

RTR 2WD Brushed MONSTER TRUCK SHOOTOUT

Four-Way Monster Mash!

BY THE RC CAR ACTION TEAM PHOTOS JOEL NAVARO AND CARL HYNDMAN

It's hard to top a monster truck for all-around RC fun. Whether you're blasting the sidewalk, jumping skateboard ramps, or bombing trails, monster trucks do it all and look great doing it. 1/10-scale 2WD monster trucks offer the best bang for the buck and they are easy for anyone to get into. So, which one should you get? This shootout will help you make the call. We gathered all the latest 2WD, brushed-power, ready-to-run monsters and ran them head to head to see which came out on top. With tests for speed, jumping, acceleration, and all-around fun factor, there's plenty to dig into— so let's dig in. The trucks are listed alphabetically, so ARRMA gets the kickoff.



ARRMA Granite MEGA

The good-looking Granite sets itself apart from the other trucks with its narrow, low-slung boxed chassis, which lowers the truck's CG to improve its handling. A bottom-feed battery tray makes it easy to install and remove the included 6-cell NiMH battery pack without removing the body, but thicker LiPo packs can be a tight fit. A waterproof servo, speed control and receiver box make mud and water runs a no-brainer, and the 15-turn motor and 6-cell NiMH battery pack wick speed up to 23mph.



FEATURES

1. Enclosed plastic chassis
2. Oil-filled shocks with clip-on preload spacers
3. Adjustable-length upper arms
4. Steel dogbones
5. Waterproof MEGA 40A speed control
6. Waterproof receiver box
7. ADS-5 62 oz.-in. waterproof servo
8. Adjustable slipper clutch
9. 15T brushed Mega motor
10. Bottom feed battery tray

QUICK SPECS

Weight: 4.4 lb. (1,990g)
 Wheelbase: 11.4 in. (290mm)
 Width: 4.5 in. (114mm)
 Battery: 2000mAh 6-cell 7.2V NiMH
 Top speed: 23mph
 Price: \$180

ARRMA gives you a 2000mAh 6-cell 7.2V NiMH battery and a wall charger to get you rolling — you'll want to upgrade to a fast charger.



ARRMA's 40-amp speed control is rated for 3S LiPo batteries. NiMH and LiPo modes are selected by repositioning tabs inserted into the speed control.



The closed-endbell motor looks like a stocker, but it's a 15-turn modified. With the included pack, it's good for 23mph.



ARRMA does things their own way with the Granite. The narrow chassis is stadium-truck low, and the battery loads via a trap door underneath.

Arrma's 2.4GHz system offers dual-rate steering in addition to the usual trims and reversing switches, all hidden under a lid on top of the radio. The antenna folds for transport.



ECX / Horizon Hobby Ruckus

The Ruckus' high-riding chassis provides plenty of ground clearance for runs in rough conditions. ECX gives you a 6-cell NiMH battery and charger to get you going and as a bonus you also get AA batteries for the included Spektrum radio. Twist locks and a molded plastic strap keep the batteries in place and the chassis is designed to fit 6 and 7-cell NiMH and 2S LiPo battery packs. The truck is topped off with an aggressive-looking body and you can choose from a green and black or silver and charcoal paint job.



FEATURES

1. High ground clearance plastic chassis
2. Fixed-length upper links
3. Clipless battery hold-down
4. Waterproof Dynamite servo
5. Oil-filled shocks with clip-on preload spacers
6. Waterproof receiver box
7. Tazer 15T Speed control
8. Adjustable slipper clutch
9. Telescoping universal-joint driveshafts
10. 15-Turn mod motor

QUICK SPECS

Weight: 5.5 lb. (2,500 g)
 Wheelbase: 13.1 in. (333mm)
 Width: 13.7 in. (348mm)
 Battery: Dynamite Speedpack 1800mAh NiMH
 Top speed: 22mph
 Price: \$180



The Ruckus use a high-riding chassis to improve ground clearance and deliver a tall monster stance.

A Dynamite 1800 NiMH battery pack provides the juice for the Ruckus and it uses high flow EC3 connectors to get it from the battery to the speed control.



The Tazer speed control is waterproof. Tabs are used to set the reverse mode and switch between LiPo and NiMH modes.



15-turn mod-motor power gives the Ruckus solid torque and brisk performance.

