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THE INDEPENDENT CLUB FOR SLOT-CAR ENTHUSIASTS

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## Lose the weight in 2008

**A** Happy New Year to you all. 2008 already promises to be the biggest year ever in terms of new product with Hornby's recent announcement of at least 80 new cars. No doubt the other manufacturers have similar plans so the collector's wallet is going to take a sizeable hit, particularly as Scalextric have also added a 'stealth tax' in the form of a £2.50 increase in the recommended retail price! I wonder, is there anybody left out there with sufficient disposable income (and storage space!) to purchase every single model? It used to be relatively common for people to try and collect the complete output of certain manufacturers but I suspect they are very few in numbers these days.

On a different subject, you may already have noticed that the Journal has been on a diet over Christmas as I have used slightly thinner paper in order to get the weight of the thing a bit lower. This is because of the ever increasing financial appetite of what is laughingly called The Royal Mail - I bet the Queen doesn't have to queue up in her local W.H Smiths to post a letter following the closure of her main Post Office!

The cost of Journal postage (with a further increase due in April) is threatening to outstrip the printing bill and is becoming a matter of some financial concern. I would much prefer to use the money to increase the amount of colour in the Journal rather than fill the coffers of the Post Office! Most issues of the Journal contain 48 pages or less and my aim has been to get the weight of those below 100gms and thus drastically reduce the monthly bill. With a bit of luck I should be able to save in excess of £2000 in a full year which will more than pay for some extra colour pages or even a full colour issue once a year. Mind you, it hasn't worked this month as this issue has stretched to 52 pages!

If you feel I have reduced the quality of the Journal to an unacceptable level by this action then please let me know - this issue is by way of an experiment and I can easily revert to the previous standard if necessary, although you won't then get the benefit of increased colour later in the year.

*Till next month*

*Brian*



BY **ROB SMITH**

# **MESSAGES**

## **FROM MARGATE**



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**A**nd a Happy New Year to all of you! I do hope that Santa brought you all the Scalextric cars that you wanted, and there were some great ones to choose from around Christmas. However, I hope you have lots of money left for the new releases planned for 2008.

### **Scalextric 2008 News**

Here is a brief run down of the planned releases for this year. Scalextric have several TV and film tie-ups for 2008 with a new DBS for James Bond fans, a proper Mini Cooper Italian Job triple car pack with DVD of the original film, and a Top Gear Powerlaps set so you can take on the Stig at Gambon Corner.

Other planned items include the new Fiat 500, the latest Nascars and closer co-operation with McLaren Mercedes. Returning to the range is a modern Touring Car in the form of Andy Priaulx's BMW 320si. A new 997 GT3RS will keep Porsche fans happy with road and race liveries. Three new A1 GPs join the range for South Africa, The Netherlands and China.

Classics include the Lotus Cortina Mk1. Lotus 49 and Eagle Weslake single seaters will be in a special 1967 Year of Legends twin pack too. A Mercedes 300 SLR Coupé looks superb as does the classic GT40 with no 7 and a black bonnet - remember the old Hong Kong made version?

Of course there are reliveries of many cars including the classic Mini Cooper and a scary Italian Police Lamborghini. Rally enthusiasts will enjoy the Stobart Ford Focus and new Subaru Impreza and Peugeot 307 liveries. The black and yellow Coastguard Range Rover looks great.

For digital fans there is a new six car powerbase and an electronic pitbox which should give hours of amusement as you can control pit stops via a series of lights.

More information will be in the 2008 catalogue available in early January.

### **Recent Releases**

**C2853W BMW Mini Cooper S**

**After Eight No9**

**C2854W BMW Mini Cooper S**

**After Eight No8**

Now these two Minis are an absolute must for any collector and they will not prove easy to find. They are two Mini Cooper S cars finished in dark green (#8) and black (#9) with Union Jack roofs and After Eight logos on the sides. They are only available in a set and that set was given away by Nestlé Germany as an internal only promotion. 1500 pairs of cars were made and a few sets have appeared on eBay Germany so far.

The set was not put together by Hornby, although you would never know this from the box, and the likelihood is that the basic sets were returns to the German importer who changed the polystyrene car tray and created new box art. It does not, therefore, have a C number. ➡➡





### **C2775 Ford Mustang No9**

This Australian only release did appear back in November and a few are now back in the UK. Finished in a striking red with Coca-Cola logos, this represents the Alan Moffat Racing Mustang from 1968. A limited edition of 3500 pieces, this is a nice TransAm to find.

### **C2829 Ford BF Falcon**

**Craig Lowndes**

### **C2830 Ford BF Falcon**

**Steven Richards**

### **C2831 Ford BF Falcon**

**James Courtney**

The annual release of the Australian V8s is always worth waiting for and the Ford BF Falcons do not disappoint. They are a brand new mould and are beautifully decorated as usual. The Chris Lowndes car has a red and silver Vodafone livery, the Steve Richards car has a red, green and white Castrol livery and the James Courtney car has a beautiful blue and yellow Jeld Wen livery. There are 1500 of each car available.

I was lucky enough this year to pick up my cars in person in Australia from Stanbridges in Perth. Stanbridges is a huge model shop with a large slot car section along with trains, radio control stuff, diecast and an exciting rocket section to name just a few departments. Peter, the owner, was most pleasant and helpful and was pleased to show me around the shop and extensive warehouse. They will do mail order worldwide and more information can be found at <http://www.stanbridges.com.au>.





### **C2789 Subaru Impreza "The Sun"**

It is hard to believe that this is only the second release of the fourth version of the Impreza and Subaru have already announced its replacement. This release is the Mobil 1 and Scalextric sponsored car campaigned by The Sun in 2007. Prominent is the Scalextric 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo on the roof and the appropriate racing number of 50. This white car is complete with a weathered finish of a real rally car which I like. What do you think? Should Hornby produce more weathered cars?

### **C2812 Porsche RS Spyder No6**

Another brand new model is the Porsche RS Spyder which promises to be blisteringly quick on the track. Finished in the yellow and red colours of DHL this is a great looking model. The louvres over the front wheels are particularly fine as are the details at the back. Perhaps surprisingly the Porsche does not carry the special motor and axle carrier first seen on the Lister LMP. I wonder if we have seen the last of that innovation.

### **C2809 Audi R10 TDI Power No 8**

The other brand new LMP model is the 2006 Le Mans winning Audi R10. This is the Biela, Pirro and Werner number 8 car finished in silver and grey with the red detailing of Shell's V-Power diesel fuel. Like the Porsche this is sure to be an exceptionally quick Scalextric car on the track with a wide wheelbase and track and a flat chassis. The bodywork is complex with a variety of complex shapes, grilles and intakes that capture the details of the real car very well. This car is reviewed elsewhere in the Journal this month.

### **C2783A Celebrating Mille Miglia 1955**

#### **C2827A Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren 722**

#### **C2828A Mercedes-Benz SLR 300**

The Mille Miglia 1955 twinpack is beautifully produced in a silver box with a prominent red 722 on the lid. It is a limited edition of 8000 with the familiar credit card certificate stuck to the tray beside the cars. Both cars carry the small ➞➞





*Limited* plaque on their base and are unique to this set.

The SLR McLaren 722 differs from the general SLR release in two main ways. It has a superb set of grey wheels and a more aggressive front spoiler. Minor details include a tiny 722 logo by the side air vents and different badging at the rear.

The beautiful SLR 300 varies considerably from the Fangio solo release as it carries two figures. Stirling Moss and Dennis Jenkinson famously won the event with the use of pace notes stored in a scrolling map. Therefore C2828A carries both figures which do have a passing resemblance to the real personalities – a sterling effort one might say. Each figure has an aerodynamic headrest and the car has a full width windscreen.

### **C2817 Honda F1 No 7 C2840 Honda F1 No 8**

Although the digital version of Button's Honda came out back in October, the analogue version together with team mate Barrichello's car have only just become widely available.

The complex technique of applying such a large decal suspended in a bath with the car passed through it works really well and the cars look fantastic. Hopefully they have better slot track performance than in real life!

### **Slot City GT40**

The online Slot car retailer Slot City has an exclusive GT40 livery for delivery in March or April. The reference is C2490 and it can be pre-ordered from their website.

The real GT40 is driven and co-driven by Alain Schlesinger and Jean-Claude Andruet, the famous drivers, whose experience in Le Mans racing is world renowned. Their victories include the prestigious Monte Carlo and San Remo Rallies, and they have dozens of stage wins and podium finishes around the world. ■





## Rear View

**B**efore pulling away into the New Year, it's always nice to take a look in the rear view mirror to see what's behind... As always, Ninco managed to produce some landmark cars over the past twelve months with a number of totally new models, unique to the world of slot-cars, as well as some beautiful liveries on both new and existing bodies.

With the exception of Go-Karts, Ninco released vehicles for all categories with the highest number of new releases going to the fast and furious GT class.

## The Need for Speed

2007 started off with a re-liveried McLaren F1 GTR (*one of my personal favourite car types*) which was followed later in the year with some attractive Mégane Trophy cars and racing versions of the Supra and Nissan. The Ferrari F50 saw a welcomed return to the circuit but this time in the form of a kit. It was joined by self assembly kit versions of the Ferrari 360 "Le Mans" and an official ProDriver kit with plain and Ninco decorated body shells. The GT class also saw the addition of two totally new car designs from Ninco; the stunning Ascari and the stylish Porsche 997. For me, in the GT class, 2007 will be remembered for the Ascari... what a car! Ninco chose this model for their very own "Club Car No.4" which was offered to Club Ninco members with a digital chip for racing on N-Digital tracks. Just before Christmas, four Porsche 997s were released as N-Digital ready cars, offered in different colours and carrying numbers 1 to 4.



When the Mosler was launched, it quickly became recognised as one of the fastest GT cars available to race straight from the box. Not content with this, Ninco decided to release a "Lightning" ProRace version of the car supplied on a luminous yellow base – needless to say it didn't need to rely on bright base-plate to be noticed, as the addition of ProRace parts such as lightweight wheel hubs, gears and race-tuned NC-6 motor guaranteed this car would get everyone's attention on the race track! ➡



## Timeless Classics

Not many models released in this category last year but all were true classics. The first Ferrari Testarossa to be released as a self assembly kit appeared to complete the line-up of Ninco produced Ferraris to be released in this form. In my opinion, the one which really stood out was the gorgeous Jaguar XK120. Mounted on the "Classic" brick road base, the silver 'big cat' with chrome wire-wheels and fine print detail looks almost too good to race!

## On the Road

Notable road-going versions include the all-new crisp white Porsche 997 and of course the BMW M3 from the love-it-or-hate-it "Tuning" series, again re-painted in white rather than orange from the previous year. Before really getting into the "off-road" category, the awesome Hummer has to get a mention as the first two to be released were the plain yellow and the Police versions... these massive cars meant that Ninco had to re-design the display base to allow the beast to be contained within the standard crystal cover!



## ... and Off-Road

Rally cars have always been popular both here in the UK and abroad. The most notable addition to the Rally class during 2007 has to be the new Ford Focus which was immediately competitive with the already established WRC stable of Subaru, Lancer and Peugeot 307. The relatively new Raid category has also managed to gain popularity and enables more challenging

circuits to be designed and conquered using quite unique body-styles. Aside from the above mentioned Hummer, another wholly new designed vehicle from Ninco was born in the guise of the Schlesser. With an appearance more like a buggy than a ProTruck, this model really is at home on the off-road surface tracks, especially the Dune sections!

## Keeping the brand alive

Some years ago, I volunteered to run a Ninco track at my daughter's primary school at their annual Christmas Fair. The event proved so popular that I was asked to return the following year and have been going back ever since! Each year I try to offer something a little different and have set up circuits based on asphalt, off-road and a combination of the two. Last Christmas (2007), I decided to offer two separate tracks, one rally and one road.



Both accommodated a continuous stream of children for three and a half hours, without fault, even though some of the cars took a battering when launched from the track onto the classroom floor. This kind of reliability is a testament to the durability and robustness of the Ninco product, track, cars and accessories.

