

MIDNIGHT PUMPKIN

Could be in trouble now.

Jim Crabb takes a look at Tamiya's Midnight Pumpkin and has a musical trip down memory lane.

It was towards the end of the festive season that El Supremo of Radio Race Car, Dave Pearson, called me and asked me if I would like to review a Midnight Pumpkin. I naturally assumed that he had been partaking in a little amber falling over liquid and asked him if it was powered by



Now get out of that!



two pink mice and did it have cart wheels. Dave assured me he was quite serious and that although the vehicle had large wheels, they were made of rubber, they were not iron rimmed and also it was electrically powered. I was still not convinced and having recently been to see the pantomime Cinderella, I asked him if the track test had to be conducted at midnight with only one slipper on! By now my mind was running riot and in overdrive, I could visualise a large green bulbous car that would be quite outrageous, it would have a psychedelic paint job to match.

The car sounded fun and yet I had no idea what it was going to look like, already it had created some interest and discussion; little did I know more was to follow.



In it's element in the mud.

Hurry Up Mr. Postman

A large box finally arrived and I was very pleasantly surprised to find it contained the latest Tamiya fun car based on a 1952 Ford pick up truck. A look through the pop charts these days will reveal a nostalgic trip back to the 50's and 60's (even last Christmas' number 1 was an oldy and Chubby Checker was twisting, the first time around without the fat boys). So here was fun car from the time when Nat 'King' Cole was top with

superb and they proffer it beautifully, even though there are not the number of parts one has come to be used to on cars which are at the competition end of the market. The small number of parts is because the 'Pumpkin' is a basic simple car and it is 1/12 scale.

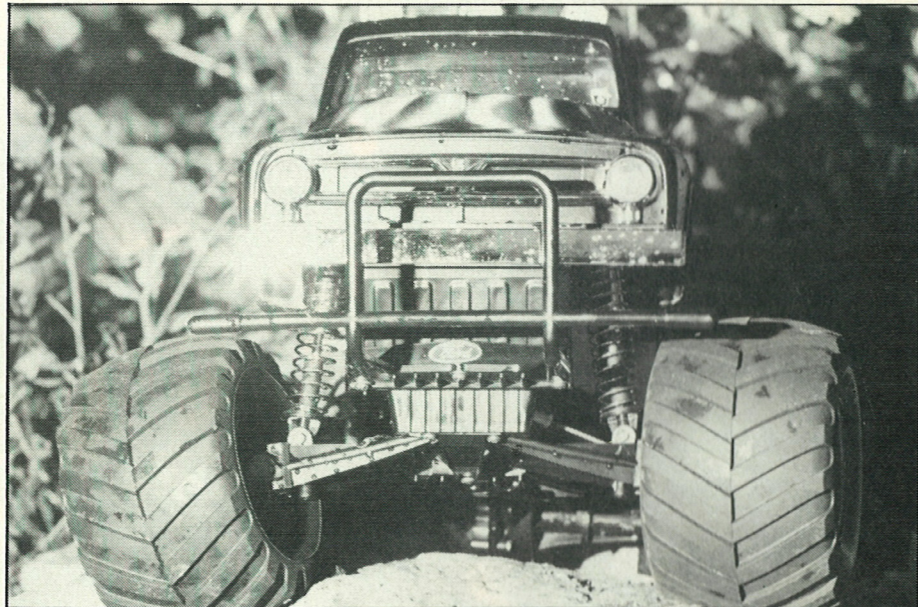
Tamiya have a world wide reputation for good value, up to date designed and well engineered kits which are easy to build and have a very good spares back up, the 'Pumpkin's' initial impression is that it can only help to enhance Tamiya's already proud standing in modelling circles.

Midnight What?

We have had a Midnight Cowboy and even a Burn Midnight Oil so why Pumpkin? It's a question I cannot answer, maybe it's because the pick up truck is very rounded or simply it was used a lot in the southern states where pumpkins are grown, could it be one of our readers knows the answer?

Flying Purple People Eater

So Tamiya have launched a fun car from the time when things were fun and the above record was tops by Sheb Wolley (anyone remember Rawhide), many of the parents of perspective buyers of this car would be too young to remember the real truck, even if any did in fact come to the UK, so it is nice to have something that is different yet based on fact. The car is not a 1/12 scale circuit racer but a 1/12 scale car crusher designed for pleasure and above all fun.

