

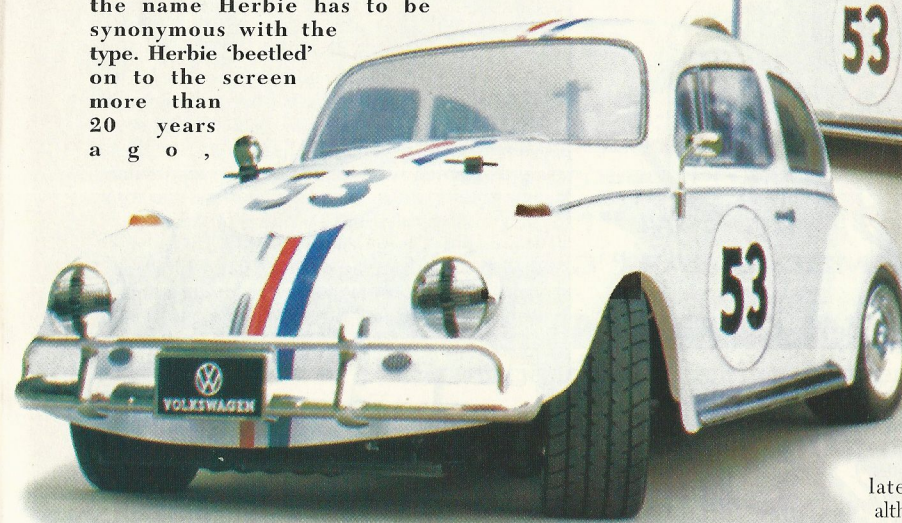
# The Love Bug



Is it a bird, is it a plane....

**Ian Young does for Tamiya what Walt Disney did for Volkswagen.**

**N**ext to the Mini, the VW Beetle has to be the best known of popular cars in modern times, so it was a logical step for Tamiya to produce a radio control model of the 'Vee Dub'. Whilst the 'Bug' is popular, the name Herbie has to be synonymous with the type. Herbie 'beetled' on to the screen more than 20 years ago,



Which way to M.G.M.

**starring in**  
*The Love Bug*, the first of several movies featuring the loveable little car, and from that day the VW (named after Tennessee Steinmetz's Uncle Herb, an ex-middleweight boxer whose nose gradually got turned, reminding Tennessee of the little car), became a piece of motoring history.

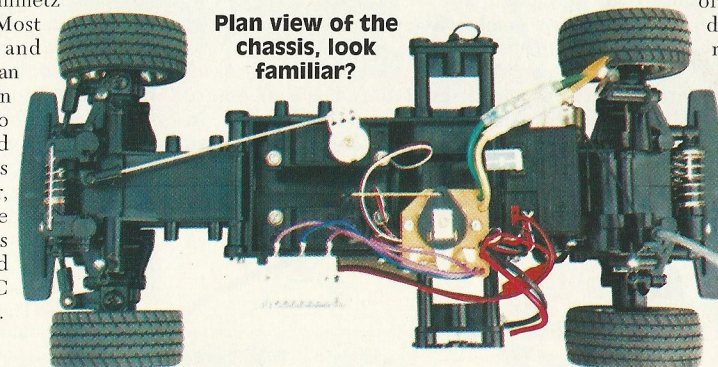
### A screen star

In many ways the screen star is similar to the latest 1/10th offering from Tamiya. Jim Douglas bought the car on a very tight budget and the Tamiya car is also suitably aimed at the cost conscious racer. Tennessee Steinmetz (Herbie's mechanic) quoted "Most guys spend more love, time and money on their cars in a week than they do on their wives and kids in a year, pretty soon the car starts to think they're something!"—Sound familiar! Similarly Jim Douglas (Herbie's so-called driver, although he didn't always have control!) said that little car was "Just a lot of nuts and bolts" and that is certainly true of most R/C cars, including the Tamiya Beetle.

