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Tyred and Emotional

I have long held the view that Formula One racing is not really a sport at all but a soap opera entirely scripted by Bernie Ecclestone. Who could forget those epic episodes involving the Frenchman and the Brazilian conducting a high speed feud in the red and white cars? Not to mention the plucky Brummie with the moustache - high drama every time he sat in the car.

In recent years though Bernie seems to have been suffering from writer's block. The 'red car disappears into the distance' storyline was repeated so often that TV audience figures were plummeting and the show was in danger of being taken off the air.

Something had to be done so Bernie decided to hire the scriptwriters from "Dallas" to spice up the plot. At a script conference just prior to the USA Grand Prix they met to discuss the season so far - "Well I have to hand it to you guys," said Bernie, "This season has been a stunning success and viewing figures are much higher. We have had blue car disappears into the distance; silver car disappears into the distance followed by silver car falls apart on the last lap while leading. Then there was white car gets caught cheating and that great episode where the handsome Colombian driver injures himself off track, fights back to lead the next race and then gets black flagged. What have you got planned for Indianapolis?"

"You will love this one Bernie - the exploding tyre episode. We are going to issue the Michelin runners with faulty tyres so they can't race on the banking. They are all going to withdraw after the parade lap so only six cars take the start - just think of the great crowd shots we are going to get when the fans find out they have been had!"

"Ah come on - nobody is going to believe that - the FIA would surely sort something out to keep the show on the road.....!"

And Finally - Scalextric have announced a major safety recall on all their F1 cars fitted with Michelins. They will also be marketing a small chicane to be placed immediately before all banked curves.

Till next month
Brian



by
Rob Smith



MESSAGES FROM MARGATE

A very quiet month for new releases with just a handful of reliveries to report.

C2662 Maserati 250F "Behra" #4 H2681A Maserati 250F 1957 #10

Two new versions of the Classic Grand Prix Maserati 250F are now available although one is much harder to find than the other. The easy one is the generally released C2662. Finished as car number 4 in Maserati red it is complete with

Jean Behra driving in his red overalls and white helmet with a chequered band.

Also in Maserati red but this time racing number 10 is H2681A driven by Francisco Godia in his pale blue overalls. This car is only available to subscribers of the Spanish magazine Mini Auto Slot.

See www.revistasprofesionales.com for more details. A years subscription is 128 Euros and the magazine is great - if you can read Spanish. =>



H2681A is a full Sport release complete with a Mini Auto Slot sleeve and a black interior describing Francisco Godia (in Spanish). Hornby obviously can't decide on the reference number prefixes as in various places it carries H (for Hisinsa – the original importer) or S (for Superslot). Take your pick.

Superclub Superslot is now up and running although I'm still waiting for my first mailing to get here from Spain. Remember – you need a Spanish address in order to join the club. More information when something arrives!

C2582D Renault R24 F1 #8

C2583D BMW Williams F1 FW26 #3

The final two Scalextric Sport Digital cars previously announced are now in the shops. Visually identical to their standard version cousins they are equipped with the small digital chip. It is amazing how so much technology can be fitted into such a small space these days.

C2661 Ford GT 2003 Road Version

Looking absolutely beautiful is the second Ford GT to be released. This is in bright red with bold white stripes. As a road car this has no racing numbers. I wonder when we will see a blue Jeremy Clarkson version.

C2697 Ford Torino Plain White

A plain white version of the Ford Torino will be released in the USA only soon. It can be found on several USA retailer web sites and can be pre-ordered.

A New Auction Site

Hornby have launched their own internet auction site www.model-auctions.co.uk. You can sell any toy related items so long as they are at least three years old – no cheap current items being dumped here. The site works very well and is, of course, much like eBay to use. All items must start at £5.00 and the fees are very low. Hornby have already placed one or two interesting items on the site and look out for more – especially some spares from the 80s and 90s. A rival for eBay? Only time will tell.

A Guided Tour of the Hornby Factory

Situated in Westwood on the outskirts of Margate in Kent the factory has been the home of Scalextric and Hornby Railways since 1971 when production moved there from Havant, Hampshire to the busy Rovex Ltd factory. Across the front of the site is an imposing two story office block which is indeed a listed building. Upstairs the marketing and design teams sit on one side and the sales team in the (usually deserted) other. I always enjoy visiting the office because the whole team at Hornby are so enthusiastic about their products and are really keen for acceptance from the market and for others to share their enthusiasm.

Passing through the offices leads into a huge area which was the main production area before the move to China. This area is put to different uses and is currently filled with all of the train moulds bought as part of the purchase of the Italian Lima company. There are hundreds of them – all in top grade tooling steel and they weigh tons. Fortunately they are all resting on pallets as recently the area was flooded in a particularly violent thunderstorm that so nearly caused a massive amount of damage. Adjacent to this is the factory shop and the demonstration area where retailers are shown the product range and get to try it on one of several large layouts. There used to be service and repair departments here too but they have now all gone. Complete product replacement is a much quicker and cheaper alternative for returned goods.

Passing through here leads into the huge and impressive main warehouse. This is where deliveries from China arrive every few weeks. Pallet racks 10m high seem to stretch forever in huge rows with massive fork lift trucks to move things around. The place is eerily silent as modern warehouse facilities don't take much labour to run them. Interestingly Scalextric and Railway cartons are all muddled up as the warehouse does not use the same reference numbers we see on the cars and components. Each pallet has its own reference number that can be tracked from manufacture to dispatch.

Next to the warehouse is the dispatch area. This is where the big pallets are broken down for their contents and orders are dispatched to the distributors and retailers around the world. A conveyor system makes it easy for a complicated order to be made up and the line ends at an ever waiting queue of courier vans. The feeling here is one of cardboard boxes rather than pallets! To one side is the small Internet sales area. This is lined with racking carrying individual product items and spares and if you order from the Hornby web site this is where your order will be completed. Anxious not to tread on the toes of their retailers the Internet shop sells at the full suggested retail price – however it still does good business.

Although most items arrive complete from China there is a small repackaging department. This may be busy swapping cars out of slow moving sets to create the specials we sometimes see in Supermarkets, or doing exactly the opposite and taking cars out of sets to be sold elsewhere – such as Argos return cars sold singly in Australia. Also in this area is a machine

placing track rails onto the track pieces – apparently used when demand is very high to keep distribution moving.

Overall the factory is very quiet – Hornby employ about 150 people these days including the sales team out on the road and the various franchise managers. Much of the factory is showing its age and the recent flooding and busy seagulls make for a pungent odour in some areas. It seems very low tech compared with the high tech of the current product range and the superb quality of the design and finished articles. It is unsurprising that Hornby were interested in moving to a new site quite recently. Unfortunately this is not happening and some reinvestment in the existing buildings is probably inevitable.