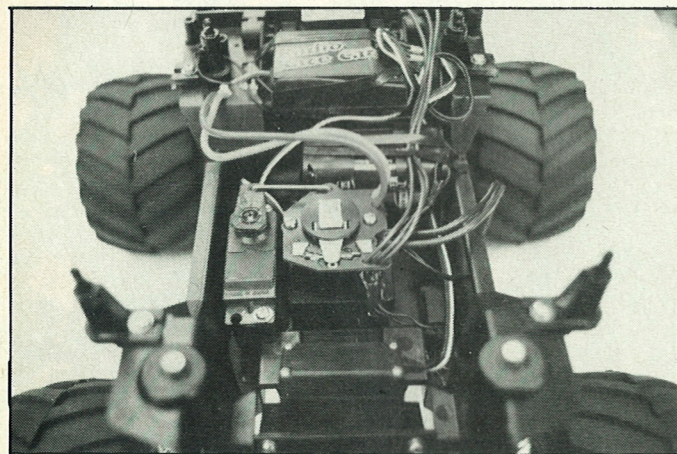


Emerging from the undergrowth.

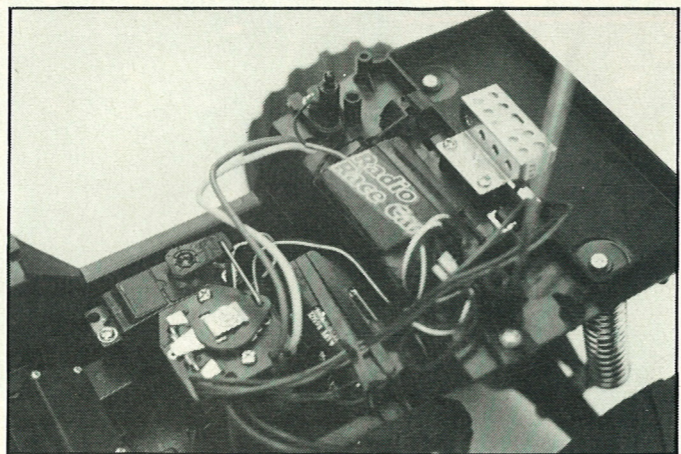
not prove a problem to the youngest builder, the only tip I need to give is to make sure the tyres are put on so the ribs face in the same directions. I have seen these types of cars with the rear side tyres facing the back and the off side ones the front.

First item on the agenda is the installation of the radio gear which fits neatly into a bath tub chassis, all popular types of radio are catered for with the provision of a selection of various types of servo horns.

receiver in position on a bulkhead at the rear of the car, two sided tape can be used to stop any bouncing about. The supplied aerial tube plugs into a moulded lug in the chassis. Another well proven Tamiya part is used in the next stage and that is the three nylon bevel gear differential, the addition of silicone grease makes for a quiet, long lasting unit. The differential is sandwiched between the two gearbox housings for the outputs shafts of the rear



All the electrics are well protected within the chassis.



Well proven 3 forwards and reverse speed controller protected in bathtub chassis.

It Takes A Whole Lotta Pumpkin Just To Make My Baby Happy

The car is a very simple design with all the electrics in a large bath tub chassis. It is two wheel drive, has four large friction shock absorbers, speed control is via the well proven Tamiya three forwards and reverse resistor unit used in other cars in their range. The truck is equipped with a servo saver and is powered by a Mabuchi 540 motor which drives enormous deep ribbed 115 mm diameter tyres. The wheels dominate the truck and it must be remembered it is 1/12 scale so we have a very over tyred and over powered truck which should be a lot quicker than the larger 1/10 scale types such as the Monster Beetle.

