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AUD\$12.98  
NZD\$19.95, (INC GST)

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# Maserati 1:18

# 300S

Produced by CMC

Words by Matt Boyd, pictures by Aly Cassata

Today's world of hyper-regulated sports car racing couldn't be more different from the sport's wild and woolly origins. The FIA established the World Sportscar Championship (WSC) in 1953 following the successful launch of the Formula 1 World Drivers' Championship in 1950. The series had two classes: production-based 'GT' cars, and purpose-built 'Sports Car' prototypes. The FIA intentionally left the rules for the latter quite liberal; pretty much anything with two seats and four wheels covered by wings would qualify, meaning F1 technology easily translated over. That, plus the inclusion of the world's most prestigious endurance racing events – the Carrera Panamericana, Mille Miglia, Targa Florio, 12 Hours of Sebring and, of course, The 24 Hours of Le Mans – on the WSC calendar made the series irresistible to Europe's premier sports car marques. Among them were F1's chief combatants Ferrari and Maserati, soon to be followed by Mercedes-Benz.

Maserati invested much into the development of its single-seat 250F Formula 1 car for 1954, which helped Juan Manuel Fangio capture the F1 drivers' championship. Seeing the platform's obvious potential, Maserati set about crafting an enclosed-wheel, two-seat version based on the F1 car's

mechanicals for use in the WSC the following year. Because WSC rules did not share F1's 2.5-litre displacement limit, Maserati chose to develop a new engine based on the 250F's inline-six, but with a deeper block and an additional 15mm of stroke, taking it up to 3 litres and yielding the name of its new sports car: the 300S.

As has become its custom over the last few years, CMC takes full advantage of the shared architecture of the 250F and 300S. To the several 250Fs in its 1:18 catalogue CMC now adds its first 300S, of which we got to sample one of the pre-production prototypes. Predictably, the 300S uses a number of the same castings, particularly in the powertrain. The tubular space-frame chassis is unique to the 300S, but shares several key features with its F1 cousin. To begin with, the inline-six was mounted behind the centreline of the double-wishbone front suspension to optimise weight distribution. That gives the Medardo Fantuzzi-designed and hand-built aluminium body a classic long-bonneted roadster profile despite its compact 2.31m wheelbase. The illusion of length is enhanced by the tiny doors, elongated snout (which differentiates this 1956 model from the previous year) and the sinuous curve of the rear wing and deck. CMC nails these, as you would expect.



Other highlights include the multicoloured Maserati medallion on the nose, and the delicate mesh grille with photo-etched trident badge



### Maserati 300S

SCALE: 1:18

ITEM NO: M-105

PRODUCER: CMC

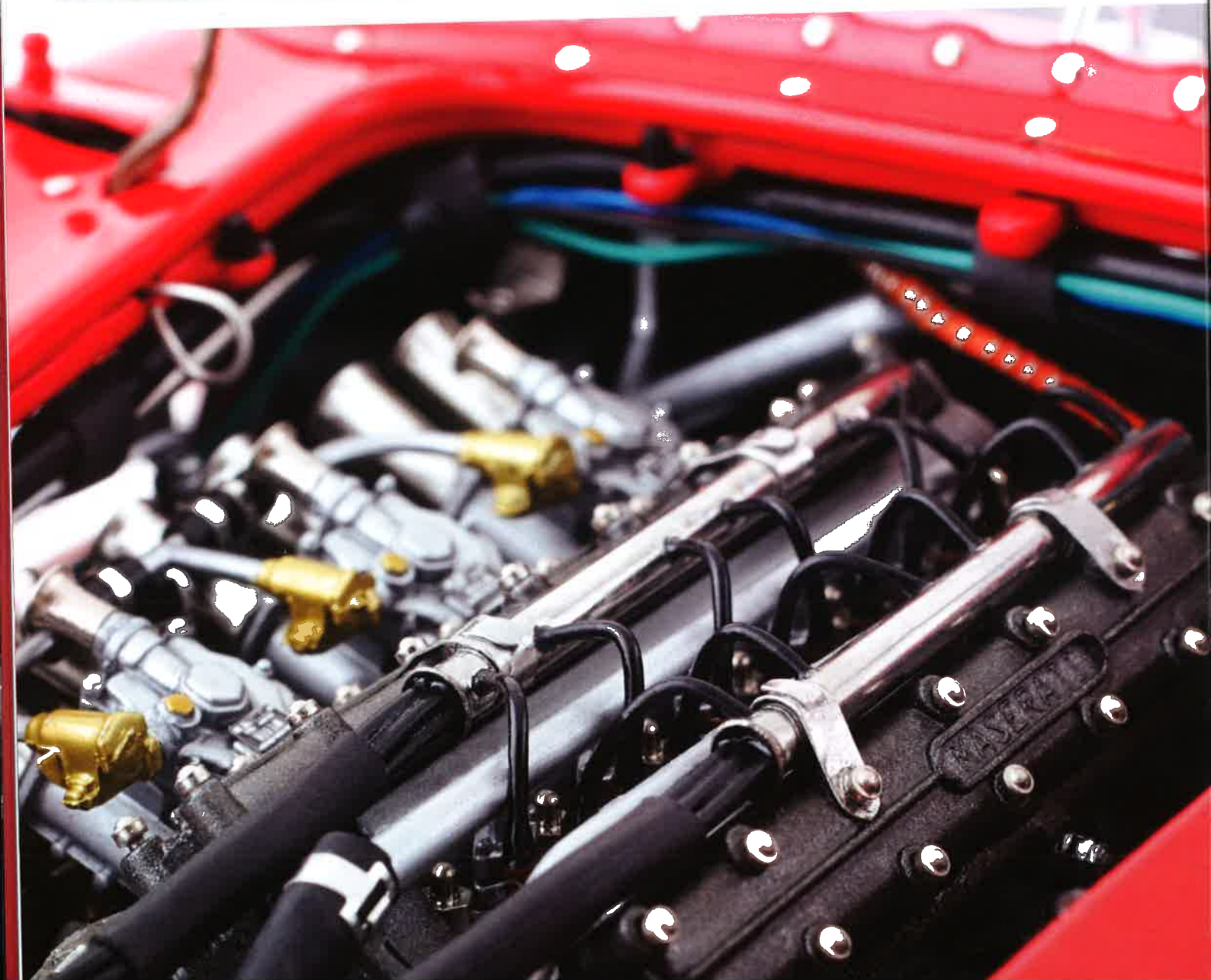
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I am particularly impressed by the uniform gaps between the body and the various opening panels (bonnet, deck and doors). You're thinking, "Sure, they're good, but what's the big deal?" Well, consider that CMC uses ridiculously thin aluminium for the bonnet, boot and doors, yet they blend seamlessly with the diecast body. Paint is perfect, and it contrasts delightfully with the individually cast rivets and vents behind the front wheels. Other highlights include the multicoloured Maserati medallion on the nose, and the delicate mesh grille with photo-etched trident badge.

