

JR Alpina PCM

2 channel

As I predicted when I reviewed the twin stick 'Beat 2 PCM' it appears that JR see the way forward in radio control being with 'PCM' technology.

Now they have followed up on the success of the 'Beat 2 PCM' with an equally reasonably priced steering wheel set. The 'Alpina PCM' follows very closely the technology of the 'Beat 2 PCM' which I reviewed a few months ago so there is no need to go into any great technical detail.



The one pertinent point that I missed in that review was the fact that 'PCM' sets have a very high degree of tolerance of background signal noise. That does not mean that they will not be interfered with if another competitor turns on his radio on the same frequency, but it does mean that they are far less likely to be troubled by interference from other sources such as power cables etc.

The transmitter is of the now normal pistol grip type in a smart military grey. The antenna is stored in a clip on the back of the set and has to be screwed in before use.

It features fail safe protection on the throttle only. The user is able to programme the point to which the throttle will return if the set goes into the fail safe mode. There is a separate switch which enables the driver to decide whether or not he wants to use the fail safe facility. I notice now that the

fail safe facility will also function if there is any loss of signal from the transmitter, such as may be caused by battery failure.

Another useful feature is a switch for what JR call throttle neutral point adjustment. On many pistol grip transmitters the amount of servo movement on braking is far less than it is on the throttle. Whilst this is acceptable, indeed even preferable for some set-ups, it can also pose problems. On this set it is possible to select a 3:1 ratio of throttle to steering or a more conventional 1:1 ratio.

Both servos may be reversed by use of switches built into the front of the transmitter.

Steering and throttle trim are both controlled by large knobs on the front of the transmitter to the right of the steering wheel, rather than the more conventional sliding switches. More logical in a way and certainly easy to adjust.

The steering is controlled by a wheel placed centrally in the top half of the transmitter. The steering rate may be adjusted by a thumb wheel that is so placed as to be operable by the left thumb even when racing! One nice touch is that the spring tension on the steering wheel can be easily adjusted to suit the drivers' taste.

The throttle control takes the form of a trigger which is squeezed to operate the throttle and pushed backwards, by what looks like a trigger guard to operate the brake or reverse.

An output meter, power switch and socket for the relatively cheap AM Crystals that the set uses complete the front of the transmitter.

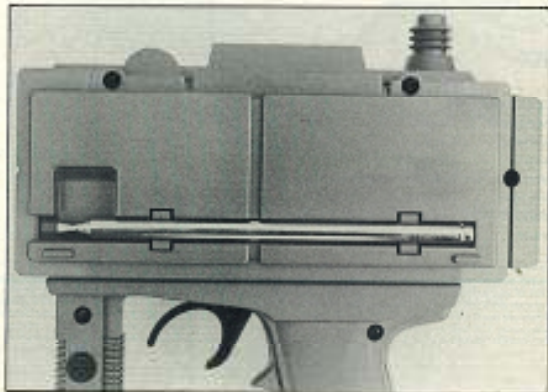
The receiver is the same as that used with the 'Beat 2 PCM' with the same very useful feature of being able to run straight off the power pack batteries of electric model car using its own internal circuitry to regulate the voltage.

As supplied the set includes two of the excellent JR general purpose 'MSS 505' servos and is for Dry-Cell operation only.



MacGregor tell me however that they are able to supply more sophisticated servos if required and are also able to supply the sets converted for Ni-cad operation with a suitable adjustment in price. Talking of the price the one quoted below is a new price which is substantially less than the original price.

Overall a thoroughly competent and workman like set, with enough features for all



but the most serious races. The price is going to prove irritable to many, when one bears in mind the advantages of 'PCM'. Currently both the 'Beat 2 PCM' and the 'Alpina PCM' are only available as 27MHz sets.

As a foot note JR presently only have their less sophisticated sets available with PCM but clearly as a company they are committed to moving down this road. I was shown a computer controlled multi-channel set that they are now marketing which included such features as being able to retain and select at will the settings for several different models. If or when such features become

available in two channel sets the possibilities are endless. Just imagine being able to retain the settings used for different circuits or different conditions. If an engine blows and you need to change to one of another make in a hurry there will be no need to fiddle about with the linkages, all that will be needed is to punch a few buttons!

Imported by: MacGregor Industries Ltd., Canal Estate, Langley, Slough, Berkshire SL3 6EQ.

Telephone: (0753) 49111.
Price: £79.95 Dry Cell.
£115.00 (approx) Nicad.

