BUG TO BASICS

KIT REVIEW

Reviewed by Grahame Chambers

Mardave are the masters of cost control. There mini stocks, 1:8 oval cars and now Beetle are still the starting place for most racers offering a tough product at a reasonable price. Their latest is a simple chassied car with limited suspension and great looks

As we all know, model car racing is not always a cheap hobby. By the time you've spent your hard earned cash on a car, radio set, batteries, charger, tyres etc etc, your bank balance can look decidedly worse for wear. (Perhaps Fergie's a secret R/C racer!).

So, any form of racing designed to give maximum fun for minimum outlay must be a sure success.

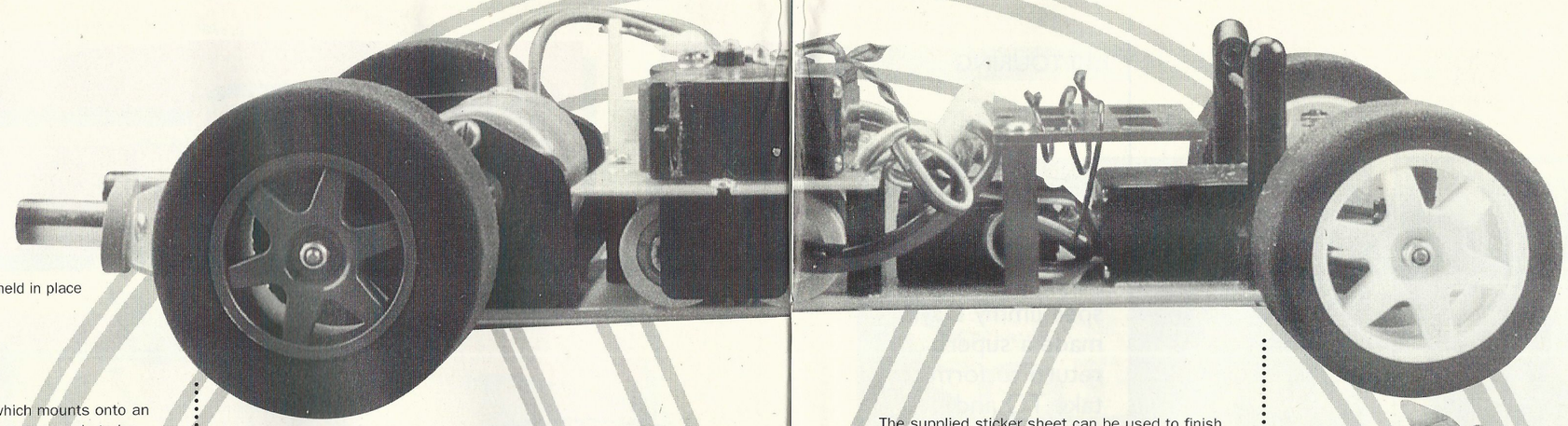
Mardave's Ministock instantly springs to mind to fill this category and there are clubs all over the country which cater for this low cost indoor racing. Competition is now at hand for the Mini in the form of the 'V Dub Special', and this looks like another winning combination.

One slight drawback of the little Mini is the need for a smooth, flat track (e.g. indoor carpet) as it has no suspension. However, the V Dub is more able to cope with an outdoor circuit (e.g. local car park) thanks to a new sprung set-up.

Designed as an easy build beginners car, the V Dub Special comes with a 4 cell battery pack and 540 size motor. All that is needed to go racing is a 2 channel radio set and charger.

So, following the assembly instructions containing text and photographs, the first items to be built are the front suspension arms. A small spring drops over the kingpin which allows the stub axle/steering arm to slide up and down (about 5m). The pair of arms fit to the alloy chassis plate with self-tapping screws, and it's on to the rear end.

The motor mount is tough moulded plastic and houses the rear axle bushes (we replaced ours with ballraces) and the motor itself. The mounting clips onto a ball stud in the chassis, allowing a 'rolling' movement which is kept in check by another pair of small springs and a neat 'damping' system consisting of an 'O' ring which grips a metal post. This is surprisingly smooth, especially with a dab of gearbox grease applied to the post.



Drive time

The rear axle is steel and carries the plastic spur gear. There is no differential and this does not affect the car's handling. The wheels can now be fitted, the foam tyres being held in place with Evo-Stick contact adhesive.

Under control

A mechanical speed controller is supplied which mounts onto an alloy plate over the battery pack position. The motor needs to be soldered to the speed controller and here is my one and only minor criticism. Both wires coming from the speed controller are black and the instructions state "solder the short lead to the top tag on the motor". This makes it very easy for a beginner to connect the motor backwards. It might be clearer to say "solder the short lead to the positive tag of the motor", indicated by a small dot on the end bell.

The rear body mount is made up from an alloy plate fitted with two chromed plastic tubes. When the body is in place they project through the rear wings and resemble hefty exhaust pipes. I sprayed these lightly with black paint to represent smoke staining.

