



**This 1/10th scale Ready To Run buggy from Japan is reviewed by JOHN VARLEY**



Playtron have supplied us with their 2-wheel drive contribution to the 1/10th off-road scene, the Doberman.

Those knowledgeable people will study the review photographs and think that the layout of this car appears familiar to them. Tamiya can feel flattered that the familiarity is to their Frog car, so popular not so long ago.

Chassis design, new suspension arms, gearbox design and shock absorber location, all bear close resemblance to the above mentioned car.

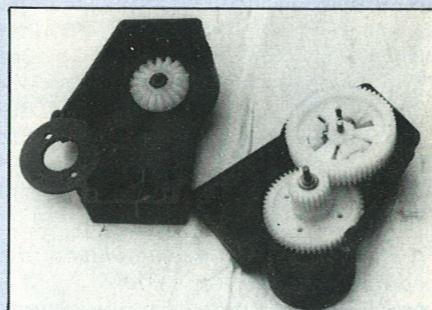
To many, the one major advantage over the kits that the Doberman can offer, is that it comes ready built. Ready built that is, with the exception of radio and bodyshell, which has to be painted and trimmed.

Immediately obvious is the overall simplicity of the car, which is strikingly moulded in contrasting black and yellow with lightweight white nylon hubs.

The space frame design chassis, is moulded into two sections, held together simply with self tapping screws. A separate front bulkhead member and two bracing spacers at the bottom of the frame are employed. Rigidity at the rear is effected by means of clamping the chassis members to the gearbox housing. This then becomes a stressed member and gives the entire assembly extreme rigidity.

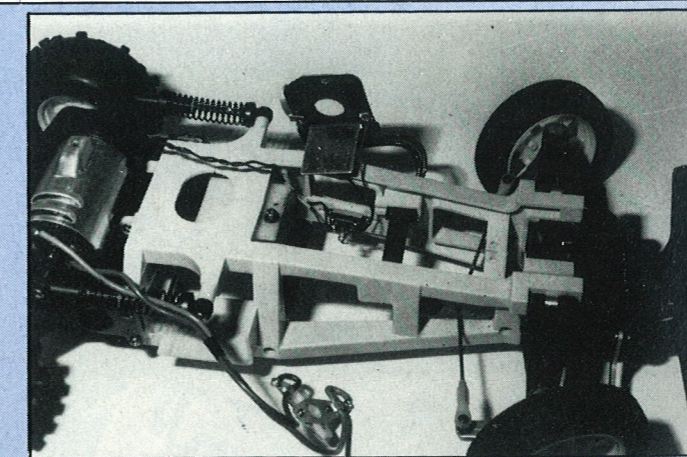
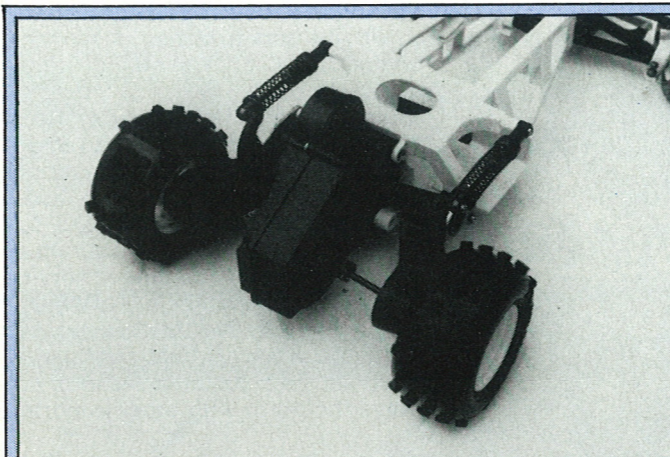
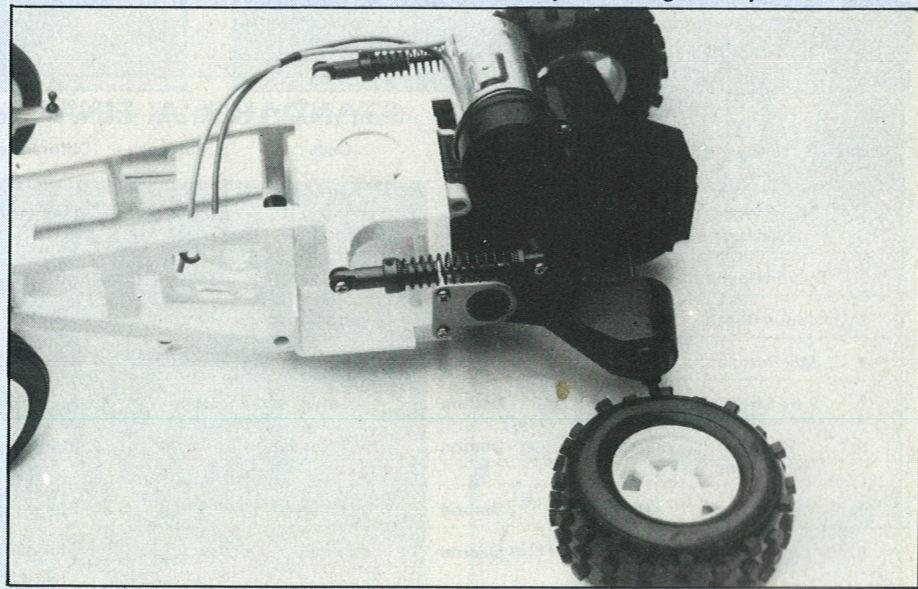
Provisions are made in the chassis design, for simple transverse battery pack location. The batteries are positioned as low as possible, to compensate for the second heaviest article on the car, the motor, which is positioned quite high on the gearbox.

