



SLOT CAR REPORT

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DIGITAL SLOT CARS

A dealer's shelf space is limited and we know you want to have selling items in your inventory. There is nothing worse than having a product taking up shelf space for months and months. I hope by now dealers realize I try to review the things that are likely to sell.

When digital slot cars were first introduced about 15-20 years ago, they did not sell well and hobby shops ended up having a bunch of sets and individual cars sitting forever on the shelf. Digital slot cars have now become very popular and the two biggest sellers are Carrera and Scalextric. I talked with two hobby shop owners who are now claiming they sell quite a few more digital cars than analog. For purposes of the article I will cover examples of both and describe the systems and cars of each. The cars are equally matched and they are both as good as they get in terms of performance, detail, workmanship, and how well they stand up to use and misuse.

The **Scalextric Bentley** is sold as an analog car, but it can easily be converted to digital format. Most of the shop owners I've had the chance to speak with inventory the analog Scalextric cars and also the add-on digital chips, typically selling them separately. The Bentley is a fantastic replication of the full-scale car with every little detail rendered very nicely. The paint on this car is perfect, not only in the great choice of colors, but it has been applied flawlessly. Scalextric also offers Bentleys in a variety of racing liveries and they are all just as crisp and sharp.

The car handles very nicely right out of the box

and has a strong magnet that allows the driver to go into turns pretty deep without losing it. The performance is great for a car that is as long and narrow as this car. It does have a little trouble with really tight courses with lots of slow turns but manages to compete fairly well if driven with a little extra concentration. The car is very

rugged and can stand up to punishment and falling off the track and crashing to the floor.

I bought two of these and fresh out of the box they lapped my Scalextric hill climb layout within a tenth of a second. This is important for club buyers or people who simply like to race with a friend with the same car. It also limits the returns significantly. Because of the workmanship and design customers rarely return Scalextric cars.

To convert the car from analog to digital you simply open the door located in the chassis and connect the digital chip to the wiring harness. The next step is to close the

door and replace the screw. The process takes all of a minute or so; it couldn't be made any simpler and requires absolutely no special skills. Even though in analog mode the Scalextric cars can run on any track, when converted to digital its cars can only run on Scalextric digital track.

Carrera has a slightly different approach to digital slot car racing. You can buy an analog car at a very nice price and, if you wish, buy a digital chip and install it later. The digital cars Carrera now offers have an excellent price point and only require the end user to

flip a switch located in the chassis and he'll have an analog car that can run on any brand of track. But like Scalextric, when a Carrera car is operating in digital



Sold as an analog car, the Scalextric Bentley is easily converted to digital format by opening the cover located at the front of the chassis and inserting a digital chip that is available separately as an add on sale. When operating in analog mode Scalextric cars will operate on any track, but unfortunately when converted to digital operation Scalextric cars will only operate on Scalextric digital track.

**Analog is still popular,
but digital is what sells.**

format it can only run on Carrera digital track.

The switch approach is really ingenious and allows users to switch format in about two seconds. If your customer purchases, or already owns a Carrera Evolution analog car, it can be shipped to Carrera and for a nominal fee the same switch system can be installed.

The Carrera Corvette in blue and white racing livery is just beautiful and faithfully represents the complex shape and detail of the full-scale car. This is no easy task because the new Corvette has a very complex shape with compound curves and vents everywhere. The car is rugged and stands up to abuse very well. I bought the same Corvette but in a different livery and both cars ran laps on my hill climb track within about a tenth of a second. The Carrera Corvette does well on shorter tracks and really shines on tracks with long straights and high-speed corners.

In comparison the cost of the digital Carrera and the analog Scalextric are about the same price. To upgrade to digital for a Scalextric car costs about \$20 in addition to the original cost of the analog car. The Scalextric cars have a strong magnet that is not adjustable, which makes them faster than the Carrera straight out of the box. However the Carrera cars have two

adjustable magnets that are set at lowest magnet strength out of the box. After adjustment of the magnet strength on Carrera Corvette it had the same level of magnet strength and performance as the Scalextric Bentley.

So basically, the Carrera is simpler to use with a simple switch to change back and forth from analog to digital. The Scalextric car has a stronger magnet out of the box and turns slightly better lap times than the Carrera Corvette with no adjustment. The cost of the digital Carrera cars is ever so slightly lower than the Scalextric car converted to digital.

In the interest of full disclosure I collect these two manufac-



Carrera uses a slightly different approach as although older cars can be converted to digital, the new cars are digital from the factory, but can be used in analog mode with the flip of a switch. Like Scalextric, when operating in analog Carrera cars will work on any track, but in digital format Carrera cars will only operate on Carrera digital track.



HO cars and sets continue to be popular sellers if for no other reason than the customer gets a lot of performance in return for his investment. Two prime examples are the Thunderjet Junior Johnson 59 Chevrolet and the AFX Super Mega G+ chassis, which was converted to a mid 50s racer with the addition of a cast resin body. What's really nice about the AFX sets is the dual speed transformer that drops the voltage to the track—and therefore speed—which allows the user to gain experience driving without getting frustrated.

mechanical grip and only moderate magnet strength in addition to reasonable speed. The speed and acceleration allow inexperienced and young racers to keep the car on the track. Kids and newbies often have trouble with the high-performance HO cars only because the speed is so high that it takes a great deal of experience to master one. The lower magnet allows drivers to slowly work up to best lap times and allows the back of the car to swing out in corners in a controllable way. I love the car on short twisty tracks, and tracks with longer straights and high-speed corners. These NASCAR Legend cars define the value in having fun.

The new **AFX** Super Mega G+ chassis is a high performance chassis that has optimal magnet strength and amazing speed and acceleration. It is perfect for serious racers because it can go faster and corner at higher speed than anything out there. The dual speed transformer from AFX lets users drop the power on the course allowing less experienced drivers to have fun without constantly falling off the track. I tested the chassis using a resin body that was on-hand. Resin bodies tend to be pretty heavy, yet the car still performed very nicely.

Both the Thunder Jet and AFX cars will sell well. HO takes up less shelf space, so it is worth it to offer a wide variety of Auto World and AFX cars, sets and accessories. **HM**

tures and have for many years. I was careful not to be biased and did an extensive survey of hobby shop owners to determine which brands to use for this comparison.

HO slot cars have been good sellers for years and the reason for this is that the two major manufacturers that dominate the field produce some very nice cars and sets. As an example, the **Thunderjet** R17 Junior Johnson 1959 Chevy stock car is a great little car. The key to this car is excellent