

It's only
ROCK
but I like it!

Mustang GT350 (Acapulco Blue)



Ref: CA00504



**There's this "thing" about American muscle cars...
Everyone lusts after them. Everyone turns their
heads as one drives past. Everyone thinks they are
to cars what the Beatles were to music...
Everyone, that is... except me. But then again...**

& ROLL



Everyone has watched “Bullitt” with Steve McQueen driving his Mustang past the same VW Beetle about twenty times. Or Burt Reynolds and Sally Field with the trusty Pontiac Trans Am in “Smokey & The Bandit”. More importantly, what about the cult film “Vanishing Point”? Barry Newman in his Dodge Challenger, chased down (eventually) by police into a fiery ending (Spoiler alert! – Ed.)

All this to make us Europeans envious of the power and sound of the mighty American muscle car. Well, not me. I couldn’t get my head around it. I remember, back in the

late ‘70s, a guy at work turned up, rather proudly, with his latest second-hand car that he’d shipped over from Belgium (of all places) – a Chevrolet Camaro. Now don’t get me wrong. It looked good, it sounded great and the seats were rather comfortable... but... it was a bag of poo to drive, unless you were going in a straight line. There was so much roll and lack of grip, I remember my little Mark 2 Ford Escort keeping up (and trying to pass) on the twisty country lanes around Hertfordshire. It got him all the wrong type of women too – lucky blighter. There they were

swooning over all that leather and stuff and spent more time in the back seat than the front, I shouldn’t wonder.

Yet here’s a bigger question: Why has no one yet made an American muscle slot car that is fast and furious and more importantly easy to drive?

Well, hold my beer whilst I test the last offering from Thunderslot. It’s been promised for a while and I must say eagerly awaited too. Add to that the design and thought process of Giovanni Montiglio and you kind of know the long wait will have been worth it...

A lot of you will have seen the Thunderslot Mustang GT350 at last year's UK Slot Car Festival, presented in an array of 1960s-style colours. We also showcased them in the issue directly following the show. I did manage to get a very short drive on a wooden track at the event and was immediately impressed. The car given to me was very smooth and quiet and fast too.

Now here's the thing. Most of us race on plastic tracks, especially at home, so would the extra added grip of my Ninco circuit create any weirdness in the stability department?

My test car arrived just after our last issue was published and so we had no time to do a report back then. Unpacking my "Acapulco Blue" 350, I did note that it only just fits in the crystal case. It's not that it's too long or wide, it's just that the position of the guide and securing screw mean you have to line it perfectly on the plinth.

Talking about size, yes it's a tad too large, especially width-wise. However, this will only anger the purists

amongst us. Come on, we're racing a toy and we want it to perform and because of that, I'm sure we can allow a discrepancy or two – mainly because it looks beautiful.

The chassis is a neat two-part affair. Take a look at the pics and you'll see that there's an entire centre section that extends from the rear axle assembly all the way to the front where the guide is. The rest of the chassis holds the body aloft but, also includes the front axle.

You'll also note that there are some small rubber "dampers" that help separate the chassis from the body as a kind of suspension. I wonder if anyone will try and leave these off to get the body lower and reduce the CoG?

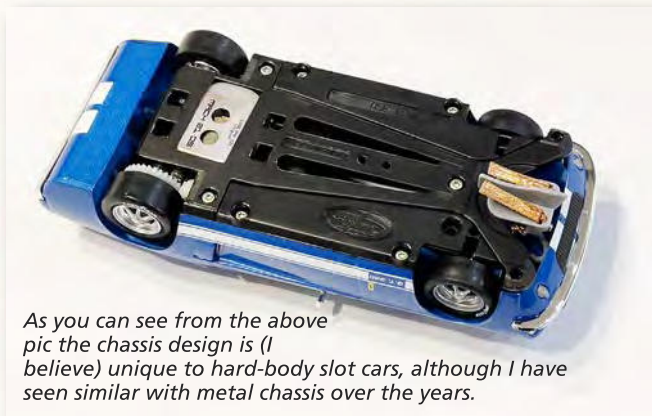
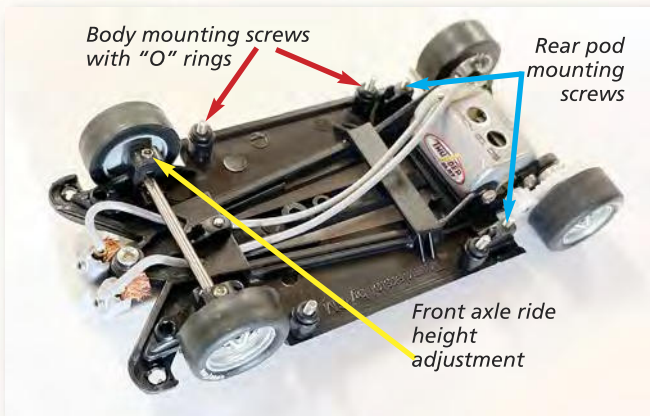
There's also an acute lack of magnets, although there are positions where you can place them if you're of that ilk. Nah, don't go there, please!

And what of those extra holes at the front of the chassis? Well, they are for stability (yikes). Indeed, an optional "ball" will fit neatly in, so that when you're cornering, they will stop you rolling.

