

Aston Martin DBR9/02 at Le Mans Building Provence Miniature's open panel kit

by Richard Loveys

In the last edition of FSW we included a plea for test builders. The response has been excellent and over the coming issues we hope to bring a wide variety of subjects and styles. First to be able to send a build and photos was Aston Martin enthusiast Richard Loveys.

Aston Martin has a long history of racing at Le Mans, achieving a win in 1959. There have been a number of years when the company did not participate, but 2005 was when Aston Martin was back, in the GT1 class, with the DBR9. Two cars were entered, car 59 finished third and car 58 (the subject of this review) was fourth in class behind the two Chevrolet Corvettes. It was a good result first time out. The DBR9 won the class in 2007 and 2008.

The model manufacturers were commendably quick off the mark and had kits on sale before the end of the season; since then many different versions have been released. Provence Miniatures Automobiles was one of the first with its 1:43rd scale kit; its earliest offering was of the 'launch' version of the car without most of the sponsors' logos or drivers' names included on the transfer (decals) sheet. Later kits were of specific cars in particular races, with the two 2005 Le Mans cars being first. In 2006 PMA released an 'open panel' edition of the kit with separate doors, bonnet and boot lid. This also required that an engine be included, and it was done to an excellent level of detail. These kits were made in limited numbers and it took the writer a little while to find one, you will be very lucky to find one today. All is not lost, however, as PMA has recently released a new version of this kit for the DBR9 as raced at Le Mans in 2008 in the later blue and orange Gulf livery, it is [PMAK0159OP](#) and retails at about £90.

The kit is made mainly of resin which is very well moulded and extremely detailed, some of the body panels are so thin that they are translucent. The sheet of photo etched items is about as big as a postcard and includes nearly fifty different parts, several of which are duplicated because the car needs more than one – for example there are four brake discs and two fuel filler caps – and a few of the smaller items have spares in case the modeller is unlucky enough to lose one. There are in total about a hundred of these individual photo etched parts; one is a neatly designed name plate which identifies the car, the race, and the kit manufacturer – the one from this kit is attached to the underside of the model. In addition there are white metal parts, mainly for the roll over cage and engine. The tyres are made from a material that looks and feels like rubber, they have realistic looking tread. The main sheet of transfers has everything needed for car 58 or car 59; it too is well made and accurate. In addition there are two sheets of carbon fibre finish, one black and one gold. There is a clear sheet of plastic with printed outlines for the various windows and for the headlamp covers.

The instructions are largely pictorial, and most helpful. Both sheets are in full colour and A3 in size. They show a completed model, the various stages in reaching completion, and an exploded diagram to illustrate how everything fits together. In addition to the instructions it was beneficial to have already



Richard's completed model with the loose panels on a purpose made rack

built an earlier closed panel version of the PMA kit, to have seen and photographed the full sized DBR9 several times, and to have access to published pictures. The 1:18th scale Solido model of the same car was also a useful reference – it too has open panels.

One of the challenges in building accurate car models is to establish the appropriate colours to paint the various parts. In this case the PMA instruction sheet tells you which Humbrol or Tamiya paints to use. It also names the colour for the body, and the paint was mixed by the local branch of Halfords and appears to be an exact match for the Aston Martin colour. Clear lacquer was applied over the transfers and has produced a good gloss finish.

The kit is very detailed, particularly the engine and the body interior. The finish of the various mouldings is excellent and requires little work before painting. The parts fit together well, apart from a few exceptions noted below. The transfers adhere to the complex shapes of the parts very well with the use of Microsol ([MSSOL](#)), and they are accurately shaped; it can take time to decide where each piece of 'carbon fibre' fits. The use of flat plastic for the windows works very well, but for the headlamp covers it was not so easy due to its springy nature, it always wants to be flat; perhaps the application of the hair dryer would have helped.

The engine is beautifully made and it was tempting to keep it separate from the car so that all the detail could be appreciated. In the end it was put in the model and enquiries made about buying an additional set of engine parts for a display unit; Provence is not interested in supplying such things which is a pity as it now has several kits for interesting cars with engines which would make a good collection on their own.

There were a few shortcomings with the kit. A white metal part of the roll over cage was missing, a replacement was made with much trial and error from thick wire. The rear 'parcel shelf' did not match the illustrations and was modified. Two of the cylindrical tanks did not fit and had to be shortened. The rear axle (a metal rod) needed to be lengthened. There were no centres for the photo etched wheel spokes (and neither were there in the earlier kit). The carbon fibre transfers could be improved. And there was a small part left that did not seem to belong anywhere! None of these are insurmountable, and in overall terms the kit is excellent for the experienced modeller.

Building the model took a long time due to the high level of detail involved. The end result makes the effort worthwhile and is a most pleasing addition to the writer's collection of Aston Martin models.



Comprehensive kit parts from Provence Miniatures



Another, more conventional view of the completed model. Savour the detail.