

Smart 1/32nd scale Airfix "nostril-nose" Ferrari (everybody has made it!) and Cooper cars on their attractive grey polystyrene track. Note interlocking piece at track split between the cars.

WHO'S WHO IN BRITISH CAR MANUFACTURERS & SYSTEMS...

Introduction

A LOT of potentially interested people may well pick up this issue number one of *Model Cars* who have never remotely considered the possible interest of model cars and model car racing as a sport and hobby. For that reason we feel there can never come a better time to set out in brief the pros and cons of what is beginning to be a somewhat baffling array of British made, or available in Britain, model car racing products. An appraisal of the even wider range and variety of American equipment (not on the British market) can be safely left to a later date.

It is true today to say that every set and car—with rare reservations—is reasonably good value for money and will do what it is sold to do. Like every other commodity one tends to enjoy the value that is paid for—there are no wonder routes to the best except money on the drum. The multitude of sizes and types, however, makes some discussion of their various qualities opportune.

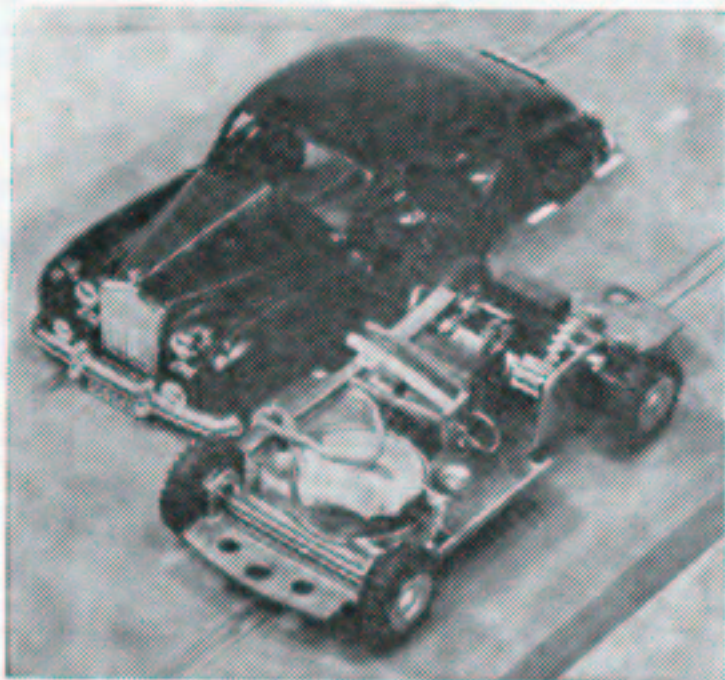
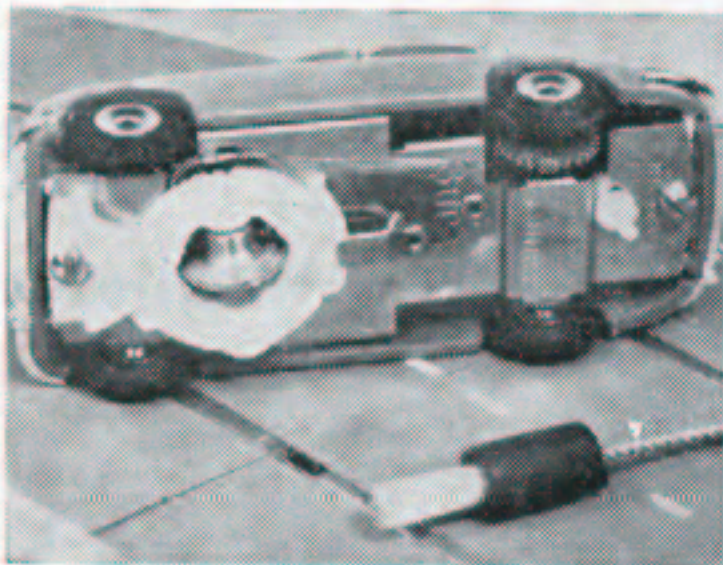
Another thought we must have for these beginners of ours is that they may not even know the general principle on which electric model car racing operates. For their benefit therefore, we will add that current is passed via flat metal strips let into the track to electric motors in the cars. By means of a speed controller which varies the power passed, the speed of the cars can be adjusted at will. In this way each car is really "driven" by its operator, and subject to the hazards of the road in full size fashion—if driven into a corner too fast it will "run out of road" and spin off the circuit.

PRINCIPAL ELECTRIC MODEL CAR SYSTEMS AVAILABLE IN U.K.

