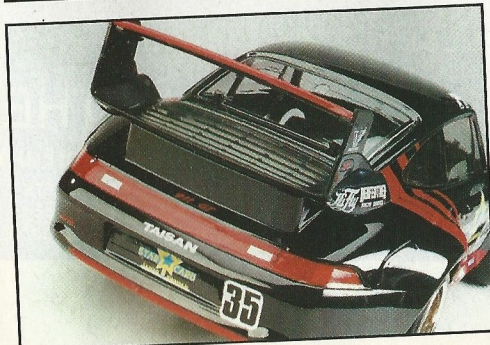
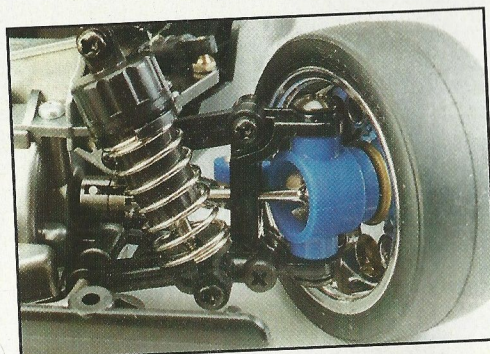
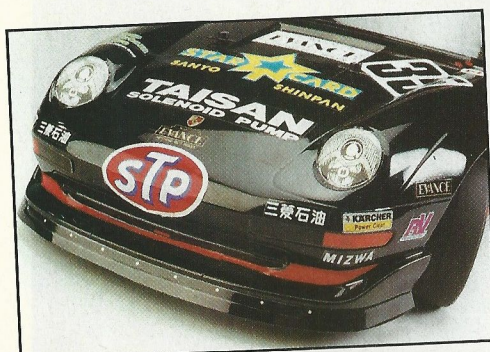


KIT REVIEW
Reviewed by Mike Caine



Trump Card?

The latest Tamiya release feature a new chassis spec, new materials and an excellent bodyshell of one of the World's top Sports Cars, RCMC take a test drive



Who would have thought, when Tamiya released that Toyota Celica GT Four rally car in 1991 that so many models would follow over the next five years. That original design was a compromise for both on and off road use and the subsequent pure on road models used short travel shocks. Over those years where Tamiya must surely have recouped their tooling costs ten times over, detail changes and improvements have gone by almost unnoticed, whilst the list of optional Hop Up items has grown to an unbelievable level.

Why this trip down memory lane? Because those Tamiya designers have come up with yet another variation to confuse the ardent racer, but not the man in the street.

The new Starcard Porsche features a TA02SW chassis - worked it out yet?

RADIO CONTROL MODEL CARS

Well, it's a TA02 as seen on all Touring cars after the Alfa 155, in wide (W) type, but now short wheel base (S)!

So what you may ask? Well the answer is that Mr. Taki, Tamiya's Radio Control maestro is convinced of it's improved handling and performance over all of it's previous stable-mates. Never mind the theory of a long and wide car (TA02W), yet to be proven in competitive outings here in the U.K. He says this Starcard Porsche has the edge straight out of the box on most types of circuit. So much so that Tamiya have already banned it from the European Eurocup Final in Switzerland in September!

