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## We few, we happy few, we band of brothers

In January 1981 less than 30 people read the following lines: "The first thing I wish to do is to welcome you to this 'new club' and thank you for your support to this venture." This was the opening sentence of the first Newsletter sent out by the fledgling 'National Scalextric Collectors Club' and, surprisingly, we are still here and just beginning our 25th continuous year of publication.

Much has changed since 1981; that first Newsletter consisted of just two photocopied A4 sheets while the modern Journal is a professionally printed publication of 44 pages or more read by over 1000 people. The club has also modified its name and dropped the 'Scalextric' tag due to the fact that a multitude of slot-car manufacturers has entered the market in recent years; however, I suspect that 'the extraordinary toy' invented by Fred Francis still occupies first place in most members' hearts.

Sadly, two of the essential ingredients of those early days are in decline; the 'members adverts' which filled the early issues have fallen victim to the power of Ebay (just two in this issue) and some NSCC swapmeets have disappeared under the onslaught of open events. I am convinced we will come to rue the latter when the commercial swapmeet bubble inevitably bursts and nobody is interested in resurrecting the club ones.

However, we must move with the times and the committee is trying hard to offer alternative attractions - the forthcoming 25th Anniversary Event is one and I hope you will all support Gareth's mammoth effort to make this the biggest slot-car event ever held in the UK.

**And Finally** - the closing sentence of that first Newsletter is as relevant now as it was then: "The purpose of this letter is to encourage collectors to meet and swap, so if you want to make this club a success then keep in touch with us and tell me of your needs - and don't forget to tell your friends about the club."

*Here's to the next 25 years*  
*Brian*



by  
**Rob Smith**



# MESSAGES FROM MARGATE

**W**hen I started contemplating what to write in this month's Journal I was worried that I would have nothing to write about. However, one week later, and the final week before Christmas, I have a huge mountain of new releases to discuss and still another delivery expected in the next two days from my supplier.

The most exciting new models for me are always the first releases from a new mould. There are four new ones to choose from this month.

## Dodge Viper

C2522A Dodge Viper Competition Coupé 3-R Racing #22 and C2523A Viper Competition Coupé McCann #82.

The first new model to arrive here was the pair of Dodge Vipers in their Sport versions. Not the prettiest of cars in real life but Hornby have done a fabulous job of modelling them. The liveries differ greatly from those pictured in Catalogue 45 as C2522 is a beautiful metallic blue with yellow detailing and C2523 is blue and white. The wheels have come in for particular =>





praise so far, as have the finely detailed louvres in the bonnet which show just how delicate the tooling must be. The Sport versions are in a limited edition of 6000.

### **Ford GT**

C2570A and C2570 Ford GT 2003 Road Version

My favourite new model this year is the Ford GT. The car is white with twin blue stripes with great photo etched details such as three different mesh grills. Such an expanse of plain white body work makes the finish particularly important as every blemish will stand out. All the versions I have seen have been perfect but apparently some show dust in the lacquer so choose carefully when buying yours. As with the previous GT40 the bodywork is cunningly made of several pieces and this will enable future versions to differ in detail. Have a look at the various pictures of real cars to get an idea of what we might see in the future. The Sport version is in a limited edition of 6000.

### **Williams FW26**

C2583 and C2583A BMW Williams F1 FW26 #3 and C2584 and C2584A BMW Williams F1 FW26 #4

As has been mentioned several times in the past the Williams was the subject of a new mould last year, changing what was announced in Catalogue 45. This is because the Williams F1 team unveiled a radically different nose to their car which has been dubbed a walrus! Williams reverted to a more traditional aerodynamics package mid-season but the Hornby FW26 makes a different alternative to the other look-a-like F1 cars. Technically this new model is interesting as it is the first car to use the much smaller Mabuchi motor from the MotoGP bikes. This has enabled the rear of the car to be much smaller and more realistic although there is still a slight bump for the gearing. The Sport versions are in a limited edition of 4000.



### Renault F1

C2581 and C2581A Renault R24 F1 Team Spirit #7 and C2582 and C2582A Renault R24 F1 Team Spirit #8

The 2004 Renault F1s are also a new model and therefore available in both Sport and standard versions. Like the Williams FW26 they also use the smaller motor and have particularly fine body work at the rear.

The standard versions of the Williams and Renaults have a new sleeve design in purple with the Scalextric web site address prominently featured. The Sport versions are in a limited edition of 4000.

Last year's Renaults are available in a special set and as solo cars from your local Renault dealer. If anyone has bought these perhaps they could let me have more details.

### TVR Tuscan

C2591 TVR Tuscan 400R "Peninsula" #36 and C2618 TVR Tuscan 400R #28

The reliveried TVR Tuscan in JCB colours is my favourite livery so far and is nothing like the car illustrated in Catalogue 45. It features a yellow roof and bonnet with the familiar JCB logo on it and has black sides decorated with grey spots that get bigger towards the rear of the car.

C2618 is the Hamleys' car for Christmas 2004. It has a very unusual livery designed by one of the staff members at their Regent Street store. This consists of two similar shades of metallic red in a random jagged pattern with a high gloss lacquer. It has black wheels and small Hamleys logos on the top of the screen and on the black rear wing. Very unusual but very effective, especially in bright lights. ⇨

## **C2589 Caterham 7 "30th Anniversary"**

The new Caterham livery is lime green and represents a Superlight version without headlamps and with small aero screens in place of the windscreen.

### **MotoGP**

C6002	Makato Tamada / Honda
C6004	Alex Barros / Honda
C6007	Colin Edwards / Honda
C6009	Troy Bayliss / Ducati
C6010	Shane Byrne / Aprilia
C6011	Jeremy McWilliams / Aprilia
C6012	Neil Hodgson / Ducati
C6013	Ruben Xaus / Ducati
C6016	Nicky Hayden / Honda

Almost all of the expected MotoGP bikes are now available including the new model, the Aprilia.

I forgot to give the reference numbers of the two Holden Commodores from the Toys-R-Us V8 set. Here they are: C2625 Holden VX Commodore Yellow / blue and C2626 Holden VX Commodore Grey

### **M&S Kits**

Two of the Hornby kits are available at Marks and Spencer this year. First is the K2006 Ford GT40 again but with different packaging and second is the K2013 Mini Cooper. Both are complete with paints and glue.

### **Coming soon - BMW Mini Cooper S**

Hot on the heels of the Hamleys' TVR is a Mini Cooper S for the Modelzone chain of model shops. They tell me that this will not reach the shelves until late January/early February. It is in a black and silver livery with the Modelzone logo featuring prominently. The 2005 Dealer Presentation car is also a Cooper S.

### **2004 Summary**

The amount of choice now available to the slot-car purchaser is huge with models available to meet everyone's taste in racing. Hornby have had another busy year. According to my lists

there have been 80 new models this year not including Sport, Digital or set versions, or the kits. These have been based upon 36 different models of which 17 were new in 2004. I'm not surprised my bank account looks so depleted! Development hasn't just happened on the car (and bike) front either with several new track pieces, including the banked curves and raised bridge and the long awaited pit crews too. Sport Digital was released just a few weeks ago and every retailer I have spoken to has seen it fly off the shelves. 2005 will see the range of Digital cars increased and the launch of the conversion packages to upgrade your existing collection.

### **2005 what's next?**

Hornby show no signs of letting up with the pace of new releases in 2005 either. I can't give you many details until after the UK toy fair at the end of January but there is much to look forward to during the year. There are several new models announced in 2004 which didn't quite squeeze in and these include the Peugeot 307 Rally cars, Vectra DTMs, and Maserati Cambicorsa Cup cars. The new licensing deal with Ferrari will give us a new current F1 car and several classics too, and they will need something to race against. Le Mans isn't forgotten either with several re-liveries and an exciting new model which is the most detailed Scalextric car I have ever seen – unfortunately this is not the Aston Martin DBR9 – perhaps later? There is also an interesting road car from nearby and a new model from a racing series far away from the UK. More details next month when the new models have been unveiled to the public.

A question for the obsessive collector, do we collect Sport, Digital and Standard versions next year?

### **NSCC/Hornby Weekend**

Look out elsewhere in this issue for details of the annual NSCC/Hornby weekend to be held 4/5/6 March 2005. Send in your entry form immediately. The weekend car is NOT the same as the Range Presentation car this year either – but I'm not telling you what it is. ■



From Peter Solari

**T**raditionally, the first few weeks of the year are fairly quiet in terms of announcements as there is much going on behind the scenes in the run-up to the Nuremberg Toy Fair and of course, any real news is normally kept under wraps until then.

However, for those of you with Internet access, it is worth logging on to [www.ninco.com](http://www.ninco.com) to see their new-look web-site. Many pages are accompanied by synchronised animation and video footage of the two new NSX cars racing through various feature sections of a circuit; curves, cross-over, bridge section etc. There is even race-car sound played as the cars flash along the track. Cool! The current cars have data sheets listing all relevant dimensions and there is still a useful section to search and view all standard cars manufactured since 1993.

So what will Ninco bring out this year? Well, the most exciting development we know about is the new Digital Track system; hopefully, we shall learn more about this at Nuremberg. There are some great new liveries of existing models on the horizon and we can be sure of some fantastic new models - with a full twelve months ahead, let's wait and see...

## Arrows Competition

As mentioned in last month's journal, Ninco are currently offering some of their F1 Arrows cars for the bargain price of £15. With winter setting in, what better way to while away the long evenings than to paint your own F1 car? The livery can be based on any existing team (preferably not Arrows!) or your own Fantasy F1 team. A 2005 edition Ninco car will be awarded to the best re-liveried Arrows submitted before the end of February. Send your pictures to me headed "Arrows Competition".

## Club Tracks and Events

I would like to include in future issues details of Club circuits using Ninco track or any events using Ninco cars. If you race on Ninco track at your local club or are aware of any scheduled event, please get in touch directly by email ([PTSolari@aol.com](mailto:PTSolari@aol.com)) or by post via our editor.