TRADE NAME	MANUFACTURER/AGENT	SCALE	REMARKS
Scalextric	Minimodels Ltd., Fulford Rd., Havant Hants.	1/30 & 1/32	Catalogue 9d. from local re- tailers.
Airfix	Airfix Products Ltd., Haldane Place, Garratt Lane, London, S.W.18.	1/32	*
Circuit 24	Meccano Ltd., Binns Lane, Liverpool, 13.	1/30	* First made in company's French factory.
VIP Raceways	Victory Industries (Raceways) Ltd., Barfax Works, Worplesdon Rd., Guildford, Surrey.	1/32	*
M.R.R.C.	Model Road Racing Cars Ltd. 29 Ashley Road, Boscombe, Hants.		Catalogue 6d. from makers.
Champion	Playcraft Toys Ltd. 5/6 Argyll St., London, W.1.	1/36 & 1/42	Preliminary details in Toy Fair Report.
S.R.M.	S.R.M. Engineering Ltd., 71/73 West Street, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middx.	1/40	* Smallest rac- ing cars with steering.
Wrenn Formula 152	G. & R. Wrenn Ltd., Bowlers Croft, Basildon, Essex.	1/52	*
Minic Motorways	Minic Ltd. Canterbury, Kent.	1/75 or 1/87	* 00 Model Railway Gauge.
Faller	Gebrüder Faller, Germany Agents in U.K. R. Kohnstam Ltd., 78/9 White Lion St., N.1.	1/75 or 1/87	* 00 gauge

* Price lists, etc., for 3d. stamp.

Several other systems have been or may be imported in small numbers or through limited agents, such as Strombecker-Dowst (big U.S. company); Marx (Gamages had some of these); Rally Monte-Carlo (French - with lovely cars); Elmodan (Swedish - good cars with steering 1/32 scale), etc., etc.



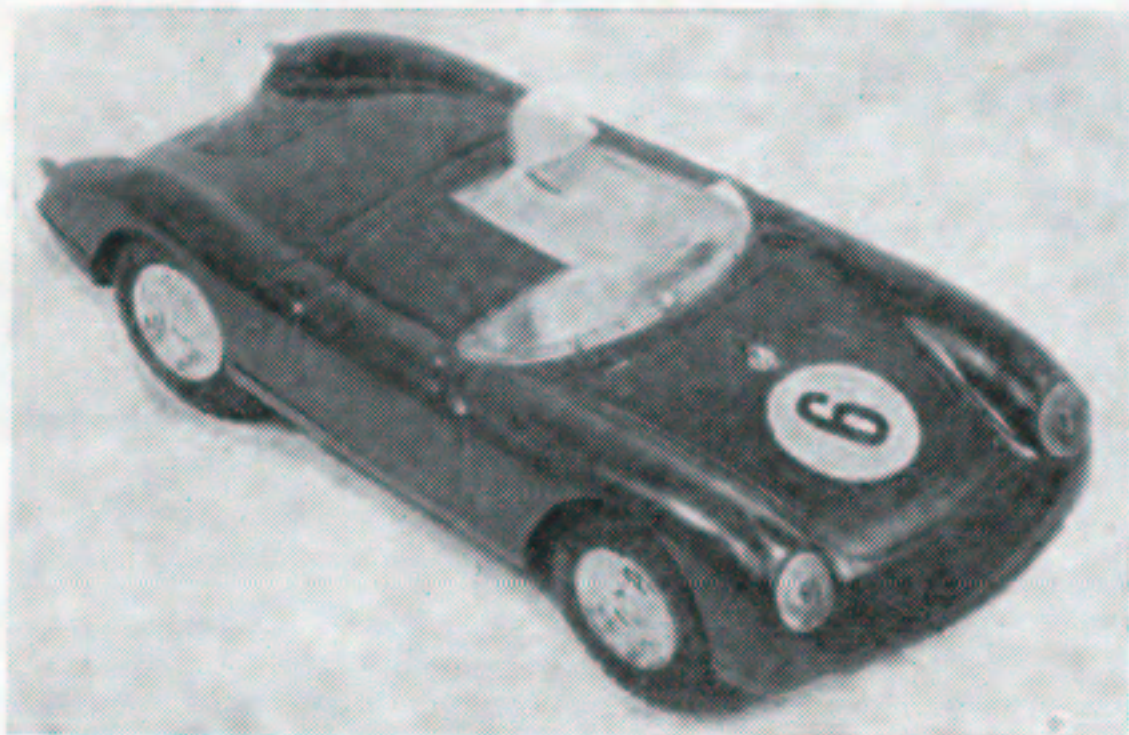
Looking at Minic from all points of view. Top: gimbal which provides current pick-up and steering will be noted. The track cleaning brush is also provided! Above: Minic car with body removed. This little motor is laid across the chassis and drives via spur gears.