The Ruckus includes a genuine Spektrum radio system. The DX2E 2-channel radio is compatible with Spektrum's Active Vehicle Control electronic stability system if you want to upgrade later.



Tamiya Mud Blaster II

The Mudblaster II is built on Tamiya's WT-01 chassis, which can also be had in Bush Devil II and Blackfoot III body styles with the same specs shown here. The unique chassis is split into left and right halves, and can be converted to 4WD by adding a second transmission and motor. Tamiya leaves battery choice to you and the included speed control is LiPo-compatible, but the chassis only accepts packs that match 6-cell NiMH dimensions—keep that in mind when you're battery shopping.

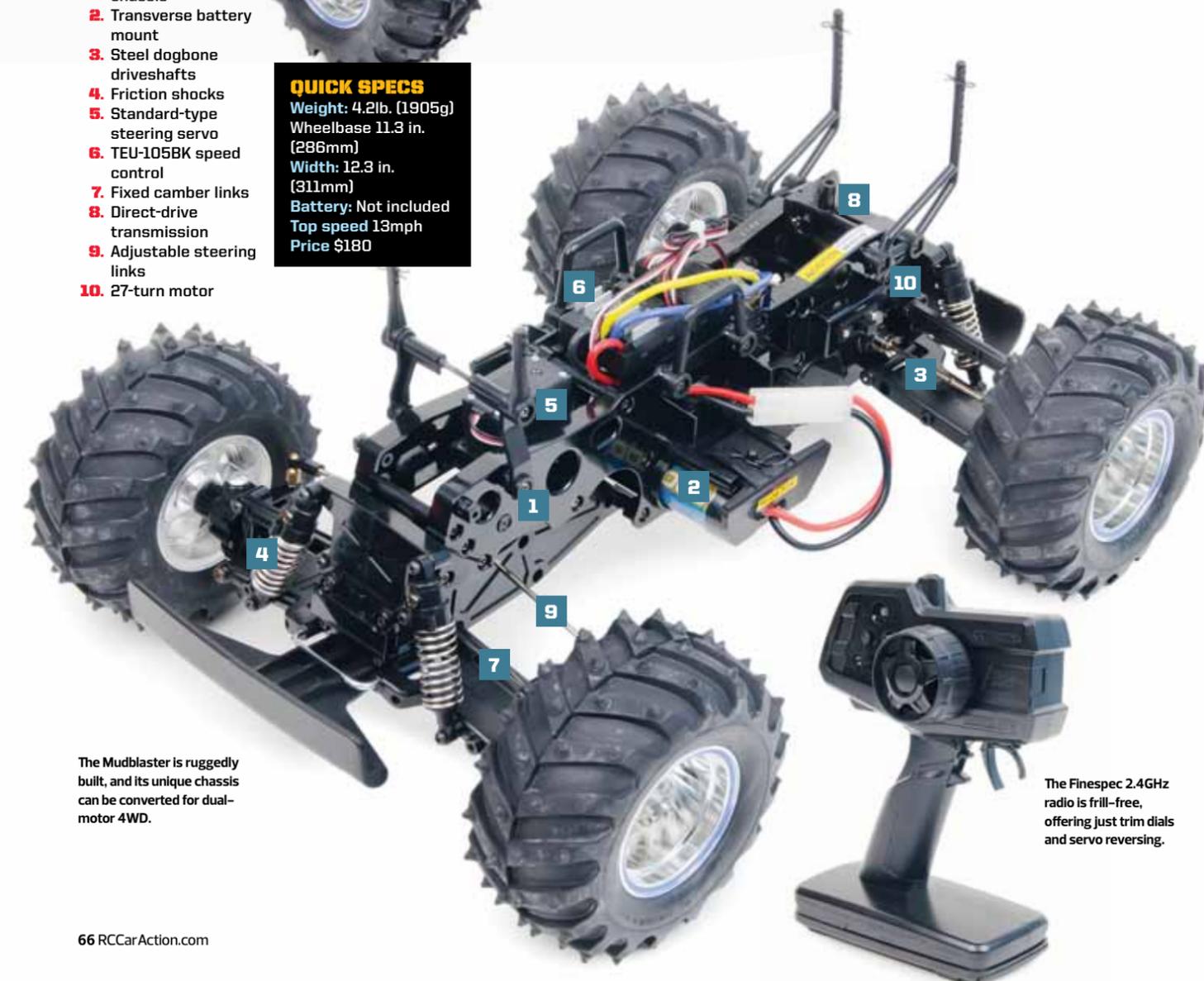


FEATURES

1. Monocoque-style chassis
2. Transverse battery mount
3. Steel dogbone driveshafts
4. Friction shocks
5. Standard-type steering servo
6. TEU-105BK speed control
7. Fixed camber links
8. Direct-drive transmission
9. Adjustable steering links
10. 27-turn motor

