

Super Sleek Celica!

Lewis Eckett drives Hirobo's 4WD Toyota Celica

As I sit here penning this review, Carlos Sainz from Spain is desperately fending off an attack from Pentti Airikkala's Mitsubishi Starion in the Lombard RAC rally.

Sainz is driving a Toyota Celica and by the time you read this you will certainly know which car has won, (it sure isn't going to be a Sierra).

When the Audi Quattro appeared all those years ago it created a massive impression not just in sales of full-size road-going Quattros but also in the model world where suddenly everyone wanted an Audi bodyshell to fit to their car. Tamiya even brought out a car.

The Quattro (or its latest marque) is still racing but the fashion has changed. In recent years the Peugeot 205 Turbo has swept all before it, now it looks as if the Japanese manufacturers have the advantage (only until the 4WD Sierra Cosworth comes along that is).

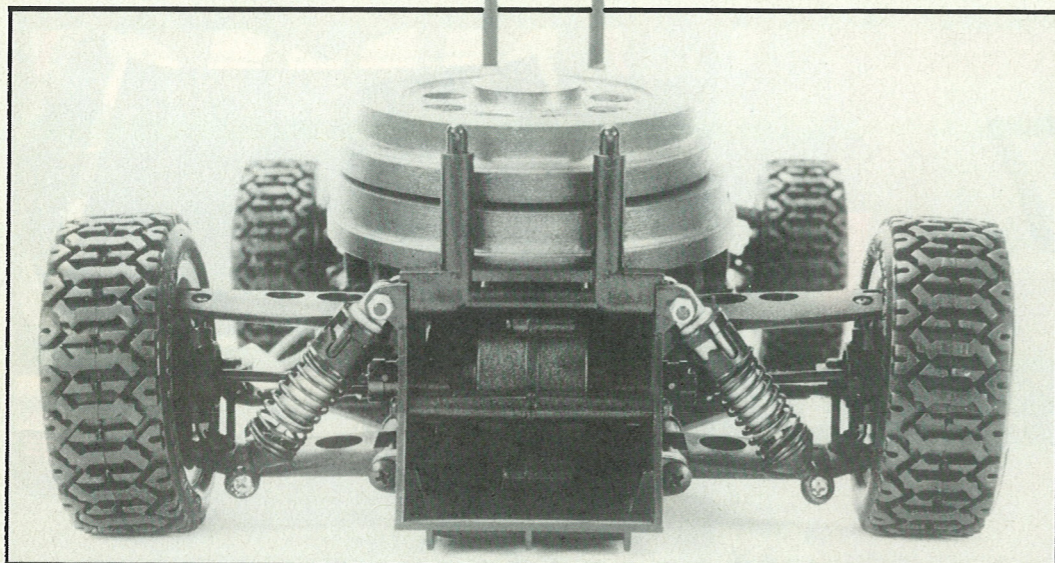
Whatever the outcome of the rally battle, the fact is that immediately large numbers of R/C car racers head for the model shop demanding a kit of the winning car or at least a bodyshell they can fit to their buggy.