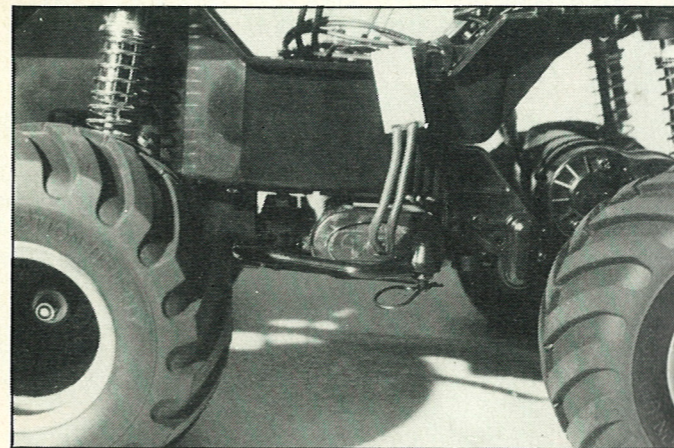
I Want To build You Up

Construction proved to be easy and should

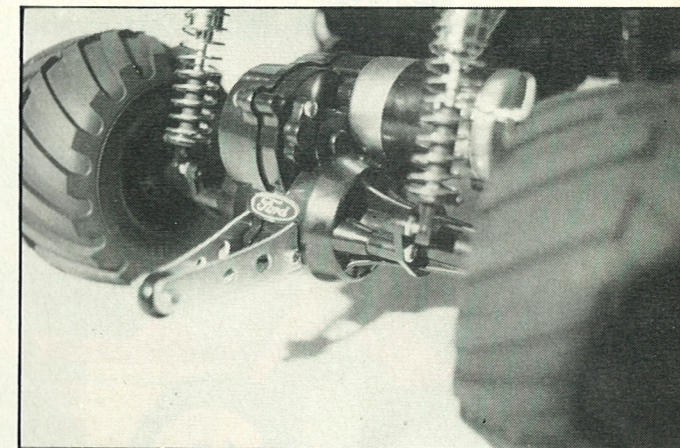
For the first time buyer it is important to centralise the speed controller and steering servo before you fit the servo horn. All you need to do is set both trims on the transmitter to neutral and plug in the radio gear, switch on the transmitter and then switch on your radio gear, both servos will take up their natural position. Switch off the radio gear then switch off the transmitter. The well proven Tamiya three speed controller can then be fitted ensuring the wiper arm is in the middle (neutral) position. The controller comes complete with BEC, battery and motor connectors and a wiring loom to plug into the speed control resistor. A servo saver is supplied with the kit for the steering (it is a device to protect the servo when you crash or drive over very rough ground), this is fitted prior to fitting the servo to the bath tub as the servo has to face downwards. A rubber band locates the

wheel drive system. Self tappers hold the two halves together. All bearings supplied are of the nylon bush type which can be replaced by ball races. A standard 540 motor supplies the power and has its motor pinion drives directly into the straight cut gears on the periphery of the differential.

Suspension is conventional at the front with single wishbones and exactly the same main spring units as the rear. The spring units look like coil over shock absorbers but are in fact just spring units with no damping, they can be changed for the Tamiya yellow oil filled units at a later date should you wish to upgrade the truck. Road holding is not the best feature of this type of vehicle so such a bolt on 'goodie' could well improve the situation. Steering rods are of unequal length because of the centrally placed steering servo, they are fitted with the well proven white Tamiya



Battery location low down to reduce centre of gravity helps with the good road holding of the Pumpkin.



5th wheel prevents car from flipping over when doing wheelies. Small cover comes off to oil gearbox.

balljoints. Rear suspension is unconventional in the respect that it utilises four springs. There are the two main units similar to the front and two much smaller springs which allow some movement at the front of the gearbox. If there is a tricky part in the construction then it is with the rear gearbox but simplicity being the order of the day I doubt it. There are the four enormous main wheels which just pull onto the yellow hubs without the need to glue them and one little wheel on the rear to prevent the truck flipping back when performing wheelies!!

Tamiya thoughtfully supply in the kit brackets, which are required should you decide to fit, their excellent yellow CVA oil filled coil over shock absorbers, also included are two spare track rod ends and four spare nylon bush bearings.

