

The new "Panther Pro 12" complete with Osella bodyshell which is standard in the kit.

Keith Helmke tests the latest 1/12 racer

This is the first new car from Parma for some years and is a natural progression from their World Championship (won by Bud Bartos) and European Championship (Phil Olsen) winning car the 'Euro Panther'. Some of you will remember how competitive Chris Arnold and Phil Olsen were with the original 'Panther', but as trends changed the saddle pack type layout became unpopular and 'stick' type configuration was the norm. Even *Associated* following the 'C' car with this style of car. However Parma refused to change and events of the past year have shown they were right with *Associated*, *Schumacher* and *Corally* all producing saddle pack cars.

Enter Andy Dobson, who started working at Parma last year. Andy's brief was to make the 'Panther' work without changing the simplicity of the design too much. This job has now been completed and the results speak for themselves with the car winning many races in the States on carpet

and asphalt. So the 'Pro Panther 12' is launched in the UK and without a doubt is competitive out of the box.

The kit itself

On opening the box the first item inside was the bodyshell, this was a pleasant surprise as few 1/12th kits come with shells these days, especially one of this quality. The body is an 'Osella PA9' one of Parma's most popular shells.

After removal of the body we have the chassis, rear pod, all wheels and tyres plus four plastic bags all numbered, which contain parts for front beam assembly, and rear damper etc. The chassis plate itself is very similar to the original 'Panther' item and all holes are drilled correctly, and edges nicely routed. First thing worth doing here is to file a bevel onto the battery cut outs so they sit into the slots better. I then proceeded to build the front end of the car. This consists of a flat glass beam which sits on top of two spacer blocks and are held by a screw, through the chassis, block, and

beam and then a large nylon nut keeps it all together. For adjustment of the castor angle Parma supply nylon wedges which fit under the beam on top of the spacer. These are 1, 2 and 3 degree angles. Kingpins screw into the beam and small nylon moulded steering arms which incorporate the stub axle are dropped on. Suspension is coil spring which goes on next and then the washer and 'E' clip to finish the front end assembly. One of the nice touches is a threaded stub axle so that wheels are held on by a nylon nut and not 'O' rings or fiddly 'E' clips which always come off at the wrong moment!

Up the back

The newest part of the car is the rear flex plate which uses 'rockerball' type suspension. The balls are held in place by a two-piece nylon moulding which screws into the flex plate one at the rear of the chassis and one in the middle. It is well worth polishing the rockerballs before fitting as any binding

will obviously affect the car's handling. Tweak adjustment screws go just in front of rear rockers and use silicone tube to damp suspension movement. On top of the rear rocker goes a damper post of alloy tube and a 'C' car type glassfibre damper plate goes over this and is screwed onto the rear pod. The rear pod is one item I have always liked from the original car as it is a one-piece U shape folded alloy channel. The big advantage of this is the fact that there are no circlips to fall off or glue to crack when hit by another car, as on most other 1/12th cars. It is also very light.

To complete the car the superb Parma graphite diff is assembled and front and rear wheels put on. The wheels come with ready-trueed "Greens". Also in the kit are good quality ballraces and the longest glassfibre roll mast I have ever seen. I obviously haven't gone through the complete build bit by bit, but the instructions adequately cover this. Fitting your radio

gear is a job which needs a bit of time to do it neatly. If you use a mini receiver everything can go more or less up the front near the servo, but if your equipment is on the large size more work is needed to make a tidy-looking car.