Servos for steering and throttle are located longitudinally on the centre line of the chassis and ample flat area is provided behind the throttle servo for positioning of the receiver.

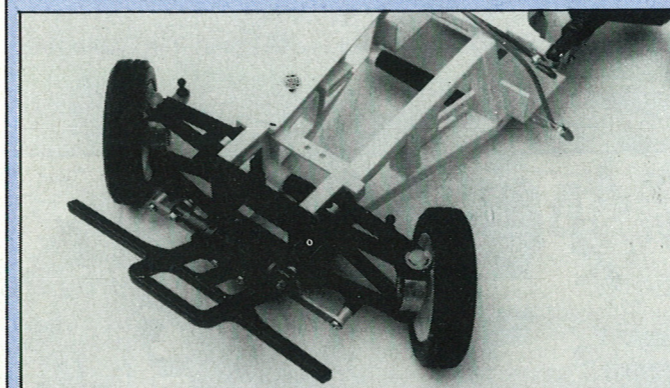


**Gear box opened up showing drive gears and sturdy nylon diff. unit.**

**Rear suspension has individual shocks and simple trailing link system.**



**The open space frame chassis makes for a light but strong unit and, as can be seen in these photos, maintenance is made easy by keeping the structure simple but functional.**

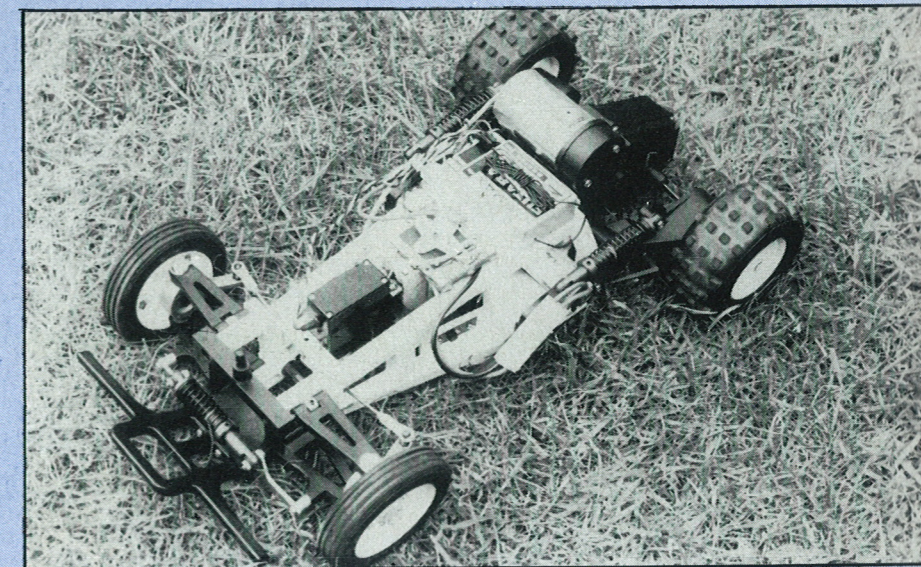


The front suspension is by unequal length wishbones, offering little adjustment to the suspension geometry. One adjustment the owner can make is the castor angle, simply altered by loosening the alloy collar between the upper wishbone pivot points and sliding the whole along the pivot pin. This movement is no more than 3mm and in my opinion, is too little adjustment to effect the castor angle, to in turn, have much effect on the front end grip in corners.

An oil filled, adjustable coil spring mono shock absorber is used on this front suspension, located between the lower wishbones.

Suspension travel at the front is small, but can be enhanced by the 'Rocking' motion of the assembly through the pivoting bell cranks, that link the wishbone with the shock absorber.

