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ROAR TQ buggy

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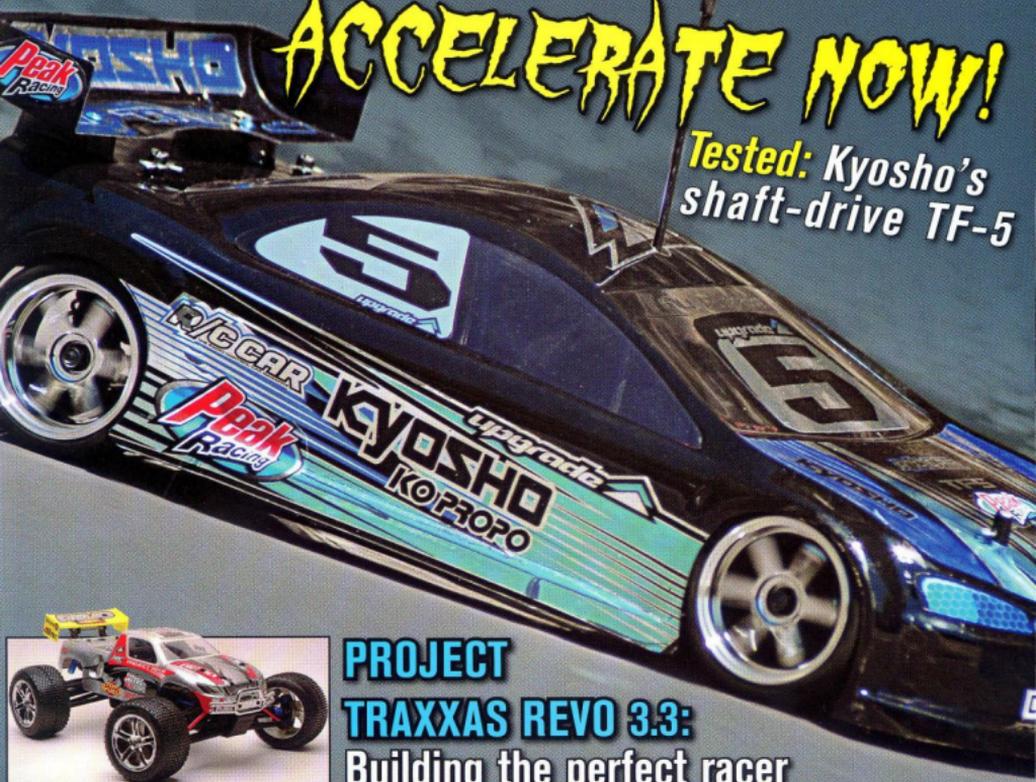
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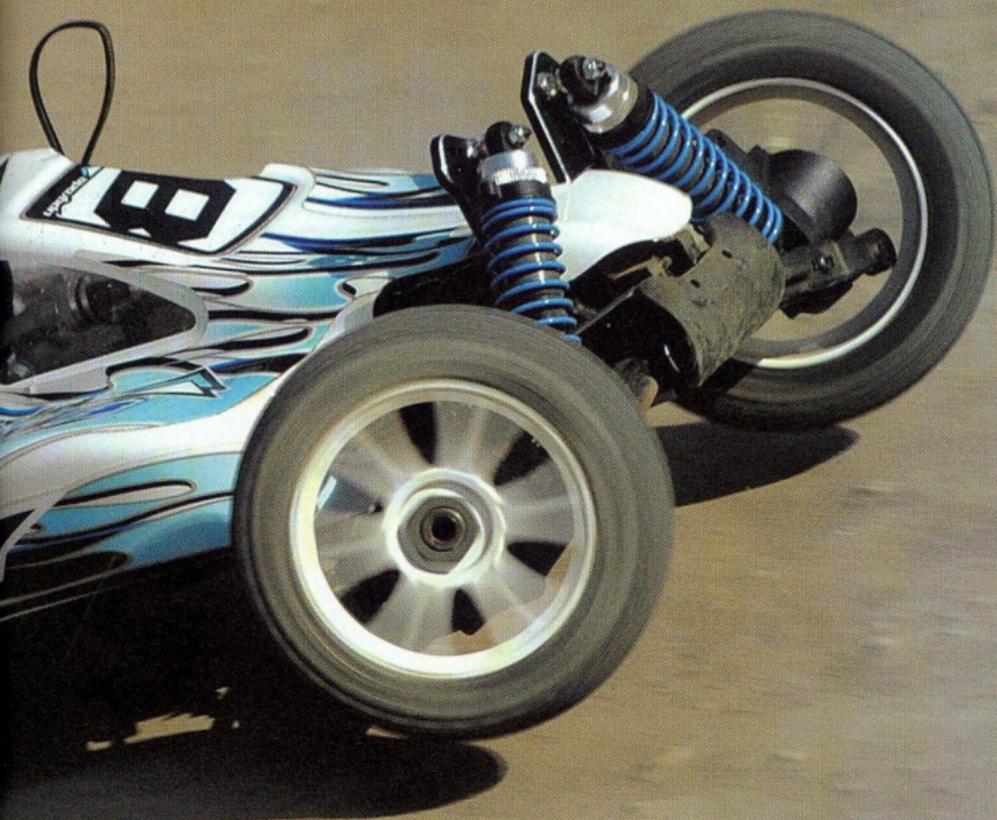