## Not Ninco News

(but I thought I'd share it with you anyway)

A few years ago, fellow member Paul Leagas and I had an idea of running a slot-car track at a couple of local schools during their Christmas bazaars. What could be simpler than connecting up a track and charging 50p a go to raise much needed funds for the schools? I had a couple of Ninco sets (Karting and DTM), a Pole Position lap counter, and between us we had more than a few cars. I can distinctly remember phrases like, "We can just join the two circuits together", "It'll be great!" and "The kids will love it!" being mentioned. So we approached the head-teachers with our offer which was warmly received.

After years of Friday night "loft-racing" we felt this would be a good opportunity to show off our slot-car skills and impress the 5-10 year olds at the schools! We'd have the chance to put on a few demonstration races while waiting for the kids to have a go and at the same time introduce the pleasures of the hobby to the racers of the future.

Paul and I share the same philosophy of "if it's worth doing, then it's worth doing properly". To tell you about how we arrived at the layout in his loft is another story entirely, suffice to say that we wouldn't be content with a figure of eight or an oval - the track had to look interesting although be simple for the children to navigate and, in the interest of keeping things fair, both

lanes should be of equal length. I spent more than a few hours designing and redesigning different circuits using the Ninco Track Planner before arriving at a layout that looked pretty impressive, yet not too complicated and more importantly used every section of both track sets! The layout was a 2-lane, 15m circuit, covering a floor space of 1.8m by 5.4m. When using the track planner, I hadn't realised exactly how big an area this covered! I popped back to the school, just to check what sort of space was available... Fortunately, the head-teacher suggested that we set the track up in one of the classrooms - Result!

So we had the layout, we had the space - what would we set up on? MDF to the rescue; the next time I visited B&Q, I left with nine 6x2ft boards and a tin of bright green paint in the back of the car.

We discussed how best to run the event and tried to cover every eventuality, making a check list of what we would need; Track Plan, Boards, Track, Cars, Extension lead, Sticky labels, Tools and a few spares. The list seemed surprisingly simple... is there something we've forgotten?

When the first day arrived, we loaded the car and arrived in good time to set up. The event didn't start until midday and we were pulling up outside the school at 10am. "Once we've set up, we can have a little race before it opens!"

We used every table in the classroom to lay the boards on and the track went together exactly as it had on the planning software. By the time all the finishing touches were added (borders, barriers and labels) there was hardly time to test the circuit, let alone start our own private mini-competition! Twelve o'clock struck and the kids had started to trickle into the classroom. Before you could say Kimi Rako., Ryko., Raiko., Nigel Mansell, the classroom was comfortably filled with spectators and we had a constant queue of racers, all clutching their fifty pence pieces. Three hours flew by and before we knew it, it was time to pack away - Paul and I hadn't even raced each other! The very next day, we did it all again, only this time a different

venue and again it was a great success. Not once did we suffer from a poor connection, power loss, short circuit or track fault of any kind.

However, it wasn't all plain sailing; marshalling can be a problem especially when there is just two of you and no matter how the cars are labelled, some bright spark will always place a car in the wrong lane (well, if it happens at club level, how can you expect otherwise!). Cross-over tracks just add to 'offs' so we decided not to include them the following year. The choice of car is also very important; some very inexperienced children (and adults!) have a go, so it is best to run something that will withstand a lot of crashes. I have found the most robust vehicles to be Ninco DTM and GT cars.

We decided to be a bit more adventurous the following year and developed the track into a four-lane circuit with an average lane length of 9m, still covering a similar area. A second Pole Position lap counter was linked to the first to count down the race time and record fastest laps.

Funnily enough, I was approached by the school to run the track again for their recent Christmas bazaar and was told that many of the children had been asking if "the race man" was going to be there! According to the PTA, the track made more money than Santa's Grotto last year. The same 4-lane circuit was reproduced although this time we added the new safety fences (highly recommended for bends at the end of any long straights), a few more borders and a "skirt" around the tables... definitely the best yet! ⇒





Converting some of the cars to NC-1 motors and removing the magnet is actually a very good balance for most drivers although we did field an NC-2/magnet class for about half of the races. The main thing to remember is that we are there to have fun and I'm always amazed at just how good some of the children are. But why are there not more female racers? Girls will nearly always achieve more laps than the boys

just because they manage to keep it on. In fact, during the last event, a 10 year old girl managed to achieve the fastest lap and the most laps within the time limit, beating older children, parents and even the teachers!

If you have the time to donate to your children's school to set up a race track during one of their fairs, I can thoroughly recommend it. Children, young and old, really do enjoy it. ■



# NINCO

## track test

## Peugeot 307 "Mexico" Reviewed by Peter Solari

**E**arly last year, Peugeot launched their successor to their multi-title-winning 206 Rally car... the Peugeot 307. It got off to a troubled start with problems associated with the hydraulics, gearbox and handling but as the problems were solved it emerged that this new model had enormous potential. Ninco chose to release their Peugeot 307 with the new ProShock 2 system... would they suffer the same problems?

### Overview

At first glance, the Peugeot looks to be a well proportioned car. It has the usual high gloss finish and all the stickers and sponsor logos appear to be in the right place. However, the general appearance lacks the "real car" look. It's almost as if the car has been lacquered without being painted and so gives the appearance normally associated with a "set car". On closer inspection, there are three panels that look as if they were originally printed white but then over-printed with the same colour red as the body. This puzzled me as all the pictures I have seen of the real car competing in Mexico have white panels in the exact same places. These panels would normally be home to the Marlboro logo but as mentioned, when the car was run in Mexico, these panels remained white. If this is an error on the first batch, then they may prove to be highly collectable! Interestingly enough, two other-brand 307 slot-cars currently on the market also have the white panels missing... So, am I missing something?

The wheels fitted look small in the wheel arches but they are in fact true replicas of the OZ Racing wheels fitted to the car during the Rally of Mexico. A fifth of the Mexican rally circuit is made up of loose rocks and stones so it is vital for the wheels to have plenty of suspension travel.

### Inside view

The car interior is home to a 1/32nd scale Marcus Grönholm and his co-driver complete with printed navigation notes. The instrument panel on the dashboard is also printed and the interior tray has face vents and gear stick detail moulded in. A silver-grey roll cage surrounds the occupants should the car break loose from the track. In the event of a fire (*electrical of course*) there is a fire extinguisher fitted behind the co-driver.

### Under view

Removing the body from the chassis reveals the ProShock 2 system. You really have to look twice to notice the difference but the new shock absorbers are around 4mm shorter due to the new design of fixing to the chassis. I assume the benefit of the ProShock 2 system is that the shocks will fit in smaller spaces and therefore allow lower bodywork designs. On the downside, the "hook" built into the chassis does look fragile.

The car is fitted with the blue shocks (medium) but can be interchanged with soft or hard ones. The other difference with the new system is that four double-bushes replace the eight single-bushes supplied on the original ProShock system. This will reduce friction on the axle and should result in smoother running.

Four-wheel-drive is achieved by a black band linking two red pulleys, one on the front and one on the rear axle. The bright NC-5 motor sits in-line and transfers power to the rear axle via a 9-tooth pinion and 27-tooth crown gear. In front of the motor and just forward of the centre of the chassis, the round super-magnet is fitted. The last notable features are the spring-loaded guide and grooved tyres. =>

### 3... 2... 1... GO!

To run the car in competition under the same rules as everyone else, I removed the magnet. Doing so allows the suspension to work to its full potential as this frees it from the magnetic down-force. It took a few laps to get used to the handling of the car as it seemed to have too much grip for a smooth track surface but very quickly it settled down. The “race-ability” of Ninco cars straight out of the box never fails to impress me. After the inevitable few rolls and offs, the limits were quickly found and consistent lap times could be clocked up. Compared to a standard Subaru, the Peugeot was immediately competitive. With the chassis and body tightly screwed together, the suspension would do its job balancing the car as it cornered. It was an absolute joy to watch as occasionally it cornered on three wheels – just like the real thing! Lap times produced were consistently in the 18-18.5 seconds for a 200ft lap (just 2 seconds off the pace of a GT car!)

### Conclusion

I must admit, I wasn't bowled over by the looks of this car. However, the performance of the 307 really did exceed my expectations and I feel that

if the chassis proves to be robust enough, this car will be a popular choice for rally events.

### And finally...

I'm afraid that curiosity got the better of me and I just had to take a cotton wool ball daubed with a little nail polish remover to those red panels. The result was fantastic! It is indeed overprinted and fortunately the high gloss lacquer has sealed the original white panels. I'm now the proud owner of the only Ninco Peugeot 307 that is a true replica of the one raced during the 2004 Rally of Mexico! ■



Before (above)  
and after (below)



# Wellingborough NSCC Race Event

By Matt Tucker

On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November 11 race hardened individuals congregated at Wellingborough Scalextric Club to do battle. It was misty and cold but that did not deter this gallant bunch of slotterers. Well that's the romantic rambling out of the way.

We held an open invitation race meeting combined with an NSCC championship-qualifying event. 11 racers turned up (four NSCC members) attracted by the prospect of some good racing and the chance to win some great prizes including two places at the NSCC finals and some goodies supplied by GetSlotted.

We raced the SCX Citroen Xsara – the car stayed on the same lane and drivers rotated around the car. We did a time trial and the combined time of your four runs would dictate the class placing. I won by 1.5 seconds after 60 laps and a cumulative race time of 13 and a half minutes! I have to say I was a tad lucky as the leader broke the guide on his car half way through his final run resulting in much mirth as he de-slotted at the merest hint of a bend.

On to the second series: Scalextric Lister Storms. Again the cars stayed in the same lane and drivers rotated with the aim of doing as many laps as they could within three minutes on each lane. We had real problems with the Lister, especially their pinions and all but one had to have work done to ensure they lasted the race. If the car had problems during your run it was deemed hard racing luck. I managed a clean run and somehow I came out on top again!

Finally we raced the Ninco BMW – what a beast. We race with 18 volts and these cars proved a real handful. We did a round robin



event with five points for the winner, three for 2<sup>nd</sup>, two for 3<sup>rd</sup> and one for 4<sup>th</sup> in each race, giving a maximum of 20 points. Again I won the event accumulating 18 points (three wins and a second); a clean sweep and while I put it down to skill I have to acknowledge the contribution of a significant amount of misfortune to other racers that played its part.

