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THE INDEPENDENT CLUB FOR SLOT-CAR ENTHUSIASTS

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Size doesn't matter!

Readers of this publication could be forgiven for thinking that there is only one scale of slot-car - the ubiquitous 1:32 that most people collect and/or race. But, in truth, there are several others with H:O scale possibly being the most neglected.

I was contacted some time ago by Deane Walpole, who runs the East Anglian H:O Racing Club, with an invitation to attend one of their meetings and find out more about 'tiny cars'. An H:O racer, Clive Mills, also joined my local club so, before you could say 'Tomy/AFX' an outing was organised and a good contingent of Mussel Bay members braved the border patrols and crossed into Suffolk for the day.

Now I know I am advancing in years and my eyesight is not what it was but these things are not only very small but seriously quick and the track was enormous. I am also used to circuits with braking facilities so it was a bit of a culture shock when I hammered down the 40ft main straight at some 'ballistic' speed only to find nothing happened when I took my finger off the controller. Having dug the car out of the plaster I was a bit more cautious next time around!

The other interesting thing about the day's racing was the complete reversal of the normal pecking order amongst our members; Jamie Kelly, our lap record holder was comprehensively stuffed by his father; Clive, who is struggling at the moment on our track, finished 5th overall and Paul Edmunds, who normally can't buy a win, notched up three victories.

I reverted to 'crap racer' mode, needless to say, but I was beginning to get the hang of it by the last race! Overall though - great fun and I look forward to our next visit. Deane will also be writing a regular column for the Journal about H:O matters so perhaps we can give the scale a higher profile.

And Finally - you will notice some fresh headers for the regular columns this month. These are the work of a new member, Mark Sanderson, I hope you like them.

Till next month
Brian



by
Rob Smith



MESSAGES FROM MARGATE

As usual February is a very quiet month for new Scalextric product and this year has been no exception. With many new releases stuck on the same slow boat from China as the NSCC Minis there is not much to report.

C2577 Chevrolet Camaro 1969 V/J Racing "No72"

This one was pictured in the 2004 catalogue but not released until this year. It is mainly red with a bold blue stripe from front to rear with a huge silver "72" on each side.

C2622 Chevrolet Corvette

This car is from the USA Classics set released before Christmas. Finished in red and white with racing number 12 it is one of the nicest Corvette liveries. It is unusual because the domed headlamp lenses are partially painted making it look quite different.

Although complete sets are easy to source from USA dealers or on eBay it is an expensive and heavy set. USA dealers seem to be asking \$100 to break the sets for the car and I haven't spotted one on eBay yet. This car could definitely be the rarest Corvette. ➡➡



C2634 Dodge Viper Competition Coupé Plain White

This new release was a complete surprise to me so my thanks to Stephen Langford for bringing it to my attention. This plain version of the Viper has been released in the USA only. The standard issue Vipers C2522 and C223 are also now available.

Digital

The first solo SportDigital cars are now available.

These are C2564D and C2565D – Mini Coopers, C2567D Mercedes CLK and C2569D Opel Coupe. Visually these are identical to the normal releases. The packaging features a new sleeve design in a subtle shade of purple with silver and black chequer work and of course SportDigital logos prominent.

Kits

The 2004 range of kits with paint and glue were finally released earlier this year. These are:

K2008 AMG Mercedes CLK DTM Works Starter Kit

K2012 Caterham 7 Gulf 2002 Starter Kit

K2011 Mini Cooper John Cooper Challenge Starter Kit

K2009 Chevrolet Corvette Starter Kit

K2007 Ford GT40 JW Automotive Gulf Starter Kit

K2010 TVR T400R Eclipse Starter Kit

Wing Mirrors

Normally the Sport, standard and set versions of cars only differ very slightly, usually with the removal of some of the etched metal parts on the set cars. The Chevrolet Corvette shows more variation. The solo racing cars and plain



white car have a large mirror on twin stalks, the convertible and the Starsky and Hutch twin pack cars have small chrome mirrors, the road version and the set Starsky and Hutch car and the new USA Classics car have no wing mirrors. Why the variation I wonder. Surely the cost of changing the tooling would be more expensive than the cost of such a small part. However, the only car with and without a mirror is the Starsky and Hutch version. Do you have both?

Spares

Hornby continue to help repairers with an ever growing range of spares. The Service Sheets can be downloaded from the Scalextric web site in PDF format and all of the part numbers easily obtained from these. Some spares are available on the web site and the latest addition is a Mini spares bag with headlight glass, wipers, mirrors and aerial at £3.00. Be warned though as postage is exorbitant at £5.00! If the bit you need is not available on-line (and even those that are) the best advice is to ask your dealer to order them for you. In addition, and in my personal opinion, the best solution is to ask one of the big resellers that advertise in the Journal. Many of them carry a large range of spares in stock. ■



WOW! 2005 is now well and truly underway following Ninco's announcements and displays at the recent Nuremberg Toy Fair. Their familiar 'big red stand' had some superb new models, track sections and details of the delights in store for us over the coming months.

A demonstration track showed off all three track surfaces Ninco now offer. Two new standard track sections are to be introduced, each covering a 22.5° arc following an inner curve and a standard curve radius. Both (*R1 and R2*) are described as "half-curves". An inner curve is also now available in the Raid class of track surface. With the introduction of the "snow curve" before Christmas, four snow surface track sections are to be added; an inner and standard curve and a 40cm and 20cm straight. More sections are planned for release as part of the Digital system but it is worth remembering that all current sections will be fully compatible.

Alongside the digital track sections, various hardware is proposed to power and control the Ninco digital system. A central control unit will allow up to six ergonomically designed throttles and two transformers to be connected. This unit will feature a large display showing lap data for up to six cars. Remote "Race Position Control Towers" will be available to place anywhere around the circuit to display current car positions during a race.

Perhaps the greatest innovation included in the Ninco system is the "Decoder Chip". This clever little device is designed to fit into any slot-car making it compatible with the Ninco system.

No modification of the chassis or guide will be required for installation, which means that future, current and even older models will be able to compete in the digital arena!

A new entry-level set will include two exclusive "Muscle Trucks" only available with this oval circuit. Another new release is the "Arctic Rally" set that will include five standard 'snow-curves' making up one end of a figure of eight.

New to the "Track Accessories" range are three N-Type pieces of hardware. The *N-Tronic* controller is a programmable electronic one incorporating a display to show settings of power curve, brake adjustment, turbo boost and polarity. The *N-Scorer* is a combined start-light bridge and lap counter with a large central display for number of laps and lap times. An adjustable transformer – *N-Power* – will offer variable voltage levels to be selected and will include an LCD screen and universal outputs as well as two Ninco outputs, one for track and one for accessories.

Cars featured in the latest Ninco brochure include beautiful new re-liveries of existing cars across all groups and some are sure to sell-out on looks alone. However, there are a number of totally new models, the most exciting (*in my opinion*) being:-

- i) the Mitsubishi Pajero EVO – a fantastic addition to the Raid range of vehicles,
- ii) the Toyota Supra GT – real competition for the highly popular NSX and
- iii) the Renault Mégane Show Car – absolutely stunning! The Supra and Mégane will have motors fitted in the angle-winder position. ➡➡

The next Ninco Club Car is a special version of the Honda NSX. The striking Ninco-red livery will include the NC-6 motor and feature the number 2 indicating that it is the second in the series of exclusive club cars. As with its predecessor the Subaru Impreza, this car will only be available to members of "Club Ninco".

The successful ProRace series has given birth to a new range of racing components. These include balanced axles, phosphor-bronze

core crown gears, magnesium wheels with interchangeable hubcaps and a variety of natural rubber tyres.

I will advise of release dates for all of the above in future issues. Pictures of some of these cars are already available on the new style Ninco web-site – www.ninco.com

Finally a special thanks to Gary at MRE... Firstly for bringing back a copy of the new catalogue for me, and secondly for sending my McLaren F1 GTR "Lack"! Mmmm, lovely... ■



How many of you received eBay emails asking you to re-send your credit card and banking details recently? They usually threaten that your account will be suspended or worse.

These scams are very realistic and even have links to the real eBay website. Never send your details; open the email, click on Forward and send to Spoof@ebay.com. Then wait for a reply from eBay. I personally know three people who fell for it.

Turtles anybody?

