

The body beautiful



The Tamiya 1:8th scale

Mercedes CLK

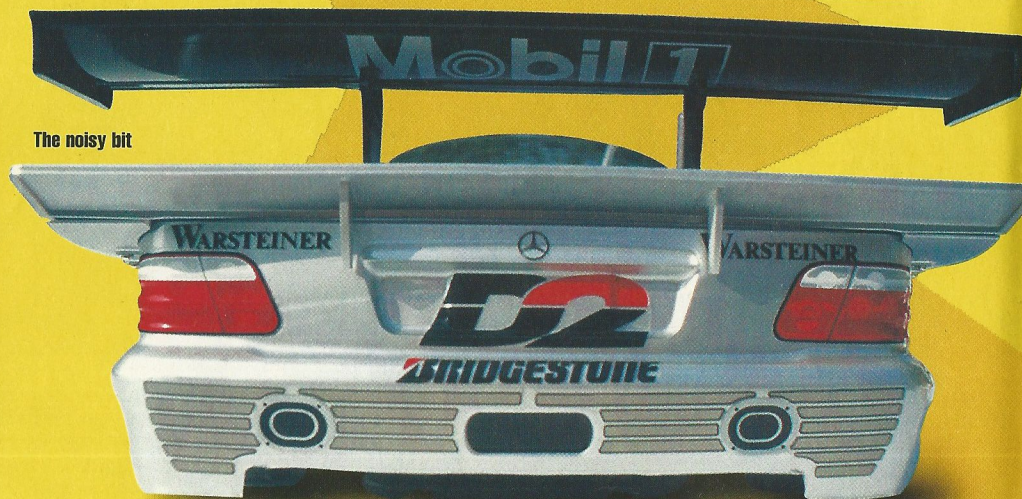
The summer of nineteen ninety-eight seems to be the year of the Mercedes CLK with just about every major manufacturer releasing a replica of 1997's most successful GT car. The reason for its popularity is not hard to understand. The Merc was undoubtedly the best sports GT car of 1997 and it is also one of the best looking sports cars of all time being much more pleasing to my eye at least, than its main rival the Porsche GT1.



What you get in the box



Radio box detaches with the servos for cleaning



The noisy bit

Tamiya have set a pattern of releasing new sports cars first in 1/8th IC TGX form and then shortly afterwards in electric 1/10 TA03 form. By the time you read this the electric CLK will be in the shops too. The TGX MK1 chassis itself is not really new, however, though you don't see to many of them around for reasons I'll come on to later.

What's in the Box Then?

Well, unlike most IC kits in this sector of the market this is not ready built - you have got to put it together yourself! Personally this is fine as I found the assembly exercise a real pleasure

even though I had to rush a bit to meet the copy deadline. This is certainly Tamiya's most complicated RC car kit but as long as you pay attention to the labelling of parts and build it up in order, most folk should be able to put it together properly. It took me about 6 hours to build the chassis with engine and another eight or so hours for the body.

The whole thing is an excellent piece of engineering set off nicely by the blue anodised chassis plate. The radio box is pretty neat and allows you to take out the radio gear and servos (5 screws) for cleaning whilst also keeping the vulnerable bits dry and away from the fuel. Unless you expect to drive through 2-inch deep puddles I would guess the car is effectively waterproofed from the outset - just a little silicon sealant on the servos should guarantee safe wet weather running. Some of the key ballraces are included and are mainly for the

gearbox internals and drive train. Ballraces for the wheels are not included leaving you with the opportunity to fit the remaining bearings later without having to strip the whole car down.

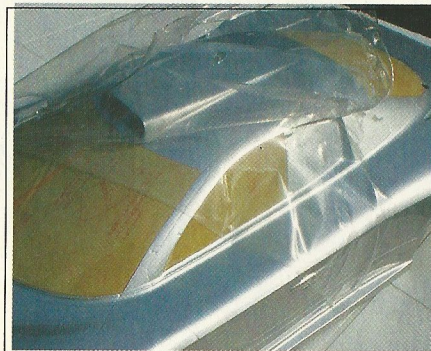
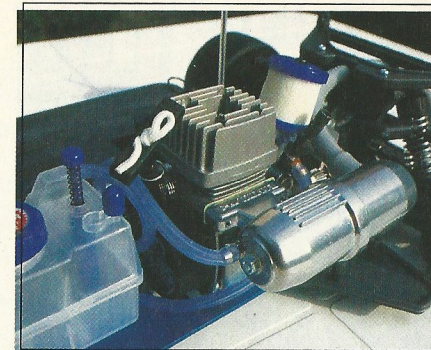
Any Problems?

Problems on the way? None really though I knew from bitter previous experience that it was worth Loctiting all the machine screws in place though Tamiya do provide some locking washers. IC cars vibrate a lot and things will fall off if given half a chance. For some reason there is no fuel filter included which, on a nearly £300 kit seems a might tight fisted. Fuel filters are cheap and save potential serious damage to the engine so really ought to be included.

