

Optima Custom SPECIAL

A RGGGHH*!?! . . . not another Optima Mid . . . I can't cope - where do they come from? - Why am I going into this model shop - Why are you taking my money? - Why, why, wh . . . ARRGGHh*?! . . .

Mr. "K" - he a velly worried man. Not only is he biting his toe nails about trying to win the World Championships in September, he's also got a pile of moulding tools lying around his factory for a car that will be superceded as soon as the first race in Australia.

There is no doubt in my mind that Kyosho are building a brand new car for the Championships and are signing up some impressive and expensive talent to make sure it wins or comes pretty close. Despite losing the last World title to the pride of Great Britain - the *Schumacher* CAT - Kyosho have enjoyed massive sales with their Mid for



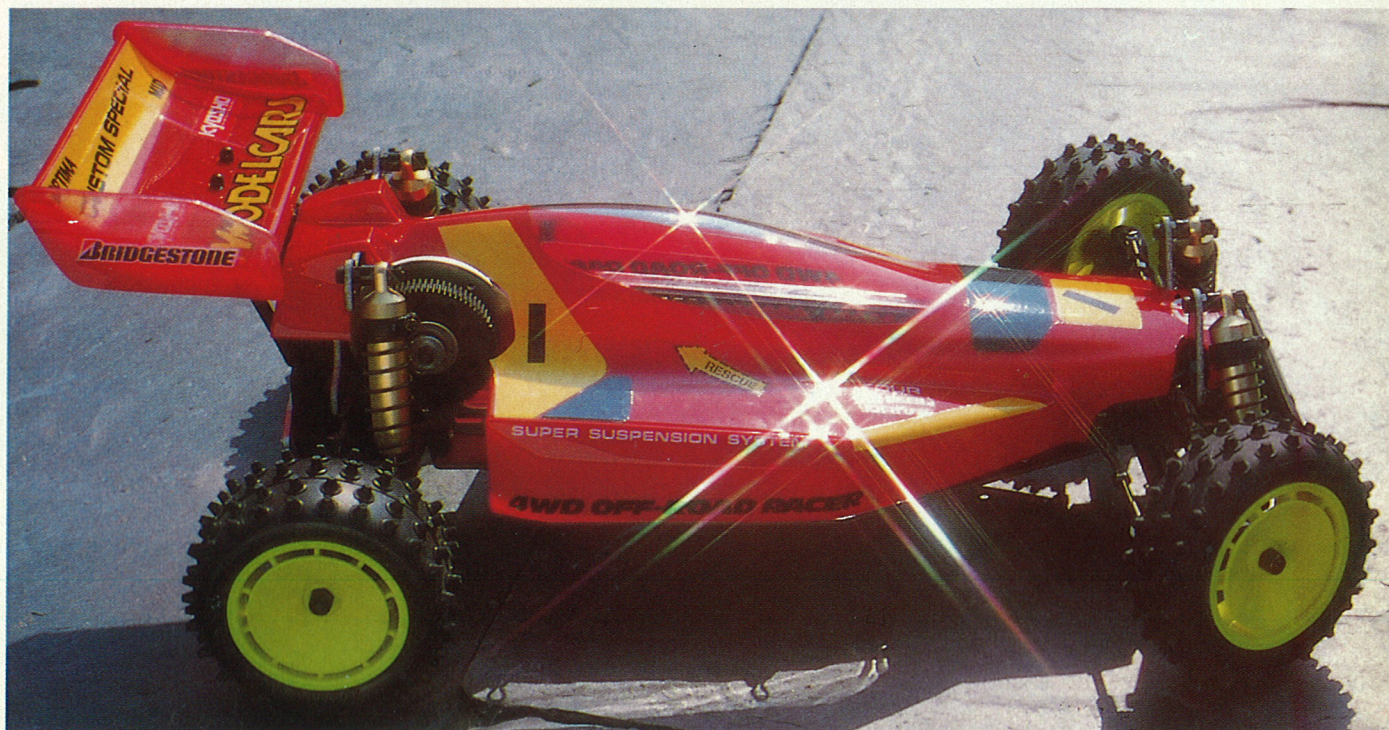
The Ultimate Optima Reviewed

very simple reasons. It's a very good car, excellent for the expert, even better for the club racer and what's more in plentiful supply.

The CAT's success at Romsey did not translate into immediate World sales because *Schumacher* could not supply enough kits to meet the demand.

