Paul Darby

Mr McQueen your car awaits!

Tamiya Ford Mustang Cobra

bullitt proof

Here is the view from a complete beginner in the world of radio control. For my first R/C Car your Ed', PeterE, selected a Tamiya Ford Mustang Cobra R. Described as a 1/10th scale 4WD. High performance racing car by its manufacturer, the box art certainly grabs your imagination encouraging you to get this model built.

In the Beginning

This car had to be built right, so I decided to read the instructions and follow them closely. Half an hour later my first problem was upon me. Step 1 tells you to check your R/C equipment and particularly the servos, ensuring they are in neutral? For this you need a CHARGED BATTERY. But of course new batteries come in a discharged state. Hey!.. no problem.. 15 hours later you are now ready to start again. NO ...of course I didn't wait that long, nor could I, could anyone?

Getting On With The Job

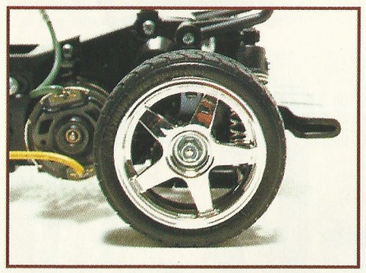
My next mission was Step 2, The Tie - rod assembly was pretty simple to put together and it also certainly looks robust. Which is just as well at the beginners end of the market.

Once the servo is attached to the left hand side of the chassis. The right hand side of the chassis can the be mated easily. Big concern here though is that if like me you do not check your servo correctly by using your R/C equipment there is a danger that the steering could be way out of centre - beyond trim adjustment using the radio. The right side of the chassis holds the propeller shaft along the outside which will carry the four wheel drive. Once the two halves are mated together they form a very solid looking monocoque. It does feel a bit heavy though.

Electrics

A 540 type electric motor is supplied. Simply add the motor plate and pinion, ensuring the grub screw is secured very tightly and slide the motor neatly into position. I was impressed with the location holes, these are numbered to indicate the correct position relating to the pinion gear on your motor. Great thinking here gives you the correct mesh for smooth operation.

The next item to fit would be the CPR unit which is a combined Radio receiver and electronic speed controller that comes with the Tamiya Adspec Sport Radio set. As I have already mentioned I am new to this, so once I had reached the stage of inserting the CPR unit, I began to search through all the pieces and parts that I had remaining, the illustrations displayed gave no reference to the more primitive form of speed controller which is included with the model. I asked about this at my local - or rather nearest - R/C shop. They told me that in Japan the Electronic Speed Controller is supplied with the kit. Over in the UK it is replaced with the cheaper Mechanical Speed controller to keep the cost of the kit down. At least that was his version. Or is it done to create better after market sales, since it was the first thing they recommend I replace? (The instructions for the mechanical speed controller are packed with the mechanical speed controller, as Paul subsequently discovered - Ed')



Really nice looking wheels are a Tamiya trademark

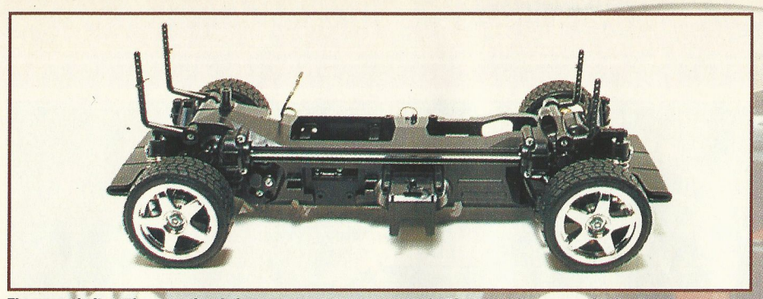
Running Gear

The model incorporates front and rear double wish bone suspension. Building the suspension arms was great fun. To see the finished components working does give you a real feeling of creation as the chassis takes shape. But it is also good to know exactly how these parts go together and how they work. This point is also true with the build up of the gearbox and differentials. This department is clearly a work of art, pure genius, that such small parts work so well is mind blowing.

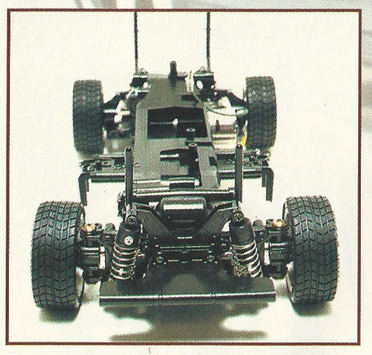
Radio

I am using the Acoms Techniplus. It feels very light and is a bit plasticky but it does the job. It does have a great LED display for battery power that also looks pretty good.

The antenna feels a bit flimsy when fully extended, which does make you wonder how long it will remain attached to the radio. The trim buttons on either channel need to have a more positive ratchet system to avoid accidental movement. It is very easy to knock the trim out of position with horrible consequences. especially the forward reverse trim which I have experienced several times already. This unit retails at £50 and seems to be the one 'bundled' in most package deals.



