

Racing Sabres

Lewis Eckett drives the latest Tamiya QD

Back in the December issue we previewed Tamiya's Quick Drive (QD) 'Thundershot', ready to run car and came to the obvious conclusion that this was something a little special.

Sales of the 'QD' over the Christmas period have proved we were right because the car, according to UK Tamiya importers - RIKO Ltd, has disappeared from shop shelves very, very quickly.

The QD's combination of excellent quality, adequate pace and attractive price has made it a winner in the model shop at the expense of the vast range of ready to run rubbish on sale up and down the High Street.

The crucial element in the 'QD's' success is the price and quality. Looking through the adverts in RCMC these past few months has shown that the cheapest 1/10th buggy deal is around £130 (maybe less if you look hard). This is a daunting figure for a parent buying a present and even more so for a kid saving up his money. At around £80 the 'QD' is under £100, making it very attractive price-wise.

What's more you get Tamiya quality and reliability which the man behind the counter can feel happy in recommending instead of seeing his customer trot off down the road to buy a cheap and nasty, unreliable model. People get put off when they buy something that is badly made and not up to the job which may mean the R/C model car hobby losing new enthusiasts.

In my humble opinion I believe the 'QD' can only boost the hobby in general because it gives the model shop a slice of the action and means that there will be customers walking through the door who may wish to progress onto 'real' R/C cars.

As I said before all this has come to pass because Christmas sales of the car have been tremendous. In fact so many have been sold that there is even talk of setting up some kind of national racing series between RIKO and the BRCA. Certainly I feel people who have bought them should be able to put them to good use in a racing situation. This would take advantage of the 'QD's' unique feature of being able to run on different frequencies. No other radio-controlled car of this type can use the full range of frequencies commonly used by the larger 1/10th scale cars. This facility means anything up to 12 cars can be run at the same time depending on the type of frequency crystal being used.

Choice

The 'QD Thundershot' was the first car to be produced and it didn't take a genius to guess that there would be a range of alternatives on the way.

The first of these is here now - the 'QD Super Sabre' - I'd bet on more to follow. The 'Super Sabre' uses the same basic chassis and electronics as the 'Thundershot' but instead has a different bodyshell.

Personally I like the 'Sabre' bodyshell better than the 'Thundershot' but maybe that is

because it is produced in black injection moulded nylon (black is my favourite colour scheme) and not white.

The quality of the moulding is superb with 'wedgy' looks that flow back to a mega built-in wing. Silver and orange stripes add to the racey look along with some interesting stickers. Tamiya have pioneered the off-beat style of sticker with such notable gems as 'Go for it', 'Being nuts is neat' and on the 'QD Thundershot', 'Bullitt Benny'. Now on the 'Sabre' we have 'Harry Hurrlyup' (whoever he is) to contend with. It will be interesting to see what they will come up with next - clean answers only on a postcard to RCMC.

The bodyshell bolts directly onto the chassis and does protect the internal electrics a bit. However it is extremely unwise for the car to be run if there is the possibility of it getting wet. Sophisticated electronics and water do not mix. Serious dunkings can lead to permanent damage but generally speaking the car will not work until it has had a chance to dry out. This can be done by placing the car in a warm, dry place for a couple of hours. Salt water will result in permanent damage.

The electronics in the 'QD' are quite sophisticated and consist of a steering servo and a combined receiver/speed controller unit. Access for changing the frequency crystal is through the battery hatch on the underside of the chassis which fortunately means the bodyshell does not have to be



Above: The 'Super Sabre' is moulded with brown tinted windows. The silver and orange stripes set it off nicely. Below: No separate rear wing is included but a built-in 'step' features on the bodyshell.



taken off every time you want to change.

Mechanics

As I said - the same as the 'Thundershot'. The whole design is based mainly around the 1/10th scale 'Grasshopper/Hornet' cars with wishbone front suspension and a solid rear axle. At the front there is quite a lot of suspension movement which should mean the 'Sabre' will be able to take on fairly bumpy terrain.

The gearbox features a geared differential unit which helps the handling considerably but also includes a gear ratio switch to give high and low speeds. High speed is for flat running and the low for going over bumpy ground.

The motor dishes out a fair amount of power for its size and makes the 'Sabre' quite nippy, particularly indoors. Because it is only 1/14th scale the car can be thrashed around even the most modest size living room, with practice. A small school or town hall would

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be ideal if there is a group of you racing against each other.

The 'QD' is supplied with a pistol-grip style radio transmitter which has a wheel for steering and a trigger for the throttle.

To make the complete racing package a set of rechargeable Ni-cad batteries are required, along with a suitable charger. Tamiya can supply these although it does boost the basic price of the car. The extra soon becomes worthwhile because ordinary 'dry' cells are expensive and do not last as long.

The charger supplied with the review kit connects into a standard, 3-pin mains plug socket and the batteries do not even have to be taken out of the car because there is a special charging jack plug socket situated on the side of the car. The charger takes a maximum of five hours to charge the batteries which is probably too long unless you have a spare set of batteries already charged and ready to

go. Quicker chargers, which only take 15 minutes or so, do exist and it is best to consult your local model shop for advice.

On a full charge the Sabre will run for around 35 minutes depending on what sort of ground is being covered. How you drive the car will affect the battery duration also, particularly if you are throwing the car from forward to reverse all the time.

Running report

Several people I know have had a go with a 'QD' and all have expressed admiration for the quality and performance. One car I know in particular has clocked up a vast number of 1/14th scale miles without missing a beat. Damage is also limited despite the limited skill of some of the drivers and the attentions of a very large dog!

It is this reliability and fun which will encourage people to retain their interest in this and higher forms of R/C car racing.

The 'QD' transmitter supplied is of the pistol grip type. The car has two speeds in forward and single speed reverse.



The 'Super Sabre' bodysell is held on with three screws and can be changed easily for the original 'Thundershot' shell.