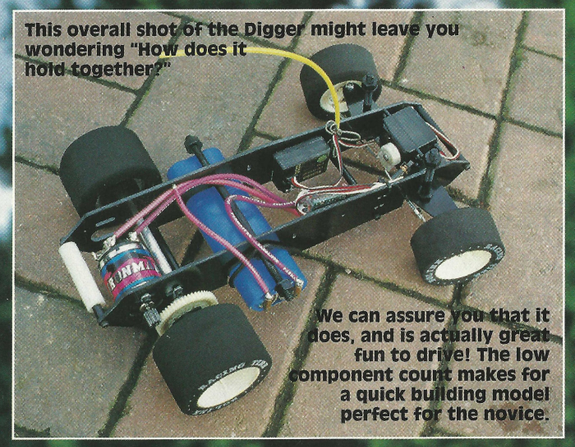
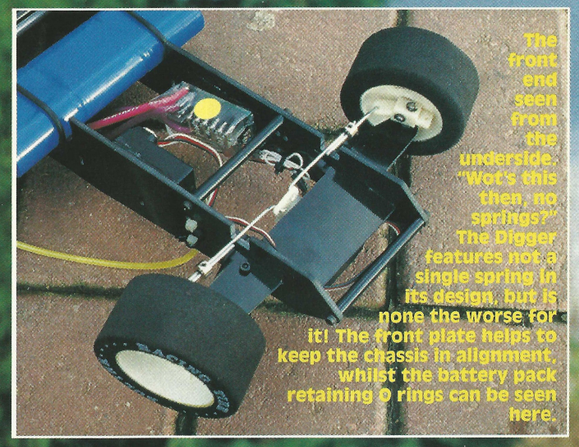


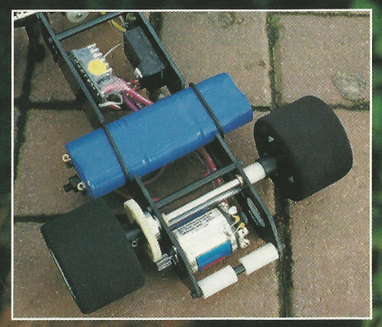
This overall shot of the Digger might leave you wondering "How does it hold together?"

We can assure you that it does, and is actually great fun to drive! The low component count makes for a quick building model perfect for the novice.

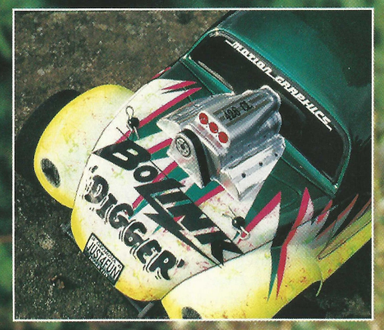


The front end seen from the underside. "Wot's this then, no springs?" The Digger features not a single spring in its design, but is none the worse for it! The front plate helps to keep the chassis in alignment, whilst the battery pack retaining O rings can be seen here.

BOLINK'S DIGGER



RRC reviews a very unusual entry level kit from the USA, the Bolink Digger. We are certain that you've never seen anything like this before!



The V8 lump sticking out of the bonnet (boot?) boldly advertises its 426 cu in capacity on its chromed rocker covers.

The majority of electric model car kits usually follow a set pattern in their design principles; buggies have a single or twin plate chassis with bulkheads front and rear, on which the suspension arms mount, whilst 1/12 and 1/10 circuit cars usually have all the running gear mounted to a flat chassis plate or 'pan' for simplicity. This little gem from Bolink is of the twin plate design, but in the Digger's case the plates are vertical rather than horizontal!

Bob Rule from Bolink produced the original 1/10 Bigger Digger way back in the early 'Eighties, and for a while it ruled the British Off Road racing scene, thanks to its light weight and simplicity in comparison with the early Japanese Off Road kits. The Bigger Digger featured two rocking pods at the front and rear to give an element of 'suspension action', although it retained a solid rear axle. The Digger goes one stage further on from its predecessor in the search for simplicity - It doesn't have any suspension at all, or even a differential! In fact, this really basic approach actually works very well, because thanks to the simple design it is cheap to produce and very reasonable to buy, in other words the ideal beginner's car, especially if all that is going to be asked of it is to charge around the school playground or corner of the local Superstore car park (when it's empty that is!).

What's in the box?

Very little actually! As is the usual practice these days, all of the components, except for the black 3mm thick GRP chassis plates, are neatly packed in labelled, heat sealed plastic bags, each bag containing the items required for a particular stage of the kits construction. The chopped Beetle lexan bodyshell is supplied ready sprayed in a brilliant fluorescent (orange in our case) scheme, although the shell used for this review was actually painted by Richard Muise of Motion Graphics, one of the USA's top airbrush artists.

