

Lewis Eckett  
looks at another  
exciting Tamiya  
idea

**T**he Earls Court Toyfair at the beginning of 1988 seems a long time ago now.

However lead times of 12 months or less are small beer when you realise how much time, effort and money goes into the release of a brand new product.

On the Tamiya stand at Earls Court I can remember being beckoned into the back room to see something so special that I thought we would be asked to sign a declaration of secrecy. To be honest I was puzzled. On the stand the "Avante" was blaring out its competition message so what could be more significant than that? The answer was something of a surprise and also disappointment, although on further reflection the reasons for the hush hush approach became steadily clearer.

Quick Drive (QD) is a firm thrust into the part of the radio control car market dominated to date by the like of *Taiyo*, *Bandai*, *Tomy*, *Nikko* and others. You know the sort of cars I mean: low cost, small scale, ready built machines running on ordinary dry cell batteries. They sell by the container load simply because they are far cheaper than the cars produced by Tamiya and Co and easier to get to grips with on an immediate level.

However between the two camps there is nothing that bridges the gap. With their renowned flair for marketing Tamiya have come up with the missing link and produced the "Quick Drive" Thundershot.

The "QD" borrows features from both sides and combines them to produce a winner. For a start the car is ready built and for some people that is a big plus because not everyone has the confidence or ability to tackle the complexity of even the simplest kit.

Parents particularly are happier with this situation because usually it is them who have to do the building. Tamiya have a reputation for quality envied through the World so the "QD" is bound to satisfy on this level. Certainly on the car provided for review I could find nothing to fault; the quality of the mouldings in particular are a testament to Tamiya's expertise.

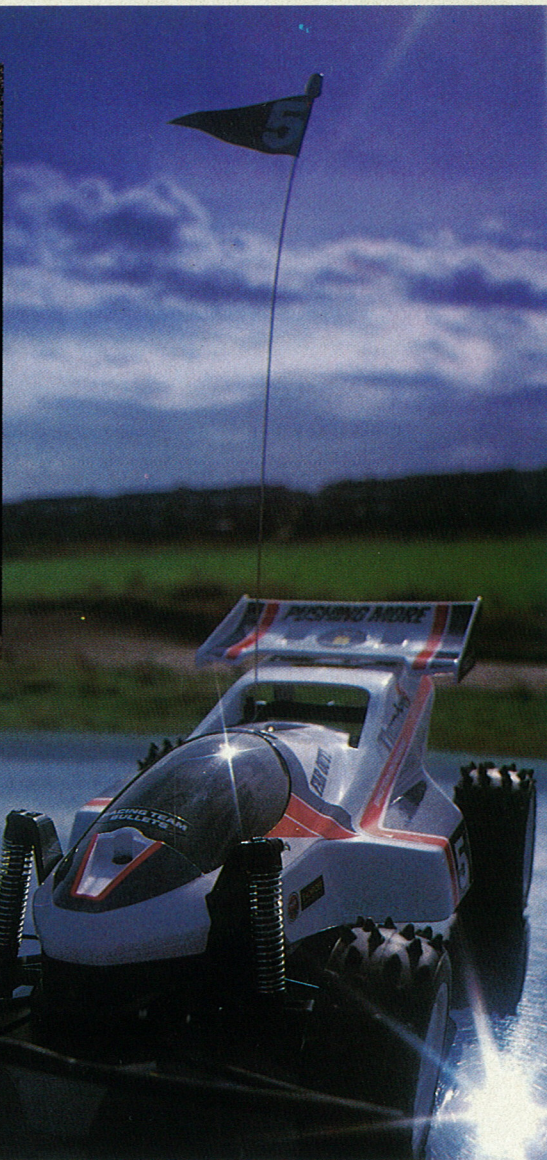
#### Well, what's it got?

OK, so the car is ready built, what else is good? Well the

# Storm Ahead!







"QD" is pitched in at 1/14th scale which is probably as big as you would want to go for this type of car. Whereas a 1/10th scale kit built buggy needs a fairly large space to operate in, the "QD" can be driven around a reasonably-sized living room if for instance the weather is bad. Outdoors the larger scale means that the suspension is big enough to cope with reasonably sized bumps. Don't for one moment think that the "QD" will negotiate the neighbours' rockery or steaming great piles of horse manure because it won't. However short grass and concrete surfaces are ideal terrain.

