

The BoLINK 'Bandito' is the latest in a long line of one-twelfth electric circuit racers from this well known American company, the previous effort being the 'Renegade' which was reviewed in RRC not so long ago. Very few parts are common between the two cars, the most obvious one being the logo of a Mexican gunslinger on the box, instructions and sticker sheet! Those of us with a cynical frame of mind will soon conclude that 'Bandito' was the name chosen for the new car to use up the old stickers...

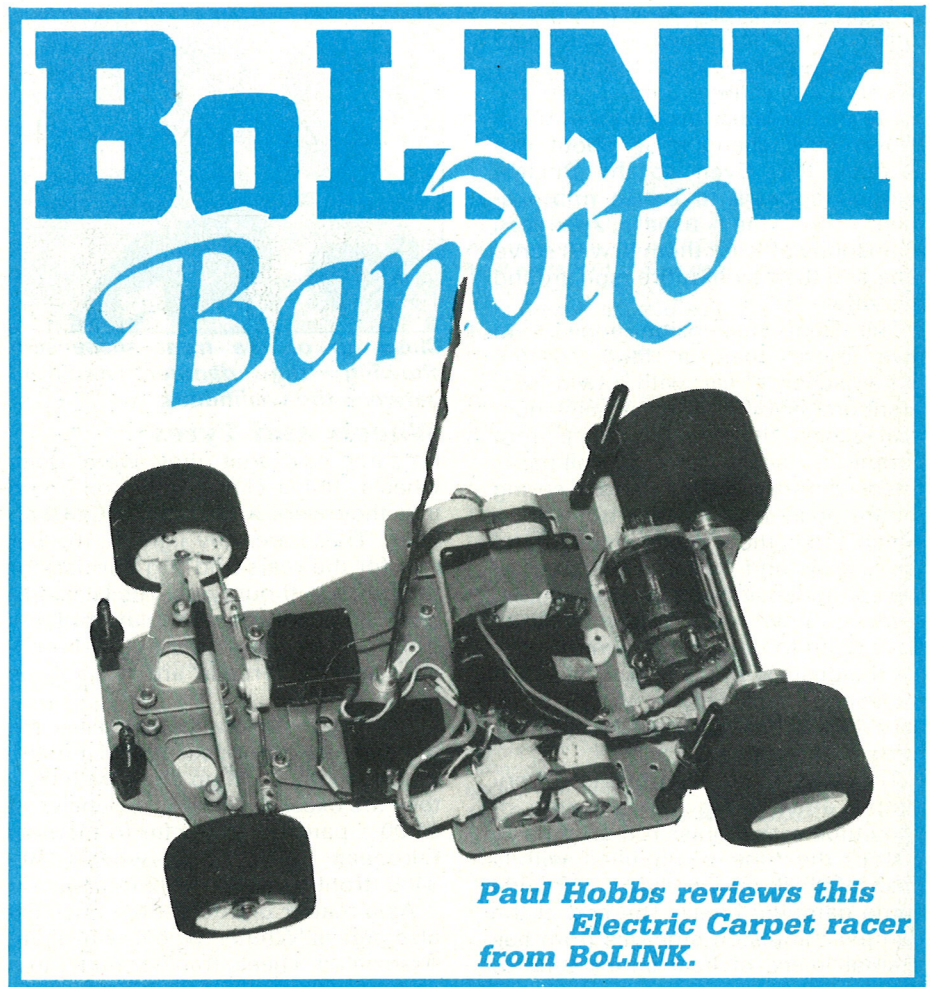
Presentation

A large cardboard box adorned with pictures of completed cars and multinational text welcoming the buyer to the world of electric model car racing (and of course congratulating the purchaser on his good taste for choosing a BoLINK car) contained all the parts needed to construct the kit, separately bagged into logical assembly groups. An unpainted body, a version of the popular Schkee, was also provided as was a standard 05 motor.

The usual comprehensive instruction booklet was conspicuous by its absence, instead a handwritten sequence of assembly was provided, plus an exploded diagram and a sheet of hints and tips. As explained in the notes a full instruction was not ready at the time the kit was despatched, but in fact the information in the kit was quite adequate. Also among the paperwork in the box was an invitation to find out more about R.O.A.R. (the American equivalent of our own B.R.C.A.) — an excellent idea that should be taken up by National bodies everywhere to promote the sport.

Building the Chassis

The first impression gained from the glass fibre parts is the size of the chassis and radio plate, but in fact there is very little excess material in the chas-



Paul Hobbs reviews this Electric Carpet racer from BoLINK.

sis and any surplus in the radio plate can be removed by the purchaser once the radio layout has been decided (although in point of fact effort expended on glass fibre components is largely wasted as they are not that heavy to start with).