So, the 6 million dollar question – are there hidden stores packed with rare and exciting items – sadly no – and I did look in every single corner. Unless they are buried under the floor they are long gone. Thank you to Hornby for my guided tour. Please remember that the factory is not open to general visitors so please don't ask! ■

You will have to forgive me if Shipment from Spain has been a little on the short side for the last few months - I have been somewhat busy! So I have a couple of review models sitting on my desk awaiting members to review them – get in touch if you would like to play with them.

Lots of new models out this month both SCX Digital and SCX. Let's kick off with Digital:

When the SCX Digital was announced over a year ago, several people commented that lane changing on the curve was a good idea and would SCX be releasing a lane change on the curve similar to the Scalextric version. Well they have and, in my opinion, gone one better. Ref 25050 SCX DS Change over Curve Track lets both lanes cross on the curve. There are no left/hand entrance/exit sections just a cross over

which both lanes can use. This new track section now allows lane changing on straights and curves and I understand plans are still underway for an extended lane change on the straight for higher speed overtaking.

Now for the SCX stuff and there is quite a lot. First a couple of accessories:

Ref 88490 Trainer 2

No this is not a model railway item, but a new version of SCX's pacer type system. Unless I'm very much mistaken (and I probably am) the original was not available in the UK for some reason so this is the first time we can officially buy this. Basically this is a race against the computer type device for individual racers to improve their driving skills. It's been updated from the original with SIC technology! (SCX Intelligent Control). The unit can be set to race/practise against another car (any car) for anything up to 99 laps, as you do your fastest lap you are informed with an audible signal and the car you're racing automatically increases or decreases its speed. No additional computer or accessories are required. ⇨



Ref 88390 2-Speed Electronic Hand Controller

According to SCX this has been designed for the "little ones". Basically it's a hand controller with two speed settings; Junior and Expert. Whilst this is pretty straight forward it is actually a pretty good idea. Anyone who has run a public event with kids will know the benefits of being able to slow things down a little to reduce offs and crashes. A simple up/down switch located on the back of the throttle controls speed.

Three new cars this month, well not quite. Remember a while back I showed you a picture of a very pretty red Seat Cupra only available in Spain. Well SCX have had a re-think and decided that we might like to buy this after all!

Ref 61840 Seat Cupra GT "Dommo"

This model represents the car driven by Gines Vivancos and Jordi Gene in the 2004 GT Championship. The car comes with a tilting chassis design similar to the Dome along with lights, suspension guide and the other SCX

normal features. This car is low and fat and drives very well with or without magnet.



Ref 61820 Dome Judd "Lammers"

This is a re-livery of the Dome in the 2004 Dutch Team entry for Le Mans driven by Jan Lammers. At first glance the livery is similar to the original but all the logos have been changed. The RX-62-C motor is on a tilting chassis as before.





Vintage

Last but not least is this year's annual Vintage car. Ref 61780 Tyrrell-Ford-001 which is a re-issue of the original 1973 Exin mould. This new model is tampo printed in the livery of Jackie Stewart and the body has been lacquered, apart from that it's as per the original with RX-1 motor and the unique guide flag. In SCX version this is a limited edition of 4500 units worldwide. Full review next month by yours truly.

That's it for another month, if you fancy a review of any of the above (minus the Vintage!) then get in touch with me or Brian. Just before I go, a big thank you to TecniToys, Bachman and Morningstar for running an excellent display of SCX Digital at the 25th Anniversary weekend. ■





One of the most exciting additions to the Ninco range this year is their ProRace components. This assortment of precision replacement parts offers racers the opportunity to upgrade and fine-tune their cars for optimum performance.

Starting with the axle, straightened and hardened solid steel shafts are available in two lengths; 51.5 and 53.5mm. Suited to both front and rear, the 2.48mm diameter axles are designed specifically for use with the ProRace wheel hubs, gears and bushings.

The new phosphor-bronze ProRace bushes give lower friction and longer life due to the precise fit and properties of this material. Crown gears available in 24, 26, 27, 28 and 30 teeth sizes share the same durable material for the core and are secured to the axles via 2mm "Allen" screws. Each crown is colour coded to aid identification of gear size. In conjunction with the crown gears, a series of pinions (8-11 teeth) manufactured from nitride steel are offered for fitting to the motor shafts. Each is designed to mesh perfectly with the crown gear. With three "angle-winder" cars (M3-GTR, NSX and Supra) the special gears to suit this configuration are also included in the ProRace range. Again, each ratio set is colour coded; Blue = 31/13 (for fast tracks with long straights), Silver = 32/12 (good all-round setting, suited to mixed tracks), Red = 33/11 (ideal for small or home circuits).

Wheel hubs are of a totally new design manufactured from aluminium and magnesium alloy. Each wheel is reported to weigh around 1g and has three balanced ribs designed to prevent

tyres moving under high-torque and cornering loads. The core is precisely drilled to match the hardened steel shaft and can be secured to this by the same size Allen screws. A variety of sizes ranging from small 15mm hubs to the large F1/ Cart hubs can be fitted with different hubcaps and brake-discs to add extra detail making your cars *wheelie* stand out from the rest!

A new range of relatively soft, natural rubber tyres compliment these new wheel hubs to give excellent grip as well as durability. Five types are released; 19x10 ribbed and slick, 20.5x11.5 slick, F1/Cart and 18x10 low profile slicks - all supplied in packs of four.

Alongside the wheel/axle/gear/pinion components, Ninco have added the metric screws (currently fitted as standard to the ProRace cars), high quality silicone covered copper cable and eyelets and finally a metric Allen key and spare grub screws - an essential tool for those who wish to tweak their car's performance.

Stunner No.2

Many members of the Ninco Club will already have their second exclusive club car. For everyone else, this is what you are missing... =>



Reminder

If your club is staging a Ninco competition over the summer, be sure to let me know by e-mail (PTSolari@aol.com) or in writing via our editor (details at the front of this Journal).

First pics

Following on from last month's new releases, here are some pictures of the actual slot-cars announced:-



CART Lola "Target" - 50374



Corvette "Hard Top" - 50376



Honda NSX "Denso" - 50382



I did not pick a theme for this month's column as the monthly deadline seemed to come around much too quickly! I suppose I mentally eased off the gas once my post-anniversary party column had been sent off, in which case I'm likely in the same boat as other columnists and the editor!