With the Nuremberg Toy Fair taking place next month all manufacturers will be able to showcase their current and future products. I am sure Ninco will announce more innovation and great new models for us all to look forward to during 2008. ■





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**H**appy New Year to you all and here goes for another 12 months of slot car mayhem. This month there are 10 new models to report on, which includes the first of the long awaited "Playboy" collection.

## Standard Releases

**Alfa Romeo Giulia GTAj  
"Jagermeister" #83 (88312)**

DRM championship 1972, driven by Rainer Maschke. The Alfa Romeo Giulia is one of the unsung heroes in the Fly range and looks especially good in this livery. It is decorated in orange with a pale orange nose and finished off with gold wheels. Although a standard release, it should prove to be very popular due to the sponsorship on the car.



**March 761 "Jagermeister" #34  
(88286)**

This model represents the car driven by Hans Stuck competing in the German F1 GP at the Nurburgring, which was Race 10 of the 1976 season. This must be one of the most famous races of all time and all for the wrong reasons, as it was here where Niki Lauda suffered his

terrible burns. Stuck failed to finish the race as his March suffered with clutch problems. The model is decorated in orange, except for the silver rear wing and is presented in a crystal case with a grey plinth.

**BMW 320i "Hasseroder" #22  
(88287)**

Another in the Evo racing series, which requires assembly with all extra spares included to customise the car's set-up to suit your circuit. The body shell is fully detailed with a lexan interior and decorated in yellow. It represents the car driven by Thomas Winklehock competing in the 2003 DTC series.

**Porsche 934 "Meccarillos" #60  
(88291)**

24hr Le Mans 1977, driven by Claude Haldi, Angelo Pallavicini & Florian Vetsch. This and the sister #59 car of the Schiller racing team both failed to finish the race. The model is decorated in an attractive livery, although mainly white it does have some fancy yellow and red harlequin graphics around the wheel arches. It is fitted with covered head & spotlights and complimented by gold & silver BBS wheels.

**MAN Truck "Paga" #3 (08053)**

Modelled on the truck driven by Alfonso de Orleans-Borbon, competing in the FIA ETRC at Jarama in 2004. It is decorated predominantly in yellow with a few minor graphics and presented in a crystal case with a picture backing card.

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## Special Editions

### BMW M1 "CharlyM" #84 (99086)

A specially commissioned model for La Estacion del Hobby of Spain, limited to 1300 units. The model represents the car that took part in the DRM championships in 1981, driven by Walter Maurer. It is decorated in maroon with sunset graphics adorning both sides, complimented with white rear window slats and wing mirrors. Presentation is in a crystal case mounted on a grey plinth with a numbered picture backing card.

### Kremer Porsche Set (99065)

Kremer are a former motorsport team based in Cologne, Germany. It was founded by racing driver Erwin Kremer, together with his brother Manfred. They both competed internationally driving Porsches and were backed by the factory for many years. The team was also known for their tuned Porsche race cars that they both

raced and also sold to other teams who could not gain the best equipment from the factory. Amongst their greatest achievements were winning the Le Mans 24 hours in 1979 with their own 935 K3, and later winning the 1995 Daytona 24 hours in a K8 spyder.

This set is a continuation of Fly's team set series and represents two of the cars that Kremer have raced and tuned. Both cars are mounted parallel to each other in a hinged card box and is a limited edition.

### Porsche 911S #28

Driven by Erwin Kremer, Günther Huber & Juan Carlos Bolanos, competing in the Sebring 12 hours in 1972, finishing 12<sup>th</sup> overall after completing 201 laps. The model is decorated in dark red with burnt orange swirly graphics bordered in blue. It also features spotlights on the bonnet which are tampoed to simulate duct tape.



### **Porsche 935 "Malardeau" #43**

Driven by the all French driver line-up of Xavier Lapeyre, Jean-Louis Trintignant & Anny-Charlotte Verney, competing in the 24 hour Le Mans in 1980. Not one of Kremer's success stories, as the car failed to finish due to gearbox problems on lap 217. The model is decorated entirely in yellow and is very striking in its appearance.

## **Playboy Collection**

The first two models are now available in this long awaited collection. It's been nearly a year now since the series was first announced and I for one was beginning to think it was not going to happen. Despite being late it is nonetheless here and I must say both cars look extremely good. An unusual feature of this series is that all 12 cars in the collection are and will be available in two different display packaging formats. The cheaper version is mounted in the standard crystal case with a picture backing card, whereas the other slightly more expensive version is

mounted in the larger hinged card box, which incidentally is the same size used for the team sets. To my knowledge there is no difference between each pair of cars. Each version will feature a particular cover issue from the "Playboy" publication archive. The first catalogue reference number quoted below on each model represents the crystal case version:-

### **01 - Ferrari 512 CL (99017) & (99032)**

Decorated in black with the cover issue of January 1974, which is of the iconic "Playboy" bunny on the bonnet.

### **02 - Porsche 911S (99021) & (99033)**

Decorated in silver with "Playboy" bunny hologram graphics all over and the cover issue of June 1997, featuring the former Swedish Olympic skier and model Victoria Silverstedt on the bonnet.

At the time of writing, the more lavish card box version has only been released in Spain, but should be widely available by the time you read this. ■







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Since my last column a great deal of new product (relative to H:O terms) has been announced. Life-Like have announced more Nascars, as expected, including for the first time cars of Dale Earnhardt Jr, which was not so expected. With the change of team and the move away from Budweiser as principal sponsor, I suspect the Walthers owned company could not resist the chance to model Nascar's most popular driver (by some margin) even though they had to no doubt expend a large amount of capital to get that right.

Whilst the Car of Tomorrow (CoT) may not be to everyone's taste, I am glad that Life-Like have also announced that, from August, they will be releasing models of these cars (including two Earnhardt cars) as it shows a higher level of commitment to tool a new body shape rather

than just put new liveries on the existing shell. The Earnhardt cars, the AMP and National Guard Chevy Impalas, look very striking in the metal, time will tell how good the Life-Like versions look but they are sure to be big sellers almost regardless.

Additionally, as expected, Life-Like have risked incurring the wrath of the hard-line Nascar 'fans' by modelling the Toyota Camry. Despite the fact that the road version of the Camry is made in the USA and all the other road cars in the series are not, the presence of the Japanese make in Nascar continues to be heralded as the end of the series/world (take your pick based on how extreme you are) in some quarters. Clearly Life-Like have decided that not to release any Camrys would be foolish. Exactly which ones will be released has not ➤➤



been announced but a re-visit to their Home Depot and Cat colour schemes on the new badge (formally it was Chevy and Dodge) would seem likely.

For me the best H:O car of 2007 was the red GT40 (see large picture) from Racemasters released under the Tomy AFX brand. These were released at the beginning of December along with three other GT40s and followed on from the superb Champcars announced last April and reviewed in the September Journal. With such high standards being set, Racemaster's plans have been met with much excitement amongst the H:O crowd. In October it was announced that the Control Station (basically a lap counter/timer), for many years discontinued, would be updated for a new release in 2008, no doubt partly to counter the AFX Australia remake of the existing unit.

I would not like to guess how many thousands of laps the original units have recorded at UK H:O races, for the most part faithfully and with few problems. Even in this age of PC programmes the units continue to be used as they give the raw data needed whilst remaining very easy to use (something that cannot always be said about PC systems, even the really good ones). Nonetheless, there are areas for improvement and it does seem that Racemasters are looking at them.

Improvements under consideration include making it mains powered (the current unit uses four C Batteries) and a lot smaller, rather than looking like an ersatz grandstand. In addition, the display might show the gap to the car in front and your average lap time. A pause button is also being considered for those times a floor crash or pile up halts the racing. Another strong possibility will be the means to colour code the screen surround for each lane to match the track colours, but the most anticipated change focuses on the track interface, probably the biggest fault on the current unit.

The current design uses reed switches embedded in a white base, which clips under the track. The problem is that the base raises the track far too much which can cause cars to 'go light' and crash or miss laps being counted. In

addition the sides of the base prevent, or certainly make it tough, you putting two side by side on a four lane club track, and staggering them is not only unsatisfactory you have to cut chunks out of the track pieces to do so. If the new units address this, they will sell very well. Whatever other changes are made would then be a bonus. Time will tell.

If the new timer is good news then that of a new chassis is major news. When you consider the part previous Aurora and Tomy chassis have played in the development of the hobby, a new chassis promises much. Racemasters have so far said the chassis will be lower and narrower than any current design, as well as lighter and possibly longer (or adjustable) which has only added to the anticipation. Given that all H:O cars are held back a little by their chassis, a smaller design has been on every H:O fan's wish list for years.

Open wheel cars won't have to be so high sided and generic (a new Panoz Champcar body has already been announced by Racemasters) and closed wheel ones won't be so stunted. The resin casters out there will be able to copy die-casts directly and fit them without modification (not that such an illegal activity goes on of course). More details on the new chassis will become available as the year progresses and hopefully by the summer everything Race-masters plan will be revealed and on schedule for release in the autumn. Start saving the money now!

Scalextric sent me some info on their 2008 cars just prior to Christmas. For me the highlight looks to be the G2077 Ferrari F430 'Scuderia







Ecosse', and there will also be a 'Ferrari GT set (G1024) containing two further F430s in plain silver and red. There will also be a set, G1050, featuring one yellow and one red Fiat Cinquecento (the new Panda-based version set to be a big hit next summer), and a set (G1044) themed around the next James Bond movie due in November. Current box art features a modern Aston Martin motoring past Big Ben, fingers crossed for an iconic DB5 as well.

In addition, two of the Nissan 350Zs sold in the Argos set 'Supercar Showdown' will be available on their own. The red version

(pictured) is listed as G2071 and the white/green model as G2070. The silver version looks likely to remain as a set-only car, and with the set itself now appearing to have been discontinued by Argos, it will rise in value. Meanwhile Round 2, releasing product as Autoworld, have been, in contrast to all the new models covered here, somewhat quiet of late, although their Dukes of Hazzard set (which uses Tomy-compatible track) has been selling well in the USA.

Christmas came and went without the much anticipated Super 3 chassis or Nascar bodies appearing and now it would seem that they won't be seen until April. Given that the Nascars are 2005 shapes when Life-Like will be releasing 2007 and 2008 ones in the Autumn, if the licence for the colour schemes is equally dated I fear that AW could crash and burn on these. I hope I am wrong on that, as up to now they have served the hobby really well, and they could still come out well if the Nascars they do are unique to them and well executed. ■

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**F**irst up on Kits N Bobs this month is not cars but scenery and accessories. Many of us spend time and money on cars without much thought to what the track looks like. I have been fortunate enough to obtain exciting new products from three companies. First I have been speaking to the nice folks at Slot Track Scenics based in Warwick. They are developing some great stuff to enhance your circuits or dioramas with tyre walls and covers, safety fencing, marker boards, advertising hoardings, spectator embankments and rumble strips. Hopefully we will incorporate these into our additional new five lane wood track planned for 2008/9 at Wolverhampton to bring it to life.



Scenery and accessories from Slot Track Scenics, Slot City, and Tarn Model Foundry.

The next company is Slot City who are selling some excellent track lighting products with various styles of illuminated signs and street lights, these are elegantly simple with a base unit to fix to the trackside with two screws (provided)

and then a plug in lamp post or sign that simply push fits into the base units jack plug. With 6-12 volts either by battery or transformer they give a very realistic lighting level for 1/32<sup>nd</sup> scale. Finally on the scenery side I have bought some great cast trackside figures from Tarn Model Foundry, in the shape of orange clad marshals and various "British forest weather" rally spectators. These figures are some of the best I have seen and the weight being cast metal means they don't fall over each time a slot car goes past on the track. I have produced a picture with sample items from all three companies, and incorporated them into this month's diorama shots.

