

WORDS AND IMAGES: JERRY IBBOTSON



There's always a first time for everything. Whether it's stepping into the world of R/C cars or writing your first ever review for RRC, you have to start somewhere. If that all sounds a bit Zen then let me explain. This is my first time writing for RRCi magazine and the car I'm testing, the FTX Edge, just happens to be aimed at first timer racers. It can be a scary prospect (going racing, not writing for RRCi...!) but CML, the people behind the Edge want to make things as easy as possible for newcomers.

FTX are a firm with an impressive background in 1/5th scale petrol trucks and buggies and past 'over-sized' 1/10th bashing-buggies. They've recently introduced a range of more regular 1/10th

off roaders and what stands before me is their new 2WD buggy, the 'Edge'. It comes in two forms: one with a brushless motor, LiPo pack and 2.4 GHz radio aimed at the more experienced R/C fan and racer, and the other with a less powerful brushed motor, NiMH battery and 27 MHz AM gear, perfect as a first buggy or budget club racer.

BACK TO BASICS

For my first review Pete had sent me the brushed version that apart from eight AA cells for the radio, includes everything else you need to get started right in the box. This rather teasingly, also shows the brushless version and at first this is what I thought I had been sent... but hey, upon opening the box, what you see is still impressive nevertheless!

GET A RACING EDGE FOR UNDER A TON

QUICK SPEC

Manufacturer FTX
Type 2WD 1/10th Electric Buggy
Price £99.00 (yes that's £99.00)
www.cmldistribution.co.uk

Scale 1/10th
Power 2WD Electric
Length 405 mm
Width 250 mm
Weight 1.195 kg
Gear Ratio 1:9.6
Wheelbase 265 mm

First thoughts: it's pretty wide and that will equate to stability on track or out bashing. We've got another brand of buggy in the house already (in code: a crazy rodent!) and the Edge's chassis is quite a few millimetres wider than that. It also sits very low, again pointing to great handling with a low Centre of Gravity, which makes it look even wider still.

My next thought was: that's an awful lot of cross-headed screws! But like many beginners and budget cars to keep the costs

down the Edge is virtually held together by cross heads rather than hexes. This won't affect the car's strength or performance in any way though. It just means you need to make sure you have a good quality screwdriver on hand in your pit box to ensure repairs are easy to undertake and the heads stay undamaged.

The front-end looks really professional, with nylon composite wishbones and steel turnbuckles and not just plastic links for steering rods and the upper suspension arms. The wishbones themselves look quite dainty compared to others on the market, but on closer inspection the material is of a very high quality. The front suspension is of a familiar looking design, with the same basic layout as just about every other 2WD buggy on the planet. There's a front shock tower around which everything else is attached and a much larger than average front bumper. Thankfully there aren't too many 'e' clips, which I hate (me three! ED). Instead, things like hinge pins are held in place with captive screws, a neat and secure touch.

"The front-end looks really professional, with nylon composite wishbones and steel turnbuckles and not just plastic links for steering rods and the upper suspension arms"

QUALITY PLASTICS ARE JUST THE START

What stands out is the standard of the plastics given the low price of the car. There's no nasty 'shininess' that might make it look cheap and even holding the car in my hands is enough to impress and get me itching to drive the thing. But that has to wait for a while because I've got to examine the Edge a little further. The shock absorbers are nylon bodied and un-threaded, so spacers will be needed to make any pre-load and ride-height adjustments.

There are three upper mounting points available on the shock tower and two lower ones in the wishbone. The use of turnbuckles also allows for plenty of tweaking and adjustment to the front-end, in both the steering and suspension geometry departments. The front axles are of the internally threaded kind: the wheels hold the bearings and slide onto the shafts, where they're held in place by a screw that goes inside the end of the axle.

Although this is a similar design to some other 2WD buggies, the wheels and bearings on the Edge are unique so it won't be possible to use other wheels. I know this because I enquired with CML about getting some spare wheels in order to change the tyres. I race indoors at York and would need to fit mini-pins or spikes before I could run the Edge on the hard floor.