The reason I have themed columns in the past is that there are very few new H:O products to write about and I can't usually base my scriblings on those. Things are looking up at the moment though with two new cars from Life-Like to follow on from Scalextric's 'Batman Begins' cars which surfaced at Epsom. Life-Like have produced many good NASCARs over the years and these two releases are no exception. They are especially welcome as they reverse a worrying trend. Considering that doing a new body mould (as opposed to simply repainting the existing one) is an expensive process, Life-Like have been noticeably active in that department. The two new cars (available in a set only and likely to stay that way) are both Dodges, but with a completely different body to the previous releases – perhaps to mark the replacement, in full-size NASCAR, of the Intrepid model with the Charger.

The new body looks pretty nice, which reverses the trend of more recent Life-Like cars that seem to get more and more ridiculous. Do a Google image search for '22 Life-Like car' to see what I mean.

Whilst it could be argued that the new race cars do not look overly much like the real thing (a moot point as NASCARs tend to look

nothing like the road cars they are named after!), it is good to see that they have the right NASCAR feel to them, looking as they do (especially the dark car) suitably low and 'mean'. We often theme our H:O club events around this form of racing and I can see the Charger becoming a popular addition. Hopefully Life-Like will follow these two generic releases with some stand alone ones and 'accurate' paint schemes (although, it has to be remembered, this would involve going through the difficult and expensive full licensing process!) such as Mobil and Texaco.



Latest, much improved, Dodge NASCARs from Life-Like

Certainly they should be applauded for quickly tapping into the return of this famous US automotive name. The two Life-Like releases will probably be the highlight of the year so far as H:O racing cars go. I would love to be wrong, but the H:O companies are quiet, bordering on dormant to an extent that I have not seen before. The silver lining is that the cottage industry seems ready to step in. At the⇒

moment this follows two distinct areas of the hobby, bodysells and hop-up parts. As with any slot-car, an H:O car can be upgraded and there are many small companies (and one man bands) that specialize in better parts for your H:O 'toy'. Similarly, there are lots of bodies made by individuals frustrated that the stuff they wish to see cannot be obtained any other way. Below is a good example.



Stunning Alfa sports car for Tyco by Andrew Abbott of Sheffield

Recently, however, I have noticed that these dedicated concerns are turning to new areas. If the toy companies are not interested in making new chassis, possibly with improvements and new innovations included, then the void will be filled some other way. It cannot be a coincidence that two projects have started around the same time that addresses the fact that all existing H:O chassis have (sometimes extremely) inaccurate wheelbases. Both have started by making accurate bodysells and then tackling the not inconsiderable job of building up a chassis to suit.

At the moment Matt Norris seems to be in the lead with his 1980s McLaren but Dick Picard (slotcarinnovations.com) is catching up fast. I hope both become fully-fledged cars we can purchase and I'm convinced that neither of these projects would have been started in an environment where the toy companies were bringing out a reasonable level of new stuff. As both have the potential to be better, maybe this absence is a good thing.

Microslots are another small concern making its own chassis. At first glance the PS2 is, apart from being made of metal, entirely



Matt Norris' 'true scale' F1 car. Note the wheelbase of the cars either side!

conventional. A closer look reveals that it has adjustable guide positioning, three wheelbases and traction magnets that screw up and down in the chassis. Again, none of these things are likely to interest the toy companies so their absence has actually helped spur the designers on.



Microslots PS2 steel chassis

In one final piece of 'news' my club's website has moved to www.eahorc.com, a move I should have undertaken a long time ago. Not only was the price for the domain name a lot cheaper than I imagined, but I was able to avoid the problem of changing webspace hosts by setting the new URL up with an invisible (and free of charge) redirect to the old one. So if you have ever thought about setting up a slot-car site on the 'net I would say now is the time to do so! See you next month. ■



Audi A4 DTM "M. Ekström" (25751)

Review by Peter Solari

If I like the look of a full-size car and it becomes available as a slot-car, it normally ends up in my collection. Some time last year, I was flicking through the multitude of sports channels on TV and stopped at a DTM race being shown with a fantastic set of Audi A4s competing with the likes of the Mercedes and Opel. It was the first time I had seen the A4 in full DTM trim and the thing that went through my mind was "How long will it be before it's available as a slot-car!"

Thankfully, someone at Carrera thought it would be a good idea to reproduce these at 1/32nd scale and now the 2004 Audi is available in

Some people like to moan about the size of presentation cases claiming savings could be made if the packaging wasn't as big but I think Carrera and Ninco must have two of the largest boxes, yet still manage to keep the cost of their cars below those of other manufacturers with smaller and no doubt cheaper cases. With the car out of its see-through garage, it feels slightly heavier than most but this model does include front and rear working lights. It weighs in at 106g.. around 10g more than a typical DTM car from Ninco (*mentioned only because it is track tested against a couple of these later on*). The actual 2004 DTM car weighed in at 1080kg.



three liveries - this one being the Red Bull sponsored Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline. Having the opportunity to review one of the three A4s presented me with a bit of a dilemma ... would my love of the full size car bias my opinion and would the 1/32nd scale model live up to my expectations? Well, read on...

The Carrera presentation case really is the daddy of them all. It is a sturdy box with a nice little mirrored back section allowing a second view of the car without having to pick the box up. Behind this mirror is a neat little storage area where spare braids and instructions are kept.

Overall, the finish of this car is as good as any other on the market today. Compared with photographs of the full size car, all the graphics and sponsorship logos appear in the right place. Printing white on a dark colour is never easy but Carrera have made excellent work of some quite small prints with only a couple on the front wings suffering from a slight "fuzzing". The bodywork is accurately proportioned with strategically placed aerofoils and vents that really give the car a stuck-down look. Inside detail is adequate for this type of model; there is quite a bit of mould detail with only a silver →→

gear stick and fuel pipes in an otherwise black interior. The driver (a head and shoulders of Mattias Ekström) looks as though he is sitting in the rear of the car but if you examine pictures of the real thing, you'll find that this is an accurate representation of the driver position. He wears a "Red Bull" style silver and blue crash helmet and through the front opening you can see his startled eyes peering out at you. The body is fixed to the chassis by three screws and lifting the body off reveals a spaghetti plate of wires for the two-way switch and light control.

