

RECYCLING PROFICIENCY

A different approach to affordable housing from Gary Long

Interview by Ric Woods

It's funny how these things come in waves. Last year we witnessed a welcome succession of '70s Classic F1 candidates after what seemed like years of very slim pickings for the fans of that particular era. Now I am pleased to report that the current upswing in accessory options has continued with the buildings of Gary Long. Gary's buildings were actually recommended to us by Sam's World in Miniature, where Gary worked before striking out on his own, which speaks volumes for both parties. In all the articles I have done over the years, I think Gary is the first person to have gained a ten-year start on most of us by being born into a slot-ready household. I'll let him take up the story:

"Dad bought a large box of used Scalextric from a junk shop back in 1968 and I arrived in '69, so I was born into the fold. In the box there were classic buildings, chicanes, ravine jump, trackside accessories, along with a couple of very early catalogues. From then on I always loved the extra detail parts that made not just another track but a real-looking race track. Dad used to make buildings for me when I was young. His passion was model railways and he had one set up in the loft with full scenery, so I have grown up within the hobbies of Scalextric, Hornby, and Airfix kit bashing."

Gary then spent some time working for a large UK importer of R/C planes, helicopters, boats and models, spending a lot of time on the development side (I'm trying hard not to be totally overcome with envy at this point). He even

had time to star on the small screen, in Discovery Channel's 'Supermodels 2' programme. Some readers might remember the massive R/C C-17 Globemaster project; Gary supplied some scratchbuilt models to be carried in the 16-foot wingspan monster.

Then what seemed like a cruel twist of fate led to us lucky slot racers having a new model building maker:

"During a period of redecorating at home the unimaginable happenedthe whole box of my beloved Scalex was accidentally thrown away with the rubbish and was gone forever. (There's

a lesson there, readers. Never, EVER redecorate. – Ed.) With new resolve I

began to collect again and soon became interested in the making of scenery for my own tracks with a view to selling to make room for more."

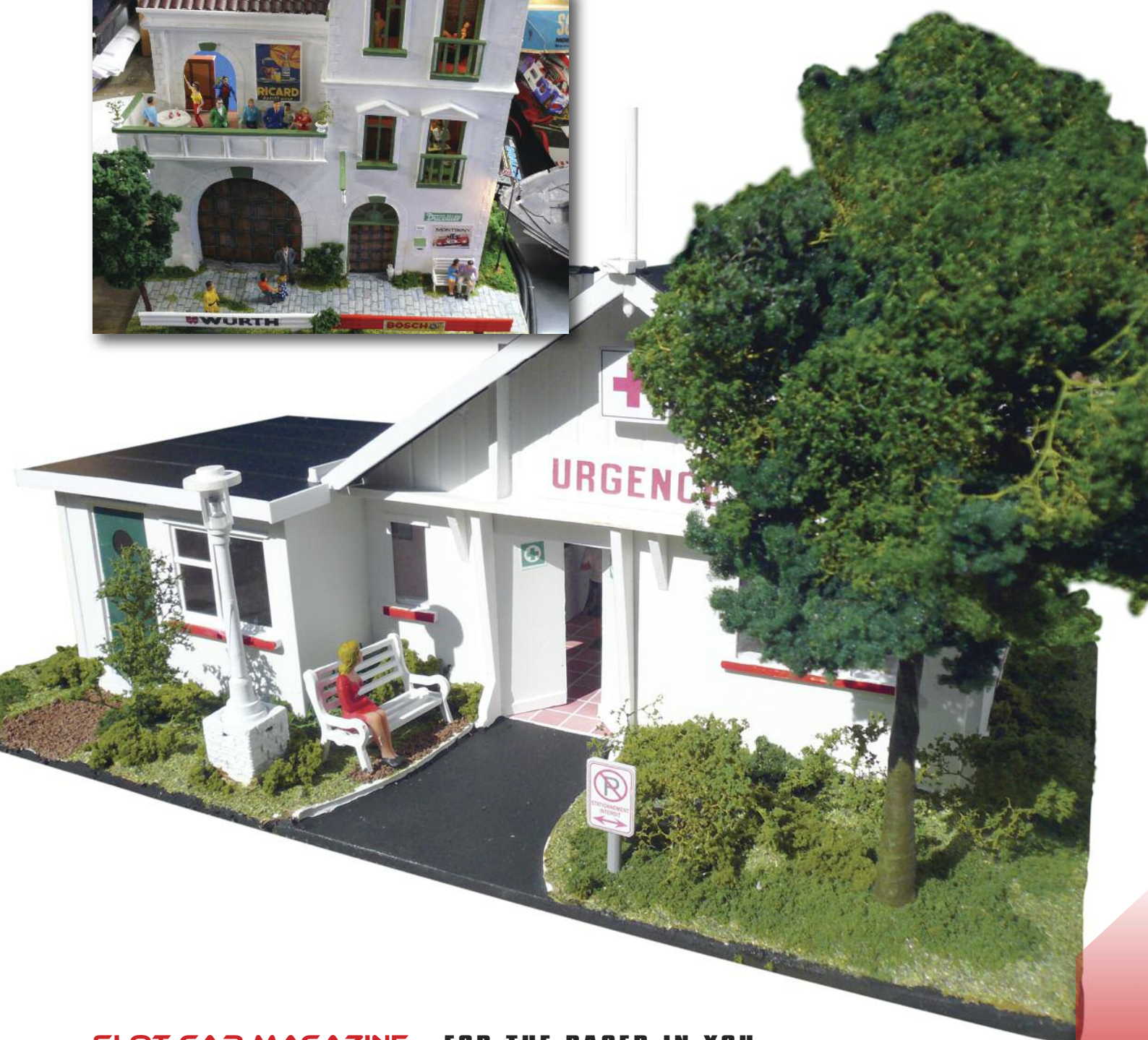
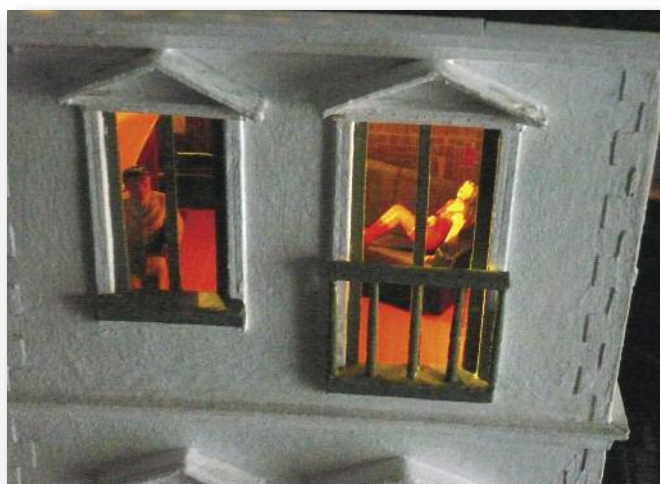
"At this time the model making was something I did while working full-time and being part of the Sam's World in Miniature team. Health problems at home and work led me to break away from Sam's World and my full-time job, to take a long sabbatical to work out my direction. What you see now is the culmination of that sabbatical."

