



Dennis McFarlane

On the Surface

Aquacraft Models RIO EP

Looking fast out of the box is sure to make this electric boat a winner



When I received the Aquacraft RIO EP for review, my first thoughts were to hold the boat until the spring thaw when boats once again started to move in my local Midwest market. Having done boat reviews in the past several issues of *Hobby Merchandiser*, it seemed like another boat review so soon was not warranted. However, after checking with several dealers at iHobby Expo this year to ascertain what has been selling in different markets, I found that entry-level electric boats were having a surge of Christmas sales. One dealer told me his boat sales generally doubled during the Christmas season. This was surprising, I suppose I have a tendency to focus on the market where I live, and cold temperatures and frozen ponds pretty much keep boat sales to a minimum. However, boat sales are increasing, even doubling during the holidays in other areas. Hence, another boat review is in order.

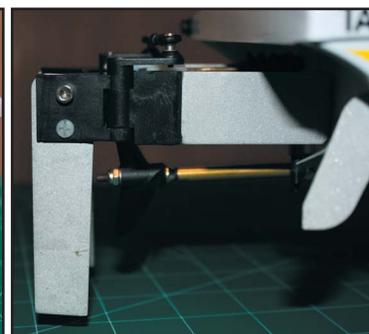
Aquacraft Models' RIO EP is exactly what the name implies—another boat in the popular RIO line and electric powered. The molded plastic hull measures about 25-1/2 inches long and 6-3/8 inches wide. The boat is powered by the 550-size RIO



The interior of the boat is well laid out with the receiver, steering servo and ESC all contained in a separate waterproof radio box. Shown is an 8.4 volt hump pack battery, which is held in place by hook-and-loop straps.



Twin rudders not only look good but provide for precise steering. Items such as trim plates, turn fins and the rudders can all be polished if the customer is interested in racing.



brushed can motor with a cooling jacket installed from the factory. This is a nice touch, as electric-powered boats require a cooling jacket for longevity. To have this already installed mean there's one less item for a neophyte boat

owner to worry about. The instruction manual suggests the use of either a 7.2-volt six-cell or an 8.4-volt seven-cell battery pack. Figuring this boat was intended for the novice, our trip to Lombard Lagoon, the local boat pond, included an Onyx 7.2-volt pack of a 2000mah rating. It was a late fall day, and the normally busy park was empty except

for a few straggling geese.

Installing the battery pack is simplicity in itself. The battery tray is not hidden but has very easy access. The battery is held in place by two hook-and-loop-style straps and is more than secure enough for the speeds this boat travels.

The included Tactic 2.4 GHz wheel-style transmitter was turned on and the onboard battery connected to the speed control. Once all

the functions were checked for proper directional movement, the boat was placed in the water. Cindy began to drive the boat around the pond. I had initially set the steering rate at slightly less than half the available rate. With boats, especially in cool weather, it's better to have too little rudder control than too much and end up flipping the boat in a turn before becoming used to the way it handles. Almost immediately Cindy requested more steering input, so the rate was turned up on the transmitter without stopping the boat. At about 3/4 available throw, Cindy felt that the boat handled properly for a deep-vee hull. The idea behind a quick turn in a deep-vee is to get the boat on its side so it will slice through the water. In comparison, with a tunnel hull a flat turn is desired.

Powered by 7.2 volts, the Aquacraft RIO looks like it is moving much faster than it really is. The hull kicks up an impressive wake and rooster tail, giving the appearance of real speed. Even though with the lower voltage battery pack, the boat looks like it's moving at an aggressive rate while still very easy to control. Turns, both left and right, are easy. And once the steering rate is properly set, the hull grooves in the turns with no tendency to flip out or roll over.

Like all instruction manuals included with Aquacraft Models, the one for the RIO EP is complete. The cover lists warnings—not to scare a potential customer but to let him know what is expected before attempting to run the boat. These warnings are all pretty much common sense but are covered before the consumer proceeds any farther in the manual.

Beyond the initial purchase, you need four AA batter-



At speed the RIO EP kicks up an impressive wake. Even so, once trimmed, the RIO EP remained stable with no tendency to roll over or flip out of a turn.



The RIO EP is a quality boat for either an entry level modeler or a customer who wants to have some quiet fun. Good looks and presence on the water make this boat a winner.

ies for the transmitter, a 7.2-volt onboard battery, and a charger for the onboard battery. Listed in the extra supplies are a lawn chair and a cooler with ice and soda. I had to grin when I saw these items, but anyone who has been to a race knows how valuable they can be.

Both the International Model Power Boat Association and the North American Model Boat Association have classes for electric powered boats. The Aquacraft RIO EP qualifies to run in both organizations. With a little detail work, such as polishing the rudders and turn fins along with using an 8.4-volt battery pack, the RIO would be race competitive.

The Aquacraft Models RIO EP is slightly larger than an average entry-level plastic hull boat, which gives it good presence in the water. The boat is easy to control and once trimmed grooves quite nicely, making successful operation easy for an entry-level boater.

Included with this boat are an extra propeller and a roll of tape for sealing the radio box if future repairs will be needed. Few additional items are needed, although I would suggest having a battery charger with the capability to charge both 7.2- and 8.4-volt battery packs. The lower voltage is perfect for younger, supervised children who need a slower boat to stay out of trouble, but everyone else is going to be looking for the speed that the 8.4-volt battery will provide.

We had a lot fun running this boat. The RIO EP is designed to

have the appearance of a full-sized offshore boat like those frequently seen in south Florida. When the day was over I found myself humming the theme from *Miami Vice*. **HM**