QUICK SPECS

Weight: 4.2lb. (1905g)
Wheelbase: 11.3 in. (286mm)
Width: 12.3 in. (311mm)
Battery: Not included
Top speed 13mph
Price \$180



The Mudblaster is ruggedly built, and its unique chassis can be converted for dual-motor 4WD.

The Finespec 2.4GHz radio is frill-free, offering just trim dials and servo reversing.



Tamiya's 27-turn stock motor is a classic and can be found in just about all Tamiya RTR vehicles.



The TEU-105BK speed control is LiPo-compatible and ruggedly built.

Traxxas Stampede

The Stampede leads the way in the power department with its 12-turn motor and 7-cell battery, which make it the fastest truck of the bunch in stock form, and even faster when you install the supplied "speed pinion." The Stampede also includes a peak-detecting fast charger, and is the only truck in the guide to do so. Waterproof electronics and a "brushless ready" steel-gear transmission are standard, and if you're interested in tricking out your truck, you'll find a nearly endless array of aftermarket gear for the Stampede.



FEATURES

1. XL-5 60A waterproof speed control
2. Oil-filled shocks
3. Adjustable slipper clutch
4. Narrow high ground clearance chassis
5. Telescoping universal joint driveshafts
6. Fixed length upper links
7. Turnbuckle steering links
8. Waterproof receiver box
9. Waterproof high torque steering servo
10. Titan 12-turn mod motor



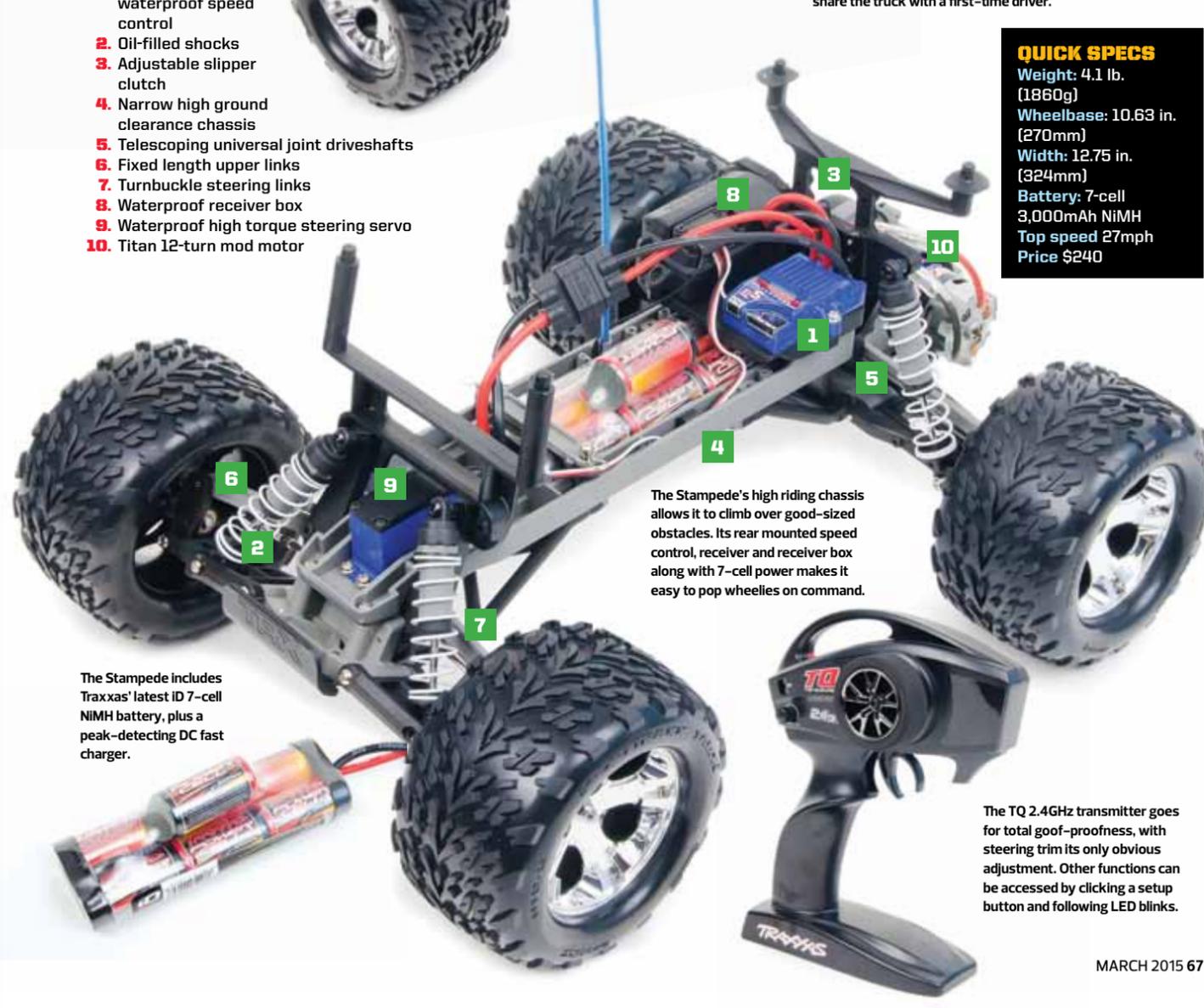
The 12-turn Titan 550 motor powers all of Traxxas' 1/10-scale brushed cars, and delivers the highest top speeds in the shootout.