If the Spanish driver wins then Hirobo will be pleased because they have just



RADIO CONTROL MODEL CAR

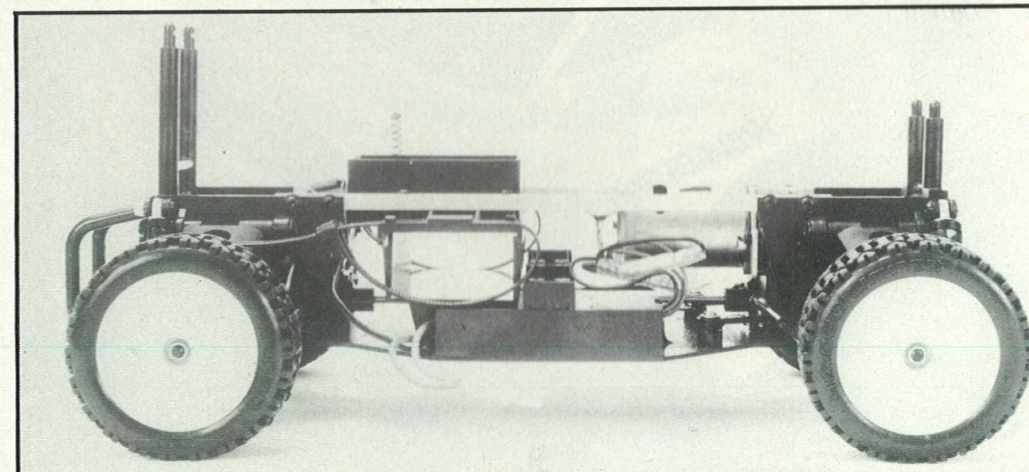
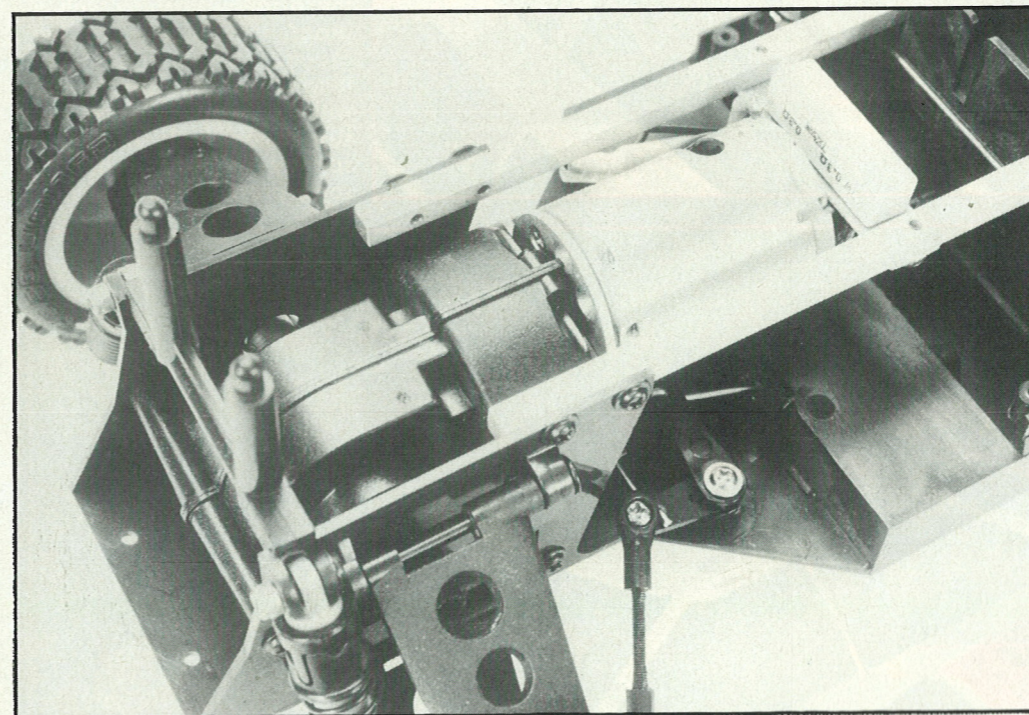
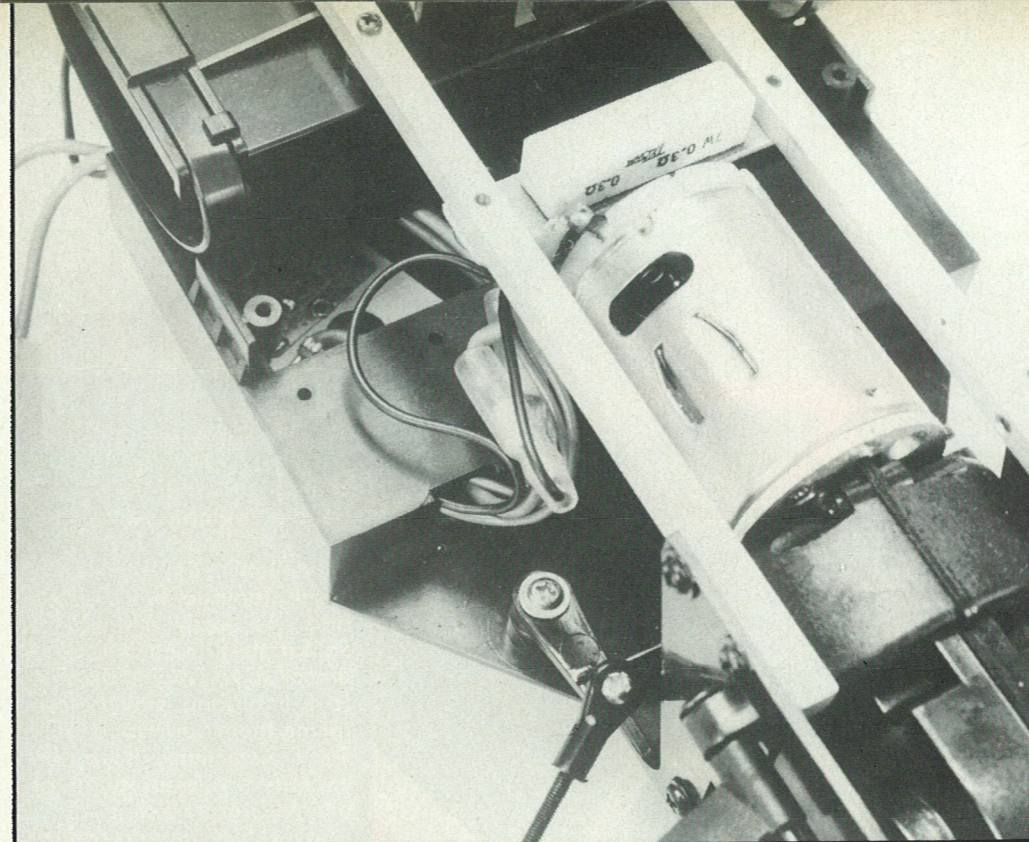