Building The Digger

The actual construction of the car took only just over an hour, which in anybody's book can't be at all bad! It is ultra simple: Firstly the oilite bushes for the rear axle are pressed into the GRP side plates, then the chassis plate spacer tubes, one aluminium and five plastic, are mounted to one of the plates with cap head screws. The front axle support plate is then slotted through the routed slot in the chassis plates prior to bringing the two side plates together. We found that a little filing to remove the radius left in the corners of the support plate was needed, to allow the plate to butt nicely up to the two side plates, a very quick job. The Digger has a rear mounted motor to help the nose of the car reach skywards when having some fun, so the Digger is fitted with nylon tubes to act as 'wheelie bars', which rotate around the rearmost chassis spacer. Believe me, they are essential when driving the little beastie with freshly peaked out cells!

When assembling the two halves of the chassis, a little care has to be taken to make sure that both chassis plates are flat on the work surface, to stop any possibility of misalignment creeping in. The next step was to put together the steering set up, which again was simplicity in itself, as it merely consists of two Associated 1/12 style moulded steering blocks, through which are pushed the stub axles, retained by the standard American fixing; 'E' clips. The kingpins are then quickly bolted to the front mounting plate, and the steering blocks held in place on the kingpin by two more 'E' clips.

The front wheels are held on by nyloc nuts, thanks to the stub axles having threaded ends. The wide wheels and tyres go a long way towards creating the Digger's appeal, because thanks to

Wide rear 'boots' really look the part on the Digger, and those 'wheelie rollers' come in useful when you really gun the throttle.

their width and the attractive bodyshell, the car looks great when fully assembled. The front tyre compound is quite firm, and looks likely to last well.

The rear end build centres mainly on ensuring the steel axle is free to rotate in the oilite bearings. A little care taken here will lengthen the life of the drive motor and make the car faster, but we found it quite easy to line the bearings up and, when lightly oiled, were as free as could be expected. A ballracing kit is available as an option from Bolink, and I would think it would be advisable to purchase this when buying the Digger. As the Digger doesn't have a differential, the aluminium hub to which the gear is mounted was locked to the axle with its grubscrew, having first set the axle's spacing across the chassis, then the .32 dp spur gear was offered up to it. The instructions show that the gear is retained to the hub by two countersunk cap head screws, but the gear hadn't been prepared, so out came the hobby drill and the countersinking tool. A few seconds work and the gear was ready, but this could be a minor gripe for those who don't have such things readily to hand.

Having assembled the gear, it was now time for the black plastic wheel hubs. These wouldn't fit onto the axle without first having a 1/4" drill run through them, another gripe, but having done so they were fitted to the axle, retained by two grub screws in each hub, and the rear wheels were assembled, making the rolling chassis basically complete. The 45mm wide rear wheels and tyres really look the part on this machine, and I would imagine the chromed versions really set off a nicely custom airbrushed bodyshell. The tyres look to be of the Yellow compound, the softer of the more popular American On Road racing types.

The rounded lexan bodyshell always allows the Digger to finish up on its wheels after a roll. Great paint job by Motion Graphics!

The Radio Installation

This again couldn't have been easier, as with the easy accessibility available thanks to the Digger's design, it was child's play to install a Futaba S132H servo for steering, a Futaba 40mhz receiver, and an early M-troniks ST400PB speed controller (a very likely candidate for an entry level car such as this. Now available neatly boxed). For motive power we used an S&K Ironman Cheetah 27T stock motor, powered by Sanyo SCE cells assembled into stick packs. The method of retaining the stick battery pack is by 'O' rings, taken from the horizontal body mounting posts, through which the pack is pushed. These cells gave more than adequate performance!

How Does It Go?

The Bolink Digger isn't actually a 'racing' car, made to compete in an established Formula. It is a beginner's car, as we said before, and should be looked upon in this kind of light. Indoors on carpet, it performs very well indeed, and doesn't seem to suffer much in the cornering department even though it hasn't been fitted with a differential (a differential kit (BL-5702) is available as an optional fitting from Bolink). It pops great wheelies with a little provocation, and is highly entertaining for any onlookers due to the antics it can perform. It lands back on all four wheels after a roll 99 times out of 100, thanks to the rounded shape of the Beetle shell, and is altogether fantastic fun! As a pure introduction to r/c model car driving, it is brilliant, and will allow the raw beginner to get to grips with the basics of car control (learning left from right etc) without having to spend a fortune. A little more spent on basic tune up bits will see an improvement in the performance, but it is definitely not an Off Road car due to the total lack of suspension.

What does add to the appeal though, is the fact that Bolink also market 10 alternative bodyshells to fit the Digger, from a '32 Ford Street Rod to a Chevy Luv Pick Up, my personal favourite being the '66 Ford Mustang Fastback. There you have it, an inexpensive little car that is great fun to drive (play with!?). As the song says,"Can you dig it?"

Manufactured in the USA by Bolink R/C Cars Inc, 420 Hosea Road, Lawrenceville, GA 30245. Tel (404) 963-0252 FAX (404) 963-7334