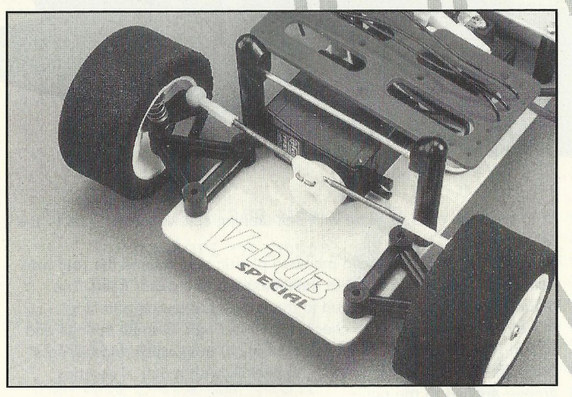
Two servos are needed to operate the V Dub, both of which are fixed to the chassis using servo tape. Mounting posts are provided for the steering servo, but as long as the mating surfaces are cleaned carefully the tape will be fine. The receiver fits to the chassis in the same way, the aerial being looped around a plastic plate.

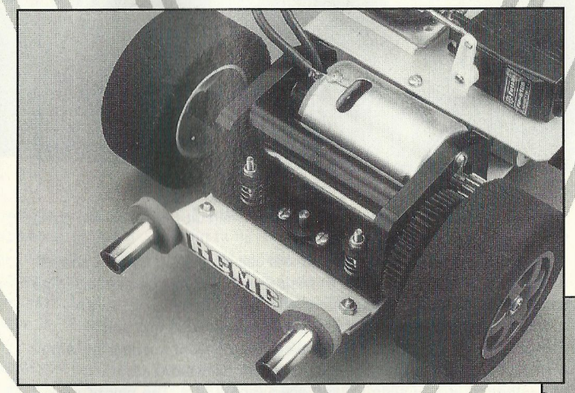
In the box

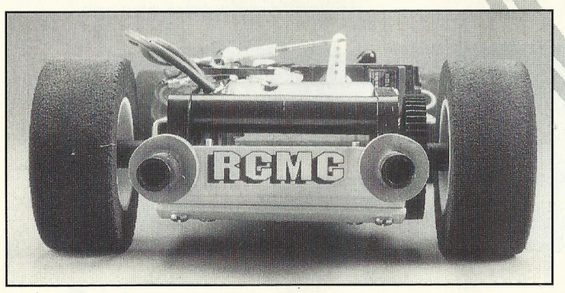
An excellent feature of both the Mini and the V Dub is that the battery is supplied. This is a 4 cell (4.8v) 1600 mAh pack, and can be charged using Mardave's own charging lead (r.r.p. £6.95) or any suitable charger. The nicad slots under the speed controller mounting plate and is held in place by a plastic retainer block.

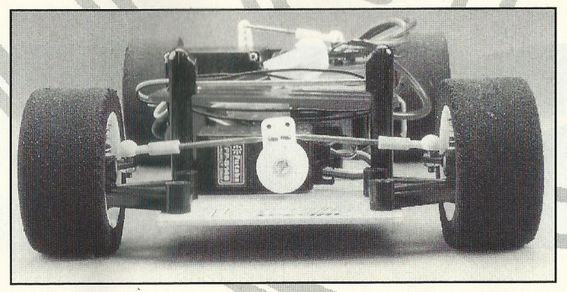
Unusually for a modern R/C car, the bodyshell is formed from white ABS plastic rather than lexan. Slight trimming and sanding is required, followed by fitment of the front mounting catch. This is a clever sprung item which latches onto a rod at the front of the chassis and securely mounts the 'shell.

Below left - Simple front spring set-up shown here improves handling on outdoor surfaces, while the rear end (below right) is 'damped by an 'o' ring sliding on the metal post. Bottom right - compact layout of the R/C components in the chassis.









The supplied sticker sheet can be used to finish the body without the need for painting, but our review model was first washed in warm soapy water and then masked with brown plastic parcel tape. Aerosol cellulose paint was used for the colour coats and when dry, the stickers (cut from the kit sheet) were applied. The 'headlamps' are airbrushed and the spoiler (non-effective!) was made from lithoplate.

With the bodyshell in place and a fully charged battery, it's time for a test drive!

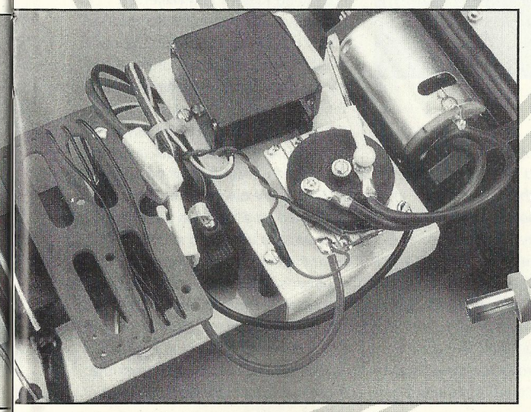
Considering only 4 cells are used, the car's performance is excellent and the top speed is very respectable. On an open tarmac area you can whiz around at full power for about 10 minutes. The suspension is surprisingly effective and grip from the foam tyres results in precise steering response and handling.

Race the ace

There are clubs all over the country which cater for Ministock racing, and many of these are now taking on V Dubs as well, so if you fancy a bit of competition why not go along? The racing is very close and exciting, and in keeping with the spirit of the cars, very economical.

I'm sure Mardave will have a great success with the V Dub and with other bodyshells to follow in the future, the low cost/high fun combination can't fail.

Mardave V Dub Special r.r.p. £57.95
Mardave Fast Charge Lead r.r.p. £6.95
Ballraces (Otley Modelsport) £5 plus p&p



Battery pack comes in the box and is a nice surprise!
Below; Ready for the off - Our VW had an extra wing fitted for looks
Bottom; Simple chassis means less to go wrong...