Staying for the moment with accessories, although this time for the cars themselves, Penelope Pitlane have produced their new vintage wheels and photo etched inserts, suitable for the Birkin Bentley and as replacements for the older Scalextric and Pink-car vintage models. They also have some great new Bugatti eight spoke vintage cast inserts, which really look the part. I have also finished their new side-winder chassis, which is fitted under the new AA Bodies' Lancia D24. I ran this at Wolves and found the smooth handling to be very sweet indeed, even though I was on standard Ninco classic rubber rather than Ortmanns and had fitted a stock Mabuchi rather than something with a bit more fizz. You will have to wait for the promised head to head review with Rob Hill's new sidewinder chassis which, while completed and running well enough, doesn't have a suitable body fitted to it yet. In a similar vein the AA Bodies' Ginetta is running but is waiting for me to find the lilac paint I need to finish the car in its proper colours. One car I did finally complete this month is Maxi Models' magnificent Can-Am Ferrari 612P as driven by Chris Amon at Watkins Glen in 1969.



From OCAR / World Classics Limited this month we have a glut of kits with the promised Link-Aston V8, and the NART Ferrari P2 long-tail both finished and pictured below. These have been replaced on the workbench by the new Aston Martin DB2, and Alfasud Ti kits. I will hopefully have these up and running to show you next month. Also via World Classics the latest four MMK / Slot France are now here, these being the Facel Vega MK 500, De Tomaso Panterra LM72, CD Peugeot LM68, and the Cunningham C2R LM51. These four are all lovely looking slot cars, but do suffer from mechanical frailty as on all four I have already had to change slipping pinions for tighter fitting ones. Also on release in France but yet to hit the UK are the TKP pre-painted kits of the Saab 96 Monte Carlo 1962, and the Alpine Renault A310.



**Maxi Models 612P, and the OCAR NART P2 and Link Aston V8**

Slot Classics of Spain have now released their Rob Walker / Stirling Moss Ferrari 250GT SWB for those who had pre-ordered them. They have also announced their next planned release for Spring 2008, which will be a road version of the Jaguar MK II. Sadly, if you didn't have a standing order with Slot Classics within days of the announcement all five hundred planned units had been pre-sold. Moving on to plastic cars I have very little to bring you this month except that the Sloter Opel Mantas are now on sale in the UK in both red "Bastos" and white "Opel Euro team" liveries. These cars feature an angle-winder SCX pro-turbo motor and drop



**MMK Cunningham C2R and AA Bodies Lancia D24 with Pitlane sidwinder chassis**

arm for the pick up and seemed very rapid right out of the box on both the Slotfire and copper tape tracks at Wolves, I can't give you any times however as our computer system had thrown a major wobbly. The tyres, bearings, axles, guide, and the crystal display box all appear to be pure SCX, further evidence of the tie in between these two manufacturers. Lastly for this month, the new Carrera Peugeot 908 Hdi, Porsche GT3, and '07 Camaro appear to be on release in the States and should, like the two Opel Commodores released Stateside last month, be with UK dealers in the not to distant future. Carrera have also released limited edition Mercedes GL Class but these seem to have been done for various German dealers and non-German buyers will probably have to rely on eBay if they want one. ➡➤



**MMK De Tomaso Panterra and CD Peugeot**





MMK Facel Vega HK 500 and Slot Classic's 250GT SWB



Sloter Opel Mantas with Tarn Model Foundry rally spectators

Very finally, this year's MRE Classic Le Mans event for cars up to and including 1961 to be held on Sunday May 11<sup>th</sup> 2008 at Wolverhampton has now sold out, we are running a stand-by list but already have four names in addition to the forty-eight registered drivers. The good news is that the World Classics / OCAR European Saloon Classic for pre-1980 cars has now been set for Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2008 and we are taking pre-paid entry bookings at £7 per entrant. This event will be split for small and large saloons based on wheelbase, track and width. I have a full set of details for those who are interested. ■

# GT Raceway Slot Club

By Bob Wiles

**T**he Southeast Essex based GT Raceway was founded by Graeme Thoburn and Ian Newstead in 1999. In the early days meetings were held in the hall of a local snooker club every fortnight and at each meeting the track had to be set up and put away again at the end of a night's racing. The club found its first permanent home in 2001 at Progress Road in Eastwood and stayed there for one year before being forced to re-locate and return to its roots for a time, with meetings being held in a Scout hall and the track having to be set up for every meeting. Two further relocations have been forced on the club, but since 2004 it has been based in its present location, an industrial unit on a farm complex near Benfleet.

Membership levels have varied over the years but the club has generally retained a core membership of around 12-14. As with most clubs, members come from a wide variety of backgrounds.

There is no formal organisation to the club, a three person committee is in place to resolve any issues that cannot be settled by discussion and agreement by members but is rarely, if ever, called upon.

The club runs a members' championship each year. Championship rounds are held for eight of the classes raced and points are scored based on finishing positions in the A final, B final and heats finishing positions. Championship events are spread across the year.

## What We Race

As a result of having an established, though small, core membership for some years, the number of classes raced grew by the year as members proposed and agreed new types of car, peaking at 17 in 2006/7.

For 2008 this has been reduced to a total of 12, with eight of those comprising the club championship. These are:- ➡➡





Fly Classics*	Open GT*
Fly Trucks	SCX F1*
Ninco Classics*	Scalextric Indy/F1*
Ninco Angle Winder/GT*	SCX GT/Lemans
Ninco Rally	SCX Rally*
Ninco Touring	Slot.It GT/LeMans*

(\*denotes championship class)

All classes, with the exception of the Open GT, are raced in standard or near standard trim. It is an aim of the club to have simple rules governing car preparation that can fit on a single side of A4. The rules and a list of eligible cars for 2008 can be found on the club's website.

Two classes are raced each meeting. These take the form of heats, semi-finals and final. Races are over 10 laps. Whilst this format maximises the amount of racing that members enjoy, it does mean that drivers have to be ready to present their cars as soon as a race is called to prevent late finishes to meetings.

Every six weeks or so the club runs a mini-endurance race instead of sprints. These are team events where members use their own car (rather than a single car) and run on each lane in turn with the team completing the most laps being the winners. Driving stints are usually 10 or 15 minutes duration and lap counts of between six and seven hundred are typical depending on the type of cars being raced.

## What We Race On

The track is a six lane Ninco with a lap length of around 135 feet. A couple of members who are old-time slot racers reckon it's similar to the old American made King wooden slotcar tracks in its layout. The track is positive wired so that electronic controllers work correctly.

The racetrack has recently been fitted with white LED track lighting that allows 'night-time' and 'day-night' endurance racing for GT cars.

## Where and When?

The club is based in Benfleet. Meetings are held every Monday except on bank holidays when



racing is moved to Wednesday.

The last meeting before Christmas is a fun event. Recent formats have included a 'Scalextric Metro Challenge', a 'Crash and Burn' whilst running the track in the opposite direction and also a 'Handicap Challenge' with cars of all different classes racing together using a time-based handicap system.

The club opens at 18.45 for practice with racing starting at 19.45. Meetings usually finish between 22.30 and 22.45

New members are always welcome and spare cars and controllers are usually available for anyone who wants to come along and have a try.

## Contact Details

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# Penelope Pitlane Half Tonner 1.5L Grand Prix

By Phil Insull

To round out the “Classic Events” season at Wolves we held the Penelope Pitlane sponsored 1.5 litre Grand Prix meeting. Given the somewhat specialist interest nature of the 1.5 litre Formula One period, I had expected around twenty entrants and was somewhat pleasantly surprised to receive thirty four pre-paid entries. As ever with these events, four dropped out due to various last minute crisis but still thirty was a decent turn out. We held a much needed practice day on the Saturday as these cars are very light and narrow with relatively skinny tyres. Come Sunday and an early practice session soon showed the aces and home driver Mac Pinches looked the pick of the bunch with his well sorted Ferrari.

Excellent models were to be seen everywhere you looked and David Wisdom even had an excellent period pit display to present his cars in. Given all this quality the Concours result was likely to be very tight indeed. Points were awarded by each entrant for every car except their own and the top five were all fabulous.

However Dave Jones’ magnificent Ferrari Aero stood out from the rest earning him the richly deserved laurels. Second was tied between John Prince’s Lola Mk IV and David Wisdom’s Ferrari 158, with John taking second having scored more perfect scores in the voting. So close was the event that fourth and fifth were each just one point behind second place with David Lawson’s Lotus 25b fourth, and newcomer to Wolves, Bryan King, fifth with his Cooper. As normal all Concours cars had to race in at least one qualifying heat.

Onto the racing and, as normal, we had a scratch built class, and also one for unmodified Penelope Pitlane SM1 Chassis cars. In the qualifying heats both classes were mixed together with the distances from all four of the driver’s heats determining which finals they ended up in. Qualifying caused a bit of a shock for Mighty Mac as Dick Smith’s Porsche 804 qualified over a lap ahead of Mac with a total distance of 87.48 laps from Dick’s four runs. Mac, Mick Kerr and Robbie Davies all passed ➡➡



David Wisdom's period pit box display





The Concours 1-2-3 shown here in David's great display

the 85-lap mark to make up the four scratch A finalists. In the Pitlane class I had lent young Andy Tyrer my Porsche 804, while using my own Ferrari Aero. Andy stormed the Pitlane qualifying and won the Penelope Pitlane award

with 82.5 laps and seventh overall, while the next best was David Wisdom on 76.9 and myself on 76.8 having switched to the Porsche for my last two heats. Completing the Pitlane A final line up was Lewis Ward.



David Lawson's Scratch B Final winner and fourth placed Concours car





**Dick Smith's Scratch A Final winning Porsche 804**

The finals were run to three minutes except for the B finals at 25 laps, and the A finals at 50 laps. The Scratch final winners were - E Final Charlie Prince, D Final, John Prince, and C Final Bill Charters. In the 25 lap B Final David Lawson, who had run his Concours car throughout the entire meeting, won beating Chris Adams and Eddie Grice after a very tight race. If we thought this was close however we had underestimated the skills of the Scratch A Finalists. All four drivers completed the fifty laps with just seven seconds covering them after one of the most enthralling races I think we have seen so far at the Wolves Classic events. The finishing order was Dick, from Mac, Mick and Robbie but it could so easily have gone to any one of the four, Mac in particular having hauled himself in front a couple of times and then skidding off.

The Penelope Pitlane B final was won by Malcolm Scotto from Dave Sykes and Ross Troman. Malcolm using my somewhat crabbing Lotus 21, but only after poor Tom Reynolds

retired from a comfortable lead. Sadly Tom was also using my Lola MK IV and I felt awful that my poor car preparation had let him down. If I felt bad for Tom, worse was to follow as I decided that I didn't want the 50 lap A final to be a walkover for Andy so I took the Porsche with its Ortmann tyres and made Andy use the Ferrari with its less grippy NSRs figuring that Andy's superior driving skills should be sufficient to compensate for the slower Ferrari. Sadly I was totally wrong and the Ferrari's grip disappeared after about five laps leaving a slip sliding Andy to finish third some two laps down on David Wisdom and myself. More shameful was that even with the quickest car of the four I kept hauling myself in front and then binning it, while David drove a cool, calm fifty laps to seal his victory.

Finally with Penelope Pitlane's Steve Ward on hand to present the trophies and prizes, including magnificent ready built Pitlane Lotus 18s for the A final winners, it was time to bring a close to the 2007 Wolves classic meetings. ■



## Audi R10 TDi Power #8 C2809

By The Editor

### The Model

**A**ARRGH - it's a diesel! When it comes to motive power for race cars I am firmly in the Jeremy Clarkson camp - diesel engines are for vans. Who, in their right mind, allowed the things to take part in the Le Mans series? Apart from which - I don't much like the current generation of open LMP cars. I think they are ugly and, stripped of their sponsors logos, only a sports car aficionado could tell them apart.

Not a good start to a review of Scalextric's latest offering then - the 2006 Le Mans winning Audi of Biela, Pirro and Werner. So why am I writing this? Simple - it arrived just before Christmas and I didn't have time to send it out to a member for review. My garage track is also functioning at last so, in the interests of research, I felt obliged to give it a bit of a go!

First though - the box. As you are probably aware, Hornby have recently introduced a new display case and this is used for the Audi. It is reminiscent of the 70s 'Super Formula' items and, in my opinion, is a great improvement over the previous type. No more picking up the thing by the lid only to have the plinth detach itself and plunge to the floor with the usual disastrous consequences! It shows off the car very well and stacks neatly - the only addition I could ask for is an inlay card with details about the real car.

