

HM Review

Jeff Troy

AirBorne Models Spot-On 50 ARF

Here's an easy flying, rock-solid model for intermediate precision aerobatics pilots.



Specifications

- Wingspan: 53.5 inches
- Area: 538 square inches
- Length: 57 inches
- Weight: 5 pounds, 3 ounces
- RC: 4-channel w/five servos
- Power: .52-.72 4-stroke glow

ARF Features

- Factory-built components
- Laser-cut wood construction
- Factory covered in ToughLon
- Fiberglass cowl and pants
- Hardware and fastener kits
- Control horns, rods and links
- 14-page instruction manual

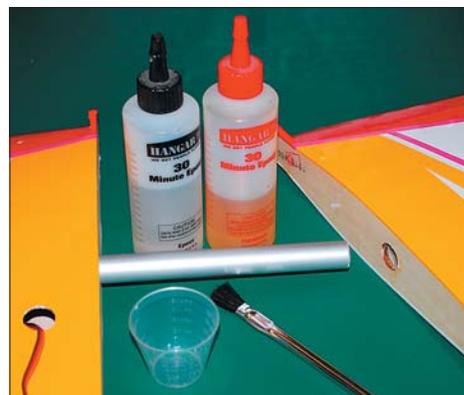
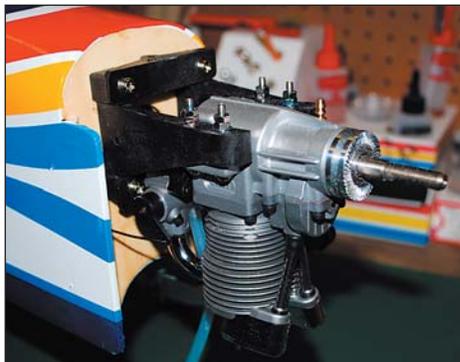
Jeff Troy went slightly out of the engine range with a Saito FA-82. Case size is similar to Saito 72. There were no problems, and the engine proved to be a good match for the model.

My editorial responsibilities get me an almost unlimited number of opportunities to fly an incredible variety of models. I'll often visit my club sites or Brandon Wright's private flying site with a collection of airplanes ranging from large-scale, gasoline-powered fighters and four-stroke 3D aerobats to entry-level park models with brushed motors and NiCd packs. While all this is a lot of fun, the constant shift in airplane type and RC system differences make it difficult for me to become truly proficient in any one style. As an old-school sailplane guy with a bender for pre-World War I aeroplanes, the idea of becoming a skilled precision aerobatics pilot is almost comical. Still, I suppose I'd like to be able to do it.

Learning to fly 3D maneuvers is a riot, and I've flown dozens of excellent models that make me look pretty good. While 3D may be the ultimate challenge in aerobatic gyrations, it's pretty tough to beat a good "pattern" ship for perfecting one's skills in precision aerobatics.

My first RC airplane was a Kwik-Fli III, designed by Phil Kraft and kitted by Top Flite in the USA and Graupner in Germany. A basic sport model by today's standards, it was a world champion in its era.

"Pattern ships" have evolved from boxy, constant-chord, high-dihedral models to taper-wing, dolphin-headed machines of grace and beauty, and such a model is the Spot-On 50 from Chinese manufacturer The World Models, exclusively distributed in the USA by AirBorne Models in California. I was looking for a model that would fly those big, wide loops and slow rolls, and give me a chance to think and breathe my way through each one. The spot-On 50 looked like the right kind of model. This 53.3-inch span at just under five and a half pounds with a four-stroke engine proved to be just what I needed.



Rugged joiner is an aluminum tube. Mate panels with 30-minute epoxy.

Assembling the Spot-On 50 goes quickly. The two wing panels slide over an aluminum tube joiner, the stabilizer and fin fit into the fuselage with no special adjustments needed, and everything else about getting the model ready is neatly engineered. The Spot-On 50 is covered in TWM ToughLon polyester film, with all the decorations factory applied. A factory painted fiberglass cowl and wheel pants are also included.

The fiberglass cowl comes packaged inside a clear plastic, two-piece dummy cowl. The clear parts are used to locate the cutouts for the muffler, high and low needles, fueling valve and glow access. Once the clear cowl is correct, simply trace the openings onto the fiberglass part. The result is a perfect set of cutouts.



Perfect cowl cutouts are possible thanks to the clear plastic dummy cowl that comes with the kit. When the clear cowl is right, just trace the openings onto the factory-painted, fiberglass cowl. Complete hardware for the pull-pull rudder is included.

I chose a Saito FA-82 four-stroke, which is a little outside the manufacturer's power range. A call to Fai Chan at AirBorne got an "okay," and that judgement proved correct, even if something of an understatement. I use five JR standard digital servos, an 100mAh battery and a Spektrum AR6200 2.4GHz receiver and remote receiver with my JR 12X transmitter.

Engine and RC installation is a pleasure. Servo bays are sized correctly, holes for the control horn screws come drilled, and the linkage parts are of better-than-average quality. An adjustable engine mount is included, and even the mounting screws are in the hardware kit. A fuel tank and plastic spinner are also included, so my only additions were fuel line and a Kwik-Fill fueling valve.

surface throws, it's easy to keep the straight lines straight and the curves wide and accurate. The speed range is good, too, with plenty of top end — without being over the top — and a low end that shows no threat of tip stall.

I have my expo set at 20 percent at full rate, 25 percent at mid rate (80 percent), and 30 percent at low rate (65 percent). So far, this model has been so "design conceptually correct" that I've yet to flip a rate switch. The factory callouts are fine, and the airplane needs no more.

Well, I'm still no pattern champion, but I am getting better. I still think I can better relate to spoilers on a sailplane wing or birdlike wing warping on a Bleriot more than the accuracy of ailerons, but if someone really wants to improve his or her precision aerobatics piloting skills, the TWM Spot-On 50 is an excellent choice. **HM**



Spot-On 50 is a smooth performer, agile but extremely stable and predictable at all points in its speed range.