

The 1:8 Rallycross side of our hobby can sometimes be a strange category, there have been swings in popularity ranging from the 'Garbo' time when every one including the top drivers ran the neat and well designed Italian cars, to the 'PB' time when Keith Plested's X3 ruled in the UK, if not anywhere else. The last big swing of cars changes occurred when the Kyosho Burns arrived on the scene. At first the car was considered a joke, a toy even in the man's World of 1:8 Rallycross racing. Since being British and European Champion the other manufacturers have had to take notice.

That's probably why there's a new Italian racer here for us to look at, the sheer competitiveness of the sport of late has pushed technology on at a faster rate, and the Unika from Mantua is the result of that push forward in design.

Top Spec

The first thing that becomes apparent with the Unika is that this is a top of the line car. Everything on the car is designed with racing in mind and all the Mantua top range parts are included. The car is well finished and presented with most of the parts anodized in either a rather loud red or gold. Shocks on the car are the Mantua designed progressive type. These dampers have what is basically a tapered bore, this means that as the piston travels up the damper the damping increases, this allows the car to take small bumps with light suspension but also enables the car to handle big jumps and landing without bottoming out – or at least that's the theory!

The shocks are again anodized red and gold with progressive black springs.

The drive system on the car is also interesting with lightness being a main feature. The diffs are geared and are set in a plastic casing, this is then joint to a plastic main gear and a plastic pinion! This is very light and according to Richard Stitson at Windsor Models very strong, the Team nether having stripped a gear.

Three diffs are the norm in 1:8 and the Unika follows this format, torsion diffs are available but are not in the kit.

Radical Man!

The chassis on the Unika is where past thinking goes well and truly out of the window! The car has a two piece swivelling chassis, the photos show what the chassis does and the movement is controlled by a damper. The idea is that the car is set up as per normal with a pin in place that

stops the chassis 'hinging', then the pin is removed and the car will go even better! Now whether the chassis works or not the idea is there and the extra stableness the chassis could give may well be the edge the car needs over the opposition.

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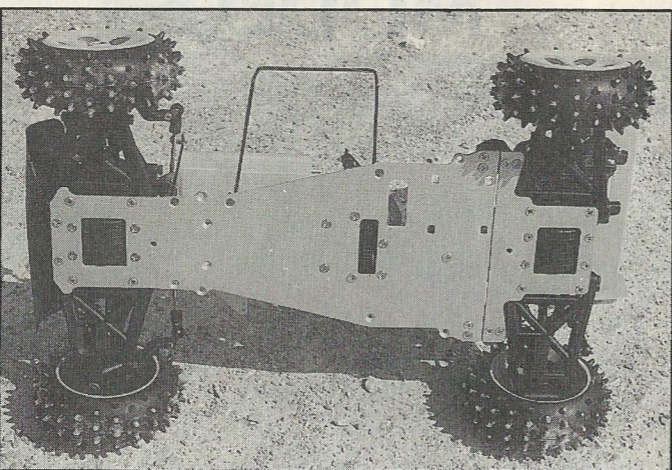
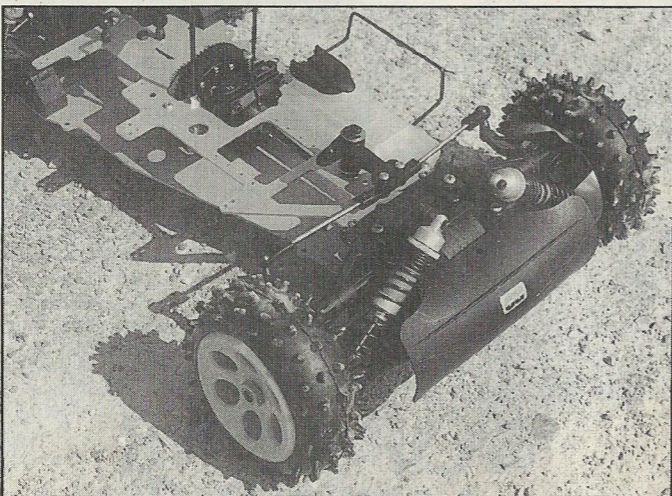
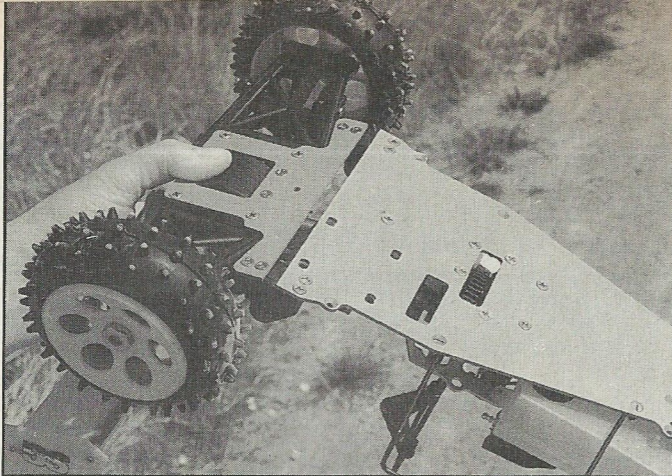
The radio plate is made again from alloy and coloured gold. a single servo saver takes care of the steering and the radio fitting is the same as in most 1:8 kits (a little tricky but you get there in the end!). The fuel tank is towards the front of the car and is a neat design complete with flip-top.

