

**Mardave's
successor to the
venerable
'Apache' may
have been a long
time coming but
was it worth the
wait? Lewis
Eckett finds out**

You may be surprised to learn that amidst all the hype surrounding the introduction of the Schumacher 'CAT' and PB 'Mini-Mustang' a third British company launched a new car kit onto the market. Not so surprising however when you realise that the company in question is Mardave Racing of Leicester. Most manufacturers in the same situation would have bided their time — waiting for the fuss to die down. Not so Mardave. True there was a strong pre-Christmas reason for

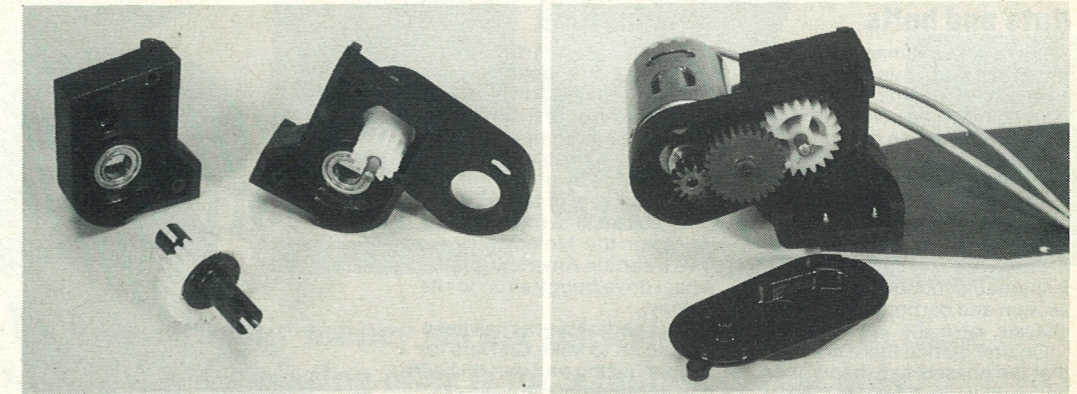
releasing when they did but still the 'softly softly' approach is pure Mardave. As long ago as November 1985 we learned that a successor to the worthy 'Apache' 1/10th scale buggy was on the blocks — perhaps in time for that Christmas! Now following a hiccup in the design stage and over 12 months later the 'Meteor' is with us. The reason for the delay stems from the release of the Associated 'RC10' which when released in early 1985 provided a quantum leap forward in design and performance from

the vogue car of the time — Kyosho's 'Scorpion.' Mardave's plans for a budget alternative to the latter were instantly superceded by the advent of the 'RC10' — result a complete shift in design and emphasis to meet the challenge. The less subtle amongst you will no doubt be thinking "So why did it take them so long to produce a copy of an Associated?" The answer to that one lies in the cost of tooling up for the sort of injection mouldings expected by the majority of self-respecting buggy racers. Nevertheless similarities

between the two cars are obvious although on the 'Meteor' the reason for the cost difference (£57.00 as supposed to £130.00) is equally apparent. Quite simply Mardave 'Meteor' is a low cost, easy to build electric Off-Road racer, incorporating proven design parameters. In this respect Mardave have strengthened their hold on a small corner of the market which they have been exploiting for themselves since the introduction of their first kits over 15 years ago. That corner is where R/C car racing makes its introductions.

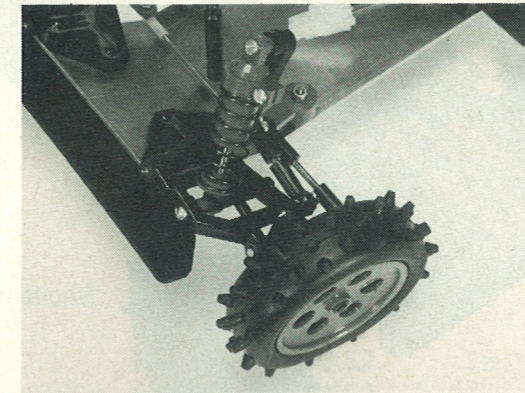


MARDAVE Meteor

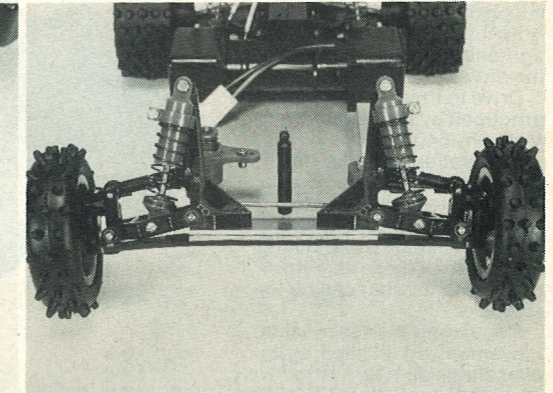


Above: inside the 'Meteor' gearbox showing ball-races and ball type differential. Complete unit is pre-assembled.