At the time of writing the nice people at CML are looking into this – bearing in mind it's a brand new car. It's annoying not being able to grab some 'generic' wheels off the shelves of my local model shop. But if the worst come to the worst I'll be soaking the kit wheels in acetone to loosen the cyano glue on the standard tyres and ditching them completely. OK, so I'll reek of nail varnish remover for a few days but it'll be worth it. Doing the classic test of 'pressing down on the front-end with a finger', the suspension compresses and re-bounds in a nice controlled way without any of the RTR springiness that I might have expected for a buggy at this price.

Right: As a first buggy, or budget club racer it's the perfect choice

TRADITIONAL REAR

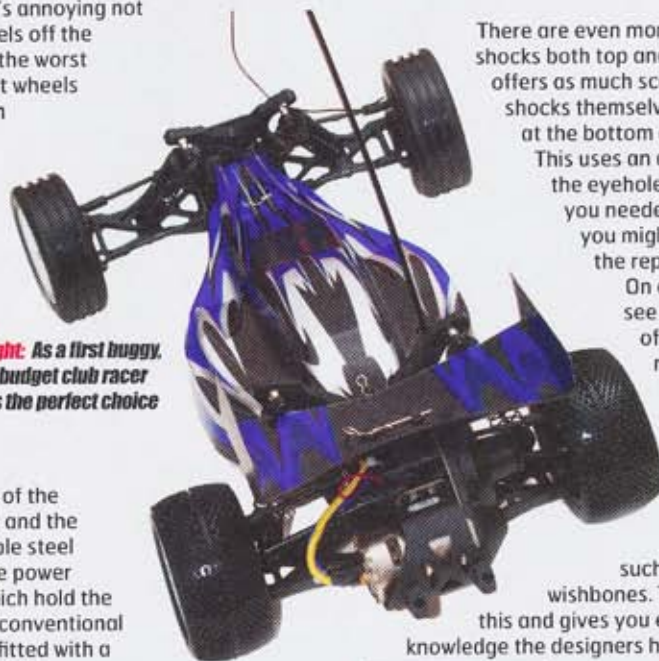
At the other end of the car is the classic rear-mounted motor and gearbox set-up, with lower wishbones of the same high quality plastics as the front and the upper suspension arms being adjustable steel turnbuckles. Dog bone shafts carry the power from the gearbox to the rear axles, which hold the wheels in place using a cross-pin and conventional Nyloc wheel nut. The gearbox itself is fitted with a twin-plate slipper clutch and a geared diff.

I was pleased to see that on this part of the car at least, some hex bolts are used to keep things together. I'm beginning to sound like a stuck record but what really shines through is the quality of the individual components: the plastics and metal fittings do not in any way feel cheap, and everything fits together really nicely with good tolerances between the individual components, the gearbox casings are a prime example of this.

Right: 1800 mAh may seem a small duration, but it's a starting point and higher duration packs are easy and cheap to get



Left: £99 gets you so little these days, but the FTX Edge gives you so much



There are even more options where you can mount the shocks both top and bottom, and overall the back-end offers as much scope for adjustability as the front. The shocks themselves are mounted with a pop-on ball cup at the bottom and an unusual screw fitting at the top. This uses an alloy mounting 'peg' that goes through the eyehole in the top of the shock. It means that if you needed to change shock absorbers in a hurry, you might be slowed down moving that peg to the replacement shocker.

On a similar note, I'd have preferred to see bolts or screws holding the bottom of the shocks to the wishbones with a more traditional captive rod end as my chubby, middle-aged fingers sometimes struggle with pop-on fittings.

Another good thing to note is that at various points around the Edge shims have been used to take away any slack or wobble in joints, such as between the rear uprights and the wishbones. That's a nice touch for a buggy like this and gives you extra confidence in the product in the knowledge the designers have really taken things seriously.



Above: Note the 'Bomb Hatch' sorry, bottom loading cell tray... I was proved wrong, it doesn't come open mid-flight!