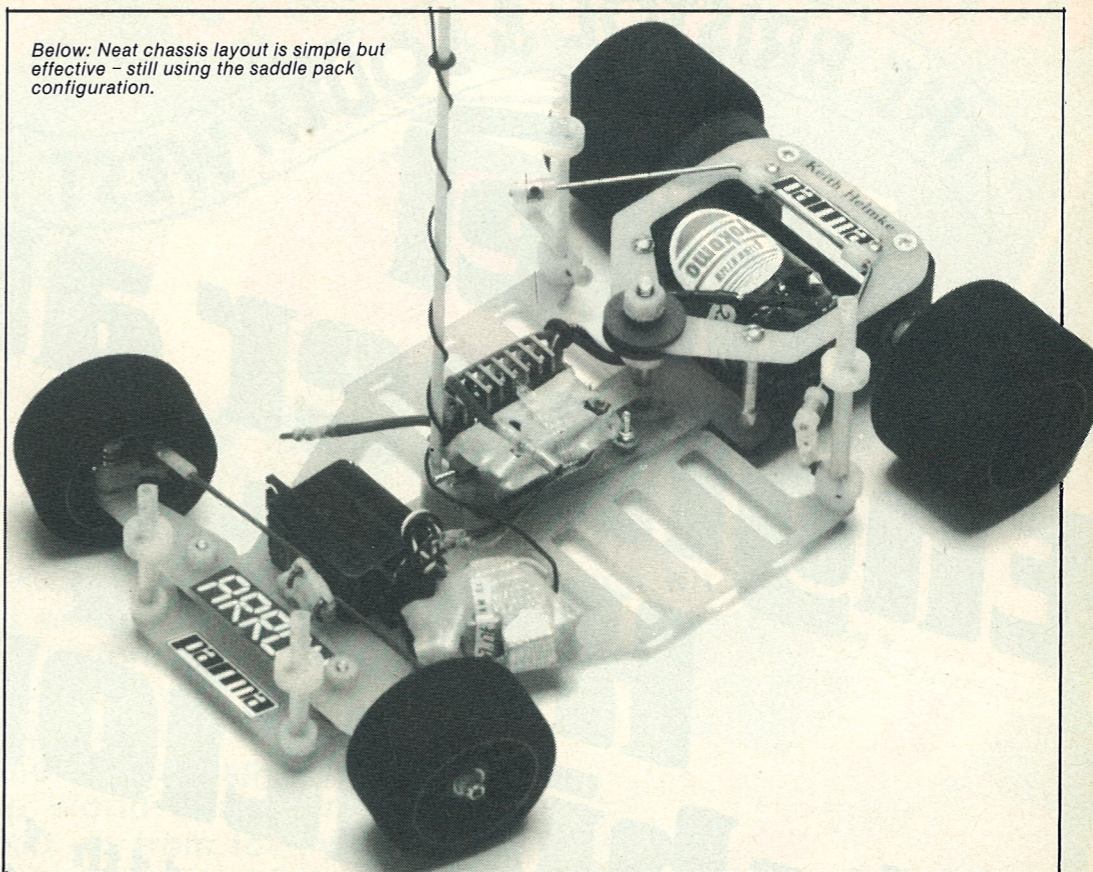
On the road

Eventually the Model Cars Parma 'Pro Panther' was ready for the track. With the tyres trued at 54mm rear and 48mm front, I was a bit worried the car could tip over as there is no rear ride height adjustment, as it happens this is not the case as the car handles fine. Ride height has gone down to 48mm rear and to the plastic on front rims and the car has stayed nicely balanced through three meetings. Castor angle was first tried at 2 degree but is now up to 3 (which is what the team is using). The car ran perfectly straight first time and turns in smoothly with just a slight hint of understeer out of very tight hairpins, but long sweeping corners can be taken flat out giving a feeling of confidence which increases with every lap.

Wheelbase is quite long compared to a 'C' car but 5mm shorter than LWB, Corally. Front and rear width is to BRCA legal maximum which makes the car very stable on the straight. The car rides bumps on the track very smoothly and has plenty of all-round grip. Because it is so light it is very kind to tyres, we have lost about 1/2mm per meeting from the rears which is very good.

Results by Andy Dobson are one thing but what about the rest of us. So far the Parma team drivers, Bill Boldison, Pat Hodge and Keith Helmke are said to be delighted with the car. They have been on the pace at Luton and Watford with A final places at two very competitive clubs.

All-in the 'Pro Panther' at £116.50 is very good value for money. You get all you need bar radio gear, speed control and motor. Parma importer Helger Racing will carry all the spares and these will be available from Parma dealers up and down the country, if you need them. Helger Racing will also be bringing over the new Parma 1/12th motor winds which should be available by the time you read this. Also Parma matched Sanyo's to complement your motors and 'Pro Panther 12', ready made in

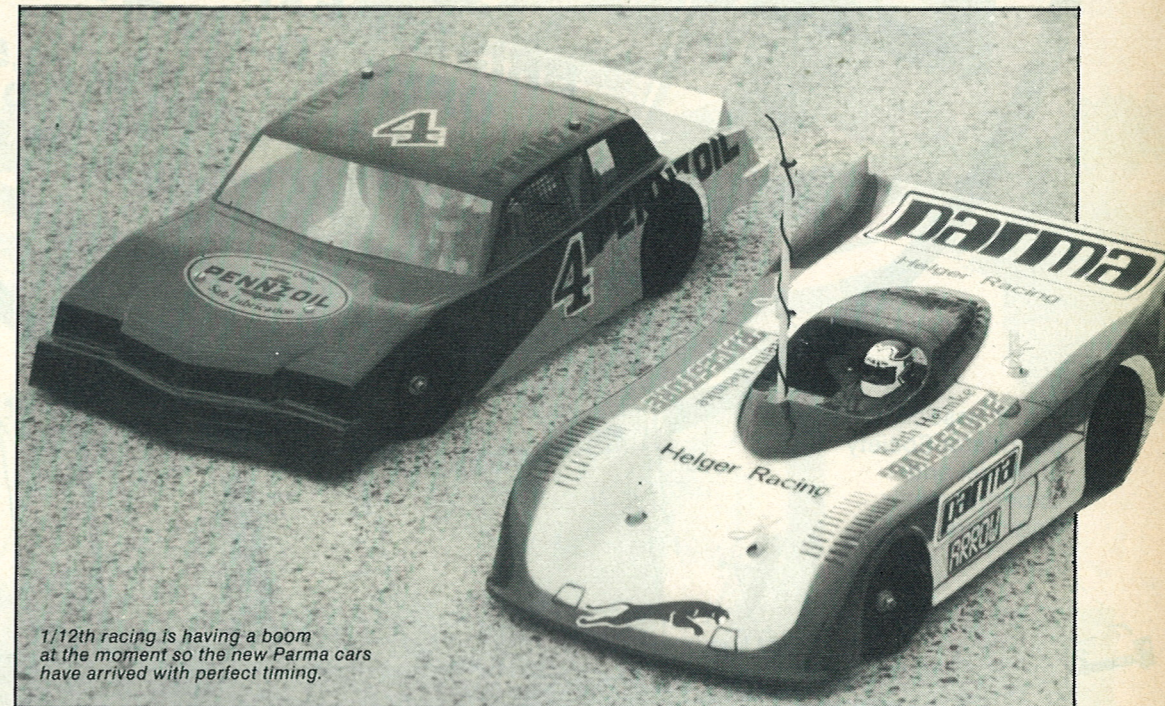


Below: Neat chassis layout is simple but effective - still using the saddle pack configuration.

saddle pack configuration can also be obtained from your nearest Parma dealer.

So with the resurgence of 1/12th racing carrying on, this car seems to have come onto

the market at the right time, for beginner and expert alike. Ignore it at your peril!



1/12th racing is having a boom at the moment so the new Parma cars have arrived with perfect timing.

PRO PANTHER 12