DRIVEN
REVIEW

TEAM XRAY XB8

FAST FACTS
MANUFACTURER: Team Xray
VEHICLE: XB8
CLASS: 1/8 nitro buggy
DRIVER: Intermediate to experienced racers
SPEED (AS TESTED): 44.8 mph
PRICE: $669.99

by Greg Vogel

Talk about a company making some real waves in the industry: Team Xray is the topic of discussion for many racers. Xray has a reputation for building high-tech quality racing sedans in both the 1/10 and 1/12 variety. They recently took charge of the micro scene with their shaft-driven, independent suspension M18. They are now making their place known in the US by opening RC America so they can make products available and customer service better for their existing and potential buyers.

Now with all that going on, you'd think they'd be too busy with current projects to introduce anything new. Wrong! Xray isn't taking any breaks, and in fact is expanding their product line. Until now, the company has been all about electric on-road cars. Now they are diving straight into nitro, but not on-road like you'd think; they went straight to building a 1/8 nitro buggy. Xray has the reputation for high-end equipment. Does this reputation hold true for their brand-new XB8? It sure does.

Luxury off-road racer

PHOTOS BY WALTER SIDAS

TEAM XRAY XB8

DRIVING IMPRESSIONS

TRACK—The crackle of the tuned pipe, the wisp of smoke puffing from the stinger…not too many things in RC top an idling .21-powered 1/8 buggy ready to rip into action. Well, to make it really exciting there would be a full race buggy coupled to that powerful engine. The XB8 and RB S7II combination fit the bill perfectly.

The test site was Wolcott RC in CT, a massive off-road track with several challenging elements that require skill to navigate; perfect

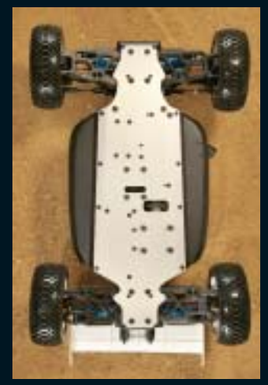
for the new competition-ready XB8. The buggy first hit the track for pictures, which allowed me to get used to the way the 8 wants to be driven. During half throttle passes around corners, I noticed that the buggy had a tendency to push and required stabs of the brake to bring the rear around for very tight corners. Although this raised a little concern for when I would be taking the racer around the course at full throttle, the 8's handling traits really grabbed my attention. Off jumps and over bumps, the buggy was incredibly surefooted. It just seemed to grab the ground and firmly plant all four wheels, giving 100% of its efforts to forward bite. Acceleration was very good, but the engine seemed like it was hesitating through the power band. For the high-grip track, it probably would have been better to put a 1mm clutch spring or higher on each shoe, rather than the .9 spring indicated in the instructions. Luckily, Xray also includes a heavier spring with the kit, and this seemingly minor detail deserves a thumbs up.

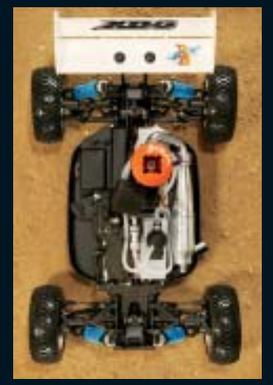
Back to the driving: the photo shoot was over and I was finally able to open it up. The engine was acting finicky and the clutch needed tuning, but the buggy itself was clearly ready for competition. The 8 just soaked up the bumps, as you could easily see the suspension working. Some of the larger ruts and jumps made the buggy bottom out, which indicated it could use just a tad more pack. A switch from the included 35wt oil to around 40wt in all four shocks would sure the handling right up. Focusing on the steering, the 8 turns well, but the front diff oil may have been a little too thick for the tight corners on the Wolcott test track. Dropping the front diff oil from 7,000 to 5,000 would probably put the buggy on target and shave valuable seconds off lap times.

Jumping the XB8 is awesome. It flies so level, and if for some reason you do dive into the ground, you can keep the throttle pegged and the car will pull out of what would otherwise appear to be certain disaster. Overall, the buggy pulled off excellent lap times with its excellent handling, good acceleration, and nimble steering. With just a few alterations to setup, which you would need to do depending on the track, the XB8 will run anywhere from great to fantastic.

