



ASSOCIATED RC8 RACE SPEC RTR

BY STEVE BASS

WIN A WINNER!

RACE SPEC

Earlier in the year we reviewed the UK spec RC8 combo, packaged by CML Distribution, which included the excellent RB WS7 III engine with an RB manifold and EFRA homologated 2045 pipe. This is the car, which Neil Cragg won the BRCA National Rallycross championship with, not only at its first time of asking, but even before it was in full production!

It is therefore inevitable that it was just a question of time before Associated gave it the Race Spec treatment (hence the RS badge) and launched what is basically a very high specification ready to run 1/8th buggy. RTR kits are getting better and better in terms of being 'competition ready'. And the RC8 RS is no exception, so in true RRCi style we "put our money where our mouth is" and raced the box-stock RC8 RS at Baginton, to see if it proved capable of running a strong A-Final pace, but more of that later...

We would give the RC8 RS the usual RRCi thrash test for starters but after that we raced it for real. Just to add a little more interest to the proceedings we have decided to let my son Scott do the driving. Now, whilst he is no stranger to rallycross, he hasn't raced competitively since 2006 and is therefore just a little rusty. This should wake him up a bit!

RC8 Trade mark lower shock mounts



Pro-Start hand-held starter gun much better than pull-start



Pro 28 engine and AE 'outlaw' two chamber pipe combo works well



Ball raced steering and adjustable servo saver



Removable capacity limiter is attached to base of fuel tank

WHAT'S CHANGED?

Like most RTR kits these days, all the essential ingredients that you find on the 'Pro' (or in this case, Factory Team) versions, can be found on the RS. The main differences are a change in material. So, for example, no carbon fibre shock towers on the RS, but 3 mm black anodised alloy. Otherwise the design parameters are largely the same, and you still get the advantage of the lay-down design, negating the need for large, beefed up and vulnerable shock towers.

The 3 mm thick T7075 black anodised chassis also follows the FT layout. There's no centre diff spur gear cut out and the upper deck is machined for a low C of G in all the key areas. The side plates are quite narrow (and therefore strong) and the pre-painted bodyshell is an excellent fit, so it should be good at keeping the muck mainly on the outside.

The shocks have had some value engineering in the sense that composite materials are more widely used but they are still silky smooth in operation, and feature the same large volume compensating bladders and massive 4 mm shock shafts (although not nitrided) that you find further up the price scale.

The 3 mm thick black anodised steering arm is ball raced, and the right hand steering post features a standard design spring tensioned adjustable servo saver. The RS is equipped with black anodised steel turnbuckles at both ends, so you can dial in the geometry to any circuit, surface or driving style.

The differentials, clutch and transmission are all carried over from the RC8, which means that access for maintenance is quick and easy. The 4.30:1 drive ratio a feature, which works driver Richard Saxton was waxing lyrical about all through the development stage, means that you can look forward to almost instant get-up-and-go with lots of punch out of the tightest of corners. Both the drive shafts and high-speed propshafts are CVA type with captured pivot pins. We liked that feature on the FT version and it's great to see it carried over to the RS.

...AND WHAT HASN'T

You still get adjustable front and rear anti-roll bars, and adjustable biplane rear wing, 130 cc fuel tank (with splash guard) with the capacity limiter, bringing capacity down to a BRCA legal capacity of just 120 cc. The centre diff can be removed with just 4 screws and the top brace moulding provides additional protection from dirt/fuel getting onto the brakes. The brakes feature Associated's FFC (fully floating callipers) to prevent drag when the throttle is open.

EXCLUSIVE TO RS

Naturally, with this being a race-ready car, you get a pre-installed and plumbed-in engine, manifold and an outlaw two-chamber pipe. Stand-up AE servos are also fitted (metal geared S2008 for steering, and plastic geared S1903 throttle/brake, though an optional metal gear-set is available for the S1903 servo) and the radio box is pre-wired with an XP 3-channel 27 MHz AM receiver. The RS also comes with an XP3D pistol grip steer wheel radio transmitter, and a Pro-Start™ handheld engine starting gun powered by a standard 7.2 V Sub-C stick pack with Tamiya style connector.

Before we move on to the track aspect of our feature, let's just take a look at the XP3D transmitter. I haven't used this particular model before, and with it, Associated have certainly 'upped the anti' so far as what we might expect to find in an RTR kit. The LCD display shows the relevant settings when the unit is switched on. These include switch polarity for steering (ST), throttle (TH) and the third channel (AUX). ST and TH sub trim, plus end point adjustment for ST, TH and AUX. ARC (Adjust Rate Control) can be adjusted for ST, TH and AUX with an adjustment range of +100% ~ -100%. When adjustments are made, the values are shown clearly in large bold characters. The unit has a 10-model memory and the model number is therefore displayed on the LCD. The audible 'beep' default is set to ON, and whilst this can be turned off, there is no volume adjustment. Battery status is displayed in the form of a bar graph and also in figures. The XP3D is powered by 8 AA cells and features an external charging jack for those keen on installing rechargeable cells for life.



Raked angle shocks negate need for large, exposed shock tower



Three position steering arm



Rotor start equipped Pro 28 engine showed a good turn of speed



F1-style starting with easy access for hand held starter hex key



AE servos do good job steering and stopping the RS



Fibre brakes work well and require little torque



Comprehensive tool kit included, just fuel and batteries required



Only the flywheel is exposed under the 3 mm thick black anodised chassis



Our RS came with a pre-painted shell featuring the usual AE style red/white/blue patriotic striping over a glossy black background, which is quite attractive and far simpler than trying to paint it yourself. You also get a huge decal sheet if you want to adorn it with even more of the manufacturer's identity!