Stephen Langford spotted a corker on Spanish eBay; a complete set of Turtles including the pick-up and party wagon. Unsurprisingly, despite being relisted, they failed to attract any bids. Mind you the start price of £550 may have had something to do with it!

Tip

When offered a second chance offer, always email the highest bidder to see what happened. The seller may have several of the same for sale or the highest bidder may have returned the item not being satisfied with it.

Recent eBay prices

C95 Graham Perris Bugatti (red)	£410
T45 Truck unboxed chrome incomplete	£59
C83 Sunbeam Tiger, holes in rear of body	£102
Batmobile	£38
C41 Ferrari	£102
B1 Typhoon blue	£70
B1 Typhoon red	£60
Pitstop set	£62
C41 Bentley black no description, so could have repro parts. Seller had 100% feedback.	£440

Happy bidding. ■

At last I can report something! As you will have read from my London Toy Fair report last month Tecnitoys decided to leave all announcements about new releases until the German Toy Fair in Nuremburg. Unfortunately I couldn't make the show, but following some very helpful info from Gary at MRE and Allan and Doug at Slotforum I have been able to compile the following. It has been checked by Tecnitoys and confirmed.

SCX has a new look! All branding and packaging for SCX has been changed and was launched in Germany. I understand that everywhere you looked in Nuremburg you saw SCX adverts in bright red mainly with the news of their Ferrari licence agreement. All new sets and cars will come in new style packaging.



As you can imagine SCX Digital was given a major push in Germany with a big track layout dominating their stand. It showed some of the new track components like inner curves and the Le Mans style pit start section. As you can see from the picture this opens up numerous possibilities for layouts allowing for multi lane designs. New at the show was a prototype Pit



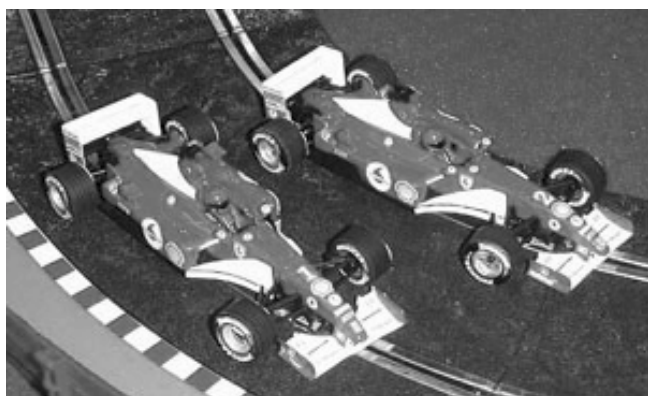
Lane software system that sets and controls fuel usage and brake usage. Basically drivers can determine the amount of fuel in the car prior to the race and then re-fuel during the race, the more aggressive the driving style the more fuel will be used and the amount of fuel put in at the beginning affects the weight of the car.

New digital cars announced at the show included; Alfa Romeo 156 'ETCC', AMG Mercedes C Klasse DTM, Ferrari 550 GTS 'Maranello', Seat Cupra GT 'Dummo', Ford Focus WRC 'Monte Carlo' and Peugeot 307 WRC 'Monte Carlo'. In addition to the cars look out for a new bridge section and a new digital Chronometer/Pit box.

On the non digital side it's all change; all the sets have been re-designed and there are now four track size sets, C1, C2, C3 and C4. New sets available include; C1 Rally with Ford Fiesta and Citroen C2, C2 GT with two Seat Cupras, C3 Rally Snow effect with a Subaru and Citroen Xsara, C3 F1 with two Ferrari F1's, and C4 GT with two Ferrari 550 GTS.

New cars planned for 2005 include; Ferrari F1, Toyota F1, Mc Laren F1, Ferrari 550 GTS, Alfa Romeo 156, Seat Leon, Seat Cupra, new liveries and body for the Audi R8, new liveries

for the Dome, AMG Merc C Klasse, Opel DTM, Fiat 124 Spyder, new liveries for the Fiat Abarth 100 TC and Subaru.



This years Vintage release is a Tyrrell-Ford in Jackie Stewart colours.



A large number of cars and accessories have once again not been made available outside of Spain and this year the Jaguar, and Jordan F1 cars, Skoda, Hyundai, Mitsubishi and Seat Toledo will only be available in Spain. Figures (Camera crew and Marshals) and some track sections will also be Spain only. Before you ask I don't know why. One accessory to make it into the SCX catalogue is a new SCX trainer system.

Last but by no means least a little bit of eye candy for our gentlemen readers:



Looks like Carrera have some competition! ■

Photos for this article kindly provided by Gary Cannell of MRE

H:O World

By Deane Walpole

Some of you may recall my article last June introducing the delights of racing H:O scale cars. Since that time several NSCC members have come along and taken part in a race day. Encouraged by this, I have put together a 'nuts and bolts' guide in the first of what will be a new regular column.

It is easy to think, when buying a slot-car, that it is in the scale quoted on the box. In fact, the manufacturers will bend this standard to breaking point if they feel justified enough. In the main though it is fair to say that the 1/32nd companies are trying to achieve cars that look to scale. The same cannot be said of H:O (which stands for Half-O, a railway scale!). Too many decisions were made in the early days by the manufacturers in isolation for there to be a common scale, although 1/64th gets quoted the most. All this does not make it easy to imagine what an H:O car looks like. I have come to apply my own standard which is that any car or truck 34mm (1.34") wide or less will run on an H:O track without blocking the car in the next lane. It is therefore an H:O car. Hopefully this picture of a chassis next to a coin will clarify things further. If you download the short piece of video on my club's website that may well complete the picture.



a typical H:O chassis

At the moment, only one manufacturer from the 1/32nd 'world' also make H:O cars, and that is Scalextric with its 'Micro' range. In amongst the Skateboards and other weird vehicles it has been possible to find some real gems. Sadly, Hornby switched to their own chassis design (with braids) about 5 years ago which is not a patch on the first design, licensed from a now-defunct American company called Marchon. Nonetheless, they still produce very nice looking cars such as the recent Audi TT.



Stunning Audi TT by Hornby

Another company you may be familiar with is Tomy, the Japanese giant best known for baby and pre-school toys. This company acquired Aurora in the 1980s, taking over a company that was almost a household name with its AFX range. The new owners did a grand job of modernizing the product line, with two new chassis designs and a range of track pieces that has never been bettered. In recent years the slot line has been dropped by Tomy but still continues in the hands of a much smaller company called Racemasters, run by a chap who worked for Aurora way back when. If anything, the 'Tomy' range is better now than ever. There are three chassis, all with differing traction magnet strength, and Racemaster has turned a blind eye whilst the cottage industry ➡➡

has produced compatible curves with 18" and 21" radii. Sadly, Tomy's arch-rivals Tyco have withered in recent years ever since being swallowed by US toy giant Mattel, and having their excellent cars re-branded as Hot Wheels. Late last year the cars disappeared from the Mattel literature and it would seem the range is now dormant. A real shame as the cars were probably the most drivable and the chassis were beautifully engineered.



Mercedes CLK on Tyco chassis



GTP Jaguar XJR9 by Tomy

There are other makes, but these are the main three 'players'. Despite the mixed level of commitment from the manufacturers, past over-production and the rise of eBay means that there will be cars and spares aplenty for years to come, with the very occasional new car to keep the excitement going. At my club we race all these chassis and others, and any readers who wish to have a go at H:O racing would be very welcome to come along to a meeting. Have a look at the club website (www.bglawns.com/eahorc.htm), especially the video and gallery sections, email me (slots@bglawns.com) or Telephone on 01268 573377 for details. ■



Carrera Corner this month brings you the latest news from the London Toy Fair. I know Gareth Jex stole the show last month with reviews of everyone at the Fair but it was my job to get the in depth information from Nikko, the importers of Carrera.

This was my first visit to any toy trade show and I was impressed with the volume of stands at this event. I know that most of them didn't have anything to do with our hobby but it was a real eye opener into the world of toys and hobbies. If anything, I learnt that we are not alone. So next time someone takes the pee out of your hobby, gently remind them that it's a lot more exciting than collecting plastic farm animals or making Wasjigs!

It's a hoot!

Yes, that's official. Carrera Pro-X is great fun. I had never experienced the new digital systems before the show so I was a little sceptical at how it would sell to me. I suppose I have fallen into the same rut as most other club racers and feel that this kind of attempt at revamping our beloved hobby is just another gimmick aimed at the home user.