Traxxas' XL-5 speed control features a "Training Mode" to reduce speed and power by 50% — perfect for when you want to share the truck with a first-time driver.

QUICK SPECS

Weight: 4.1 lb. (1860g)
Wheelbase: 10.63 in. (270mm)
Width: 12.75 in. (324mm)
Battery: 7-cell
3,000mAh NiMH
Top speed 27mph
Price \$240



The Stampede's high riding chassis allows it to climb over good-sized obstacles. Its rear mounted speed control, receiver and receiver box along with 7-cell power makes it easy to pop wheelies on command.

The Stampede includes Traxxas' latest ID 7-cell NiMH battery, plus a peak-detecting DC fast charger.

The TQ 2.4GHz transmitter goes for total goof-proofness, with steering trim its only obvious adjustment. Other functions can be accessed by clicking a setup button and following LED blinks.

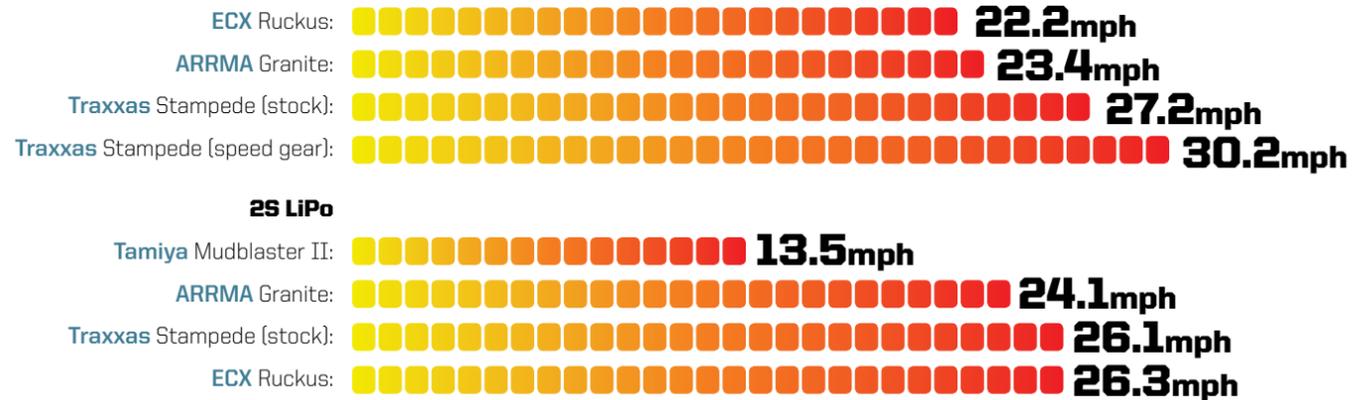
TOP SPEED TESTING

The first question that everyone asks is, how fast does it go? We first tested each truck on flat pavement with its included battery, using GPS to record the top speed. We tested the Stampede with its installed pinion, as well as its included "speed pinion," which is for hard-surface running only. Since speed is affected by battery performance, we also tested the trucks with a MaxAmps 6500mAh 2S LiPo to "level the playing field" and see what kind of performance you can expect when you install other packs. We also wanted to test the Tamiya Mudblaster II (which does not include a battery) fairly against the other trucks, and using the same pack in each truck let us do that.