### Mini Based

In true Tamiya tradition the Volkswagen Beetle is based extensively on a chassis from another car, in this case the Mini. To give the 'Bug' handling characteristics compatible with the real car Tamiya have swapped the chassis direction through 180°, providing a rear wheel drive chassis. In order to do this the front and rear steering and suspension components have also been moved to opposite ends of the chassis. The 'Vee-Dub' retains the rather curious 'friction' dampers first seen on the Mini. For those who haven't built or seen the Tamiya Mini (shame on you) the dampers look outwardly like any other spring assisted shock absorber but the resistance internally is provided by a metal piston acting inside a length of greased rubber tube rather than in oil. Whilst they work satisfactorily I shall probably change them for conventional dampers

at a later stage, although they don't affect the handling as much as on the front-wheel drive Mini. The radio gear is re-arranged to suit the new layout with the receiver positioned above the motor at the rear, the rotary speed controller moves to the other side to avoid fouling the steering servo linkage but the resistor stays in the same place as the Mini. Many other components have been carried over from the Mini but one area where there have been some changes is the wheel and tyre assembly. The wheels are beautifully chromed, with only a domed centre cap missing from an otherwise good representation of the real wheels. Tyres are the normal semi-pneumatic type with a road pattern. The front and rear tyres are different, with the



Plan view of the chassis, look familiar?

rears being of the softer Tamiya 'Super Grip' variety. Another interesting and welcome addition is the inclusion of foam sponge inserts which certainly improve the handling of the little car. The body is superb, a masterpiece of tool making, capturing the look and feel of the Beetle perfectly. As with the Mini, the Beetle is a polycarbonate shell, supplied in clear plastic with a protective film over the exterior surface to protect it during construction and painting. Plastic and chromed plastic fittings along with a comprehensive sheet of stickers are provided to finish off the bodyshell.

### Construction

The entire construction process is dealt with in 36, easy to follow stages, detailed in a

comprehensive 24 page booklet. Anyone who's built a Tamiya R/C car before won't have any trouble with 'Herbie', it's a simple to construct, no nonsense kit, only the body shell is tricky, and that's not too bad.

The first six stages deal with the assembly of the differential gearbox and motor. There's nothing awkward during this process, the diagrams and instructions make it virtually foolproof and at the end of it you end up with a complete gearbox come differential unit.

The rear suspension is next to be dealt with, assembling the units and attaching them to the gearbox assembly. The springs on the Beetle are the same as on the Mini, being a 'hairspring' type as opposed to 'coil' springs. These are rated differently front to rear and as a consequence are colour coded to avoid confusion during assembly. Everything drops into place nicely, the only comment I would make is that the tiny tube of grease supplied in the kit runs out far too quickly. To ensure an adequate greasing of components which in turn should increase the life of the car, I suggest getting hold of some additional grease.

Stages 11 to 14 detail the construction of the front suspension and the associated chassis spacer. The following five stages see the addition of the steering linkages and the curious dampers, leaving the complete front and rear suspension units ready for assembly on to the chassis.

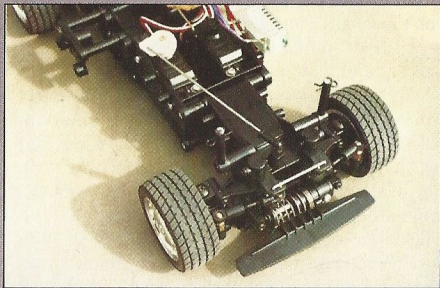
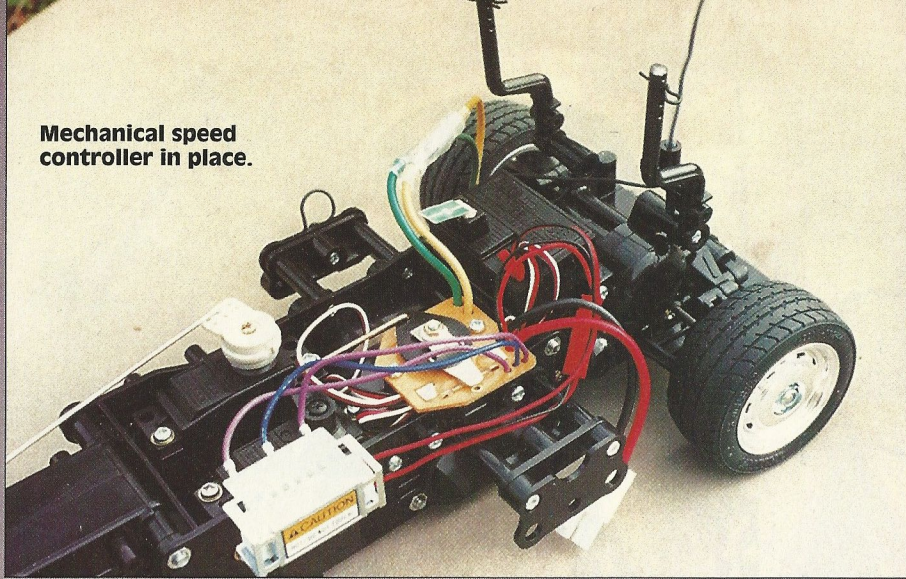
The chassis is more of a glorified spacer between the wheels, being a simple open-topped 'coffin' type affair which is home to the radio gear of your choice and the battery. To give you an idea of just how simple the chassis is the assembly is covered on just one diagram and only involves 15 pieces, and that includes the nuts, bolts and screws!

