John Davies

low cost racer

Mardave Alfa 156 - V10

When I received the phone call from PeterE asking if I would like to review and build the new Mardave V10 series kit with Alfa body, it took me almost 1/10th of a second to answer YES!

When I met the Ed' he gave me my new toy and told me what he needed. So off I went thinking to myself 'What have I let myself in for? I've never reviewed anything! I had previously built Mardave's Rebel and V12 cars so I knew the quality was going to be good.

The kit to be reviewed was the V10 sports chassis which includes, speed controller and standard RS 540 motor. The TQ kit, which is the other kit option, does not include these 2 items, but it does come with a set of two-ball race bearings for the rear axle. The choice of motor and speed controller is left to individual choice. Obviously an electronic speed control. (Esc) would be the best choice.

What Have We Here?

The kit comes in a box just bigger than the V12 and Rebel kits. On opening the box you notice there is not the traditional, for Mardave, white ABS body, but a clear Polycarbonate Alfa 156 shell. The other shell option is a Mercedes CLK. A set of wheels and sponge foam tyres were next to take my attention - wait until you see the size of the rears! All the hardware is packed in a bag under the shell along with the yellow chassis plate. In the bottom of the box were the assembly instructions, accompanied by the decals and window masks.

My overall impression of the instructions was good. They were clear, concise and on the whole, easy to follow. However, I would have found it easier if the exploded view diagram had have been printed on a separate sheet, making it easier to refer to during assembly.

Front and Rear Suspension

The first page of the assembly instructions takes the builder through the construction of the front and rear suspension units. The front unit being coil sprung, when the stub axles have been pushed through the steering arms. It is necessary to secure them with a M3 plain nut. For some reason this process appears to be missing from the instructions, but it can be seen on the photograph of the completed assembly.

The rear suspension uses the same coil sprung method as is used on the Mardave's V12 cars, where the damping is achieved by varying the tightness of an 'o' ring fitted to the motor mount assembly - around a metal guide pin on the chassis plate.

Rear Axle and Differentials

The kit comes with a factory assembled ball raced differential, which is fitted through the nylon bushes (sport) or the bearings (TQ). As Mardave kindly supplied a set of bearings the nylon bushes were discarded. When purchasing the sports kit it is worth investing in the bearings, as the extra cost is no more than £5.

How about supplying them with the kit as standard, V10, V12 and Mini/Rebels Mardave? The extra price would still make the kits good value for money.

Sliding pillar front suspension

Just love those monster rear tyres

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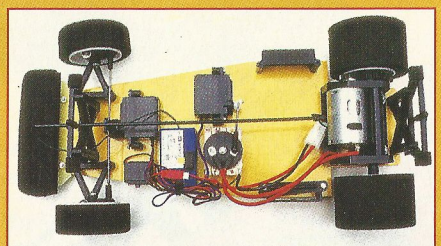
'Overall the kit was easy to build and fun to drive'



The rolling chassis embodies the KISS principle, keep it simple stupid!

Speed Controller

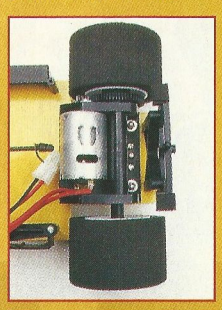
The kit as Mardave supplied was the sport model, so the mechanical three-speed controller was used. A brake resistor kit is obtainable from Mardave, which is easy to fit to the PC board. Unlike the 1/12th cars the speed controller actually sits on the chassis plate, being secured with a long M2.5 machine screw from the underside. If the TQ version is bought this area is going to hold the ESC.

Battery Holder and Motor

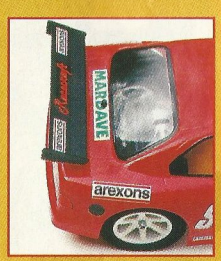
Assembly of the battery holder is straightforward. The motor is fixed to the motor mount, not forgetting to solder the leads from the speed controller to the two tabs first. The kit is supplied with a twelve-tooth Pinion, but a 14T and 16T are available. When fitting the pinion, care should be taken to push it well into place on the shaft to prevent it from fouling against the rear tyre when fitted. I also used a piece of paper as a shim guide to get the correct mesh between the pinion and spur gear on the diff.

The wheels came with the tyres already fitted, but they required truing and sticking to the wheels with 'Cyanoacrylate' (SUPER GLUE).