S.R.M. cars include Cooper and BRM. In spite of reduced scale, working Ackerman type steering and sprung rear ends are standard. Amazing in the size, isn't it?

Smaller yet—we come down to 1/52nd scale, or 152 as manufacturers Wrenn of Basildon describe it. It was produced as the smallest practical racing scale by its makers, whose early work had been concentrated on model railways trackwork (and still is to some extent). It is hardly their fault that other makers have gone still smaller. Unusual feature of Wrenn 152 is use of vibrator or impulse motor instead of more usual armature motor. This enables a smaller car to be effectively motorised more easily, and also enables some clever track juggling to be arranged (of which more anon). Only other successful impulse motor in cars is that offered by the larger Meccano Circuit 24 system.

Now we go right to the smallest—the two systems in 00 railway scale. We have described this as 1/75th scale in the past—strictly speaking it is nearer 1/87th if we follow the mixed scale arrangement of 00 by taking track as scale basis. Anyway, in

whatever we say it is, it is very very small. It seems incredible that practical commercial motors can be made so small and yet not have loads of bugs to bedevil retailers! The original American inspired Model Highways in this size used vibrator motors and are no longer available in this country. Their U.S. branch has gone from strength to strength but only by changing over to tiny armature motors. It is therefore interesting to compare the two ways that systems on our market have tackled the job. Most ingenious is the Minic system, where they have their armature motor laid across the frame (shades of Alec Issigonis and the Minis) driving the road wheels by spur gears. This bulks rather in the model and means that so far they have been limited to saloon cars where the motor can overflow into the passengers' compartment. However, it goes very well, using the original gimbal wheel current pick up that was once part of their fellow Lines Bros. group company Mini-models' (Scalextric) patent specification. Newcomer in this tiny scale is German Faller company just launching over here. Believe it or not, they have managed to get the sweetest little armature motor into their cars! So far they are sticking to saloon types, but since the motor lies flat there is no reason not to expect some baby Grand Prix cars eventually. (See First Look at Faller, page 14).