For a fair test, I ran it "out of the box" and compared it with NC-2 powered Ninco BMW M3-GTR and Mercedes CLK. I must say, the most noticeable thing about this car is just how quiet and smooth it runs. Two magnets are fitted, a bar magnet just in front of the rear axle and a sliding block magnet just in front of the in-line rear Mabuchi style motor. This sliding magnet design allows the magnetic downforce to be adjusted from zero to maximum in just a few seconds. In the forward most position, the magnet is furthest from the track rails giving little or no effect. As it is moved towards the rear,



the magnet becomes closer to the rails and so increases the magnetic effect. As the times show, by adjusting the magnets, this car can easily be tuned to compete with other manufacturers slot-cars with or without magnets. I used three settings: the first had the rear bar magnet in place with the block in the rear position giving "maximum magnet". The car ran very fast on the track with excellent braking when the throttle was released. Very easy to race with the back hardly ever stepping out - but when it did, the car was off the track.



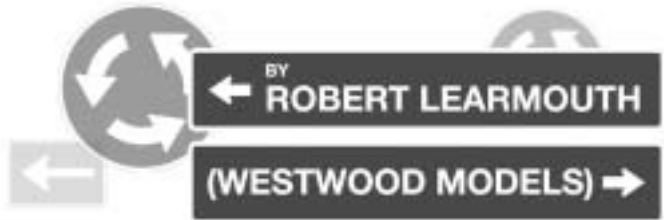


Next, I pushed it all the way forward, reducing the downforce and running under “medium magnet” conditions. The strong bar magnet still allows the car to be pushed but the limit of adhesion was noticeably reduced. Finally, removing the rear bar magnet and pushing the block all the way to the front again allowed me to race with (*virtually*) “no magnet”. Much more care was required to keep the car on the track and cornering became more of an art.

However, it was still very drivable and the bright “Xenon” style lights look great! The car was run on Ninco track which has a deeper slot than some other brands so I was able to test the car without changing the guide blade and it is also worth mentioning that at no time did I suffer problems with the two way switch grounding out on the track.

Carrera have really raised their game in recent years and this model is a prime example. There are not many manufacturers that can boast about truly *racing* their cars straight from the box and Carrera offer some nice simple tuning touches that make this car ideal for levelling the field between dads and lads. I’m still a big fan of Audi and I feel that this model is worthy of a stable mate... So what shall it be? The silver Sport Infineon Team Joest or the yellow Sport Team Abt? ■

| Average lap times: | <i>Maximum magnet</i> | <i>Medium magnet</i> | <i>“No” magnet</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Carrera Audi A4 DTM | 3.974 | 4.599 | 5.399 |
| Ninco Mercedes CLK | 4.328 | - | 5.471 |
| Ninco BMW M3 | 4.458 | - | 5.189 |



The English Church swapmeet in Madrid was again a highly successful affair. Beautiful weather nudging 40°C saw a continuous stream of visitors to this small but perfectly formed event. The quality and quantity of the slot-cars on offer (aside from the four English dealers) was disappointing but sales were brisk throughout the day.

Making its debut was the latest attempt at a Bugatti replica, high quality but extremely confusingly named. This was apparently a 'De Havilland replica'! Now the older members will know De Havilland is a tag that even when applied to the 1980s model is something that Steve De Havilland is unable to approve. Not because he is a grumpy bugger but because this is a registered trademark of the aviation corporation. Anyway, the thought of a replica of this model (the 1980s Hornby reissue to give it the Phil Etgart handle) is quite entertaining. What name it should be given would be equally entertaining. Presumably the '1980s Hornby reissue replica'! Personally I'm going to stick to Pink-Kar Bugattis. These are enormously under-rated models in my view (along with the Auto Unions and Healeys) and for around 20 quid are a bargain. Buy em now before the residual stocks dry-up!

Having flown out to Madrid early to take advantage of a cheap flight offer we had plenty of time for sightseeing. It is a fantastic city, smart and relatively compact but plenty to see and do. We took a trip on the cable car that travels out for 1½ miles from the Western outskirts of the city. It has to be said this wasn't the most scenic of trips, travelling first over a concrete suburb and then over a deserted country park of scrub terrain. Deserted that was apart from two young ladies who somewhat bizarrely seemed to be soaking up the sun in their bikinis whilst pacing up and down an access road. Initial suspicions

were confirmed about their precise occupation on the way back. One of them slid her pants down whilst waving her rear in a seductive manner at a passing car. A third member of the group was spotted making her way into the bushes with an older and somewhat withered Madrilian male. Shocking... and in broad daylight too... naturally I gathered some photographic evidence. Ironically these were the only pictures I did come back with. All my other photos, including those of our trip to the awe-inspiring Bernabeau stadium, were lost as I discovered I had no film in the camera... Never mind - back next year!

Hornby have launched an auction site a la Ebay - www.model-auctions.com. It's quite an impressive looking site and is based on well proven off-the-shelf tailored software. However the rules and regs are paper thin compared with the exhaustive (and exhausting) ones on Ebay. I've already had my bottom smacked for inserting website references in a listing (the regs did not state this was an issue so I tried it). Listings were few and far between in the first two weeks of opening but everything has to start somewhere. If it is the success it could certainly be then enormous amounts of promotion will be required. Success will in turn pile pressure on Hornby to staff the back office of the operation as these things certainly do not run themselves. The site is a nice idea on Hornby's part so give it a go and support it! All items have to be over three years old.

Phil Smith's Orpington swapmeet will be the last one of the season in early July. We then have a 2½ month break until Milton Keynes in September. There's no point running regular style events during the summer - slot-cars are not on most people's agendas. But if the weather were as reliable as Madrid, a beach event at Brighton would be quite interesting! ■

Vectis toy auctioneers synchronised some of their live auctions with eBay last month - a bit risky if you ask me. The highest bidder would have to add 20% to final price, and for the postage and packing (£25 - £50 seems to be average).

I bought some Scalextric items from a live Vectis internet auction last month. Only bid the maximum you are willing to pay. I got all three items I bid on at maximum price. They sent me the wrong lots and charged me £50 postage and packing! They said they would refund some postage and guess what? - I'm still waiting. At least with eBay you can leave feedback.

Tip - always ask a seller to pack an unboxed car in a strong box. I once received a £100 car in a jiffy bag.