A good day and everyone went away with a broad smile. Our conclusions about the cars and race format (supposed to be straight out of the box although we undertook some basic preps on all cars) were that:

- Scalextric have got to sort out their pinions if they want their cars to be raced hard, and
- to race evenly and enjoyably all the cars need work on them. Racing box stock showed up huge variations in the cars' performance and their handling made them less enjoyable to drive.

Finally a big thank you to the NSCC for supplying some of the cars and to GetSlotted for the prizes.

The NSCC winners were Matt Tucker and Mike Kerr. ■

# BITS & PIECES

## Christmas Competition Update

Only 20 entries received as I write this just after Christmas - all correct, so it can't be difficult - but there is plenty of time yet. The competition doesn't close till February 19th.

In addition to the prizes already announced in the December issue Hornby have generously provided a Sport Digital set so here's your chance to win one if Santa let you down. There are also three C2570 Ford GTs and three C2486 Skoda Fabias up for grabs. This brings the total number of prize cars available to 14 plus various other track and accessory goodies.

## Magic and Sparkle

"News that Marks & Spencer has installed television and Scalextric crèches for shopping weary men has caused outcry among footsore females. Far from being sympathetic to sufferers from MOAN (Males On Annual Nightmare),

women argue that men are part of the problem in the first place - and that one of the most time consuming aspects of Christmas shopping is trying to find a present not for the man who's got everything, but for the man who really can't think of anything he might want."



I really like shopping now, Mummy: the new men's crèche at Marks & Spencer's Marble Arch store

From the Weekend Telegraph,  
Saturday December 18th 2004.

*Submitted by Alan Slade*

## Would you buy a used slot-car from this man?

This one obviously appealed to you as I received the same cutting from nine members - now if one of them could tell me how to scan in newsprint to an acceptable standard I would be eternally grateful!



Driven to distraction - Prime Minister Tony Blair and CBI director Digby Jones

# Ebay watch

By Martin Fox

Prices always drop around Christmas time; good if you are buying - not so good for sellers.

No doubt you will have all read the press coverage of the 17 year old who conned a lot of buyers out of their money on Ebay. Even emailing them of his conquests.

The police arrested the lad, but I wonder if Ebay even got involved. I suspect the people he conned contacted the police; perhaps he will get a first warning and if it happens again he will risk a one month suspension.

I don't think Ebay do enough to safeguard buyer or sellers. Will the buyers get their money back..... what do you think?

Always check the feedback of a seller before bidding. I always "Ask seller a question" before bidding. If they can't be bothered to answer I don't bid.

When your Carrera or SCX or other non-Scalextric car arrives it will nearly always have a web address on the packaging. Log on for future releases and local stockists. You might get them cheaper than Ebay.

## Recent Ebay Prices

E5 Marshal car (rough)	£119
1950's Startex Jaguar 2.4	£112
Jump Jockey set (incomplete)	£48
C83 Sunbeam Tiger repro box	£122
Pursuit mode Knightrider set	£43
1/24 Ferrari boxed, unused, mint	£660
C65 Alfa yellow repro parts	£135
Spiderman TR7 lights down red	£39
Spiderman TR7 lights down yellow	£52
Crystal clear Diablo mint	£125
C234 Crosswalk Kit (built)	£50
Black Racer Subaru	£23

# Traders Travels

By Robert Learmouth  
(Westwood Models)

It's Christmas Eve and Jon has just received notification of the new product range from Hornby. Well page one of it at least! So I'm party to some of the new releases but not all. For sure there are nine new moulds, another very ambitious schedule for 2005 and presumably more when Jon gets pages two plus! 2004 proved an overly ambitious release schedule with various models being put back and an almost unmanageable number of new product releases in December. Some are still deferred for release in the New Year. Presumably the factory is struggling to keep up with demand!

2004 was the year when Fly managed to regain some respectability with some interesting new cars and less aggressive approach to limited editions. I hope it's not too little; too late as the jungle drums hardly suggest Fly as a company is enjoying the best of times. As the yardstick that must surely have prompted Hornby to step up a couple of gears it would be a shame to see their proposition compromised in some way. Elsewhere Ninco have had a boring year though the NSX has provided a glimmer of hope. The RAID cars are different but not of universal appeal. I find Ninco hugely frustrating as it is my second favourite brand after Scalextric and some of the old releases are real nuggets and now keenly sought after. As for SCX, well how can I comment on something that didn't happen! But Carrera have again taken sure steps to improve their standing with the Bond cars and Ferrari 575 though I remain totally unconvinced that the world wants yet more Peugeot and Subaru rally cars. And Slot-it continues to build, very slowly but also very surely and with a very, very loyal following. As a whole though, I can't imagine Hornby looking too cautiously over their shoulders at the following pack.

I said that 2004 would be a year where manufacturers, distributors and retailers would find a different world out there with selling conditions getting tougher due to over-supply. The bandwagon has now been so seriously jumped on that the axles are creaking with the load and reaching breaking point. Those who study, learn and move on will now be better prepared to face the future but from amongst those who are unable or unprepared to adapt I still believe there will be some high-profile casualties. In the short term at least 2005 could continue to be a good year for the customers as various stops are pulled out.

On an arguably related note losing Evesham and Leeds NSCC swapmeets is sad but they may not be the last. So I'm going to repeat my sentiment of last month – is there anything you can do to help make the swapmeet proposition a better and more sensible one? Just a letter to the NSCC on where you'd like to see swapmeets go would help. Or do we want to end up seeing things disappearing up their own orifice leaving us to exist in a purely virtual Ebay world?

Could we please have a volunteer to organise something up north and at least give it a try? Organising a swapmeet can be trying but it isn't rocket-science and help is available. Now, didn't I say I wasn't going to give my view on swapmeets again...

Talking of which, the rear offside light on my silver Alhambra got broken whilst parked up for Orpington. Whilst I can't be categorically certain how this happened I'd like to think it was an accident but that the person who did it would be aware and would like to relieve his guilt by owning up. I won't be upset, accidents happen but this has cost me £100 to get fixed and I can't afford that anymore than anyone else can. So if anyone can spill the beans please let me know.■

# Mad dogs on Merseyside

## The Aintree Festival of Motorsport

By Dave Yerbury

I just love the smell of Castrol R in the morning. The first Aintree Festival finally got under way at 10am and what a petrol heads' day out it was; a very brave undertaking by Aintree considering the weather the day before. The promised snow did not materialise so we were left bathing in cool winter sunshine.

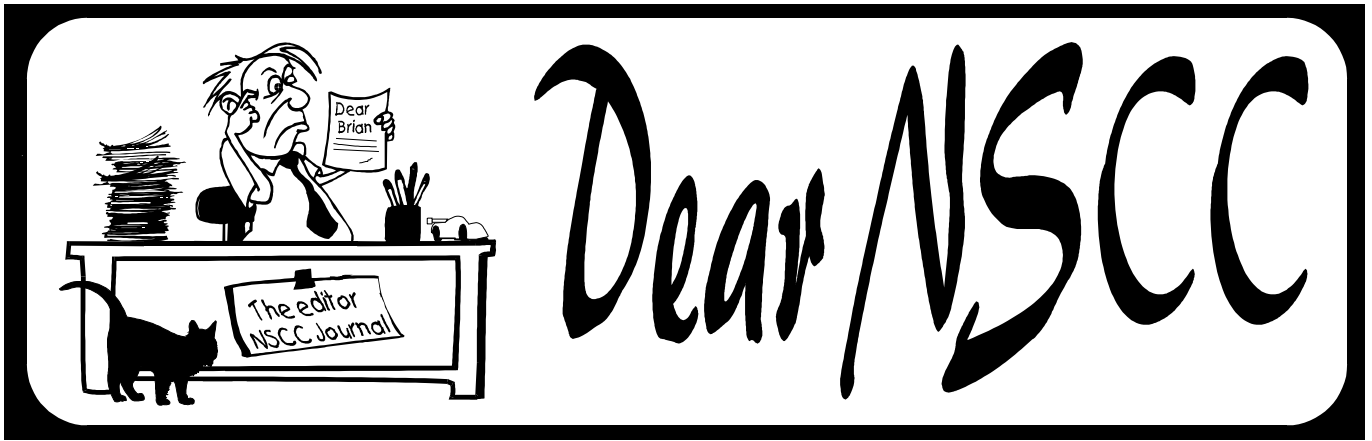
Being a new venture there was not much in the way of trade stands, so the wallet remained intact save for the purchase of Tony Bagnall's excellent new book, "The unfulfilled dream, the story of racing at Aintree" - lots of nice black and white photographs. There was plenty of time to look around at the wonderful array of Historic racing cars in the pits and talk to a lot of like minded people. It was still bitterly cold under the tarpaulin pits and a lot of cars seemed to be coughing and spluttering, some terminally. The spanner men were working overtime and cars roared into life from power packs big enough to supply a dozen slot tracks. Out onto the track they ventured behind the pace car for one lap then four laps of demonstration. I can't wait for next year's summer race meeting - a must for anyone living north of Watford.

The groups consisted of Formula Juniors, Threes, Fords and the ear shattering 500s; my ears were still ringing at midnight. Next came D Types, C Types, HWM, AC Bristols, Lister Bristol and Lister Knobbly and for the two wheel fans there came a gaggle of machines varying in decibel level including Ariel, Norton, BSA, Honda and many more. Then came the older F1 and F2 cars including an immaculate Maserati 250F, HWM, Cooper Bristols, ERA, Connaught, and many more. Unfortunately the promised Vanwall never appeared but the others more than made up for it on this mind blowing day.

The last race meeting I attended was probably at Crystal Palace in 64 - the year Jochen Rindt showed the boys how to drive a F2 car. It was also the day Jim Clark beat a Galaxie round there in his Lotus Cortina. The Festival brought all the old memories flooding back.

The highlight of my day was the saloons; among the runners were an Austin A40, Lotus Cortinas, Anglias, Mustangs of fast and notch back variety, Ford Falcon, Dodge, Minis galore, Merc 600, Volvo Amazon, my favourite being the Fraser Imp. The morning's demonstrations were a civilised affair with ice still visible on the track, the majority seemed happy at less than full power. However, the drivers must have had something in their tea at dinner time as the afternoon's outings were run at a lot more pace with many drivers determined to show off their car's full potential.