I am not the world's leading expert on LMP cars but a quick web search revealed that the colour scheme and sponsors logos were, to all intents and purposes, spot on - no doubt someone will advise me that the Shell logo is a fraction too large and placed 1cm too far back but no matter, I am not a rivet counter and everything looked good to me.



Interior detail is somewhat sparse and the driver suffers from the usual amputated leg syndrome but everything you need to view without taking the car apart is just fine.

## **On the (Sport) Track**

As Scalextric products are designed to run on their own track it would be unfair to ignore the car's performance in this area so I climbed up to the loft for an initial test on the plastic stuff. The results were fairly predictable - like all similar cars it has a low centre of gravity and a bit of a rear overhang so, with the aid of the magnet, it could be hurled round at an ever increasing pace until the rear end let go and it had a large accident. No change there then! What did surprise me was that it emitted an awful noise, similar to the racket that an unsorted SCX car makes.

## **On a (proper) track**

I soon got bored with that so went down to the garage to give the thing a serious thrashing on a routed MDF/copper tape track. As the circuit has only been running for a short while it is not 'rubbered in' yet and, as expected, the standard Scalextric tyres gave virtually no grip at all. I was prepared for this and had a set of Ortmanns to hand - why don't slot car manufacturers fit them as standard? Even on plastic track they give a serious performance advantage.

At the recommended 12 volts the Audi was relatively slow in a straight line but nicely controllable round the twisty bits with a satisfying degree of tail out oversteer. Naturally the garage track is fitted with a decent regulated power supply so I whacked the voltage up to 15 volts which produced a marked increase in straight line speed and acceleration but a corresponding increase in noise and some rear end tyre chatter in the bends.

At this point the car lost all drive so I had to take it apart to investigate. Fortunately, after removing the obligatory six screws, the body actually came off without the usual half hour struggle! The cause of both the noise and traction loss was soon discovered - the contrate

was a bit loose on the axle and had slipped sideways until it was no longer connecting with the pinion which was also in the wrong position.

While relocating the various pieces to their proper places I took the opportunity to lube the gears before returning the car to the track. Everything now functioned properly, although the gear noise was still quite noticeable, and I spent a pleasant hour or three comparing it to other cars in my stable. Its performance was roughly on a par with other cars of the same type and, although it was relatively competitive in a straight line, its cornering powers were not quite in the Slot.It league.

## **Conclusions**

I don't know if I copped a rogue car but the standard tyres were a bit loose and even slipped off the rims during a particularly hard cornering effort on the Sport track. I have also not come across a Scalextric car that makes as much noise in recent times - even after attending to the gears it still made a racket. Unless, of course, it is intended to replicate the awful rumbling of a diesel engine - in which case, top marks for scale accuracy!

On the plus side - nothing broke off the body even after several spectacular rolls. At long last Scalextric have come to their senses and made the rear wing detachable so it doesn't snap off in the first minor accident! Likewise the mirrors and aerial are made of a flexible rubber material and will survive almost all off track moments. In fact, despite a number of such incidents, the car survived with hardly a scratch.

## **Buy it or win it?**

Personally I wouldn't pay real money for it but that is down to my own prejudices and nothing to do with the quality of the car. If you like this type of thing then it is definitely one for the shopping list. The review model is now surplus to requirements so I will give it away to anybody who can give me some sort of reason why diesel engined cars are the future of motor sport!

Entries to the usual address - post, fax or email - closing date March 15th. ■



# It's Not Just 50 years of Scalextric!

By Andy Carmichael

Last year the model world celebrated another anniversary, the Golden Jubilee of G & R Wrenn Ltd of railway fame. Although the family company was formed in November 1950 when George and Richard Wrenn signed a deed of partnership, it did not become a limited company until 1957, so happy 50th Birthday Wrenn.

Now Wrenn is probably best known for railway items but they were also one of the early manufacturers of slot cars with the introduction of the Wrenn 152 Triple Electric Racing System in late 1960 ready for the Christmas market. The system was a very unusual 1/52 scale, smaller but very much a competitor to the Scalextric system, which was by then owned by the Tri-ang Group.

Imagine the scene in Christmas 1960 through a child's eye staring through a toy shop window. Scalextric were offering 1/30 scale cars such as the C 54 Lotus 16 and C55 Vanwall with oversize drivers' heads and minimal detailing using a large rubber track. Victory Industries could offer a heavy and complex to assemble tin plate track system running an MGA and Austin Healey, both 1/32 scale cars were very 'toy like' in design. On to the scene arrives the new boy with very well detailed, tiny Cooper and Ferrari racing cars that can not only race on a table top circuit.... but overtake with three cars racing independently on a two lane circuit. The desire to have one must have been overwhelming and I suspect many a child wrote 152 on their Christmas list.

The Wrenn 152 system started life as a 16 volt alternating current (AC) system using miniature vibrator motors and it sold well, its basic price compared favourably with the competition.

Some may ask - why design such a unique system? Well, the 1-52 scale would provide a

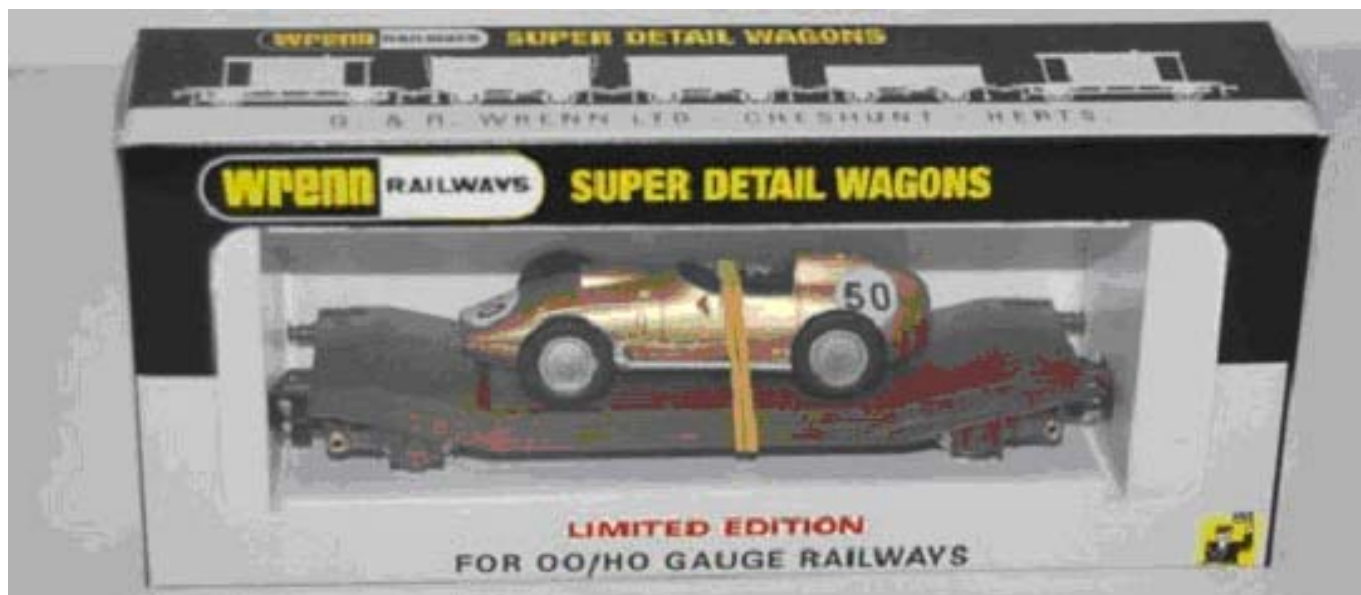
model that could be raced realistically obeying the laws of physics and displaying characteristics such as tail slides, yet small enough to have a comparatively large circuit in a suit case. The 152 cars could run on direct current (DC) but AC reduced the amount of carbonisation on the contacts on the vibrator motor points and the power supply was already in use for the railway market for operating relays and track lights. There may well have been other reasons, but we do know that George Wrenn considered 152 as one of his greatest achievements.

The vibrator cars were a complex piece of engineering with very small components and they were difficult to maintain and keep at optimum performance, especially for little fingers and thumbs! As 1-32, 1-24 and H:O racing models became the established racing scales and grew in popularity, sales of Wrenn 152 began to fall. This was possibly supported by the lack of accessories available for that scale. If you wanted 1-32 scale accessories they were available from several sources such as Airfix model car kits. An attempt to halt the decline was made by introducing the DC motor and more up to date models such as the beautiful Stovepipe BRM and Porsche 804, but sales continued to fall. The DC motor was an ingenious design with a permanent magnet armature rotating inside an electrical coil magnetic field.

Wrenn became part of the Lines Brothers Group and in 1965 took over the production of Hornby Dublo locomotives under their own name. There appeared no economic sense in continuing with formula '152' and production was finished. Wrenn 152 sets were offered at half price direct from the factory advertised in Model Cars magazine in November 1966.

This was not the end of the little Wrenn cars though, later a product named Grand Prix ➡➡





Push and Go was produced, the cars were a Maserati and Vanwall with a modified base to take a rather crude looking magnetic armature motor. The bases of these cars were marked Wrenn and ran on the same track, but the voltage was now 9 volt and a push was required to start the car! This feature may well have been the consequence of using a weak simple motor but regardless it was used as a marketing feature. I can find little information on this last range of cars although some unsupported information suggests the sets were marketed in Woolworths as a budget slot car set.

G & R Wrenn is now a privately owned company producing limited editions and providing spares for the original railway models, some of which uses old parts and stock from the original company. Sadly most of the tools for the slot cars have been lost and only three production moulds are known to exist, yet this is still not quite the end of 152! In April 2005 the Company released a Lowmac railway truck with a resin copy of a Wrenn 152 Racing Car as a load. These models were very limited and suffered some production difficulties causing delays in release. Most recently, on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2007 to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, a further Lowmac was released which carried a gold Ferrari Dino as its load, only 50 were produced and again the car is predominantly a resin model but this time with cast metal wheels and tyres.

I intentionally have tried not to go into the railway side of Wrenn, if you wish to know more then have a look at the company website at [www.gandr-wrenn.co.uk](http://www.gandr-wrenn.co.uk) which traces the history and shows the current product range.

A final thought, today we see digital sets racing six cars to a two lane circuit which uses some pretty complex electronics, yet Wrenn 152 could race six cars, albeit with restrictions, 47 years ago! Come on Hornby keep up with the times! ■

**H**appy New Year to you and I hope you picked up a few sale bargains on eBay or elsewhere on the internet over the holiday period as I hint at below. Digital set prices seem to remain buoyant in general which is to be expected I guess at this time of year. It has been fairly quiet in terms of numbers of listings towards the end of December with numbers only at the 4500 level in the UK as I write this, having hit some 11000 odd earlier in the month with a cheap 10p listing day that brought out a load of Christmas Buy It Now (BIN) items. Elsewhere, the US is showing 9000 listings closely followed by Germany just under this figure. Of the other main slot markets Spain is just above the 2000 level and France at half that amount.

## Top Gear

The trend I have picked up on this month is that a number of sellers have caught on to the fact there are some cracking deals out there from major retailers, who do not specialise in slots, making it very attractive to buy sets in particular from their sites to sell on again on eBay either as is or split down. Whilst this splitting goes on most of the year anyway, this month the special offer on Scalextric Top Gear themed sets and Digital Ignition sets has seen a flurry of these auctions to cash in on the Christmas trade and I am sure many more will have been put aside for a rainy day. As the Top Gear set contains the exclusive and quite attractive white Porsche being driven by "The Stig", this has proved popular fetching around £40 at BIN prices as a pair with the Ford GT over the month, though actual auctions of the car has seen significantly higher and lower figures realised for the Porsche alone. Even the exclusive track pieces and controls have been selling at slightly more than

one would have expected for standard accessories liberated from sets with the six curves making £10. Interestingly enough one seller did not do so well as they only got £33 for the whole set, still sealed, but then I guess if you spell it Scaletrix not so many were looking at that set, and no I did not manage to get that bargain. As I write there are offers on the Scalextric Subaru and Focus sets so I expect to see a few of them early in the New Year on eBay as well.



