

The Mud Blaster sits on huge 120mm tyres.

The Monster Truck revolution has given a new lease of life to a variety of cars.

When the Yanks started adding on big wheels and doing outrageous things to poor, unsuspecting Cadillacs the likes of Tamiya, Marui and Kyosho must have rubbed their hands with glee.

For they have been able to do the same thing to their outdated model car kits and introduce them as "model car-crushers."

Tamiya have been foremost behind this

exercise and the results have been a lot of fun.

But the potential of these beasts hasn't really been explored fully. The racing situation in particular could be improved massively with a little bit of organisation.

At last year's Wings and Wheels spectacular at the North Weald aerodrome in Essex the car racing organisers laid out an obstacle course for a heat of monster trucks to race around and over.

The race was held between rounds of the

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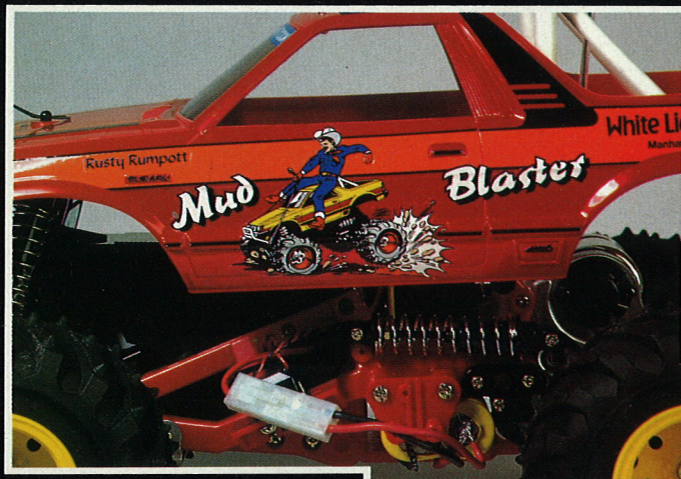
Model Cars reviews

Tamiya's latest big wheeled Monster





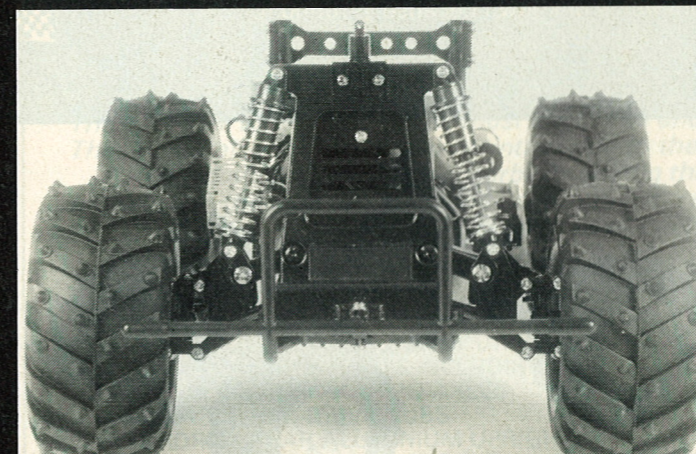
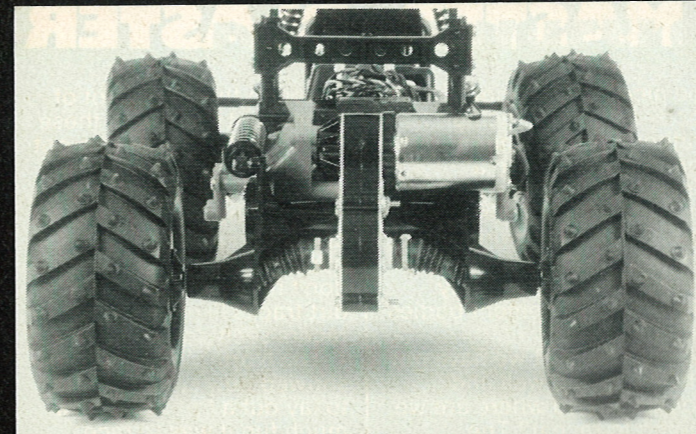
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“The big surprise was how fast, responsive and reliable the cars were”

proper buggy racing event but attracted a large number of spectators in only five minutes of mayhem. The racing was fast and fun with the cars hurtling over ramp jumps, and making mincemeat of obstacles that most buggies would find impassable.

If the spectators were amused, the actual drivers were having a ball. Most of them had never driven their car in a race before and the result was a revelation. A couple who were competing in the “proper” racing had such a hilarious experience with their monster trucks, they promptly lost interest in



Above: From the front and back the height of the Mud Blaster can be easily seen.

their buggies and concentrated on preparing their cars for the next big race.

The big surprise was how fast, responsive and reliable the cars were and because their larger size, the crowd could appreciate the racing much better. In comparison the buggies just went round and round in a blur of speed.