Unusual highlight in the F1 group was the 250F, ERA and HWM, which were not hanging about, being blown away by the impressive Williams FW06 of Alan Jones fame on the main straight. The 500ccs got louder along with the FJs and F3s. A couple of gaggles of hard charging motorbikes relieved the cold for a time and the saloons were not leaving without putting on a show. We stood (myself and apprentice petrol head mechanic son) on Tatts corner coming onto the main straight watching the goings on. It transported me back to Brands Hatch in the early 60s for a while. At times it resembled a full size slot track with plenty of tail out attitude. My star cars of the afternoon were an indecently quick 1300cc Ford Pop (described by its owner as a brick in a wind tunnel) and, one to keep the ground beneath your feet shaking, the beautiful Ford Mustang. It all came to a sudden end as darkness began to fall and I'll leave Pa Larkin to sum up the day. Perfick! Roll on next summer. ■



Sir,

Last year I was asked to set up a layout at my son's scout hut for the lads to have a bit of fun. This I did and due to the enthusiasm of the scouts and their parents it ended up being a 24 hour event with a circuit of 80ft with four lanes. After the marathon I had a discussion with Sue, the scout leader, and suggested doing the same thing again and making it a sponsored event where we could raise some money for charity and have some fun at the same time.

At the beginning of September we decided on a date. I had saved enough classic track to build 2x90 foot lane layouts. The last time about 25 cars were destroyed so I was a bit reluctant to supply all the cars again. This is where I needed help and after a chat with Adrian Norman the problem was solved. Another person I approached for help was Geoff Killick of Braintree Model Railways and he very kindly donated a set which we placed in a raffle. It was decided that the charity would be 'Children with Leukaemia' and the target was £500.

On the Friday I went to the scout hut with the track and after five and a half hours I had laid out the two tracks at table height with good power supply. Ten o'clock Saturday morning it all began. We ran the tracks for the full 24 hours with no problems. Various prize races were held. The favourite car of the event was the Mercedes CLK which put up with a lot of abuse. The prize for race altered car must go to the current Mini of which I now have five roofless models.

At eleven o'clock on the Sunday morning we counted up the sponsor forms and all the money taken on the door, the tuck shop and raffle and it came to a staggering £1000.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made this event possible. Special thanks to Adrian and Geoff and not forgetting everyone who managed to survive 24 hours of fantastic racing. I have now got a box of broken cars to fix ready for the next event. Anyone got any glue!!!!

I am, yours etc,  
Paul Blows

.....  
Sir,

Please let your readers know about the new website for The London Scalextric Club. The FIRST Scalextric racing club in London:

[www.londonscalextricclub.co.uk](http://www.londonscalextricclub.co.uk)

This is a historically significant club, whose past dates back to 1977. Its history can be read about on this site as well.

It is one of the easiest clubs to get to with over 10 buses passing close by, two underground stations, and nearby parking.

We are accepting new racers for the 2005 season, or casual racers who want to try out our 120 foot six lane fully computerised system.

I am, yours etc,  
Carlo Wejszko





## C2486A Scalextric Skoda Fabia WRC 2003 Reviewed by Russell Sault

**M**y first impression of this car when I removed it from the now standard all card "Sport" box, was that Hornby had surpassed themselves in the looks and detailing department.

This car looks great, the tampo printing is sharp with fine details standing out clearly and a really eye catching metallic green colour complementing the white body shell. Shiny brake discs are visible inside the 5 spoke wheels and very clear "Michelin" logos are printed on the sidewall of each tyre. The delicate looking roof aerials are made of a soft rubbery material, which seems to withstand even quite severe slides down the track upside down without damage, a

names are depicted on the outside of the vehicle? It is a great credit to Hornby though, that I have to split hairs like this to find any fault with the cars appearance.

On turning my attention to the drive system of the car, I was disappointed to see that the four wheel drive was achieved by the use of a drive belt from the rear axle rather than a double pinion motor driving both axles simultaneously which is, in my opinion, better and more positive. I have to say though, that in use the drive is much more positive than I expected, with virtually no free play, and vastly improved over the four wheel drive Scalextric releases of the past like the Audi Quattro of the early 1990s.



big improvement over the rigid items on other models which disappear in the first over zealous cornering manoeuvre. Mirrors, wiper blades, rear spoiler and a small silver vent box on the roof are still the traditional rigid construction with its inherent fragility, but this is always going to be the price of accurate details on slot racing models. The driver and navigator are also well detailed, and even the dashboard and course notes are clearly visible inside the car. My only small gripe is that, with this level of interior decoration, why are the helmets left plain white, and not coloured the same as the crew whose

Back in September's "Messages from Margate" it was claimed that "being short and wide the car goes round sharp corners extremely well and the four wheel drive gives it more bite when accelerating out of the corners". Both these claims were entirely justified by my track test, and were noticeably better than any two wheel drive cars that I tested it against. I was able to recover some really ugly slides that would not have been possible with a two wheel drive car, and the more I raced the car back to back with two wheel drive cars, the more apparent this was.



Now the downside, without increased motor performance, driving both axles inevitably saps more power from the motor than driving just one of them, and this car was noticeably slower in acceleration and top speed than any of the two wheel drive cars that I tested it against. Unfortunately, its different handling characteristics do not compensate for this lack of speed in overall lap times. My test circuit is a 23.7 metre Scalextric classic track permanent layout with a variety of curves, two flyovers and four 3 metre straights and timing is achieved using Scalextric RMS attached to a PC. On this circuit, the best time I could manage with the Skoda was 8.21seconds with an average around 8.3 seconds, this performance is comparable to a DTM Astra V8 that I have, but in slot racing terms, a long way off the 7.8 second times needed to compete with other two wheel drive Hornby rally cars. I have a Sport Mitsubishi

Lancer Evolution WRC, which I used in a large proportion of this test, that turned in a best lap of 7.70 seconds and lapped consistently around the 7.75 second mark.

In summary, this car looks superb and its looks alone could justify its place in any collection. Its different handling characteristics make it fun to race, but to be competitive with other rally cars it really needs an upgrade to the motor. So if you are a racer, and that is what Scalextric was designed for in the first place, and you are looking for a car to give you that edge over your arch rival in the rally class, this car is sadly not it, you still need to be looking at the two wheel drive alternatives. However, in a matched class, racing one four wheel drive Skoda against another, well that could be fun, or, better still, what is the release date for the next Scalextric four wheel drive rally model? I will have to buy it, if only to satisfy my curiosity. ■



## Scalextric Skoda Fabia WRC 2003

**O**f all the new models announced by Hornby Hobbies for 2004, the Skoda Fabia WRC was the one that took my attention the most. Its rugged looks and promise of having 4wd really captured my imagination. It became more appealing when "Slot City" promoted a special pre-order price of £23.99 for the "Sport" version. I therefore proceeded to click on the "buy now" button and waited for its arrival.

### The model

The version I have is the #15 car driven by Tony Gardemeister in its debut event at the Rally Deutschland 2003.

First impressions on opening the box are of a stunning, well-finished model which looks far too good to race. This, I think, can be said for most new models released these days from many manufacturers. The stark contrast from the ice white bonnet and roof, to the metallic emerald green rear end, combined with crisp sharp tampoing, and those beautifully crafted wheels makes this a real looker.

Picking out the best of the detailing, there is a nicely tampoed Skoda badge on the front grill, twin windscreen wipers, separately moulded wing mirrors, a silver painted camera (again a separate moulding), three rubber aerials which are very soft and should take lots of abuse, a lovely sculptured two-tiered rear wing and a chromed exhaust pipe protruding from the rear bumper. I will finish the external observations by mentioning those simply beautiful wheels. In my mind these are the second best wheels to be fitted to an RTR model. Being white they could easily have been made to look "toy-like", but these don't. The only downside is the over shiny brake discs, but that is a minor fault. By the way, the best wheels to be fitted to a RTR car IMHO are the ones fitted to the Racer Ferrari 250LM.

## Second opinion from Simon Moss

The interior has a driver and co-driver, albeit "Mr Blobby" who unfortunately still seems to be part of the Scalextric set-up. Surrounding the "Blobsies" is a white rollcage with a spare wheel on the back parcel shelf. The co-driver is holding a pace note pad with finely detailed tampoed writing on it.

The chassis is attached to the body by means of six screws. On removing these screws we can reveal the running gear and the 4wd system. The 4wd is provided by the means of a drive belt which runs from the rear axle to the front along the driver's side of the car. This is a very neat job and does not interfere with the interior detail at all. The usual magnet fitted to all cars has three possible locations, but is fitted as standard in the rear position, just forward of the motor. The excellent Mabuchi motor is in the sidewinder position and is a nice tight fit with minimal movement. The guide blade is the now standard type with the removable disc with braids attached. To finish there is a nice functioning self-centring guide blade, which is an improved version from previous models.

### On the track

Track testing was done on my 95ft classic plexytrack 'Mosshill' circuit, using lane two throughout with a professor motor (PMTR2051) adjustable controller. Power being supplied by the standard Sport powerbase/transformer set-up.

In standard form the car's performance was very sluggish. This was mainly due to the tremendous pull of the magnet. There would of course be some drag caused by the rubber band driving the front wheels, and a proportion of the current powering the very bright head/tail lights, but this would be minimal. I wanted to retain the 4wd configuration and lighting, so converting to 2wd and removing the lights

wasn't an option. I also didn't want the motor to be stressed too much so that meant removing/re-housing the magnet. This was after I tried the car with the magnet situated in the two alternate locations. As you would expect there was no increase in performance, but a marked difference in the handling. I won't go too much into the handling differences at this stage as the magnet overpowered any enjoyment I had with the car.

The next step was to try the car with the magnet removed. No other modifications at this stage, as I wanted to test the balance of the car and check the speed of the motor. Once it was removed I put the car back together, but omitted to include the two central stub screws from the centre of the chassis and also slightly loosened the four others to aid handling. The car was a lot quicker down the straights, but was a little "tippy" on the curves. It also had a tendency to "run-on" in the corners when acceleration was applied due to the nose being a bit light. I enjoyed the car much more now, being able to make the car slide a little even though I had to be more careful. I then added a 10-gram weight just behind the guidepost to try and overcome the front-end problem. Although this helped, it didn't make any significant improvements.