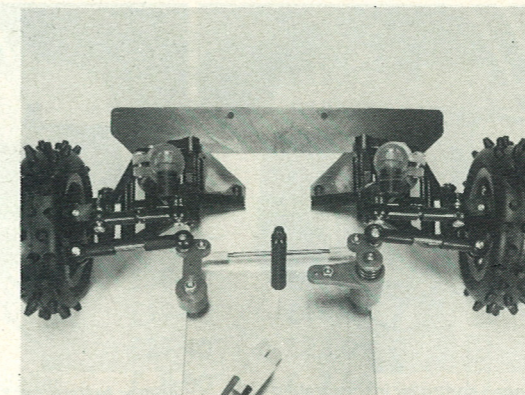
Above: motor mounting plate and drive train is protected by plastic cover.



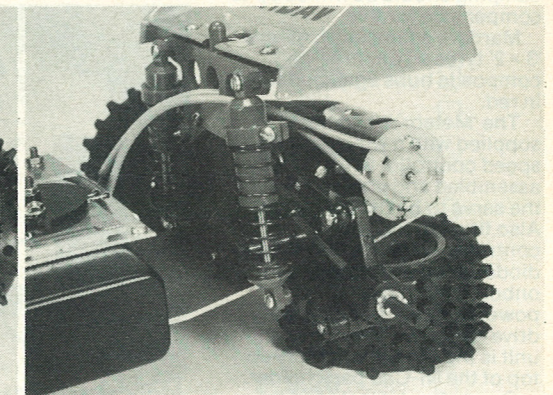
Above: front suspension close-up showing, coil-over-shock damper.



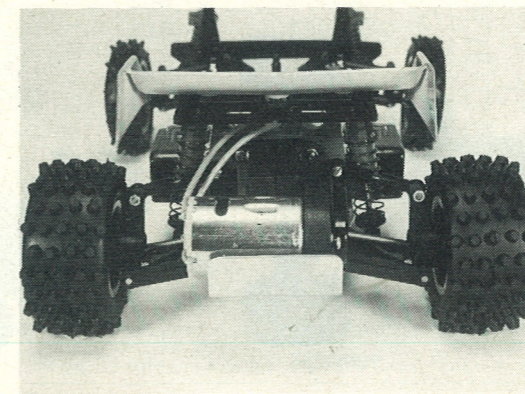
Above: complete view of front-end suspension geometry.



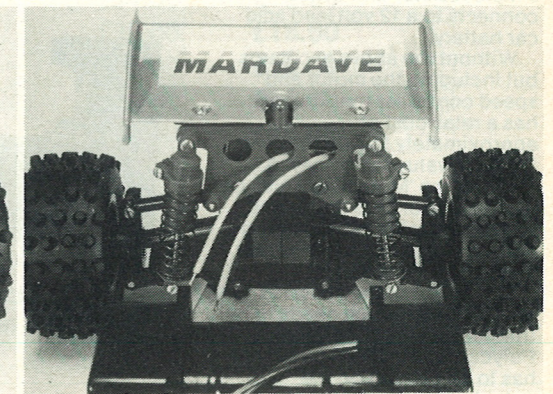
Above: bell-crank servo saver set-up lessens bump steer.



Above: rear suspension set-up has dampers mounted in front of the rear wishbones.



Above: motor is protected from behind by optional bumper plate.



Above: independent rear coil-over-shock dampers.



Nuts and bolts

There isn't too many of these, which is a good thing. The car is mostly held together with self tapping machine screws and care must be taken not to overtighten these in the plastic mouldings.

The chassis could not be simpler, just a pre-formed and drilled alloy plate. This does the job admirably in defiance of fashionable monocoque, box section and carbon fibre chassis.

On first glance there is a fear that the chassis may bend upon hefty collision, however there is enough springiness to allow only a severe flex of the plate.

The gearbox houses a limited slip ball type differential supported on ballraces. Adjustment of this unit is by tightening a grub screw linking the drive cups together.

Drive to the two rear wheels is produced by the venerable *Mabuchi* '540' motor.

As mentioned above the suspension follows proven design criteria with lower wishbones and adjustable upper arm links. By adjusting the length of these varying degrees of camber can be selected.

Regulating the suspension movement are oil filled, coil-over shock dampers attractively moulded in red plastic. No oil is supplied in the kit but a choice of damper piston is. The springs supplied are quite soft and the damping should be firmed up to compensate for this.