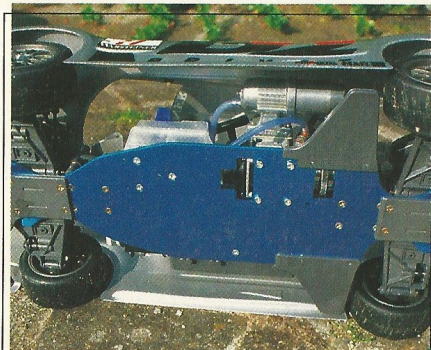
As is now standard, the body shell has a protecting film on the outside to help prevent over spraying though for some strange reason the holes for the body posts, wing and aerial are cut out but not those for the wing mirrors or the lower tail lip. The manual says drill 4 mm holes for these which was OK for the wing mirrors but I found the rear tail lip needed 5.5 mm holes - picky, ain't I? The body itself is made of a fairly thick Lexan, which ought to last well.

Running In

The great tragedy of IC models is having to run them! You spend all this time producing an excellent and sparkly clean chassis and then you start the engine and in no time the whole thing is covered in a fine oily mist. Heartbreaking stuff. I ran the engine in using 10% Nitro model fuel (note this is NOT a 'petrol' car) and followed the instructions in the manual to the letter. It started after the fourth pull on the starter and so far, has started within 4-5 pulls ever since. I ran three



Peeling back the protective film on the body



Quick Spec

- 1/8th scale 4WD chassis
- Tamiya FS-15LT IC engine
- All round independent suspension
- Oil filled shocks
- Disc brake
- Super Slick rubber tyres

Testers Kit

- Futaba Attack radio set
- Futaba 3003 servo
- KO712 FET servo
- Model Technics 10% glo fuel

Likes:

- Engineering quality
- Body shell detail and thickness
- Good handling
- Reliable starting

Dislikes:

- No fuel filter
- Needs a roll hoop to hold it with it when running



“very enjoyable
build and drive”

tanks full in static mode before gentle running at the track. Remember the longevity of your engine is directly related to how well you run it in - thrash it early, buy another one soon.

On the Track

Because of the tight deadline I took the photos before the test run and so they omit the minor detail that you have to blast holes through the front and side windscreens for motor cooling purposes.

A couple of tank-fulls of fuel were run through the car at Aldershot and were done with the body off for maximum cooling. Putting the body on didn't really make quite as much difference as it does with the smaller .10 and .12 engined IC cars, which tend to go much better without their bodies. The handling was quite soft with the kit set-up. It would understeer into corners but letting off the power early, perhaps with a dab of brakes, gave a sharp turn in and pleasantly controllable power-on oversteer. Though the body rolls quite a lot it all remains stable and safe.

After running a few more tank-fulls of fuel through I decided to open her up a bit. Top speed was reached about 2/3rds of the way

down Aldershot's main straight suggesting that the gearing isn't that far off for this track. I was able to put in consistent 17 second laps which was quite pleasing given that I was only using 10% Nitro fuel, didn't have the full ballrace set and hadn't changed any of the basic kit settings. This would work out at around a slow 17-lap time over five minutes. It was also a very hot day (35 degrees plus on the track surface) and reassuringly nothing got too hot or overheated. There's certainly plenty of scope for fine tuning the chassis and by the time I install the ballraces, try some alternative tyres and finish running the engine in (perhaps even with the tuned pipe), I see no reason why 19-lap times would not be possible.

Problems? Though I tried to find the source, a lot of oily residue seemed to be flung about from the flywheel - nothing to stop one's enjoyment but a pain as it added to the cleaning up afterwards. This seemed to disappear once running on the track but then a different problem arose - pollen! Just about every living thing had decided to shed its pollen that afternoon which duly stuck to the oil in every small orifice on the car - basically it now needs a total stripdown if it is ever to look clean again and I've only had it a week!

Summing Up

All in all a very enjoyable build and drive. It is rewarding to drive, looks great and speed freaks are catered for with potential hop-up upgrades to a tuned pipe as well as all the usual chassis tuning goodies. Apart from the ballrace set I won't do any further upgrading for a while as I expect it will be very competitive for club races as it is. Mind you, if someone starts whipping me with another TGX then I might think about the tuned pipe.

OK, I hear you say, if this is such a good kit why don't you see people racing them then? Well there are a couple of reasons. Though it is 1/8th scale it is a different beast from BRCA-style 1/8th cars, which run on foam tyres with bigger motors, two-speed gearboxes and are larger and not very scale-like. The TGX is based on rubber tyres and the motor is in a fairly soft state of tune to make it easy to run and own - it wouldn't really be competitive at that level even though it does go quite fast.

Despite this, the TGX chassis has been a steady seller and there are quite a few of these cars out there that never get to see any action. At the Aldershot club, for instance, we have over 35 members with assorted IC cars including TGXs who don't race at meetings, preferring to use the track for fun. When we have asked why they won't race it seems that some folk think they won't be any good and therefore would prefer not to risk making a fool of themselves in public. This is fine but we do run an 'anything goes' fun IC class at our club rounds, as do many others clubs, so why not get those cars out and have a go at racing?

What would be really cool is for RIKO, the UK importers to include the TGX in next year's Eurocup, which would certainly boost interest in the series. How about it then, Steve and Richard? **RRCI**

Static running in