For 2S LiPo speed testing, we used MaxAmps 6500mAh packs.

Included battery



Going Brushless With the exception of the Tamiya Mud Blaster II, all the trucks featured here are also available with brushless power systems for greater power and higher top speeds. Depending on the model, you may get other bonus features. You'll spend more to go brushless, but you get more too. Not ready to go all the way? You can also upgrade any of the trucks featured here to brushless power later. In Traxxas' case, you can even use their "Power-Up Program" to trade in the brushed motor and speed control for a discount on the Traxxas brushless system. If you want to go brushless from the start, here are the trucks to look for: **ARRMA Granite BLS, \$250; ECX Ruckus Brushless, \$290; Traxxas Stampede VXL, \$360**

Other 2WD Contenders For this shootout, we selected only trucks that are RTR with radio system, 2WD, and brushed-power. That excluded two trucks from official testing, but they're still important players in the 2WD monster scene. Here they are...



Pro-Line PRO-MT

The PRO-MT is only available in kit form. This means that you have to pick up your own motor, speed control, steering servo, radio and battery. It's a pro-grade machine and that's reflected in its price, but you get top-of-the-line everything including a 7075 aluminum chassis, Performance HD transmission, aluminum Power Stroke shocks, Pro-Spline HD steel driveshafts, and of course Pro-Line body, wheels, and tires. Not cheap, but if you want the ultimate 2WD monster truck, the PRO-MT is it. prolineracing.com; \$390



HobbyKing Quantum Skull Crusher

The Quantum Skull Crusher is sold in brushed and brushless versions and is ARR (almost ready to run), which means that the truck comes built and the electronics are installed — you supply the radio system and battery. Features of the Skull Crusher include threaded body shocks, adjustable turnbuckles, adjustable wheelie bar and realistic terra treaded tires. hobbyking.com; \$130 (brushed); \$150 (brushless)

ARRMA Granite



CARL



The ARRMA Granite had a solid mix of speed and handling that struck the best balance among the trucks. It had a nice, low center-of-gravity and decent traction. It also jumped well and responded favorably to throttle inputs in the air. Runtime was impressive and steering felt crisp and neutral. The graphics were tastefully done and they seemed to be born out of racing blood. It was my pick for the best overall.

ECX Ruckus



When it came to durability and raw thrashing, it was tough to beat the ECX Ruckus. Its long wheelbase, big tires, and durable plastics combined with its high and narrow chassis to give it great clearance and dependability when going through the rough stuff. But, it seemed a bit slow on the low end and the included servo gave it numb handling.

Tamiya Mud Blaster II



The Mud Blaster surprised me with its performance. The spiked tires handled the terrain we were in better than all the trucks and the scale looks put on a show that even scale drivers can appreciate. However, the silver can 27-turn motor was just a little too slow and screamed for an upgrade.

Traxxas Stampede



Easily the fastest out of the box, the truck seemed right at home at our bashing spot. It did everything well, but I was hoping for better handling; its high center of gravity didn't instill much confidence. I also found styling to be the least inspiring of the group, but with the speeds it is able to attain I quickly forgot about that and instead took joy in flying around with a big grin.

JOEL



The ultra-wide tires along with an aggressive tread pattern coupled with an effective suspension gave the Granite control over any surface it encountered. The low-slung chassis helps handling, but if you like to drive in rugged trail-style terrain, it's more likely to hang up on obstacles than the lifted-chassis trucks.

The visually striking color and aggressive looks of the ECX Ruckus definitely made it one of the more attractive trucks of the bunch. The basic and straightforward layout of the chassis made the Ruckus easy to get up and running and maintain. Its low-mounted electronics and the long wheelbase makes the Ruckus stable and the soft suspension absorbs large hits well.

The Mud Blaster has something over the other trucks in this shootout and that's scale looks; the detail in the body is impressive. The included friction shocks were not the best at absorbing all the bumps and jumps it encountered. Even if the Mud Blaster didn't handle as well as the other trucks, it sure can take tremendous abuse.