The design of the chassis and radio plate is probably the most unusual aspect of the kit — the radio plate is mounted on six very short spacers which means that all the radio gear is

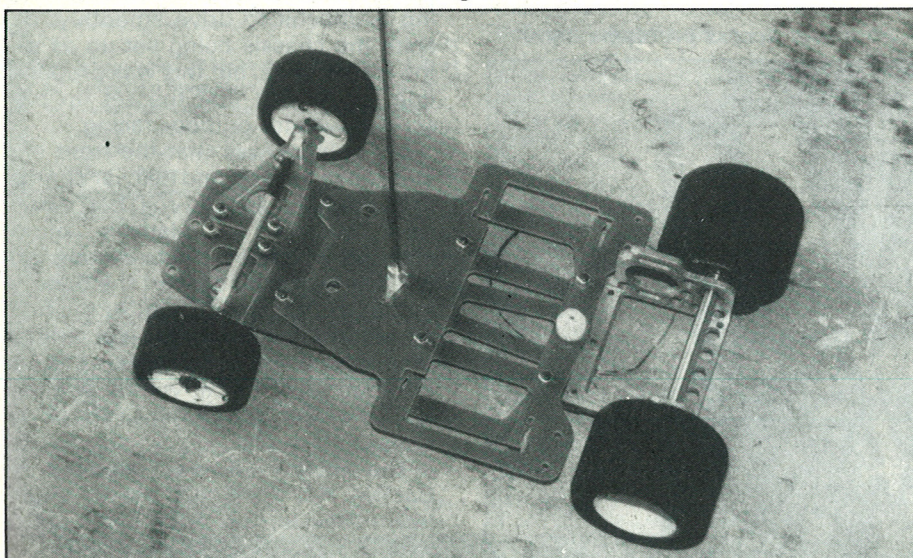
mounted on top of it. The kit supplied was the stick nica version (a 'saddle' pack version is available as well) and in both cases the batteries sit in a hole in the radio plate which holds them just off the chassis plate.

The rear pod is a one piece aluminium affair, shot through with lightening holes and attached to the chassis by three screws. This is a great improvement on the Associated blocks supplied with the 'Renegade' and it is difficult to see how aluminium blocks could have been made any lighter. In addition to all the lightening holes two small holes are provided for wing tubes at the back of the pod. No means of ride height adjustment is allowed for, perhaps not surprising in view of the rather large minimum tyre size called for by the American rules, but surely they do not enforce these at every single meeting?

Provision is of course made for normal size ball race bearings all round, but phosphor bronze bushes are supplied to keep the cost of the kit down for beginners.

The radio plate/chassis layout, whilst being relatively unconventional, does have some real benefits such as the totally unrestricted access to the motor especially as the rear damper is a grommet and nut arrangement on the radio plate. The battery pack is described as 'quick

An overall view of the assembled rolling chassis.

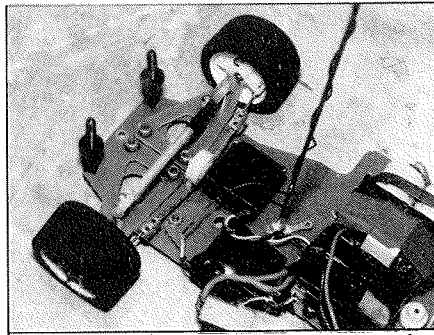


change' as sections of rubber inner tube hold the pack down into the hole in the radio plate — but if BoLINK think this is quick change they should see some of the latest brainwaves which allows pack changing in about five seconds flat! Even so the BoLINK method appears to be an improvement on the usual American philosophy of 'stick them in with servo tape and then wrap more tape around the whole lot'.

The front suspension appears to owe more than a little to the Schumacher 'C' car, with a twin front wishbone layout that is virtually identical except that a monoshock front damper is used and no anti-roll bar is fitted. Unfortunately the front spring mount posts have circlips both ends, which spoils the smooth underside of the chassis and makes adjustment of the spring tensions extremely troublesome — how much better it would have been to use countersunk screws for the posts with nyloc nuts to adjust the springs especially as all the necessary bits are already used in other parts of the chassis.

The monoshock damper is a very simple affair being just a length of alloy tube with a brass rod acting as a piston, the tube being filled with a dash of thick silicon fluid to provide some damping effect. The end of the damper the piston emerges from has a small piece of heat shrink tube to keep out some of the dust, but it is not sealed in the manner of a buggy unit.

The suspension initially proved rather stiff as the wishbones rubbed on the spring mounting posts, but a quick bit of wiggling the parts around soon freed them off. The actual springs themselves turned out to be a single spring chopped in half, the ends of which had a tendency to work their way into the slots in the wishbones provided to allow the suspension to move freely. I used washers at the base of the springs to prevent this from happening as it made setting the spring tensions difficult.



