

Smooother Than A Flying Carpet...

by Ric Woods and Marc Abbott

Thunder Slot is surely one of the most exciting new manufacturers on the slot scene in recent times. Founder and designer Giovanni Montiglio (who must be sick of being described as 'formerly of NSR', so I won't do it) has sought from the outset to establish the company on a proper footing, far removed from the companies that head straight to the 'Where Are They Now?' file following an initial release.

Further evidence of this philosophy can be seen in the expanding range of tuning parts becoming available – not that the Thunder Slot Lola T70 Coupé is in dire need of such things, but Giovanni is a racer and he'll always be looking for an 'edge'.

The first products we looked at were made of sponge, which was a bit unexpected! Sponge has been important to hardcore club racers since the dawn of time (or the dawn of my time at any rate) in the foam

form of tyres, of course, but these offerings are somewhat different. Rings that fit within the 'air' hub's cavity, the purpose of which is to keep the tyre more evenly 'inflated' on the rim. Now I can't sit here and tell you that there's a night-and-day difference and that I don't know how we ever did without them, but there is some substance to the science, particularly in endurance racing, where worn tyres will flex more, as well as inconsistently, and the rings should therefore reduce deterioration in tyre performance.

Sponge also stars in another new area – the slightly contentious world of suspension. Over the years, for every racer I've met who swears by suspension, there will be one who doesn't see the point; its use will depend on your track as much as anything. On less-than-smooth plexy tracks, I must admit that fitting suspension has transformed some of

my cars. Again this particularly relevant in endurance events, where fewer shocks through the drivetrain gives gears and motor mounts an easier time over the twelve or twenty-four hours. Sponge rather than springs is a very interesting angle, because the movement will be damped in every plane of the motor mount tripod, but with (theoretically, at least) minimal effect on the flex in the outer chassis. This system, which comes either as a complete suspension kit or simply as two sets of tiny sponge washers to replace existing springs, is launched as an alternative to, rather than a replacement of, the spring system. It is certainly worth investigating if your cars usually benefit from suspension at your track.

And so we move to the wonderful world of rubber, where things are at least a little more predictable. Thunder Slot sent us some of the new



TYR005RX 10.8 x 19mm slicks to try out on the Lola T70, which got me rather excited because they are specifically aimed at the smoother track surfaces, namely Carrera and Scalextric Sport. My own track is Carrera, so I'm well aware that you can spend more time 'chasing grip' than you might on, say, a Ninco setup. In fact my esteemed colleague here at Slot Car Magazine couldn't help but try these tyres out on a Ninco layout and yes, he had too much grip, on rails through the bends but all-too-eager to pull spectacular wheelies on the straights... You can apply oils, lotions and goodness-knows-what to most compounds and end up with amazing grip – but only for a few laps, before it all gradually slips away, quite literally. What we have here is a great starting point, tyres that work well with the minimum of preparation and thus will retain that performance for longer. The smooth tracks won't wear the softer compound excessively or cause it to 'grain' horribly either. Thank you, Thunder Slot!

We were also sent some TYR004R slicks, again 10.8 x 19mm, which are more of a replacement for the treaded tyres that come with the car 'out of the box'. Slicks have more contact area of course, so for most club racers the normal procedure of sanding down the tread on the standard tyres can now be bypassed. Grip-wise, they are really the equivalent of just that, an excellent all-rounder.

Finally, as if to quash any belief that this time next year Thunder Slot will be bringing us only unrecognisable wing cars, there are some slightly larger 'Classic' aluminium hubs. These are either 14.85mm diameter or 14.9mm, depending on whether you believe the packet or the website. Either way, they are around .6mm larger than the standard item that comes with your Lola T70.

It's good to see that Thunder Slot is 'playing the long game' here. Giovanni Montiglio has set out to do the job properly and establish his company as a major force in competitive slot car racing. Thus far, I would say he's succeeding.

Ric

Lola T70 Spyder Test Car



Look what arrived in the post from Italy, just as we were about to go to press! Giovanni Montiglio has sent us a test version (which is basically the finished car) to play with.

Obviously our print deadline scuppered any chance of an in-depth test, however, straight out of the box and using a standard first edition Lola as comparison, it was soon evident that this is another winner – and more so. The lower centre of gravity and lightness of the car give it an edge over its sibling. We're not talking night and day, but, if you're in a long endurance race, the Spyder will give you that slight edge.

The chassis / motor etc. are exactly the same as the coupé version, only the wheels (which look real because they're not all shiny and show-room like) give away the difference between the two models.

There's no real difference in handling per se, you just notice the very slight improvement in lap times.

The driver and cockpit area is in similar vein too; a nice-and-light vacuum-drawn section topped with the upper plastic body/head of what will be either Dan Gurney or Peter Revson. Notice on the close-up pic there are the tell-tale signs of previous knocks and scrapes where Giovanni has been testing in earnest. Overall however, the model is well built... but... don't expect the front air dam / roll cage and rear



air scoop to last long if your driving style is in any way erratic – any front end smash and the silver section will be gone. There's no rear mirror(s) on the test model either, so that's another part that might end up in the scenery from the finished model.

This test car came with period type front and rear tyres (the same as the previous model – reference TYC001FR and TYC002R). These are my preferred boots for Ninco track, as they give a lot of grip, yet still allow a tail slide if desired.

We can't wait until the final models are released and it will be interesting to see if any part(s) change from this late-in-the-day test piece.

Marc