INFO CENTER

CHASSIS— A 3mm thick aluminum stamped plate serves as the XB8's rigid backbone. It may appear to be just a plain plate with kick-up from the bottom, but from up top you'll see it has been lightened with milled areas under the engine, fuel tank and radio tray. Lightweight carbon fiber was then used for the servo plate, front steering brace, and center diff plate; these components give the buggy a high-tech look while serving their functions. Bolted to the left front of the chassis is a 125cc flip-top fuel tank with molded-in high splashguard to prevent fuel from spilling onto the brakes in an overflow. Behind the carbon fiber servo plate is the radio box that has clip-retained lids for easy removal. The receiver side of the box is large enough to accept standard size receivers—a good option for the few drivers left that still use larger receivers. The other side of the box holds the included Xray 5-cell side-by-side receiver battery; it's placed towards the center for better CG. Stiffening the chassis up front is a beefy torque rod, and a thick aluminum L-plate with five mounting points supports the rear. **SUSPENSION—** Xray's attention to racing detail is evident throughout the suspension system. Starting with the dampers: they are large bore oil-filled coil-over shocks with 3.5mm thick shock shafts that run through large double O-rings in the body and are protected by dust boots. Xray includes multiple pistons for fine-tuning as well as a whole other set of harder springs. Both front and rear towers are 4mm thick plates with numerous mounting holes for the shocks and the rear upper camber rod. The towers have also been milled to reduce weight and the edges have been beveled after they've been black anodized, giving them a nice look and evidencing attention to detail. Ultra rigid suspension arms up front offer three mounting positions for the lower shock and wrap around the C-hub for extra support. The C-hub area, however, is unlike that of any other buggy: the C-hub is adjustable by rotating a cam-like hinge pin support with ball end on the other side that pops into the rear of the arm. This allows you to change caster in one-degree increments from 13 to 17 degrees with the included eccentric bushings. Up above, once you change caster, you'll also need to move the caster clips on the upper arm that is also fitted with spring steel adjustable turnbuckles. As if all this adjustment wasn't enough, Xray fitted the C-hub with two possible camber rod locations. In the rear, the arm features three lower shock positions, swoop down bracing for axle clearance, and clip-less hinge pins. The bulky rear hub can be moved fore and aft to alter wheelbase, and there are three positions for the camber link up top. The camber link has very large ball ends that just say no to breakage, and spring steel turnbuckles allow for easy camber tuning. All of the arms' inner hinge pin plates are machined aluminum with oval cutouts and composite inserts that allow the hinge pins to be moved to adjust toe or anti-squat, depending on the location. **STEERING—** Twin ball bearing supported bell-cranks and an aluminum drag link with optional positions for the adjustable steering turnbuckles make up the XB8's steering system. The rods connect to stout composite steering knuckles that have metal bosses molded in so the king pin screw cannot rip out in a crash. One seemingly minor detail that stands out here is the locknuts with nylon inserts that retain the critical screws. Other companies use





regular nuts to retain important parts of the steering—thumbs up to Xray for making sure the steering will not fail. Protecting the servo is an adjustable spring servo saver in the main crank. **DRIVETRAIN—** You have to check out these exciting features! Spring steel universal axles; front, rear and center, they are driven by sealed four-gear diffs with spring steel outdrive cups. (Spring steel is lightweight yet a very strong material.) Inside the front and rear diff, the bevel gears have rubber O-rings that help the diff action react like a torsen diff. The bevel, bevel pinion, and spur are all hardened steel. Rubber-sealed ball bearings support all moving parts of the drivetrain. Xray includes a lightweight aluminum flywheel and aluminum clutch shoes for consistent clutch engagement. Optional clutch springs are provided to alter clutch action, and a 13-tooth bearing-supported clutch bell tops off the drive. Xray uses vented disc brakes to slow the buggy: one in front of the center diff for front braking and of course one in the rear. The fiber pads came glued to the plates, which was a nice touch, and brake bias can be fine-tuned with thumb adjust rods. **BODY, WING AND WHEELS—** A clear Crowd Pleazer body is supplied with the kit along with window masks and decals. A white plastic bi-level wing bolts to the rear adjustable wing support with aluminum bracing. Xray supplies spoke rims for the car that resemble large versions of the rims they include with their sedans.

The front suspension may look like your typical buggy suspension at first glance, yet you'll notice some great race features upon closer inspection: two selections for the upper arm to mount on the C-hub, an adjustable caster C-hub, swaybar, massive bore shocks, and very rigid components.

The small circular piece with two dots is the adjustable pivot for the C-hub. By rotating the piece, it will alter caster. You'll also need to readjust the upper arm clips. This adjustment feature is the first of its type and it exemplifies Xray's attention to racing detail.