XRAY XB8TQ

Taking top honors in several categories.

By Stephen Bess





There's a quote that goes, "Quality isn't an accident; it's the result of high intention, intelligent direction, and skillful execution." XRAY's reputation for quality is one that's both well earned and now widely respected in the RC community. World renown for nearly flawless fit and finish, top shelf materials, and a form and function that simply works, XRAY's stable of vehicles are anything but accidents. In the incredibly competi-

tive 1/8-scale buggy world, however, built quality only gets you so far—it's on-track performance that matters most. The gorgeous XB8 buggy was, and still is, a leader in the 1/8-scale buggy class, but on the track it has yet to capture a major win against the world's best. XRAY's second buggy release, the new XB8 TQ, features a load of new components designed to take the high quality XB8 directly into the winners circle.

TEST DRIVE XRAY XB8TQ

KIT FEATURES

XRAY addresses nearly all of the original XB8's flaws in this TQ kit, with a laundry list of improvements, upgrades and new features. Open the box, and you'll still receive a rolling chassis minus electronics and engine, a sleek new XRAY Lexan body, white wheels (minus tires) and wing and an incredibly detailed instruction and setup manual.

Suspension. The TQ's suspension arms, like nearly everything else on the buggy, are completely redesigned. XRAY makes the new arms considerably thicker than the originals for increased durability, while the arms are also longer than before, for increased stability and down travel through ruts. Taking advantage of this increased down travel is a larger, taller rear shock tower that provides the geometry necessary for the longer arms' down and up trav-

el. Rear anti-squat is increased, with settings for 2-4 degrees of anti-squat (compared to the 1-3 degrees normally found on a buggy). Up front, the TQ's adjustable front caster is also improved, providing between 17 and 25 degrees of caster, while the front end kick-up is further adjustable from 4-8 degrees. All this, plus the expected adjustments of camber, toe and rear toe, are available on the TQ buggy, without any e-clip hinge pins to remove. All of the TQ's suspension pins are captured, using Hudy's ISS inserts (integrated suspension settings) to adjust the suspension angles. Finally, the TQ's shocks have received updates as well, with more precisely molded shock clips and harder plastic pistons that resist cracking and breaking when compared to the original XB8's pistons.

Drivetrain. With durability being a large part of a 1/8-scale buggy's winning poten-

tial, the TQ features one of the best drivetrains in 1/8 buggy racing. A standard three-differential set up is included, with six-gear silicone-filled differentials in the front, center and rear of the car. XRAY's driveline itself is a true work of art, with spring-steel universal drive shafts, updated differential outdrives, and updated spring steel spur gear and clutch bell for increased life span. Even the flywheel and clutch undergo improvements, with a hard-coated aluminum flywheel and 1.71g lightweight aluminum clutch shoes for harder-hitting low-end power. As we'd expect, the entire drivetrain spins on a full set of rubber-sealed ball bearings.

Steering. The TQ's steering system is a fully ball bearing supported dual bellcrank rack system, with an aluminum Ackerman plate and steel pivot balls. Adjustable turn-buckles milled from Hudy's exclusive spring





TEST EQUIPMENT



Radio: KO Helios EX-10, 89978, \$180 (transmitter only)



Receiver: Spektrum Pro, SM3001, \$110 (includes tx module)



Servos: JR ZB900T (steering), JR Z650M (throttle)



Engine: Max Power 21 M3, \$310



Pipes: Jammin' JP-1 polished, #10055, \$79.95



Fuel: Works Racing 30 percent gallon, WRX6630, \$30



Body: XRAY TQ body (included)



Tires: Panther Gators, T985, \$18/pair

steel take care of the steering and front camber duties as well. You won't find a pivot ball suspension here, as Hudy instead chooses to use the popular C-hub design that typically requires a complete hub swap to adjust caster. Adjusting the TQ's caster (which affects steering the most) is accomplished by simply swapping out the ISS insert on the lower front hinge pin.