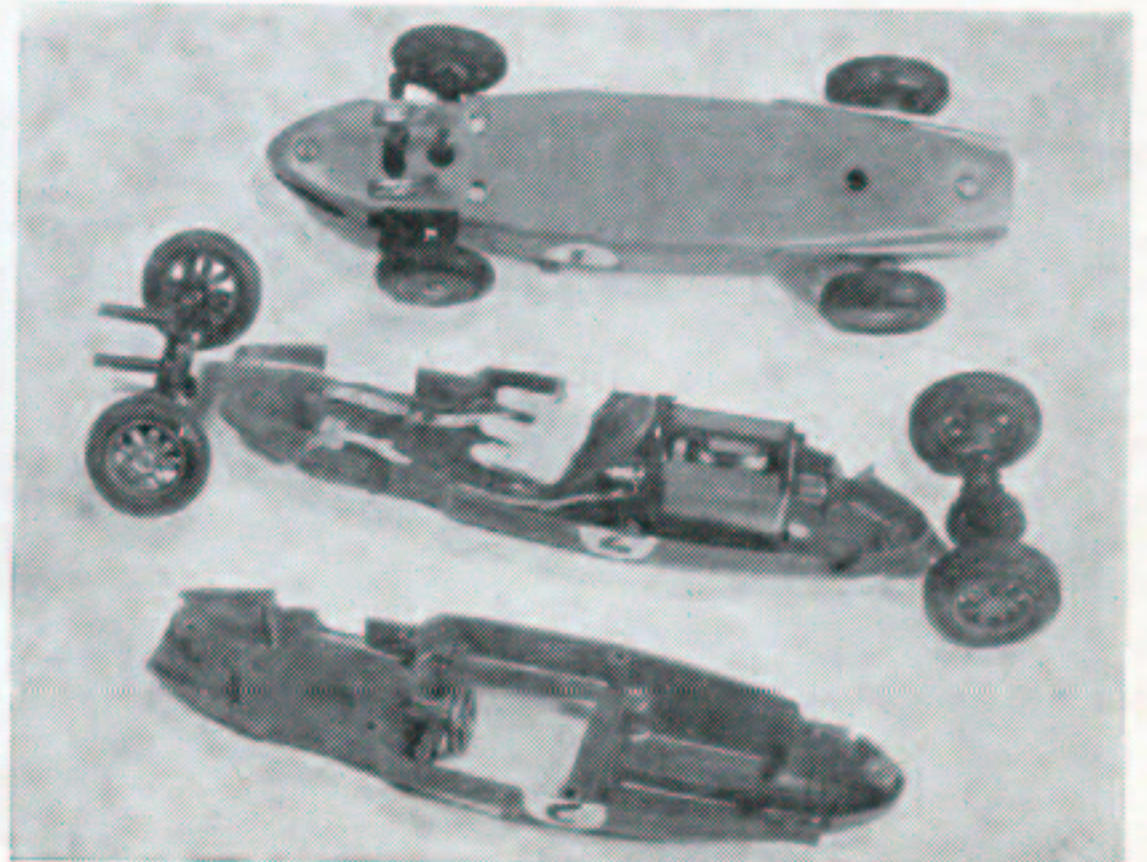
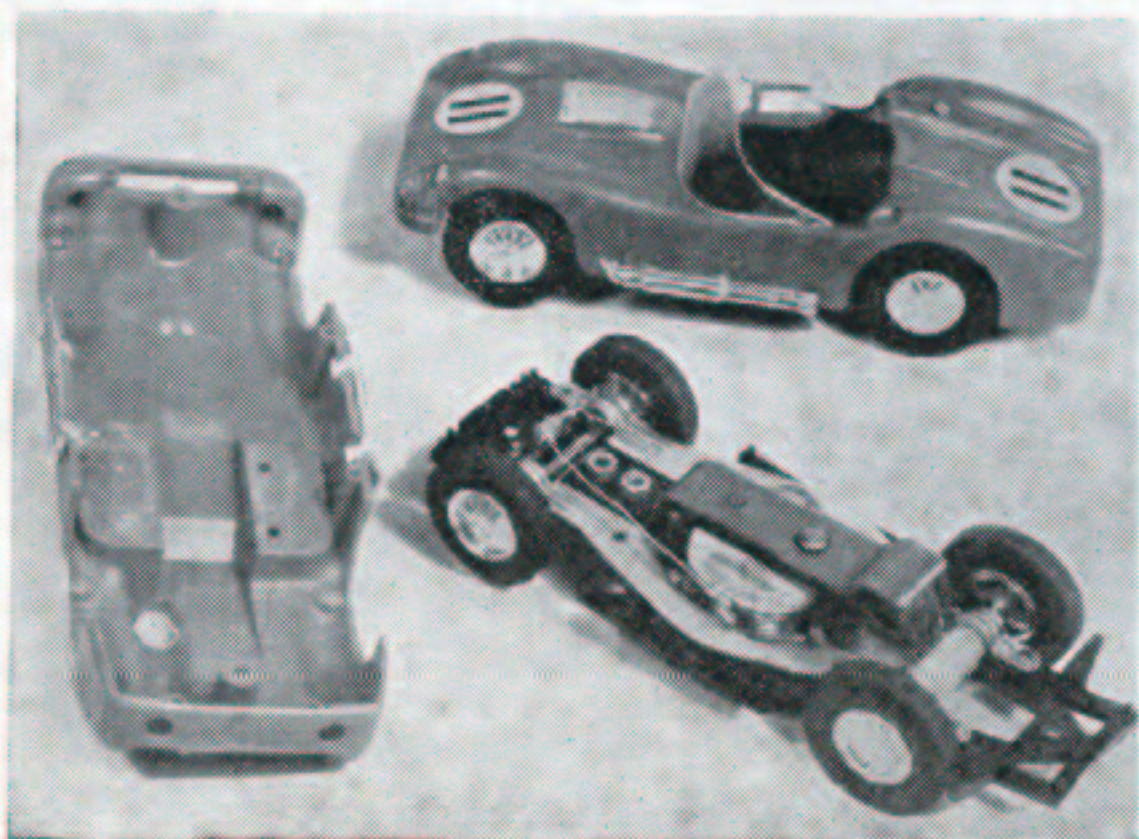
One aspect Scalextric have pioneered—cars with working headlights such as this Porsche!