Right: The front axles are captive, with bearings inserted into the wheels themselves, then retained by a bolt and washer



BOTTOM LOADER

You're probably getting the idea by now that I really like the Edge, without even having run it, and I do. It comes across as a well-made, well-designed piece of kit. But there's one thing that really makes it stand out from other buggies on the market at the moment. Instead of the usual method of fixing a battery in place from the top (and then putting the bodysell on) FTX have opted for a bottom-loading battery compartment. There's a hatch in the belly of the car, held in place by spring-loaded bolts, and you slot the pack in here.

The idea behind it is so that you don't have to take the body off to change packs. It's the same reason why the power switch for the car is mounted above the gearbox, right at the back of the chassis – so you can turn on and off without disturbing the body. Both great ideas, but whereas the switch idea doesn't appear to have any downsides, I have to admit to a slight niggling doubt about that belly hatch. I've got an image in my mind of it turning into some kind of bomb-bay door: launching the precious battery pack into space when the car takes-off over a big jump.

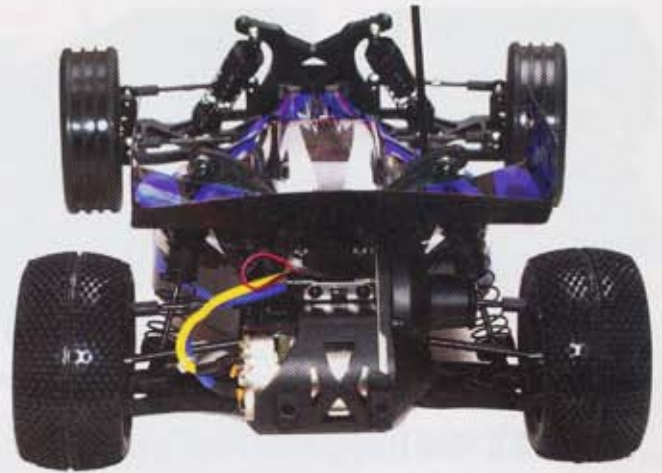
To be fair, the retaining hatch bolts are well sprung and I'm probably worrying unnecessarily and only the testing will show me how unfounded I am being.

The Edge comes ready to run (or race) and that means it's fitted with a full set of electronics. The speedo is an Etronix Probe Plus brushed unit, which is thankfully LiPo compatible (although this version of the car comes with a NiMH battery pack). Etronix are another respected part of the CML brand portfolio and it's nice to see some of their own branded gear in a low-price RTR buggy. I've used an Etronix Powerpal charger for over a year now and I've been impressed by how well made it is and its features for the price.

"everything fits together really nicely with good tolerances between the individual components, the gearbox casings are a prime example of this"



Above: A few screws later and the front-end was off... critical for trackside repairs and maintenance



Above: Traditional rear motor and gearbox 2WD layout, why go changing 30+ years of off road design?



Above: At the rear pins retain the axles in place and act as a firm location for the rear wheels to sit

SILVER CAN RACER

Even though the Edge is running a sealed-can 540 brushed motor the speedo is fitted with a cooling fan. Personally I've never had problems with heat when running a stock motor like this but at least it gives you the option to upgrade at some point. It also possibly links back to battery hatch design removing the need to take the body off in between heats. The speedo also comes with a power capacitor fitted, and this helps smooth out the power delivery and can prevent the electrics from dropping out or the motor from stalling when there's a lot of current drain on the system.

I had the issue myself last year while racing: after fitting a more powerful steering servo I found the motor was hesitating at certain points on track. One of the many helpful guys at the York club (thanks Matt) pointed out that it's a common problem but one that's easily solved by adding a small capacitor. A lot of racing-biased speedos have them ready fitted and it's good to see one here even if it may not be needed.

