

JOHN VARLEY reviews this 1/10 scale saloon bodied racer from Marui

Marui Melling TH

A superb paint job really sets off the lines of this racing saloon.



When is a Marui 'Ninja' not a 'Ninja'? answer, when it is a 'Melling Ford Thunderbird'.

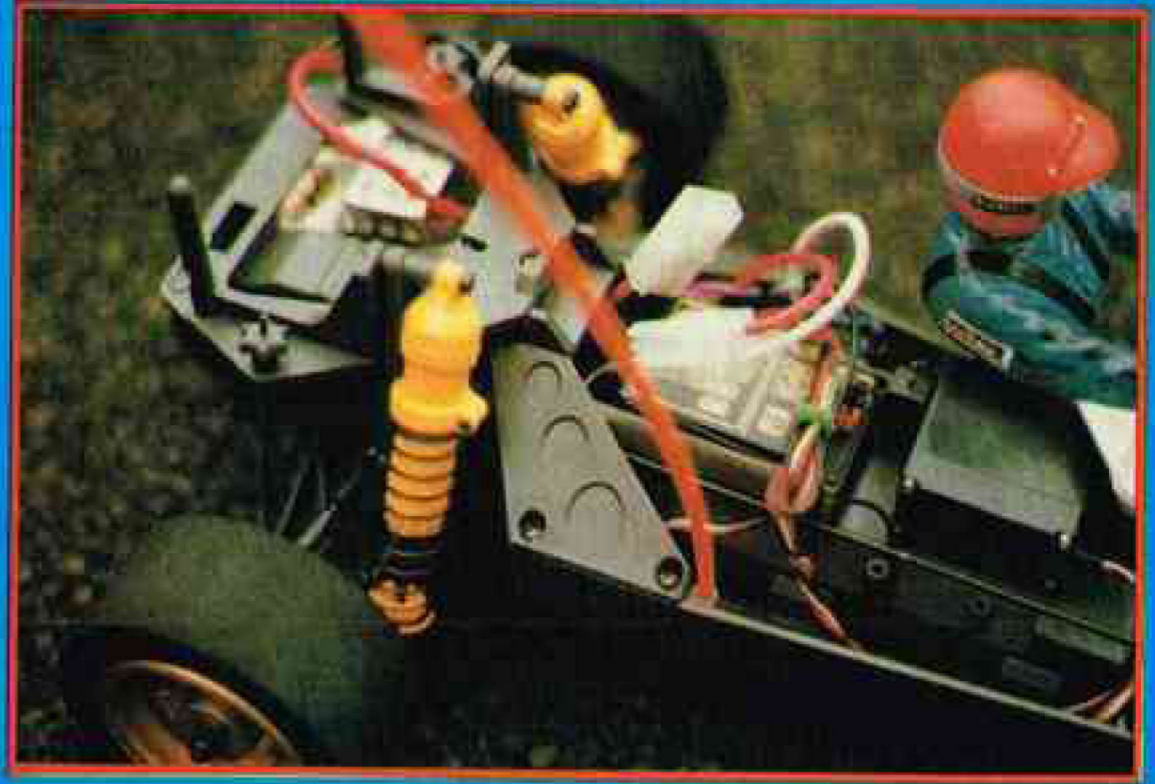
Why so one may ask? In my opinion it is a very neat job of revitalising an existing kit without the high cost of re-tooling involved with bringing out a completely new design of car.

What is pleasing, is that Marui have decided that 1/10th scale racing cars do not all originate from full scale desert racers, the like of which most Europeans have never seen, with the exception of the home built Volkswagen based kit cars.

In the USA, the range of racing for 1/10th scale cars far exceeds that catered for in the

A compact monocoque holds all of the Thunderbird together giving a finished package that is easy to work on and strong in use.





Above and left, clearly shown in these photos are the suspension ride height adjustment system. Left the Thunderbird comes complete with two sets of tyres, on and off road.



THUNDERBIRD

UK. This Melling Thunderbird kit is representative of America's Stock Car style of racing. Merely a "silhouette" of the car you will see in the showroom, having all of the internals removed, and a very worked on engine block allowing average speeds in excess of 200 mph on America's banked oval tracks.

They have therefore taken that style of

racing and brought it down to 1/10th scale on dirt or tarmac oval tracks, with the choice of tyre and suspension setting coupled with the fully enveloping scale lexan body.