The prop shaft can be seen clearly here



This has to be the front as the motor is at the back

Body Work

Finally it was time. This part I was dreading having never touched one before. The moulding from Tamiya is simply superb. Typical of Tamiya's high standard in static kits, the 1/10th scale polycarbonate body had all the right lines to ensure an accurate replica. Having said that there are two mould lines that run across the body one at the rear one at the front this is not very clever and I must be honest I have never noticed lines this pronounced in any other type of model before. Although in fairness I do not know what the standard of moulding is like for this type of kit.

(Tamiya use a multi-part mould for accuracy. This technique needs a mould split line and that is what Paul could see. The alternative is to have bodies with virtually straight sides rather than being curved inwards like the prototype. Once painted and stickered these lines are hardly noticeable. Ed')

I started by scoring around the wheel arches using a very sharp Stanley knife. Surprisingly three passes over the same line was enough to remove the sections from the shell. Masking off the windows can be tricky, but the masks that are supplied (thank you very much Tamiya) are easy enough to work with and well marked out ensuring accurate sizes for each window.

Metallic true blue pearl, is the colour I went with. What a nightmare. For some reason the paint would not cover the shell evenly. OK. I know now. I was putting it on to thick. So my paint work never was much good anyway. Some good advice from the model shop was to back it with white however because mine was so bad they advised me to buy a new shell! Ha! Back the metallic blue with another blue sounds good. Blue streak was used, they had run out of metallic blue that I used anyway. And no I only purchased one can because I was told there was enough in it to cover three shells. I did not believe him of course because the tins are quite small, but at £3.50p it ought to!

By backing this terrible paint job with another blue it has got rid of all the patches and has given it a very nice finish. Even I cannot believe the difference it has made to this cars paint work. But take note here if you are a beginner. You really must spray very light coats of paint and keep the body in a stable temperature until complete. To finish just add the decals provided. This model does not come with many decals as it is a road car rather than a race car. So just front and rear lights tiny badges and door handles complete with door lock decal, front grille, rear number plate and optional window tinting decals.

Only problem here is that unlike the paint the decals are on the outside and if you are a beginner as I am, they do not last anywhere near the length of time it took to put them on.

Which brings us nicely to driving the Ford Mustang Cobra R.TL01.

Handling

This chassis is fitted with the standard radial tyres and although it has 4WD the wet winter evenings offered very little grip to the scrabbling tyres. Excellent fun to drive without any doubt.

Performance wise I obviously cannot give you a worthwhile opinion due to the fact I have nothing else to compare it to. The 540 stock motor certainly does the job, this chassis does not hang around. I am amazed at just how much room is needed to turn this car around under full throttle on dry tarmac. At full throttle and hard left the car slides away into understeer and this is with 4WD remember and without 30ft or more you will not make a 'U' turn. In fact my Cobra met a tree that has been outside my house for 60 years but I did not see it until it was too late. This has caused a crack in my shell just above my offside head light. Perhaps slightly softer suspension would help turn in a little better or an easier solution is to get off the throttle and this chassis will turn like a spinning top. It's great for donuts in our forever damp conditions.

Most of all the robust chassis is ideal for the beginner offering superb protection to most of the major internal workings. But remember it is not indestructible. There are also plenty of go faster 'hop ups' that can be added once you can control the standard car

My only real dislike is the battery life. This is a real bummer, you gear yourself up for a spin and then 10 minutes later it's all over, just as you were getting the hang of driving it. A couple of the 'hop up' mods. that are available could improve battery life or so I have been lead to believe. An electronic speed controller, which I am also told will increase the control of the car and also improve braking. Ball race pack, this will replace all of the white nylon bushes, which must create a lot of friction. I could do with some feedback on those tips especially regarding value for money.

Bad Paint Day

The Ed' says....

A good idea is to place the paint can in some warm, not very hot, water for a few minutes. This warms the contents of the can and makes it spray more evenly. In fact the bodyshell on Paul's Mustang looked fine but we did have a technical problem with the photographs that Paul had taken of the finished item. As we were giving away a Tamiya Mustang anyway I had Terry 'The Paint' Atkinson do his thing and prepare the shell of the prize car. The brief was to re-create the car driven by Steve McQueen in the film Bullitt hence the gorgeous metallic green/blue colour.

Ed' Says....

Buy the ball race set as a 'must have' item. Then buy a good Peak charger and at least one - preferably two - more cellpacks so that you can have a longer driving session. This will give you more benefit than any amount of Hop Up items if you are just starting out.

RRCi

Quick Spec

1:10th Scale shaft drive, 4WD Touring Car. Supplied with stock 540 motor and 3 step mechanical speed control. Requires Two channel radio, servos (x2), NiCad Pack, Charger and Paint to complete.

Tester Kit

Acoms Alpha Techniplus Radio and Servos
Tamiya 1400 NiCad Pack

Likes

Build quality
Easy instructions
Excellent scale
Price
Durability

Dislikes

Mechanical speed controller
Acoms trim switches
Battery run times