There is no denying that the Stampede sets the standard for 2WD monster trucks. The truck as a whole worked great and out of the box, the Stampede was the fastest of the group. The chassis had an ample amount of ground clearance which gave me confidence to clear anything in my way.

KEVIN



What stands out for me is the unique chassis of the Granite. It's lower than the other trucks, but it slides over obstacles with no problem. The bottom feed battery box is a really nice touch.

I really like the aggressive look of the Ruckus but the soft acceleration of the truck doesn't match the look. I'd rather have it geared down slightly to give me a little more low-end grunt instead of a higher top speed. It more than makes up for the reduced bottom end with its high-clearance chassis and stable stance.

When you get in the dirt with the Mud Blaster II it's a real handful due to the stiff suspension. What I do like about the truck is that the drivetrain is bomb proof and you can add a second gearbox and motor to make this sucker 4WD. Oil shocks can easily take care of the stiff suspension.

The Stampede is considerably more money than the other trucks, but for that money I'm getting the power I wish the other trucks had, along with a fast charger and a higher-voltage, higher-capacity battery. Out of the box, the truck is very fun and it is cool to know that there's a discount on a brushless-power upgrade with the Traxxas Power-Up Program. I also like that there's a lot of aftermarket support for this truck.

LEIGH



I felt the Granite was the most stable and could rip around while staying on its wheels. It also jumped extremely flat and even. It could use a bit more traction but once it hooked up, it did very well. Physically, the body looked smaller than the others but I was pretty pleased with the look of the truck.

To me, the Ruckus was the most fun to bash. Adding to the fun was that it would also right itself most of the time. I really like the strong look of the body. It gives up some speed to the ARRMA and Traxxas trucks, but a 7-cell pack would help it close that gap.

I was completely surprised with how well-rounded the Mud Blaster was. I found myself having fun with it. It was lacking in power when compared to the rest, but I think that is part of why it was so easy to drive with plenty of traction and control.

The Stampede was a bit of a challenge for me to drive. It didn't have as much traction as the others, the speed control has a lot of punch and I found that it would roll pretty easy at times. However, the Stampede would be my choice if I was looking for a project due to the long list of upgrades available.

SPECIFICATIONS

	Arrma Granite MEGA	ECX Ruckus	Tamiya Mud Blaster II	Traxxas Stampede
Item no.	AR102604	ECX03022	57839	36054-1
Weight	4 lb., 12 oz.	5 lb., 10 oz.	3 lb., 10 oz.	4 lb., 15 oz.
Wheelbase	11.4 in. (289mm)	13.1 in. (333mm)	11.3 in. (287mm)	10.63 in. (270mm)
Width	13.8 in. (340mm)	13.7 in. (348mm)	12.2 in. (310mm)	12.75 in. (324mm)
Speed Control	ARRMA Mega	Dynamite Tazer	Tamiya TEU-104BK	Traxxas XL-5
Motor	15T modified	15T modified	27T stock	12T modified
Shocks	Plastic, oil-filled	aPlastic, oil-filled	Plastic, friction	Plastic, oil-filled
Camber Adjustment	Adj. front, fixed rear	Fixed	Fixed	Fixed
Toe-In Adjustment	Fixed	Fixed	Threaded link	Turnbuckle link
Slipper Clutch	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Transmission gears	Plastic	Plastic	Plastic	Metal
Differential	Bevel Gear	Bevel Gear	Bevel Gear	Planetary Gear
Driveshafts	Dogbones	Telescoping U-Joint	Dogbones	Telescoping U-Joint
Servo Gears	Plastic	Plastic	Plastic	Plastic
Servo Torque (oz.-in.)	70	70	57	80
2.4GHz transmitter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Waterproof electronics	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Included Battery	6-cell 2000mAh NiMH	6-cell 1800mAh NiMH	Not included	7-Cell 3000mAh NiMH
Included Charger	700mAh	2-amp	Not included	4-amp
Connector Type	Deans	EC3	Tamiya	Traxxas
Price (varies with Dealer)	\$180	\$180	\$180	\$240
Website	arrma-rc.com	ecxrc.com	tamiyausa.com	traxxas.com

