



Blaze of Glory

Small 1:18 scale cars are the new black in the world of RC fashion. They're available in trucks, touring cars and now off road buggies. The latest is from FTX and comes in the shape of the ready-to-run Blaze

It's a wet, cold, dark winter evening and you want to be out driving your shiny new 1:18 scale IC powered buggy, but it's not really the conditions for it. So how can you satisfy your driving urges and still remain warm and dry? By getting out your new electric powered 1:18 replica of your 1:8 scale buggy and running it indoors of course. And that's exactly the kind of scenario that must have inspired the designers at FTX to come up with the idea for their latest creation, the Blaze. FTX refers to its new small creation as a 'Mini Cross' buggy and it could be the next big thing in small scale off road racing.

The model's available as an almost ready-to-run kit that just requires the addition of your own choice of radio gear, or in completely ready-to-run form as tested here.

CHASSIS DESIGN

The Blaze is built on a good quality plastic moulded tub chassis that offers a very stiff and strong foundation for the rest of the car. It has a central spine running along its entire length, which gives it good rigidity and means the car doesn't need a top deck to stiffen it. All the screw holes on the bottom are countersunk so the model has a completely smooth and obstruction free underside.

The front and rear gearboxes are bolted to the chassis and each contains a geared differential. The gearboxes also provide the anchor for the front and rear wishbones. Once again these are high quality plastic moulded items that are quite beefed up and strong looking with extra moulded ridges on their edges to help withstand impacts. The front and rear suspension top links are also

made from strong looking plastic and threaded rod, which makes for easy adjustment. The same plastic used for all the other components is also used for the dogbone style driveshafts all round. How strong these are and how well they'll stand up to abuse remains to be seen.

The front and rear gearboxes are joined by a central alloy driveshaft, which is anodised blue. Other blue anodised alloy parts on the car include a front stiffening plate, front and rear shock brackets, steering link and rear hinge pin brace. The shaft driven four-wheel drive transmission is very free and helps to give the Blaze its good grip, quick acceleration and high top speed.

Given that everything else on the car has been made adjustable, it's a bit of a shame that the steering arms are fixed length. This limits

any tuning possibilities for the steering and means you're stuck with the front wheels running parallel. Replacing these with some threaded turnbuckles and ball joints shouldn't be too difficult if you want the extra adjustability.