The rear hub carrier is beefy. It offers three holes up top for the camber rod, captured hinge pin, and spacers to adjust wheelbase. Cool gray anodized wheel hex!

Xray uses spring steel for many of their metal components such as the universal axles. Spring steel is lightweight and very strong, and its bronze-like finish looks cool.

No corners were cut: bearings are installed into the steering cranks; the cranks slide over spring steel posts that have been machined to conserve weight except around the area where the bearings ride. The aluminum drag bar allows three turnbuckle settings and the main crank has a built-in servo saver.

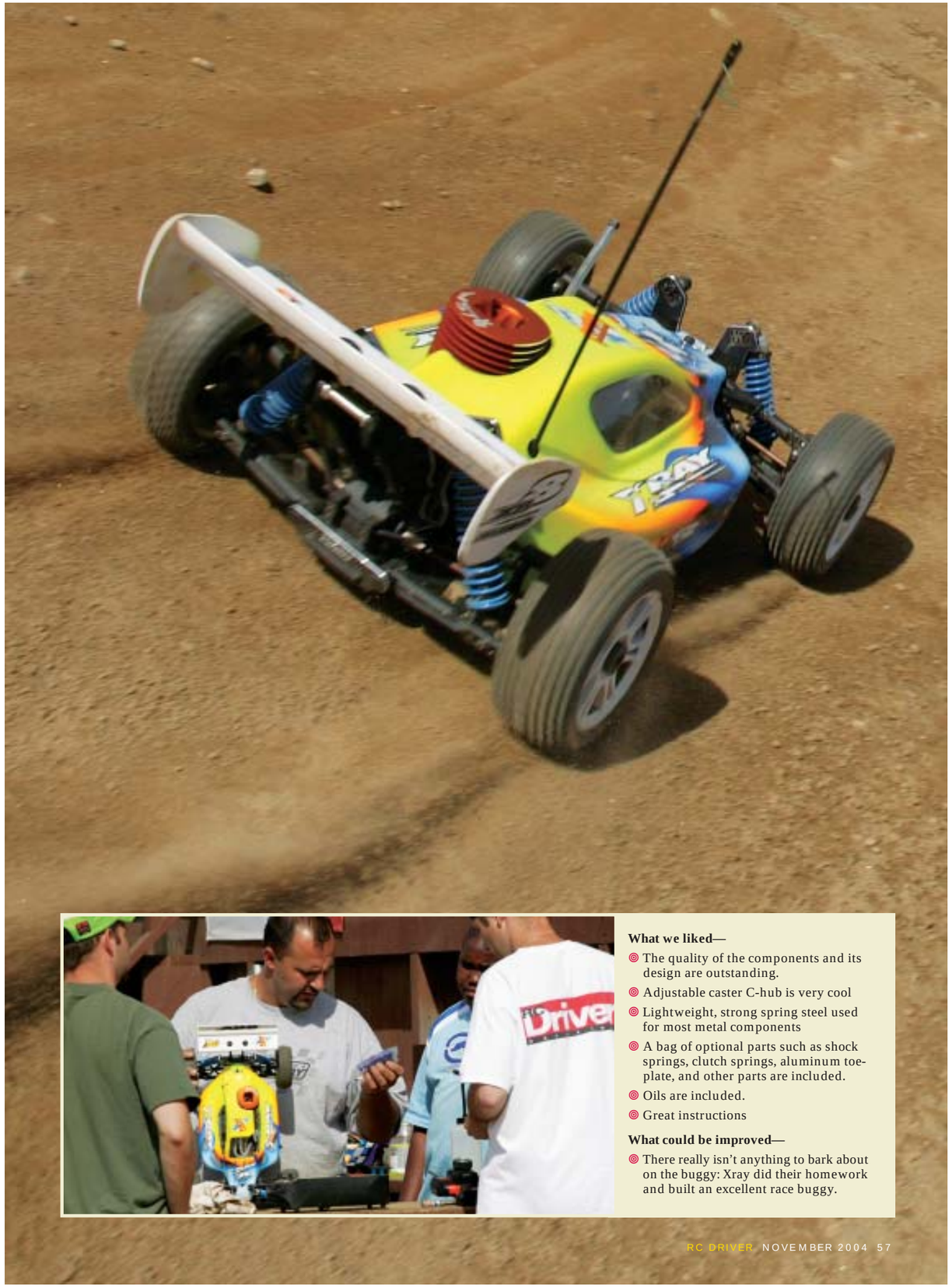
The center diff can actually be removed by pulling off the top caps of the diff supports. Vented disc brakes provide the stopping power and, believe it or not, Xray glues the brake pads to the brake plate for you. Xray, you just raised the bar!