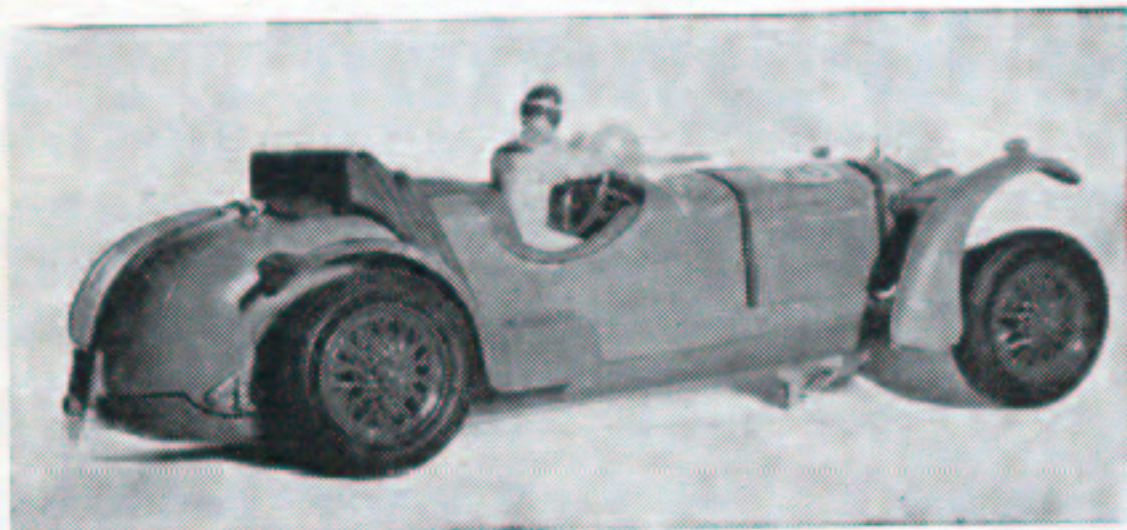
Below left: Meccano's Circuit 24—the inside story and one of their elegant cars complete.

Below right: Breakdown of Airfix components. A joy to home builders is availability of all these parts separately.

Track

Just what is the "best" track must always be a matter of opinion, and also, of course, of the particular purpose for which it is required. Considerations of space will often make it necessary to





Just starting this Scalextric series has promise — old time vintage cars for the track. This is their Alfa Romeo 1932 model offered as stable mate for their earlier introduction the Le Mans Bentley.

choose a smaller scale than would be chosen in a free selection. There is no doubt that the finest track will usually be the hand-made tailored to fit club circuit that has been built regardless of labour costs with perfection as the mark. Very often money is important, but hard work has taken the place of a lot of hard cash. For those who must settle on a 1/32nd scale track commercially, we would urge the claims of Scalextric Plexytrack. The long experience of the company has enabled most of the bugs to be ironed out of the system. Their deep promotional pocket has enabled a wide range of curves, track lengths and practical track accessories to be swiftly assembled. They have evolved a virtually foolproof method of holding sections together that can still be easily released. Finally, most other makers' cars can be simply adjusted to run on it.

What special merits have the other tracks? Many people who start their model car racing career with the gift of a complete set feel that they should continue with that on which they started. Other tracks have special "gimmicks" which make them either essential or at least desirable for the system in use. With smaller scales the limits of space make it necessary to retain the small size sometimes, since that may be the qualifying proviso that makes a circuit possible in the home at all.

But let us consider the other tracks. Airfix have proved disappointing. We had hoped and expected their wide resources would be devoted in part to an extension of the limited range of track pieces available. They have not as yet done so, merely adding a chicane and a double length straight to their "opening" supply of over a year ago! Of V.I.P.—least said soonest mended! For some unfortunate reason they tooled up at great expense with an all metal track and have been stuck with it ever since in spite of valiant but vain efforts to make something of it. Here a common negative strip involves change of polarity of cars when lanes are changed. Very little track variety is offered (but don't forget *some of the best cars available*). Circuit 24 offers a mixed-up track partly hard and partly semi-flexible, with some current collecting metal of thick section wire, other of coiled curtain spring type. Joining by protruding ears is not entirely satisfactory, as ears have a tendency to break off, and sections spring apart. Happily cars will go on almost anyone else's track (though not mixed cars please, since Circuit 24 is impulse motor operating unrectified).

In smaller 1/40th, S.R.M. track is interesting. Lateral and longitudinal connection possible making for firm multi-lane circuits. Good range of additional diameter curves promised in immediate
(Continued on page 35)



Last but not least — the VIP version of the "nostril-nose" Ferrari. This car enjoys Ackerman steering, and can be obtained in a tuned version as the "clubmen's special". Whether standard or hotted-up it can be relied upon to hold its own in the best company.