By far the most popular car to date has been Tamiya's Monster Beetle. This car is based on the old Frog/Subaru Brat chassis which appeared almost five years ago. Now Tamiya have used the space-frame layout of the chassis in their latest Monster Truck kit.

The Mud Blaster has taken shape just as the full-size American cars have. Tamiya have taken a long look at the old Subaru Brat and decided to make it look totally silly by jacking up the body and adding on a set of massive wheels.

There are some advantages in this kit over the original however. Back when the Frog was first introduced the car soon developed a range of faults which had to be rectified. Pretty soon there was a whole host of companies

producing tune-up and add-on parts for the cars to improve their performance and make them more reliable.

These days those companies have mostly all shut up because the cars have been improved to the point where the modifications have all been included.

The big problem to begin with was the rear

suspension and drive, originally the trailing arms of the suspension pivoted within a hole in the gearbox. Unfortunately the metal side plates of the gearbox wore away the plastic part of the trailing arm to the point where the suspension slopped around uncontrollably.

In the Mud Blaster the problem has been solved with the addition of a shoulder stamped in to the metal side plate so that the plastic is no longer pivoting on a thin piece of metal.

Another problem was the steel hexagon drive shafts. These had the annoying habit of wearing our very quickly because the corners of the hexagon wore away.

The problem resulted in alternative polycarbonate drive shafts being produced which were far tougher. When the popularity of the Frog waned so did the need for drive shafts. When the

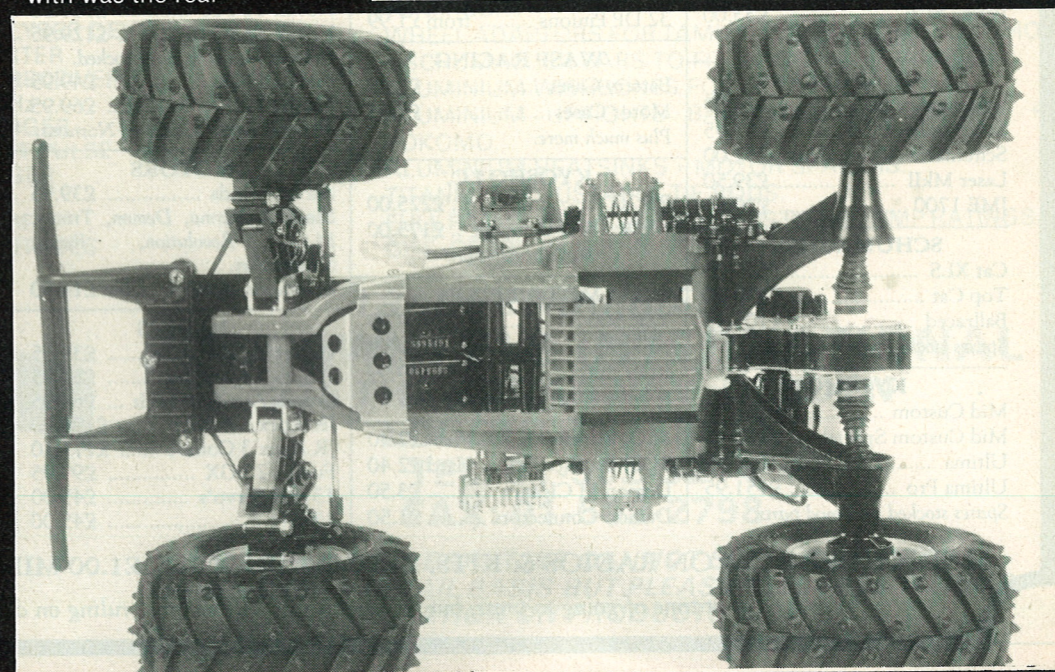
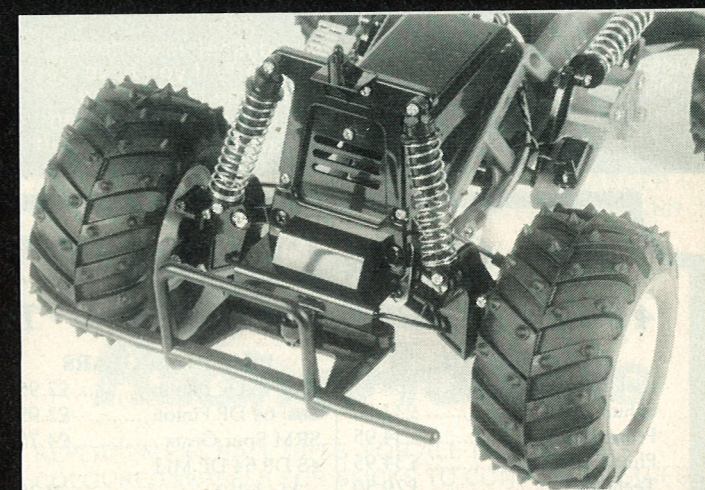
Monster Beetle, Blackfoot and others came out the problem had not gone away. In the Mud Blaster kit two sets of drive shafts are supplied, which could mean that Tamiya know they will wear out quickly. If they do, perhaps someone will start making polycarbonate alternatives again.

