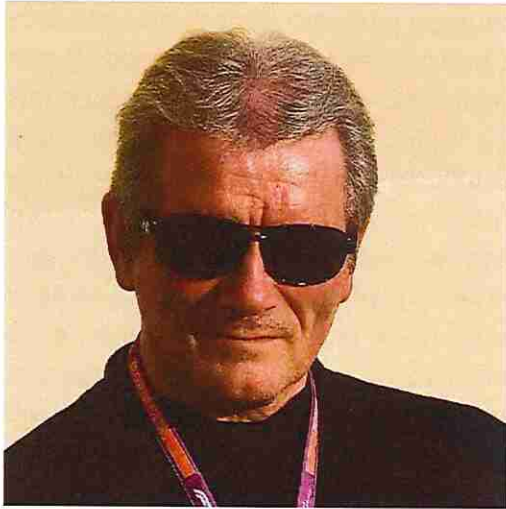


YES, THIS ACTUALLY IS ROKiT SCIENCE



We've become slightly inured to negativity these past two years, which is why it was all the more special to visit Motorsport UK's new headquarters at Bicester Heritage last Friday where something hugely positive had nothing to do a Covid PCR test.

Actually, I visited twice, picking up some oil for Tom's newly acquired Ford Model A from Fuzz Townsend's Classic Oils in the morning and talking Vettes with gateman Neil, who used to own a C4 manual, then returning for the launch of the 2022 ROKiT F4 British Championship certified by FIA (to give it its full snappy title) in the afternoon.

I love what Daniel Geoghegan and his team have done at the venue, which I like to describe as a motorsport campus. The first time I went there a few years back, I had been looking for a big hanger I kept seeing while driving in the area. We were planning to relocate

STAY GOLD closer to where Tom lived at the time in Pitchcott, as he wanted to work on her more often. I was surprised that the hangar turned out to be so close to his home, even more so when, having pulled up outside what looked like an office near the entrance, I was accosted by a man who said, "Mr Tremayne, what the hell are you doing here?" It was Brian Pallett, who had formerly worked at Silverstone.

"To be honest, Brian, I'm looking for someone exactly like you and somewhere exactly like this..."

It was serendipity at its best, and Brian gave me the guided tour which included a drop-in to Historit, who said they would be happy to house our machine. Other events overtook us so she was subsequently given a home in my pal Paul Stabler's garage in our home town of Darlington, which in many ways made more sense because instead of

being allowed to run at RAF Fairford down in Gloucestershire we ended up going to Elvington which was much closer to home, as was Bill Smith's Blue Bird Project, in North Shields. I would have been very proud to have had a base at Bicester Heritage, however, as it would have been the perfect venue to entertain potential sponsors and the like. I look forward to taking GOLD to one of the Sunday Scrambles next year.

Motorsport UK's building is so much more suitable an imposing than the one it had down in Colnbrook, which is such a depressing area these days. And it was bristling with old mates for the F4 launch. I'd been invited by Bob Fernley, and it was lovely to bump into former Sauber team principal Monisha Kaltenborn whom I had not seen since she left F1 in 2017, to catch up with Indycar-bound Callum Ilott as I walked in, and to hang out with the likes of Karun Chandhok, Richard Dutton, Neil

Brown, Jimmy Roberts, and Jonathan Gill, as well as Hugh Chambers, Chris Clarke and John Ryan from Motorsport UK itself.

I was impressed by the presentation by Ariana Bravo, in one of those lovely old aircraft hangars which reminded me of the one we were once lucky to have all to ourselves for GOLD when she lived at The Cotswold Airport (formerly RAF Kemble). And by the all-new car, the second-generation Pirelli-shod, Abarth-engined Tatuus T-421 complete with steel halo and, stunningly, F1 standards of safety in crash resistance and on-board signalling systems. I don't know company boss, Giovanni Delfino, but was very taken by the humour and humility in his speech. And then there was the big turn-out. I'll be honest, much as I really like and enjoy the British Touring Car Championship, as a purist it always irked me a little when it took away F3's mantle as the UK's premier national racing series, because F3 was where the F1 stars of tomorrow were cutting their teeth. I loved covering it between 1981 and 1987, and many of the drivers and team personnel whom I met in that great period remain close friends today. So now it was great to



see that there is still so much interest in the series.

I was also stoked to hear of the plans for what is, essentially, the modern-day equivalent of British F3, and it all reminded me of just how far the lower formulae have come in these past 30 or so years.

2022 marks a dramatic shift in the dynamic of Britain's internationally renowned entry-level category for the stars of tomorrow. Pirelli's role as tyre supplier brings it into line with its contemporaries around Europe, as well as the rest of the FIA Single-Seater Pathway. And the guiding

philosophy behind establishing the series' commercial partners for the future has been their ability to enrich the experience for drivers beyond their financial support.

Pirelli has launched its Hardest Charger Award in line with this, ensuring that the driver who completes the most overtakes at each event will receive a free set of tyres to be utilised in testing, boosting their prospects for meaningful track time in the car. And, crucially, besides the 12 valuable FIA Super License points, the 2022 champion will receive a Pirelli-funded test in a Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine. They will also receive a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to go behind the scenes at a Formula 1 Grand Prix with McLaren, providing an in-depth insight into life in the sport's foremost championship.

"As the entry-level step on the single-seater ladder, it's absolutely crucial we put together a platform that gives competitors the best opportunity to make meaningful progress through the ranks," Chambers, the ceo of Motorsport UK said. "Many of these drivers will be aiming for Formula 1, so giving them a championship that

allows them to start gathering relevant experience from their first laps in the car is a key element of what we're building.

"Our vision has always been to grow and develop the series into a global leader, and to kick things off with partnerships alongside the likes of ROKiT, McLaren and Pirelli really gives us a solid grounding on which to build and unveil further incentives in the near future. It also highlights how seriously British F4 is regarded at the highest echelons of the sport."

The final kicker was the announcement of ROKiT's new Racing Star programme which is designed to support two future talents.

The scheme will select 32 participants aged between 14 and 15 years old through the sport's ever-growing eSports scene, with a further shootout held on state-of-the-art simulators (provided by Monisha's company Racing Unleashed) at the University of Bolton next Spring to determine which two drivers – one male and one female – will be awarded a fully-funded seat in British F4 for the 2023 season with the FIA Racing Star team, underpinned by Hitech GP.

That prize will include 25 days of testing and six months of training and development alongside the Motorsport UK Academy, the governing body's elite performance pathway, to aid their attainment of the necessary race licence and build a foundation on which to progress into real on-track racing.



Bob Fernley, head of the FIA Single-Seater Commission who is spearheading the concept with James Kendrick, said: "I'm very excited to be able to unveil the new FIA Racing Star programme, and our ties with both ROKiT and the F4 British Championship.

"Talent detection programmes are commonplace in sport, generally, but in motorsport this really is a ground-breaking opportunity for two stars of the future to make an impact in a virtual environment, then have the framework and support to translate their abilities into real-world competition alongside a renowned resource such as the Motorsport UK Academy.

"ROKiT really has to be commended for partnering the ROKiT - Racing Star F4 Esports UK initiative to complement its British F4 Championship commitment, demonstrating its desire to provide opportunities and support youngsters in realising their racing dream. The stakes have never been higher to win the two coveted spots on the grid as part of the ROKiT F4 Racing Star Team in 2023."

With full access for regular drivers to take advantage of Motorsport UK's driver training and support schemes, young racers have never been better catered for in their formative stages. ❖