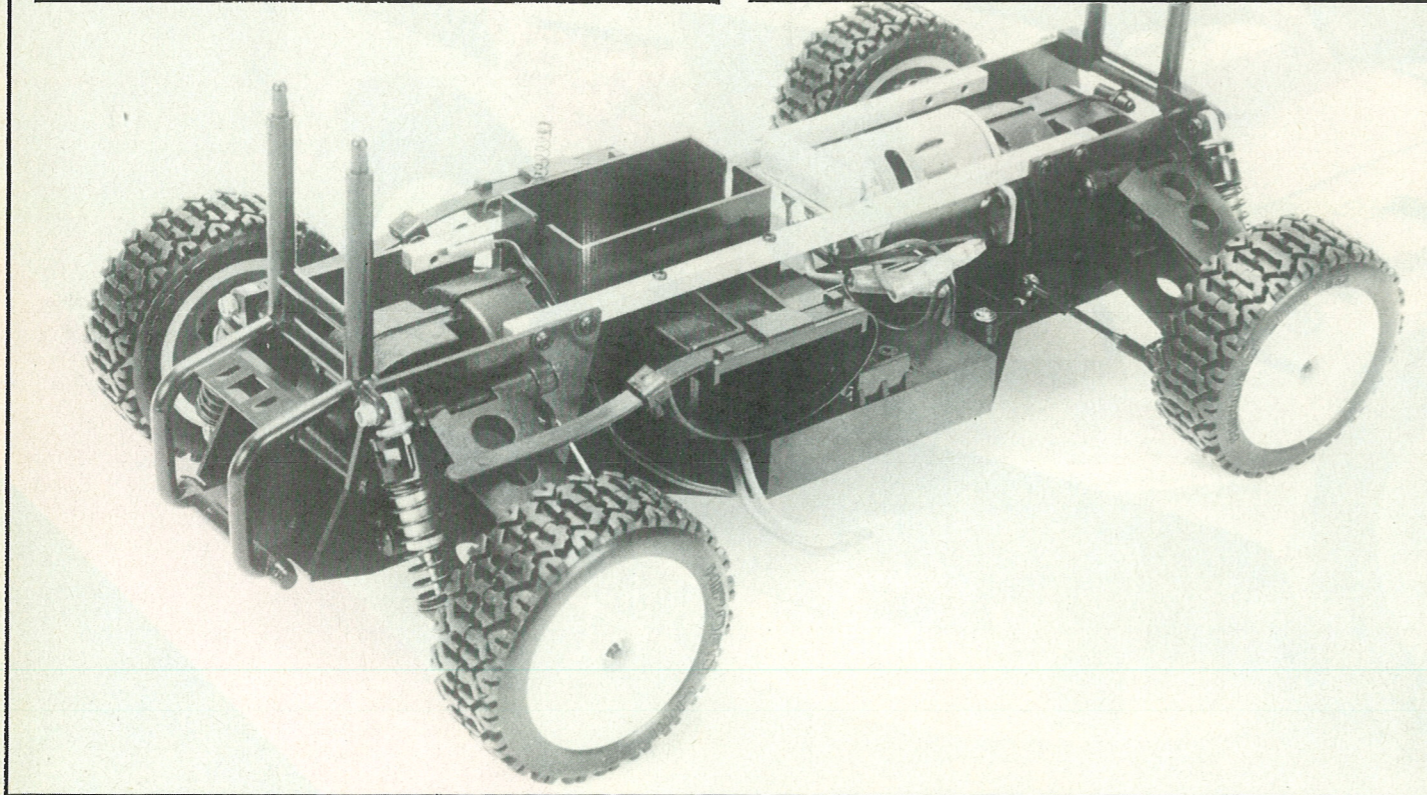
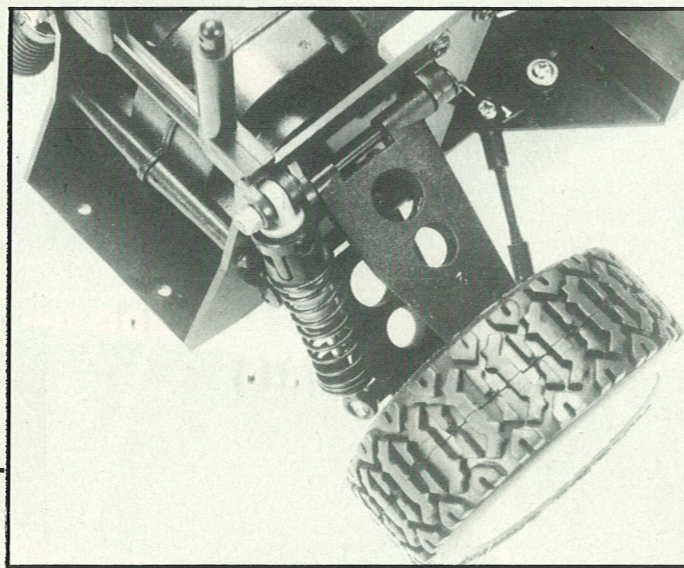
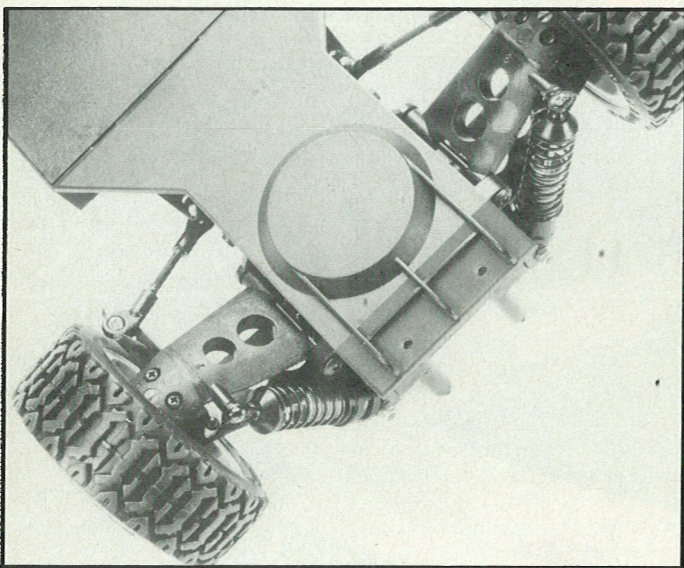