Suspension arms on the car are very strong looking being masterpieces of moulding technology, camber is adjustable as is castor with a bit of effort. To finish off the car a couple of nice touches are the exhaust saver wire (this protects your tuned pipe) and the carrying handle/roll bar. Also included as standard is the rear roll bar.

The Unika does break new ground with its well designed swivel rear end, the hinges are simple and tough and the quick insertion of the pin means the car can be used in more conventional mode. The car is well finished and we were impressed with all the parts that came standard in the box, the breaking system is good as are the ball joints and the lightweight wheels. The only real disappointment were the tyres supplied, these are not the types usually raced on and the handling of the car is greatly improved if these are changed.

Final comments are; the car is easy to build, has new ideas that may well make it a World beater, is produced by a company that know their sport (Mantua are past World Champions), and we especially liked the plastic moulded rear wing. Made from Nylon this is virtually unbreakable and is a really good idea.

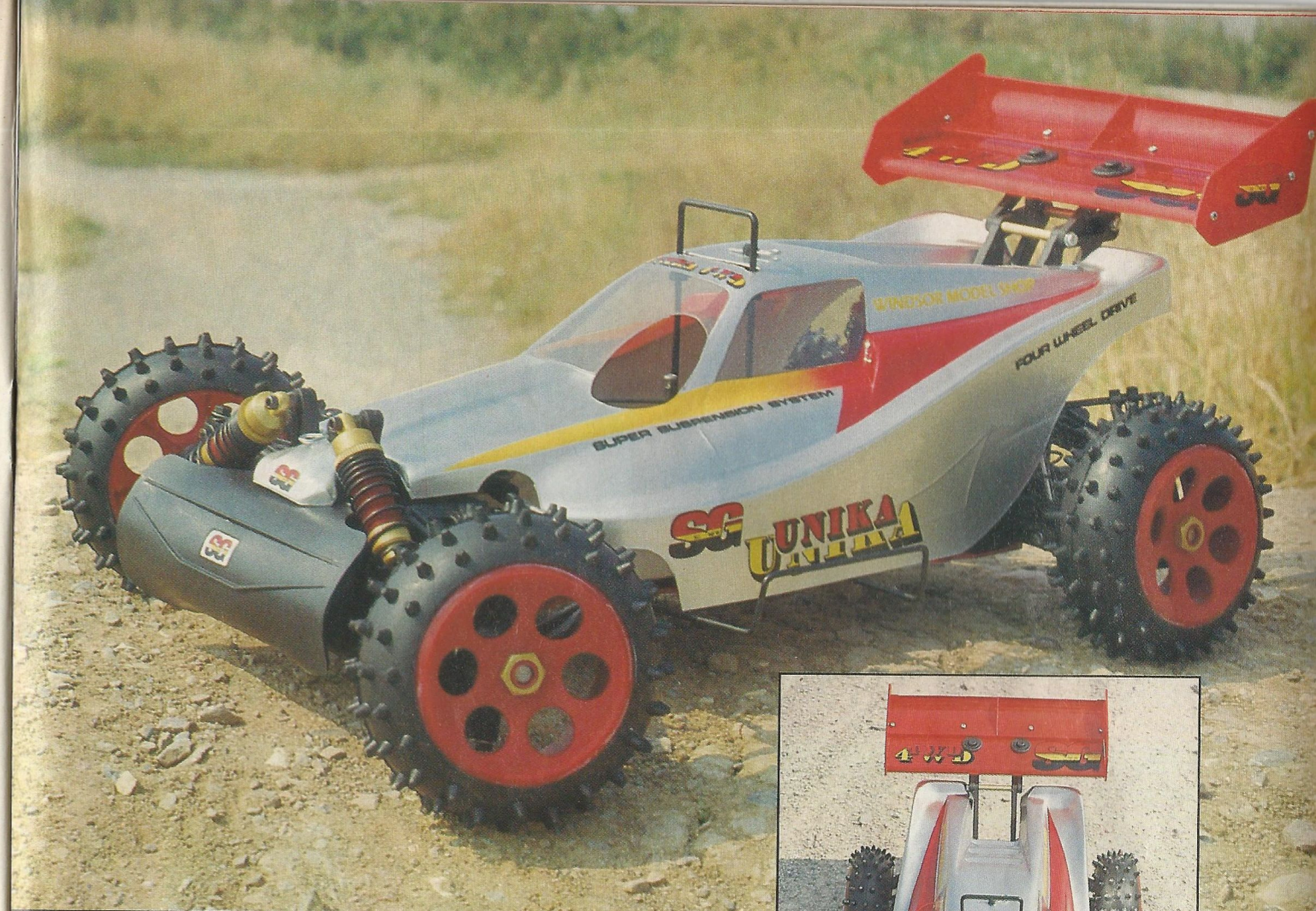
The new Mantua Garbo Unika is imported by Windsor Models and there is a comprehensive spares list and service available.



The new Unika has radical design and could well be a title contender

It's UNIKA!

RADIO CONTROL MODEL CARS



The Unika bodyshell is shaped to allow the hinged chassis to move inside without fowling. Rear wing is moulded from Nylon and is very tough. Right; Standard style of Rallycross racer bodyshell; when will they start to race saloons!