Well I put my hands up and admit that I'm totally wrong. You may not see it at club level, the reason for this will be clear later, but as a development to the hobby it is just superb.

As I approached the Carrera section of the Nikko stand I could see the sizeable Pro-X circuit set up in the middle of the platform. After meeting Jon Burcham and getting a bit of background to the products on display, we roped in one of the salesmen and had a go on the system.

We used Formula 1 cars and after a very quick lesson on how it worked we were away. Yes, it's that simple. The controls fell very easily to hand and within a couple of laps I was showing these salesmen what a proper racer could do. Oh, then I crashed!

See, that's what happens when you get cocky.

The first thing that I noticed about this system was its ease of use and how it performed the lane changes so quickly and efficiently. A simple press of a button under my forefinger and the car slipped into the other lane. No fuss, no noise, no change of momentum. That's German engineering for you.

The controller is exactly the same as a standard Carrera thumb controller but with the addition of a button where your forefinger rests. When you press this button it powers the infrared light under the car, which in turn activates the changeover by means of a sensor that registers the infrared passing over it. Once the car has passed over the intersection, it immediately springs back to its original in-line position. This happens so quickly that if you are being followed by a tailgater, he stays in the original lane, while you nip into the opposite one.

Carrera suggest a maximum of four cars per lane, so on a normal two-lane set up you could be running an eight car race. Could this be the end of multi lane circuits? In my view, no. The reason being, that it was great fun with three cars all chasing each other and nipping in and out of the bends, but with eight cars, CHAOS!

I would suggest a maximum of four cars in total.

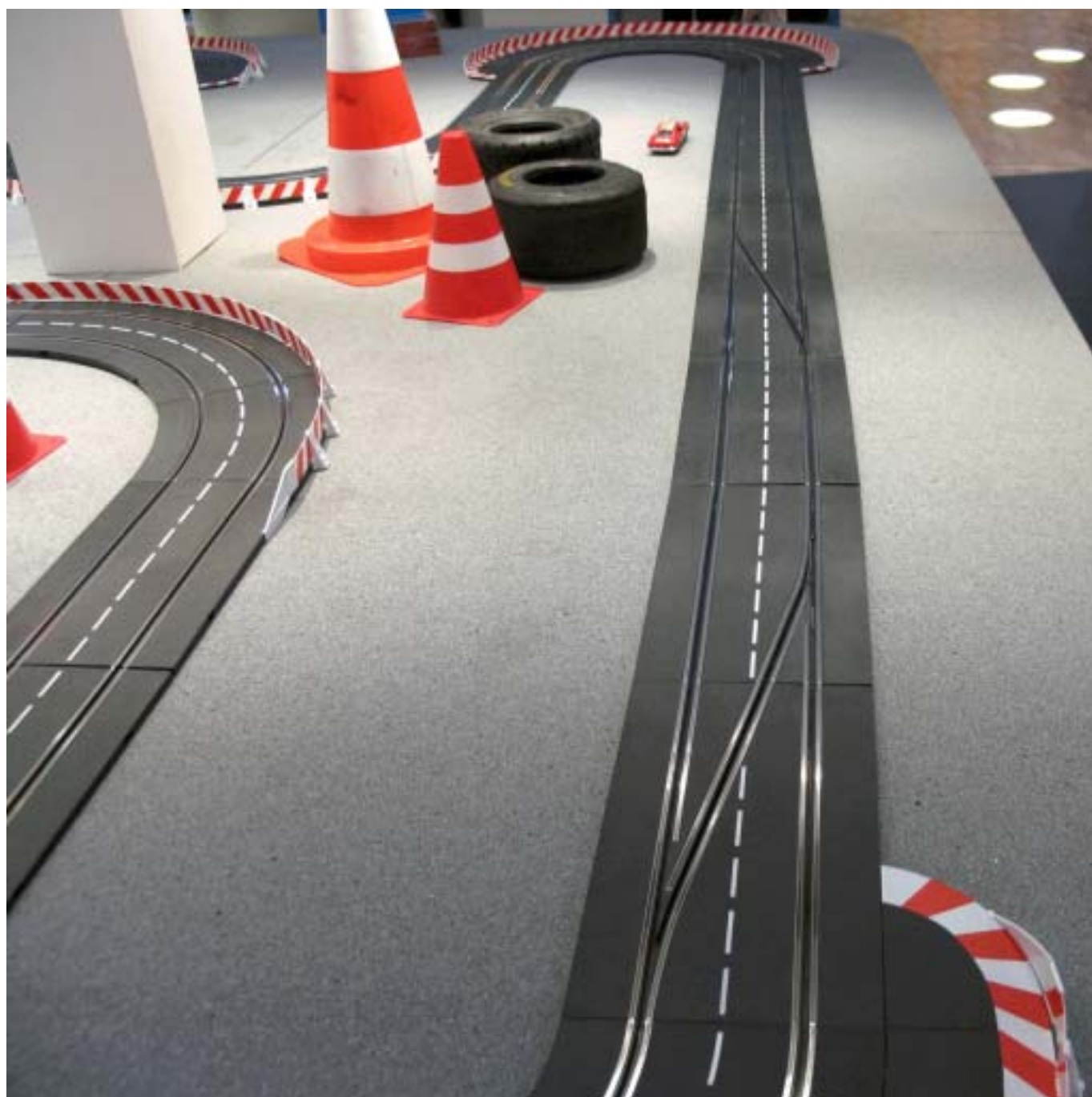


Also, this is limited to a two lane circuit, as there aren't any track sections to allow you to cross from an outside lane to an inside lane on a four lane circuit. If you built a four lane circuit it would end up being two, two lane circuits. Does that make sense?

Carrera have obviously given this system a lot of thought and the display circuit had all the accessories attached, including a double cross-over, which was still in the development stage. This did work extremely well, even though it wasn't a production piece. The accessory that really impressed me was the pit stop section. This is a "lay-by" section of track that can be

purchased separately, but as soon as you have this accessory you can remove the covered section from your power pack/black box to reveal the pit section controls.

You then have the ability to programme in pit stops. The computer/black box measures your throttle use and converts this into fuel use, so that as you run out of fuel your car begins to slow down. At this point you have two laps to pit, otherwise your car stops on the circuit and is deemed to be out of fuel, the power to your car being cut. That is the power to your car, not your lane. See the difference?



When you pit, the car comes into the pit lane and the power is cut, holding your car there for 10 seconds, until it is refuelled and can then return to the race.

Pro-X cars, are of course, a different breed to the standard Carrera product. The most noticeable difference is the guide. Actually, I felt it was more of a girder than a guide and I couldn't get over how long it was. I reckon it would have difficulty getting around anything less than a standard curve. The one clever bit though, was the magnet. It is fixed to the guide on a sort of sliding bar, so that as the car corners, the magnet moves out to the edge of the car. The thinking behind this is that you get the magnetism where it is needed, in the corner and on the correct side of that corner.

Furthermore, the magnet moves across the underside of the chassis in an inverted arc, so that as the car is straight the magnet sits up in the body, giving less magnetism and improving straight-line speed. As it corners so the magnet moves down towards the track and gives better magnetic adhesion. Neat job, but it still comes off if you try to be too clever.

The Price Is Wrong

Carrera will initially be launching Pro-X in the UK this coming June. It will be released in two sets. The starter set, code 30100, will contain Formula 1 cars and 6.9 metres of track along with two lane change sections.

The second, bigger, set will contain two new DTM cars and 8.9 metres of track. This set, code 30106, will also have two lane change sections plus an additional double lane change section.

Now comes the crunch. These sets will be a wallet busting £200 plus.

Although you can connect standard Carrera track sections to the Pro-X system you cannot use standard cars and there isn't the opportunity to retro fit the digital trickery into your older cars.

I think the price is going to put consumers off an otherwise superb product.

One other thing that struck me, after looking at the competitors' digital tracks, was the

changeover. Scalextric and SCX both seem to have gone for what is essentially a crossover, whereas the Carrera system can be made to represent a realistic pull out, overtake and pull in manoeuvre as shown in my picture.

Sum it up

My final blurb on Pro-X I've taken from my notes written at the time.

Carrera have managed to go digital without getting too technical. The SCX system was not different enough in the fact that it was a series of standard crossovers. The Scalextric system needed two hands to operate properly and so made it less user friendly. I also took a look at Sport Digital World. Playstation for slot racers? Not in a million years!