Finally the RS sits on white dish wheels mounted with AE branded tyres that I can only describe as a very close equivalent to an M2 compound Crimefighter. These will work on a multitude of surfaces including dirt, worn grass and AstroTurf.

SHAKE DOWN TIME

After carefully running in the AE 28 Pro engine, we fitted a fresh glow plug and ran the RS around the garden at race speed, gradually leaning out the engine and getting the RS to really stretch its legs.

On many RTR kits that we have reviewed, one area of weakness that

crosses up time and again is the servos just not being up to the job. This particularly affects the steering servos, which are often not capable of winding on full lock, or holding the steering on course as you track through a corner. As soon as I started to run the RS around the rear garden I soon discovered that the steering servo is certainly up to the job. The throttle/brake servo is just a standard servo, but we know from the RC8 FT test that the brakes are very powerful and do not tax the servo as much as some cars that we have tested. However, it is still just a standard servo, so the optional metal gear set would be highly recommended.

After this encouraging start, we looked forward to the following weekend where the RC8 would get its race debut. This was destined to be on the new dirt track at Baginton near Coventry, but the wet weather during the week would actually see us running on their AstroTurf track.

RACE DAY

Our chosen meeting was a round of the Coventry club's summer series, and despite some very early morning rain, the weather turned out to be sunny and breezy.

Much to the disbelief of many on-lookers, we ran the RS exactly as it comes out of the box. After the first qualifying run we were second overall, and Scott followed this with FTD in each of the next three rounds, with the RS being the only car to put in 13 lap qualifiers.

During this time the only modifications we made to the RS were moving the rear shocks inwards by one hole, and winding off some of the droop as the grip came up. The car was very forgiving and easy to drive. It flew the jumps well and nailed the landings with ease. The Pro 28 engine also gave a good account of itself. Not only did it pick up cleanly and strongly in the infield but, it wasn't embarrassed by some much more expensive machinery on the long straight!

So, with great expectation I put the car down on the front of the grid for the final, but it was clear that something had suddenly gone wrong as the race got underway. The car crawled around for one lap and came slowly into the pit lane. The throttle/brake servo was chattering away on any throttle setting between neutral and full throttle, making the car virtually undrivable! A disappointing end to an otherwise enjoyable day's racing, for the sake of a metal gear set which is high on my shopping list before our next outing.

SUMMING UP

As RTR rallycross kits go, the RC8 RS isn't cheap, but there again it is perhaps closer to its pro-level big brother than any other comparable buggy. And as our experiment has proved, you get what you pay for! It is therefore a very competent piece of equipment and should suit both the beginner and keen club racer alike.



Right: XP3D radio transmitter has surprisingly high specification, LCD on Tx makes radio set up as simple as 1-2-3

WIN THIS BUGGY!
TURN TO P44 NOW!

QUICK SPEC

Class: 1/8th 44WD Off Road Buggy
Type: RTR Nitro
Manufacturer: Associated Electrics Inc.
Price: £439.99 (ARR)

WHAT YOU GET

- 4WD 3 diff 6 CVA transmission
- 28 Pro nitro engine, manifold and pipe
- Pre-painted bodyshell plus decal sheet
- Steering, throttle/brake servos
- 4-cell receiver harness
- Wheels and pre-mounted tyres
- 27 MHz receiver and XP3D pistol grip radio Tx
- Pre-Start hand-held starter gun
- Tool kit
- 600 ml fuel bottle
- Glow Starter

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED

- Fuel: Byron Race 25% nitro fuel
- Charger: Prolux DigiPeak charger
- Batteries: Radio Tx GP2700 AA NiMH
- Radio Rx-Venom 1600 mAh NiMH 6 V
- Starter Gun: FTX Intellect 7.2 V NiMH
- Glow Starter: GP D size 1.5 V NiMH

DISLIKES

- Captive nuts in mouldings
- Radio switch not sealed
- No info on kit diff/shock oils

LIKES

- Maintenance friendly
- Competitive without need for upgrades
- Performance (on ground and in air)
- Captive CV pins
- Metric hardware

CONTACT

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www.cmldistribution.co.uk

We didn't get our fairytale ending on race day, but we were content to have set FTD and taken pole position in the A-Final, and we can only surmise that it would have been a very different outcome if it hadn't been for the standard throttle servo letting us down. I guess we paid the price for all the repeated hard braking on a high traction AstroTurf track.

However, despite this, the RC8 RS is the best RTR rallycross car that I have reviewed, and my son is keen to give it another outing once we have the standard throttle/brake servo sorted out.

Now that you've read this thoroughly you are armed with all the knowledge to answer some questions, on the competition page that follows and see if you can be the lucky winner of this amazing buggy! **RRCI**

WIN IT!

Our feature article is also the basis for our free to enter competition! Yes, you could be the lucky winner of this fabulous prize as CML have generously donated a second, brand new car for us to give away! All you have to do is read on, then complete and return the entry form at the end of the feature. There are also runner-up prizes of a RC10B4 RS and RC18T RTR up for grabs.

The winner will receive a factory built RC8 RS, complete with a powerful AE .28-Pro big block engine installation, servos and radio receiver, all ready for action. Just like our review kit the prize kit will also include an AE XP3D steer wheel radio transmitter, a Pro-Start handheld engine starter, tool kit, fuel bottle, and a glow starter. All you the winner needs before you go racing are fuel and batteries.