine detail and a single exhaust. The wheels appear to be a sort of lattice-work in gold with silver rims which are authentic.

The interior detailing is good with a three quarter driver figure, detailed dashboard, roll cage and fire extinguisher. Not too much detail in my opinion, just about right.

Innards

Turning to the chassis and drive components, this car is fitted with an in-line NC-5 motor and has the Ninco suspension set up with blue shocks and dampers. The usual sprung guide has been fitted and drive is to the rear wheels via the standard brass pinion and plastic contrate. Brass bearings on both axles have also been fitted. A round magnet has been fitted just in front of the motor but there is no adjustment for alternative positions.

My first impression, looking at the car is that it sits quite high with some 2mm of clearance between the tyre and wheel arches. The reason for this is to allow the suspension movement. The chassis pan is not flat, the motor sits low but the pan has high sills.

Performance

On the track (Scalextric Classic) the car is good dynamically, but nothing special, about what you would expect given the relatively high centre of gravity.

For those of you that like to tinker with things, I found that by unclipping the front shocks allowing the axle to turn much more freely performance was improved, not only in a straight line but also in the corners.

I am not a magnet lover, so with said device removed it was back to the track. Again, the best performance was achieved by removing the front shocks. Well balanced tail slides were easily achieved and held as the Ninco 20 x 11 slicks held on.

The guide has a very good angle of turn and does not snap the car out of the slot allowing you to have some great fun.

Gimmicks

I just wish Ninco (and other) manufacturers would get back to basics and stop the gimmicks with features like suspension on these sorts of cars. Paying more attention to detail like a flat pan and other fundamental principles would have a much larger impact on performance.

In conclusion then, another nicely detailed car from Ninco. If you race box standard this car probably will not put you at the front of the race but with a few simple adjustments this will always be a car that you will enjoy to blast around the track in true tail out style. ■

BITS & PIECES

Roger's 6th edition

This is now available from the usual sources. Unfortunately my review copy arrived too late for me to appraise it this month but my initial impressions are highly favourable.

Brian

R/S Slot Racing update

We now have a new "sectioned" price list which should make it easier to read. There have been quite a few additions lately with our latest arrivals being replica front tyres for K1 Go Kart and replica tyres for Scalextric Vintage Bentley and Alfa. These are superb, with detail on both sides of the tyre.

We have also added to our range front and rear slicks to fit Aurora/AFX/Tyco HO cars. Please also note my new address in the advert on page 43 (as I deal with all the mail order). As soon as I am settled in my new home the website will be updated to show all the new additions.

Colin Spark

Whoops!

Gareth Jex would like to correct a small but important error in the flyer about the NSCC Anniversary Weekend event contained in the SCX Vintage Mini delivery boxes (and given away at the Milton Keynes swapmeet).

The Flyer noted that, "NSCC members would get early access and a jump the CREW system".

What he meant to say was, "a jump the QUEUE system"

He apologises for this slip up but felt that he would not have enough takers for the jump the crew, the committee aren't that attractive!

A rare old piece of Scalextric memorabilia

Scalextric crash barrier..Bosch; Item no. C274-0020 in perfect condition. For sale on eBay - where else?

Ken Elston

Speaking of ebay

Unfortunately Tony Frewin has had to stop doing his 'Ebay watch' column for personal reasons. Would anybody like to take it over? Drop me a line at the usual address if you are interested.

NSCC Championship

Wellingborough Scalextric Club are holding an open NSCC Championship Qualifying Round on Sunday 28th November 2004.

Cars and controllers will be provided with prizes to be won on the day.

The classes are: Scalextric Lister Storm, Ninco BMW M3 GT and SCX Citroen Xsara WRC. The organizer is Matt Tucker who can be contacted on: matthew.tucker1@virgin.net

Entry fee is £3.

Trackside accessory

For ages now I have been on the lookout for a proper fire engine, the sort found at every racing circuit. I have always wanted a fire/rescue tender for this reason.