Looking ahead

The new DTM cars are now being released and they are gorgeous. My particular favourite was the Audi A4 "Red Bull" as shown here. All these cars have working Xenon headlights and rear tail/brake lights.



So far there are three Mercedes C-Klasse DTM:

- 30226 – "Vodafone" red and silver.
- 30228 – "Direkter" black.
- ????? – AMG chrome.

Two Audi A4 :

- 30224 – "Hasseroder" yellow.
- 30225 – "Red Bull" blue.

⇒



Carrera have exclusive rights to James Bond, so the current Goldfinger set will make way for a new Bond set to coincide with the new film. More details on that when I get them, but if you are a collector and haven't got the Goldfinger set, then get one soon.

Finally, on the smaller side of things, Carrera Go! This is the 1/43rd scale series that really never gets a mention. Now I've always thought this was just another version of those awful Micro Scalextric sets for children but I was proven wrong, yet again.

The quality of the cars is as good as their big brothers and there is a substantial range as well. The track is made of the same material as Exclusiv and the whole product is not at all a cheap and cheerful kiddies' toy. However, the price is unbelievable. For example, the Rally Set on display had over 5 metres of track, double loop, single loop, hill climb and banked curve, two cars and turbo boost controllers all for £50!

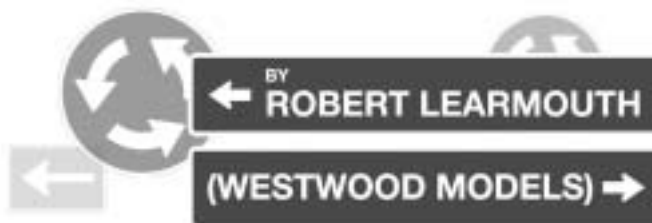
Jon Burcham kindly gave me a copy of the forthcoming 2005 brochure and I promised that I wouldn't give away any secrets. All I will say is that if, like me, you are a fan of 1/24th cars then you are in for a couple of real treats.

Rally Competition

Due to being a novice at this kind of thing, I didn't realise the short time span between you receiving your Journal and the deadline for this

month's Journal. Consequently, I've decided to extend the competition to the deadline for the April issue as printed at the bottom of the first page of this issue. See last month for questions and how to contact me. Response has been reasonable, but come on, there are supposed to be over a thousand of you out there and this car is FREE, no review to write. FREE.

See yer next month. ■



The grapevine has it that Proteus has gone out of business and that Vanquish and Pink-Kar have suspended slot-car production. There is no indication that either of the latter two has gone bust - they have probably found something more profitable to produce. Remember after all that even Hornby produced things like mobile phone covers (albeit alongside slot-cars) just five or so years ago to keep the pennies coming in.

I'm probably most sad about Pink-Kar, I've always thought their range was good fun and that it filled a genuine gap in the market. Vanquish got a lot of things right but really should have ditched the rear diff to allow production of true 1:32 models. Some of the subject matter was questionable but the Lotus 72 was a popular model. Of the three, Proteus was probably too little, too late but I'm sure others may disagree. Apparently their tooling has been acquired by MRRC and production of the Murcialago is expected to recommence sooner rather than later. We're told the other two may be back so don't give up hope just yet! Keep watching this space though as I fear there will be other casualties and not just amongst the manufacturers. In the short term there will continue to be more bargains to be had but in the long term we will see a more compact market, consequently with less choice and probably higher prices. Hornby are getting ever more dominant while virtually everyone else seems to be shooting themselves in the foot. This doesn't help the market as a whole but it has to be said it really is great times for all us Hornby fans. They really do need some more serious competition though and at the moment I can only see that coming from Carrera and they are probably two or three years off that still.

Ebayers beware! Most of us know there are scammers out there who piggy back genuine auctions, contact you as a bidder offering the same thing off-eBay and take Western Union payment that would seem to offer no protection to the victim. However what I didn't know is that these people have actually managed to acquire good feedback ratings for their eBay accounts. Apparently these are some of the people who send account 'verification' emails (pretending to be from eBay) and if you click the supplied link a fake eBay screen appears which attempts to steal your logon credentials. They then use your account to buy their own fictional items and leave positive feedback for themselves! Of course they never actually sell through their eBay account as they'd get neg'd - they just mention it to you to look impressive!

Despite reservations in some quarters because of a crackdown on non-NSCC members getting in, Milton Keynes was another dealer sell-out and visitor numbers appeared to be excellent. The number of international dealers remains high and I'm sure there were some new faces amongst them too. It was also safe to go into the gent's toilets without a pair of wellies! So congratulations to Nigel for ensuring this day remains a great one and helping to address the criticisms that have previously been levelled. I hope those who were obliged to join the NSCC on the door to get in will come to appreciate that the 18 quid they have just invested is well worth it to get this journal alone. I do have to say I am unconvinced of the necessity to ensure that all table-holders are members but there is an issue here around the club trying to protect transactions amongst its members. Dare I suggest there is a new type of membership with a discounted fee that gives access to swapmeets (for both visitors and stall-holders) but no journal? ■

Swapmeet misconceptions

By The Editor

It is becoming evident from the number of letters I am receiving that there is a good deal of confusion - particularly amongst our newer members - about swapmeets. Many people are under the impression that all of them are run by the NSCC and that we have control over when and where they are held. So, rather than publish a number of letters on the subject, I thought I would try and clarify the situation.

A bit of history

First we need to travel back in time to the early days of the club when there were virtually no events where slot-cars could be traded; the "National Scalextric Collectors Club", as it was then known, virtually invented the swapmeet as we know it now. The club instigated meetings where members could meet on a social basis to buy, sell and swap slot-cars. At that time there were no real full time traders/dealers in the modern sense so these events were swapmeets in the true spirit of the word - people literally swapped surplus cars amongst themselves with a cash adjustment if necessary.

They were held at various locations over the years but eventually settled into a pattern of six a year at fixed venues - Milton Keynes in February; Loughborough in April; Liphook in May; Evesham in September; Bishops Stortford in October and Leeds in December.

As time moved on each took on its own unique character - Milton Keynes and Bishop's Stortford (the two largest) became important commercial events as the number of full and part-time dealers increased. Both attracted good numbers of overseas visitors and table holders. Others, such as Evesham and Liphook tended to remain as smaller, more social events.

As interest in toy collecting in general increased the commercial Toyfairs, such as those at Sandown and the NEC, arrived; these

included slot-cars in the general mix. Some slot only commercial events also sprang up. Most of these, such as "Slotswap" - a summer event at Milton Keynes organised by former member Phil Etgart - were fairly short-lived so one can only assume that they were not sufficiently profitable for those who took part.

Boom time

After years of stability on the swapmeet scene (or stagnation according to your point of view) the arrival of the 21st century bought a massive boom in slot-car sales and the NSCC committee came under severe commercial pressure to increase the number of events. Rightly or wrongly this was resisted; the traders went their own ways and started to organise open events. It is also my understanding (although I remain to be corrected) that the traders found their returns from general Toyfairs diminishing, due to the over proliferation of events, so were looking to increase sales in other directions.

As a result the number of swapmeets has multiplied dramatically over the last few years but, inevitably, smaller NSCC events such as Evesham have disappeared. Bear in mind that these swapmeets were organised on a non-profit making basis by individual members as a service to the club; it is hardly surprising then, that when a commercial event is announced in close proximity (date or place) they have difficulty selling tables and consequently decide that it is not worth the effort. One former NSCC event - Bishop's Stortford - has also turned into an open affair because the organiser was not prepared to abide by the rules laid down by the club about spacing of dates. I suspect that commercial considerations may also have been a factor - after all, by running it as a members only event you are restricting the number of people who pay to get in.

As a side issue there is a significant body of opinion amongst the traders that NSCC events should be thrown open to the general public as well. It is perhaps worth pointing out that this has been tried in the past but was stopped at the traders' request as they reckoned that members were inclined to buy rather than browse!

NSCC/Open - what's the difference?

So, after one of the editor's usual long-winded introductions, we come to the real point of the article - what is the difference between the two types of event and does it matter?

