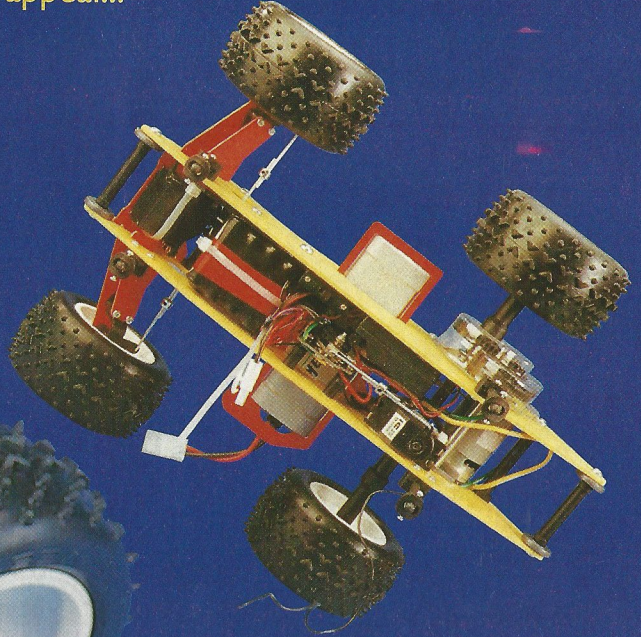


It's been over a year since we took a look at the pre-production version of Schumacher's wheelie wagon for beginners. Since then they've changed chassis material a bit and have added an optional Mini body, a canny choice that should give the Vyper even more sales appeal...



To save you searching through piles of old issues of your favourite R/C car mag for the original Vyper review, I'll give you a clue - April '95, p.10, author Mike Caine. Not a lot of people know that... Got it? There's not really a lot that I need to add to Mike's excellent description of the Vyper's chassis as all that's really changed in the kit version is that the big yellow banana shaped side frames are now made from plastic rather than from glass fibre. You'll remember that Mike was not best pleased at having to clean up the frames before screwing the chassis together, but this is a thing of past as the plastic parts are cleanly moulded. The battery holder and front suspension wishbone are made from red glass fibre sheet, as per the pre-production car, and these need cleaning up in a couple of places to get rid of the sprue marks where they are cut from the master sheet but this only takes a few seconds with a small file.

Bolting it all together

Read Mike's review again and you'll find that nothing's changed in the assembly department, even down to this reviewer missing out the front wishbone and the battery holder before screwing together the two side frames, just like Mike did! Seems that our Ed has also done the same thing with his Vyper, but Schumacher can't really be blamed for this as the instructions do show these parts to be fitted in place before adding the second sideframe. Perhaps all that's needed is for the instructions to give more emphasis on fitting these vital parts at the right time?

I was also a bit stumped after cutting the body posts to length as shown in the instructions, only to find out later that, having finished the car, they were

too short to reach the Mini body. It then dawned on me that the instructions were aimed at fitting the original Vyper body, which has no roof! Luckily, the RCMC office had an old Schumacher buggy chassis in stock from which I cannibalised a set of full length body posts and this time I made sure that they reached up to the Mini before cutting them to length. How about an amendment sheet for fitting the Mini body, SRP?

Apart from these minor hiccups, the Vyper went together easily and quickly in one evening, leaving only the body to be sprayed. I made a big mistake here by using an unfamiliar brand of paint, supplied in a high pressure can. The paint ricocheted off the sides of the body and I ended up with more runs than Ian Botham! In future, I'll stick with my favourite brand of paint, even if it does cost a few pence more.

Gear mod

One of the developments that Schumacher have made is to beef up the motor support. If really abused (running through long grass etc.) the original Vyper would shout surrender by stripping the main pinion. Although rare, this has been made even less likely by replacing the plastic chassis

spacer which holds the pinion idler shaft with a steel spacer. A plastic motor spacer is slid onto the shaft, this being cut out to support the rear of the motor case.

R/C model aircraft are my main interest in life, so most of my gear is on 35 MHz. As you probably know, aeromodellers swapped to this waveband in the early 80's following the introduction of CB radio on 27 MHz. This move was made to stop our models spiralling out of the sky every time Rubber Duck and his mates drove by! All of my 27 MHz gear dates back to this time but it still works just fine, hence the old Acoms receiver fitted to the Vyper. However, I couldn't let the Vyper suffer the slow speed and square output drive of the original Acoms servos, so I fitted a couple of modern Sanwa units instead. These were mounted using the grippy servo tape supplied, backed up with tie-wraps.

The biggest drawback of using old gear is that you can't use the 7.2V BEC connector from the mechanical speed controller to drive the 5V radio as it will shove a couple of extra volts into the receiver, bringing its long life to a rapid end. I therefore had to fit a separate four cell AA battery pack to power the radio, secured to the front chassis spacers with tie-wraps. Obviously any newcomers to the hobby will be sold a modern BEC equipped receiver and this can be connected direct to the speed controller, as intended.

