

BEHIND THE WHEEL

1/5 SCALE | GAS | KIT

Type » 2WD buggy

Price » \$930 (price varies with dealer)

Top Speed » 45mph

Requires » Transmitter/receiver » Throttle servo » 12 AA batteries

» 5-cell sub-C receiver pack » 2-stroke gas mix » Charger

hpiracing.com

HPI BAJA 5B SS

The 5B is back, with even better specs—and you get to build it

WORDS KEVIN HETMANSKI » kevinh@airage.com | PHOTOS HOPE McCALL

HPI changed the face of the 1/5-scale RC scene when it unveiled the Baja 5B in 2006. The big buggy was an instant sensation with its realistic proportions, exciting off-road performance and ready-to-run convenience. Knowing HPI's past, it was only a matter of time before we saw an SS version of the gas-burning giant. For those of you not hip to the "SS" series, allow me to explain. When the HPI guys decide to offer a kit version of an RTR, they don't just poly-bag the parts, throw in a manual and call it a day. Instead, they up the ante for kit-builders by including popular option parts and improvements not found in the RTR. Case in point, the 5B SS delivers with a bigger engine, tuned pipe, beefed-up differential and more. It also has a new look with the orange and gun-metal anodizing, so everyone will know you stepped up to the bench to build your 5B.

DRIVE TIME

TEST SPOT
CONSTRUCTION SITE AND MY HOUSE

MORE PUNCH

The first thing you notice is that the pipe is wicked loud and not something to run in a well-populated neighborhood. I have a lot of experience with the Baja RTR version, and that has a restrictive muffler, and the clutch engages early. It's amazing what a difference a tuned pipe and high-stall clutch make in this buggy's acceleration. It easily spins the tires

when you punch the throttle from a standstill on any surface. Engine response will increase as the engine and clutch spring wear in.

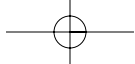
DRIVES LIKE A 1/10 SCALE

HPI did things right when they designed this buggy; it's very nimble. The Baja 5B SS drives like many 2WD buggies I've raced through the years. Steering response is great, and the

buggy is so controllable that you can get it around a tight yard with no trouble. The included servo has more than enough muscle to pitch the front tires from side to side. The swaybars do a great job of keeping the chassis flat in the turns allowing you to stay on the throttle without the worry of rolling your Baja.

STRONG BRAKES

The brakes work very well, and they should, when you think about how much weight you have to slow down here. The grip on the disc



is consistent, but just like when you accelerate, things can get a little hairy when trying to slow down on pavement or on hard-packed dirt. The brakes are easy to lock up, and that causes the rear end to loop around. You can adjust the brakes so they don't grab as much, but then you can't slow the Baja down. I would really like to see a front brake kit for it.

AIR TIME

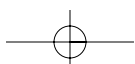
It's hard for me to get used to jumping this buggy. I'm accustomed to smaller vehicles

that you can mess with in the air to adjust the chassis' attitude. It seems like you have to hold on for the ride with the Baja. That forces you to learn how to jump it correctly, and when done so, it's great. The chassis is well balanced and the shocks do a great job of soaking up the landings.

ENGINE PERFORMANCE

It didn't take much work to start the Fuelie 26cc engine; just prime the bulb, close the choke and pull until the engine fires for a sec-

ond, and then open the choke and give it a tug. Once the engine was running, I let it sit and idle for a little while to allow it to get up to operating temperature before I pegged the throttle. The carb's tune was fairly close out of the box and only needed minimal tuning to lean out the high-end needle. The nice thing about a gas engine is that you only really have to tune it once. The Fuelie 26cc engine runs well, and the carb holds a tune very well.





HPI supplies a clear body kit for the SS. Most of the buggy's look comes from the exposed chassis and roll cage, so even a simple paint job looks killer. I used Parma FasKolor paint to complete my 5B.

UNDER THE HOOD

Serious servo

It's normal to see an engine included in a kit, but we're not used to seeing a steering servo. Rather than send you off on a hunt for a the correct large-scale servo, HPI includes its water-resistant, metal-gear SFL-10 unit. With 347 oz-in of torque, it has the power needed to steer over 20 pounds of gas-burning buggy, and its extra-large size means the metal gears within are also larger than a typical servo's for superior strength.