Let us take the NSCC version first - this is, surprisingly, not actually run by the committee (we simply don't have the time) but by an individual member under licence from the club for the benefit of the membership. Anybody can run one subject to certain basic rules:

- Health and safety laws must be observed and public liability insurance must be provided.
- They must not be too close, in time or distance, to other NSCC events - the suggestion is four weeks or several hundred miles apart.
- It must only be open to members (visitors and table holders). The reason for this is that the club takes responsibility for policing all trades within the club - if you have a dodgy deal at an NSCC event then you can call on Stephen Barber (the club secretary) to take action on your behalf. This could be a bit difficult if you have bought something from a non-member!

Thus, if there is not an NSCC swapmeet in your vicinity, don't ask, "Why not?" - organize one yourself. The committee will be pleased to offer help and guidance.

As things stand at the moment there are only four NSCC swapmeets a year - Milton Keynes (February), Loughborough, Liphook and Newark. All others advertised in this publication are open events, organised on a commercial basis, which the committee have no control over.

I am by no means criticising the organisers of open events here; I am sure they fully comply with the relevant legislation and keep an eye out for any less reputable table holders. I am merely trying to help members understand what to expect at each.

Some of the confusion amongst newer members may also arise from the fact that these open events often have NSCC participation in the form of a club stand and/or a club track for visitors to play on. This is because we are seeking to recruit new members - Gareth Jex is in charge of our promotional side and he attends these events, often taking a circuit, in order to promote the club. However, just because we are in attendance, it doesn't mean we are running the show.

By all accounts these open events are worthwhile attending. I have received glowing reports about those run by the Larmouth brothers and Phil Smith in particular but, if you have any complaints about their location or timing then please address your comments to the organisers; it is really nothing to do with me.

Whether this huge expansion of open events is a good thing is a matter of some debate and I have had a number of disagreements, both public and private, with Robert Larmouth and Phil Smith on the subject - I think we are still speaking to each other though!

As Robert correctly maintains - the web in general and eBay in particular are the real problem - far too many people are content to live in cyberspace instead of getting out in the real world and talking to other enthusiasts. If well run open events attract more people to our hobby then I am all for it.

Ultimately time and the market place will determine whether I am right in my opinion that the whole thing may be getting out of hand but one thing is for sure - as Robert correctly states - we need to bring some sense of order to the swapmeet calendar. If the trader who volunteered to co-ordinate the thing last year could actually start to do the job then perhaps people would stop writing to me with their complaints! ■



Sir,

I am a member of both the NSCC (1107/92) and the Australian Scalextric Racing and Collectors Club (ASRCC) (1/92) and have seen a dramatic improvement of the NSCC journal, and before anyone complains about pleasantries to the editor etc, this is the first time I have felt inclined to send a comment into the NSCC.

I would like to congratulate the NSCC on its capacity to retain membership at the previously mentioned 1,000, a commendable effort by all concerned. The ASRCC has a previous high of 261 members in 1997 and now stands at approximately 120 in 2005.

This figure in my opinion can be directly related to e-bay and the internet; everyone has access to up to the minute news and can get that car they always wanted, now. Perhaps of interest in the NSCC membership is the representative figures for non UK members. Personally I have travelled to the UK in 1981 and 2004 and failed to get to an NSCC Swapmeet, maybe next time.

I luv this part...

I am, yours etc,
Ian Towle

.....

Sir,

Reference the article "Smooth Operator" by Gareth Jex in the February 2005 issue, I feel I must raise the following points: Gareth makes no mention in his article of the excellent versions of the Lancia Delta done by Team Slot, nor the fact that the SCX version is missing the chin spoiler, and rear mud flaps nor has fat enough wheel arches for the "Deltona" version

that the SCX liveried car is based on.

He also classifies the Peugeot 205 T16 as being the same era as the Delta HF Integrale, sorry the 205T16 was a group B car 1984-86, while the Lancia was a group A car from 1987-93 with this particular version being Carlos Sainz's 1993 car.

I am, yours etc,

Phil Insull - Wolverhampton Slot Car Club

As a big rally enthusiast Gareth is going to be mortified when he reads this!

.....

Sir,

I recently received my first NSCC Journal - it's great, full of interesting articles and lots of contacts for slot-cars.

I first came across your club at the Swindon meeting; I spent a good three hours there and spent far too much money. There were cars there that I had never heard about.

I go to many Toyfairs where there are only a few stalls selling slot-cars; this club and the event were a real eye opener. As you said in your editorial, "how many people sit down in their living room with a Scalextric track (like me) - there must be thousands!

'Model Collector' doesn't carry a single page about slot-cars - this really is a neglected hobby in the magazine world.

Looking forward to my next Journal,

I am, yours etc,
Trevor Fentham

BITS & PIECES

Your Club Needs You

Enclosed in this month's journal is a flyer for our 25th Anniversary weekend. As you know this is an open event and our aim is to get as many new faces interested in slot-cars as well as raising money for charity. To this end we have a request: could you take this flyer to your slot-car club, local model/toy shop, school, club, scouts, guides, youth club, pub etc, in fact anywhere that you think it might be seen by interested parties. If you need more just get in touch with Gareth Jex and he can send some. Thanks in advance for your help.

NSCC Birthday Party

Saturday 21st May 2005 held at the NSCC 25th Anniversary venue, from 7.30pm onwards three course meal with half bottle wine. £30 per head. Advance tickets only. Quiz, prizes, speeches, cake and fun. All NSCC members welcome with partners. Menu TBC next month. Advance bookings from Gareth Jex. Full details next month.

Championship news

Thanks to those who sent in their clubs' results for the championship. A full list of those invited to the finals will appear in next month's Journal, on the web site and you will all receive a posted invite. Please let me know ASAP if you are unable to attend as others may be able to come.

Pendle chassis competition

Remember the deadline for this is really the day before the event 20th May, so you still have plenty of time to complete your models. We have confirmation that the racing will be held on a four lane Scalextric Sport track.

2005 AGM

It is also our intention to hold the 2005 AGM during the course of the Anniversary event. Refreshments will be provided and there will be a prize draw for those in attendance.

If you have any items you would like discussed then please get in touch with the secretary, Stephen Barber (contact details on back page).

I know AGMs at any club can be extremely boring but if you don't come along and express your views the committee have difficulty knowing what you want from the club.

Christmas Competition

This is now complete and, as I am still awaiting the arrival of a few more prizes (some Vanquish F1 cars have recently been added to the list), Archie the Editorial Cat will be contacting the winners by post. The answers and a full prize list will be published next month.

Advert time

Yet another firm using Scalextric to advertise its wares - submitted by *Bill Grigg* If only real travel was that easy!

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TOTAL's Eurotraffic card is the best way to simplify your journey. It is a unique means of payment which can be used in 10 partners' networks, totalling more than 5000 sites spread out across 13 European countries on the main road network. Wonderful diversions are now a thing of the past. TOTAL's Eurotraffic card can pay for all of your on-the-road expenses: fuel, lubricants, accessories, and even tolls. A must for those who manage a fleet of vehicles, and a simple business tool which allows, amongst other features, VAT recovery abroad. With detailed statements you will be able to check every vehicle's history (consumption, expenses, mileage...) with peace of mind, thanks to a unique security system. **YOU WON'T COME TO US BY CHANCE.**

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Caravan racing

By Bill Grigg

For quite a few years three friends and I have held a post Christmas slot racing day on a four lane Scalextric track (it, like us, is now 'Classic' – euphemism for old - though it wasn't when we started!) in my spare bedroom, where we give our slot-car collections and latest acquisitions a festive airing.

In late 2003, recalling fond memories of an earlier friend and I, back in the sixties, getting great entertainment by towing Dinky Toy Land Rover trailers behind our slot-cars, I decided to suggest that we might try caravan racing. There had to be basic rules so that the caravans would be roughly the same size and, not least, so that they'd go under the bridge on the figure of eight circuit. I was humoured, the idea taken up and we mustered three caravans of individual

appearance come the Christmas holidays. Our fourth member, strapped for building time, had to make do with one of those 'Made in China' plastic versions, albeit a little under scale, that can be purchased complete with tow car, for about £2.99 off many a market stall.

(Pause for small digression: I was browsing eBay in the middle of last year and an item headed "Scalextric Caravan Racing" caught my eye. I investigated further and found a photo of two of the '£2.99 complete with tow car' caravans displayed behind Scalextric new Beetles. A glowing description accompanied the photo, pointing out that the Beetles weren't part of the deal and, I recall, that tow hooks (ie I assume, bent wire) would be supplied. The bidding was up to about twelve quid!) ➡





we're not and I can report that this provided close racing, prolonged merriment and at times reduced us to helpless laughter.