Chassis. Many racers thought the original XB8's chassis didn't distribute weight where they wanted it, so XRAY tweaked the TQ's chassis and made it longer. The buggy's wheelbase is also longer by up to 2mm through the use of new suspension plates. The shorter and longer settings allow the racer to adjust the car's weight balance, which in turn affects the buggy's steering and rear end stability. The combination of the longer wheelbase and longer suspension arms equals a more stable and easier to drive machine. One of the TQ's most interesting features is its chassis brace design. The TQ includes both machined aluminum chassis braces and molded plastic braces, allowing the racer to tune the amount of chassis flex into the buggy according to the track conditions. Plastic braces are included for bumpy and loose tracks, while the aluminum braces are included for use on smooth, high speed tracks.

PERFORMANCE

Breaking-in the Max M3 engine was cake, as it fired up immediately and ran through a heat cycling round with no hiccups. After nearly a gallon of fuel, it was off to the tracks for several weekends of testing.

Having raced the XB8 and run it in shootouts, I'm familiar with the previous car's handling attributes and I can say with certainty that the TQ buggy is a better car. XRay's suspension and chassis changes make sense on paper—the arms are longer and more durable, while the chassis moves components around for better weight distribution—and the effects of these changes are felt in the car.

On smooth tracks, the XB8 TQ's handling with aluminum braces is predictable and smooth. The new lightweight 3-shoe aluminum clutch provides excellent low-end snap when combined with the torquey Max Power M3 engine. Though I checked every handful of tanks, the clutch system required nearly zero maintenance during testing, which is excellent wear and tear for an aluminum clutch. Over the course of the month, however, I fought a mid corner and exit push that never really went away no matter what tuning changes I performed. The car feels stable over rough sections, jumps well, but doesn't seem to corner with the same corner speed as other buggies no matter what I tried.

It's obvious that the XB8 TQ is a capable car in the right hands, but the question remains—how much tuning time is too much before you're ready to move on to something simpler? The TQ's myriad of tuning options and suspension adjustments is something you either grow to love or grow to hate. For the majority of

racers out there whose talent isn't up to par with factory pilots Josh Wheeler or Chris Crews, or whose on-track tuning experience isn't quite up to snuff, the XB8 TQ can potentially tune it self off the track. I say potentially because with the right set up, the car's very good. However, the TQ buggy isn't a car you can set up quickly, toss on the track, and immediately be on the pace. It requires patience, suspension tuning knowledge, and a lot of trial and error before it's dialed in. And as already mentioned, a buggy requiring this much attention is either something you know you love or know you want to avoid.

There's no denying the TQ's beauty and function on the bench. Everything fits perfectly, it's a gorgeous car, and we applaud Xray for giving racers plenty of tuning options. However, after driving the car for a month, I can say that the TQ buggy is not a buggy I'd recommend for inexperienced racers. If you know suspension tuning, the TQ will reward you, and if you don't, the TQ can eat you up and spit you out.

WHAT DID WE LIKE?

We absolutely love the TQ's high quality parts and fit/finish. The buggy is so gorgeous when first built that it's a shame to get it dirty. We also like that XRAY addressed the racers' complaints about the first XB8 by designing longer suspension arms, a different chassis and beefier components. If there were ever a buggy we'd want to display on our shelf, the XB8 TQ is it. On the track, it's no slouch either, and we like the buggy's increased stability and corner speed compared to the original.

WHAT WOULD WE CHANGE?

There's still just something missing that we can't put our finger on that's keeping the buggy from feeling like a Kyosho, Mugen or Jammin' on the track. We're not sure whether it's the car's geometry or our



TEST SETUP

Setup We Used. One of the XB8's biggest potential advantages is also its biggest potential flaw—the buggy's adjustability allows you to tune the car to nearly any setting you want, but the myriad of adjustments also means you can tune yourself completely out of the ballpark. We stuck with the baseline starting setup and tuned slightly from there with heavier shock oil up front (45wt) and a few track specific camber and toe changes. If you're not confident in your tuning abilities, use XRAY's excellent website to download a few pro-driver setups to try instead.

Test Track: KZ Speedway, Sun Valley, California.

Track Conditions: Large, open layout with groomed and watered dirt.