I'd have liked to see some way to disable reverse on it – the more basic Etronix Probe 12T unit does this but there are no set-up buttons on the Probe Plus. Disabling reverse gives you much more control and confidence in braking during a race; you're



Left: The brushless ready twin plate slipper allows the user to help protect the driveline, and adjust how power is fed to the rear wheels

Below: Note the spring-loaded retaining mechanism for the cell-retaining hatch

Above: FTX branded receiver offered great response and perfect range for club racing

“there’s one thing that really makes it stand out from other buggies on the market at the moment. Instead of the usual method of fixing a battery in place from the top (and then putting the bodyshell on) FTX have opted for a bottom-loading battery compartment”

not worrying about suddenly going into reverse and spinning out. And of course, you shouldn’t need to reverse with those lovely marshalls around.

The motor itself is an unlabelled silver can 540 with a built-in cooling fan. FTX rate it at 20,000 rpm but don’t actually state what turn it is, though I’d guess around the 20T mark. In other words, perfect for an R/C beginner and for the first step into club racing. The fact that there’s a brushless/LiPo version of the Edge available shows that the rest of the car can handle more power but not every new driver can. I’ve seen it in the flesh with new club members who struggle to cope with the speed of a brushless 2WD car, spinning out on every corner and hitting obstacles at high speed. A 540 may be slower but it’s still (in my opinion) a really decent way to get started in club racing.

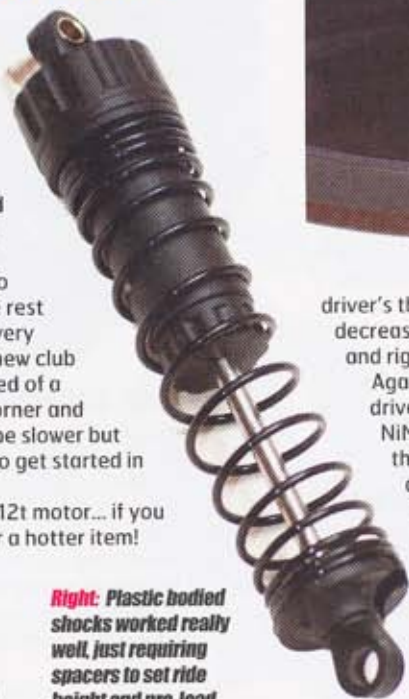
Don’t forget as the ESC is rated down to a 12t motor... if you want to go faster... swap the stock motor for a hotter item!

STEERING GROUP

The steering servo is another Etronix branded unit and although there are no details available for it. I’ve had a quick look on the Etronix website and it doesn’t match any of the servos in their range, although it’s hardly an issue in an RTR car. It links up to a servo saver that strangely doesn’t offer any adjustment at all, which is weird to my mind, as some other budget cars do.

I’ve said that one of my first impressions of the Edge was of how wide it is and that means there is plenty of room in the chassis to fit other electronics should you wish to upgrade later. The stock radio on this version is a 27 MHz AM item and the receiver is actually branded FTX, rather than Etronix. This may seem like old-technology to some but then again it keeps the cost down below the magic 100. At around £40 for an entry-level 2.4 GHz set, this is a future option, but you do, however, get an extra set of crystals to help prevent possible conflict with other drivers.

The transmitter is very ergonomic, with a decent foam grip on the wheel rather than the nasty plastic that some others have. It has end-point adjustments as well as trims, so you could reign in the top speed and steering throw for a younger or more nervous first time driver. It’s also got a dual-rate steering dial within easy reach of the



Right: Plastic bodied shocks worked really well, just requiring spacers to set ride height and pre-load



Above: Again a quality branded Etronix Probe ESC capable of running a 12T motor and LiPo safe to boot!

driver’s thumb, so you can increase or decrease the amount of overall (left and right) steering without having to look down during a race. Again thought has gone into the basic requirements any new driver will need. The Edge also comes with a Voltz 1800 mAh NiMH pack and charger, fitted with a Tamiya plug. I know the LiPo version of the car comes with Deans connectors, and as most of my cells do too, I swap the connectors and soldered on Deans all round. Even with a brushed motor I’ve managed to fry a Tamiya plug, so better safe than sorry. The charger is a basic wall mounted unit that charges at 500 mA, which works out at over three hours for a full charge. A Delta Peak charger (or even just another pack) would be a worthwhile first investment for any new driver. The bodyshell comes pre-printed and I think looks pretty good. One thing: the body and rear wing both come with a protective film covering that peels off. I didn’t notice this initially (I blame my eyesight) and they do look brighter once you’ve removed it!