I then decided to take the modifications a little further. In doing so keeping the appearance of the car the same, which meant modifying the chassis to aid performance. It was apparent that I needed to keep the front-end down, so all I did here was to stick the existing magnet onto the 10-gram weight, thus giving a little downforce in the nose as the magnet was now further away from the track, but not too overpowering. Next I broke off the four plastic lugs which protrude from the underside of the interior. I have done this to many of the slot-cars which I use to race, mostly to Scalextric and SCX cars, as I cannot see their purpose. All that remained to do now was to lightly shave away the sides and rear of the chassis to prevent rubbing against the bodywork, and also sand down the protruding screw posts from under the driver/co driver which took the small stub screws. With the

chassis slightly smaller and a gap between the chassis and interior, the body is now allowed to "rock" slightly with the help of some Fly "suspension" screws. I wouldn't say that it "rocks" violently like the Fly racers I have, but enough to make a difference. The main problem seems to be the front end again, where the screw posts rub slightly against the front lighting board. This I will need to look at sometime in the future, but for now the car is a pleasure to drive. Overall, a much improved model now where you can attack the circuit and feel confident. With the 4WD system the car does not powerslide quite like a 2WD car does, but times have improved to almost a second quicker from its original box standard format. The handling still has that slight "tippy" feel, but to me that actually aids enjoyment. We don't want every car to handle like it's on rails now do we!

### Lap Times

Standard form	11.04
Standard form (magnet removed only)	11.24
Final modified version to-date	10.18

These times are not really a fair comparison as I only did around five laps in standard trim and around 10 laps with the magnet removed. Whereas the modified version has done more laps than I have had hot dinners (in the past year at least).

### Conclusion

Overall, a brilliant and disappointing model. Brilliant in its detail and finish for the collector, but disappointing in the performance straight from the box for the racer. Although after my minor modifications it becomes brilliant all round, I would like to see Hornby producing magnets with much less strength as an optional extra in all Sport models. In the past I have substituted the powerful barrel magnets with the flatter circular ones you sometimes get with the Sport cars. I'm sure a rectangular magnet of the same strength as these could be produced. A first class model that should not be overlooked. ■

# NINCO

## track test

50342 BMW X5 X-Raid  
Reviewed by Mark Hatton

50343 BMW X5 "Motor Cadi"  
Reviewed by Vince Feeney



**W**ell here goes for my first, and maybe last, car review for the NSCC! Today we will be looking at one of the Ninco rally Raid cars, the 50342 BMW X5 in its second livery. First off I must say that I am not interested in rivet counting and getting out any gauges to check if everything is totally correct and to scale. If a car looks OK then that will do for me.

A quick check on the good old www. reveals that this model appears to be based on the 2003 Paris-Dakar mount of Gregoire de Mevius and co-pilot Alain Guehenec. The Team 1 car No 205 was going well in 3<sup>rd</sup> place for several days before it all came to a sad end during the Siwa – Siwa loop when a boulder damaged the steering. The impact also damaged the frame with no hope of running repairs in the field, or should I say desert. But enough of the history lesson and on with the model review.

OK, let's look at the car itself. The BMW X5 looks good in the box with the standard off road pose astride the rocky outcrop. Out of the box and it sits high and purposeful on the track and ready to take on the worst that the desert track can throw at it.

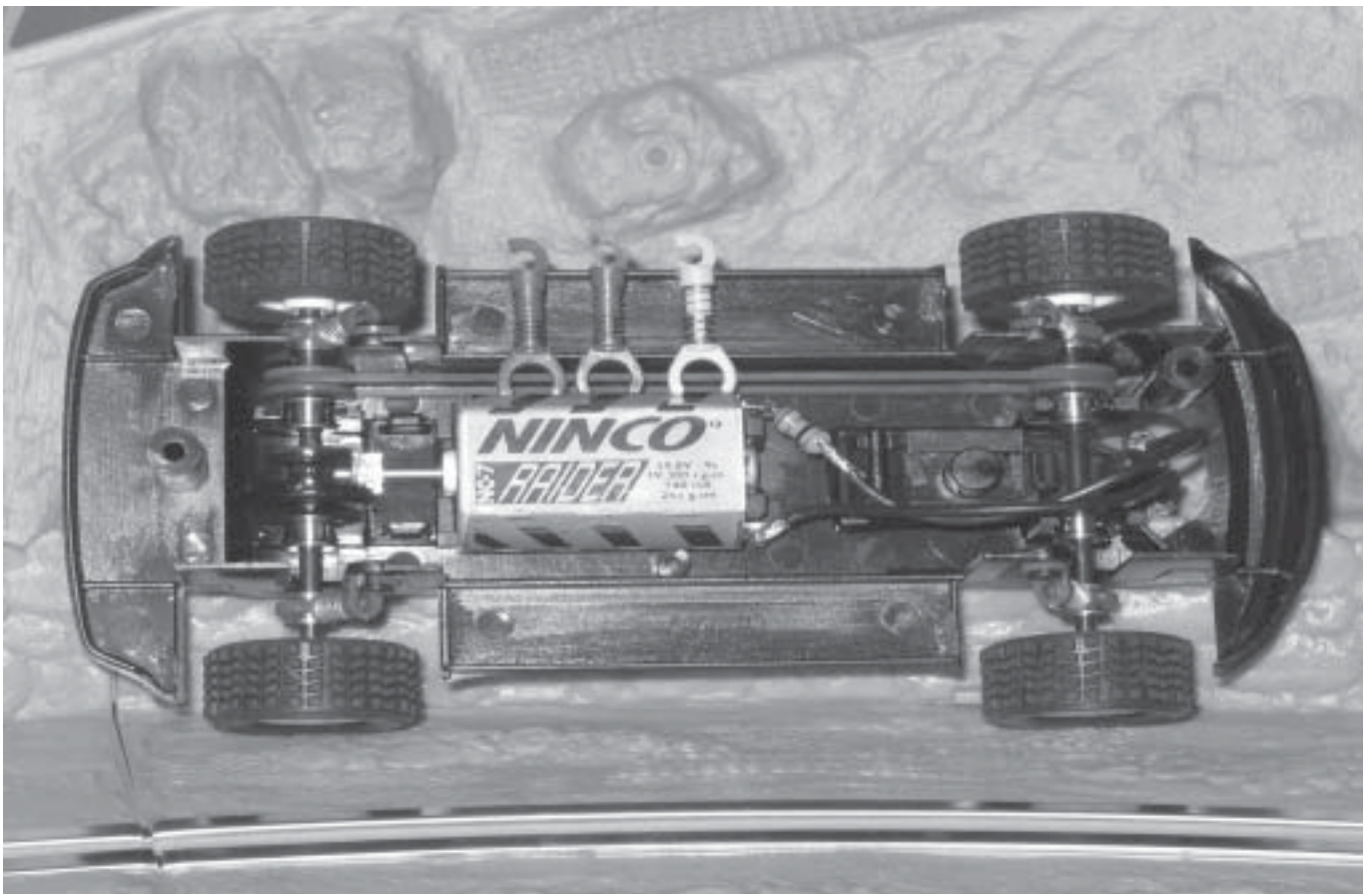
The tampo printing is clear, crisp and well up to the standard that we all now expect from Ninco. If you look closely, and I do mean closely, you can just about make out the drivers' names on the front wings. From the pictures I have, the vast majority of the decals are in the right place as well as being the correct overall colour scheme. Yes, some of them are missing and the number plate is incorrect (the real one is GG-XR 500 and the model is GG-XR 555 – is this a passing connection with Prodrive?) but who cares? I also particularly like the BMW kidney grill at the front and the BMW badge on the front of the bonnet. ⇨



Inside, installed behind their safety roll cage, we find Gregoire at the wheel with a few dials on the dashboard in front of him and Alain with pace notes you can just about read. Mind you they don't match the test track I've set up so they had better do a quick recce before trying for a special stage time. Unfortunately I don't see how Gregoire can drive, as he and Alain seem to have lost their legs below the knees and I don't see any

additional controls on the wheel? You would also think that if Ninco can take the time to give the driver a speedo and the co-driver some pace notes they could also give them some eyes to read them!

The wheels are the standard chunky off road tyres that we have seen on all the previous Raid cars and suit the car for its purpose. The mud flaps also add to the feel of a real off road vehicle. All Raid cars come fitted with Ninco's ProShock suspension units. The BMW is fitted with the medium blue shocks all round but these can easily be changed for others. Does this alter the handling? Previously I have changed them on a Ninco Mitsubishi Pajero from the original yellow (hard) and used red (soft) at the front and blue (medium) at the rear with a bit of lead in front of the motor and it has worked for me. However, with the BMW the medium all round has it handling just fine. Why not try changing them for yourself although they are a bit expensive at £4-£5 for a set of four.



This is all without the standard fit magnet installed. I guess like many “older” drivers I prefer the non-magnet approach. The magnet is easily removed complete with its own clip in holder. With the magnet in place you can certainly corner faster but once the magnet goes so do you due the higher centre of gravity of the body. Magnet out, and with skilful application of the hand throttle you can be tail sliding with the best of them. Talking of crashing, I have always found Ninco cars very robust and up to some serious knocks. With the X5, once the wing mirrors have gone there’s little else to worry about. You can always remove them before you get down to the real rough stuff.

If you feel the need to open up the BMW then it is a simple matter of three screws. The standard fit NC-7 raider motor has plenty of poke and isn’t troubled by the rubber band four-wheel drive system used by Ninco. If you compare this with the SCX TT rally cars of the mid nineties with their shaft four-wheel drive

then I know which one I prefer. Sorry Ninco. That’s not to say that there is anything wrong with it but when the going gets tough the BMW has a little problem. Just like the real thing, it is more of a soft roader than a hard core off roader.