For Christmas 2004 the event was again on the menu, this time with a full complement of home made vans as we'd built a couple more between us. It will certainly remain a feature of the Christmas races.

A few tips: keep the 'vans light as they go faster, handle better, and inflict very little, if any, damage. Ours are made of plasticard. The proprietary plastic van we used last year

Back to a form of reality. The racing turned out to be very entertaining as we'd all fitted old, hard-ish tyres from the spares box so the caravans slid out wildly on the turns and, if you weren't careful, went the length of the following straight still sideways: dodgy if you were on an outside edge of the track. Surprisingly, we found that having a wildly sliding thing attached to the rear end stabilised the cars and they kept going even when assuming wild angles of drift. With practice it became easy to aim a well placed caravan



(even with 'windows' insert removed to lighten it) didn't slide too well, turned over more easily and was altogether a bit of a brick. Hard tyres mean you can get a real tail out slide going and obstruct the opposition but it takes so long to get the combination straightened out before you can accelerate on the straights that it's much slower. Soft tyres mean that you can corner much faster but there's not so much sideswiping potential, and cornering too fast often ends in tipping the lot on its side.

Needless to say we tend to use our less cherished cars for towing though tow hooks have successfully been held on with masking tape, to avoid making holes in the underpan for bolts or screws. And, lest it sound all a bit too much like Crash and Bash to purists, I advise you to try it before you knock it! ■

sideswipe and punt your opponent off into the boondocks. Over exuberant cornering however, could tip the caravan and then the car over onto their sides. Even though some would say we're all old enough to know better, thank goodness



C2504A Maserati Coupe Cambiocorsa Trofeo Reviewed by Len Hay

Maserati Coupe Cambiocorsa Trofeo – what a mouthful! This is the Maserati that was used in a ‘one make’ series in 2003 using Pirelli control tyres, over seven races in five countries. The Trofeo Series was for gentlemen racers and each car had two alternating drivers. This particular model was raced by Zanussi and Cecinelli. The seven races were spread between FIA GT, DTM and F1 Grand Prix support races, and a final race at the Ferrari/Maserati world finals at Mugello.

is set off with the raised trident badge in brilliant silver. My only reservation is that the red used on the quarter light windows seems slightly orange.

The wheels are five spoke alloys, with each spoke shaped as the Maserati trident, with the silver disc brakes showing through giving an authentic look. Complementing the front splitter is the tow hook and at the rear of the car are the meaty double twin exhausts.

Internally the car has a $\frac{3}{4}$ length driver in white race overalls and silver helmet; although



Having researched the series on the internet I could not find anything about these particular cars' race results. However, I did find a nice picture from the DTM round at Nuremberg to compare the model with.

The Scalextric model is presented in the now standard blue sports box. The car is predominately red and white and adorned with its main sponsor – Vodafone. All the other printed markings from the series sponsors are crisp and correctly coloured and placed. The colour markings on the passenger's side front light are in proportion to the car and the grille

this does not seem to be a true representation of either driver nominated to race this particular model. A detailed fire extinguisher and dashboard finish off the interior nicely.

A unique feature of this model is the windscreen and dashboard moulding. The windscreen does not fit flush with the bodywork but meets the dashboard – meaning that the windscreen wipers sit on top of the windscreen. This configuration caused a major problem when removing the lower body. If you remove the four screws located at the top and bottom of the chassis, instead of all six screws, you can ➤➤

pull apart the body. This will pull out the moulded driver's compartment, including wipers, but there is no way that the windscreen can be fitted back over the wipers without them coming off! So if you do take it apart make sure to remove all six screws.

It is interesting to note that the chassis is stamped 'Maserati Trofeo' yet the box is titled 'Maserati Coupe Cambiocorsa'.

The chassis allows for the magnet to be fitted in two different positions – one just in front of the rear mounted sidewinder engine and the factory fitted position just behind the front wheel arches. You could possibly fit two magnets but I am not sure whether the engine could take it!

On to the track. My Scalextric Sport track, known as Boerwood, is a permanent 10.97 metre long two lane circuit with a variety of curves, one large flyover and four straights. Timing is controlled using a Scalextric RMS connected to a Sony laptop. Normal racing and testing on my circuit is done over eight laps – 87.76m (a decision made by my 15 year old son). I was given the brief that on a wooden circuit the car handled like a Porsche GT3 so having run the car in for a few laps it was time to see what could really be achieved with this 'straight out of the box' model.

There was a large amount of lateral play in both the front and rear axles but I corrected the rear axle by moving the pinion gear along the motor axle to give a more rigid fit – resulting in a 1.8 second gain on the initial run. Truing the tyres only gained a further 0.52 of a second, which is a lot less that I would have expected. Next I oiled all the bearings and gearings – gaining 1.72 and resulting in a best time of 43.33 seconds. The car proved to be very tail happy on the tight bends, even though the magnet was in the rear position. Moving the magnet to the forward mounting produced times two seconds slower and a car that was very unstable and uncontrollable on the tight bends. (OK if you like to drive by the skin of your teeth.) Running this car with the magnet removed was a nightmare – constantly de-slotting and producing times in the high 60 second bracket. Obviously this was partly due to



having to tip-toe around the circuit using minimal power – especially on the bends and the flyover.

So – how does this model compare to some of its competitors? Well, it is not as fast as the OCA bodied Ferrari 550 Marinello, Scalextric or Fly Sports Dodge Viper but is quicker than the TVR Tuscan and can hold its own against the Saleens and Corvettes.

Overall this is a nice looking model and once 'set up' will prove to be a very good car to race in the GT class and is no doubt capable of winning on a variety of circuits.

In my opinion the wiper blade problem and tail sliding need to be looked at by Scalextric but these are minor problems in an otherwise lovely looking car.

Several of these on a grid line with the new 'start line girls' from Carrera will look an impressive sight and if the MC12 is anywhere near as good it should be a real winner. ■



C2630A Maserati MC12 No33 **Reviewed by Mike Thompson**

The Company and the car

The Maserati story started in 1914 in a small garage in Bologna, but it wasn't until after the end of the war that the production of the first 'special' racing cars began. Although the family sold the company in 1937, the name remained and became one of the most well known in motor sport between the wars. The Maserati name is often associated with the glorious 250F, but Maserati has produced some of the finest sports racers the world has ever seen. Fielded by drivers of the calibre of Fangio, Moss and Behra, the cars racked up victories the world over, earning their place in motor racing history and directly influencing the company's high-performance road cars.

It is this tradition that the MC12 continues to uphold and is a development of the road going GT car using many parts from its sister company Ferrari to very good effect to produce a stunning car, both in looks and performance. The long wheelbase two seater coupe is powered by an impressive 630bhp 6lt V12 developed from the Ferrari Enzo and is capable of over 205mph. This performance was soon seen on the racetrack and in late 2004 after a few shakedown races; the Maserati achieved a double podium at Imola in September. We didn't have to wait long before the top step was reached and two weeks later the Maserati MC12 No 33 took its first victory in the FIA GT Championship at Oschersleben with exuberant drivers Salo/Bertolini. This result comes after 37 long years since its last victory in an international championship (1967, Cooper Maserati F1 South African Grand Prix); the Trident is returning to the track. The Ferrari Maserati Group's wealth of knowledge and technological excellence has been poured into the design of the new car and it looks as if they've got it right! The 2005 championship should be a good one, roll on the first race

(Monza 10/04/2005) and expect the Maserati MC12 to be up at the front of the field fighting for the victories.

The model

The model being reviewed is the limited edition version of 5000. The packaging is attractive, and displays the model well, with information about the car on the inside lid. This, however is completely ignored when you set eyes on the car – this has to be one of the most beautiful cars Scalextric has produced and easily equal to any other on the market today, although I'm sure some might have other opinions! The quality of detail, finish and printing is as good as any I've seen and combines to produce a stunning model – yes you might have guessed by now that I do like this car! The detail inside the cockpit, the fire extinguisher and roll cage, is commendable considering it is very difficult to see without a good magnifying light. If I was to be picky I might say that looking at photographs from the Imola race, some of the sponsor logos are not in the exact position they should be, but I can forgive this slight error. Overall I would say that this is an excellent representation of the original car and well worth a place in any collection.

