

REVIEW

# Rage Aqua Dart

Feed 'em the bait first, then set the hook.



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The spending habits of the consuming public have changed dramatically in the past few years. It's very rare that you have a first timer enter your store and plop down several thousand dollars for a top of the line camera equipped drone. Today's buying public is very cautious in their spending habits. People now like to start slowly, then ramp up in small steps before they will begin spending serious money on their chosen hobby.

For reasons such as this dealers need to inventory more basic and lesser expensive items to lure the customers in. In years past these would have been thought as more toy-like items than hobby quality, but that gap has narrowed to the point where it isn't always so easy to distinguish the two. Times change and to stay profitable dealers need to change with the times.

Boats have always been a rather narrow segment of the industry but in certain months of the year they perform well. In the more northern climates as the summer dawns boats will once again begin to move off the shelves. Dealers need to have inexpensive entry level products to draw people into the hobby of boating. As mentioned, consumers and their cash are not easily separated, and when it does happen it is because they feel they are getting

a quality product for the amount of money invested.

Rage has a line of boats that fits this category to a tee. The Aqua Dart is an easy and affordable way to enter the world of RC boating. Packaged as a complete Ready-to-Run product, everything needed except four AA batteries for the transmitter is included in the package (this is clearly stated on the box).

At 10 inches long and 3.75 inches in beam, the Aqua Dart is by no means a large boat, but it is rather sophisticated in construction. The molded ABS hull is a one piece unit, so accidental impacts won't cause a split seam, which could be catastrophic. The hatch is a single piece that rests in a thick rubber gasket for sealing and is secured mechanically. Mounted inside the hull are a water-cooled brushed motor, receiver/ESC combo unit and a



*Closing the gap between more toy like offerings and hobby quality products, the Aqua Dart is not a bad little boat at all. It is well manufactured, includes a nice set of electronics, and it performs quite admirably, especially for a first time entry level purchaser who may not be ready to shell out the big bucks for an upper end marine product.*

small servo driving the rudder. The electronics are described as waterproof, but that doesn't mean the Aqua Dart is a submarine, yet even after a few hard rolls, and a little water in the hull, everything continued to work perfectly, something that is very important to both a dealer and consumer. To make a

customer a repeat customer he absolutely must enjoy his products and no dealer likes to deal with a disgruntled customer who feels he's wasted his money.

While charging the 7.4V 360mAh Li-ion via the now stan-

standard USB connection the instruction manual was read. Nothing really stood out, but I did notice where the box photos had a small flag mast attached to the hull's transom, but nothing was mentioned in the instructions. The mast is located under the display stand and it must be installed. The hole for the mast penetrates into the hull and without the mast this becomes an easy point for water to enter the equipment bay. In the same bag as the mast is an extra propeller and a six point wrench for performing the all important shaft maintenance. For proper performance and longevity, shaft maintenance can never be stressed enough and for this reason the manual devotes the better part of a full page to servicing the drive shaft.

One thing that really impressed me about the Aqua Dart, especially considering its entry level status, is the full-size wheel transmitter. To build the interest of a potential long-term modeler this is so much better than a game controller. Right from the start a purchaser feels he is operating a real hobby product and not a toy. Even though the transmitter is rather basic it still has some nice features. Things such as dual rate steering (called beginner and advanced in the separate transmitter operation manual) steering reverse and trim, and throttle reverse are all standard. The transmitter is the right size and has just the right amount of heft. Rage could not have made a better choice when it was decided to feature a full-size, hobby quality, transmitter in the Aqua Dart package.

With all of the niceties out of the way it is time to put this little boat in the water. Under low throttle the steering trim was adjusted until the boat was running nice and straight. Now it was time to put the boat through its paces. The best description is spirited. The boat is plenty fast, especially for the crowd it is aimed at and when in high rate, the steering is really quick. It's nothing to bring the Aqua Dart up to speed and then apply full rudder. The result is a hull that quickly goes up on its side, and if the turn is held, then reversed, the boat goes upside down. No concern, the shape of the top of the hull is conical, and the boat simply rolls back upright, drops the prop back in the water and takes off again.

This type of driving brings a huge smile, but the manual warns against doing this repeatedly, and it does state that doing so will weaken and eventually cause part failure. The problem is that out of the water the prop spins free, and then to drop the propeller back into the water puts a significant stress on the prop and drive shaft. Oh well, it's still a whole lot of fun.

Today's consumer needs to be baited before he'll dive in and begin to spend any significant amount of money and for the budding marine enthusiast the Aqua Dart is a good choice. It's economical and performs really well for the investment. Understanding what he is getting into, it would be difficult for a consumer not to be happy with his purchase.

Rage is a proprietary brand of and is distributed exclusively through HRP. **HM**



The included 7.4V lithium hull battery offers an acceptable eight minutes of run time and is charged via the now standard USB port.



Packaged in a clear plastic tray, the Aqua Dart is a complete and ready-to-run offering, but it will require the purchaser to supply four AA dry cells for the full-size wheel style transmitter.



Listed in the manual as waterproof, the electronics are neatly packaged within the hull and protected by a soft, thick gasket that does a good job of keeping water out. The boat also includes the hex wrench needed to loosen the set-screw that holds the prop shaft to the coupling, so maintenance is trouble free as well.

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