## Rare Department

On the rare car theme - the supply of Scalextric Bond cars and Auto Union cars seems to have dried up this month though I reckon we could see a few more Bond cars surface some-how next year if the whispers I hear of 2008 range details are correct. Let's wait and see... Incidentally continuing the rare and Modelzone Mustang theme from previous months, \$200 BIN was achieved in the US with a slightly more palatable price of £77 for another buyer in the UK. Thanks to some feedback following my reports of black road LE models last month I have learnt on the Carrera front there should be white versions to look out for shortly as well. ➡➡



## Fake?

It is always interesting to see something that looks a bit different and a potentially rare collectors piece but sometimes you never know whether something is a genuine factory issue item or not. There was obviously some concern over one particular item that was a red Aston Marshall's car that attracted a top bid of only £167. However the interesting part was in the description where the Spanish seller, on English eBay, was indicating that he thought it potentially a fake but named the previous seller who had sold it. Shall I just say this led to some considerable dialogue on the auction in the question and answers section between the interested parties so check out auction 310008688033 if you want further details – just type that number in the search box and that should bring the completed auction up which goes back further than just by searching by description on completed listings. In fact what I will do in future is include the odd listing number in my prices to make it easier for people to search out particular auctions.

## SCX

Thanks to a cheap listing day early in the month coinciding with the release of the fabulous looking Mk 2 Escort, there were many of these SCX cars listed that day and eagerly snapped up by buyers, particularly the dirty version that is limited to only a 1000 models. Many were snapped up within minutes at sub £30 BIN prices. However, you may have missed the boat, especially by the time you read this, as the going rate for the dirty Escort seems nearer £40 now and has even reached £50 in the odd case. The clean version can still be secured including P&P for less than £30 though.

## Slot.It

Well the top dollar, so to speak this month in the UK, goes to an Audi SICA01D which broke the £150 barrier closely followed by an early model SICA01A that made £123. Over the pond in the US, \$800 was all a single bidder needed to secure eight of the earliest released Porsche

including the Newman car as well as the Kouros Mercedes and a “free” Vanquish MG car. Several of the earliest Audis hit the £100 mark particularly for the “EU” models. However, it is not all rosy in the garden selling Slot. It cars though. It is a bit hit and miss with many of the latest models being left on the shelf particularly if listed above the £30 mark as a quick count up showed only actually around a quarter of the 270 Slot. It listings being sold by my reckoning on the UK site. Of interest to those collectors who like a desirable limited edition number on their prize car was a three car Porsche set that had a reserve of at least \$350 for set number 4000/4000. However this went unsold having not met the reserve price.

## Prices

Prices as listed and spelt on UK eBay unless stated, with the time and auction ending day. Note the misspelling theme this month:

SCALEXTRICS DUCATI LORIS CAPIROSSI C6008 \$19.99 (UK eBay seller listed in \$ on Sunday midday).

scaletrix 75 bits classic track some unusual rare old £26 (Included pitstop plus £15 P&P on Thursday night).

Scaletrix Mega sound £26.51 (Jaguar Challenge set on Saturday lunchtime).

SCALETRIC CATALOGUE 8th EDITION 1960,s £4.99 (No bidders on Sunday evening for very good condition example).

old rare slot car and scaletrix 2 new £12.50 (three boxed cars - I guess the SCX F40 Totip was the rare car sold alongside a Brabham QXR and Mercedes Promarket on Sunday night).

Spanish Scaletrix (superslot) Maserati 250 (1957) £25 (Mini Auto LE attracted only 1 bid on a 10 day listing ending Wednesday night).

scaletrix truck sisu sl 250 fia etrc 2000 £10 (Used Fly truck model that “goes like a dream on the track” on Monday afternoon).

Scalextrics rare Aston Martin C57 , original box. £27.85 (Blue boxed example possible faint brown mark on wing on Thursday night).

Scalextric £10.75 (Excellent looking Scalextric starter man boxed on Thursday night).

Very Very Rare Scalextric McLaren Senna C462 Read Why \$168.50 (US eBay on Sunday night).

TRIANG SCALEXTRIC A/228 REFRESHMENTS KIOSK BUILDING. £97 (Unboxed with canopy, step and drainpipe missing but lovely flag on Sunday night).

Rare Refreshment Kiosk £46 (Complete apart from drain pipe on Thursday morning – a bit cheaper than above!).

SCALEXTRIC MEGA RARE JAGUAR XJ220 NEW £165.10 (Gold wooden plinth model on Sunday night).

Scalextric Tinplate Rare 1950's? Austin Healey Red 5 £560.50 (Looked like good complete example but no driver on Sunday night).

Scalextric Batmobile BRAND NEW AND BOXED #6351 £4.99 (Sunday night and another from same seller went for £6.05 4 days later and yet unboxed examples fetched three times as much at different times in the month).

Scalextric - 12 genuine Motor Cycle Tyres W/504 £52.56 (Unopened pack of early tyres on Sunday night 260191969948).

TRI-ANG TRIANG SCALEXTRIC 12 PC brush & brush arms R X \$51 (Unopened pack on US eBay on Wednesday night 160187957698).

SCALEXTRIC RARE SHADE BLUE ROTHMANS MARCH FORD 240 C129 £92 (Light blue Rothmans car but with painted airbox on Sunday night).

RARE VINTAGE SCALEXTRIC C/65 ALFA ROMEO 1933 BOXED £530.99 (Sunday morning 320187381048). ■



# The Great NSCC Tuning Experiment

By Dave Chang

## Part 3: Traction (tyres)

**S**o far we have prepared the test car (T Car) and experimented with motors, increasing its power so much that it is hard to drive. This month we are going to be working on traction, and hopefully get the T Car back to pole position.

Traction is about the grip and friction between the track and the tyres of the car. Traction affects how well the car can transfer the power of the motor to the track, how well the car can accelerate and decelerate. Grip also works laterally, sideways, and determines how well the car corners, whether the back end will follow the line of the road or whether it will slide out. Traction is a vital factor that determines how the car handles and performs.

### Cleaning tyres

One vital step before each race is to clean your tyres. Tyres work by having a high level of friction with the track, so that the energy applied to the wheels is used to move the car forwards instead of just spinning the wheels and the car staying still.

Because tyres are designed out of grippy substances, they can pick up dirt off the track very easily. Dirt has not been chosen for its grippy qualities, and so greatly reduces the friction between your tyre and the track. Cleaning this dirt off will return your tyres to their original condition and performance, and can yield a surprising performance and handling difference.

I have been cleaning the tyres before each test run to ensure consistent results. There are two main methods for this process, using tape or using petrol lighter fluid. If you are club racing, check with the club in case there are restrictions on the cleaning method.

I have been using the tape method, which requires a roll of 'gaffer'/'duct' tape. The method is very simple and quick – I fold back a couple of inches of tape on itself and roll the rear tyres of the car over the sticky side of the tape. Dirty tyres will leave a trail of dark muck, and I keep rolling until the wheels leave no marks, pulling back fresh tape if needed.

The alternative method involves squirting a few drops of petrol lighter fluid onto a Jaycloth, and wiping the dirt off with this. With both methods, be careful if your tyres have decals or printing on them, because either method may remove the detail. If using lighter fluid, remember it is flammable and use in a well ventilated area, and also be careful in case it reacts with the car's paintwork.

Grip is a function between the tyres and the track, so keeping the track clean is equally important. The best way to clean a track is to race on it a lot.

### Tyre truing

This is probably the most fundamental part of tuning that can be done to a slot car and can often make a tremendous difference to how the car performs and handles.

It is basically the process of sanding the tyres down to make sure that they are round and that from the front, they are flat across the profile of the tyre. Slot car tyres are small and mass produced in moulds, and once stretched over the hubs are rarely perfectly circular. It is vital that they are as perfectly circular as possible for your car to drive well.

To illustrate, imagine that your wheel is slightly oval, it has a raised lump on one side. When the car drives slowly, the corner of the car with this wheel will raise and lower. This is not



going to help the stability of the car, but the real problems occur when you drive quickly. When the wheel is spinning fast, the car is lifted up by the lump, but it does not have time to drop down before the lump has come round again. This effect can be seen quite clearly on a rolling road, with the back of the car spending most of the time floating with no rubber on the road. Whilst the car is in the air, the tyre cannot transfer power or offer lateral grip for cornering.

Making sure the profile is flat from the front is equally important, and generally is solved at the same time. Most hubs have a central ridge to hold the tyre in place, but usually this is either taller or shallower than the tyres need. This means that in most cases the tyres either bulge or sag in the middle, resulting in only 50% of the tyre making good contact with the track. If you sand off the bulge in the middle or ridges at the edges, you can double your contact patch and grip.

When you look at the Gallardo's tyres on the test plate, you can see that they are mainly making contact on the inner ridge. Light can be

seen under the central part of the tyre, and the tyre appears to be supported on the mould line on the outer ridge. The tyre needs some work.

Checking the Gallardo's wheels for roundness on the rolling road suggests that the tyres are already circular from stock. The back end seems stable with out any bounce or vibration, and there is no sign of the back end 'floating' as it would if the tyres were oval or lumpy.

To be thorough, the first task is to remove the tyre and true the hub. Here there is a slight sprue irregularity, but it is not raised much. On some cars, these and mould lines can be large enough to affect how the tyres sit, so they are best sanded flat.



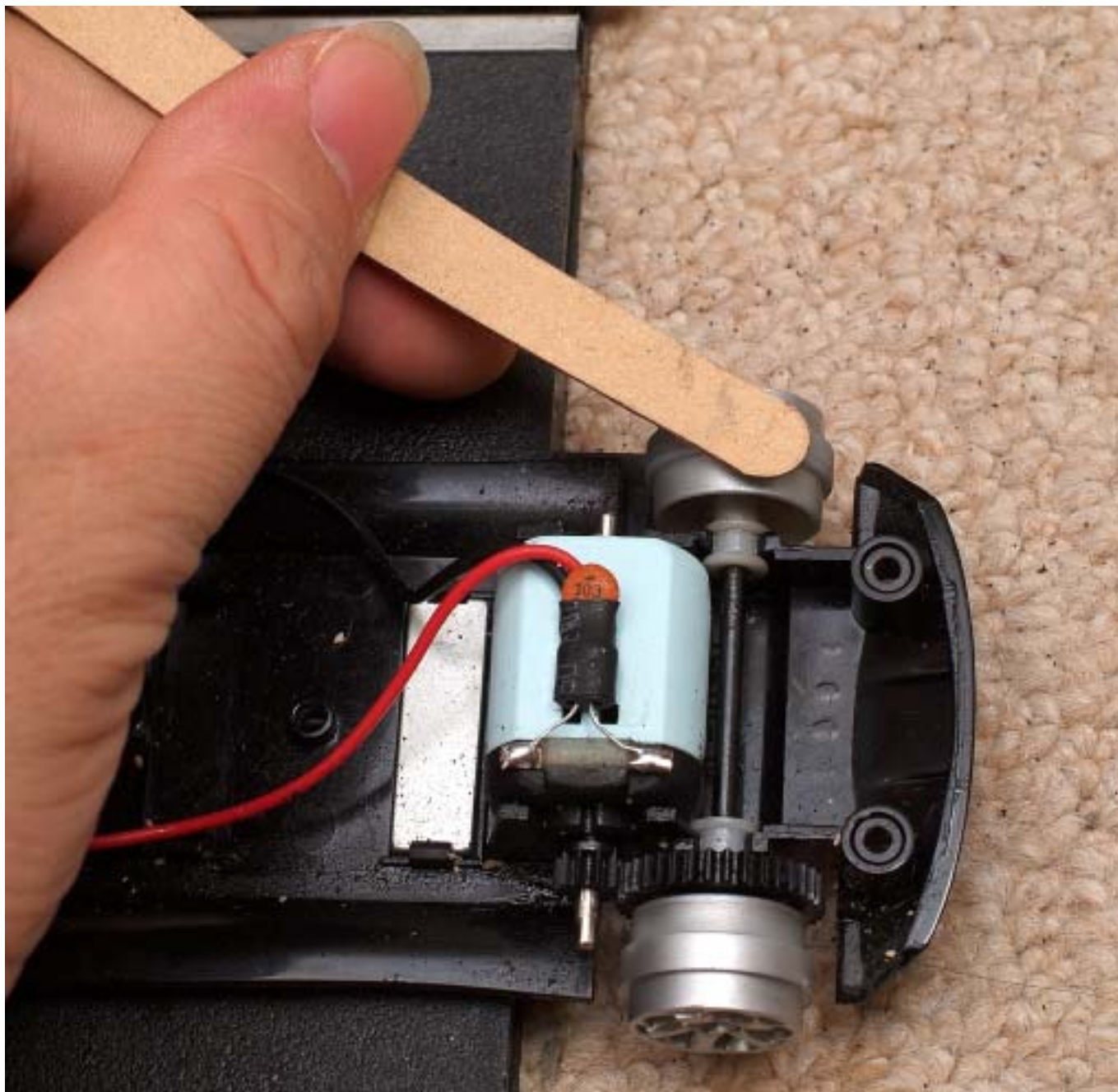
Tyre before truing - note how little rubber touches the track



Hub irregularity

Truing can be performed with dedicated tyre truing machines, where you remove the wheels or axles from the car which are then driven by a strong motor. These are great for accurately truing tyres, but as long as you are careful, you can achieve similar results without one. Most machines are not very suitable for the standard press-fit wheels that come with most slot cars.