Now, let's pull it apart and see what makes it go. The chassis is the usual flat moulding with the body held on by five screws and the separate motor/axle moulding locating on a single front lug and held in place by one screw at the rear. ➡➡



I was surprised to see that this motor is in an in-line configuration, as there seems to be ample space to fit in a sidewinder arrangement. Although it's only a personal opinion, I do think that the sidewinder is a superior arrangement for reliable gear mesh and overall handling. Hopefully advantage has been taken, with the use of a separate motor sub chassis, to use a different material to prevent some of the problems with axle support breakages seen on other cars (sometimes the 'snap in' arrangement snaps off!).

The easy removal of the motor sub chassis means easier access for maintenance and fitting of the range of 'top quality racing components' available (according to the Scalextric web site) – anyone seen any of these yet? The lights fitted are extra bright xenon but it is worth mentioning that these are only fitted to the Sport version; the standard car will have the usual LEDs.

The motor assembly unplugs from the loom with a small two pin connector and the rear axle runs smoothly in brass bushes, coloured black matching the chassis colour. All together a well thought out design.

Enough about appearance and construction, how does it go? I took this straight out of the box, put it on the wooden track at King's Lynn's Mussel Bay Raceway and was pleasantly surprised. The first thing that struck me was the smoothness of the gearing and how quietly the car runs; I just wish all the in-line cars ran that quietly! It takes energy to produce noise and we want all the energy available to go through the rear wheels and onto the track because although this car is fitted with the 'Sport' motor, it just isn't quite quick enough for the rough and tumble of club racing. However, with the track and wheelbase of this car being as large as it is, the handling, without magnets should be reasonable and it was. The tyres seemed to grip pretty well and didn't need

any sanding down, even on the edges, as they came with a generous radius. This seemed to prevent the car rolling and allowed the tail to slide out just enough to make the driving easier. The first test run lasted about ten minutes and it was noticeable that towards the end, the car felt a little quicker as the motor and tyres bedded in, or was it just me getting accustomed to the car? How did it compare with other GT models? Well after another 10min session, the best time I recorded was 8.6 sec compared to a Slot It race prepared Audi time of 8.0 sec. Whilst the difference is a whole 0.6 sec, we should remember that this is not a stripped down racer version of the Maserati whereas the Audi is definitely designed for competition.



Moving on to 'Sport' track, the car felt almost the same but the grip level was obviously higher due to the magnets, although the progressive breakaway of the car felt just as controllable. The length of this car also means that any tail-out antics require aprons if you're on an outside lane! This is a big car when compared with some of the rally cars and two of these on a Scalextric track make it look pretty crowded.

Overall I'd say this car is certainly a better performer standing still in a display, than on the track and anyway it is far too good a looker to be spoilt by racing. ■



Review

SCX

SCX Fiesta JWRC By Dale Goodchild

The humble little Fiesta, this latest incarnation of the small family car, is reproduced excellently by SCX with their new JWRC version.

First impressions are of the high level of detail these cars now come with and also how hard they are to remove from the base with the new locking mechanism fitted!!

Once removed though, the under pan can be examined, this reveals the Fiesta to be RWD and not 4x4 as hoped. But it does carry some good skid plate and suspension detailing, albeit in gold???

The motor is the standard RX-41 and the rear axle sports the newer style brass bushes similar to the Ninco versions. The front axle is supported in the usual SCX fashion by vertical slots in the chassis, although posts within the body restrict vertical movement. The only thing that looks out of place on this model is the mirrors, they look huge compared to the model itself and wouldn't look out of place on a Carrera muscle car!

Splitting the body from the chassis reveals a self-centring guide, power distributed by copper rails rather than wires and the back axle is pre-greased.....almost! Motor and axle bearings are still dry though. Looking into the underside of the body, the lighting system has the same copper rails for distribution with LEDs front and rear. The front LEDs are mounted on a PCB with reverse polarity protection diodes, so they don't light up at all if power is reversed. Moulded into the interior platform are steady posts for front and rear axles and the motor.

After briefly running the motor in on a bench power supply, it was time to give it a whirl around my fairly small Carrera test track, initially in out of box state.



First thing you notice are how brilliant the headlights are on this model, the rear lights do shine through the bodywork, but hey, hopefully it will only be your competitors who will be seeing that!

The magnet has the usual monstrous pull, providing the car with huge amounts of grip from its vinyl feeling ribbed tyres. On Carrera track its almost vertical before the magnet lets ➡➡



go. The Fiesta is very well behaved but does break away violently if pushed too hard, acceleration is excellent and top speed is good! (My Fiancée suggested that maybe fitting a 'Shrimech' à la Robot wars, as she kept coming off!)

The standard tyres without the aid of the magnet weren't very good at all, but did make for some huge tail slides if you got it right. I tried some older scrubbed SCX tyres on the rear and it did make an improvement to the way it drove.

	Average(s)	Best(s)
Box Standard	7.1	6.09
Without magnet	8.0	7.3
Older tyres w/o magnet	6.9	6.48
Older tyres with magnet	6.75	6.01

In conclusion, this is a great little addition to anyone's rally collection, I'm not sure how long the mirrors will last sticking out as they do, but it's a blast to race on plastic and a definite must for any hot hatch rally class! ■

Carrera Subaru WRC

Reviewed by Steve Westby

Although I enjoy watching the WRC on the television, I've never been tempted to stand in the middle of a cold forest to see it live. Perhaps for that reason, the cars have never featured very significantly in my slot-car experiences. So when I was asked if I would review this car (Ref: 25734) I was intrigued to see what I was missing.

The car arrived in the usual oversized Carrera box, which takes up an annoying amount of shelf space. I must admit however that it has some advantages. The wheels are clear of the floor, better for long term storage. The mirrored area allows you to appreciate both sides of the livery without taking it out of the box and there is a secure compartment to store leaflets, spare braids and magnet spacers.

My first thought was to compare the car with the only other rally car in my collection, the Ninco Subaru WRC club car from a couple of years ago. This showed the Carrera car

favourably. The detailing of features such as light clusters and windscreen wipers is more convincing. The moulding of fine features is just a little crisper and overall it looks less plasticky than the Ninco car, just a little more real.

I'd been sent the "dirty" version of the car, in the usual blue and yellow Subaru livery and intended to represent the car as rallied by Tommi Makinen on his last event, the Rally GB at the end of 2003. Overall, it appears to be a good replica, the one obvious fault that I could see being that the number plate, which should be set back in the lower grille, is instead a very small tampo print on the splitter, where the Prodrive logo should be.

I'm still in two minds about how effective the weathering is. The effect has been achieved by a graduated mist of brown mud down both sides, on both the body and the wheels. I just wasn't sold on this, for two main reasons. ➡➡



Firstly, it looked too even, I'd expect to see the occasional streak or lump of mud. Secondly, the rest of the car was pristine and gleaming, it just didn't seem to all add up.

Interior detail is adequate but limited to roll cage, crew and moulded interior features. Colour highlights are restricted to pace notes, face, hands and some unconvincing helmet liveries.

One final criticism of the appearance, navigators in WRC cars sit much lower than the driver, with their helmets just showing above the dashboard. As with the Ninco car, the navigator in this model is sitting far too high, level with the driver.

Track time

It was now time to take the car to the track and see how it went. I think it's important to see how the car goes straight out of the box, without any fiddling, as this is a consumer product and needs to be immediately usable.

I started running the car on a fairly large Carrera road course and found that it was a bit hesitant, balking round the turns at the far reaches of the track, where the power is a bit low, though properly run in cars sail round. Next stop was a short Scalextric Sport track, using the usual Carrera feature of a switch on the bottom of the car to swap the electrics round so that it travelled in the right direction. Here the car balked even more on the corners and couldn't be persuaded round a 270 degree loop of standard curve without so much throttle that it deslotted.

To run the car in, I put it on a Carrera high speed oval and let it run round for half an hour. This made a minor improvement, as did applying a little light oil to the bearings. Having

checked that nothing was rubbing on the body, I tweaked the braids until the car was running freely and well and it was time to see how it performed.

As times don't usually worry me too much, the only track I have with a lap timer is the short Scalextric Sport one, so this is where I put the car through its paces. As a benchmark, I ran one of my faster saloons round (an SCX Nascar) and got a best time of 2.1 seconds, a more recent Scalextric Starsky and Hutch Torino did 2.8.