Recent prices

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Grande bridge - boxed | £87 |
| Four lane pit track - boxed | £195 |
| Refreshment kiosk - boxed | |
| but missing downpipe | £38 |
| Vintage Bentley set - | |
| Cars missing headlight parts | £320 |
| Goodwood chicane - incomplete | £48 |
| Pair of Bond cars - missing bumpers | £630 |
| Good pair of Bond cars | £700 |
| Bond set complete | £1000 |
| Catalogue #2 | £65 |
| Catalogue #1 Australian | £50 |

1/32 Electric Slot-Car Set for £15

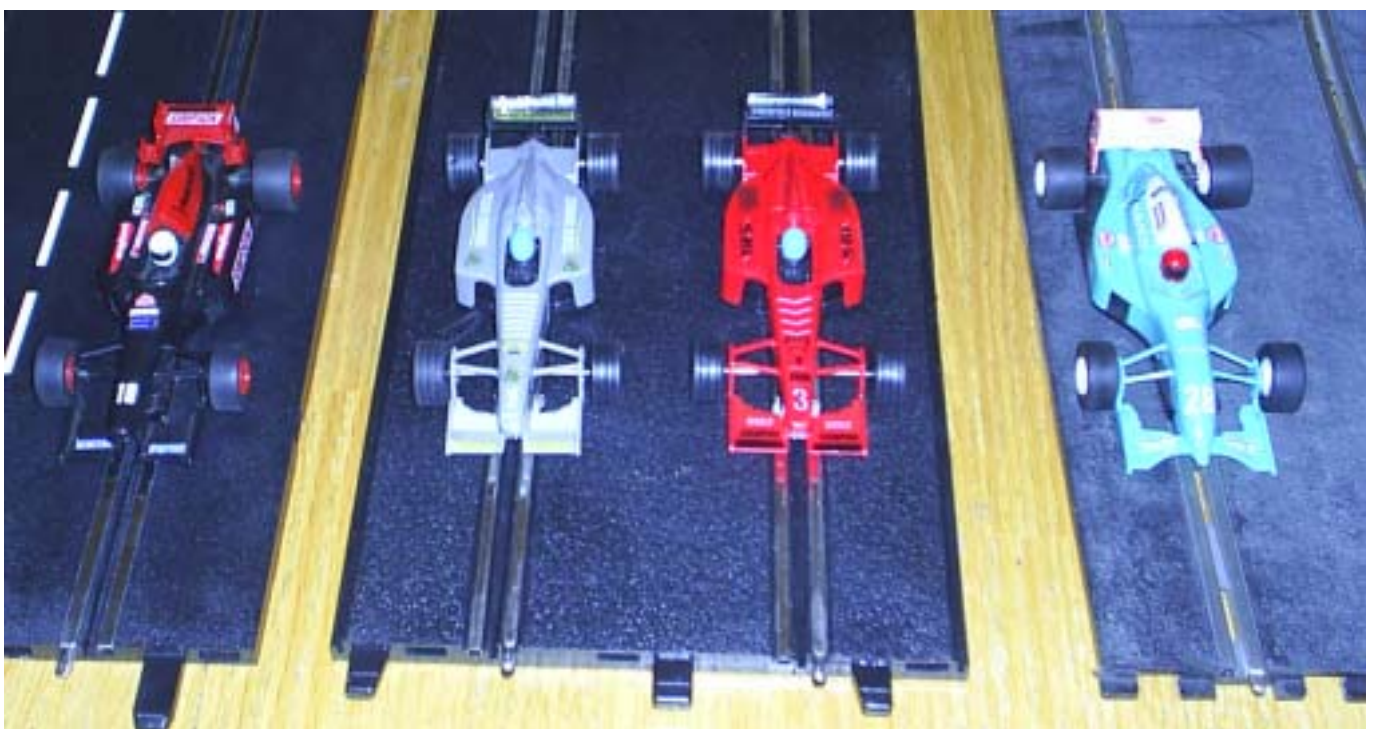
By Greg Tripp

Last Christmas, while enduring the usual pre-festive shopping trips, I came across this intriguing proposition in a T J Hughes shop in Maidstone. T J Hughes is a 'pile 'em high sell them cheap' High Street operation that buys in cheaper Christmas toy lines for the more financially challenged parent (ie me). The sight of a set of slot-car set boxes in such a shop is not usually that interesting as they are generally the Artin style play and throw away 1:43 scale battery powered sets. However, on closer inspection I realised that they were knocking out a full blown 1/32 electric slot-car set for the all-in sum of £15. In the interests of research I handed over my £15 to the cashier, made my excuses and walked away with the nattily titled GP Racing Speedrace Sepang Set.

Once home, closer examination of the set box established that the GP stood for Giochi Preziosi. None the wiser, a Google search then indicated that they are an Italian toy company but that the set itself was manufactured in China.

When assembled the track is an extended figure of eight that is a reasonable 12ft long (3.6m if you must). It is manufactured in the similar hard plastic favoured by Carrera. The track sections are connected by a push fit lug system that I can vouch is extremely effective, as I managed to draw blood when trying to take it apart. The gap between the slots is almost identical to Ninco track, ie wider than Scalextric but not as wide as Carrera, however it is not compatible with the Ninco track system.

The set is supplied with two generic F1 cars, one in red and one in grey and both have blue headed drivers. The cars are quite crudely finished with stick on numbers and transfers, but have some nice wheels and tyres. Someone at GP Racing appears to have had a very close look at some Scalextric F1 cars as they are very similar to Margate's finest from about ten years ago. They run on Mabuchi motors and even have bar adhesion magnets. Track performance is fair considering the cost but could be better =>





if the designers had used a squared off slot guide instead of a chamfered one which leads to deslotting on some corners.

The controllers are stylishly designed thumb operated units with a proper push in jack plug connector to a dedicated track connection. The set also includes crash barriers that have to be wedged into narrow slots moulded on both sides of each piece of track.

So there you have it – the £15 1:32 electric slot-car set. Desirable? Well, what does £15 normally get you in the slot-car world these days? If you are lucky, half a decent new slot-car. However if you fancy a test track you and the kids can trash and then bin at the end of the holidays and some cheap new engines and slot-car spares, this is an offer that is hard to refuse. Keep an eye out for fresh supplies of this set this Christmas, as I believe TJ Hughes sold out of it last year. ■

Slot 32 Endurance, Knockout and Rally Event

By Ric Woods

Four Hour Endurance

Seven teams assembled on the 4th June to take part in this event, held in Bricket Wood, which nestles conveniently next to both the M1 and the M25.

The race was run on a 'mirror image' pair of challenging, technical 4 lane layouts, made up of some 364 pieces of Ninco track plus, of course, a huge number of borders, barriers and fences. The rules specified the use of Ninco cars and spares, and to that end the Honda NSX proved the most popular contender, with a couple of the new Toyota Supras also in evidence. As a further item of interest, teams were allowed to specify the voltage they raced with (from 12 - 20 volts), though the fairly twisty nature of the circuit design dictated that, for the most part, people used a conservative 14 or 15, instead of anything that might have seen their car exit the building in an uncontrolled manner.