Mardave's familiar '4 x 3' and '3 x 2' tyres sit on three-part composite hubs again moulded in red.

The 'Meteor' kit comes supplied with a wiper board speed controller which is fully assembled and only requires the servo to be fixed in place. Also fitted to the speed controller is a voltage dropping diode which enables the onboard radio gear to be powered direct from the main drive batteries. The complete unit is then mounted firmly on top of the Ni-Cad pack holder.

Our review kit included the Ni-Cad pack and charge lead which cost £13.95 and £5.95 respectively. The charger is a simple resistor unit which connects to a 12 volt lead acid car battery.

Without the above two items but including the motor and speed controller the 'Meteor' has a retail cost of approximately £57.00 which is fantastic value for money. A competition 'Meteor' will also be available soon less motor and speed controller but including four extra ballraces for the rear stub axles. Price £55.00.

On the top of the chassis sits an ABS body which needs to be trimmed and painted. Unlike Polycarbonate this type of shell has to be painted on the outside. However, ABS can be painted with acrylic, enamel and even cellulose paints including car touch-up spray cans.

Conclusions

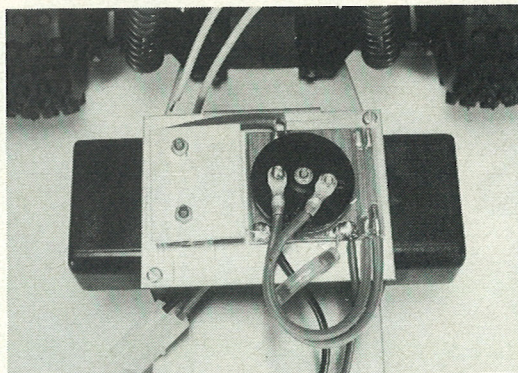
If the 'Meteor' performs as well as it went together then the car will be well worth a look, particularly for first comers.

At this sort of price the 'Meteor' is well able to counter claims made by other manufacturers of two-wheel drive starter kits. Indeed given its design the 'Meteor' may even give a certain American two-wheel drive buggy a run for its money.

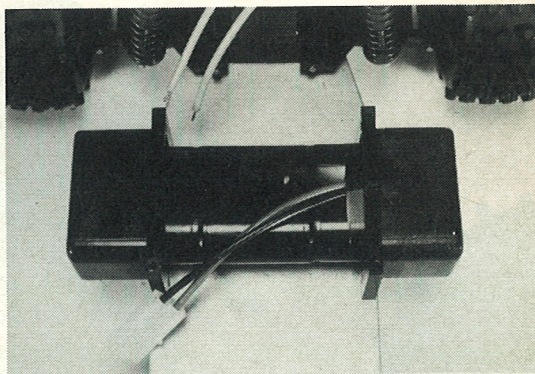
This particular car has been passed on to Mike Chilvers for further testing and we will keep you informed of his progress.



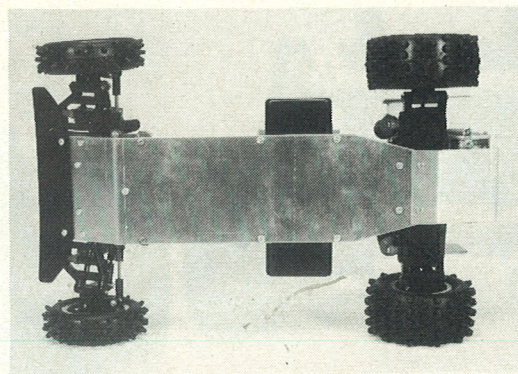
Above: ABS bodyshell can be decorated with aerosol spray paint and Stika-trim.



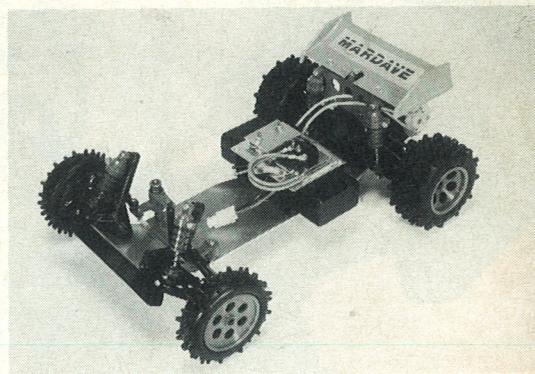
Above: wiper board speed controller incorporating voltage dropping diode.



Above: battery pack held firmly in place by protective holders.



Above: underview showing flat chassis plate.



Above: rolling chassis waiting for installation of radio gear.

