

CMC's 1/18 scale Mercedes W165, 1939

During 1938, the Mercedes and to lesser extent the Auto Union dominance, seemed to prompt the Italian authorities to switch the regulations for the forthcoming 1939 Tripoli Grand Prix, from those of Grand Prix cars to voiturettes (smaller, lighter cars, with only 1.5 litre engines). The Italian authorities were hoping for and expecting an Italian win with either an Alfa 158 or a Maserati 4CL, but Mercedes had other ideas.

In early 1939, Mercedes continued with their V12 three litre, twin supercharged engine, though in updated form, designated M163. The W154/163's engine provided an improvement of nearly twenty brake horse power at an improved, 8000 rpm. Having scored a one-two at the Pau Grand Prix, Mercedes entered their secret weapon at the highly prestigious and lucrative Tripoli Grand Prix, the second Grand Prix of that year, now run under voiturette regulations. Unknown to the authorities and the other competing teams, Mercedes had designed and built their own voiturette just for this race, over the preceding six months. Thus the Mercedes W165 was born. Being in looks and technicality a mini W154/163, the German cars were frustratingly superior to the Italian makes. These unexpected and unwelcome entrants secured the front row in practice and ran away with the race, Hermann Lang triumphantly scoring his Tripoli hatrick (having being run as a three-litre event in 1937 and 1938). The supercharged 1.5 litre V8's were never passed during the 244 mile race, Lang bringing the car home first, with Rudolf Caracciola second. An Alfa was placed third. The Mercedes W165's never raced again, the rest of the year being competed by W154/163's under normal Grand Prix regulations, their 3 litre supercharged engines otherwise being the one's to beat.

Once again, CMC have produced a beauty of a model of this voiturette racing car. When seen alongside CMC's 1938 W154, what is immediately obvious is the smaller size of the W165. Additionally, the radiator grill is oval shaped like that of the 1939 version of the W154. This is in contrast to the shapely rounded version on the 1938 car (as in CMC's W154) extensions of which appeared to extend a little way into the front suspension fairings, presumably due to differing radiator demands. The tail is shorter and less arrow-like from above, whilst retaining the familiar tail fairing behind the driver's head. With a similar width body, the car appears more compact overall and nothing emphasises this more than when the engine cover is removed. Hidden within is the supercharged V8, which seems even more shoe-horned into the available space than that of the W154 itself. I presume, like the W154 before it, this is one of CMC's earlier models with engine detail very good, but without the additional multi-media detailing on some of the later Silver Arrows.

The cockpit is extremely similar in general concept and one can see why the W165 was thought of as a mini W154. The only differences are subtle, namely the altered detailing of the rev' counter, the slightly different shaped seat and the lack of a turned aluminium effect dashboard bulkhead, as in the earlier car. The whole body shape is similar with sight glasses in the right side of the fuel tank behind the driver. The

engine cover is lightly built and removable by way of well placed static clip at the leading edge, which cannot be seen unless the cover is removed. Typically, the engine cover is perfectly fitting in this model and of the same perfect silver finish to the body work. The six engine cover clips are of non-working type (but one doesn't seem to notice that or worry about it), a further feat of brilliance in model making on a mass scale seen in later models. As usual, the wheels are exquisitely prepared with the best ever wire wheel representations on any model and in this CMC excel. Unlike later models, the spinners/knock-offs do not unwind and so one cannot remove any wheels. These wheels are noticeably smaller than those of the W154 which were just possibly not quite big enough in the model, especially the rears. Thus, the voiturette class of racing car is very convincingly represented and there is no carry over of parts from another model. This is truly a one-off racing car for the 1939 Tripoli Grand Prix and CMC have made their own memorable version of it, quite distinct from the W154, but fantastic alongside each other!