Personally speaking the very charm of this kit is generated by the high quality driver figure, excellently scaled Ford body, just ready for a custom paint job, and the realistic high quality set of decals covering

all sponsors products included on America's Bill Elliot's full size car.

With those few opening comments behind us, let's look at what this kit offers the potential buyer.

Marui have boxed clever by continuing to offer this kit with full adaptability, from flat circuit use, to off-road use by supplying a choice of sponge and rubber tyres, with

Imagine eight of these around a tarmac circuit, now that would be worth seeing.



simple chassis ride height features.

The car can be run indoors on carpet by using the foam tyre supplied, or by adapting to any of the 1/4th range of foam tyre on the market.

Moving outdoors on to tarmac circuits, popular with some clubs in the winter months, when the off-road areas are water-logged, the car can be left in this same guise and raced very successfully.

Come the summer, when off-road realises its popularity, the car has a change of wheel and tyre to the rubber spiked supplied, the ride height is altered dramatically to clear the new tyre, and you now have an off road racer.

The Melling Thunderbird car comes in ready to assemble kit form and builds into a full independent suspension, four wheel drive, racing scale car.

The front and rear drives through bevel differentials, both of moulded plastic and diecast alloy construction, both neatly housed in moulded plastic centrally split housings. All internal and output shafts running in greased nylon bushings, which would be best replaced by ballraces for long term racing use.

The four-wheel drive is achieved simply by connecting the front and rear drive housing with a pre-formed spring steel shaft, neatly held in place to each differential output shaft, with a nylon shroud around each shaft.

The chassis monocoque is a one-piece affair, very narrow in design but incorporating facilities for all the necessary equipment, comprising steering servo, throttle servo, the siting of your receiver and its aerial, and finally Marui's very small and neat fully enclosed proportional speed controller.

Operated by push-pull linkage from the servo it offers effective slow speeds with manageable mid range speeds up to full speed, without any noticeable 'jumps', and a single full speed reverse option.

Further mouldings are supplied in order to marry the assembled gearbox and differential housings on to the main chassis. Front and rear housings supports are supplied, along with suspension/wishbone mounts and body/suspension mounts.

None of these mouldings when in situ distract from the car's narrow design, a fact which is brought about by the design incorporating the main battery pack in its own compartment longitudinally inside the main chassis moulding. Access to the batteries is via a snap on cover in the base of the chassis.

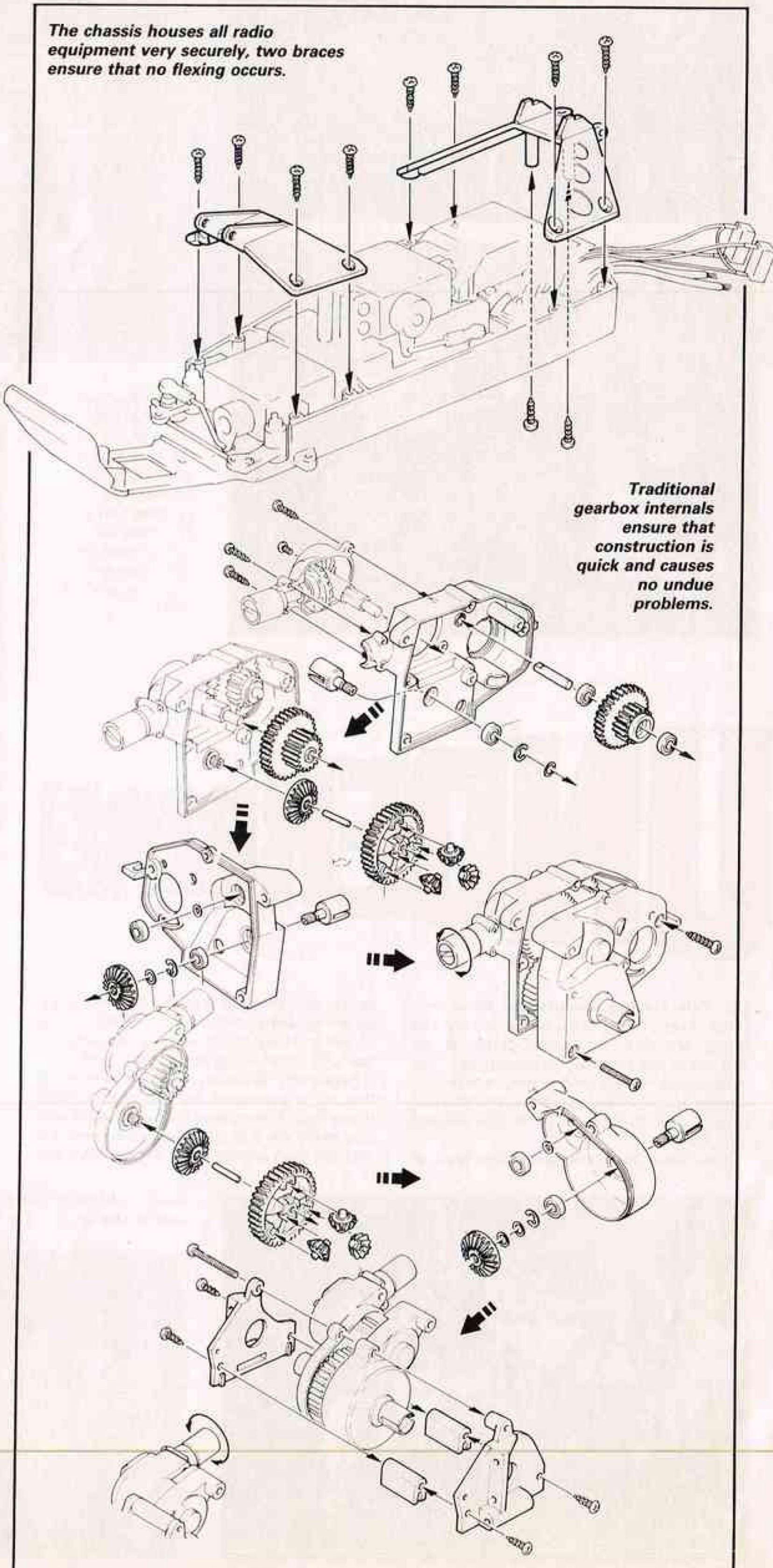
The fully independent suspension is by lower wishbone with adjustable upper links. Castor on the front is preset at what would appear to be somewhere between 12°-15°. The adjustable upper links all round, offering changes to camber to suit different types of terrain the car can be raced on.

