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R/C Report

Inexpensive Doesn't Mean Cheap

The new Electrix Circuit offers quality radio control at department store prices

Horizon Hobby is introducing a new brand to its lineup of radio control products. The brand has been named Electrix and will consist of a series of radio control surface vehicles and accessories aimed at a price point that matches products offered by department stores. In a challenging economic atmosphere, being able to compete with the “big box” stores in terms of pricing yet offering a true hobby quality product, complete with factory warranty and service backing, will be most welcome by hobby store owners.

The first release in this new series is the Circuit, a 1/10 scale, electric-powered stadium truck. The first thing that a customer sees will be the large, colorful box. The front of the box is eye-catching and is loaded with attention-grabbing graphics. The box bottom shows the vehicle chassis and explains the vehicle features in detail. Each of the remaining four panels is informative. One of the end panels tells consumers the color of the enclosed vehicle and which two frequency channels are included.

Inside is a completely assembled vehicle and every-

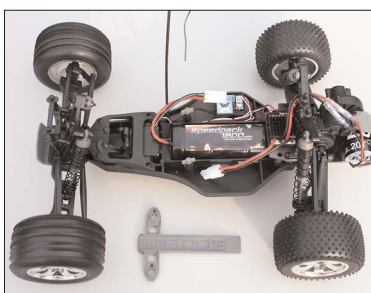


thing else a purchaser will need to operate the vehicle. The included transmitter is a basic wheel design that operates on 27 MHz. Although basic, features such as function reversing, steering rate, steering trim and throttle trim are part of the unit. Features like these are what places the Electrix line a step above typical department store offerings. Also included with the Circuit are a Dynamite brand

1800 MAh six cell NiMH battery and battery charger. There are only a couple of assembly steps needed by customers before running the vehicle. The transmitter antenna needs to be attached to the transmitter, and the receiver antenna needs to be fed through the antenna tube. Other than



Everything needed is included with the Electrix Circuit. The chassis is a molded composite material and appears quite “beefy” in design. Although two sheets of decals are included with the package, the vehicle comes with eye-appealing graphics already applied.



installing the batteries, this is all that is required.

The chassis of the Circuit is manufactured from a nylon composite material, quite “beefy” in design, and it has proven to be durable. The battery tray is molded in place and uses a unique strap with a half-twist lock to hold the battery to the chassis. For the sake of simplicity,

the vehicle was kept at two-wheel drive but uses a tunable “slipper” clutch transmission and differential. The independent suspension incorporates shock absorbers that are long in travel and oil filled. Designed to replicate a stadium truck the vehicle is shod with “pin” tires in the rear and ribbed tires up front. For looks, all four wheels are chrome plated.

Lastly, the Circuit is powered by a Dynamite 20 turn-brushed motor and uses a Dynamite electronic speed control. The chassis is capped with an aggressive-looking body available in either red with black trim, or gray with blue trim. A full complement of decals is included, but the body comes heavily decal'd from the factory. Personalizing the body was not done as it would have required removal of the already good looking factory markings.

The instruction manual is 56 pages long and at first had me wondering about complicated details, but it was quickly ascertained the manual is printed in four languages, English, German, French and Italian. There are 13 pages in English, a much more reasonable length for an entry-level vehicle. For customers who don't like to read, there are illustrations that supplement the written instructions, and these are completely descriptive. Included as part of the instruction manual are maintenance tips, such as the recommended interval before rebuilding the shocks and tuning the slipper clutch on the transmission. The last three pages are exploded views that include parts listings and a handy troubleshooting guide.

Driving the Circuit is a whole lot of fun. The speed the Circuit operates at is ideal for an entry-level vehicle. It's fast enough to be exciting but slow enough so the beginner can keep the vehicle under control. The vehicle is large, and this makes it easy to see, especially for those with aging eyes. Traveling on a blacktop street surface then transitioning to sand or gravel doesn't seem to have any effect on the speed of the Circuit. Driving in tall wet grass does noticeably slow the vehicle, but this is to be expected.

From the factory, the chassis is quite close to being in



There is plenty of power and traction on tap to climb the wall of a skateboard ramp without any difficulty.



The Electrix Circuit is fast enough to be exciting yet slow enough that new modelers won't become discouraged.

tune. Steering is quick and surprisingly precise. Slides on sand, gravel and even warm blacktop are fun and, with only a little practice, completely predictable. It would have been nice if a selection of pre-load spacers for the springs would have been included. These would allow fine tuning of the chassis for different driving styles, but this might only complicate an already complete, ready to drive, package.

The Electrix Circuit was designed not only to be simple to run but is also a true example of less-is-more aesthetics. The chassis is durable, and the two-wheel drive transmission means fewer parts to wear out

or break. These are examples of what makes for a solid vehicle a customer can appreciate. It also translates into less hassle and fewer things customers have to worry about as they learn radio control vehicles.

While the included battery charger is okay for an entry-level unit, I feel that recommending a better battery charger to your customers would be warranted. The included charger is most commonly referred to as a “wall wart” and has a 300MAh output. By dividing the battery rating of 1800MAh by the charger output, that means that six-hour charge times are to be expected. Nothing will discourage a potential young modeler faster than 15

minutes of fun followed by a six-hour recharge cycle. Either the Dynamite Vision Peak 2 AC/DC #DYN4044 or the Dynamite Prophet Plus AC/DC #DYN4046 would be excellent choices. Both cost less than \$40 each and can quickly charge batteries into the 4500MAh range, the maximum capacity battery Electrix recommends for the vehicle.

Other than the charger and, of course, extra battery packs, there isn't much a customer needs to add to his Circuit. At 1/10 scale this is a large vehicle, so in size alone there is a strong perception of value.

The vehicle is a good performer, especially considering the price and the peace of mind that comes with full factory support. There will be hop-up parts, such as adjustable shocks and stronger motors, available in the future, but in its stock form the product value for the dollar is difficult to beat. **HM**