The motor and gears are very familiar (assuming you already own a Thunderslot car). A 21500 rpm motor (175 gr/cm) powering through nylon gears. The pod is angled very slightly, so it's not quite a sidewinder but not an anglewinder either. This has proven to be a very quick and successful design that makes the



The Mustang looks fab in this colour scheme. It's also available in Moss Green, Wimbledon White, Silver Frost and of course the usual white kit car if you want to do your own decoration. The American market sees even more colours, but you'll be hard-pressed to get hold of one outside of their borders. Personally I might stick some numbers on the sides and front, but we'll see.



The car is quite a tight fit on the base, only just aligning with the guide and screw mounting holes. No real shakes though. It really does look the business, oh, and the centre section of the plinth keeps the tyres off the ground, so you shouldn't develop flat spots whilst it's in storage.





brand one of the fastest hard-bodied slot cars out there.

So, being the man at the Slot Car Magazine offices to try the car first, I thought I'd better do what your average slot nutter would do – place it straight on the track and press the trigger.

Well, thankfully, it sped toward the first corner like an angel's whisper and drifted around on to the next straight. So far so good. As I got more confident, I braked later and later, until it suddenly did what I was kind of expecting from the start. The front tipped slightly, the car de-slotted and it was suddenly on its roof. Just to make sure it wasn't a one-off, I managed to do it again and again, especially on left-hand turns.

Looking at lap times on our circuit it was approximately 3/4 of a second slower than a Thunderslot Can Am car (5 secs against 4.25 secs). Now be fair, that's not too bad from a car that has a much higher centre of gravity and

that the test driver decided to test without any prep whatsoever!

So, off to the workbench and a closer inspection with the body off.

As stated, I'd seen the car stripped down before at Gaydon, but that was nearly a year ago. Now I was pleasantly reminded what a good piece of engineering the chassis is. Alas, almost immediately I noted a factory misdemeanour – the right-hand front wheel had no up and down movement at all, whilst the other side was flopping around all over the shop. Whoever did the adjustment on the Allen screws must have gone to a coffee break half-way through and forgotten what they'd done.

This must surely be why the car kept tipping so much unexpectedly! I decided to guess at initial set up here, and had the wheels only just touching the ground, but with about 3mm of upward travel on both sides.

The "motor pod" section meanwhile, was fairly "free" all

round and I figured that I'd leave it alone, as it seemed to be generally ok when I did the initial run. Also, adjustments can be made with the body on.

Everything else seemed ok. A guide that was free and rear axle that had nicely aligned gears (just a small amount of grease needed). The tyres looked good – no burrs. The front tyres felt virtually zero grip, another good omen.

I then did about twenty laps bodyless. Wow, smooth as silk and no "offs".

Therefore, after a quick once-over again, the body went back on and screws done right up and then backed off two complete turns – again, a guess at this stage, but you've got to start somewhere.

On track... well much better, the only real sound was the occasional bump/scrape from where the front of the chassis sometimes hit the deck. I was liking this.



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Body off again and a complete strip down of the chassis, as I wanted to make sure the plastic was flat. I noted that one side was, well, just a gnat's doo-dah higher at the front than the other. Nothing to worry about at this stage, unless I ran into any sudden unexplained offs or chattering of the rear axle etc.

Ok, so let's go for some proper fast times. Back together again and lap after lap. I tried differing amounts of body rock and motor pod movement and was actually surprised that on our (Ninco) test track, it all worked best with the motor pod near enough tightened right up and the body screws with the two full loosened turns. It'll be different on your track, I'm sure, especially if you have any minor bumps. A totally flat wooden track will throw up completely differing configurations. Also, I have no doubt that if you run the car on Scalextric Sport track you'll be able to get wonderful tail slides, which I can't

achieve because of the high grip level of Ninco.

You know, there's perhaps only one thing to beware of overall – the wing mirrors. They are, of course, going to come off and get lost or broken. Fortunately, they aren't (at least on my model) heat welded in. You can simply pull them out, place them in a small plastic bag and tape to the bottom of the case so you don't lose them whilst racing.

The body is very nicely presented. The interior is not exactly lightweight, but not too heavy either. And, the glass seems a bit light.. bordering on being vac-drawn, but not quite. I'm wondering if they'll ever produce a race-liveried version, but what the hell – if you need one, buy the white kit. I did wonder about the positioning of the mounting screws as there's nothing fore or aft. But it seems to work well. All-in-all, this is a sturdy car and should give you hours of enjoyment. It's never going to beat a Thunderslot Lola or

McLaren, but it's not supposed to. Just keep tinkering with the amount of body and pod rock until you find the optimum position for your driving style and type of track. Oh, and after (quite a few) more laps, my car really started to get some grip on the rear tyres, so much so that a small amount of weight was added as far forward as possible.

I have also tried it on a very large 6-lane club track and my opinion hasn't changed. It's a driver's car and will keep you on your toes, so it will certainly sort the men from the boys when you get to proper top speeds.

Do you want one? Of course you do. Is it pricey? Yes it is. In the UK they'll be just under 90 pounds, so start saving, or, like Ric (the editor), don't use your heating at home for a few months.

Right, you'll never get me buying a real life American muscle car, but I can't wait for Thunderslot to bring out some differing models to pitch against the Mustang...

I'm sold!