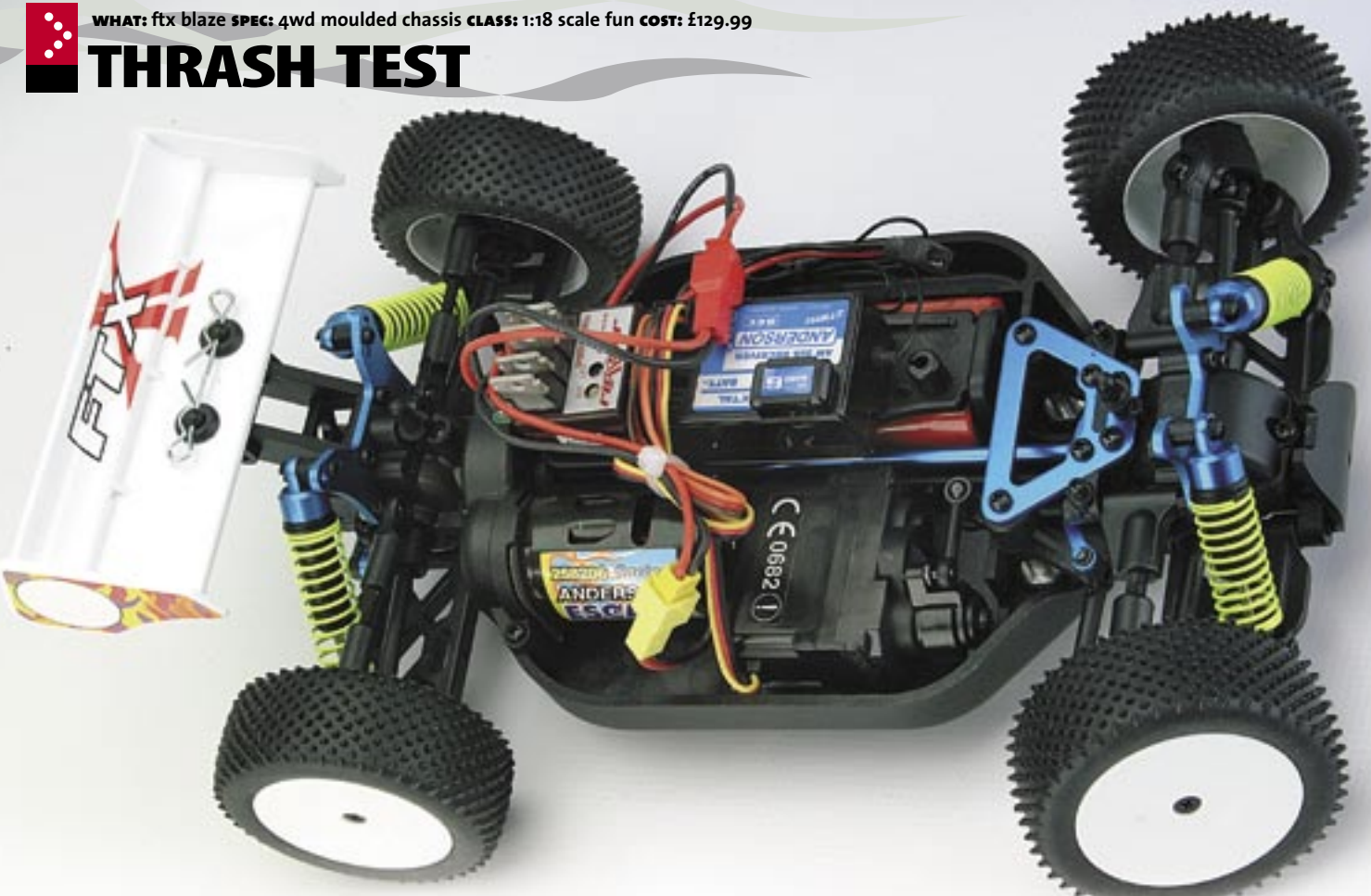
SUSPENSION AND HANDLING

Suspension on the Blaze is taken care of by four small plastic bodied shocks that have blue alloy tops and are fitted with medium rate yellow springs all round. The shocks are filled with medium weight shock oil and feel very smooth in operation. Ride height is adjusted using small plastic spacers on the shocks, some spare ones are included in the kit. The shocks attach to the wishbones in either of two holes at both front and rear while the blue alloy shock brackets have a



WHAT: ftx blaze SPEC: 4wd moulded chassis CLASS: 1:18 scale fun COST: £129.99

THRASH TEST



Long travel shocks ensure the Blaze handles the rough stuff with ease

WHAT WE USED

Electric Kit

Transmitter: Anderson MRX4 (kit)
Receiver: Anderson 27MHz (kit)
Servo: Anderson MRX416 (kit)
Speedo: Acorns Roxster (kit)
Motor: Anderson Escape 380 motor (kit)
Battery: 7.2V 600mAh stick pack (kit)



Fixed length linkages are perfect for newcomers



Pin spike tyres on white dished rims are perfect for the scaled down buggy image

HOPPING IT UP

If a new model's going to be successful in today's tough and ultra competitive RC marketplace the one thing it needs is decent backup and some hop-up options. Luckily for the Blaze it's being distributed in the UK by CML who are renowned for their excellent spares backup and for stocking a huge range of hop-up options for many different cars. They already have Blaze hop-up options in stock and will soon be carrying performance-enhancing parts including replacement graphite items. Metal driveshafts and adjustable steering arms may well be other items on the stock list. These are sure to help wring extra performance out of the car and make it popular among more serious mini racers.



The size of the Blaze is easier to see when compared to the radio that it comes with

The FTX package includes a steering wheel radio, battery and mains charger



Mains unit makes charging the battery very easy

choice of two mounting holes at the front and three at the back which all add to the buggy's adjustability and handling tuning options. The standard setup works well and offers a good balance between rear grip and sharp steering.

RADIO AND ELECTRICS

The clever design touches continue under the shell where placement of the radio gear has been well thought out. Surprisingly for a small-scale car it's fitted with a full size steering servo and quite a large receiver. Although

they fit fine, it would have made life even easier if the designers had incorporated some of the smaller size radio gear that's now available. This is more than made up for, however, by the use of a tiny electronic speed controller. Branded a 'Roxster', it



ON TEST

The FTX Blaze is at home on many different surfaces, both indoors and out, and we tried the buggy indoors first on some shiny laminate flooring. The little mini pin tyres work really well on this surface, offering bags of grip and allowing the car to handle very predictably. This is similar to the kind of flooring found in a village or school hall, which are the kinds of places where small clubs tend to race during the winter months. This makes the Blaze an ideal candidate for indoor club racing and having a few of these running together would provide a lot of close racing and very fast fun.