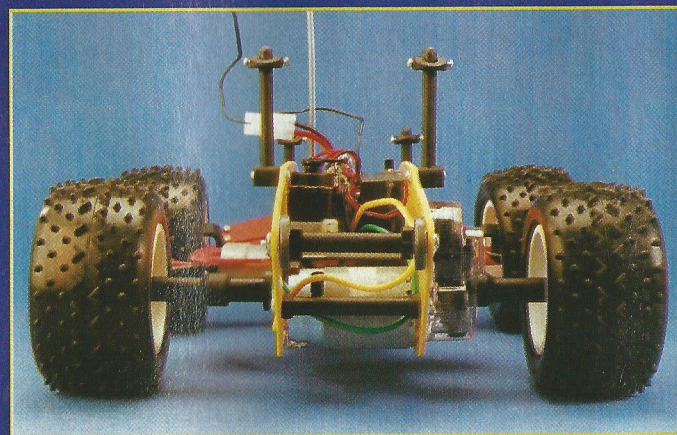
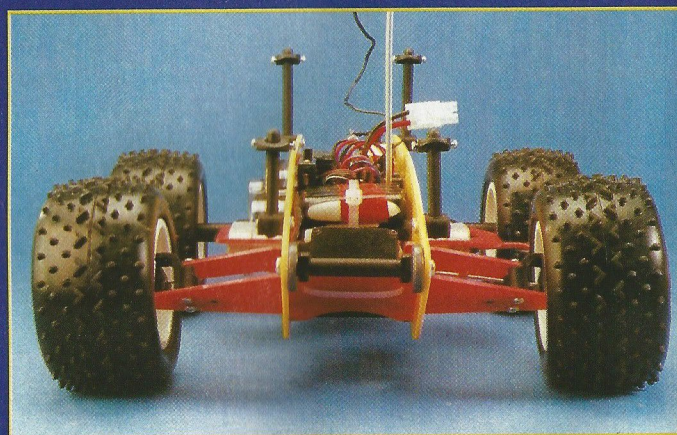
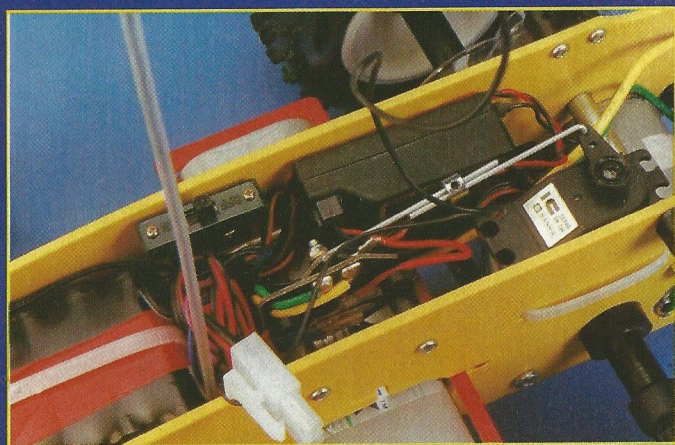
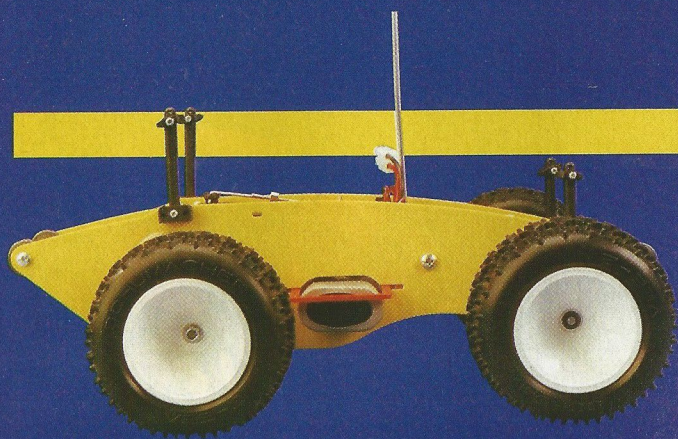
On the run

After posing for photos (the car, that is), we took Vyper out to a neighbouring office car park for a test drive. First impressions were that it certainly wouldn't out burn a race prepped Cougar, but top speed really doesn't matter with a fun/beginners class car such as this. What matters is that it's not slow enough to be boring, yet neither so fast that it won't bounce when a new driver bangs it into a kerb or brick wall.

What it has got is plenty enough poke to get it way up on those mighty back monster tyres, pulling six foot wheelies across the tarmac. It also does a great line in full speed pirouettes. Get it onto dirt and these are even more fun - you can't see Vyper for dust as it blasts around!

Despite a pretty good first outing, RCMC Ed thought that the performance was a bit below par, this being confirmed when he picked the car up and spun the back axle. Things were obviously a bit tight here as it

Wheelie Great



Under the Mini body shell is found a simple two piece plastic chassis and new stronger drive system. 540 motor sits at the rear and with encouragement the car will pull a full blown wheelie!

squeaked like a demented hamster on its exercise wheel. There's no way to alter the mesh of the gears (Vyper's designed this way to make it easy to set up), so it had to be the rear axle binding in its plastic bearings that was causing the trouble. Luckily, I've got a good selection of slippery stuff from playing with R/C helicopters and a smear of moly grease around the bearings soon had the back wheels loosened up. If you want to make the Vyper really go, then you would be wise to buy a set of proper ballraces for the rear axles and front wheels.

Beginners start here

With everything nicely loosened up, I handed the Vyper over to my six year old son, Daniel, who's the nearest person I know who fits the bill as a true beginner, having only ever driven a Tomy toy buggy before. I set him up in the middle of the grass patch at my local model

flying club (don't worry, there were no other flyers around to give him a low flying haircut!) and gave him a short briefing on the controls. He was soon tearing around doing pirouettes and wheelies all by himself. I know that the Vyper was giving him a good lesson in steering control as every time I turned my back to set up my plane, Vyper would appear at full tilt and aimed directly at my pride and joy. Thanks to its relatively low speed, I managed to head it off every time but I know which would have come off worse if it had made contact - and it wouldn't have been the Vyper!

Since then Daniel's had a go in an empty car park surrounded by brick walls, with which he seemed to have a magnetic attraction. Vyper took quite a few hefty thumps and came out unscathed, so it looks like its got a long life ahead of it - just the thing for junior drivers of all ages!