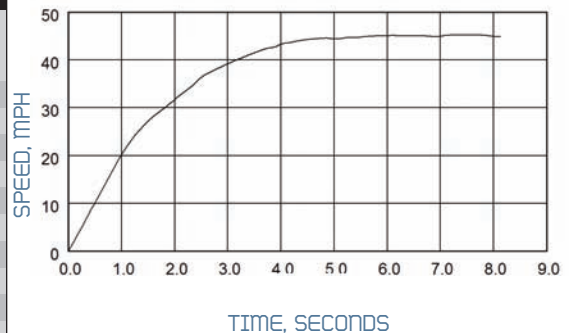
No need to save up for a servo; HPI includes this monster to steer the 5B

RADAR TESTING

TOP SPEED 45.3mph

Distance (in feet) traveled in:

- 1 sec. » 15.3
- 2 sec. » 54.8
- 3 sec. » 107.7
- 4 sec. » 168.5
- 5 sec. » 233.3
- 0-132 ft. time » 3.4 sec.
- Time to top speed » 7.5 sec.
- Speed at 132 ft. » 41.2mph



The 5B SS gets a serious-looking gunmetal and orange treatment that sets it apart from the purple-power of the RTR version.

SPECIFICATIONS

HPI BAJA SB SS

hpiracing.com

Scale 1/5

Price \$930 (varies with dealer)

DIMENSIONS

Overall length 32.2 in. (817mm)

Wheelbase 22.4 in. (570/368mm)

Width F/R 18.1/18.9 in. (460/480mm)

Weight as tested 21 lb. (9.7kg)

CHASSIS

4mm stamped aluminum

SUSPENSION

Type Pivot ball with upper and lower arms

Inboard camber-link positions F/R 1/1

Outboard camber-link positions F/R 1/1

Upper shock positions F/R 1/2

Lower shock positions F/R 1/1

SHOCKS

Threaded aluminum body with rubber shaft protectors

STEERING

Type Dual bearing-supported bell crank

Servo-saver Spring loaded

Tie rods Steel

Ackerman settings (inboard/outboard) 1/1

DRIVETRAIN

Type 2WD

Transmission 3-gear sealed transmission

Differential Bevel gear with steel ring gear and sealed aluminum housing; steel outdrives

Spur gear Plastic with rubber inserts

Brake Disc with vented and drilled steel rotor

Driveshafts Chrome plated steel dogbones

Bearings Rubber sealed ball

Gear ratios Primary 3.4:1; transmission 8.1:1; final 19.9:1 (1st gear), 13.8:1 (2nd gear)

ENGINE & ACCESSORIES

Model HPI Fuelie 26cc 2-stroke gasoline

Construction Ringed aluminum piston

Carburetor 2-needle with primer bulb and choke

Starter Pull

Manifold Tubular aluminum

Pipe Tuned aluminum

Fuel tank 750cc

BODY, WHEELS & TIRES

Body Clear, factory trimmed

Wheels Bead-lock plastic-spoke, 24mm hex

Tires F/R HPI Dirt Buster rib/HPI Dirt Buster block

Inserts Foam

INCLUDED ELECTRONICS

Transmitter, receiver & throttle servo Not included

Steering servo HPI SFL-10MG, 347oz.-in.



The Fuelie 26cc engine is a powerful mill, and it's easy to tune. A polished-aluminum tuned pipe lets the engine breathe and helps with low-end response.

More power

When you see SS at the end of the name, you know you'll get a bunch of goodies with your kit, and one such goodie is a bigger engine. The RTR ride is equipped with a 23cc engine, and HPI ups it with a new 26cc Fuelie engine. It comes in the box with a muffler installed, and you can keep that on if you're running your buggy in a close-knit neighborhood, but it will rob the engine of power. The included tuned pipe will enhance the engine's response, but it's much louder. HPI's 8,000rpm clutch comes installed on the engine, and that, too, will help with low-end response.