Strangely though, upon assembly the rear wheels showed a tendency to slightly 'toe-out', the reverse of this however would be more in keeping with aiding the stability of the car in a straight line at speed. A very small point to concern most people however.

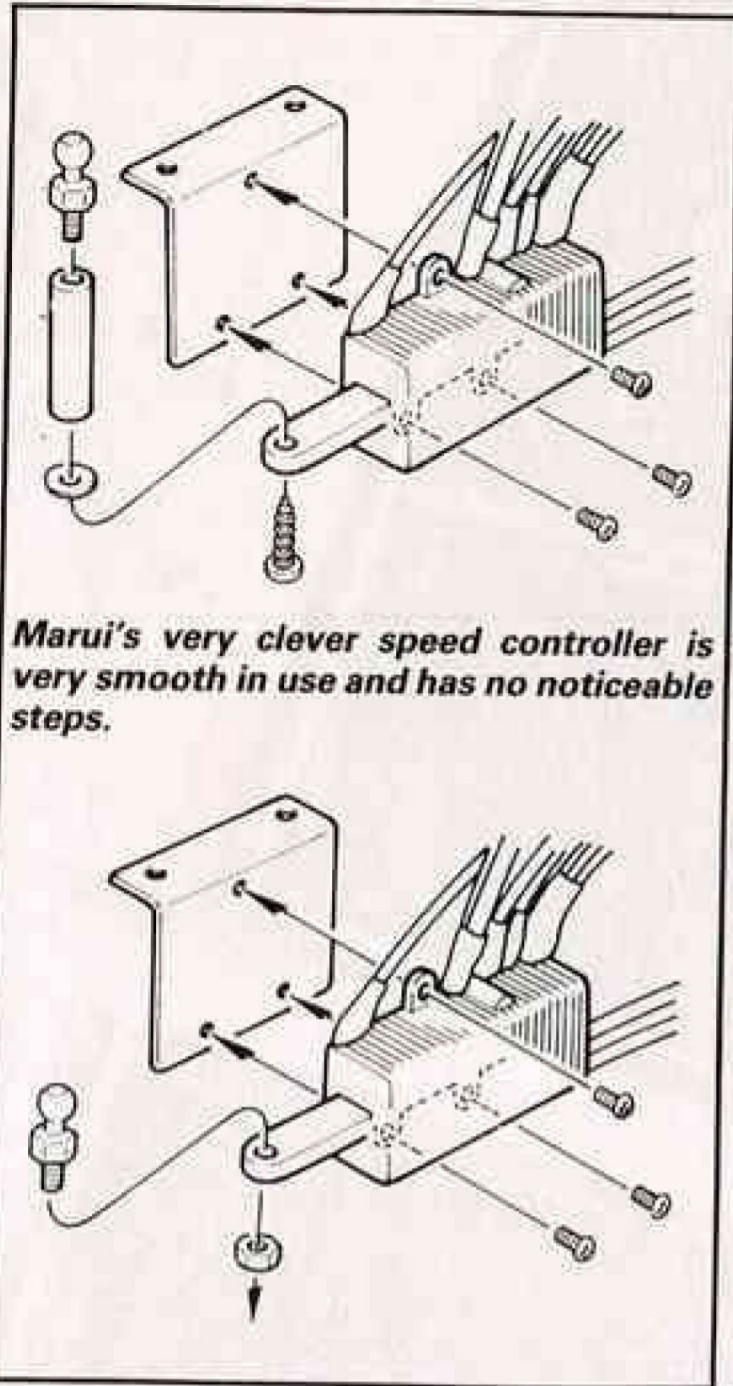
The lower wishbones have provisions for the adjustment of the lower pivot on the shock absorbers, another essential when setting the car for the requirements of off road racing.

