

Over the past two years Tamiya have very successfully promoted the Tamiya Eurocup Series for F1 cars initially and additionally Touring cars in the last year. Having competed in both classes I can safely say that all participants have thoroughly enjoyed the aspects of economical, close racing and the friendly competition that the series has spawned.

I suspect that it is with this in mind that Tamiya have introduced their latest R/C racer, the all new front wheel drive Honda Civic, as a new class in the Eurocup Series for 1994. The front wheel drive format in tarmac racer form is yet another first for Tamiya. When I first heard rumours a couple of months ago I was very sceptical about its handling capabilities, having briefly driven a front wheel drive off-road car a few years back and not being particularly impressed. However, this car has the motor mounted in front of the front axle making it appear like a back-to-front two wheel drive off-road car - highly unconventional but could it work?

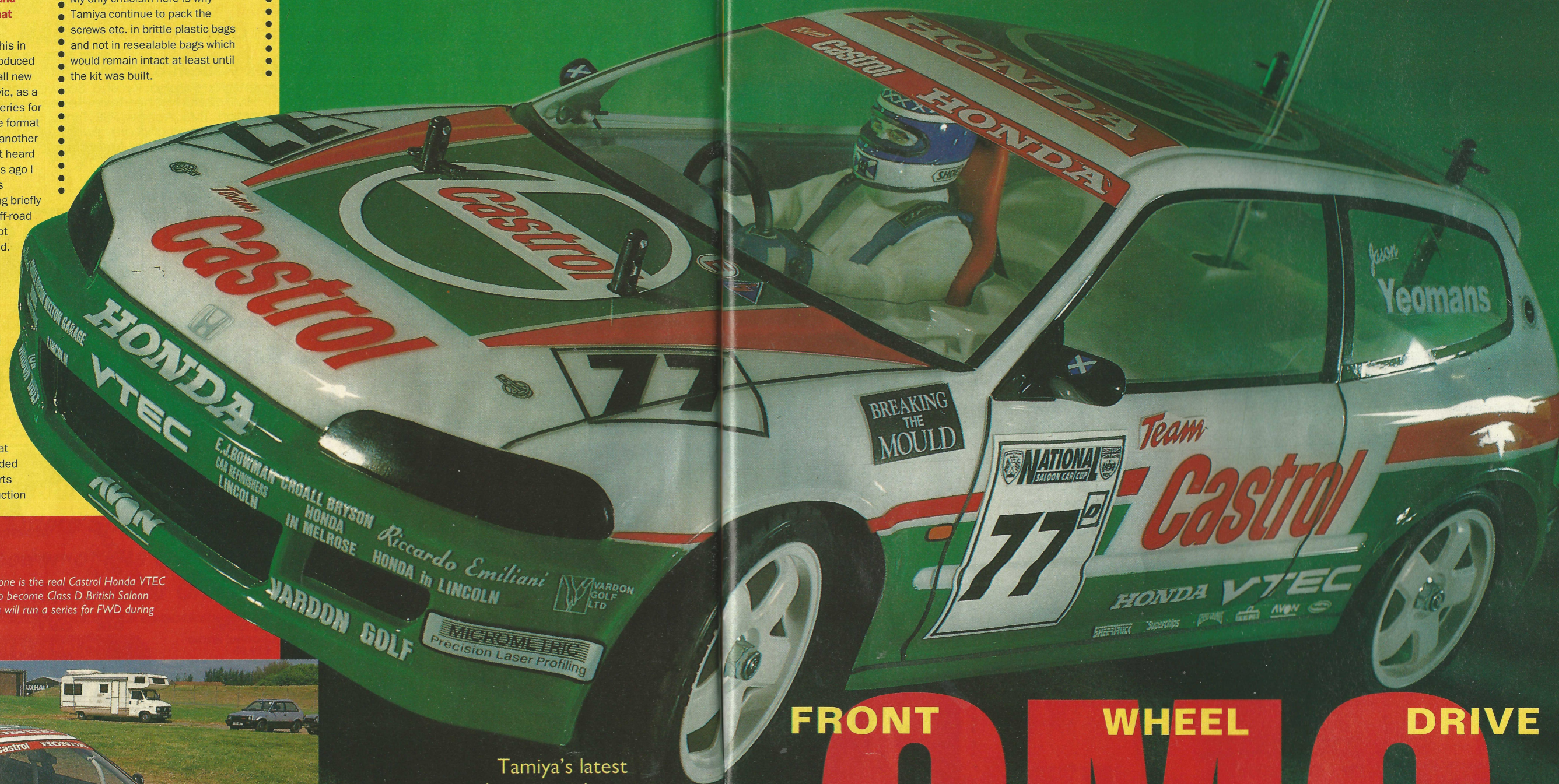
Presentation

The kit presentation is in the usual excellent format with clearly identified moulded parts and bagged small parts with diagrams in the instruction

Below; Caught at Silverstone is the real Castrol Honda VTEC Civic - the car went on to become Class D British Saloon Car Champion... Tamiya will run a series for FWD during 1994.

REMC KIT REVIEW

- booklet to double check if required.
- My only criticism here is why Tamiya continue to pack the screws etc. in brittle plastic bags and not in resealable bags which would remain intact at least until the kit was built.



FRONT WHEEL DRIVE

CMC

Tamiya's latest saloon car release mimics the British Saloon Car Championship winner, Adrian Jacob takes a look at this FWD charger.



Construction

This is as straightforward as a kit can be, providing the instructions are followed. The ball type differential is the first sub-assembly to be constructed and probably requires the most care in ensuring the parts are assembled in the correct order. Full marks for including a ball differential as this enables fine tuning of handling and acceleration by adjusting the tension. Unfortunately no guidance is given on how to achieve optimum adjustment. The front and rear sub-assemblies are next to be constructed. A