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1957 Ferrari Race Car Transporter

FIAT Tipo 642 RN2 by Bartoletti

1:18

Produced
by CMC

Story by Roger Thiedeman

This model had scarcely been unpacked from its packaging before I was rendered speechless and pop-eyed with wonder and admiration. Eventually recovering the ability to speak, with my eyeballs back in their sockets, I told the editor of *The Diecast Magazine* that instead of a full-blown review, all we needed to do was fill the pages with photos of this remarkable creation, from all possible angles, and use only one word of text: "WOW!" The editor shared my amazement, but because he wants you to get bang for your buck, he persuaded me to write a few more

words to provide a better idea of what this groundbreaking replica is all about. So here goes, but please forgive me if I lapse into descriptive dysfunction and hyperbolic hypertrophy while choking on my clichés...

First, a bit of background about the 1:18 subject of this latest offering from CMC. In the 1950s and '60s, the worlds of Formula One and long-distance sports car racing were light years away from today's rock 'n roll glitz and glamour. Instead of clinically clean pit garages, opulent motorhomes, and obscenely gigantic mobile hospitality units that resemble condominiums, the

most identifiable item of a racing team's paddock "furniture" in those days was the truck that brought the race cars to and from the circuit. Arguably the most unusual of those vehicles was the unique Mercedes-Benz "Blue Wonder" racing car transporter (*Renntransporter*) that saw service in 1954-55, and became the subject of what are now much sought-after CMC models in 1:43 and 1:18 scales.

Scuderia Ferrari's transporter truck was another familiar sight at international races throughout Europe and in Britain during that halcyon era. With duotone red



paintwork matching the vivid scarlet of the team's iconic F-1 and sports/racing cars, and discreetly decorated with the logos of major sponsors and parts suppliers, the truck was based on a FIAT Tipo (Type) 642 RN2 bus chassis. It had a six-cylinder, 406ci, 92hp Tipo 364A diesel engine capable of pushing the truck to a maximum speed of 53mph. Unlike the "Blue Wonder", which could carry only one car, Ferrari's FIAT transporter accommodated up to three race cars on two decks. This capability and convenience came courtesy of a sturdy open-frame body constructed by Carrozzeria Bartoletti of Forlì, Italy. Along with an ingenious hoisting

mechanism for raising and lowering the upper-deck ramps, the FIAT truck had an inspection bay for carrying out running repairs away from the pits, as well as storage space for tools and even a crew area and sleeping berth.

At the risk of preaching to the converted, CMC is one of a small handful of diecast modeling exponents at the pointiest end of the craft. For many years the German-headquartered company has produced a range of superlative replicas of German, French, and Italian vintage and classic F1 and sports-racing cars, plus exotic luxury and high-performance road-going automobiles – along with that

"Blue Wonder" as an interloping oddity – that have proved immensely popular with discerning collectors all over the world. Apart from high standards of fabrication, fit, and finish, CMC models have earned fame for their plethora of opening and working parts, all manufactured and assembled with surgical precision. With each new release, CMC has pushed the envelope even further by incorporating working parts that are increasingly minuscule and more intricate than before. Now, with the unusual addition of the Ferrari transporter to its catalogue, CMC has taken the art of miniaturization to an even loftier plane.

Before you begin to explore this



marvelous model and its myriad features, you must first negotiate the Service Manual that is part of the package. This is an approximately 16-page document that explains and illustrates how to operate the model's many moving parts and features, starting with procedures for unpacking and setting up the truck on four support trestles (use of the latter is optional, to ease pressure on the working suspension and prevent deformation of the rubber tires during long-term display). A word to the wise, however: it would be advisable

to conduct a "dummy" or practice run by reading and re-reading each instruction very carefully while identifying all the parts, and their function, before you actually do what needs to be done. This is particularly important because the English used in the instruction manual is somewhat "clunky" (albeit a vast improvement over the frustratingly vague instructions on the single sheet of paper accompanying CMC's "Blue Wonder" truck). Combined with picture numbers that are in many instances out of sync with the relevant

instruction, this could possibly cause ambiguity and confusion.

But there is no confusion when it comes to appreciating what a wonderful model this is. To avoid a surfeit of superlatives, it is a "given" in the description that follows that, as one of the finest replicas ever produced by CMC, the Ferrari transporter is finished to stellar standards, with meticulous attention to detail and a degree of assembly workmanship that would make even the most highly rated Swiss chronometer manufacturer jealous.



The key feature is the auto-hoist mechanism, comprising a system of toggle screws, realistic metal cables – or “ropes” – and turnbuckles to lower and raise the aluminum ramps with authentic diamond-pattern, non-slip finish. Apart from the main ramps permanently fitted on the truck, another removable pair, for contact with the ground, is stored sideways in shelves, and secured by toggles, when not in use. Interestingly, a note in the instruction manual cautions against activating the auto-hoist operation frequently because

“it employs a delicate mechanism which is not meant to be toyed around (sic). Abuse will reduce the model to a less than perfect condition”.

In the unlikely event of the auto-hoist not offering enough opportunities for “finger fun” –as the editor of *The Diecast Magazine* likes to describe it – there are a host of other working parts to satisfy and delight even the most fastidious or jaded collector. Here are just a few: the tailgate opens and shuts via a realistic slide bar mechanism, with similar simulation on the

double-doors of the inspection bay and tools and parts storage compartments; removable spare wheel and bracket behind a fold-up flap with functional spring lock; adjustable exterior mirrors; movable plastic sun visors in cabin; removable tow hitch pin, also concealed behind a removable cover when not in use, and secured with a miniature chain to avoid misplacement; functional drawer for storing six chocks to hold the race cars in place on the ramps; three fold-down flaps on the right side, two giving access to the fuel filler caps, the



third serving as a step to reach the upper deck; tip-down flap at the front, with "FIAT" and "CARROZZERIA BARTOLETTI" scripts, giving access to the flip-open radiator filler cap.

Opening the doors to the FIAT's forward-control driving cabin gives *entrée* to a wonderland of CMC's finest work. As the photos show, authenticity is paramount, with a dazzling array of controls, levers, pedals, switches, dials, three-spoke steering wheel curiously located on the right, and many other components complementing the real leather-upholstered front bucket and bench crew seats, and finely detailed engine beneath an opening cover.

The truck's underbody chassis detail also invites leisurely inspection and study. No fudged all-embracing, one-piece moldings here: every part, moving or otherwise, is replicated separately, just like on the real thing. Again, our pictures show these to best effect, from the engine with ribbed sump through to the gearbox, rotating tail shaft, rugged differential housing with separate drain plug, single exhaust pipe, copper-finish fuel pipes and

hydraulic brake lines and valves, dual semi-elliptic rear springs on each side, twinned rear wheels – the list goes on...

Obviously, the 1957 transporter truck will look best when displayed with one or more Ferrari 1:18 scale competition cars of the period from CMC's stable: for example, the 156 "Sharknose" F1 GP car as driven by 1961 world champion Phil Hill or Wolfgang "Taffy" von Trips; or the #14 250GT/SWB Berlinetta of Pierre Noblet/Jean Guichet that finished third overall and first in class at the 1961 24 Hours of Le Mans. This would be an incentive for collectors who don't already possess any of these replicas to add them to their collections.

In bland terms, CMC's Ferrari/FIAT transporter truck (item #M-084) measures about 19.7in from stem to stern, comprises some 3115 parts, and is expected to sell for \$895. But, as you have surely learned by now, nothing else about it could be described as bland. It is easily one of the best – if not *the* best – of the countless models *The Diecast Magazine* has been honored to review for our readers. All that's left to say about it is: "WOW!"