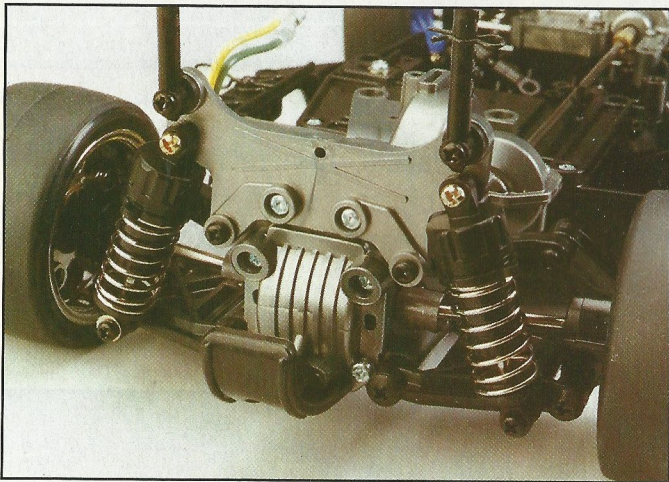
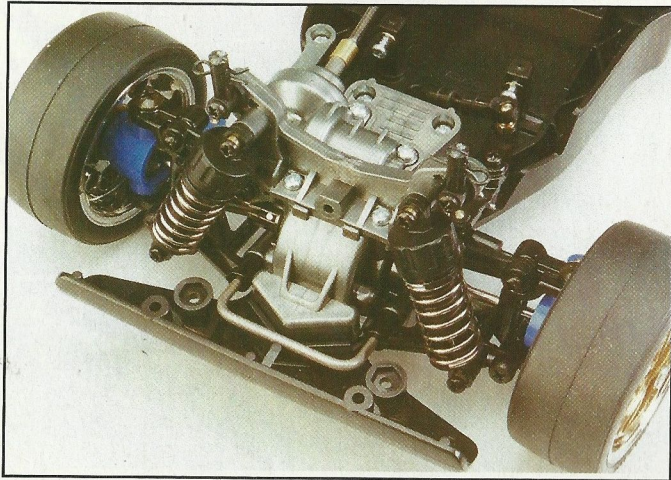
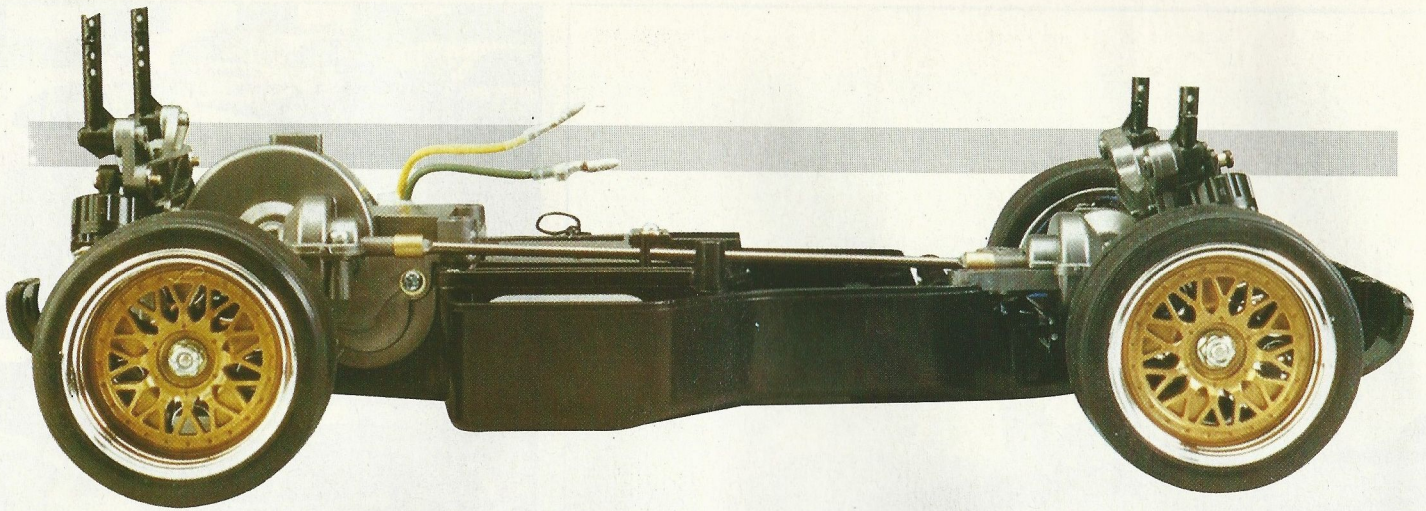
However, don't let this put you off as the realistic appearance of the car is why its been done. Tamiya engineers dislike intensely non scale models and have produced many accurate bodyshells which started the trend of narrow Scale Saloons from virtually every manufacturer. Even legendary racing constructors Schumacher have just released a narrow touring car, so it obviously is successful.