The next test surface was office carpet. Once again the combination of mini pin tyres and smooth, well-controlled suspension helped the Blaze feel right at home in this environment. It was able to dodge bookcases and waste paper bins with aplomb, and despite one close encounter with a filing cabinet while jumping some box files, it survived the workplace jungle well and came out in one piece. We then took the Blaze outside into the big wide world to let it stretch its legs and see what it could do in some open space. The little mini pin tyres worked their magic once again on

most outdoor surfaces including tarmac, gravel and short grass. The car still seemed quite fast outside, a testament to the powerful little 380-size motor and 7.2v battery pack. But you still have to remember the car is only small and some obstacles it can come up against outside can be a bit big for it. For its small size the Blaze is quite strong, but you do have to respect scale and keep it away from large solid objects if you want to avoid big repair bills. Used sensibly in the right places this little buggy goes really well and is a joy to drive.

“We dodged bookcases and waste bins with aplomb and emerged in one piece, despite a close encounter with a filing cabinet!”

features one-touch setup and even has a reverse function, very handy when running the Blaze around your front room. The receiver and speedo both cleverly fit on top of the battery pack retaining bar.

The little Anderson Escape 380-size electric motor sits snugly in the back of one side of the tub chassis just behind the steering servo while a cut-down 600mAh 7.2v stick battery pack sits in the other. A slow mains powered charger for the battery pack is supplied with the car.

The placement of all the electric components gives the car good weight balance in all directions and as it's all fitted low down in the tub chassis the car benefits from a low centre of gravity too.


As is the case with many of today's ready-to-run cars, the Blaze is supplied complete with a wheel and trigger style transmitter. While it's not a top of the range unit, it's quite a good looking handset that's comfortable to hold and

features the usual range of trim and steering travel adjustment. It operates on the 27MHz band and works well enough once you get used to it. We cheated a little bit on our test and fitted the supplied crystal in a stick radio so that we could give the car a proper drive with the style of transmitter we're used to. This is made perfectly possible by the FTX's use of standard radio gear in the Blaze.

TYRES AND BODYSHELL

One of the things that helps the Blaze to work so well on so many different surfaces are the excellent standard fit mini pin tyres. These are fitted on dish style wheels, are the same width all round and have tall, stiff sidewalls. They are just the right width for the scale of the car and offer a decent amount of grip on most surfaces.

One of the other things that makes the proportions of the Blaze look just right and very like a miniaturised 1:8 scale buggy is the well designed

bodyshell. It's a nicely moulded, smooth looking design that includes a cut out at the rear end for the speed controller FETs to stick out of and aid cooling. It's just one of the many small design features that go together to make the car look and feel like a lot of time and attention has been spent on it. A very solid one-piece moulded rear wing is fixed high up at the rear of the buggy on a very solid mounting. 

CONTACT:

CML Distribution Ltd
Saxon House
Saxon Business Park
Hanbury Road
Bromsgrove
B60 4AD

Tel: 01527 575349
Fax: 01527 575536

E-mail: sales@cmldistribution.co.uk
Website: www.cmldistribution.co.uk

SPECIFICATION

Model: FTX Blaze RTR
Scale: 1:18
Class: Off-road
Application: Fun
Format: Pre-built
Power: Electric
Chassis: Aluminium
Drivetrain: 4WD
Transmission: Shaft
Differentials: Gear
Shocks: Coil over
Bearings/Bushes: Bearings



TECHNICAL DATA

LENGTH	255MM
WIDTH	156MM
HEIGHT	95MM
WHEELBASE	166MM
FRONT TRACK	133MM
REAR TRACK	137MM
WEIGHT	700G

SUMMARY

THE BLAZE IS A GREAT LITTLE CAR THAT'S BEEN VERY WELL DESIGNED AND MANUFACTURED. THE READY-TO-RUN EXAMPLE WE TESTED WAS ALSO EXTREMELY WELL BUILT AND READY TO GO STRAIGHT OUT OF THE BOX. THE LITTLE 380 MOTOR AND 600MAH BATTERY PACK GIVE THE BUGGY A SURPRISING TURN OF SPEED AND JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF POWER THAT THE TINY ELECTRONIC SPEEDO HANDLES VERY SMOOTHLY. THE MINI PIN TYRES GRIP WELL ON A RANGE OF SURFACES AND THE STANDARD SUSPENSION SETUP CAN COPE WITH MOST SITUATIONS. IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOME GREAT SMALL-SCALE BUGGY FUN THE BLAZE IS HARD TO BEAT FOR THE PRICE AND IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

VERDICT

-  WELL DESIGNED AND BUILT / EXCELLENT QUALITY
- GOOD VALUE
-  FIXED LENGTH STEERING ARMS
- PLASTIC DRIVESHAFTS

RACER RATING ★★★★★