To open the hood you first have to unbuckle the authentic leather tie-downs, and then twist the functional spring latches. The latches are great, but the leather buckles are a bit of realism I could do without. Unfastening them is no problem, but getting them back together later is next to impossible, even with the supplied tweezers. I guess it's a good sign when your only complaint about a model is that it is *too* accurate! You'll likely forget all about wanting to buckle the bonnet down when you see the beautiful Maserati straight-six, though. The F1 lineage is

apparent, although WSC rules mandated standard petrol rather than the exotic methanol 'witch's brew' fuel the 250F used. That, and the rigours of endurance racing, necessitated a lower compression ratio and slight detuning, so the 300S had no extra horsepower despite its half-litre displacement advantage over the 250F. Still, the 194kW was more than ample for the car's 794kg kerb weight.

CMC tells us 1838 parts went into its 300S replica, and when you see the motor you'll believe it. The 'Maserati'-embossed cam cover dominates the view; wires from the twin ignition system are bundled into two tubes atop the cover, and scale plug wires trace down to the dual spark plugs at each cylinder. All of the coolant hoses have scale metal hose clamps, and the linkage for the recirculating ball steering system turns with the wheels where it mates with the worm gear housing. Down the left side of the engine is a pair of three-into-two race headers that lead straight under the raised lip of the body to the twin side pipes. To the right is a gorgeous trio of Weber twin-throat carbs fully plumbed with fuel lines and topped by chrome intake trumpets.





The interior is typical '50s race car fare: spartan and functional. That is not to say it is devoid of charm for the model enthusiast, however; the low-back bucket seats are upholstered in real leather, while the polished aluminium floorboards provide a reflective surface that further shows off the shift linkage, the nest of chassis braces and the nice floor-hinged pedal set. The dashboard contains only the essentials, but the gauges are legible with their pale blue backing, and each features a separate aluminium bezel. The doors have delicate scale hinges and spring-loaded catches to hold them tightly closed.

The boot is typically not a highlight with most replicas, but in the case of the 300S case there is plenty to see. Getting to it involves the more of those clever twist latches and one of the leather buckles, after which the cover lifts right off to reveal a fully-detailed engine compartment retained by more leather straps and a rammoth fuel cell. The tank is handcrafted from stainless steel plates, shaped and then riveted together. The quick-fill caps for the fuel tank and supplementary oil reservoir both open. There are more parts and craftsmanship evident in this fuel tank

than in many entire models! Under the spare wheel you can catch the barest glimpse of the transverse leaf spring, but to truly appreciate the suspension's complexity you have to flip the model over.

When you do, you get a first-class view of the F1-derived driveline and suspension. As with the 250F, the 300S has its four-speed box mounted transversely, integrated with a de Dion rear axle. The de Dion tube wraps in front of the transmission itself for better control of suspension movement and lower unsprung weight – design elements that the model depicts to perfection. You can clearly see the twin fuel pickups in the bottom of the fuel cell, from which brass wire fuel lines lead forward to the carbs. Large-bore oil lines are plumbed from the oil reservoir to the dry-sump system beneath the engine. There is also impressive detail on the hydraulic drum brake system, although the best way to see that feature would be to twist the functional spinner nuts and remove the wheels. Sadly, this is the one feature on our pre-pro sample that was not up to production spec, so I was unable to remove the wheels. That was a minor disappointment, but the wheels are so spectacularly detailed, right down to their

scale spokes and valve stems, that I didn't miss it much.

The 300S is a fascinating contradiction; its traditional hand-crafted roadster coachwork masks cutting edge (for its day) Formula 1 technology. The strengths that Maserati perfected in Formula 1 – iron-clad durability, versatility and consistent speed – lent themselves perfectly to endurance sports car racing. And the 300S was an excellent race car, achieving victories at the hands of Stirling Moss and Juan Manuel Fangio among others, and finishing second in the 1956 World Sportscar Championship. CMC's replica brings to life Fantuzzi's design, revealing charming subtleties that further flatter its traditional beauty. And CMC yet again ups the ante with scale detail, delivering a model with more than 1800 pieces, each seemingly perfectly crafted and placed. While the 300S may not have quite the racing pedigree of some of CMC's other models, it more than makes up for it in artistry and authenticity. In fact, this may very well be the most detailed 1:18 model CMC has yet produced. That makes it a winner – even if the 300S only managed second place in the World Sportscar Championship!