TABLE II. GRAND PRIX CARS

	Airfix	Circuit 24	Scalextric	SRM	VIP	Wrenn 152	MRRC
BRM	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cooper	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ferrari	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lotus	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Maserati	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Vanwall	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Porsche	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mercedes	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

TABLE III. SPORTS RACING CARS & G.T

	Circuit 24	Scalextric	MRRC	Minic
Aston Martin	●	●	●	
Lister Jaguar	●	●	●	
Jaguar D	●	●	●	
DB Panhard	●	●	●	
Aston Martin GT	●	●	●	
Ferrari GT	●	●	●	

TABLE IV. VINTAGE SPORTS & RACING

	Scalextric	Airfix
Bentley	●	●
Alfa Romeo	●	●
Bugatti	●	●
Auto Union	●	●

TABLE V. F/2 RACING CARS

	Scalextric
Cooper	●
Lotus	●

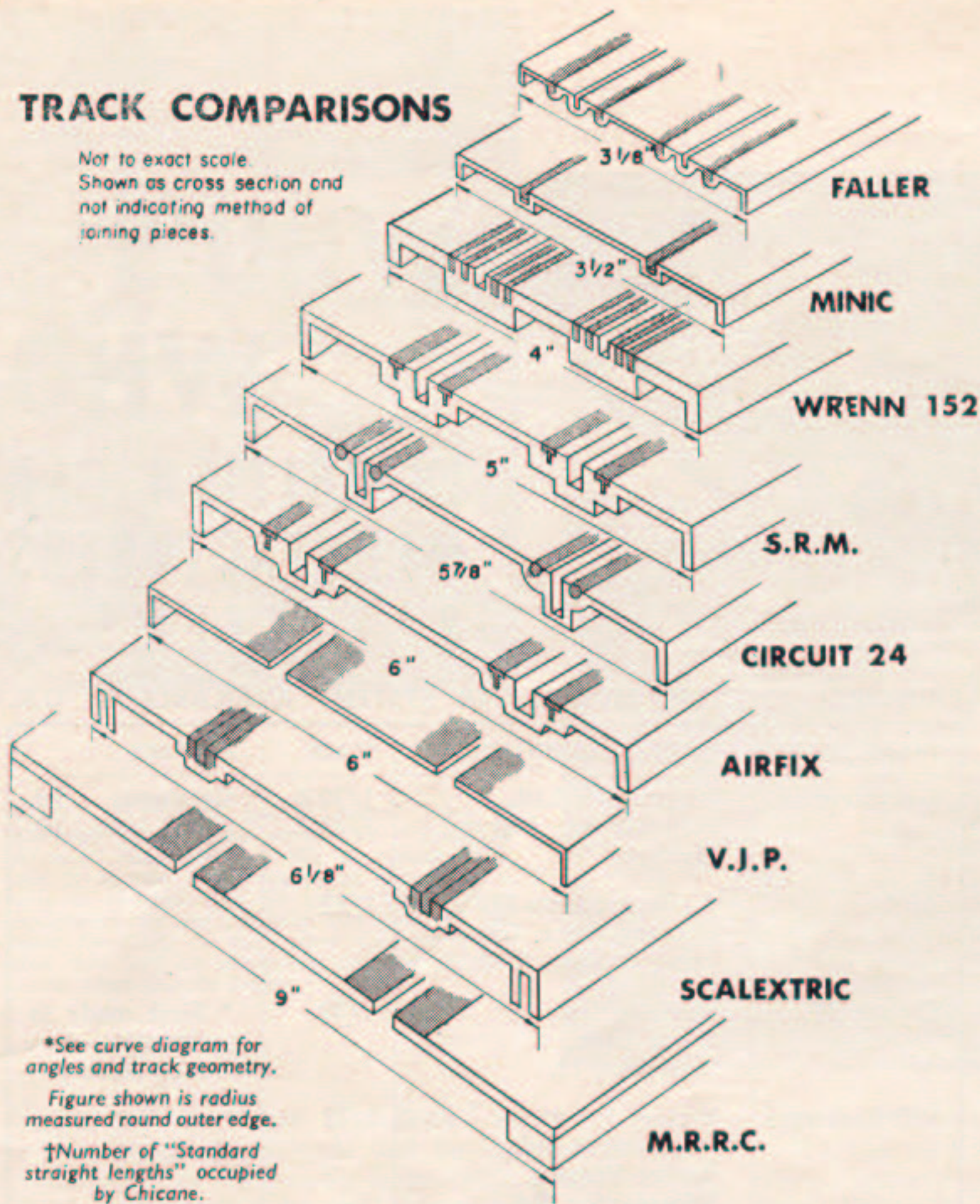
TABLE VI. MISCELLANEOUS FAMILY SALOONS, ETC.