⇒⇒

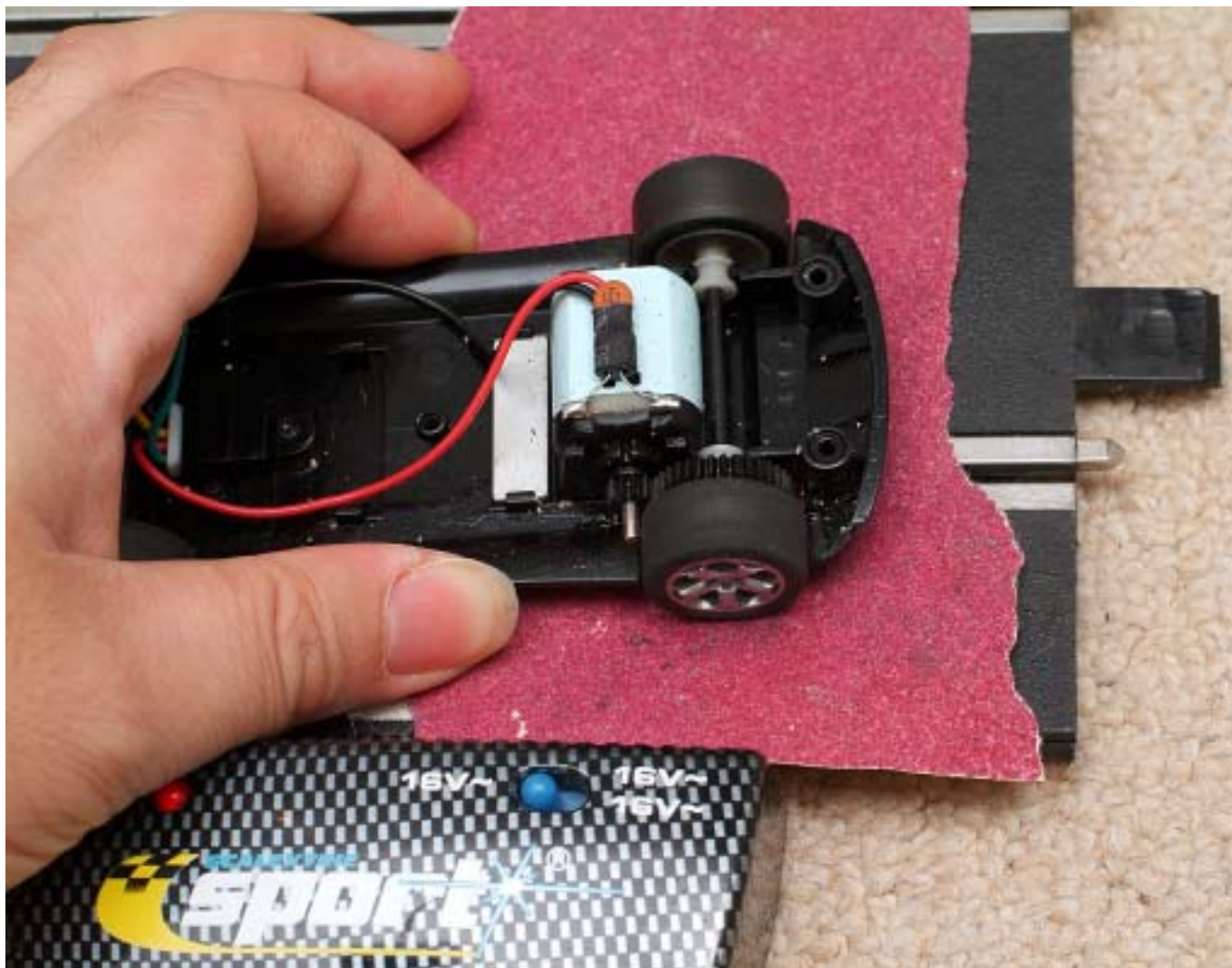


### Sanding the hub

I simply use a powerbase track piece which is not connected to a circuit. It is also easier to sort out the wheels with the body removed: you can see what you are doing, and the body does not get full of bits of sanded off plastic and rubber. To sand off mould lines and lumps from the hubs, I removed the rear tyres, positioned the rear of the car off the track with the guide in the slot and applied some throttle. Then I used a cardboard emery board (nail file) and brought it to the hub's ridge. The spinning hub sands itself against the board, with high lumps and ridges being removed. This usually takes a few seconds per wheel.

With the hubs sorted, I replaced the tyres and got a piece of 100 grit general purpose sand paper (people use between 60 and 200 grit, try some different sorts to see which suits your tyres or temperament best). The only difficult part of the process is having enough fingers and hands to hold everything at the same time. You can tape the sandpaper to the track to make it easier, but I usually manage without. I span the wheels up and lowered the rear of the car onto the sandpaper, whilst making sure I had good hold on the front to stop it driving away. Using mainly the weight of the car to apply even pressure on the wheels, I slid the back of the car from side to side a bit (only





Truing the tyres

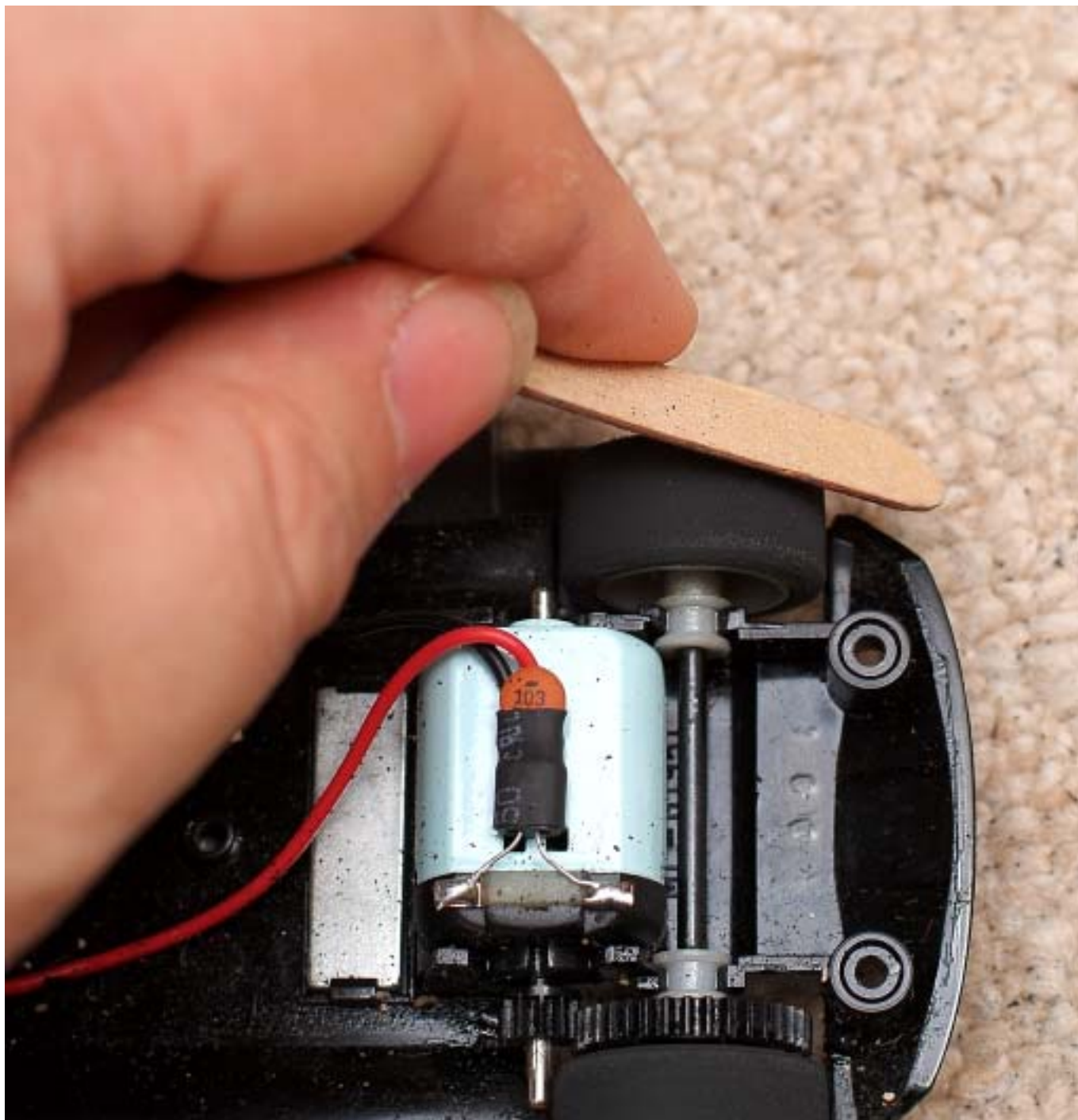
a centimetre or so) as the wheels span against the sandpaper. The ridges become sanded and scuffed first, and you can see the areas of trued tyre become wider as the process continues. If the tyres were not round, I would expect to feel the back of the car hopping a bit against the sandpaper until they were true.

I stopped every few seconds to check how things were going. I also checked the temperature of the motor and controller, which can get hot. Some of the electrical components – particularly the chokes in Carrera cars – can get extremely hot very quickly. Also be careful not to melt the rubber of the tyres. If this happens, your tyres end up coated in a layer that has less grip than the natural rubber. Allow things to cool if they get hot to avoid damage.⇒

Once you can see that the whole surface of



The finished job



### Profiling the tyres

the tyre has been sanded, the tyre is trued and the profile flat. I also like to bevel the edges of the tyres. Once the tyres are trued, they can have a very sharp corner at the edges as seen from the front. This edge can act like a pivot point when the car corners and the car is more likely to roll. If these edges are rounded, the car is more likely to slide, which can be controlled.

To round the edges, I raise the back of the car and apply throttle, and then use the cardboard emery board to take off the corner.

Finally, I cleaned the tyres and cleaned off all

the bits of rubber from the chassis, and relubricated the axle and motor. Time to see how the car performs on the track!

Unfortunately the high speed and balance of the T Car meant it was not registering laps properly on lane 1 – I would normally tune the car more to sort this out, but that would add another factor into the equation. Instead, I tested on lane 2, which is a trickier drive.

### Lap Times (lane 2):



<i>Std Car</i> (untrued)	6.83s
<i>T Car</i> trued tyres	6.51s

The T Car is back in the lead, but that is just part of the story. Just to get the sub 7s lap times, the Std Car was really on the edge and crashed a lot. It did not get on well with the cambers of the corners. The T Car had been hard to drive before, but now it was transformed. The T Car now handled beautifully and predictably, even on the difficult lane; it was a pleasure to drive again despite the greater power.

