

Alan Fernihough

# 'new kit on the block'

## Mugen Seiki Prime 12 Tourer

**N**ever having bought a new kit before it was very exciting to find one waiting to be reviewed and even more exciting when told it was the first one in the country.

### Prime Time

The latest kit from Mugen is such a car and is unusually called 'Prime 12 Touring', 12 relating to the .12 engine and Touring because it is a true scale saloon tourer. I have yet to discover what the 'Prime' stands for but what's in a name?

Immediately upon feeling the weight of the box I could tell that this kit was solid. Even the box itself is likely to see off some of its lightweight competitors, that is to say that if packaging could race already this would be in pole position. Being a designer I could criticise the design but whoever receives this kit probably wouldn't waste time debating the point of sale merits and debits and would want to get that pull start going as quick as possible.

The kit itself comes almost complete just requiring you to add servo linkage and electrics plus the wheels to bolt on which makes it ideal for the younger driver who is set on driving an I.C. for the first time. I found after close examination that even if this kit came unassembled a complete novice could soon have it completed in about 4-5 hours. This makes it easy for stripping down something which I had to do to insert the bearing set which is recommended at an extra £20. Believe me these make a tremendous difference as Alex has found in the past when trying to run a car with standard bushes fitted.

Unusual for a car at this budget price are the oil filled shocks which takes the standard 20wt oil which can be changed to suit your needs

but for most drivers this is really unnecessary as at the moment you are unlikely to be seriously racing this car until you come up against other drivers with these cars or there is a series for you to race in.

The double wishbone suspension arms have two sets of holes which allow a choice of narrow or wide set-up for maximum performance.

The four wheel drive system is rugged and well built and uses a twin drive shaft system from the main spur mounted centrally in the car. Identical gearboxes front and rear contain strong bevel gears which should take plenty of hammer. Just a note here to remind you that if you do take out the diffs remember which way they came out and not do what I did which was to insert both the wrong way round and upon starting the car found that I suddenly had one of the only front engine rear wheel steering cars around! (I still wonder if anyone has considered this set-up yet?)

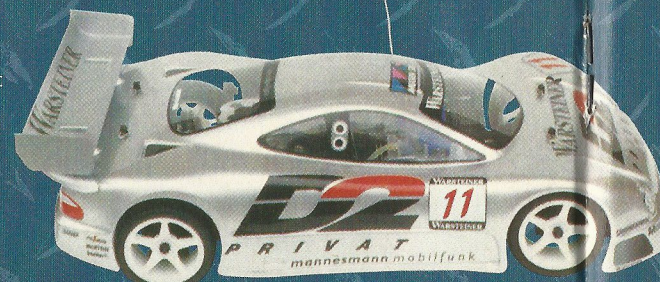
Add plenty of diff grease to these boxes as the car will tend to be noisy with all this metal to metal grinding away and it will also prolong the life of your car.

At the moment there are no plans for a two speed box but upon closer examination there is room to add the extra gear and bell housing which would seriously make it fly! A centre mounted plastic disk brake is easily accessible and is easy to adjust. The minus factor with these plastic discs is they tend to get very hot under severe braking particularly with a car of this speed and weight. The track rods are adjustable but without the provision of a nut on the arms you run the risk of stripping the thread when adjusting with a pair of pliers.

I have to confess at this stage that I know very little about Mugen engines but their success in off road buggies speaks for itself.

### Mugen Power

The assembled VX-12 engine comes complete with pull start, standard silencer and slide carb which allows adjustment to both top and bot-



tom end air fuel mixtures. Although the engine can be started with an external wheel I would doubt whether you would ever need it as the pull start is a substantial piece of kit and should take lots of use.