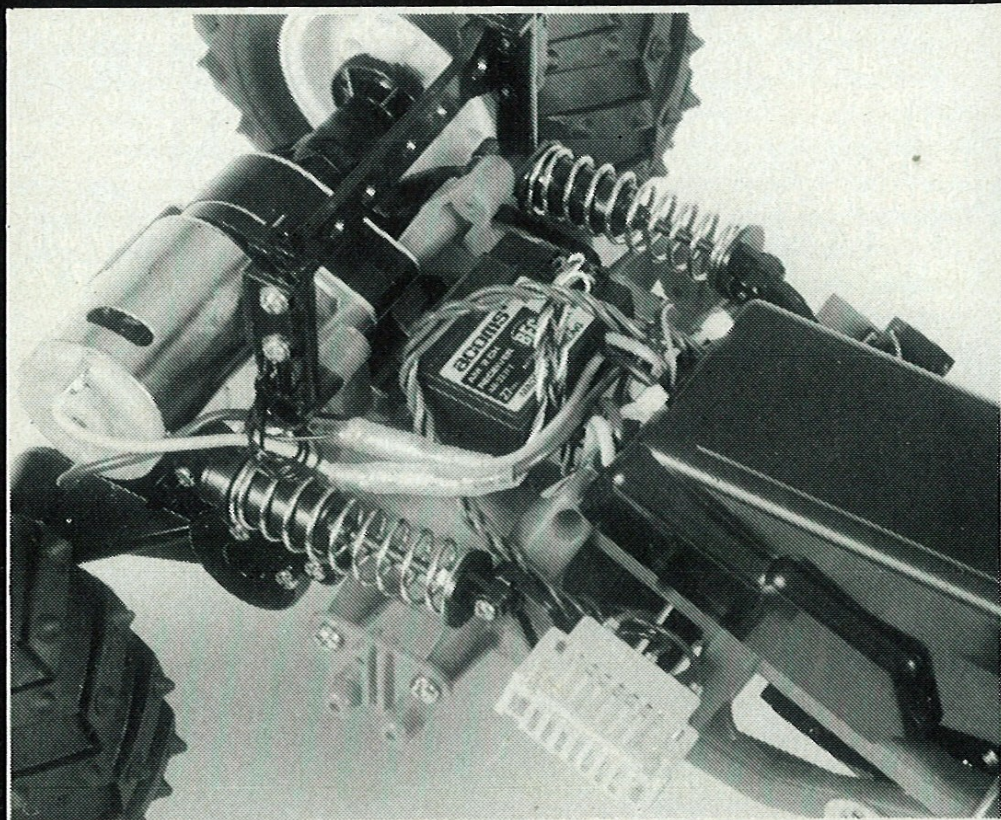
Thankfully Tamiya have included two ballraces in this kit to support the differential outputs to produce a nice free drive system.

The Mud Blaster bodyshell is the old Subaru Brat one - but customised. Some neat chrome trim is supplied and the driver now has the advantage of a sun-roof to get a nice tan.

The stickers on these cars are always good for a laugh and the Mud Blaster is no exception. "Santa Monica Tuning Tycoon" and "Rusty Rumpott" along with the rodeo cowboy

Below: Friction dampers hold the springs and are replaceable by CVA oil shocks. Bottom: Red space frame chassis holds all the goodies.





Above: The receiver sits well protected in the centre of the chassis. Right: Ready for the bodyshell.

motif are sure to amuse.

The Mud Blaster was fitted out with a set of new Acoms radio incorporating a battery eliminator circuit (BEC). This is a lovely unit, with its smooth, ergonomic contours and flashy black and chrome colour scheme the transmitter looks and feels very good.

Out on the street our Mud Blaster looks a dream. It might look a little ungainly

because of the height of the body and the size of the wheels but the fact is the car handles quite well. The secret of course is that the battery pack is set in the bottom of the chassis to keep the centre of gravity low.

the bodyshell is so good, particularly if you have spent some time on the paint job, that a crash can be heart-breaking. It would

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be nice to have another body for actual racing rather than endangering the original. *Parma* do a replacement Subaru body in clear lexan so it should be possible to fit this instead and keep the kit body for concours only. *Tamiya* replacement bodies are expensive.

But now that we have got the car going well and looking good where are we going to race it? The answer is unknown because

although there are a lot of people out there with these cars, hardly anyone has got together and started racing seriously on a purpose built track. It shouldn't be too difficult to arrange things, particularly as these cars don't need smooth grass or dirt tracks like the buggy racers seem to.

The North Weald race showed how simple it was to lay out a track and how much fun it was to race round it.