An added benefit of tyre truing is that it marginally lowers the car's ride height. This also lowers the car's centre of gravity, and brings the magnet closer to the rails, helping with cornering. I retested the T Car's gauss, which was now reading 255 instead of 242: a noticeable increase, and now greater than the Std Car's 253. The braking was definitely sharper now, down to the ride height. It should be noted that some people do grind their tyres down more than necessary to simply true them in order to get a lower centre of gravity and greater magnatraction.

I cannot say how much of the difference is due to the tyres and how much to magnetism, but the process has made an impressive difference to the car.

## Additives

In high performance brass chassied sponge tyred racing – which is beyond the scope of these articles and my experience – tyre additives are a necessity and a big part of preparing the car and the track. The tyres are often made sticky to the touch. Many racers have also experimented with ways of softening the tyres of conventional ready-to-race cars, using suntan lotion, tigers milk, WD40 or oil.

This procedure is frowned upon by some clubs, others stipulating that the tyre may be treated but must be dry – i.e. leave no residue on white paper.

If you have enough of the liquid you are

using as an additive, you can fill a small pot with it and dunk the tyres in. The rubber compounds are not very absorbent, so it will take between an hour and a few days for there to be a difference. Some combinations of lubricants and tyre can be much faster than others, and I have heard reports of tyres swelling so much that they become unusable, so monitor the process regularly if you take this approach.

My preferred method is to coat the tyres with a few drops of oil, let that soak in for a few hours, then recoat, and so on. Every so often I rotate the tyres because the surface oil collects at the lowest point.

After applying five coats over twenty four hours, I cleaned the surface with lighter fluid and trued the tyres again. The rubber felt grippier than before, but not sticky. Now time for testing:

### Lap Times (lane 2):

<i>Std Car</i> (untrued untreated)	7.05s
<i>T Car</i> treated trued tyres	6.18s

The track was a bit slower today, judging by the Std Car's times, but the T Car laps have dropped from 6.51s to 6.18s. The treated tyres yielded a remarkable leap in performance, with the car much more confident around corners. If rules allow, this is a valuable tweak.

## Better tyres

As with real cars, different slot tyre compounds and materials will affect grip and performance. Some companies offer their tyres in a range of softness. Softer tyres generally give better grip.

Beyond this, there are other materials for tyres. Silicon tyres are popular offering tremendous grip. Some silicon tyres do not true very well, but since they are quite soft and offer so much grip, the advantages may outweigh this issue. Silicon tyres can also pick up dirt readily, needing to be cleaned to return their grip. It has also been noted that racing with silicon tyres has an effect on the track where conventional tyres become slower than before. The most compelling theory for this is that normal tyres put



down a thin coating of rubber on the track which helps them grip. The silicon tyres are so sticky that they remove this coating from the track, making it too clean for normal tyres.

Also available are polyurethane tyres, most notably 'Ortmanns'. These can be trued like normal rubber, but offer a grip level similar to silicon. They do not pick up dirt quite as readily as silicon tyres either, although some people have found that they adversely affect the track for conventional tyres similar to silicon.

For this reason some clubs do not allow silicon or polyurethane tyres. If your club does allow these tyres, it would be a double advantage for you to use them too: the tyres are better, and normal rubber will suffer.

The standard tyres on the Gallardo are pretty soft and feel grippy to the touch, but I shall be trying some Scalextric Sport Plus tyres. These are said to have some silicon content, and have the shine of silicon tyres, but they true easily and it is claimed that they do not affect the track in the way silicon do.

A pair of Le Mans Sport Plus tyres were put on and trued. These are stretchier than rubber, and expand a lot under full throttle – so much so that I suspect in a club race they may not only lose you performance, they may come off the car altogether. These really need to be glued to the hubs with superglue, but I shall try without glue to start with. If you glue your tyres, remember to wait for the glue to fully dry before running the wheels, otherwise glue will fly off.

#### **Lap Times (lane 2):**

<i>Std Car</i>	7.08s
<i>T Car</i> Sport Plus trued tyres	6.01s

The Sport Plus tyres have again upped the performance. Cornering speed is faster and generally more predictable; I can use more of the car's power. Magnetism is down a little to 250 gauss. This is still more than the T Car's original reading, but close to the trued value.

## **Front tyres**

Most slot cars are rear-wheel driven. In a rear wheel 1:1 car, the front wheels provide steering and must have enough grip to guide the car. In a slot car, the steering is performed by the guide blade in the slot. It is generally agreed that in a rear wheel driven slot car, the last thing you want from the front wheels is traction or grip. They just add friction and will slow the car down.

Things are made even worse in cars like these Lamborghinis where the front wheels are fixed to a common front axle. When the car goes around a corner, the outside wheel must cover more distance than the inner wheel – yet they both turn together. One or both of the wheels must be slipping, which is wasting your car's energy and possibly destabilising the car.

One school of thought is that the front wheels should not even be there – that a slot car works best as a tripod – resting on the two rear drive wheels and on the guide. If the guide is supporting the front of the car, the braids will be pressed firmly against the rails making better electrical contact. Check your club rules before pursuing this approach. To achieve this set up, the simplest thing to do is simply remove the front tyres. If you don't like the look or rules stipulate the need for front tyres, you can purchase 'skinnies' or very thin tyres from specialist slot retailers. The other alternative is to grind down the front tyres using tyre truing techniques until they are thin enough not to reach the track.

Not everyone likes the tripod approach. Some feel these are slot *cars* and as such should be supported on all four wheels. Others feel that the tripod approach means that the cars are not as stable as cars supported at four corners, and do not handle as well. For this set up, the aim is to reduce the friction of the wheels so that they touch the track firmly but can easily slip.

Depending on the car, it may still be wise to fit skinnies, or thinner tyres than those that came with the car. Even if the tyres support the car, you want the guide as deep in the slot as possible, and the front as low as possible for a better centre of gravity.



A harder compound of rubber will have less grip, so if available this is a sensible choice. Where rules allow, a common technique to harden the surface of the stock tyres is to paint them with clear nail varnish. The shiny hard coat has very little friction and will let the wheels slip.

The other common method is to slip an o-ring around each front tyre. These are like small rubber bands with a circular cross section. When a car has these on the front tyres, the o-ring contacts the track instead of the tyre. The o-rings are much narrower than the wheel and tyre, so the contact patch and therefore friction is reduced.

### Lap Times(lane 2):

<i>T Car</i> standard front tyres	5.97s
<i>T Car</i> tripod: no front tyres	5.54s
<i>T Car</i> varnished front tyres	5.38s

The tripod arrangement has the least friction at the front and allows the car to sit as low as possible, and gave a major boost to the cornering and handling of the car. Some cars may become destabilised without front wheels, and liable to tipping over, but the Gallardo worked well with this set-up displaying how much the friction at the front end had been holding the car up. The car worked even better with varnished front wheels, indicating that the Gallardo benefits from the extra stability that the front tyres give.

## Conclusion

Increasing traction with trued tyres and different tyres has transformed the T Car from an unmanageable beast to a pleasure to race, and has had significant effects on the lap times. I would recommend always truing your tyres, the cars are much nicer to drive, and it is one modification which is normally allowed in box standard club racing.

If you are a speed demon, then you also need to consider additives or upgrade tyres. They do make a considerable difference and let you get a lot more out of your car.



Do not overlook the front wheels and tyres, work here also makes a considerable difference. Cumulatively, work on the tyres and traction has knocked a good second off the lap times and tamed a very high revving motor on a moderately twisty circuit.

Next month we will look at transmission and gearing to see whether we can get even more out of the car. If you can't wait, read more in 'The Slot Car Handbook' published by Crowood press. ■



- At-a-glance technique summaries
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- Details the tools needed and how to use them
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**H**igh performance is not a term one would normally associate with SCX slot cars, so when I happened upon a plea from our very own Gareth Jex to review such a item, I was more than a little intrigued – especially as the car on offer was none other than one of my favourite Le Mans Prototype (LMP) cars – the Audi R8, the latest offering in the SCX Pro range of slot cars.

## First Impressions

This offering from SCX into the ‘performance’ niche in the slot car racing market comes packaged in an attractive glossy cardboard box which gives little away as to the contents. These comprise of a clear (transparent) body shell of the Audi R8 LMP – a proven race winner in the Le Mans 24 hour annual event and American Le Mans Series races (ALMS) worldwide, - complete with driver or at least half a driver, plastic chassis with SCX Pro Speed motor attached, spare pick-up guide, length of braid, spare motor cradle, hexagonal wrench and brake assembly. The chassis already has alloy wheels attached front and rear together with a plastic 26 tooth crown gear and 10 tooth pinion. These are all held in place in a foam rubber



The attractive ‘boxed’ package that conceals the Audi R8 Glasswork and its associated spares

## SCX Audi Pro Glasswork Ref 50570

By Paul Leyshon

inner container and prevented from falling all over the carpet on opening by a transparent cellophane cover- quite a ‘professional’ appearance but one that most racers would probably do without if this is to be a pure racer and not just a pretty boxed ‘shelf queen’

Lifting the foam tray out of the box reveals a comprehensive ‘Driving and Maintenance Guide’ in no less than nine different languages, none of which included my local language ‘Black Country’! - Still ‘yo cor hav ev’rythin’. SCX TecniToys are therefore presuming that this latest offering in the Pro range will be a hit across Europe and most of the Western world if the booklet is anything to go by.

The guide gives general advice on- guess what? - driving and maintenance – but also goes into specifics appertaining to the setting up and racing of the Audi contained in the box. For those of us that sometimes need a reminder of just how to drive a scale automobile at speed around a track (I definitely include myself in this category) the booklet contains some reasonably useful material- albeit in a ‘loosely ‘translated form. The tips explore the bodywork, wheel assemblies, ‘dynamic braking’ (more of which later), transmission ratios, pick up guide, motor etc, etc. This is then followed by a couple of pages on how to drive a circuit and the pitfalls that many of us succumb to all too frequently when going for that extra quick lap. So all in all not a bad little booklet for those of you that may need a gentle reminder or those of you new to the hobby but wishing to avoid the embarrassing questions you feel you need to ask of the ‘hot shot’ in your local club who can make even Revell and Carrera cars seem competitive on race night.

So having read the booklet, (missing out seeing the film and buying the tee-shirt), we feast our eyes on the contents of the box. The transparent body, weighing in at an impressively





The contents – see thro' body shell, chassis with aluminium wheels attached, spare motor cradle and ancillaries.

svelte 16gms looks to my eye to be a reasonably accurate portrayal of the full size car – here I must digress - I have to admit that I am a particular fan of this type of sports car the Le Mans Prototype (LMP), which I have observed at close quarters at Le Mans, on several occasions come rain or shine (mostly rain). In my humble opinion these classes of sport prototypes bring to the fore what racing is all about – speed, aggression, aesthetic lines and pure noise, (before the advent of diesel power) giving the racing fan a real adrenalin rush at close quarters – these beasts cost megabucks and the drivers fortunate enough to be given a race seat are usually the best of the best - a certain DTM driver by the name of Tom Kristensen will vouch for that.

So given the racing pedigree of the real car how does this offering from SCX shape up?



Close up of dynamic braking cradle – to the rear of the crown gear which engages the device as the motor cradle moves backwards under deceleration

The kit chassis plus motor and wheels plus tyres etc weigh in at 60g which, for those astute mathematicians amongst the readers, gives a combined weight of 76gms. Comparing this to a similar car, in this case a Spirit Dallara racing version we find that the SCX Audi is actually some 6gms lighter, so it's no heavyweight. The motor cradle, of which there are two provided – one for long can, one for Mabuchi type motors, seems reasonably sturdy. The axle, crown gear and rear wheels are held in place on the motor cradle by spherical brass bearings and the whole unit is able to move back and forth in the chassis by means of three lugs that fit into cut-outs on the chassis ( a little like the ProSlot Porsche/Ferrari.) A small grub screw positioned above these slots allows one to reduce or even negate the amount of travel of the motor assembly. The spare motor cradle included in the box allows for the use of most aftermarket motor upgrades, so it all looks reasonably promising.