Perhaps the QD's greatest claim to fame is the fact that it can be run on a variety of frequencies. Usually this type of car is produced on a common waveband and this makes things difficult when two or more cars are run in close proximity. With the "QD" however several cars can be run at the same time using different crystals available from your local model shop. Between six and 12 cars can be run at the same time depending on the type of crystals being used. On the "QD" the crystal location is found in the battery recess underneath the car. You do have to remove the batteries but this is the only shortcoming to what is basically a very simple operation. The ability to change frequencies cannot be over-emphasised as this is the major difference between the two types of car. Without it any form of racing is virtually impossible and as we all know there is no greater enjoyment to be had from these cars than when you pit your skills against other drivers.

### The Design

On the design front the "QD Thundershot" is based more or less on Tamiya's other great favourite the 1/10th scale "Grasshopper". This gives an independent suspension front end fitted with coil spring shock absorbers. At the rear the gearbox drives the wheels through a differential and the whole drive system floats on two pivot points governed by another two coil spring shocks. This system allows the rear axle to pivot forwards and side to side for suspension movement. The beauty of this design is that it is very simple and therefore easy to maintain. The original "Grasshopper" has been one of Tamiya's greatest successes ever, simply because it just goes on forever. The "QD Thundershot" should be no exception.

On the rear of the gearbox is a switch. This changes the gear ratio to give high or low speed performance. The high speed facility is best for flat surfaces where the "QD" can really show its places. The low setting is not as fast but does give a longer running time and is also better for off-road use.

There are several points to bear in mind when running the "QD".

Because it is not as sophisticated as its 1/10th scale cousins, the internal electronics are not as well protected against the wet. Inside the car is a combined electronic radio receiver and speed control unit which must be kept out of large puddles, wet grass or the garden pond at all costs.

Another interesting feature of the "QD" is the fact you can change the wheels and tyres. This is significant because usually the tyres wear out well before the car does and finding replacements is extremely difficult. A small box spanner is included in the box and presumably spare wheels and tyres will be available in the near future. Perhaps we may even see a variety of tread patterns and a choice of wheels.

The battery compartment is found through a hatch in the bottom of the chassis. There is a choice here; either fit eight HP11 type dry cell batteries or rechargeable Ni-Cads. The latter is by far the best as the dry cells will run out very quickly and will need to be replaced at considerable cost. Rechargeable batteries may be more expensive to begin with but the savings in the long term are well worth it. A complete package is available from Tamiya stockists which consists of eight Ni-cads and a charger. The batteries can be charged when they are still in the car through a charging socket in the side of the chassis.

Of course 'QD' is supplied with a transmitter and this is the pistol-grip type with a wheel. For beginners and anyone who has never handled a transmitter before this is ideal as the pistol grip action is far more natural than the normal twin stick operation. The throttle is the trigger and when this is squeezed the car moved forward; push the trigger back and reverse is selected - simple, huh. For steering, the transmitter features a wheel which when turned to the right steers the car right. I won't insult your intelligence by telling you what happens when the wheel is turned left!

### Transmitter detail

On the front of the transmitter is a dial for adjusting the angle of the front wheels so that the car runs straight when the steering wheel is at neutral. The radio gear in the "QD" gives fully proportional control for both steering and throttle. This means the more movement of the throttle trigger, the faster the car will go. The same applies for the steering.

Always make sure you switch the transmitter on first when in use. The transmitter provides the control, without it the car will be out of control.

Since the car has been in my possession it has provided endless enjoyment to all manner of people paying me a visit. Mostly they are amazed by how much fun driving a radio control car can be. None of them can be really bothered to build one for themselves so the "QD" is ideal because you just switch it on and go. I found it fun as well which was surprising because I honestly expected it to be too slow. I'm not sure what size the motor is but it is quite powerful, especially on flat tarmac with the high gear selected. The best thing to do is to set up a course and drive around that. Anyone can drive a car aimlessly over a car park but make hem drive to a set course and the whole situation is changed. With five or six cars running together it will be even better and tremendous fun when the racing bug begins to bite.

Now that there is something at the bottom end of the market with real racing appeal, maybe a few people will graduate to building "real" cars from kits. On the other hand the "QD" is almost there anyway so the jump is not that great. In the meantime I expect we will start to see a complete range of "QD" cars once the "Thundershot" has filled a few Christmas stockings.

I just hope Santa has a contained wagon hitched to the



Above: The simple steer wheel/trigger transmitter is easy to use and runs on a 9 volt dry cell battery.

back of his sleigh. Distributor: RIKO International Price: £75 (approx). Rechargeable batteries and charger £21.99 (approx).

Below: Inside the 'Thundershot's lots of electronics which provide the 2-speed forward and reverse as well as proportional steering. Bottom: The eight rechargeable batteries.