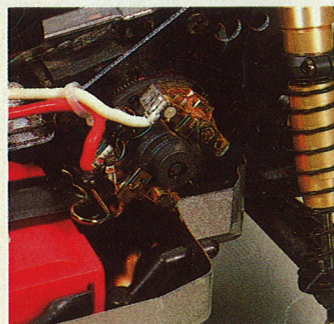
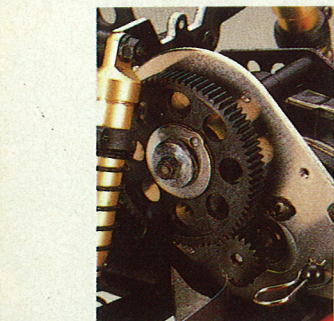
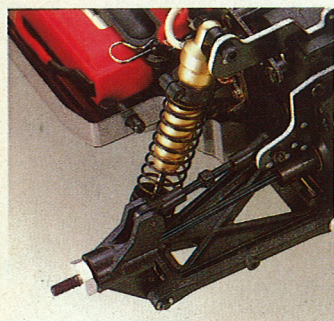
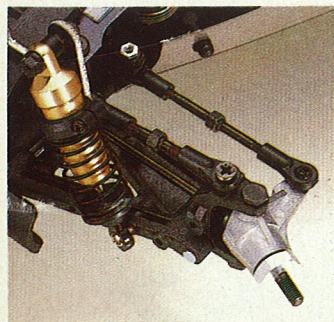
Kyosho did not have these problems and the popularity of the MID grew because of it. Many people agree that it is probably the biggest selling competition car yet to be produced.

That belief is something *Kyosho* want to hang onto with the new car, whatever it may be and the best way to do that will be to win the World Championships. Furthermore they must have the confidence in the new machine to abandon the Mid in its present form. Whatever happens in September production versions

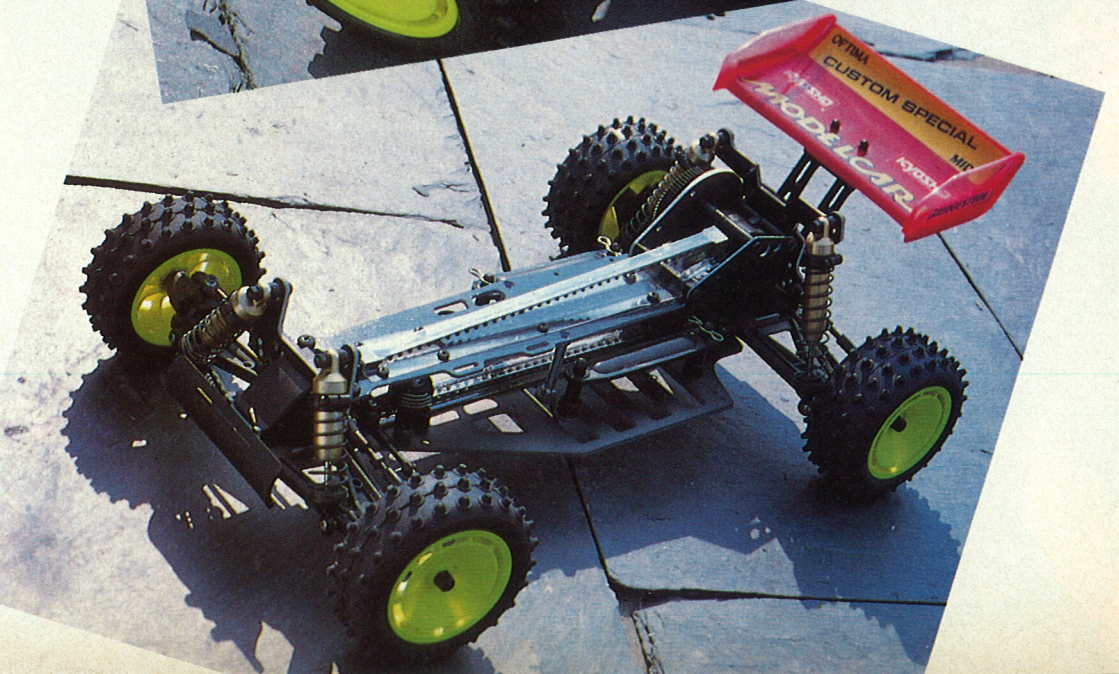




**MODEL
CARS**



The Optima Mid Custom Special comes with Option House gold dampers. Below: 48dp gears are fitted. Bottom: neat chassis layout with black glass chassis.



of the next generation Mid will not be available until at the most the middle of 1990.

That's a long time off and in the meantime Kyosho are furiously trying to get the most out of the original car. This must be why every month or two a new Mid kit pops up, slightly different to the last, but the same in general design.