Shock absorbers are nylon moulded,

The chassis houses all radio equipment very securely, two braces ensure that no flexing occurs.



Traditional gearbox internals ensure that construction is quick and causes no undue problems.



Marui's very clever speed controller is very smooth in use and has no noticeable steps.

front tyres, leaving the outer half untreated. Do this well in advance of your race in order for the additive to soak in to a suitable depth, and wipe off all excess before putting your car down to race.

If done correctly, the Mabuchi RS540 motor supplied with the kit, will propel this lightweight kit at a more than acceptable speed (our car weighs in at 3lb.5ozs) with all the grip and handling you require.

Outdoor tarmac racing requires little change to the set up. Slightly vary the ride height and damper spring tension in order to account for the less than perfect surfaces encountered.

Tyres can be left as they are, or have additives applied, if your club allows it.

We haven't as yet tried the car off road, but the Ninja car that it is derived from, has proved equally at home in such surroundings. The only changes you require would be substantial raising of the ride height, and the raising of the body to clear the spiked off road tyres. Soften up the suspension, and experiment with various damper oils and the pistons supplied with the kit.

Imported by Amerang. Available from all leading model shops. Say you read about it in Radio Race Car magazine.

supplied with twin 'O' ring seals in their base for easy replacement when worn and a choice of two pistons, a single and twin port for that variance of damping effect.

Damper oil is supplied, sufficient to fill four units. Oil of course can be varied by the user, depending upon the type of terrain and time of year (hot or cold). The screw-on nylon top to the damper is supplied with an O-ring seal to prevent any leakage, and finalises a very neat workmanlike assembly.

The dampers appear very efficient and would not be out of place if used on more exotic racing machinery. Just think how cheap they can be, and how much weight they can save you, and of course we shouldn't fail to mention that they are supplied with fully adjustable coil springs.

At this stage, there is little more to do in order to complete the kit. Assemble the steering track rod set, 3mm threaded studs with nylon rose joints. Link up the steering servo to the assembly, but be careful to note if the centre wire linkage between the track rods does not foul on the rose joints, thus restricting the turning circle of the car. A little packing in the form of 3mm washers to lift the rose joints clear of the wire will do the job for you.

Choose your wheel and tyre for the desired racing, adjust the front and rear ride height adjuster rods, paint the body, add on the kit decals, and you have yourself an extremely well scaled realistic, eye catching cat.

So far we have tried the car indoors on carpet, where you really can't go far wrong, as long as you adjust everything to drive in a straight line when desired. Most problems for beginners are centered around getting the car to drive 'straight' under the application of full power.

Indoor racing will, if on carpet, require the car to be set up as low as possible, without the tyre fouling in the wheel arch of the body. We adjusted the ride height until approx. 5-6mm of thread protruded at front and rear. We stiffened the spring tension on the dampers until approximately 10mm of damper body showed above the adjusting collar.

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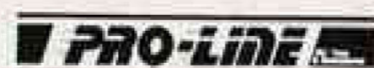
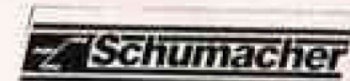


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