

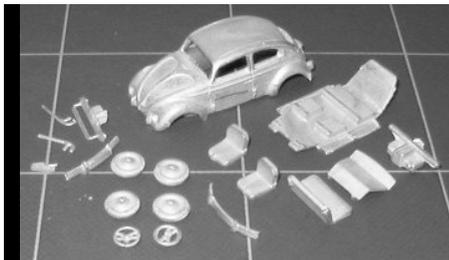
Building a Beetle

by Phil Parker

As I write this, Volkswagen is preparing the to build the very last Beetle ever. This will be a very day for someone like me who has loved the car since I saw my first Herbie film. You would expect that as a fan I'd have layout where every car was a bug. Well, I haven't. You see there aren't that many kits and all the RTR versions are of the very earliest split screen variants. Since they stopped making these in the 50's when it became possible to make curved glass I can't justify many of them. Anyway you can only get them in HO and we wouldn't want that would we !

What I really want is a post '67 car. One with a rectangular rear window. One like mine.

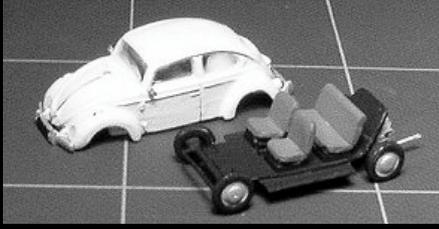
A few years ago when Springside brought out a Beetle kit complete with rectangular window I ought to have been really pleased. But I wasn't. You see I have tangled with Springside kits before. There is a Morris Minor on my layout. When I bought the kit it came with two roofs. Needless to say I needed both, as neither was long enough on its own. The end result was good but it was a lot of work. A Bedford lorry was also a "challenge" so I wasn't going to shell out over a tenner for a Beetle that came with this pedigree.



This is what you get in the kit. There should be a couple of jewels for the headlights. I never use these preferring to use Krystal-Klear as it looks more realistic.

A fiver is a different matter. Hanging on the wall of my local model shop was a Springside Beetle kit in a plastic bag with all its parts for the price of a Parkside kit.

What I got was a one-piece body, wheels, seats, chassis, engine, tailpipes and steering wheel. Quality was OK except for the horrible mould mis-alignment line along the sides. The model was assembled as per the instructions that include an excellent exploded diagram. Everything fitted OK. I had to file the rear seats a little to get the body over them but that was it. The hardest part was getting the model level as the rear wheels attach to the engine and then this is stuck to the back of the seats but there is no positive location for this. All assembly was carried out using Zap-a-Gap superglue.



The body is attached to a separate floor pan. This is quite prototypical as the real car works in this way. The windows are glazed with Krystal-Klear. I know it doesn't bend like glass but it is near enough for me and a lot easier to use than cutting plastic to fit the holes.

"But the mould mis-alignment !" I hear you cry. Well I scraped and sanded it, cleaned the bodyshell with a fibre pen and you can still see it. If I had bought the kits new I would have sent the part back and asked for a new one. I did manage to remove the hinges for the doors which had to be replaced with plastic rod. While I was doing this I added a set of plastic wing mirrors. Cars of this vintage only need one, the second was an optional extra, but what the heck.



My dream Beetle. A white 1500 pre 1967 model. Front disk brakes, sport engine, lovely...

At the end of the day I have quite a nice model of my favourite type of car. I sprayed it with Halfords grey primer and then white car paint. This was sprayed with matt varnish and the chrome trim was picked out in matt aluminium. I would have built a model of my car but the kit was for a 60's vehicle with sloping headlamps and mine is a '73. Alterations would be easy with some plastic lights and squarer bumpers. Perhaps I'll do this one day - if I find another bargain kit !



Three cars, different scales. HO (3.5mm:1ft), OO (4mm:1ft), 1:72 Carmarama die-cast model.

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