GREAT MANUAL

Most RTR cars come with a decent instruction manual but the booklet that accompanies the Edge is one of the best I’ve seen. As well as plenty of set-up instructions it also has exploded diagrams not just for the whole car but for individual sections, including gearbox and steering assembly. It’s more like a proper set of instructions for a kit than an RTR manual.

“There’s also a full listing of all screw sizes, so you could ultimately replace these with hex bolts, bonus!”

Right: The steering servo proved fast enough for any driver, with bell-crank steering assembly neat and well tucked away from harm



One other good thing about the instructions is they list some rather nice option parts including carbon chassis sections, alloy suspension components and a set of rear CVDs. There's also a full listing of all screw sizes, so you could ultimately replace these with hex bolts, bonus!

The minute I got my hands on the Edge I wanted to take it racing and as luck would have it the new season at

York Off Road Club has just got underway. At York we race indoors on a mixture of carpet and polished gym-floor and the only way to get any grip is by using mini-pins or mini-spikes but I wasn't able to source a second set of wheels to fit new tyres to. Even so, I did take it for quite a lengthy spin in between heats over a couple of meetings and made sure I handed the controller to several other club members to gauge multiple opinions. At first I ran it with the shell sticker-less, so that it looked like a generic buggy and was almost like a blind testing for anyone having a go.

RACE SIMULATION

The shiny new stock tyres squealed like piglets on the slippery floor but that just added to the fun. It responds really well to whatever commands you give it and is dead easy to flick about, even in the air! It's a nimble little car that turns really quickly and I'm now even more desperate to get proper tyres on it.

The opinion of other club members, many of whom run some pretty costly 2WD machinery, was also very positive. I had people firing questions at me about the buggy left, right and centre, and the looks of astonishment when I told them the £99 price tag were un-missable. This isn't an exaggeration: at least one person suggested they should have bought one of these over their uber-deluxe chassis and that was



Left: Ergonomic and easy to use... the FTX pistol-grip transmitter even comes with two sets of crystals!

after just a quick test run in the pits and a few laps of the circuit!

Obviously the real proof of the pudding will be when I get it into a proper heat, and some spiked tyres on it. The signs are good, very good indeed. And I will report back in another issue of RRCi. Considering the sub £100 price tag, for a completely RTR car it's pretty mind-blowing. You could buy one of these and gradually add more serious components (like better, treaded shocks,

a brushless system and 2.4 GHz) when funds allow. Actually I feel a project coming on!

I've just put the bodyshell back on after having the car in various states of undress for a photo session and I've got to say I am really impressed with it. There are quirks that I'm not totally happy with, like the wheels but overall it's a really nice buggy for the money. It seems like there's never been as much choice for the beginner or someone on a lower budget and that can only be a good thing. I fall into the latter category and have raced a sub £200 4WD buggy for a year now and I'm loving every moment. To me, the FTX is everything the hobby should be, a decent club buggy, at a really decent price. You're onto a winner here CML, and not just on price... **RRCi**

"I've just put the bodyshell back on after having the car in various states of undress for a photo session and I've got to say I am really impressed with it"

TECHNICAL SPEC

REQUIRED TO COMPLETE
8 x AA batteries for transmitter

LIKES

How can anyone complain at a sub £100 price point?
12 turn motor limit LiPo compatible ESC
Brushless ready and very capable
Etronix branded components
Bolt-on performance options
Handling and ability in use

DISLIKES

Unique wheels restrict tyre choice
Mostly cross head hardware

CONTACT

www.cmldistribution.co.uk



Left: Keeping a low profile, the Edge went racing at York 'Incognito' to gauge opinions... and were they impressed or what!