A shot of the highly adjustable rear suspension reveals the aluminum suspension pivot with captured hinge pin. It sits inside an adjuster cap that alters the toe in small increments. The front rear arm's holder allows for anti-squat adjustments by using included alternate inserts.

Hockey stick? No, a rear chassis brace. This rear chassis brace doesn't follow the design of conventional braces; function yes, but definitely not the style. Five screws hold the aluminum brace in place, and the back of the XB8's chassis does not flex—at all.

A lightweight aluminum flywheel is included with the kit, along with the aluminum clutch shoes and optional springs in case you need to firm up the feel of the clutch's engagement.

The differentials are all sealed and Xray even includes oil to fill them. The front and rear diff have O-rings inside the bevel gears to give the diff action a similar feel to a torsen setup. Spring steel outdrive...yummy.



What we liked—

- The quality of the components and its design are outstanding.
- Adjustable caster C-hub is very cool
- Lightweight, strong spring steel used for most metal components
- A bag of optional parts such as shock springs, clutch springs, aluminum toe-plate, and other parts are included.
- Oils are included.
- Great instructions

What could be improved—

- There really isn't anything to bark about on the buggy: Xray did their homework and built an excellent race buggy.

TEAM XRAY XB8

TECH SPECS

SCALE: 1/8
WIDTH: 12.05 in. (306mm)
WHEELBASE: 12.64-12.87 in. (321-327mm)
OVERALL LENGTH: 18.98 in. (482mm)
WEIGHT: 118.2 oz. (3,350g)

CHASSIS
3mm thick milled aluminum plate with carbon fiber steering and radio plate

DRIVETRAIN
Shaft drive, spring steel universal axles: front, center and rear all supported by rubber-sealed ball bearings driven by 4-gear sealed bevel diffs

SUSPENSION
Double wishbone: solid lower arms with adjustable caster up front, adjustable turnbuckles for camber, and oil-filled coil-over big bore shocks for damping

BODY, WHEELS AND TIRES
Clear Crowd Pleazer shell with white spoiler and white spoke rims are all included

RATINGS

DURABILITY: Although our engine had issues, the Xray XB8 did not. We only ran this race-bred machine on a track, so there weren't a bunch of major crashes like the ones that may occur during a backyard bash session. The buggy did hit several pipes at full throttle, did a few endos, flips and cartwheels, and came off the track just as good as when it went on. Nothing in the suspension loosened up; no slop or signs of wear. This buggy is pure quality.

EASE OF USE: For a race machine, the buggy went together easily with no additional hand fitting of parts required. The instructions were perfect and allowed for a quick build. On the track, the buggy was to drive even with the little bit of push it exhibited, but this can be altered with some standard tuning.

CONCLUSION

The popularity of 1/8 buggies has been on the rise. It may even become the largest racing class if that isn't already the case at your home track. So like most competitive drivers, you're going to want something that features all the technology that will put you ahead of the pack. Xray's XB8 is the buggy that has all the technology you need: the adjustability, the quality, the flat-out race look. It handles extremely well on the track and is tunable to the point that you'll be able to dial it in better than you can drive it.

Everyone on staff was extremely impressed by this buggy, and if it makes its way into your hands, we're sure you'll be impressed too. ◎

Links

Futaba, distributed exclusively by Great Planes Model Distributors, www.futaba-rc.com, (800) 682-8948.

OFNA Racing, www.ofna.com, (949) 586-2910.

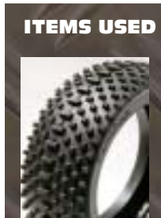
Panther Products Inc., www.panther-rc.com, (866) 700-8473.

RB Concepts, www.rbproducts.com

Xray, www.teamxray.com, (800) 519-7221.

For more information, please see our source guide on pg. 201.

ITEMS USED



Panther Tire 1/8 Komodo Dragon tires—PT911, $20.95

Futaba 3PK radio—FUTJ32, $329.99

Futaba S9450 steering servo—S9450, $149.99

OFNA 053 tuned pipe—10077, $55.99

Additional items needed: Engine, tuned pipe, starterbox, radio system with two high-end servos and receiver, fuel, glow igniter, AA batteries for the radio, paint and tires