The editor assures me that the "Mid Custom Special" is absolutely, completely and utterly the last Mid we shall ever see. I'm not so sure - every time he says that I get a phone call asking me to review another one. (And before you ask, I don't have a house full of Optima because I give them all back to the ed).

Still, if this is the last one then it is a pretty good example of the breed and follows on directly from the car reviewed in May's RCMC. That was the Mid Custom which meant

there must be something "Special" about this kit.

Working backwards from the front we find the first major difference. The Special is only the second Mid to include universal joint drive shafts as standard in the kit (the first was the Mid Turbo). Up until now anyone wanting to fit UJ's had to indulge in an "Option House" tune up part at extra cost.

UJ's are a worthy feature for the front end of any four wheel drive car, to stop the drive shafts from popping out during hard cornering.

At both ends of the Special, hidden in the gearboxes are two geared differentials. Kyosho have been supplying a variety of their cars with limited slip, ball type diffs with mixed reactions. Some drivers find it difficult to get on with ball differentials - they are fiddly to put together, require care and attention to set up and are generally a pain to adjust trackside.

The two types of diff are suited to different styles of tracks. On loose, slippery surfaces there is no doubt that ball differentials have the advantage because they allow a little bit of slip before the wheels start transmitting full power to the wheels. This helps to stop the car from spinning out when throttle is applied.

In this country the vast majority of tracks have high grip surfaces such as grass. Although ball diffs can be adjusted to give hardly any slip, the geared alternative is already set up to allow full power to be laid down. The other attraction for geared diffs is that they require a lot less maintenance except a periodic check and clean up. Also in the Special gearboxes, as well as the rest of the car, you will find a full set of ball races as

standard. Another feature you do not have to worry about buying as an extra.

Between the gearboxes is a block glass fibre chassis which takes advantage of both battery pack layouts. If you are unsure about whether you should be following the latest fashion by using saddle packs, but you only have ordinary stick packs at the moment, then don't worry. The Special's chassis has the option to fit both because all the mounting hardware for stick packs is included, whilst the chassis has cut outs to allow saddle packs to be used and the Champs to retain them.

All the holes through the chassis are countersunk so

there are no projections underneath the car to catch on anything.

Inside the kit you will not find a motor or a speed controller. Kyosho realised pretty early on that most buyers of competition kits already have their own speed controllers and motors and generally the kit supplied items remain unused. By not including them in the kit other items such as ball races and UJ's can be supplied instead.