	Minic	Faller	VIP
Porsche	●	●	●
Mercedes 190SL	●	●	●
Mercedes 220	●	●	●
Opel Kapitän	●	●	●
Vw	●	●	●
Ford M17	●	●	●
Rolls Royce	●	●	●
Humber	●	●	●
Mercedes 300SL	●	●	●
Jaguar E	●	●	●
Jaguar 3.4	●	●	●
Austin A40	●	●	●
Renault	●	●	●
MGA	●	●	●
Healey	●	●	●

Not listed: Sundry Go-karts, motorcycle combinations, etc.

TRACK COMPARISONS

Not to exact scale.
Shown as cross section and
not indicating method of
joining pieces.



*See curve diagram for
angles and track geometry.

Figure shown is radius
measured round outer edge.

†Number of "Standard
straight lengths" occupied
by Chicane.

MODEL CARS



Above: Scalextric Plexytrack, showing
bendability and connection
method. Right: Some Circuit 24
pieces: Bridge with built-in sup-
ports is particularly interesting.

Scale

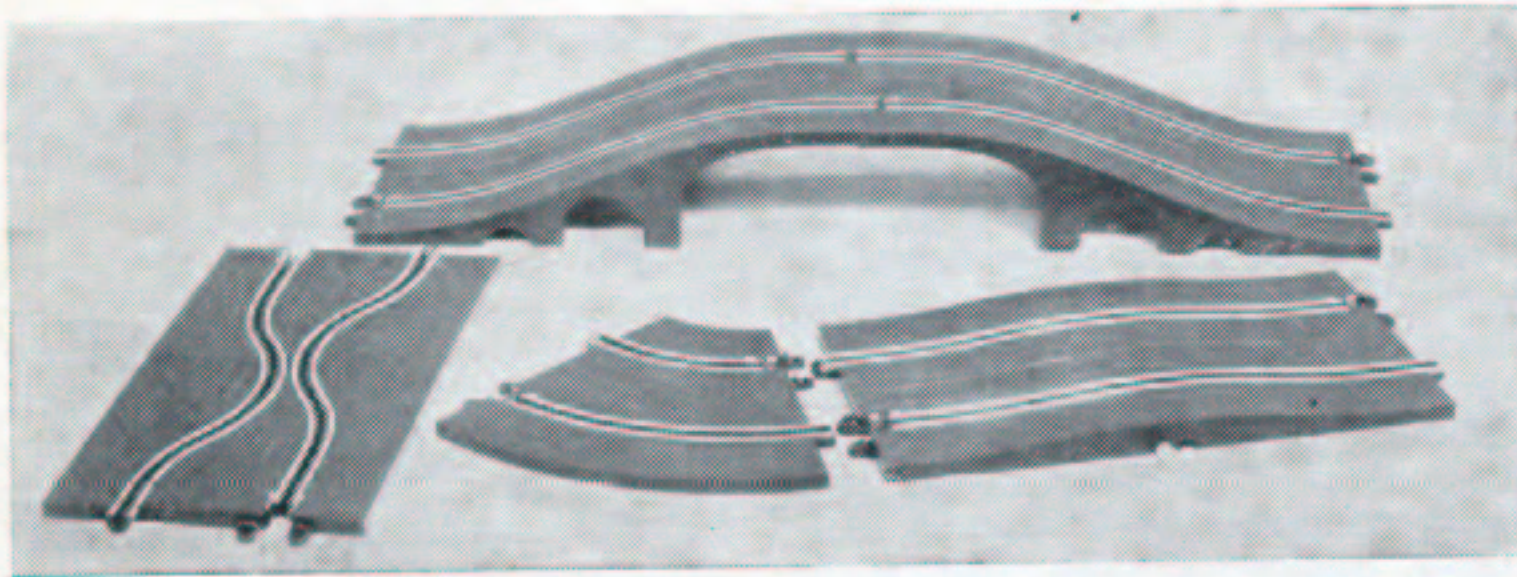
Nearly all model cars are made to represent some full-sized car. The reduction in size of the model in relation to the prototype is the scale (i.e., 1/24th full-size means that every real foot is represented in the model by 1/24 inch). We know this is very elementary to the initiated, but many are quite new to our hobby! Apart from just making the model smaller than the real thing, the model maker will also copy the details as exactly as the reduced size and the price at which a commercial article is to be sold permit. Plastic bodies make a remarkable fidelity to scale possible at a very low price nowadays.