Everybody wanted more practice, of course, but at 1.30pm things got underway with the first half hour session. The Eastcote team established themselves in the lead by nine laps at the end of this, but behind them great battles were shaping up between the 2nd placed Misfits (not an insult – that was the name of their team) and Burnt Oak, and also between West London and Slot 32 in 4th and 5th places. At the end of the first hour Eastcote had pulled away to a 25 lap lead, having done the highest total (190 laps) in a session for the day, but as their little red NSX blazed on its way, the places from third to sixth were being fought for tooth and nail, the New Tottenham team hauling themselves into contention.

As the race wore on, and the rear wings gradually went missing from the cars, a good fourth stint by New Tottenham saw them

elevated to third spot, with Slot 32 sneaking into fourth, ahead of the Burnt Oak and West London teams, giving their all and separated by only two laps after two hours. Then, not content with an honourable third place, New Tottenham actually took second place (by three laps) from the Misfits at the end of the third hour!

One hour to go, then, and the Misfits clearly hadn't taken too kindly to losing their second place, so they promptly retook it, and if that wasn't bad enough, by the end of the race Slot 32 had rubbed salt into the wounds of the New Tottenham team by stealing their third place by five laps! Eastcote ran out the winners, and took fastest lap in the closing stages when ex-European Champion 'Mad' Matt Digby went for 20 volts, ignored the ashen faces of his teammates, and threw the little red NSX round the track in 8.22 seconds. Toyota Supras took second and third place honours. Overall a most successful and exciting event.

Final Standings:

- 1st Eastcote 1467 laps
- 2nd Misfits 1401 laps
- 3rd Slot 32 1390 laps
- 4th New Tottenham 1385 laps
- 5th West London 1376 laps
- 6th Burnt Oak 1323 laps
- 7th Team Odious 1231 laps

Knockout Event

With the four hour endurance dust having barely settled, the hard-working Slot 32 team set about combining the two 'mirror image' tracks into one impressive 180 ft/ 54 metre installation. To Ninco's credit there were no drop-offs in power or connection problems even at this extended length. This individual event was ➡➡



run to 'Crash and Burn' rules, with races being run on the outer lanes of the four lane layout, two drivers going at a time. If after two minutes no-one had fallen off, the lanes were to be switched and a further two minutes run, and again if nobody had come unstuck, then the driver of the car which had completed the greatest distance was declared the winner and would go through to the next round.

A number of people had arrived specifically to take part in this event, and so they were allowed a few minutes of practice time. Those drivers who had taken part in the endurance had to be content with knowing one half of the circuit well, and only knowing the other half backwards!

As with so many of these things, being able to tread the fine line between speed and accuracy was going to win the day. Poor Matt Digby, who had set fastest lap in the endurance, lasted just a few metres! In the end it came down to the equivalent of a slotting stare-out between Steve Kempson and Adam Kushner, a hush descending over the room as they commenced the final. An outstanding display of high-speed

tightrope walking by both drivers eventually saw Steve make the slightest of mistakes and Adam was the winner. No-one was more surprised than he was, as he hadn't competed in a slot-car event of any sort for two years! Incidentally he had borrowed the Eastcote team's winning Ninco Honda NSX from the endurance race, so that was a pretty successful day for that car!

Rally Event

Three sinuous instruments of slot-car torture greeted the competitors on Sunday morning. The giant 'knockout' track had been knocked down and combined with all manner of bridges and bumps, ridges and roundabouts and the slippery and the steep to form three special stages. There were two classes – Rally and Raid, and within the Rally class you could run 'classic' rally cars if you wished to do so and indeed a number were in evidence, such as Roland Brookes' Ferrari 250GTO (yes, they did some rallies!) and Jim Moyes' very smooth Lancia.

Stage One was a supremely twisty affair, with a tricky bridge with steep drops on either side of it, Stage Two was dominated by a large



section of 'rock-strewn' track, which climbed and then descended majestically in a series of 'dunes' (with a tight corner at the bottom!). Stage Three was more open, a bit faster, with a section of Ninco's snow-effect track, which looked very effective.

Drivers were allowed to choose their own voltage, and it was immediately clear that those with experience at this sort of thing knew to keep things under control, and to make steady and smooth progress rather than the 'banzai' approach. The various vehicles in the 'Raid' class showed perhaps less ability in the corners than would have been ideal, but they did have a great plus point in that they could put a wheel off the track and onto the table, the ground clearance and drop guides allowing them to keep going regardless! Another star was Gareth Jex's Peugeot 205, a potent beast which delighted onlookers with its leaps off the tops of the dunes, and indeed off anything else it had the chance to!

With three stages completed, it was clear that Jim Moyes and Gareth Jex were the class of the field, and they lost none of their momentum

as they went into the second round. This time, just when we thought we knew what we were doing, the running directions were all reversed, so once again every corner was a surprise.

Six stages down, and it was back to the original direction of travel on two of the three stages for the last runs through.

A very intense day of competition, but that having been said, it was all run in a very relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. The stage lengths were good (mostly it took well over a minute to complete a stage) so you ended up having a decent amount of 'track time' by the end of the day. The organisers had thoughtfully provided a test track for people to have a go on if they wanted to as well. What with all that, and a free sandwich and raffle ticket into the bargain, it's safe to say everyone enjoyed themselves! Jim Moyes took the first two places with the two cars he had entered (Peugeot and his Lancia), Gareth Jex took third, Ric Woods took fourth, Gareth's second car was fifth, followed by Gary Hobden who was sixth and again an excellent seventh overall and first in the Raid Class. ■



Sir,
 An unexpected bonus has emerged following the complete and utter farce that was the US Grand Prix at Indianapolis. For the first time since Scalextric was invented in 1957, it is actually possible to accurately reproduce a Grand Prix in miniature, using just six F1 cars running on a two-lane digital track.

I suggest that Margate get on to it pronto, marketing a unique limited edition Indianapolis set with two Ferraris, two Jordans, two Minardis and a big banked bend that no other F1 cars can negotiate. They shouldn't bother supplying Sport cars in the set though; it would clearly break the trades description act.

I am, yours etc,
 Paul Strange

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Sir,
 News has just reached me of the latest Scalextric racing set. THE US GRAND PRIX!
 It comprises two super detailed Ferrari Formula One Cars fitted with Pacer units, two lane figure of eight track, kitchen timer, tin of paint, paintbrush and 20 cm square sheet of MDF.