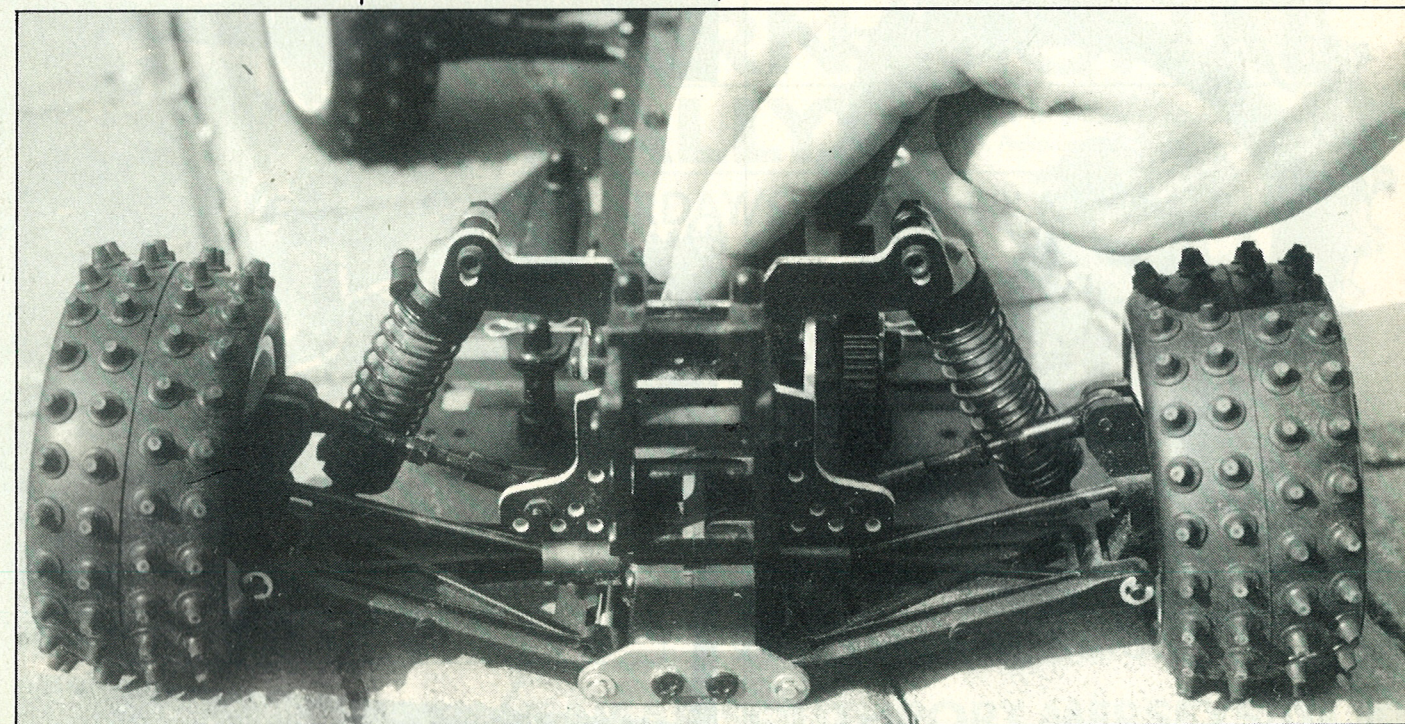
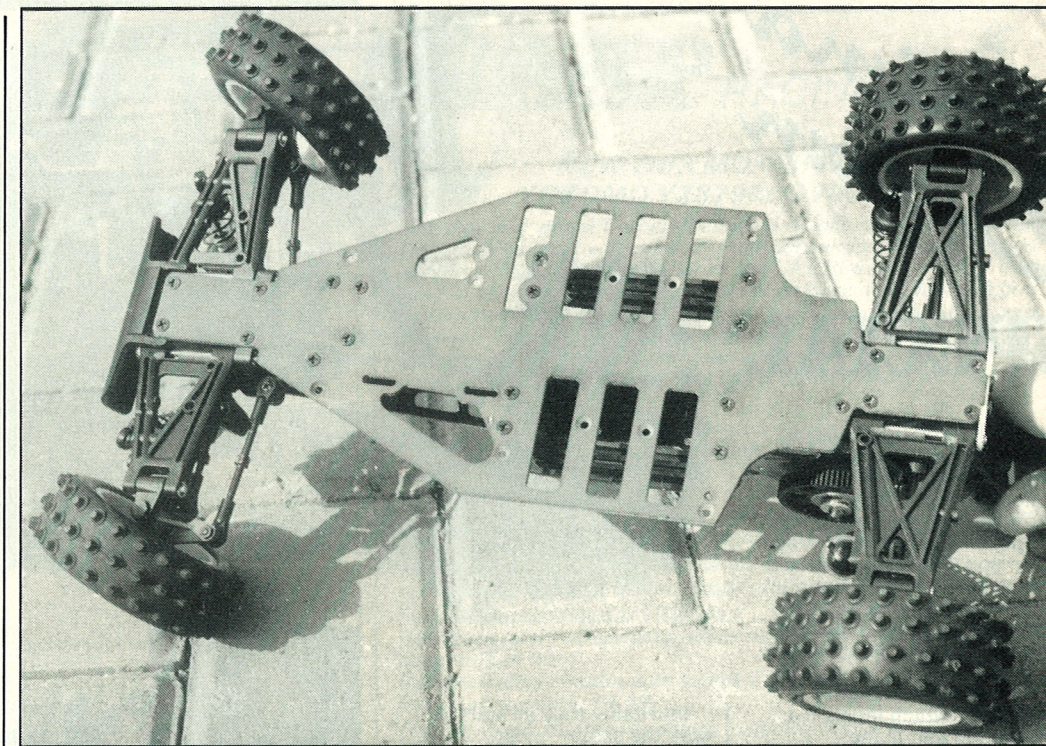
The "Custom Special" also heralds a welcome return of the Gold "Option House" shocks. Other Mid kits have featured a variety of Shock Systems including the Platinum 'Option House' types and the more

The chassis is neat and well produced. The Option for both stick and saddle pack batteries is given.

simple plastic versions of the Gold.

These shocks still find much favour amongst top flight racers, they even find their way onto other manufacturers' cars such as their popularity. Although no shocks are totally leak-proof the Golds do a better job than most. Only one set of springs are included in the kit. You won't be surprised to know they are the black,

Rear suspension uses standard Optima parts and includes adjustable top suspension pivots.



Optima Custom SPECIAL

medium type. Soft and hard springs are available as an extra from the 'Option House' catalogue.


Another welcome feature in the special kit is an undertray (again you don't have to buy it as an extra) which fits snugly to the bodyshell and seals the car's internals from the worst British tracks and weather can throw at it.

