

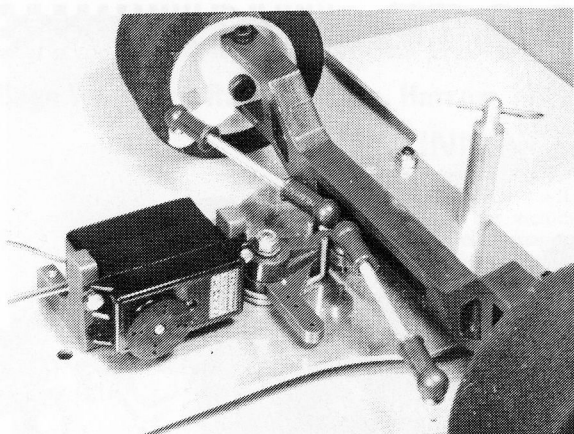
SERPENT III Competition

SERPENT III will be the one to watch this season. It has attracted a splendid team of drivers to back up the faithful Peter Bervoets who long led the company challenge. Now Ronnie Ton has teamed up as well as Dennis Tassaux from Belgium so, with Cromberge they are very strong indeed. Already in the last weeks of 1978 events were beginning to fall to the marque. However, although promises of a kit to play with in September, it was through into the new year before I got it, which shows that the step from prototype to production is no easy one.

What's special about the Serpent? It is almost alone now in still being faithful to an all metal chassis (when glassfibre is taking over nearly everywhere). This is in the usual two parts, a lighter main plate with a stout power pod to carry the works. Power pod is elegant in a satin finish, rebated to take waisted front chassis plate and also at the rear for the bumper. Steering crossbeam is cambered, steering arms moulded in nylon; servo saver of Serpent pattern has simple springing release. Lightweight nylon wheels have an attractive open simulated "wirewheel" design. Radio plate is stamped out to shape but not drilled, so that matching holes for attachment must be made as well as those for the four radio gear attachment posts, holes for fuel tank and servo cut

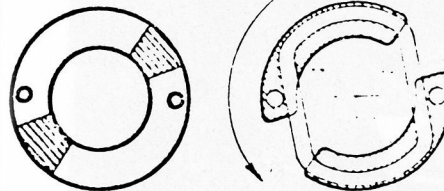
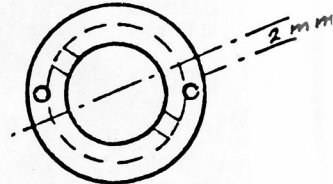
out, plus securing holes for radio on/off switch. Some of these are wisely left to allow choice of radio equipment but I hope later production kits will have at least fuel tank and chassis attachment holes cut out. A very neat disc brake is provided with pivot post bracket in anodised blue. This is secured to power pod with castlenuts through predrilled holes. Fibre disc presses onto robust square locating piece held on to axle with allen screw. A similar pre-cut hole in the crown wheel is a positive fit for the hexagonal block that holds it in place. Plummer blocks are, almost needless to say these days, ballraced. Front and rear bumpers are shaped, but, again not drilled for securing bolts -- giving some latitude in precise adjustment. The very popular Serpent silencer is provided as part of the kit in matching blue anodising. A hole is drilled in power pod to secure it in place.

Fuel tank is of nylon in two main parts plus tubing into the sump and a spring loaded quickfiller cap. A rubber seal ensures that the two basic parts are fully sealed, and the units are firmly fixed with eight selftap screws. A further two screws secure the tank to the radio plate. Up front steering links are threaded type with ball-joints of robust size. Servo saver has a wide range of fixing holes for adjustment: the unused half to be cut away before



Steering crossbeam, steering arms and fail-safe. Note servo brackets.

Flywheel, clutch, shoes and bellhousing detail.



Clutch shoes detail.

lot of races — sometimes for Mr. Nobodies who would never have believed it of themselves! It is also going to encourage a lot of people to produce embellishments to go on it to precision limits which are not really necessary but will delight those enthusiasts who look on their cars as male jewellery.

operation. Small mounts are provided to take servos. These are unthreaded and must be drilled to suit equipment and also to secure to radio plate or chassis. Motor mounts are bored and threaded to attach to power pod, which has a couple of slots each side to allow a degree of longitudinal adjustment. Mounts must be drilled and tapped to suit engine of choice.