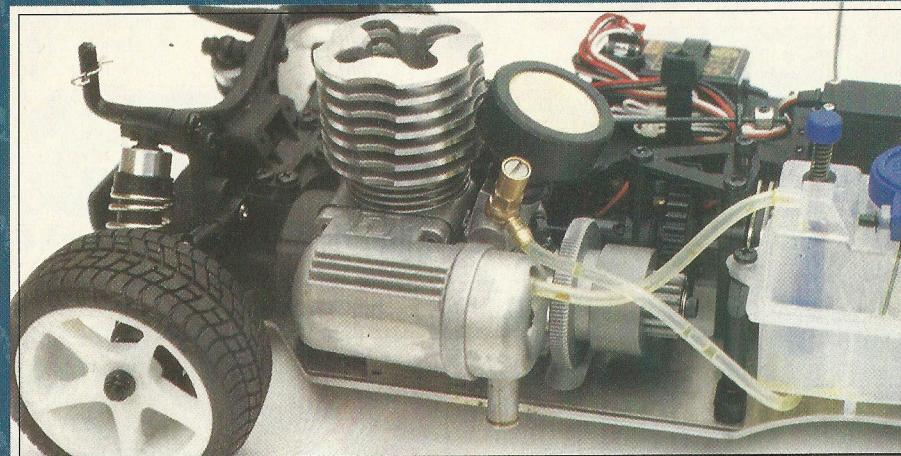
Fuel is supplied from the large tank which is situated directly in front of the engine which means that the fuel pipes do not have to travel over the electrics and therefore leaves you with a 'dry' side to the car on which the batteries and receiver are situated. It would have been an improvement to have the tank opening from the right to make refuelling easier through a window yet I am sure that the tank could be reversed and extra length added to the fuel lines to make this possible.

Whilst on the subject of fuel lines, this kit does not come with a fuel filter, something which every I.C. car should have to prevent bits of crud entering your engine so I would suggest strapping one on at the earliest opportunity.

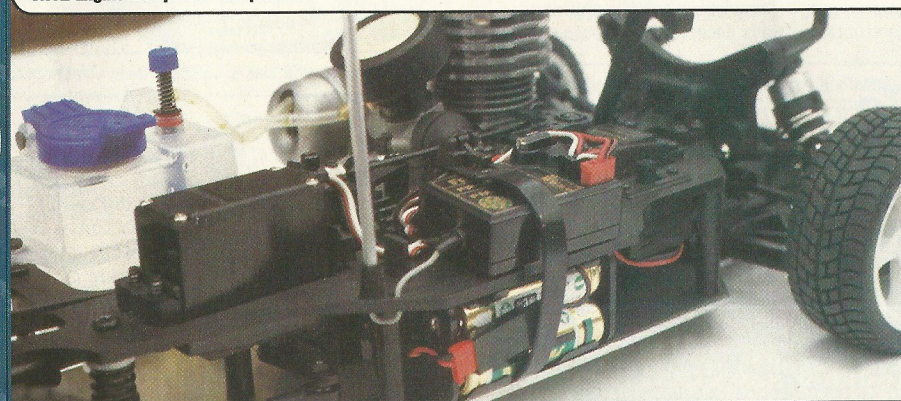
### Body Beautiful?

Fully adjustable body mounts give you the choice to slip most scale saloon shells to this car but the one which we were supplied was the Mercedes CLK-GTR. The other available is the Toyota Supra in GT racing trim. The shell fits snug and low onto the chassis which is all the easier due to lack of roll over bar.

The shell itself is a doddle to paint and all that requires masking are the windows. The outer of the shell is covered with protective film which prevents any overspray from going



VX12 Engine has power to spare



Typical oriental twin deck design

onto the outside. I personally use brown packing tape for masking as it comes in rolls 50 mm wide and is very thin and ideal for a sharp line this is the type of tape you often find on parcels and I would advise that if you are in any doubt try it on some offcuts first and judge for yourself.

With the windows masked and the body sprayed I was ready to add the decals. A slight moan here is that the decals are quite thick and this makes it difficult when applying around corners. They also seemed a tad too small for some of the apertures but I'm told that the new bodies will attempt to put this right.

A set of HPI radial tyres were used after the inner foams had been inserted and the tyres superglued on. This is essential as the tyres have a habit of leaving the wheels if this is not done.

After running a couple of tanks of fuel through the engine to run it in, it was off to our local track at Ashby to see how it performed. Alex knows this track like the back of his hand so he would be able to assess its potential immediately.