This also brings us onto the drop arm spring guide, or proarm assembly. It works fine and you certainly need it to help get you over the lumps and bumps of the desert track as well as the extra clearance that the chunky tyres and suspension provide. This, however, is also the problem. Compare the Ninco proarm with the SCX TT and you will see what I mean. It is just too short. I am also fortunate to have some of the original SCX TT track and with the rope bridge and jump the BMW is not up to the task. It can also be a problem on the dune track because if you stop halfway up then that’s it. Not so with the SCX TT as the four-wheel drive will dig you out and up most of the time, or flip over backwards trying!

⇒→



One thing I wish Ninco would do is to fit some of their cars with lights and the raid cars seem like good candidates. Imagine going up and over the dunes and bouncing round the off road curve in the dark. Fantastic.

Just in case anybody is interested in race pace, then I race at Wolverhampton where we are in the fortunate position of having both a large six lane Ninco track as well as the four lane routed variety. I tried the BMW with and without the magnet installed on both circuits.

Magnet in, then round she goes with an impressive turn of speed in a straight line from the NC-7 motor and good "Magnatraction" cornering ability until, as mentioned previously, the magnet gives up and off she goes into the "wall"! My wing mirrors are still intact if you're interested. How long they remain on your X5 will depend on you!

Magnet out, this is much more enjoyable as you can take advantage of what is basically a reasonably well sorted chassis to begin with given the high centre of gravity. This is a typical trait of most Ninco models, good to run straight out of the box.

Sorry, no times, even though we have computer timing, because that is missing the point. More on that in a moment. Any Raid cars won't win in a rally class, either two or four wheel drive, at Wolves unless all the other cars are Raid class as well.

Now onto the REAL track test. For this I enlisted some serious opposition, my son and daughter! First we constructed an appropriate "bumperty" track as my son calls it and then on to the serious task of having some fun! Definitely magnets out, leaving them in just misses the point again. Then we gave the BMW a good crash, bash and bump test against a Mitsubishi Pajero and a couple of SCX TT Nissan Patrols on a selection of Ninco, SCX and old SCX TT track. And what a fantastic time we had. I certainly won't bore you with any test times either, as I didn't bother! Where's that point gone again?

Watching and driving the Raid cars bounce and jump around is thrilling as you try to max each tricky corner, boulder, mud splat, bump,

dip or jump with "maximum attack". Get it wrong and a barrel roll over a wall or a leap into the air with a crash down to almost oblivion awaits. Get it right and you can do it all again at the next corner or dip. You can even beat your opponent with a good sideswipe or bounce onto and off them! The desert track and making your own obstacles makes all the difference. The kids had just as much fun, if not more, as me and in the end I had to stop them from melting the hand throttles into their hands and telling them it was time for "my official track test" just to get back on myself. At the end of the day these cars are all about enjoying yourself and having some fun, just great fun with a capital "F".

In conclusion, would I buy one? Yes I would as I already have all the others! The downside is that to really enjoy them you need to invest in off road track and that does make for a bit of a wallet emptying exercise but at least you don't need too much. Go on, take the plunge and enjoy yourself with your own Paris-Dakar challenge...

Thanks to Brian and the Hobby Co for the car and desert track. You know where to send any more Rally Raid type cars! ■



# 50343 BMW X5 "Motor Cadi"

Reviewed by Vince Feeney

It's been a while since I received this model to review but, as I was actually going to race it, I needed a little bit of extra time because our calendar didn't allow enough time to do the second race evening to compare racing the standard car against a 'modified for racing' one.

On receiving this car for review I hastily whipped the cover off and with small screw driver clasped in my sweaty paw unscrewed the model from its sculpted 'off-road' base. There's problem number one. More later.

## So let's study it then

What we have is a top of the range panel van in a sort of medium blue hue with mainly white sign-writing. There doesn't appear to be any mention of names for driver and co. so this could be a fantasy livery, (I haven't done any research into this!), although it does bear a website on the lower sides ([www.lavanguardia.es](http://www.lavanguardia.es) - does this translate to 'The Spanish Police Van'?) Perhaps I'll check this site out and come back to you later.

Inside it bears the standard two crew members, a red fire extinguisher and a white roll cage. It runs on four Oz-race style wheels that aren't particularly round or attached to the axles. In fact the right front actually stuck outside the



body work by about 4mm (see picture) and came off in my hand. On checking the rest, the opposite side rear was also loose! To be honest it's quite bland and on our club track sort of disappears into the background.

To undo the chassis requires the removal of three screws, two at the front and one at the rear. These are the standard short screws.

Inside we have an NC-7 'Raider' motor bearing the following spec' details:

14.8v - 9z

19.300 rpm

140 mA.

265 g.cm.

Perhaps someone who knows what all this means could explain it to those who don't, me included. Well at least the 9z and 265 g.cm!

Now to two highly complicated axle layouts. They are both the same apart from the fact that the rear one has a gear!

Each axle has four brass bearings on it. The outer two sit just inside each wheel and the lower end of the shock absorber mounts on these. The inner two are spaced at just wider than a standard contrate and these clip into vertically elongated mountings allowing the axles to move up and down; this is obvious I suppose or the suspension wouldn't work!

The tops of the shocks hook onto lugs and the ones supplied are apparently of medium strength. They sit vertically when viewed front to rear and when viewed from the side angle in towards the middle of the vehicle. Tyres are bloody great knobby things! Four-wheel drive is provided via a rubber band running through pulleys down the left-hand side of the motor.

At the front end it carries a sprung drop arm and sprung guide. There are more springs in this model than there are in the matrimonial mattress!

At the back between the motor and the rear axle sits a little clip out magnet holder with (surprise) a magnet in it! This actually means that the magnet sits below the chassis line. It's a high old shed, about two and a half inches (55 mm to those who have converted) to the top of the roof so low centre of gravity doesn't come into any equation you could think up. =>

## Getting it ready for the track

On placing the car on a flat surface it displayed a distinct list to port (or is it starboard - I'm sure someone will put me right!). Anyway it leant to the right - nose down. So I screwed it back to its base and had a good look; should have done this first - kid, new toy etc. When this vehicle is mounted on its display base, both right hand shocks are under full compression. I guess over a period of time the springs in the shocks either get weakened or just stay compressed. Perhaps a flat display case would be more practical?



As I couldn't be bothered to strip the shock down and stretch the springs (the eyesight is failing as well, have trouble with very small things - stop sniggering at the back!) I left them as is. I even left the front wheel sticking out but did glue it and the other offending wheel back on.

## On the track

The thing to bear in mind is that all tests have been carried out on our club track which is routed MDF, copper tape and Sandtex surface.

This means fairly smooth, magnets don't work and it is fairly high grip, so not an entirely fair test to a car with lots of grip and the roll resistance of a jelly.

First time out takes place after the evening's racing is over and the few hardy ones are left. Start off gently and see how it goes. Very rapid off the line, front wheels about 5mm in the air, into turn one, long sweeping right, lean, wobble, fall over. Not very encouraging. Stick it back on and go again only a bit more gently.

There never seems to be more than two wheels on the ground at any one time, and through the kink on the back straight usually one. Up on to two wheels, guide out of the slot, describe a gentle arc to the right and cross the front straight against the flow! Modify driving style, point and squirt! Better. It has very quick acceleration but spends a lot of time bouncing around, so you don't get traction from all the wheels at the same time.

If you're really lucky you might have the important bits in contact with the track when you come to brake for the very sharp left at the end of the back straight about five feet after the 'kink', if not it doesn't slow down. Crash!

I took a quick lap time comparison, nothing much but on yellow lane (one of the middle ones) running tight produced a best of 8.65s. I then loosened the screws as much as possible and turned in a 7.83s. So 0.82s quicker - but I lost a screw!

Next week I'm seriously racing this, against WRC cars! Mark (who's raced a Pajero in Rally already this year) has agreed to race 'Raid' vehicles in the final two rounds of Rally this year to give me a comparison.

## Time to race

As this had to be a proper review I couldn't do any demon tweaks to this vehicle (even the motor stayed un-glued!) but I did have to do something about that sticking out front wheel. Hacksaw, Dremel and other nasty looking implements were used to shorten the axle to allow the offending wheel to sit back under the wheel arch.

Friday night - here I am lined up against a couple of ProRace Subaru, a couple of normal Subaru, a Citroen Xsara and Hyundai (older, slower version) and Mark in his Pro Truck.

Starting in middle yellow - lights green - go. Front wheels in the air, I'm off the line first. Into the first corner with care, I hold my own for all of half a lap. It does bounce around a lot! I'm getting the hang of the corners, you can start to drift through them, the outside rear digs in, the inside front paws the air and it looks quite spectacular, but it's not quick. Most of the time

the outside rear digs in and it falls over, or hooks up on two wheels and follows the radius of the corner you've just left! It really does require the point and squirt technique. I've managed to do 26.65 laps in yellow compared to Mark's Pro Truck on a 28.70. The next lane follows the same trend, other middle red. Me 26.70, Mark 28.40.

After these two lanes I decide to remove the rubber band and run it in 2WD to see if it goes any better. Initially I think yes because on long outside green I manage a 28.05 compared to Mark's 28.40. Promising. Inside blue, my favourite, back to normal, me 26.75, Mark 28.30. OK, the ProTruck doesn't have as much high-up weight, but two laps a lane isn't encouraging. Also, the Protruck is virtually silent whilst the BMW rattles like a Rattlesnake.

On examination after the event, tyre wear is interesting. Bearing in mind that it has done two lanes in two wheel drive, the fronts are as new. The rears however, are a different matter. About one third of the tread is worn almost completely away, graduating in both directions around the circumference to shiny untouched tread. To make matters worse, the worn out bit isn't in the same place on both wheels. So, is it gripping and then setting up a bounce? If so, is it gripping on the same bit each time? Is the world square? The wheels feel like it!

The net result is that everybody beat me. The ProRacers by 23 laps after 16 minutes, Mark with the ProTruck took just over six laps from me. Apart from my 'good' green lane the others were quite consistent though - 26.65 - 26.75 - 26.70. For the next round I'm going to modify ever so slightly. By the way, the other two wheels that weren't loose are now!