Against this, the Subaru did a best of 2.7 seconds, without ever feeling as glued down as the Torino, the tail drifting slightly on the turns. Attempting to better that time caused several excursions, which resulted in the rear spoiler detaching itself. However, as is common with Carrera, this is not glued in so is easily replaced without damage and can be removed for racing if you prefer. Despite my attempts to rearrange the scenery, the wing mirrors and the three flimsy looking radio aerials stayed attached.

The car had arrived with the adjustable centre magnet in the rearmost position, giving maximum downforce. I now moved this right forward and it gave a bit more freedom for the tail to swing out on the turns, the lap times increasing to 3.4 seconds.

Finally I unscrewed and removed the rear bar magnet. At last I felt like I was driving a real rally car, drifting the tail wide round the turns. Lap times initially increased to 4.1 seconds, but I was really enjoying this and gradually worked down to 3.6 as I got the balance right and sustained the drift at the right angle. Great fun.

Overall, a good looking car, which is entertaining to drive when set up with minimum magnetic downforce. At the discounted prices that Carrera cars can usually be bought for, I think it represents great value for money. ■

Trials and tribulations of running a slot car club (Part 3!)

By Steve Jones

Llantrisant Scalextric Racing Car Club

I hope my previous two articles has given those of you thinking of starting a club some inspiration to go out and give it a try. The more venues we have to race the more our hobby will flourish. It seems in general that our hobby is beginning to expand and that there are more manufacturers now than there has ever been!

Our club has just had its 3rd Birthday on December 4th 2004, I remember it well as our opening night was my wedding anniversary! What better way to celebrate than to go racing? (My wife wasn't that impressed). So I thought that I would put pen to paper and give you an update on our club.

As everyone knows the heart of a successful club is having enthusiastic members. We have all seen the turn up late after the track has been built and leave early before the track is put away brigade! If this is you take heed.

Fortunately Llantrisant has many members who are always willing to give a helping hand within the club, it's people like these who have made our club the success that it is today. One member, Ken Graham, has dedicated many cold hours in his garage building a new section for the track. My thanks to him and everyone else who gets involved.

The club now has around 30 members and increasing monthly. We may even have to start a waiting list to join the club. Around 20-25 people attend racing nights. We even have two female members who regularly race. Watch out lads they are getting better!

I still await my monthly magazine to check the membership list update to see if there is anybody who is local to our club. We continue to advertise in three model shops based in

Cardiff/Bridgend The proprietors are kind enough to put up our posters in their shop windows. This method has probably introduced the most new members to the club. We have also had success by advertising on the internet via the slot-car portal.

Varying the type of racing to suit everyone is important to keep the interest going, standard, modified GT, DTM, with magnets and without magnets. I know that there are a lot of clubs and racers out there who loathe the idea of racing with magnets, but I personally feel if we banned them at our club we would probably lose most of our members overnight. (Point to bear in mind).

I don't want to go into the long debate about the whys and wherefores of magnets at this stage but I believe there is room for both classes. In general the more experienced members opt to race without magnets.

We have regular competitions at our club that run for about a six week period, with the best five weeks to count. Trophies are awarded for the top three drivers. Racing has become very competitive but with a friendly and fun attitude, which is a nice mix. Having regular competitions keeps the interest going; it also gives a purpose to our hobby, much better than just turning up to run around the track. I believe this to be an important part of any club.

The hard-core racers at our club also race at the SWELLS league. (South West Little Le Mans Series). which is run by Mervyn Palmer of Street in Bristol. At the moment there are four clubs involved, Llantrisant, Abergavenny, Hereford and Honiton down in Devon. There are two series: Winter Classics, November to February and from March to October, GT ➡➡

cars are used. We race at each venue on a once a month basis with points scored at each for the overall championship.

Mervyn does a great job at these meetings, we all look forward to the events each month, the competition is of a high standard but again very friendly. The Welsh contingency likes the challenge of beating the English! (I must say our slot racers are better at it than our Rugby team!) It's nice to meet and race against different people outside of the club too.

Unfortunately our club track has to be erected and dismantled each session and it does take its toll on the track uniformity so we do have regular maintenance nights to replace or repair sections. This happens around three monthly intervals. It ensures that no problems arise when we have our club night as there is nothing worse than a couple of lane failures.

Our local community council have been very helpful again this year, we have just received another grant and been presented with a cheque for £200 to help repair and maintain our track.

One thing I would like to see here in Wales is perhaps providing a venue for a swapmeet event. This again would promote our hobby in

our locality and put us on the swapmeet calendar. Would anyone out there be interested? Let me know.

So that's it in a nutshell, to be a successful club you need helpful and enthusiastic members, someone to run the night's racing making sure that the races are organised and that each individual gets as much track time as possible. Having regular competitions helps to keep interest among members.

Let's hope we can continue the impetus over the coming years and have a waiting list to join our club! It's been hard work getting this far but it has all been worth it. Slot racing is within everyone's budget; you don't need to spend hundreds of pounds getting started. It's also a great hobby for all the family to get involved in especially dads and sons. I always threaten my son that if he beats me he doesn't get any pocket money that week! In the near future we would like to hold an open meeting inviting people from other parts of the country to race here in sunny Wales. Yes we do get sun sometimes. If anyone would be interested please contact me on 01443 670018 or you can email me on: steve.jones2@ntlworld.com ■

Christmas Night Races

By Clifford Rustage

It has become traditional in our household to use Christmas night as an opportunity to race with my under used track and cars and 2004 provided an extra bonus as my sister, Jane expressed a wish to continue the January office party with an extra race night at her home.

I prefer the older models from the 1980s and 90s and, as Roger Gillham mentioned in his book that the motorcycle and sidecar models may be more controllable with “de-tuned” motors, I ordered new rear tyres from Pendle Slot Racing and some 1980s spec “non S” Mabuchi motors from Westwood Models. Testing on an oval of track looked promising, so I also installed these motors in two 1990s Mini Coopers and a Wolf WR5 from a Manchester toy fair.

On our Christmas race night at my sister’s home, I arranged four types of vehicle in red and yellow, with red and yellow spots for the track lanes. We raced the motorbikes, Minis, modern Astras, the Wolf and Brabham BT44B. The Minis and motorbikes produced very similar lap times and were fun to drive. The Astras and the Grand Prix cars produced faster lap times as would be expected. We felt the Wolf would probably have been a better match for the Brabham if it too had the “S” spec motor since these were faster all-round than the Minis and bikes.

I remove all chassis magnets on principle, so our accidents and “offs” were relatively minor, the cars survived intact and I looked forward to another good evening organising a race night for my sister’s work colleagues.

Wednesday 12th January soon arrived and my sister Jane had booked the day off to get food and prepare her house for the party. I arrived late afternoon to unload the car and set up the track in the dining room.

We needed two tables, one on blocks to even the heights. This time the track layout was an

extended figure of eight using flat 90° crossing (am I mad?) and the new side swipe straight sections. A new grandstand and hand painted spectators also graced the layout.

We had only done this before for family, so this was quite exciting to arrange. After 6pm guests started to arrive with some needing to refuel straight away, so off to the kitchen to raid the buffet.

Practice laps commenced with much to discuss and two more ladies arrived to improve the party mix. The first races used 1970s style Grand Prix cars, Brabham and Wolf with Mabuchi “S” motors installed. 20 lap races became 10 laps to improve the flow of the evening. One of the ladies became quite assertive regarding track marshalling; I think the ladies were surprised how involved they became.

The motorbikes and sidecars produced different results. This time the red bike in the red lane was the favourite for wins. The lap times improved slowly and another “dark horse” winner emerged. Mini Coopers were next with 1980s spec motors. These performed well with similar lap times to the bikes and the same driver won this competition. Yellow Mini was favourite this time.

The contest became quite heated at one stage and both Minis left the track to land on the marble hearth! Ouch! We ran out of time to race the Astras. The side swipe caused few problems, unlike the cross-over, but the worst black spot turned out to be the first bend after the long straight.

Overall though there was much banter and laughter. Small medals and choccy were given out as prizes. My thanks to sister Jane Miller, Pendle Slot Racing, Westwood Models and Malcolm Ainsworth (Haydock Toy fair) for spare parts and friendly advice. Roll on next Christmas. ■