If I Said You Had A Beautiful Body

Medway Club member Alan Hughes put the car together so I could observe the building to see if there were any problems for the first time buyer (which there were not). Alan's wife, Sandra, who is the artistic one of the family, said 'Midnight Pumpkin' conjured up the picture of halloween in her minds eye as it was the time that pumpkin lanterns burnt in peoples doorways and ghosts were on the prowl. Sandra painted the car using matt black paint on both the body shell and yellow wheel hubs. The body has lots of detail on the moulding and being rigid white polycarbonate has to be painted on the outside. To keep the theme dark and mysterious a ghost was air-brushed on the bonnet, a pumpkin on each door, the wheels given golden rims and transfers kept to a minimum. In some respects it was a pity not to use the transfers as they are excellent and contain blue flames, so if you are not as artistic or as confident as Sandra just paint the truck in any base colour and use the kit transfers. The bodyclips that hold the bonnet in place need to be shortened as they dig into the body, if the holes were lengthwise compared to the body rather than at right angles the clips would not rub.

Back On The Road Again

Wheelies can be performed with ease by running the truck in reverse and then full forwards, it's then obvious why the little wheel is on the back. It is very fast but then it should be as it is 1/12 scale yet shares the same 540 motor and ni-cad power as its

larger brothers. Turning at high speed is interesting to say the least as the truck has a lot of understeer but if you back off the power it will turn quite sharply which adds to the fun and fun is what these over-powered monster trucks and cars are all about. Quick to build, quick on the road, simple to maintain and kind on the pocket, an ideal car for the first time buyer or the serious racer who wants some light relief from the rigors of racing at a competitive level.

Electric Dreams; The Acoms At1

I had been waiting a long time to test Acom's new electronic speed controller so once testing of the 'Pumpkin' with its excellent mechanical controller was complete the AT1 was installed.

The controller is an 8FET device with reverse, it is housed in a container the same size as a servo. I personally like this type of controller because they can be fitted in the position that the servo for a mechanical controller would occupy. The AT1 is particularly good as the two LED's used for setting up the device are housed on the top in a similar position to the output horn on a servo, setting up therefore can be done in situ. Technical specification is good with a

maximum current handling capability of 60 Amps and a peak of 240 Amps in forward mode. Four FET's are used for forwards and four when in reverse with a blocking current limiter in circuit to give about 50% speed when in reverse. Apart from the built-in LED's for setting up the controller and a regulated supply to drive the receiver and steering servo it has two big plus points over other controllers, one is a heat protector circuit which shuts the controller down should it start to overheat (it resets when the temperature returns to normal) and secondly an on/off switch. The unit comes complete with battery and motor connectors and weighs 70 grams.

Setting up the controller is simplicity itself using the built-in LED's, first of all the neutral point is adjusted and then the full power point using the small insulated screw driver which is supplied with the unit.

On the track it proved to be very responsive with good proportional control in both forwards and reverse.

One of the neatest and compact units on the market, very easy to set up and install. The receiver plug fits straight into an Acoms receiver and the wiring configuration is compatible with Futaba equipment.



Superb body shell and the dominant wheels.

Continued from page 45

Priced at around £49, it is good value and ideal for use with a standard motor.