Steering arms are substantial die-castings, with steel ball joint king pins screwed into top and bottom of the arm. Snap-in king pin pivots in nylon, are held in both wishbones by circlips and the stub axles run in bronze bushes retained in the steering arm. The robust nature of the steering arm, has allowed for centre point steering, giving responsive precise movements to the front wheel. This should show advantages when this car is raced indoors on carpet, where the indecisive



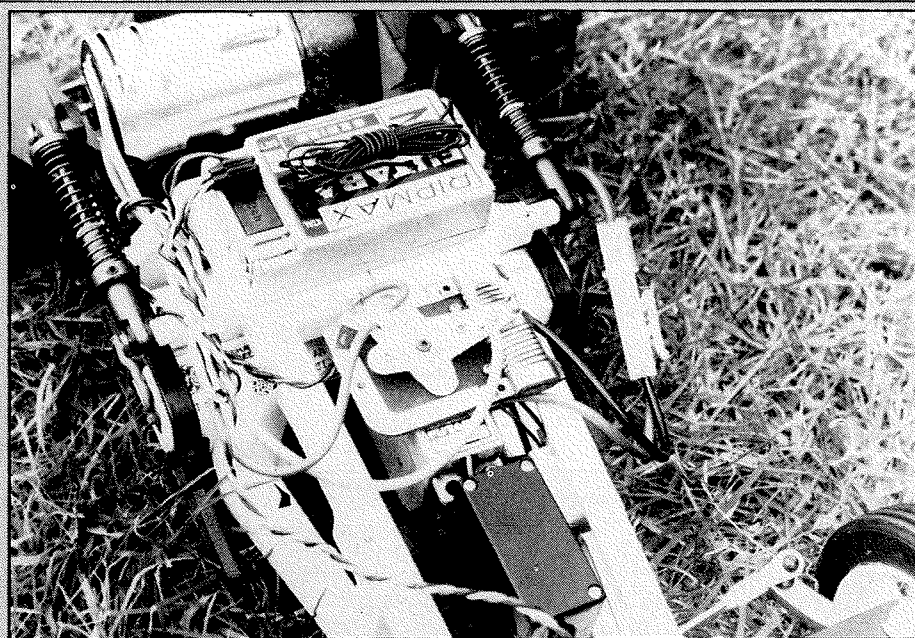
nature of some 1/10th cars steering, results in their downfall.

Rear suspension is through a trailing arm, pivoted inboard through nylon bushings in the gearbox and outboard through alloy plates, clamped to the main chassis. Extensions to the trailing arms allow for location of the oil filled coil-over-shock suspension units, with these dampers linked up with the extended lugs on the main chassis.

We opened up the gearbox to see what we got for our money and find that all gears are nylon moulded, including the bevel differential. The differential has fairly large diametral pitch gears, which should withstand well, the rigours of regular competition.

Drive from the gearbox is through the traditional steel half shafts with ball and pin ends.