In Mardave's price list blue and black wheels are listed as being available to replace the white. On close inspection of the rear tyres it is clear to see that they are in fact two front ones joined together. One of the most sensible features of the car is the rubber internal bumper which is included in the kit.



Standard 540 type motor is included in the Sport kit



If you fit a hotter motor you may need the downforce from the Racecraft wing

The radio gear can be installed at this stage. The servos and receiver I used were the ones supplied in the 'Sanwa Dash Sabre' radio set'.

Mardave supply their usual servo saver pack, which has been updated to include the output arm for the V10 series cars. The last items to be added to the chassis are the very substantial two piece body mounts, to the front and rear. The aerial for the receiver is carried internally instead of the more common method of protruding from the body shell. The aerial tube is mounted in a hole in the front body mount. I found that I had to open this hole up slightly for the tube to be pushed through. Once this had been done, I had to ensure that everything was operational before moving onto the body shell.

The Body Shell

My first thought about the body shell was, 'Why do an Alfa 156 touring car body, why not one from the British touring car championships?' After all, Mardave's main market is the UK. But, as PeteE told me, the Alfa shell is a popular choice at the moment. A Volvo S40 shell is listed on Mardave's spares list, as well as a Porsche GT and Lotus Elise. Trimming the shell began after removing the bottom lip. I trimmed to the marked lines along the sides then the front and rear. The front wheel arches were then cleared. The shell supplied does not have pre-drilled body mount holes in it. So I had to determine where they would go. To do so the shell was placed on the completed chassis and centralised then marked and drilled as described in the instructions. As this was my first attempt to do this, I have to admit to the rear hole being slightly off centre. This has resulted in the rear right wheel being a little close to the arch but it does not catch or interfere with the car's performance. For all newcomers to this method like myself I would suggest checking and re-checking before drilling. Once this had been sorted I was ready to cut out the rear wheel arches. To get these accurate, I put the shell on the chassis. The body was now able to rest properly on the mounts. I marked the axle centre on the shell sides, then placed the rear wheel/tyre on the axle hole in the wheel over the mark and drew around the tyre. Once marked, I cut out the unwanted materials and cleaned up all the edges.

The final stage of preparing the body was to drill four 3 mm holes on the boot to accept the moulded black spoiler. The instructions fail to mention this.

After the shell has been cleaned up and washed the main body colour can be applied. Window masks are placed over the windows in the normal way, but care should be taken to make sure that the whole outer body is covered to protect it from over spray, as no protective covering is provided. Cling film is excellent for this job. Black window frames/rubbers have to be painted on from the inside, as Mardave do not supply them on the decal sheet. However, Mardave do describe a method of achieving the effect on the instructions, but I decided to try a simpler method, which was to follow the shape of the window with narrow strips of masking tape, leaving a suitable amount for the surrounds clear. Then I painted black the clear area between the tape and body colour. Once all the paint work was dry I fixed the decals on the shell, and finally fixed the rear spoiler.

It's now time for RUNNING

Time to See How the Car Performs!

What can I say but - it goes like a bullet. Obviously having the ball raced differential and bearings fitted helped. If it had an Esc fitted and hot motor as well, then the car would be extremely fast. The only problem I had with running the car was with the front tyres, they wore very quickly and going into corners I had a lot or understeer. To overcome this I would suggest a softer tyre would be the answer. But as Mardave don't do a softer one, try putting a softer spring on the front, tighten the diff and a little tyre additive on the front to get the back sliding a little. Overall the kit was easy to build and fun to drive. The chassis could probably be built in an evening, but the body shell will take much longer if you want to make a good job of it. As the box states 'V10 spares and accessories are inexpensive' so if you want to get the car up to spec. this will be relatively inexpensive. These cars will make a great 'one make' racing class that is cheap and fun without having to go into three figure amounts of money. Personally, I think the chassis would make a good base for a drag racer, so how about a suitable body Mardave? Finally I would like to thank Mardave for producing the kit and excellent quality as usual and the Ed' for giving me the opportunity to review this first class car. **RRCI**

Quick Spec

1:10th scale, Pan style 2WD touring car. Sport kit as tested includes motor and mechanical speed control, Foam tyres and Polycarbonate body. Requires 2 channel radio, servos (x2), nicad cells and charger, paint to complete.

Tester Kit

Sanwa Dash Sabre radio set and servos
Kit motor and mechanical speed controllers

Likes

the lot, especially the rear tyres.

Dislikes

drilling and cutting the body.

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