super sleek celica!

released a 4-wheel drive car which can be fitted with either a Peugeot 205 or Toyota Celica GT Four body.

Hirobo made their name in the world of model car racing almost five years ago when they produced the first-ever competition 4-wheel drive buggy.



It rapidly became a sensation, carrying everything before it for a couple of seasons until the rest of the competition woke up to the fact that they could make an all-wheel drive machine as well. Sadly this latest kit from them bares no resemblance to that car, in fact, it is not even made by Hirobo. Turn over the chassis and you find 'Made in Singapore, by WESCOM', what's more the car is not a kit but comes ready built.

Opposite page: The Celica chassis has four oil filled shock absorbers, fitted with black coil springs and ride height adjusters. The whole car is ready built and only requires the radio system to be installed. Below: Front mounted motor tends to make the car oversteer. Bottom: The Celica has a reasonable amount of ground clearance.

This isn't really a problem if all you want is a ready-to-run model of a full-size rally car and you're not too bothered about it being competitive on a race track.

You're not? Sure?

Well then, no problem - this could be the car for you.

Basically what you get when you've ripped the box apart is a ready-built 4-wheel drive chassis complete with wheels and tyres, motor and dampers fitted. The only thing the builder has to fit is the radio gear which shouldn't be too difficult since the instructions detail exactly where everything should go and all the electrical connections between the speed controller and motor are already in place.

Four-wheel drive is produced by a metal shaft running the length of the car. Interestingly the motor, which sits in-line along the chassis, drives the front gearbox so if you removed the centre and rear drive shafts then you would have front-wheel drive - not that there's much point in doing so.

Both gearboxes are fitted with geared differentials and even look as if they feature ball races on the drive outputs. Both gearboxes are identical front and rear.



super sleek celica!

The suspension is pretty scale as well and uses chunky, injection moulded double wishbones all round giving good suspension movement. The coil-over shock dampers are oil-filled and are ready assembled. So far they haven't leaked any oil so you should be able to get a long way before taking them apart for a refill. The instructions have an exploded view diagram of how they go together.

In fact the dampers control the suspension fairly well - dropping the car onto the ground from about six inches height and it just stops dead with virtually no bounce. The suspension feels nice and springy and could handle some pretty heavy bumps.



Where the car could be let down, however, is with the chassis which has too much flex for it to be really effective on a race track. For general running, however, it shouldn't be a problem.

What really makes this car is the bodyshell which looks brilliant. The moulding is first class although the actual material used is uncertain. It doesn't look like Lexan, particularly as the body is supplied coloured white ready for the stickers to be applied. These are also excellent and really set the shell off.

With the body fitted, the car is transformed from a plain piece of plastic and metal to an exciting scale model of a full-size rally car. Because it is instantly recognisable, people relate to it far better than they do to the current style of racing buggies.

As I sit here penning this review the radio is telling me that poor old Carlos has snapped a drive shaft on the final stage and the Mitsubishi of Pentti Airikkala has swept on by to the winning post.