So, what shall I do to improve it. Put some round wheels on; grind the tread off the tyres; glue the motor in and put longer screws in and run it loose. Oh, and buy a new set of shocks for it, the harder ones.

A few weeks later, 'improvements' made, it's time to go again. This time Mark's using a Pajero. Without boring you with the details, the net result was much the same, Mark beat me by the same amount, so did everybody else!

I'm now sitting here looking at the chassis trying to figure out how to improve it without spoiling the basic look of the car.

## Conclusions

In fairness this review has been done on a layout and surface not best suited to this vehicle, but it wasn't pleasurable to drive or race, just hard work.

Playing with it on its intended environment will probably be fun but how long would the novelty last? Would you be able to drive it at speed over bumps, especially if they are in the corners? Does it have too much power? Perhaps for competition use an NC-2 would be better?

As Alan Slade found out, I don't think the contrate will last all that long. Is the amount of movement in the rear axle the cause of the noise from this car? Perhaps I'll try removing the front shocks as Gary did with the Porsche 934.

As it stands I wouldn't buy one. It doesn't drive particularly well and the livery is very bland. Stay tuned for an update when I've figured out how to improve this model with racing in mind.

By the way, 'lavanguardia' appears to be a newspaper. (The Vanguard?)

I bet Vince thought it was a really good idea at the time when I suggested he actually race this car! That will teach him to slaughter the editor during his annual visit to the East Devon Club! By way of illustration of my current standard of driving - I was achieving three laps less than Vince in a three minute race with a proper racing car!

See you in May Vince. ■



## Back to Back - A review of two of the latest Rally cars from SCX

# SCX

61470 Ford Focus  
WRC "Montecarlo"

61610 Peugeot 307

By Jim Moyes

**H**ah! You may say! This is not really two new models! SCX have long since had a Ford Focus in their catalogue. They have probably just sharpened up the front end styling to pass it off as the latest incarnation.

extremely crisp, right down to each door mirror having the Puma logo complete with leaping cat in tiny, but recognisable, detail. As you can see the livery is complicated at the rear of the car, with several different colours separated by silver



Wrong! This is a totally new mould of both chassis and body and boy, have SCX upped the detail level too. It now boasts two separately moulded mirrors- the previous just had a driver's side moulded lump - as well as separate wipers instead of a vague clear pair incorporated into the glass unit. The A-pillars are realistically slender and the sill line is correctly "pinched" between the axles. The tampo printing is

borders, and close inspection shows very little "bleed" between them. The new rear wing is a true feat of engineering with four vertical support spars as well as the main outer uprights. The two outer spars are even tampoed in green above and below the crosspiece on their inner and outer surfaces. A feat I wouldn't like to attempt on a super detailed scratchbuilt model, let alone on a mass-produced slot-car.

The underpan also has much more detail included, with basic suspension detail and sump and diff guards moulded in and picked out in no fewer than three different colours.

There are four separate pieces attached to the roof. Two aerials, a large air intake scoop and the small silver “box” above the driver which seem to be fitted to a lot of modern WRC cars- the Peugeot also has one. The interior platform does not receive the same attention to detail as the chassis underside, more’s the pity, and the occupants are decked out in white overalls and helmets and blue gloves. They have the benefit of intercom mouth pieces painted on to their faces/helmets. Either that or they have very strange facial hair.



The Peugeot 307 is obviously a completely new car for SCX and adds to an already impressive list of vehicles from this motorsport “genre”. Again, this car is fitted with separately moulded mirrors and a single wiper, though I feel SCX should consider making the mirrors removable, so that they can be saved for shelfdom purposes. This vehicle has six separate items attached to the roof panel, four aerials, (a bit over the top-but if that’s how the real car is.....) a smaller (than the Focus) air intake and the previously mentioned silver “box”. The rear wing is a much more usual top, bottom and two sides unit. The livery is a lot simpler, basically all over red with white lower skirt. The interior unit is a bit on the simple side, after the efforts made on the underpan detail a bit of printing of dashboard fittings would have been welcome.

The inhabitants of this sparse interior are wearing orange racing suits with white helmets and gloves and they are well protected by a complicated roll bar with side protection that does make you feel they will have to use “Dukes of Hazzard” style tactics to enter and exit the cabin.

Both cars are fitted with all the latest SCX gadgets as shown on the box base; adjustable magnets, sprung guide with automatic return system, 4wd and high intensity Xenon headlamps. The tried and trusted RX81 still provides the motive power but I get the feeling that Tecnitoys have urged a little more oomph out of the familiar silver can. But that advantage is lost by the vinyl-like tyres. Grip is extremely poor, particularly when running without the aid of the (too) powerful traction magnet, but just fitting some tyres from an older SCX car to the rear improved things considerably. The tyres don’t fit the rims as snugly as they could either, but changing for something better is simple enough. I wonder if the printing or clear coating of the tyres causes this loss of adhesion. The great thing about the SCX 4x4 range is that all of the cars are very similar in performance, due to the fact that they all share a common wheelbase dictated by the motor. Obviously liberties have had to be taken with the scale dimensions to achieve this, but I feel that is to the benefit of performance parity. This got me thinking about all the cars that supposedly share this important dimension and the list is quite a large one:

Two versions of Toyota Celica  
Two (or even three) versions of Subaru Impreza  
Two versions of Ford Focus  
Toyota Corolla  
Hyundai Accent  
Citroen Xsara  
Peugeot 206  
Peugeot 307  
Skoda Octavia  
Mitsubishi Lancer  
Seat Cordoba  
Audi 90 GTO  
Bugatti EB110

⇒

Now, do all these cars really have wheelbase measurements that when scaled down are near enough as makes no difference? To be honest I very much doubt it, particularly if you compare the Audi 90 and the Peugeot 206, but I am prepared to accept them as they are. It gives much more scope for variety at events of a rally nature.

Both cars are dismantled by undoing five self tapping screws and both feature the copper contact rails from motor to guide assembly familiar on most of SCX's recent releases. The distribution of lighting is quite different though. Gone are the large, and detrimental to the centre of gravity, bulb box and clear plastic "light conductors" fitted to previous models and instead there are neat copper strips running along the underside of the interior tray to fore and aft PCBs. The lights themselves suffer from minimal "bleed" through the bodywork and throw out a good beam to illuminate your path on those night stages.

TecniToys have also, yet again, changed the method of fixing the cars into the boxes. The plastic threaded bolt is now consigned to fastener history. I have had a few of those that refused to budge, or spun endlessly without letting go of their captive. It's replaced by a two-piece "jaw and stud" system which is removed with the use of a small coin or similar and simply snaps back into place when it's time to return the car to its container.

Performance is as expected from these cars. They are not super quick but will give lots of enjoyment, tailsliding around in true rally style, yet very seldom de-slotting. If you don't already have any SCX four wheel drive rally cars then you wouldn't go far wrong making either of these your first, but if they are already part of your slot inventory, then these newcomers will make for good new competitors. ■

# Analogue or digital?

By Alan Slade

Reading the article by Gareth Jex on the SCX digital system reminded me of an article that I had read in Model Cars in 1968 describing just such a system, albeit not quite so sophisticated but also developed for a lot less money. It also reminded me that I should not have stopped my tinkering 15 years ago to develop a lane changing system. Hopefully you will find the article in question somewhere else as I have taken the liberty of doing a Mr. Fennel and copied the article to Brian.

(see page 38 - editor)

There are a few things that seriously worry me regarding this change to a more realistic form of model motor racing. Firstly the fact that the new SCX system is totally incompatible with their existing system (sounds a bit like an advert for a certain software company); presumably this will be true for Ninco, Carrera, Hornby, etc as well. This means that should I wish to go digital I either need two separate layouts and cars or dispose of my current collection and track, which will now be worth a lot less as it cannot be used on the new system. Secondly, how long will SCX want to (or be able to afford to) keep making two of every model of car to satisfy both the digital and the analogue markets? I am assuming that is their intention, maybe I'm wrong and there will be different cars produced for each system – a clever marketing ploy or a recipe for disaster? Thirdly, until very recently I could purchase any car from any manufacturer and be reasonably sure that with just a little adjustment it will run on any brand of track, but this is now no longer true and I suspect that it is about to get even worse as I can not imagine there will be the same compatibility between digital systems as there is with analogue systems – hopefully I'm wrong.

What is the future of the hobby now – who are going to be the winners and losers? Consider the problems faced by individuals. In future have I got now got to have four or five totally different tracks and collections of cars just because it

happen to like certain models? In my case it is a resounding “No way.”, I have not got the room for one thing.

For those who do not know me, I only purchase cars that interest me, which generally means old cars or those I have had some connection with (especially FJs! and ‘big banger’ sports cars) – Goodwood is indeed rather special and an A35 blowing the Jaguars away . . . I also own a 1:1 scale A35. Sorry for the digression, back on track.

How are clubs going to react? Is there going to be a consensus between them that they agree to standardize on one system – and if so which one? What about the clubs who prefer to run on wooden tracks, what are they supposed to do? It should not be too hard to adapt the electronics to fit a wooden track, but building the cross-overs could be fun! My worst case nightmare is that there will be a fragmentation in the hobby and that inter-club competition will cease to exist as we know it now with no one being able to agree which is the best system (for that include reliable and at a reasonable cost) and each club doing their own thing.