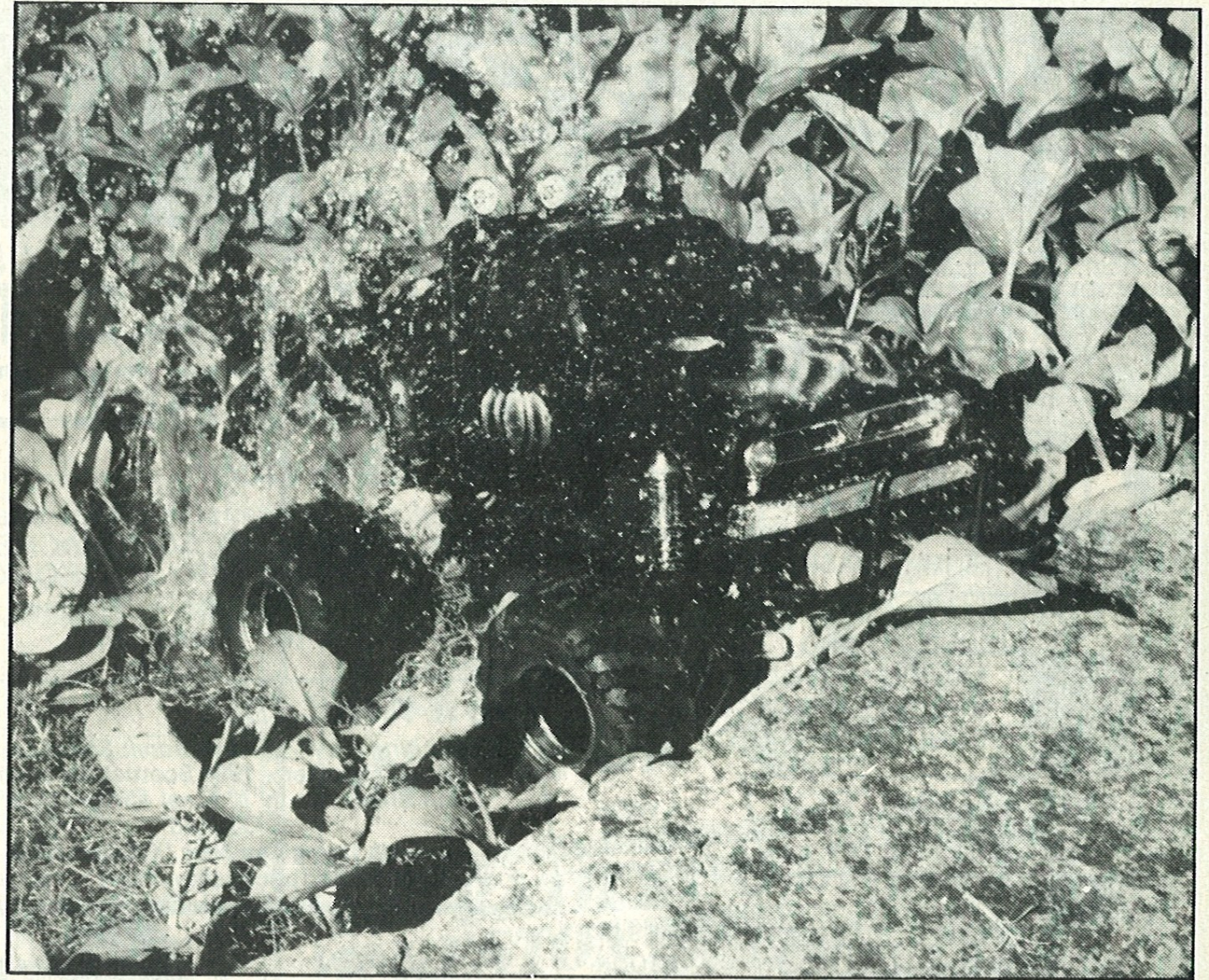
A fact you may be unaware of is that Acoms pride themselves with the boast that should a component of theirs develop a fault they endeavour to turn the item around in 48 hours on a replacement basis.

Dreaming Always Dreaming

All the major manufacturers now have at least one car crusher in their range whilst Tamiya have several. With the numbers of these cars built and sold (they were particularly popular as Christmas presents), it's about time we stopped talking about having events for these cars and did something positive. The fact they are not designed for racing and their roadholding is not brilliant will add to the fun.

I don't think it will be necessary initially to build a special circuit for them, maybe a normal club circuit with a few obstacles such as a ramp, some sand filled hoses (laid across the track) and a few wall bricks placed strategically would suffice. These 1/12 crushers would be quicker than their 1/10 scale counter parts but they would have more problems with the obstacles, so the differences could even themselves out, what we would get is one heat per meeting of spectacular racing for spectators and drivers alike. Maybe an extra point could be awarded for the longest wheelie of the day!!

Can you imagine a competition of a mixture of clod busters, pumpkins, lunchboxes, monster beetles, big brutes and big bears. Seeing the interest that one of these cars always creates the sight of eight at once is something I have never seen but



perhaps in 1988 I may have that pleasure for the first time.

Reprise

The pumpkin makes a fine dessert to the lunch box menu and what fun to see these two 1/12 scale cars competing against each other, perhaps the lunch break at a race

meeting would be the obvious time! Just for the record the Number One Christmas hit in 1952 was 'Here In My Heart' by Al Martino.

Apologies to the hit parades of the past and thanks to Ted Knight, Lin Stammer and Alan and Sandra Hughes for thier help with this review.