choice of spur gears (66 or 71 tooth is provided for use with the 24 tooth pinion gear. Clear mesh is set by inspection through a small hole in the side of the gear box. A small swing cover seals this hole to prevent dirt entering – a nice touch oil filled dampers are supplied, the front ones using different pistons to the rears, don't get them mixed up.

A mechanical speed controller is included which is perfectly adequate for use with the standard motor, and being front wheel drive the controllers stepped characteristics are smoothed out.

The completed chassis assembly forms a very rigid structure which is essential for good handling.

There are limited adjustments possible which is a good thing for novices. For others fine tuning can be achieved by altering damper oil, toe-in, ride height and front damper positions. The clear polycarbonate body is moulded to a very high standard with body mounting holes and wheel arches pre-cut, window masks are also provided for spray painting. The suggested scheme uses only white paint, all other details are stickers. The full lightweight interior is velcroed in place once it has been painted.

Driving

The car was set up as per the instructions with the 66 tooth spur gear and tested at West London Racing Centre, initially as a demonstration at the Tamiya Eurocup finals then more comprehensively at one of the Touring Car meetings. The predictions of the designer are quite correct, using the kit motor the car can be driven at full throttle using the steering lock to control the speed, a knack quite easily acquired.

In a straight line at top speed the steering response is surprisingly nimble – no excuses

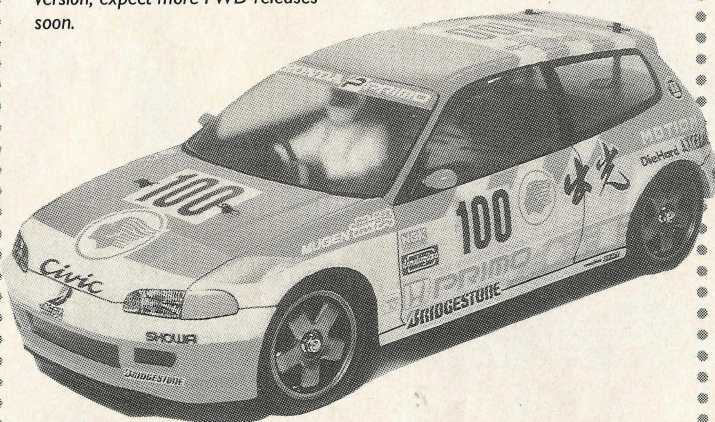
with this car for crashing into back markers whilst trying to overtake. Cornering shows the front wheel drives inherent tendency to understeer meaning in practice it was very stable entering the corner. Letting off power increased the turn-in, to the extent that if braking was applied sharply the back end would overtake the front (oversteer). On accelerating out of the corner the most noticeable disadvantage of front wheel drive was apparent – wheelspin, which bogged down the acceleration dramatically. However having the front wheels drag the car out of the corner made taking the right line very predictable.