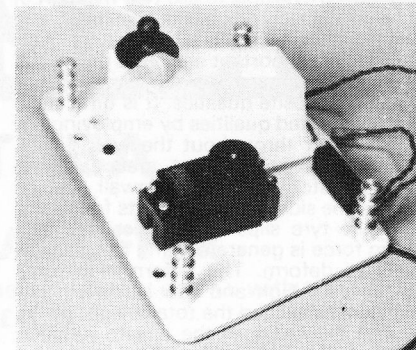
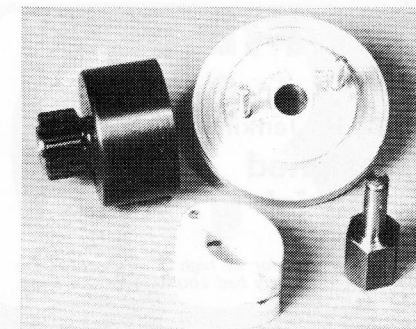
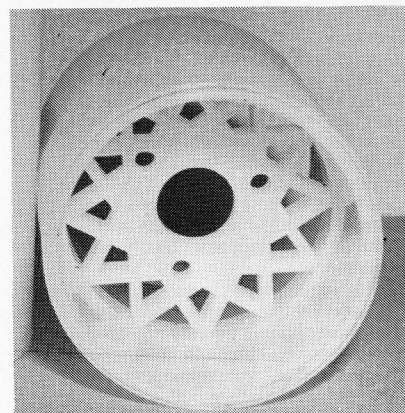
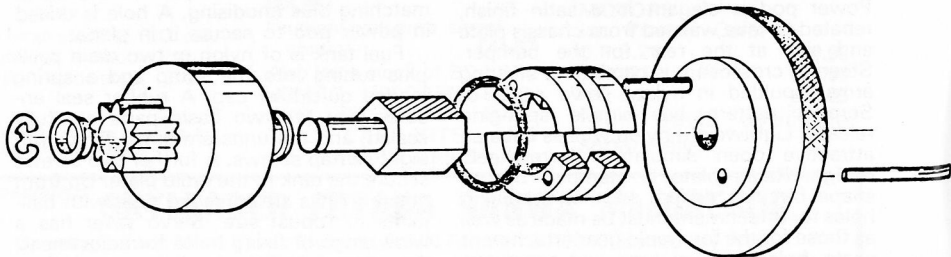
Front bumper is of goodly size and can be trimmed back to suit a variety of bodyshells. I had thought to use the popular Porsche 917 body but Ken MacDowell has just sent me his latest Mercedes shell and it seems a good opportunity to use that — it seems with very few liberties that it will prove an equally good fit. Both shells of course are Parma Lexan and worth taking a bit of trouble painting up in style.

This is not one of those kits which need a lot of explanation to build. FWF Engineering provide an exploded drawing with all the parts numbered and named in English; plus photos of the assembled car with four close-ups of special points of interest. Added to this there is a fullsize drawing of the radio plate (but use the chassis as template for drilling fixing holes,

sometimes paper shrinkage is quite remarkable — and you can miss!) and a diagrammatic sketch for fuel tank put-together. Clutch/bell housing merits another little sketch but there is nothing revolutionary here: the usual two shoe clutch with an O-ring round them. Gears are part of the bellhousing and held on with a circlip so that quick change for change of ratio or replacement is easy.

Slight novelty: the shoes come in a single round and require to be sawn in two and some small parts discarded. Sketches show how: the expert will do it his way anyhow!

Having got this far what should we say about the Serpent III? There is a saying in the aircraft industry: "Add some simplicity!" This, essentially is what has been done with this car. It has no gimmicks, no sure fire different bit that is going to revolutionise racing. It is a good simple basic car with very little to go wrong or to go out of kilter. Like a simple camera which never lets you spoil a simple picture by forgetting to do something, this car will do its designed job of going ahead fast. Apart from its team of skilled drivers which will help a lot of course, it is going to win a



Top: Clutch and bellhousing parts.

Above: Radio plate with fuel tank and throttle servo installed.

Left: Detail of nylon wheel hub.

Below left: Fuel tank detail.

Below: Disc brake, engine mounts and silencer.

