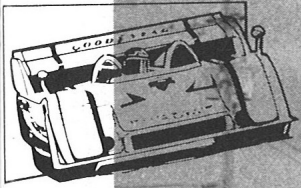


BILL BURKINSHAW VISITS THE HOME OF *parma international inc.*



SURPRISE FOLLOWED upon surprise from the moment I entered the modern *Parma International* factory situated in a pleasant suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, USA as a result of an invitation from *Parma* President, Ken MacDowell. Appearances are indeed deceptive, for the spruce businesslike Ken MacDowell proved to be as genuinely eccentric outside his factory's workspaces, as he is professional within them.

My visit started with a look around Ken's remarkable collection of memorabilia assembled from all over the world, housed within his office and spanned a social call on the *Parma* ducks, treated to piped music on their own personal telephone line beside the *Parma* duckpond, took in the factory, and finished with a trip in one of Ken's collection of historic cars, a 1949 Cadillac.

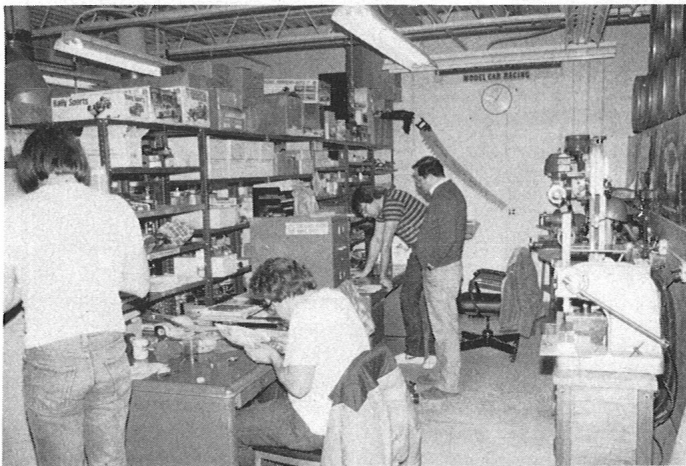
Parma's primary business is manufacture of slot racing cars and accessories,

production being shipped all over the world, and although R/C car products form an increasing part of the *Parma* visit, the production area is dominated by a slot car production line. Most of the slot car assembly is very labour intensive with a high percentage of the predominantly female labour force engaged in skilled and semi-skilled hand assembly tasks. The production area is liberally sprinkled with special fixtures and jigs devised and produced by Ken and his staff to speed production many, as is so often the case in such specialised light industry completely unique, such as the ingenious device used for producing the famous *Parma* resistors, used by many US R/C car kit manufacturers as well as in *Parma's* own products.

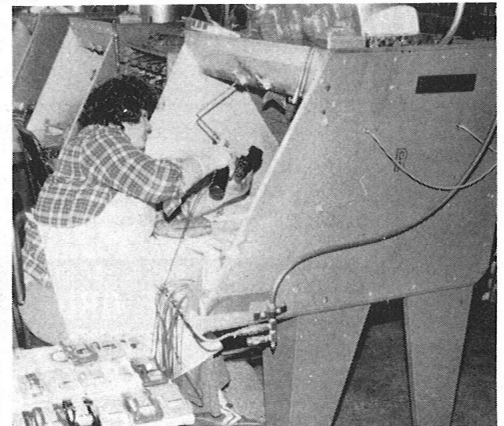
To most UK car modellers, the name *Parma* means bodyshells and paint and the vacuum forming and paint spraying section

of the factory runs a close second to the slot car area. Nestling between the spray booths and vacuum forming plant is a product development area equipped with light machine tools and all the necessary equipment for building prototype cars and manufacturing the first stage wooden formers used to produce vacuum forming plugs. The range of bodyshells produced by *Parma* totals around 160 including three different slot car scales plus 1/12, 1/10 and 1/8 types. Many are available in ready-printed form, all are moulded in polycarbonate.

With so many different products in the *Parma* catalogue it is no surprise to find that the warehouse area of the factory accounts for around one third of the total floorspace with several staff engaged full-time in collating, packing and shipping orders.



Left: The *Parma* design and development area where all *Parma* bodyshells begin life. Above: A general view of the factory floor. Below left: where it all happens the vac-forming machine produces another bodyshell. Below: one of the paint spraying booths being used for 'Cheetah' bodyshells.





Above left: Parma resistors being finished off with 'refractory wash'. Above right: the storage area for the resin bodyshell formers. Below: Parma resistors actually being machine wound. Far right: Just part of the shipping and storage area from where Parma products are distributed all over the world.

Most recent venture in the *Parma* product range is a 1/10 electric off-road car. Details were not finalised at the time of my visit, but with the ready availability of their own purpose-built off-road circuit just across the road from the factory, testing and modification of the prototypes was proceeding at the time of my visit.

We look forward to being able to report on this latest development from the busy factory of the enterprising Ken MacDowell and his production and development team.