“Driving the Honda Civic consists of keeping the power hard down and trying to judge when the car will stop understeering”.

Right now let's have fun

The best way to show any handling deficiencies is to push the car to its limits – so pop in a handy 16 Triple motor (using some gearing), install a Speedmaster Goldstar electronic speed controller, push the go stick and wow the speed was in the region of

Alternative body set is this Mugen version, expect more FWD releases soon.



the Touring cars but best of all the handling was still totally predictable. The only factors increased were the wheelspin and the fun! WLRC track's sweeping bend could still be taken at full throttle with turn-in to spare but now you have to let off the throttle going into bends, so in order to minimise wheelspin going out of the corner it was essential to keep the momentum going through the corner which means taking the correct racing line – just like the real thing.

I was so impressed, I decided to drive it in one of the Touring car heats to give a fair comparison. As expected against fully sorted 4 wheel drive cars I fell behind the competition, essentially due to wheelspin coming out of the corners. Straight line speed and cornering on the fast sweeper were on par. I finished approximately 2 laps down on FTD. But bear in mind, a) I was using kit rubber tyres, the rest were using sponge tees with traction additives b) we were racing 4 minute heats with most competitors using seriously low wind motors and low gearing, c) I had ample power left to run, I guess another two minutes (I couldn't meter it as other hands wanted a go).

In conclusion the car is tremendous fun to drive, is totally predictable, easy for the beginner to learn to drive and challenging for the expert to improve the handling in standard form. In other words absolutely ideal for a club saloon series and the Eurocup '94.

Whether it is successful or very successful will depend on the modifications allowed for racing, particularly electronic speed controllers and limited cost modified motors which although increase the cost do significantly improve the fun factor which is what this car and the Eurocup series is all about.

Points worth noting about this kit

a) the motor is situated in front of the front axle line and hence improves traction over the driving wheels. Protection for the motor and gearbox seems adequate although some may prefer to attach additional rubber cushioning for that inevitable front end crash.

b) the rear wheels are set toe-out instead of the usual straight or toe-in this would tend to imply that this set-up would give slight straight-line twitchiness but reduce understeer (i.e. tendency to go straight on) in corners.

c) the steering lock is limited, not that this affects the steering ability of the car, but at full transmitter stick travel the servo (I used a Futaba 148) will probably go past the full lock position and take up excess travel on the servo saver (not ideal). Therefore a steering rate control on the transmitter would be useful (these may be fitted as an after market part for a few pounds).

d) the tyres supplied are rubber racing slicks and have good grip on tarmac etc. in wet or dry conditions and are probably the best Tamiya type for this car.

e) if funds allow fit ballraces from new. A mixture of oilite and nylon bearings are supplied and if left for any length of time can wear away the shafts necessitating replacement of more parts.

f) when assembling the dampers lubricate the orange O rings prior to inserting the damper shaft.

g) due to the extensive use of self-tapping screws into plastic parts complaints are always heard that the thread has stripped. This can be avoided by not over tightening the screws and when reassembling parts turning the screw backwards initially until a slight click is felt, then tightening the screw. This ensures that the same threaded section in the plastic is used again and hence extends the life of the thread.

h) other Tamiya saloon bodies can be used by fitting the supplied adaptors to the body mounts.