My prayers have finally been answered. I have just found a very suitable appliance produced by an outfit called Joy City. It is of a prototype produced by MAN, and comes with a boat, hose trailer, and a fireman wearing a breathing mask. Although a toy, it could be spray painted to become a very realistic track side accessory. The box states that it is 1/40 scale, but it is larger, and nearer 1/32.

Now the good bit. It only costs £4.99, which makes it a bargain compared to the Bumslot product reviewed on page 19 of the May edition of the NSCC Journal.

Ray Harper

Carrera corner

Thanks for the interest in the Carrera liaison post; Gareth has received several applications and will appoint someone soon.



Norman's conquest – revisited

Norman Griffiths continues with memories of his career as general manager at Scalextric, 1964–1971. In this additional part, previously unpublished, he reflects on the problems the factory faced in the early 70s.

Paul Strange reports

Part 9: The Cougar, the Dart and missing stock

After the sad demise of the innovative but highly expensive Super 124 cars in 1970, Minimodels concentrated on a wildly different project – the creation of two of the cheapest Scalextric cars ever made at Havant.

“That was the Cougar Sports and the Dart,” says Norman Griffiths, as we continue our chat at his home in Broadstairs, Kent. Norman flicks through Scalextric’s 11th catalogue and spots both cars. “They were very fast, very basic and very cheap.”

After the vast expenditure on the doomed 124 series, Scalextric needed to recoup its costs – and quickly. Bill Langley – head of the development team – hit upon the idea of creating a simple, cheap, wedge-shaped car. Top brass were delighted at the prospect. “These sorts of cars were liked by the management because we could sell 100,000 of them,” says Norman. So Langley and his team, including designer Frank Buckland, got the green light, and went at it, all guns blazing.

The result was the squat, much derided C21 Cougar Sports (most normally seen in dark blue with yellow wheels, although a much rarer orange version exists), and the slightly less offensive C20 Dart (in red and green, later transformed into the C23 Scalletti Arrow). Both cars shared the same mechanicals – the E9 Johnson Type 111 small in-line can engine, and a guide unique to these cars – the G17 type, rounded at the rear, and with a rear screw fixing

⇒→





And, in a determined effort to cut costs even further, both bodies used very simple tooling, no undercuts, and an utter minimum of plastic.

No wonder the Cougar looked particularly dire – apparently early on in its development it was vaguely attractive, but Buckland was asked by his bosses to keep hacking away at the car's shape until nearly all that was left was a stump!

"That was Bill Langley," recalls Norman. "I remember that he was adamant that the finest aerodynamic shape was literally a wedge. I don't think many people approved of it because his ultimate design would have been a straight wedge, and we needed to have a few more bits hanging on the end of it. But the aesthetics and the look of the car really didn't come into it for me. At the end of the day, it was the balance sheet."

But unfortunately that balance sheet was still looking dodgy: sales of the Cougar and Dart failed to reach target and offset the huge costs incurred by the Super 124 cars and research into the You Steer series (also launched in 1970). If that wasn't bad enough, there was a spate of pilfering at Havant, and sadly it appeared to be an inside job.

"Scalextric was very desirable as a perk outside the factory," says Norman. "In the same way that supermarkets today have magnetic barriers that you walk through and alarms sound if you're trying to steal items, we had

something similar – closed circuit TV and infra-red beams at night – overseen by an ex-CID bod who had come in as our chief of security. When you're running a shift at night, you've got the assembly on one side of the factory with all the cars, and the moulding on the other side, and we had infra-red beams down the centre of the factory. We also evolved a gateway which all staff had to go through. If anyone was trying to steal a completed car, the gateway would pick up the magnetic field from a car's motor. That was where we were really successful."

Not successful enough, though. Some enterprising staff appeared to have devised a method of foiling the security system, and whipping cars and track out of the back of the factory. Stock losses duly mounted, until the head of security lay in wait at the building one night. Two of the staff were apprehended, allegedly loading a car with stock, and the police were called. The next day more staff were dismissed, after apparently pulling a similar scam.

"I lost a lot of good people at that time," says Norman. "The temptation was too much. In fact the police recovered so many stolen items that the local nick became full up and they had to take all the Scalextric stuff elsewhere!" ■

Next month: Havant's final days