The instruction sheet reads: "Set up circuit in one room, apply paint to MDF, with brush supplied, in another. Start two cars on circuit, set timer to one and a half hours and retire to second room to watch paint dry. When timer rings return to circuit and switch off electricity supply to track." Scalextric do not advise returning to the circuit before the 'race' is over as users may find this seriously detracts from the excitement of watching the paint.

I am, yours etc,
 Bill Grigg

Sir,
 The Dundee Slot Car Club now operates a four lane, 71 feet track length, computer controlled Scalextric plexi fold away track.

Enthusiasts in the area can contact us on 0131 228 1796 or email: checkeredflagdrop@yahoo.co.uk.

I am, yours etc,
 Phil Hall
 DSCC Club Secretary

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Ferrari 312PB

By Tony Secchi

It is a well known fact that, as a rule, memory becomes very selective as one gets older. Generally, you can remember clearly non-important events from the distant past but cannot bring to mind the date when your current MOT expires for example. But like all rules there are exceptions and sometimes it only takes a small happening to bring back a flood of very important (to oneself) memories from the mists of times past.

So indulge me, dear reader, as I take you back to a dull but dry day at Brands Hatch in April 1971. It is the occasion of the 1000 Km race counting towards the World Championship for Sports cars and I am sitting alone in the grandstand at Paddock Hill bend just before the steep (and in those days) infamous drop. The race has just started and the cars have departed off into the depths of Kent heading for Dingle Dell. For a short minute of time it is quiet with only the buzzing of the crowd humming like a swarm of distant bees.

Then suddenly we spectators hear a car approaching Clearways from Stirlings Corner. Getting louder, the unmistakable (to my ears anyway) rasping note of a Ferrari Boxer flat 12 engine is heard and then seen as a red missile hurtles into Clearways and barrels up the Brabham straight. Two quick downshifts like a heavy smoker's cough echo round the grandstand as the car flies down and round Paddock then roars up towards Druids hairpin. Another downshift and it zips down to Graham Hill bend and along the back straight. A further gear-change at the Surtees left hander and it is off into the country once again leading the rest of the pack by over three seconds. I am left speechless (not a very frequent occurrence) as I relish the thought that I have nearly six hours more of this.

Cornering like a modern day magnetised slot-car, flying along the straights like a red rocket, the car in question is the Ferrari 312PB driven by Clay Reggazoni (and Brian Redman)

on that particular day but by many other great drivers over the next eighteen months. It is one of my favourite and most sought after model racing cars and it has left an indelible picture on my memory for the last 34 years.

Despite my Italian heritage, I have always been a Jaguar man (real Jaguar that is!) and always will be after seeing some of the early 'C' and 'D' type victories at Le Mans and following the TWR Silk Cut prototype sports cars who contested and won the World Championship during the middle to late eighties and early nineties, travelling all over Europe to do so. I also attended the many club, national and international events in this country featuring the Mk 1/2 saloons and the fabulous 'E' Types. For a good few years I belonged to the Jaguar Drivers Club.

However, I am also tied to the Scuderia through my bloodline and as most regular readers will know have built a few examples of that marque's most famous sportscars.

That last word is important to me - I like all forms of motor racing but I am really into sportscars. They were my first love and have endured so throughout my long years of interest in our sport. The cars were more accessible, the races more frequent than F1 and in my day all the F1 drivers were allowed to drive them. They were viewed as complementary to open wheel racing and not seen as competition as they are today. They raced on the same tracks as the F1 circus used and some of them were as fast, if not faster, than F1. At Monza in 1970, Vic Elford driving a Porsche 917 (awesome) set a new lap record 1.4 secs quicker than the then current F1 time on that circuit and at Le Mans the same marque was clocking 245 mph (400 Km/h) on the Mulsanne straight - a sight to see I can assure you.

But it is the 3 litre 312PB ('P' for prototype) that holds the greatest affection for me. It is my favourite open top sportscar and my favourite Ferrari - yes, even rating above the 250 GTO

and the 330 P4. It was a fabulous little car that in its first years (1970/71) raced against its main protagonist, the more powerful 5 litre Porsche 917 that had dominated its predecessor the Ferrari 512. After the 1970 season the FIA banned 5 litre cars at the conclusion of the 1971 season and set a 3 litre limit for 1972. Ferrari were already using their 3 litre flat 12 Engine in F1 and the 312PB so they were ready.

In 1972, without the 917s to bother them, the factory entered cars totally dominated the sports car category in the world championships, winning all ten events it contested with the notable exception of Le Mans, in which cars were entered but never raced. (Graham Hill won that year in a Matra/Simca MS670 with Henri Pescarolo).

1972 was the last time that Ferrari backed a full works team in sportscar racing, from then on it was F1 all the way. Needless to say, in winning ten of the eleven races in the official calendar, Ferrari had won the World Championship and if there had been a drivers' championship they would have occupied the first seven places. The drivers read like an international who's who of pilots in the 70s:- Jackie Ickx, Mario Andretti, Clay Reggazoni, Ronnie Peterson, Brian Redman, Carlos Pace, Carlos Reutemann, Arturo Mezzario, and Tim Schenken.

Today, with Grand Prix racing being the dominant Formula, it is easy to forget that not so long ago sportscar racing was at least its equal and that the great myth and legend of Ferrari was really born out of that early success.

To those who witnessed its predecessor it can be hard to imagine something so far removed from the mighty 512 than the 312PB - minimal, compact and nimble. The engine, called the boxer, derived as stated previously from the 312B3 Grand Prix car. It was a flat 12 with four overhead camshafts, 48 valves and fuel injection. For reasons of reliability and endurance the bhp was reduced by 20, so that it gave 440 at 12,000 rpm. It had a five speed gearbox and the transmission taken from the F1 car. With its tubular space frame and aluminium/fibreglass panels it was basically the Grand Prix car thinly disguised with a full width sports car body.

To me it is a stunningly beautiful car, but to the best of my knowledge no slot-car/body manufacturer has produced one in this country. 'Real Slot-Cars' are supposed to be bringing out a cast-resin version of the 1972 Brands Hatch winning car later this year but we will wait and see.

Building the model

Now this is where my memory jogging moment comes in. Beating the proprietary makes to the punch, 'master of model-makers' Dave Yerbury (of AA Bodies) has produced a fibre-glass body of this unique car and sent one down for me to build.

Following on from his previous terrific bodies of the 'Testa Rossa' and the 'Can-Am 612' (both reviewed in the Journal) this one completes the set. As ever with David's work it sets a very high standard of detail and accuracy. As usual it has to have the 'flashing' cut away and the wheel arches profiled. I had to make a wing mirror tripod stalk from sewing needles and two vertical stub winglets as I wanted to replicate the car that I had seen at Brands. Incidentally, it did not win on that occasion. In a race of attrition I think that it retired with electrical failure when well in the lead and the race was won by an Alfa Romeo T33/3.