### Radio Gear—Your Choice

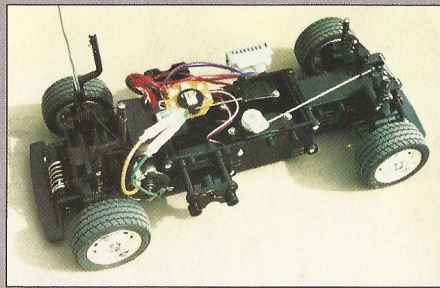
The Beetle will accept a variety of radio systems, from your basic, cheap end of the market 2 channel set to the all singing, all dancing Adspec system, also made by Tamiya. Not surprisingly Tamiya detail the installation of the Adspec system in the instruction booklet, obviously hoping that people will buy it in preference to any others. However, if like me, you choose to fit a standard 2 channel system, utilising the basic rotary speed controller which is supplied in the kit, you will need to ignore most of the assembly instructions between stages 21 and 24 and refer to the supplementary sheet supplied with the speed controller. Once again this is a simple stage by stage construction which shouldn't present any problems, especially if you are a Tamiya R/C car kit veteran. My only word of



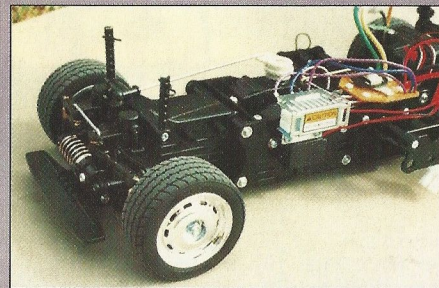
**Mechanical speed controller in place.**



**Front suspension and steering showing the transverse shockers and 'blade' type bumper.**



**Completed chassis, compact and well laid out.**



**Love those wheels—strictly speaking 'Herbie' should have white rims and a black centre.**

advice would be to jump ahead to stage 25, adding the front and rear suspension units to the chassis *before* adding the radio gear. Once the tyres have been added to the wheels and then in turn to the chassis it's time to start on the body.

### 'Herbie'

Right from the outset I had decided to paint the body in the colours of the most famous Beetle, 'Herbie'. After much research (I watched *The Love Bug* on video four times!) I had enough information to start work.

Most Tamiya shells are now supplied with masks for the windows, gone are the days of Sellotape and paper! These are carefully trimmed and stuck to the *inside* of the windows, ensuring that they line up with the feature lines of the shell. Now

the inside can be sprayed in the usual way, in the case of 'Herbie', white. After trimming the excess material off the shell it's time to turn the white Beetle into a famous film star.

I started by brush painting a band of red and a band of blue along a strip of white Fablon vinyl. When dry, strips were cut out using a scalpel and steel rule, the red being a couple of mill. narrower. The strips of vinyl were then stuck, to the boot, roof and bonnet of the shell, off-set to the left hand side of the centre line. The distinctive number 53 on the doors, bonnet and boot presented me with a problem. After visits to several model shops in search of suitable sized numbers and discs, I found myself empty handed, wondering how to make the numbers. In the end I found the numbers on an old box, traced the outline,

to simulate tape. And there you have it, 'Herbie', a very special little car.

### Driving Ambition

Unlike 'Herbie's' first outing, I confined myself to a local car park rather than the Jackrabbit Springs Raceway. Acceleration is brisk, plentiful for the casual racer but for those in search of extra 'umph' there is a choice of uprated motors to suit. Pulling wheelies was one of the little car's favourite tricks but you'll be hard pushed to get the scale version to do it. Handling is superb, well balanced, not too tail happy and definitely a good starting point for those wishing to compete. As a fun car the Beetle is tops, as a racer I'm sure it'll go far, and apparently there is already a championship in place for the type!

In terms of living with it the Beetle has some foibles. The small 'blade' type front and rear bumpers are effective—but only at protecting the chassis—the bodywork protrudes and is very vulnerable. The method for fixing the wheels in place can be fiddly, and I for one would have problems replacing the tiny drive pin, which incidentally is a carry over from the Mini.

Other than that the 'Vee-Dub' is a great new addition to the range, my attention has now wandered to speculate on what might next use this great little chassis.



**"Now pose for the camera Herbie"**