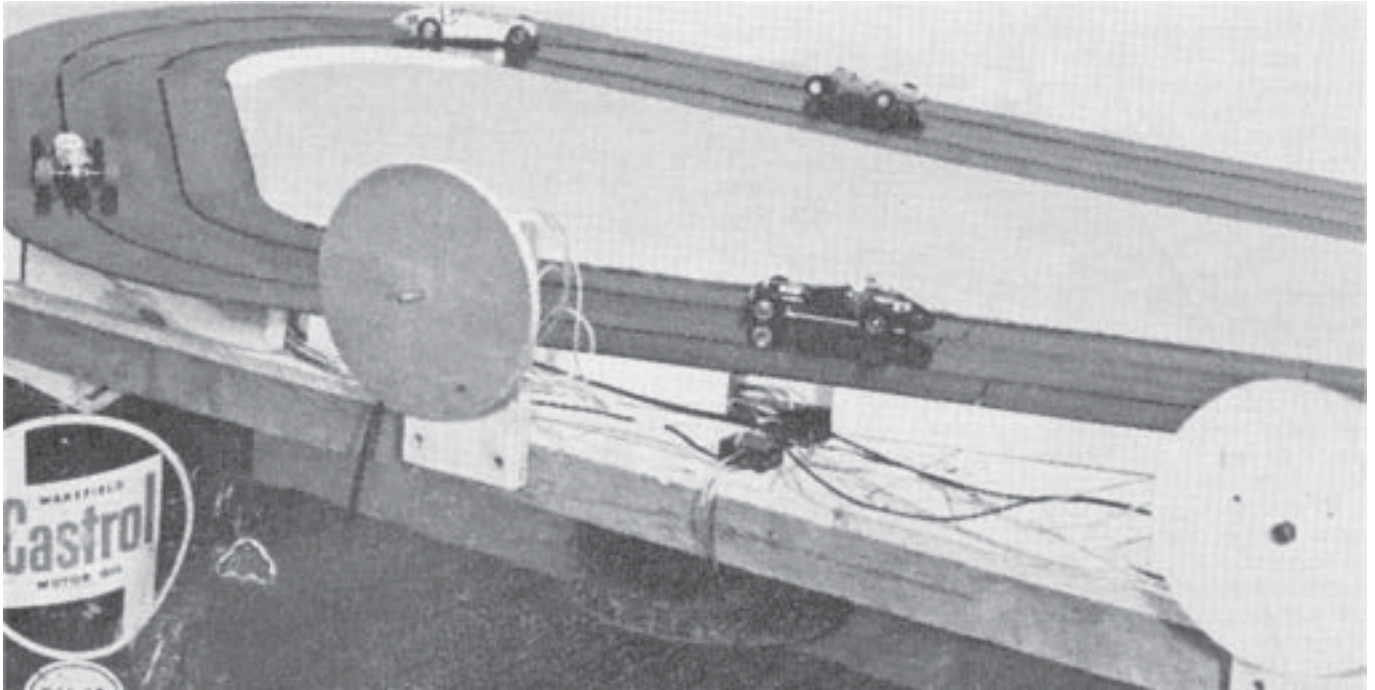
I can see a new Betamax/VHS battle for the high ground developing. I would be interested to see your views in the Journal, it at least should give the editor some copy for a few issues!”

This article was written a little while ago so Alan would be unaware that Hornby, at least, have used some common sense and made the new system interchangeable with the old. They also plan to sell the chips separately so older cars can be converted.

I am with Alan on the main thrust of the article though - anybody who converts to digital too soon wants their head examined! It is impossible for all the systems to survive; the market is simply not large enough. Undoubtedly Digital is the system of the future but, personally, I shall wait for the bugs to be ironed out and for a dominant make to emerge. ■

# The ultimate slot system?

As devised by M. W. Raynor, the inventor



If you believe that slot racing has no connection with full size motor racing and that 'Thingies' are the bee's knees, this article is not for you. If, however, you are a fan of the real thing as well as slot racing, please read on.

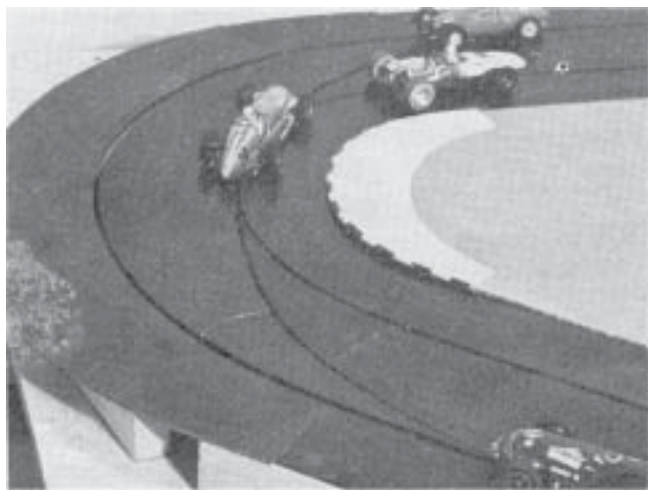
It has been my belief for some years that slot racing could be improved so that both realism and skill increased. Much time and effort has been spent to this end and a system eventually evolved which I believe be the ultimate. Many different systems were considered and it is impossible to detail them all but much has been written late about slotless or free steering systems being just around the corner and I would like to give one or two reasons why this is unlikely. If one considers a 1/32 scale model negotiating a hairpin bend and then visualizes a full size car on a similar bend, one difference should be apparent; that of the time taken. The model is round the bend and away in the time it takes our full size driver to apply the necessary lock to the steering wheel. This is confirmed by the Froude system of scaling models which states that the time scale is increased by a factor of the square root of the scale. Therefore in the case of 1/32 scale, the time scale is increased by the square

root of 32 which is something over five. This means that things happen five times as fast as in real life and our 'slotless' racing driver would need reactions five times faster than Fangio! Add to this the fact that he would be trying to steer the car from perhaps a scale 300 yards distance instead of in the cockpit and the problem becomes even greater.

This situation improves somewhat with larger models, say 1/12th scale and free steering radio control models running on outdoor tracks of generous width may be a possibility but this would be no substitute for our existing slot tracks.

It was therefore decided that guide slots must stay, but in a much revised form and after completing a total of four test tracks, the following system proved completely successful. As can be seen from the photographs, the track has two slots for two lanes and there are interchange points on the corners. The points can be positioned anywhere in the track but in the prototype they are positioned to run into and out of the apex of the inside bend. This enables a car to approach the corner in the outside lane, cross to the inside at the apex and swing back to the outside lane on exit, thus using all the road width.



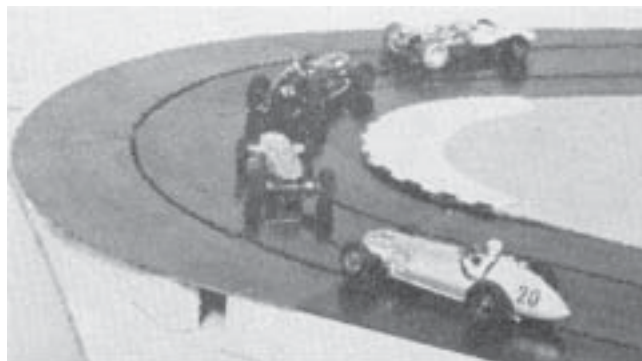


Beneath the surface, the slot widens to approximately 3/8" wide by 3/4" deep and the current pick-up tapes are positioned vertically down the sides of the slot. One of the tapes is a common negative supply and the remainder are positive, one for each car. This is duplicated in both slots and so the cars can run in either slot and up to eight cars can run together. The cars cannot de-slot but can spin through 180 degrees or more.

The real problem with designing a system of this type is to allow individual selection of the points by each driver. A simple on-off switch working the point would result in possibly all the drivers fighting for control of the switch at the same time and in eventual chaos. This has been overcome by using a system of short isolated sections in the positive pick-up tapes positioned immediately before each point. This section is connected to a steering controller which is in the form of a rotary switch and the other terminal of the switch is connected back to a solenoid underneath the track which operates the point. When the steering control wheel is turned to the right, the rotary switch makes contact but nothing happens until the driver's car (and ONLY the driver's) reaches the isolated section of track some three inches before the point. The circuit is then completed by the pick-up braids of the car and the solenoid operates the point. The car motor also runs at about half speed at this time which avoids any hesitation in the car's progress. Before the tail of the car has cleared the point, the electrical circuit has broken and the point has returned, by means of a spring, to its original position. Thus a following car and

driver, even if only inches behind, have a completely free choice of route. When the steering controller is turned to the left, it connects the isolated section back into the main circuit and so avoids a dead section in the track.

The slot guide is slightly different to existing guides being somewhat deeper and having a pick up braid on either side. For club racing it will be necessary to have a club set of 'plug in' guides to allow any car to be used with any steering controller.



With this system, realism is improved in many ways. Firstly, the track is reduced to a scale width which looks better and saves considerable space. The absence of copper tape on the surface improves both appearance and wheel adhesion. The cars look better in action, following each other through the corners on the correct line and pulling out to overtake, etc. It is not necessary to limit the track to two lanes. For instance, a pit lane could be included operated by a third position on the steering controller. It now becomes possible to have realistically banked corners which can be either of the 'Monza' type with a steeply banked outer lane and a relatively flat inside lane or of the Nurburgring 'Karussell' type with a banked inside lane and a flat outer. Both these types of banking give speed advantages to either the outside or inside lanes and this means that the driver would have to be in the correct lane otherwise he loses ground. The cars would of course start in pairs on a grid as per full size practice.

From the driving point of view, it is possible to start by selecting either inside or outside lane with the steering controller and then simply lapping in the usual manner controlling the ➤➤

speed of the car with the throttle which is a conventional thumb button. The driver can then progress to approaching the corners in the outside lane, applying right lock (in the case of a R.H. corner) to cross the inside and then, just before the apex, apply left (or opposite) lock and return to the outside lane at the exit from the corner. When this has been mastered, the next step is to try driving in company with other cars at which point things get quite exciting.

Although this track system is more expensive per foot run than conventional slot track, a relatively short (say 100 ft) track with three or four pairs of points would offer a multitude of lap possibilities, i.e. outside lane on one straight.



inside on another, vice-versa, etc., and so would take many practice laps to learn and find the fastest combination. In a race, the driver would also have to vary his route to overtake slower cars and to keep out of the way of faster cars, which is quite enough to think about without having to worry about steering the car and keeping it on the road as would be the case with a free steering system. A circuit, once completed, would last much longer than the present tracks which have to be torn down and redesigned and lengthened every year or so to maintain interest. Much work remains to be done to find the best method of track construction, etc., but the test circuit now in operation was constructed entirely by hand and any club or group could produce a track using the same methods.

A patent has been applied for in connection with the above invention and any manufacturers interested are invited to write to the inventor, M. W. Raynor, 30 Roecliffe Road, Woodhouse Eaves, Loughborough, Leicestershire.

Clubs or individuals are of course free to use the system if they wish and every assistance will be given to those wishing to do so. ■