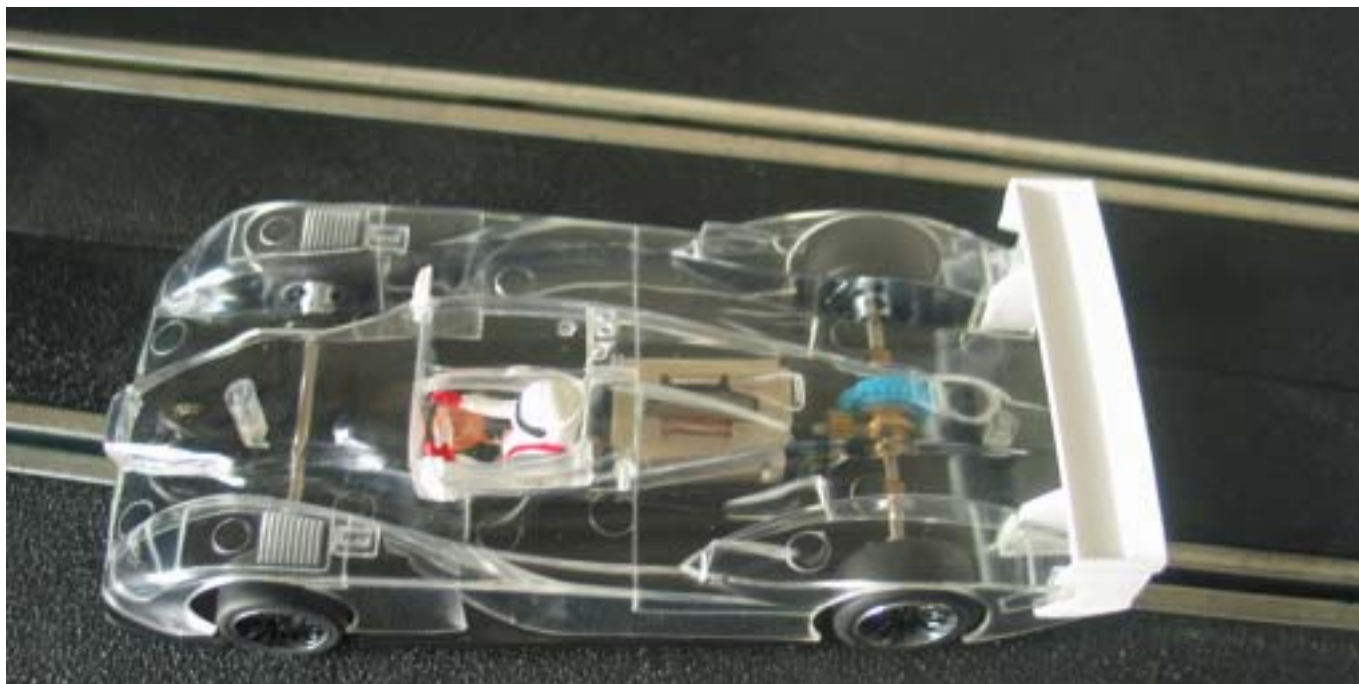
As mentioned earlier a feature of the kit is 'dynamic braking' – this consists of a small flexible quarter circle device with a retaining lug that fits onto the chassis directly behind the crown gear. It is held in place by a screw which allows lateral (forwards/backwards) movement of the device to be regulated. Thus if the motor cradle and attached crown gear are allowed to move freely backwards and forwards under deceleration/acceleration, then this 'dynamic brake' is allowed to come into effect- just how much so depends upon the positioning of the device relative to the crown gear – this according to SCX allows for greater braking force than the motor alone would provide.

The transmission ratio provided (26 tooth crown gear - 10 tooth pinion) gives greater speeds and higher torque on bends, again according to SCX but I am led to believe that they intend to produce a range of tuning up parts to supplement their Pro range, allowing the racer to chose particular gearing setups for a particular track.

The Pro series motor fitted has been re-designed internally – new windings and parts subject to wear are designed to last longer and ➡➡







**The assembled car – ready to race**

wear better- time will tell! No variables can be adjusted on the motor – the only thing possible is to attach it firmly to the chassis next to the pinion by means of a screw to prevent undue movement. As mentioned, the rear axle and wheels are held in place by the hemispherical brass bearings which click into place on the motor cradle. The aluminium wheels are held in place by means of the familiar grub screws whilst the front wheel assembly/axle is contained within two plastic extensions to the chassis. The amount of ‘free play’ can be reduced by means of grub screws located in the underside of the chassis and able to be screwed up into the axle to reduce/stop any up/down movement. The aluminium wheels themselves have plastic inserts which, however, bear little resemblance to those on the full size car. The front tyres/ wheels measure 16x9mm, the rears 18x9mm and are shod in what appears to be reasonably grippy, if rather narrow, slicks.

## **The Driving Experience**

So we have a lightweight GT with no paint/ decals on the shell to add extra weight with all the bells and whistles to make it a quick runner, perhaps even to match those cars that most serious racers include in their garage, namely the hugely successful and incredibly quick

Slot.It, NSR and Ninco Pro Race stable mates. Only one way to find out- a trip along to my local club track and one that many of you will know and perhaps some may have even raced upon - namely Wolverhampton, the home of the Wolves International Track –a four lane routed track and the newer Slot-fire three lane routed track, machined with Germanic precision affording a lovely smooth racing experience. The International track is used for the various events that our club hold throughout the year – Mac Pinches hosts his Early Birds extravaganza, Phil Insull invites us to compete in early GT/Le Mans endurance races and Saloon car classes and we hold a round of the ever popular Slot.It challenge –so these tracks are not for the faint hearted. First problem was that on the night I turned up to test the package, our juniors night, it seemed to be rather well attended and as well as the regular club racing, many juniors were taking the time to set up cars for the next round of the aforementioned Slot.It challenge.

Never mind, pack the pit box back up after noticing just how fast some of the Wolves juniors really are and I decide to try again later in the week. Friday is the club’s league night- all the serious racers (plus me) gear up for hotly contested heats in whatever racing category we

have decided, according to our race programme which is announced post Christmas and worked out for the entire 12 months' racing. Now those 'serious' racers reading this will realise that trying to prise some folks off a track to test some so called 'wacky racer' when there are points at stake is not an easy task – last minute tyre and motor changes plus trying to knock an extra 1/10 of a second from lap times is understandably of utter importance and who am I to interfere.

Biding my time and not to be put off, I gave the previously assembled Audi a quick oil using 3in1 (pinion, crown gear and axle bearings) and induced some tyre grip by means of a roll of duck tape. A few tentative laps first around the Slot-fire track proved quite surprising – the car was reasonably quiet (unusual for the SCX cars I had raced before) and showed a surprising amount of grip despite the aforementioned narrowness of the rear tyres, not glued and trued in any way and, as I mentioned, only given a quick rub over the duck tape. After about 20 laps I felt reasonably 'in the groove' and gave the car another liberal dose of oil, cleaned the rear tyres again and set off again. Using the computer assisted race management system I put in 30 laps and managed a best time of 8.162 seconds. During this time I wasn't aware that this 'see-through', racer wasn't any more difficult to follow on track than a 'solid' car. To compare like with like I then gave my Spirit Dallara lightweight package a try- again oiling the running gears/bearings and cleaning the rear tyres. I quickly completed another 30 laps and found that the best time was 8.110 seconds – this achieved with a Scale Auto 25.000 rpm motor fitted. So, on first impressions the Audi lap times weren't too shabby- skinny tyres (noticeably narrower than those on the back of the Dallara, standard motor etc. etc).

I had also employed the use of the dynamic braking effect – or so I thought - but driving the Audi around I didn't really notice much of an enhanced driving style, it didn't noticeably brake quicker or later into a corner than when I later tried to repeat the times with the brake effect not in situ (at the rear limit of its travel in relation to the crown-gear).

Noticing a gap in proceedings on the International track again, I went for the same set up as before- oil, tyre clean and dynamic breaking in situ- again after about 30 laps I managed to squeeze my lap time down to 8.8 seconds (the Wolves International track being somewhat longer in length than the Slot-fire). The Dallara was running around 8.2 seconds which many of you will know from your own experience on the track isn't mighty quick but steady. I cheekily asked one of our 'young guns' Andy Tyer to see what he could manage and he soon had the Audi lapping around the 7.9 second mark – embarrassing or what? I put it down to my age and failing eyesight – so what's he doing reviewing an out and out racer I hear you say! After a few minor adjustments I still failed to achieve the time set by Andy and so retired gracefully from the track, kicked the guide dog and collected my white stick on the way out!

## What does it all mean?

A good question I hear you say- especially for those of you who have managed to get this far without falling asleep, dying of boredom or deciding that I'm a failed boy-racer trying to regain his youth. If you were spending £39 on a pocket rocket would you be sufficiently impressed to buy this SCX high performance car, say over a Slot.It McLaren GT1 or Nissan 390 – no sane racer would forgo the lure of the latter over a car which costs 10% more at least (depending on which dealer you can negotiate a discount with) and then probably having to spend more money on replacing the motor for the latest super fast NSR Shark, Slot.It or Scale Auto and then to induce some grip splash out on some fatter rims and rubber to leave sizeable skid marks (rubber- not the underpants variety) on the track. Then of course the overriding decision to be made would be is it worth the extra money just to be able to barely see the Audi zooming around the track before deciding that you need to paint it – usually in a favourite scheme that no manufacturer has come up with. That is until you spend a great amount of hours perfecting the finish, lovingly adorning it with ➡➡



decals only to read that Fly, Ninco, Scalextric and Uncle Tom Slot Car Cobbley and all are bringing out the very same scheme. Yes, the car can be made competitive but why would you buy one when the market place is awash with offerings from other manufacturers. It is true that even Slot.It cars on race day bear little or no resemblance to the car initially purchased. Slot.It parts could and will fit into the SCX package so take your pick.

You see I still believe that despite my misgivings about this offering from SCX they produce some very fine cars, notably Rally, and the detail and finish on most of the range is improving with each new model and those are the cars I have grown up with and love to race. They were noisy to start with, had incredibly out of true grooved rubber shod wheels but once run in were a great deal of fun to race and gave some really quite close and exciting races on Scalextric type tracks – but only against similar SCX cars. In those days, the more astute were not slow to fit the Pro Turbo motors that gave the extra ‘humph’ and to true wheels and tyres to improve grip. I believe that SCX are trying to break into an extremely competitive market with several well established pure racing brands already firm favourites with many diehard racers. I don’t think there are sufficient club racers out there prepared to spend a not inconsiderable amount of money on this kit, and then some more, purely to be on par with the likes of the competition.

We also have other new manufacturers coming into the market, such as Avant Slot and Sloter whose products are comparable and faster without the cost of additional accessories. Then we have that clear body shell – could you paint in your own particular scheme from the inside out aka the Lexan body type of racer – probably, but very fiddly to do and is it worth the effort? To the serious racer and enthusiast I don’t see that it holds any attraction. The ‘dynamic’ braking effect, perceived by SCX to be a strong selling point for the club and competition racer is of little benefit, since most racers prefer to utilize a controller that regulates braking,

acceleration and speed in measured amounts, that can be adjusted mid-race if necessary – something that you just cannot do with the inbuilt, so called, dynamic braking set-up. To sum up I must applaud SCX for entering into the spirit of competition in launching the range (of which the Citroën Xsara and Audi R8 painted body versions were the first) but I feel that unless they intend to produce cars that no other manufacturer is planning to produce, then they will have serious problems convincing the slot racer to buy them. I have no doubt that there are racers out there who may be reading this review who will disagree with my judgements or think it too harsh – I can only convey to the reader my honest opinion, for what it’s worth. I would be interested to hear from anyone that is able to make this review car as quick in a race as say a Slot.It Nissan or NSR Mosler without scrapping the majority of components and starting again. ■