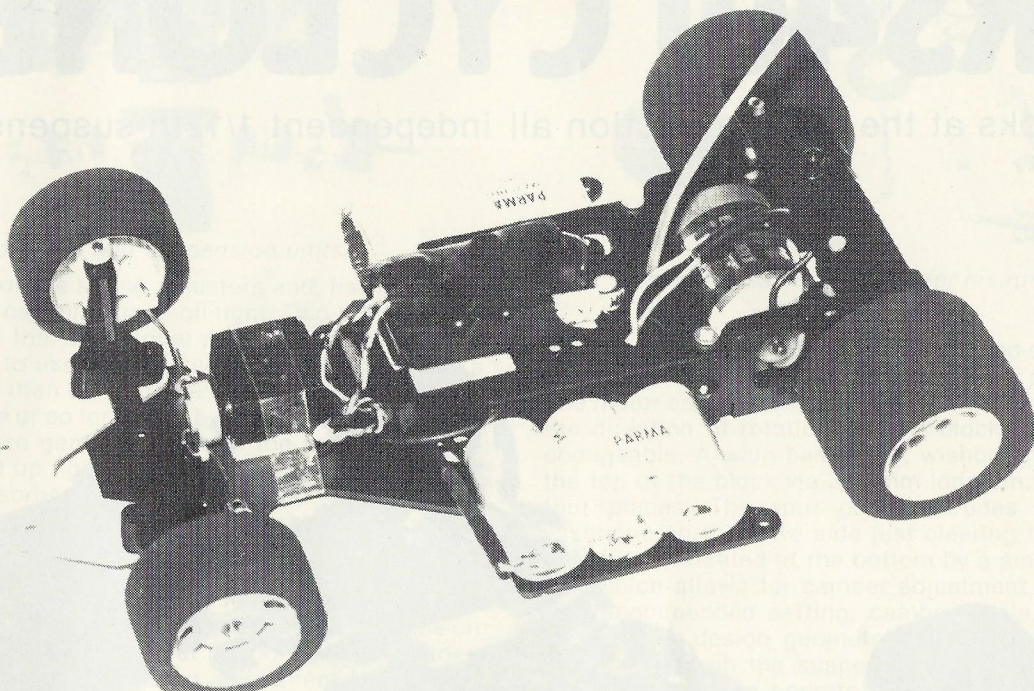


PARMA SUSPENSION PANTHER



THE original Parma Panther, reviewed in a previous issue of Radio Race Car, never received much attention in this country, as at the time, lexan cars, and silicone tyres, were all the rage. However, this new version should prove to be quite popular, and could well provide some opposition to the 'other firm' at national level. Finn Ghersoe from Denmark used one to great effect to win his country's National championship, and if that isn't a recommendation, what is?

The review kit is the complete version, only needing radio gear and paint for the bodyshell to be ready for the track. The chassis, which is really the nicest example I have ever seen is very similar to a Delta car, as is the rear end springing plate. The chassis is slotted for six cells, in packs of three either side, to sit through the plate virtually flush with the underside, giving a low centre of gravity.

The flex plate, which is the thicker of the two available, suits high grip carpet very well, although I feel that it could be cut down considerably to reduce weight, without reducing its effectiveness. Adjustment of the flex is allowed by tightening the nylon lock-nut in front of the radio plate pillar.

The two-piece motor pod is exactly the same as on the original car, but it retains a feature that is now especially useful, to me anyway! The rear axle bearings sit in adjustable cams that provide a variation of axle height in the chassis. This allows you to start racing with quite large tyres and low ground clearance, then as the tyres wear, with a change of gear ratio of course, you can alter the ride height to allow for the smaller tyres. Very useful if you like to get your money's worth!

With the rear pod mounted on the flex plate, the whole assembly flops about quite a bit. The necessary damping is provided by three rubber grommets, two at the rear of the radio plate and one above the radio plate pillar. By judicious adjustment of the screws through the grommets, a good degree of damping is achieved.

Going to the opposite end of the car, another useful refinement reveals itself in the form of a camber

adjustment screw in the middle of the cross-bar. Tightening or loosening this screw (with the four mounting screws slackened off) gives an easy camber change without having to resort to using shims, a feature I particularly like. The springing action is good, but letting go of the spring, whilst putting the 'E' clips on the kingpin, results in flying 'E' clips, and our kitchen floor is exactly the wrong colour for finding them again! These things are sent to try us.

Finishing off the car was simplicity itself. I used Phantom body posts mounted on the chassis in front of the rear wheels, to allow the rear end to flex without binding on the shell (not shown on the photographs) and a Phantom post at the front, as these are lighter than the kit items.

The receiver was mounted on top of the radio plate, and my trusty Demon 2c underneath, a very neat arrangement which also kept the weight down low. The instructions tell you to mount the steering servo upside-down, on three layers of servo tape, to eliminate bump steer. I substituted a piece of 3/16" balsa for one layer, to eliminate some of the sponginess inherent in the tape. The servo and cells were then securely taped to the chassis.

Now for the interesting bit. What does it go like? On kit tyres (Parma medium rears and firmish fronts with TEAC the whole width of the fronts), it was very stable, and I thought, ideal for a beginner. Changing to fronts made from Parma medium rears, I found the handling I was looking for, and began to explore its capabilities. I can say no more than I was very pleased indeed! You can really throw it about without it tramping or exhibiting any other nasty tendencies.

Altogether, I like this kit. Everything is supplied, including short stroke resistor and wiper, silicone lead wire connectors and wire roll-over antenna. Unfortunately, it is rather on the heavy side, but no more so than other American kit cars. I will be looking into reducing its weight now I know how it performs. Try one, and put a Panther in YOUR paws!!