Supplied with the kit and coming



*Very neat wire wound resistor type speed control helps for straightforward R/C installation.*

ready fitted with a 20 tooth pinion, is an Igorashi type motor of unknown wind, but judging by its revs. on a full battery pack and straightline speed in use, could be somewhere in the 30-32 turn region. The motor is directly wired to Playtron's own resistor board speed controller.

The forward speed section is of a fairly short stroke, giving relatively quick throttle response. Full speed reverse comes into effect at the extreme opposite end of the resistor and the balance of the resistor, allows for adjustable braking.

Also coming ready wired into the controller is the radio switch, including diodes, to exclude separate radio batteries.

To finalise, we have two-part light-weight nylon wheel hubs, front and rear, with knobbly semi-pneumatic tyres to the rear and narrow ribbed to the front.

A Lexan body with aerofoil is supplied for your own trimming and final painting.

In conclusion then, we find the Playtron Doberman a simple no nonsense lightweight racing car. With the right radio equipment installed, and with the usual receiver case cast off, it would be no problem to get down to, and below, the limit of 3lb.

With its lightweight, it was a little nervous on hard surfaces, but nothing that couldn't be got used to. Softening the suspension to get better damping, only further reduces the rather low ground clearance that comes as standard. On carpet and undulating well cut grass circuits it has a nice handleable power understeer characteristic, with quick acceleration out of corners.

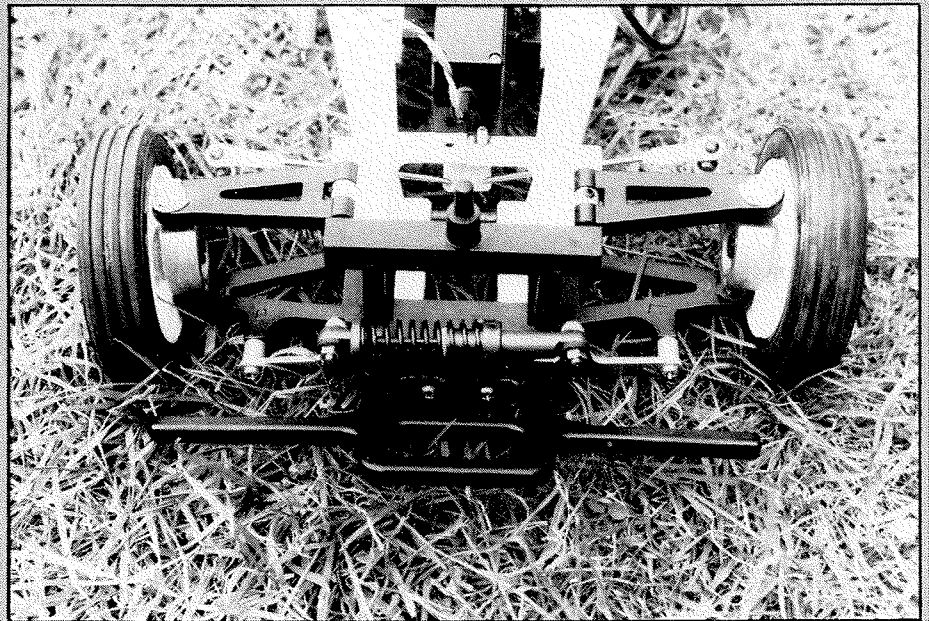
As mentioned earlier, wide range alterations to the car's handling are restricted by the limited adjustments to the front suspension.

Personally, we rather like the little car with its 'back to basics' design and nervous low C of G handling (rather like a 1/12th car).

Amerang Ltd, the importers of this and other Playtron kits, soon to be reviewed in the pages of this magazine, have stated that they intend to invest highly in both Playtron kits and full back-up spares service. Assurances are also given of a guaranteed service for spares between Japan and the UK, amounting to a five day turn round. Such assurances are vital when building up satisfied customers and is not always the norm with other imported kits.

Playtron Doberman 1/10th kit available through Amerang Ltd., Lancing, Sussex. Recommended retail price £99.95 but look out for offers from your local model shops.

Say you read about it in Radio Race Car.



*Front suspension uses single monoshock system. Works well but could benefit from an anti-roll bar.*