The striking thing about Gary's work is that a lot of the time he uses what he terms "broken and unloved" Scalextric parts as the basis of his new buildings. 'New build' models are also available, and whichever route you choose, all buildings are finished by hand with extra detailing so that no two are ever alike.

"I build to budget on consultation but always try to add lots of extras



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like figurines, Scalex parts, interiors with furniture and, where possible, removable floors/roofs, as I feel that my models should sit well with the existing vintage Scalextric buildings. The late '50s to early '70s club tracks is the time period I will usually focus on, or the 'prefab look' as I call it. I have always felt that the model railway guys have had it too good with regards to scenery items and I would love to see the same input into the slot track genre as we have very little in 1/32, or even near to this scale. This has led me to being creative, having to make things from scratch, e.g. 1/32 wine glasses/cups, general model backdrop items and so on. I think that Scalextric may have missed a trick with such interest in the classic car models. They should give some thought to possibly re-

introducing some classic buildings, as I believe there is a market for the retro stuff alongside the current range of drab-looking buildings that only sit well with current racers and F1 cars. 70% of the car range is retro/vintage cars?"

Which is a good point. It could well be easier to reproduce the Silverstone Classic rather than a classic Silverstone.

I hope the pictures will give you a good idea of what Gary can make for you. I know what your next question is; it was mine too. "How much?"

"Trying to keep the prices realistic and affordable, I feel, is something that I hope brings more slot people in on the scenery trip and maybe highlights to manufacturers a growing market. Some parts I use come from worldwide locations and

are not always in a continuous supply. There are some other producers of buildings which are truly fantastic pieces but at fantastic prices to match...nice, but no help to the market as the price is VERY scary..."

The clients I have know my work and will just give me a budget and a set of requirements and I will then trade emails/ ideas and any budget issues versus requirements. Each one has to have the hand-made 'wow' factor when it is received by the customer and it will also have some of their own input. I'm happy to take any build requests people may have or consultations they would like via email."

That all-important address is rarge2000@gmail.com. He'll be happy to hear from you.

