

The classic
Rover Mini
Cooper of
"Italian Job"
fame has been
produced in

Thirty five years ago the Mini made its debut, just as the dreary 1950s were ending, and the potentially bright '60s were beginning. Designed by the brilliant Alec Issigonis, the car became a symbol of that decade, where fun ruled supreme, and anything from

an Afghan Hound to a motor car could be a fashion statement. Celebrities such as Twiggy, Peter Sellers and even members of the Royal Family started buying them, adding to the mystique, and making the car a particularly British phenomenon.

With a simple suspension set up, a transverse front mounted engine and super stable handling characteristics, the Mini heralded a concept that was totally new - a car

1:10 scale by
Tamiya for '95.
**MARCUS
NICHOLLS**
builds this
superb little
model...

ROVERS RETURN



RADIO CONTROL MODEL CARS

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that was fun to drive, practical and trendy.

The crowning glory was the appearance of three Mini Coopers in the classic 60s movie, "The Italian Job" which featured the cars evading the Italian authorities after a gold heist in Turin, lead by Michael Caine.

Tamiya get small!

A car with the appeal of the Mini deserves careful planning and accurate reproduction to get it looking correct. Tamiya have a reputation of producing perfectly proportioned RC cars that actually look like their real counterparts

(unlike some manufacturers), and the company's new Mini Cooper lives up to that standard. The body of a model car can make or break the final effect, and Tamiya, using their ultimate lexan moulding expertise have certainly got it right.

A new chassis

Not surprisingly, an all new chassis has been designed for this model, making up into a tub from two halves firmly screwed together. To this, the front and rear suspension units are fixed with four 4X65mm bolts. The Mini features independent suspension all round - lower wishbones form the main

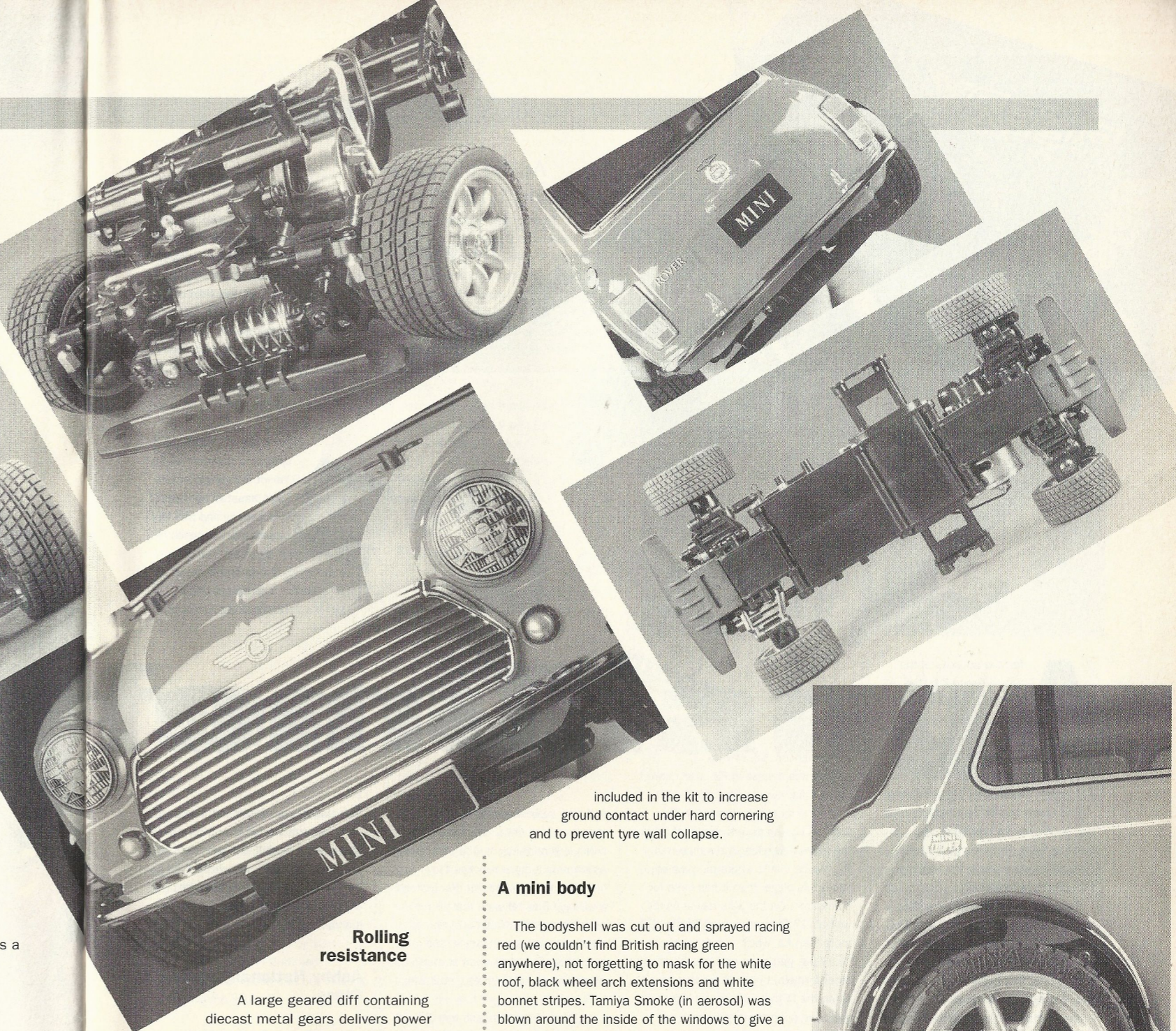
elements, with non adjustable moulded upper links holding it all together. Each end of the Mini has a single horizontal damper to keep the car from bouncing all over the place, but these are not oil filled items. Tamiya have opted to use friction type dampers which consist of an internal rubber sleeve through which a greased piston travels. Although these are not really adjustable, the damping is surprisingly effective, and they are more than adequate for the Mini, who's suspension travel is like the full size car - minimal!