### First Time Out

First impressions was how different it sounded. The throaty roar it made was music to our ears even with a standard muffler.

The first few laps were done at a sedate pace while we set the mixture to the correct level then it was put through its paces. Acceleration was tremendous but half way down the straight at Ashby the engine was sending messages to the gearbox to change! change! Alas this was not possible with this model so for the remainder of the straight it was screaming to a crescendo before backing off around the Parabolica.

On the infield it was very quick as second gear here is not always required. The shocks handled the kerbs well except negative camber at speed tended to lift the front wheel in the air and almost on its side. The tyres begged for mercy as the car was put into four wheel drifted with plenty of wheelspin. This type of driving is great fun but would send the purist running to the parts box for slick tyres and anti-roll bars. Try to let the car drive you round corners and you will find the back end stepping out whereas power round and it has the tendency to understeer. This is definitely a car which requires your full concentration when driving on the limit!

A few minutes to let the car cool before Alex attempted to break the lap record with a single speed car left us to take a quick inspection. We found that the muffler had worked loose so did the manifold although this shouldn't happen if threadlock is used. The top screw on the brake had decided to part company but was easily remedied with a spare. Our second attempt on the track saw a fellow driver join us for an evaluation. This driver will surely wish to remain anonymous as he soon had the car on its roof after the second corner (he should have stuck to F1's instead of trying to mix it with the 'petrol heads'). The results of this

### Quick Spec

12 sized Nitro engine with recoil starter and slide carburettor.  
4 WD system with shaft drive. Twin deck chassis. All round independent wishbone suspension and Oil filled dampers.  
Length 379 mm  
Width 198 mm  
Height 102 mm  
Wheel base 258 mm  
Weight 1500 g  
Available as Mercedes CLK or Toyota Supra GT

### Likes

Stunning looks  
Throaty sounding engine  
Solid build  
Easy to work on  
Good acceleration  
Fun to drive

### Dislikes

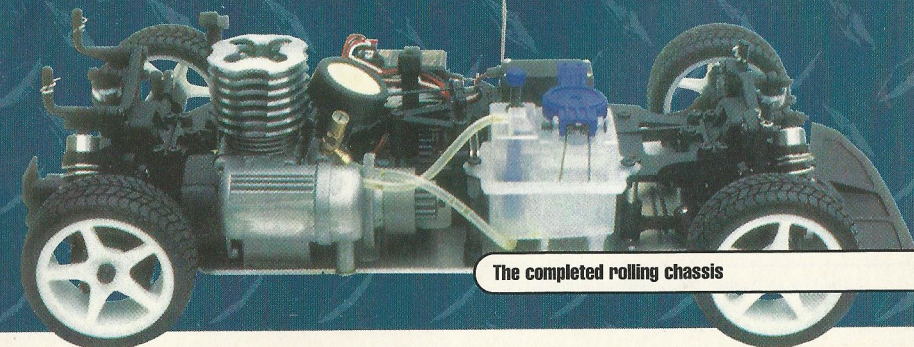
Decal material too thick  
No fuel filter  
Breakable antenna  
No class to race yet

slight diversion saw the aerial literally snap in half so for an extra quid fit one of those fluorescent jobs, the ones that bend.

The results of this test were that this is a car which is built with the pedigree of an off-road car and could benefit from some modifications such as a tuned pipe and two speed box. The Prime 12 is a very powerful car for its size and makes for some very hairy driving.

If you are thinking of buying this car for racing then find someone and somewhere to race it first. You could race it against pure 1/10th I.C.'s but you would find yourself being lapped every 2-3 laps, yet still have great fun doing so. Alternatively if you want to have some real fun in a parking lot with plenty of wheelspin then this is the car for you. At around £189 it is a real bargain and if looked after should provide hours of fun.

There are a few I.C. cars around at the moment trying to break into this fun category and some even have their own series but until the day dawns when you can see a series for this car it is off to the local tracks or car parks to have some fun! **RRR!**



The completed rolling chassis