I used Scalextric front and rear axles with a standard crownwheel and pinion but, because of its excess weight in comparison with the lighter bodied plastic cars in its class, I fitted an in-line 'Scaleauto/Mabuchi type motor which revs to 28,000 and powers among other cars the MRRC Toyota Celica LB Turbo. The chassis came from two separate Scalextric underpans cut, spliced and glued together to give the correct wheelbase of 69 mm in 1/32 scale (in real life the wheelbase was 2220 mm, the length 3770 mm, the width 1960 mm and the height 954 mm. so this was a real pocket rocket and capable of 190+ mph).

I then turned my attention to the wheels. In the late sixties and early seventies Ferrari fitted gold painted, magnesium five spoked wheels to their Grand Prix and sportscars - the 'Fly' versions of the 512 and 512S are beautiful =>

and accurate examples of them. However, for the 312PB Ferrari had used wide rims with five simple holes to replace these. They are very distinctive and unique to this model. Making or modifying a set like these proved beyond my capabilities so I used the 5 spoke wheels and tyres from the 512 as supplied by Pendle Slot Racing who provide all of my wants.

The correct decals for this model also gave me a problem. Apart from the white roundels, black numbers and 'prancing horse' shields I could not supply any items from my stock. However, once again David Yerbury came to the rescue. I phoned and explained the situation and he said he would help. And help he did, sending a selection of ten separate sheets from which I chose my requirement. Most of the sheets were by the Spanish SCX and EXIN companies so quite elderly and priceless. Nevertheless, David was quite happy to let me have what I needed. Another generous act by a man who, although I have never actually met him, am pleased to call a good mate.

The underpan was fitted to the body by the now standard 'mounting post' method in two places, one each end at front and rear. Due to the high cutaway rear wheel arches a vertical body plate was added between the wheels which accommodated the twin exhaust pipes and gearbox. This served to hide the long rear vertical mounting post.

The driver figure had to be Gianclaudio 'Clay' Reggazoni, for it was he who had taken the first stint on that April day. I had met him about a year before through my good friend the late much missed Luciano who featured in a couple of articles that I wrote previously for the Journal ('Gina the Leaner' was one) and had paid my respects to him in the Paddock before the race. Luciano had a pit pass so I returned to the stands

Anyway, I took an old Scalextric head/shoulder figure, painted the arms light blue to replicate the fireproof 'Nomex' overalls of the day. Next, I painted the crash helmet white and cut thin strips of red tape to match Regga's colour scheme, finishing with the white Swiss cross symbol on the front.

Contrary to popular opinion and belief, Clay is not Italian. He hails from Ticino in the predominately Italian speaking area of southern Switzerland. He was born in Lugano and has always been treated by the 'Tifosi' as an honorary Italian especially when driving for Ferrari.

When placed on the cockpit area the head of the driver figure was too high so I had to cut out that area and drop the figure down so that it sat with its head just below the roll bar top. Overall the effect was fine and I was very pleased with the result. I cut a small steering wheel in half and glued the top bit between the drivers hands. The whole assembly was then cemented in place before the clear acetate windscreen, thoughtfully supplied by David, was fitted. The 312PB will run in our 'vintage' sports car class up against the following cars: Porsche 908, 917K, 917H, Ferrari 512, 512S, 512LM, Matra/Simca MS670, Alfa Romeo 33TT/3 and 33/3. These are similar to some of the cars that it competed against in real life and it contains probably the fastest models in all our classes, being quicker even than our Can-Am cars which, although they have more powerful engines, are much heavier.

On the track

Any 10 lap time under 40 seconds is quick for the class in which the 312PB will be run; every car has a fastest time of under 40 seconds on both lane 1 and lane 2 with the Alfa Romeo 33TT/3 posting 36.91 (lane 1) and 37.41 (lane 2) being the quickest. As is my way, I set up the chassis without the body top using two Proslot PS6001 oblong magnets, one just behind the pick up and one in a lower position just behind the engine. The difference in the vertical position of the magnets is governed by the overall size of the front and rear wheel/tyres and a certain amount of experimentation was needed to get the right height at the rear.

Being quite a short but relatively wide body the wheel positions give the car very good stability and, like its real life example, nimble handling plus good acceleration and braking. Adding the body made a little difference to the

excellent set-up and a bit of tweaking and magnet replacement was necessary. After a series of 10 lap run tests the car recorded times of 37.87 (lane 1) and 39.18 (lane 2) with ease. These are quick times but a bit more running in and tuning will be needed to challenge for top spot - a pleasurable task I am sure. I scrubbed the rear tyres by running them on sandpaper which levels them and removes any finish. I do this with most tyres anyway except, that is, the excellent replacement tyres that I use on other

I like watching sportscars, I like finding out about them and I like racing them (the models that is). My ideal fantasy (apart from Sophia Loren) is to have had the talent to have raced in both those forms of racing and (well, this is a fantasy) to have won. But I would settle for just the racing.

Times, along with myself, have changed but I still get a similar thrill racing particular model



models. These are supplied by Colin Spark of R/S Slot Racing and are terrific from the word go on our Scalextric Sport track and get better with use. They have shown improved times over 10 laps on every car that we have fitted them to.

The extra grip means that you can leave your braking late and put the power down earlier. Add that to better grip in the corners and, for the princely sum of £2.50 a set, you cannot do a better modification. If I have any roadholding problems in the future with the rears fitted to my 312PB Colin also does replacements for them. So I will see how things go in competition - but it is comforting to know that I have an 'ace in the hole' if I need one.

I can truly say that along with our 'Can-Am' series, European sportscars are my favourite category. I like sportscars, I like seeing sportscars,

cars as I did sitting in that grandstand at Brands in 1971, when the first lap performance by Clay's 312PB left me speechless.

After assembling, painting, testing and photographing the model I wrote this article for submission to Brian for his publication approval in the Journal. On the verge of submission we were racing our Group 7 class cars and I noticed that a GB track Lancia Beta Monte Carlo had a set of wheels/tyres that were sufficiently similar to suffice for the 312PB. Although not exactly the same configuration they have wide deep rims, five holes and are about the right size to scale. I have ordered a set from Pendle Slot and with a coat of gold paint they should look the part (and R/S slot racing do replacements for these also) so I should be onto a winner. Time will tell and I will let you know. ■