Clever engineering

With a horizontal damper bolted directly between the

wishbones, the suspension has a tendency to "seesaw". To cure this, small springs (rather like motor brush springs) are mounted over the wishbone pivots, keeping the suspension level when the car is off the ground - very clever those Tamiya engineers...

As the kit builds up, you start to realise just how small Minis are. The track is tiny, and so all components are reduced in size, making the completed power module (front gearbox and suspension) look chunky and tough. The steering is equally beefy, featuring adjustable track rods, anchored by the familiar Tamiya turned brass ball connectors. The steering servo is mounted way back in the chassis, meaning that an extra long pushrod is included, but this item is strong and the tub chassis is remarkably rigid, so no slop in the steering is foreseen.



included in the kit to increase ground contact under hard cornering and to prevent tyre wall collapse.

Rolling resistance

A large geared diff containing diecast metal gears delivers power evenly to the front wheels, and the rest of the drive train is pleasingly simple. Optional "Hop-Up" ball races can, of course, be used to replace the plain nylon items supplied in the kit, and this will lower the rolling resistance a great deal.

Most of the Mini's chassis, like Tamiya's recent touring car kits is built up using 3X10mm self tapping screws, designated "BA2" in the instructions. This makes assembly much more straightforward as time is not wasted searching for hundreds of different sized screws.

Wheels and tyres

Tamiya really have captured the shape of the Mini Cooper in this model, and the thing that clinches are the wheels and tyres. If you are used to the regular touring car wheels, these will seem tiny, and yet they still look large on the car! We sprayed ours matt aluminium from an aerosol to make them brighter.

The tyres are super low profile, and foam inserts are

A mini body

The bodyshell was cut out and sprayed racing red (we couldn't find British racing green anywhere), not forgetting to mask for the white roof, black wheel arch extensions and white bonnet stripes. Tamiya Smoke (in aerosol) was blown around the inside of the windows to give a tinted look, and the body was ready for the stickers. They are simple, but when the window trims, Mini Cooper logos and lights are in place, it adds that finishing touch that makes Tamiya cars look just that much better.

With the body and wheels on, the new Mini Cooper from Tamiya was complete, and it looks stunning. Not having driven the car at the time of writing, we can't comment on how it goes, but just one look at how small and light the chassis is, and it just has to be fun!

Brief summary

A car as famous and as loved as the Mini deserves proper treatment when it come to kit production, and when Tamiya decide on a project, you can be sure that a proper treatment is exactly what you will get.

This new model should prove to be popular in the UK, and maybe if it really takes off, a new Mini racing series might be started!