But no matter what the chassis is, it's the body and the final details that make the model. They may be expensive, but the look of this superbly detailed Porsche body is quite stunning. A combination of blow moulded polycarbonate shell and injection moulded detail parts, like the rear wing and door mirrors, plus a beautifully produced decal sheet means finishing is so simple. It's even only one can of spray - black, to replicate the box top illustration. Whilst creating the ultimate street racer look, Tamiya at long last, have ditched those horrible red gearboxes - now moulded in a realistic gun metal colour That's got to be worth twenty pounds alone!

The mechanics are the same as most other 4WD Touring Cars with the exception of the wide rear wheels and tyres, plus the rear wishbones which are from yes, you've guessed it, that Toyota



JULY 1996



Above; just a little bit wider and shorter but according to the Tamiya designer Mr Taki the new chassis is the best handling yet. Front and rear of the car also feature plastic parts in Gun Metal finish - for a more racy look!

Celica GT4! Assembly is the usual Tamiya simplicity with the excellent and infallible four language instruction manual, but make sure you get the rear uprights the right way round or else you get some strange handling with toe out on the rear of a 4WD car!

So we've gone full circle from those early days and used every variant imaginable. Time to call it a day? Well I've just remembered those fabulous TRF 411X models the factory built for their star drivers in Team Tamiya at the 1993 World Off Road Championships. Now if that nice designer Mr Taki was to get a piece of paper - oops sorry, a Cad Cam screen and use the bits from... Watch this space for details!

Incidentally the Starcard Porsche is available from all good model shops. We've also heard that it will be allowed in the U.K. Eurocup series this year despite its European Final ban. Tamiya's trump card indeed.



Releases at this time of year from Tamiya seem never ending with shipments arriving of items shown at the February Hobby Fair in Nuremberg. Three 4WD Touring cars are in the shops now that may have slipped your notice. The SVT Mustang IMSA racer looks like a Mondeo Coupe, but again it's the simplicity of the paint scheme that makes it look so good. After all most of us are hopeless at producing a Concours winning bodyshell, so those clever Tamiya people make it easy. A simple mask up to allow a two colour spray job of blue and white (always remember to put the dark colours on first) is easy. The decal sheet looks a nightmare, but is nowhere near as complicated as that dreaded sheet that appeared with the D2 Mercedes. The usual 4WD mechanics again including red gearboxes! You either love it or loathe it.

More to our taste was the excellent BMW 318i of last year's German Touring Car Champion Joachim Winkelhock. It's back to the normal touring car narrow dimensions with the usual mechanics of this shaft driven 4WD chassis - TA02 of course. Topped off with a sleek BMW 318i bodyshell as seen in this year's BTCC Championship, well near enough! A little work with a scalpel and some mylar decal film will soon produce a McLaren/BMW Great Britain Fina sponsored Replica. The photo strip here even shows you how it looks in the flesh. Failing the conversion suggestion, the kit supplied decals produce a fantastic looking car and again for the non-artistic type a can of white polycarbonate paint is all you need.

Only gripe with all these new Tamiya releases is the lack of a cockpit set for that final realistic touch. Enquiries to U.K. importer Richard Kohnstam Ltd, revealed that small stocks of both left and right hand drive interiors were still available either from them or your favourite model shop, but that this set had indeed been discontinued by Tamiya.

Third on the list is by contrast from the Japanese Touring Car Series, a Toyota Supra in the splendid Castrol Racing livery. The TA02W (wide) chassis is underneath this big bodyshell. The down-force from the huge rear wing should give it enough traction wherever you use it!

This car is going to form the basis of our feature article on Hop Up parts that can be added to give the definitive Touring Car Specification. Currently we're negotiating a second mortgage to finalise our purchases. So far we've spent over £200 on practical parts and there's more to buy. Well at least there's only two compounds of rubber in the wide tyre configuration...at the moment!

All of these models should be in the shops now, so if you fancy a scale saloon it may be easier to make your choice before another string of releases confuses your decision.