Close up of the front suspension showing the damper mounted between the wishbones.

Wheels and Tyres

I nearly said that they were Delta wheels, but a closer look confirmed that they were in fact white Carlsson hubs. These are very light at 16g per pair for the rears and 10g per pair for the fronts without tyres. The kit examples came with BoLINK blut dot tyres trued and glued on, although alternatives such as 'Greens' are available as well.

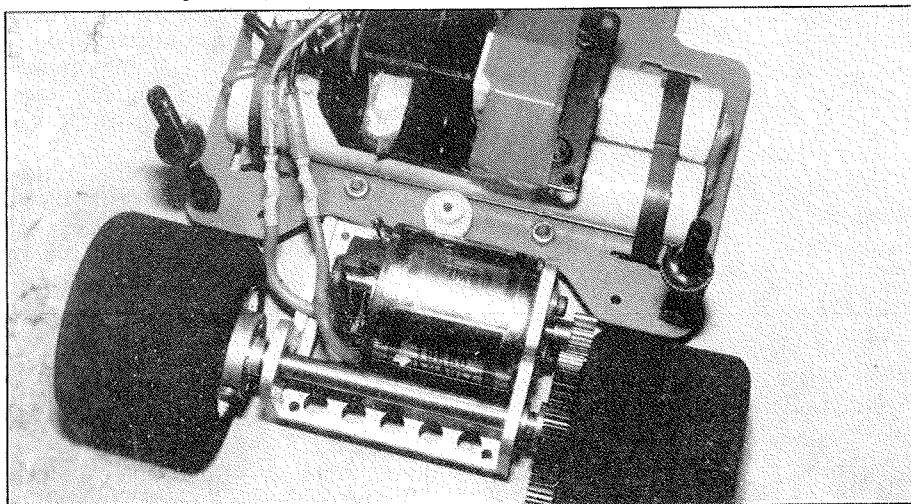
The catalogue states that these are the lightest, strongest wheel on the market today — I'll go along with that, they are excellent if fairly expensive at \$4.00 a pair. BoLINK refer to them as European Style 'Carro' wheels, BL-3409 (fronts) and BL-3482 (rears).

As a matter of interest the price list also details 'Whiffle' wheels which are Associated wheels transformed into a sort of delicate plastic lace to save weight (at \$5.95 for fronts and \$6.95 for rears!).

Differential

Oh dear — another mega-heavyweight steel axled Schumacher diff. They must be included in the kit for completeness, but I cannot imagine any serious racer would use it as it stands. Even the spur gear supplied is of the very old type where the balls are not retained by a snap fit, so it's back to the good old days of 1980 with little steel ball bearings rolling all over the floor every time you change gear ratio — what a pain.

A view of the lightweight alloy rear pod — no motor access problems here.



Speed Controller

A forward-only short stroke resistor was included in the kit, together with all the necessary mounting hardware and lengths of wire, but being a dyed-in-the-wool electronic controller fan these were left in the packet.

Radio Installation

The usual chassis layout made it difficult to mount a Demon 2c electronic controller in the normal places as most of the radio plate area is spoken for by the batteries and the roll over aerial mount — in the end it was lashed to the top of the battery pack. The chosen steering servo was a miniature Futaba FPS-133 which caused some problems as it was too small to be stuck directly to the radio plate and a small platform was needed to raise it up. Normal sized servos should be no problem, but it is essential that the trackrods are as close to the level of the wishbones as possible otherwise it is bump steer with a vengeance.

Bodyshell

BoLINK really made their name with bodies, and the kit example shows that they are still among the best manufacturers in the business — it was a Schkee sharply moulded out of crystal clear tough material.

As it had windows to be masked off I purchased some 'Frisk Film' from an art shop which is especially designed for spray masking, being a thin transparent film with a very low tack adhesive coating. Jobs like these are made so much easier by using the correct tools and materials.

Track Testing

With the kit tyres well coated with additives for carpet racing the Bandito proved to be a match for most other cars on my local club tracks, managing good lap times straight way, but it was obvious that things could have been better. Using a modified motor there was initially a lot of tramping going on when cornering hard, making it difficult to drive smoothly, despite the chassis being set up as per the instructions, but this was probably due to the fact that the set up prescribed was for outdoor racing.

My opinion was that the front end was much too soft and heavier springs and possibly an anti-roll bar would help matters — relatively minor changes which the astute among you will realise would convert the Bandito into a Schumacher 'C' car. At the time of writing further front end adjustments were still pending, but there is no doubt that the car will be up there with the best of them once these are made.

The review kit was supplied by BoLINK R/C Cars, 420 Hosea Road, Lawrenceville, GA. 30245-4695 (Price \$180.00).