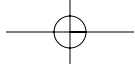


Beefy drivetrain

This buggy has some heft to it, and now that it has more power, the drivetrain needed to be beefed up a little. The internal gears are the same, but HPI gives you a cast-aluminum diff housing that is much stronger than the plastic unit used in the RTR version. And the housing has small fins molded into it to dissipate heat that builds up in the diff while in use. Heavy-duty dogbones span the gap between the diff and axles.

Aluminum diff cases won't spread under load, and you'll find a complete set of metal gears and large-diameter rubber-sealed bearings in the transmission.





HPI BAJA 5B SS



The shocks feature threaded bodies for easy ride-height adjustment, and the 6mm shafts are thicker than the RTR 5B's for increased durability.

FACTORY OPTIONS

- » Sand Buster paddle tire—item no. 4846
- » Sand Buster rib tire—4843
- » Front carbon upper plate—87446
- » Carbon gear plate—87447

YOU'LL NEED | WE USED

Radio and receiver	Futaba 2PL futaba.com
Throttle servo	Futaba S3050 futaba.com
8AA batteries	Duracell duracell.com
Receiver pack	HPI hump pack hpiracing.com
Charger	HPI Escape hpiracing.com
2-stroke gas mix	Shell



Long-stroke shocks

The 5B's shocks use familiar construction, but are much more heavily built and use two springs per shock. The pistons are nipped for strength, and the shocks are filled with MX-style petroleum fork oil instead of the silicon fluid we're used to seeing. A new rear shock tower increases suspension travel, thicker 6mm shock shafts resist bending, and the o-ring cartridges and shock valving have been tweaked for the SS. The shock bodies are threaded for easy preload changes and front and rear sway-bars are also included in the kit, making the 5B SS highly tunable.



ON THE BENCH

The instructions for the Baja are very informative, and that makes it very easy to build the Baja. There are, however, a few things you should know before you build or drive your buggy.

READ THE MANUAL

In the back of the manual you'll find great information on tuning the engine, mixing the fuel and more. Take the time to read this section carefully. The 26cc Fuelie engine is expensive to replace, and if you run it too lean or get your fuel mixture wrong, it may seize.

USE THREAD-LOCK ON EVERYTHING

Any of the 5B's screws that don't thread into plastic are secured by locknuts. The nylon inserts in those nuts should be enough to keep the screws in place, but I still had screws come loose while driving my Baja.

RECEIVER POWER

HPI recommend using a sub-C 5-cell hump pack to

power the Baja's radio gear.

You can get away with using a standard-size hump-style receiver pack if you must, but remember: you'll only get about half the run time with the smaller pack, and you'll need to pack the receiver box with extra foam to take up space. My advice? Get the right pack. why skimp on a \$1000 car?

PULL-STARTER PROTECTION

Debris can find its way into the workings of the pull-starter on the Fuelie engine, and that may cause it to malfunction. Keep the internals clean by installing an Outerwears pull-starter cover. It allows air to pass through while keeping the dirt out.

EXTENDED SPUR GEAR LIFE

Now that the Baja SS has more power, there's a potential for spur gear damage due to the gears pushing each other apart. The plastic mounts for the top shaft and clutch bell have a small amount of flex in them, and if you don't get your gear mesh tight enough, the gap may possibly open, and you'll strip your spur gear. I haven't had any problems here, but to prevent this, I installed aluminum top-shaft and clutch-bell mounts from Golden Horizons. These direct-fit aluminum parts don't flex at all, and they enhance the looks of the Baja.

Rating the Baja 5B SS

The Baja 5B SS is easily one of the coolest RC vehicles around. I love that it comes as a kit and with useful hop-up parts. The Baja is perfect for any newbie thanks to the powerplant on board; you never have to tune the carb, and it runs on economical 2-stroke mix gasoline. Some may be intimidated by the steep price tag, but remember that you'll pay about the same price for a nitro monster truck or buggy by the time you've bought batteries, a charger, fuel and the other things you need to get it running. The impressive size, handling and performance of the Baja 5B SS will make you the envy of all your friends. **T**



- » Great engine response
- » Love the new orange anodizing
- » Included metal-gear servo



- » Tuned pipe is very loud

BEST FOR

Kit-building, gas-power enthusiasts