CHOOSING THE TOP TRUCKS

After spending a lot of time with these trucks we can surely say that we had a great time working on this shootout. All the trucks were really fun to bash around with and of course, one has to come out on top. Based on total scores, the Stampede comes out on top with 27 points, followed by the ARRMA Granite MEGA (26), ECX Ruckus (24), and the Tamiya Mud Blaster II (22). The Stampede is also top truck in speed and power, and includes a fast charger. However, the Stampede is also the most expensive truck in the shootout at \$240, while the other trucks roll in at \$180. If you're looking to save money, especially if you already have a fast charger, one of the other trucks will leave you more dough for extra batteries, spare parts, or upgrades. Also consider what your local hobby store stocks; it's much more convenient to run the models your dealer stocks parts for and has experience with (which is another plus for the Stampede, since virtually every hobby store has parts for it). You'll have a ton of fun with any of these trucks, but if you want the peak performer, it's the Traxxas Stampede.

Four fun trucks, but one comes out on top: the Traxxas Stampede.



SOURCES

ARRMA arrma-rc.com
Dynamite dynamiterc.com
ECX ecxrc.com
LRP lrpamerica.com
MaxAmps.com maxamps.com
Tamiya tamiyausa.com
Traxxas traxxas.com

ALL-TERRAIN TESTING

To test the trucks we charged up the batteries and headed to a location that is surrounded by loose, hard-packed dirt, jumps, bumps, bowls, grass and pavement. It's the perfect place for anyone who is looking for a good bash session. We judged all the trucks on how well they accelerated, jumped and handled during our day in the dirt, and scored them 1-10 (10 being best)

ACCELERATION

ARRMA GRANITE MEGA

The Granite's short wheelbase puts more weight over the rear tires and when you combine that with the included aggressively treaded tires, you have a truck that does well in the acceleration department. We even saw a small wheelie out of it from time to time. **Score: 9**

ECX RUCKUS

The ECX Ruckus feels like its geared more for speed than torque, and doesn't launch off the line as hard as the other trucks. A 2S LiPo would really wake this truck up on the bottom end. **Score: 7**

TAMIYA MUD BLASTER II

The lightweight Mud Blaster is geared for torque and surprised us with its initial acceleration, but it tops out very quickly. You can move up to a 20-tooth pinion for more top speed and still have plenty of wheel-spinning torque. **Score: 8**

TRAXXAS STAMPEDE

With a 7-cell battery and 12-turn motor on board, we were expecting to see great things in the acceleration department when it came to the Stampede. We weren't disappointed as the truck wheeled on high-traction surfaces with a freshly charged pack installed. Even as the pack flattened out, the truck's acceleration was still tops. **Score: 10**

BUMP HANDLING

ARRMA GRANITE MEGA

The short wheelbase of the Granite and its low-slung chassis made it a bit of a handful in rough conditions. However, the ribs on the bottom of the chassis did let the chassis slide over more obstacles than we thought it would. **Score: 8**

ECX RUCKUS

The Ruckus is stable overall but bounced around more than we expected given its size. It wasn't anything we couldn't handle, it just wasn't as composed as the higher-scoring trucks. **Score: 8**

TAMIYA MUD BLASTER II

Friction shocks, stiff springs and shock limiters made for a rough ride over the rough stuff. The trucks' low ground clearance didn't help either. Hard hits tossed the truck around. **Score: 6**

TRAXXAS STAMPEDE

The Stampede's stock suspension did a great job of soaking up hits. It was easy to make high-speed passes without getting tripped up. **Score: 9**

JUMPING

ARRMA GRANITE MEGA

The ARRMA Granite jumped with a nose-up attitude with most launches and when needed, it was easy to adjust the angle of the chassis in the air with a stab of the brake or throttle. Landings were easily soaked up. **Score: 9**

ECX RUCKUS

The ECX Ruckus was the most stable truck when it came to jumping. It flew with level flight most of the time and landed with a slight hop. However, it was not as responsive to throttle inputs for attitude control as the other trucks. **Score: 9**

TAMIYA MUD BLASTER II

The Mud Blaster flies well but landings were a little hairy. The truck's limited suspension travel and stiff springs made it rebound harshly on landings, but the Mud Blaster stayed on all fours. **Score: 8**

TRAXXAS STAMPEDE

The Stampede's extra power makes for aggressively nose-up jumps if you're heavy on the gas at takeoff, but the Stampede responds very well to in-flight throttle input and we had no trouble leveling out for touchdown.

Score: 8