TEST DRIVE XRAY XB8TQ



inability to tune on the car for months at a time, but the end result is a buggy that's still just the tiniest tick off the pace at our favorite tracks.

CONCLUSION

XRAY's TQ buggy has all the ingredients to be a top-level performer. Spring steel, expertly injection molded plastics, machined aluminum...it's all

there. The only thing missing in the box is a talented driver with tuning experience to whip it all into a podium machine. We can't say enough about the car's quality, fit and finish, and for 99 percent of the drivers out there, its performance will more than exceed the driver's ability. We're being picky when we say it feels slightly off the pace, and without a direct shootout comparison, it may be an unfair statement. Still, we're waiting to see the XB8 win a big race, and we're sure it will with this new TQ platform. In the meantime, brush up on your chassis tuning skills, hit the track and enjoy everything the TQ buggy has to offer. □

THE FINAL CALL

Highs: Industry leading parts fit and finish, assembly couldn't be easier, has a billion setup adjustments and access to XRAY's incredible website for setups and service.

Lows: Price dings the wallet, no tires included, uses flat five-cell receiver packs unlike virtually every other 1/8 available, and you can still tune yourself completely off the track.

The Final Call: A certain performance improvement over the original XB8, but the car's adjustability is both a blessing and a curse.

ON THE OTHER HAND

Collin: If you were like most, then you were stunned when the original XB8 hit shelves, with its very high quality materials, fit, and finish, it was an immediate hit. The new XB8 TQ is the successor to the original, and is set to do just that-TQ. When I first looked at the new TQ buggy, some of the changes were obvious; well some were not. I immediately noticed the beefier arms and all of the new premium aluminum parts that replaced a fair amount of graphite. The not so obvious changes include the changing of the geometry of the buggy, which affects the overall drivability. For the few laps I putted around the track, the XB8 TQ felt very eager to win, as I found it to be easier and more aggressive compared to the original buggy. And after Wheeler's top 10 finish at the recent nats, Xray must have done some good.



SPECS

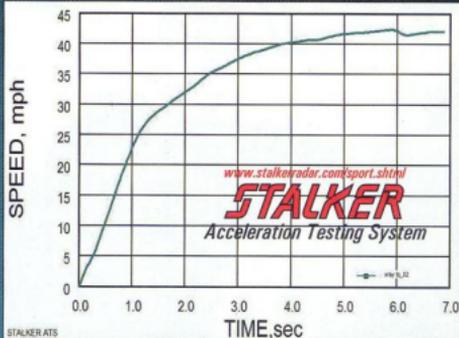
Vehicle: XRAY XB8 TQ
 Type: 1/8-scale four-wheel drive buggy
 Retail/Street Price: \$600
 Class Rivals: Kyosho Inferno 777 SP2, Mugen MBX-5 Prospec, Jammin' X1CR FT, Thunder Tiger S3, Losi 8ight, OFNA Hobao Hyper 8.

DIMENSIONS

Width:12.04 in (306 mm)
 Wheelbase:12.63-12.87 in (321-327 mm)
 Length:18.97 in (482 mm)
 Weight:7.38 lb (3350 g)
 Fuel tank capacity:120 cc
 Wheel hex size:17mm
 Chassis:Machined 7075 T6 aluminum plate
 Thickness:3mm
 Suspension:Four wheel independent
 Damping:Hard coated aluminum oil-filled shocks
 Swaybars:Included t/r
 Drivetrain:Four wheel drive w/3 gear differentials
 Clutchbell/spur:13-tooth/46-tooth
 Final gear ratio:11.79:1
 Differentials (f/r):Six-gear silicone-filled
 Bearings:Rubber-shielded ball bearings

PERFORMANCE DATA

Top Speed42.36 mph
 Zero-to-top speed5.89 seconds
 Zero-100ft2.81 seconds
 (Stalker ATS verified)



SOURCES

- XRAY, Distributed exclusively by RC America, 167 Turtle Creek Boulevard Ste. C, Dallas, Texas 75027 • (214) 744-2400.
- Max Power Engines, distributed exclusively by RC America, 167 Turtle Creek Boulevard Ste. C, Dallas, Texas 75027 • (214) 744-2400.
- Jammin RC Products, distributed by OFNA Racing, 22600 Lambert St., Ste. D-1009, Lake Forest, CA 92630 • (949) 586-2910
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- Panther Tires, 1100 Marlborough Ave., Riverside, CA 92507 • (866) 700-8473; fax (909) 682-7870
- Upgrade RC, Valencia, CA • (661) 259-UPRC(8772); www.upgrade-rc.com