Our racing models are made in several popular scale sizes. The largest size in regular use—the 1/24th scale just mentioned—is raced a little in U.S.A. though hardly at all in G.B. but is a splendid scale for detailed non-working models, being large enough for good detail but not bulky enough to make a collection unwieldy. This leaves 1/32nd scale or 3/8 in. to the foot as the "accepted" scale for working racing electric cars. This is the scale pinpointed by E.C.R.A. (Electric Car Racing Association), the governing body of the competitive side of the hobby. Manufacturers making cars to this size are Scalextric, whose latest models can be included, but who have until recently been manufacturing to 1/30th scale. Such a small variation may seem too little to worry about (as a matter of fact we don't!) but the extra size can be sufficient to advantage a bigger car in competition against smaller ones, and so is outside the latitude of 1/16th in. in size measurement allowed by club scrutineers.

Then we have Airfix, who have always maintained a close 1/32nd scale not only for their racing cars but also for a number of their non-working plastic kits which can be so adequately

TABLE I, TRACK SECTIONS

		Full Straight	Start/Connector Str.	Half Straight	Quarter Straight	Short Straight	Long Straight	Standard Curve *	Inner Curve *	Outer Curve *	Chicane †	Special bridge parts	Change over
1/32 & 1/30 Scale	Airfix	7 1/2	7 1/2	—	—	—	14 1/2	9	—	15	2	—	—
	VIP	10·8	10·8	—	—	—	—	12	—	—	2	●	—
	Scalextric	13 1/2	13 1/2	6 1/2	3 7/8	3	—	14 1/2	8 1/2	20 1/2	2 3 3 1/2	●	●
	Circuit 24	10 1/2	10 1/2	5 1/2	—	—	—	14	8 1/2	19 1/2	1	●	—
1/40	SRM	10	10	5	—	—	—	12 1/2	7 1/2	17 1/2	1	—	—
1/52	Wrenn	9 1/2	9 1/2	—	—	—	—	6	—	10	—	●	●
1/75 & 1/87	Minic	6	6	3	—	—	—	7 1/2	—	10 1/2	—	●	—
	Faller	7 1/2	7 1/2	3 1/2	2	1 1/2	—	6	—	10 1/2	1	●	—



motorised. V.I.P. (Victory Industries), after a nasty few months when we feared they might disappear from the market, have now reconstituted their company and are going great guns. Their 1/32nd range offers probably the best service to the out-and-out racing enthusiast, since specially tuned cars can be obtained designated "club specials". Their well-developed motors can also be relied upon to climb steeper inclines more willingly than most. (A "c-s" car will usually tackle a 1 in 2 climb successfully, i.e., steeper than full-size Porlock Hill at its steepest, 1 in 2½). Finally, in the 1/32nd scale we have M.R.R.C. cars. These are the oldest established makers of all, though not catering so much for the mass market. They can be regarded as a specialist provider with ready-made cars and track for those who want it, but also and more especially as suppliers of motors, wheels, gears and the various parts dear to the d-i-y-ers.

Also in the 1/32nd scale class is Circuit 24—a system produced by the French branch of Meccano. Cars are impulse motor, or vibrator powered—with flexible prongs pushing up and down against a serrated drum that drives the rear wheels. The cars are attractive—the motors make a

great deal of noise, which pleases the younger element, but so far they have enjoyed only a limited popularity. Recent moves to take over the company by Lines Bros., may spell the end of this novel system.

Going down in scale, next stop is S.R.M. at 1/40th scale. This is a very interesting size as it is the scale (approx.) used for so many metal toy cars, such as Corgi and Dinky ranges. As such, the ingenious modeller can extend his stable by use of the terrific range of vehicles offered by these people. Such motorised cars will be heavier than necessary with cast bodies but will perform well. If made up in fibreglass using the original metal bodies as moulding forms, will work superlatively. Meanwhile, S.R.M. are producing some of the very nicest little cars with enthusiasm and real dedication. We would put their latest "Jim Clark" Lotus as quite the finest piece of working electric model car produced yet in point of detail. In view of its small size and great power/weight ratio controlling it on a large track may prove a real problem! Other

Racing babes! Wrenn 152 cars on their exclusive multi-car track. The additional pick-up strips can be seen.