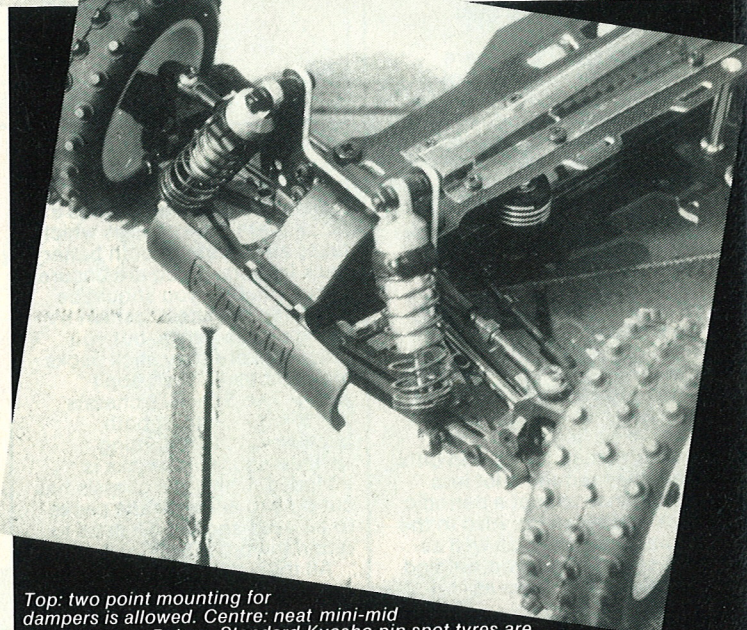
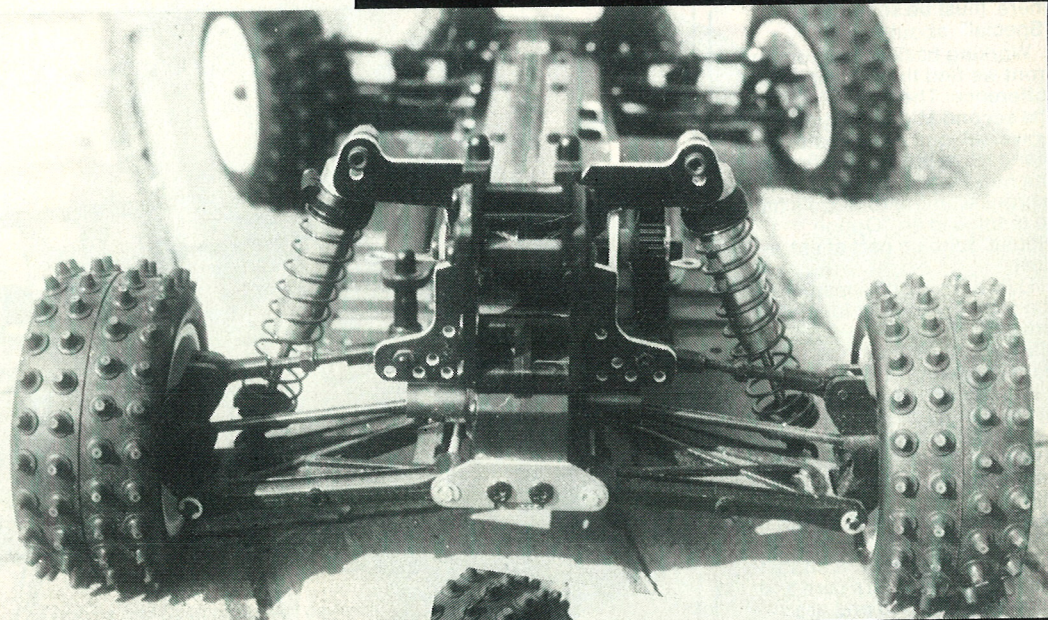
The last notable feature of the Special, which labels it a competition car, is the inclusion of left and right handed adjustable top links for the suspension. This means the camber angles of the wheels can be adjusted without removing the links. By adjusting the hexagon nut in the centre of the rod, the length of the link can be adjusted.

The bodyshell is interesting, the editor says it is ugly, but I'm not so sure. It must be one of the most difficult aspects of kit production to try and come up with a new and distinctive body shape every time.

Inevitably they all start to look the same – most competition racers don't seem to care anyway so long as it covers the car.

If this is the last Mid (then I will turn off the word processor) then it is a worthwhile stop-gap between the Mid series and whatever is to come out of the World Champs. There is no point in waiting for the new car because it is a long time off yet.

If your Mid is worn out and needs replacing you might as well do it with the Custom Special. 



Top: two point mounting for dampers is allowed. Centre: neat mini-mid front bumper. Below: Standard Kyosho pin spot tyres are supplied. Left: new black uprights and UJ's.

