

## VENOM CREEPER

■ KIT ■ ELECTRIC ■ OFF-ROAD

### INNOVATIVE FEATURES PUT A NEW SPIN ON THE COMP ROCK CRAWLER

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PHOTOS HOPE MCCALL

It is always easier to follow a path that has already been traveled when manufacturing a vehicle, but this tactic typically stifles innovation and keeps performance relatively unchanged. Venom clearly decided to blaze its own trail with its Creeper rock crawler based on the distinctive features incorporated onto the chassis such as the Tru-Lok locking differentials, Beadlox wheel and tire system and internal anti-roll shock springs. Venom didn't stop there and set out to make the Creeper competitive on the rocks, easy to drive and have full-size scale looks. The Creeper comes in kit form, which allows you to customize it with the electronics to suit your requirements. Venom also offers several hop-up parts including a remote diff-lock kit and dig unit to further dial it in. Sounds as if the Creeper is ready to rule the rocks, and there's only one way to find out.

### SPECIFICATIONS

**Type** 1/10-scale 4WD electric rock crawler kit

**Price** \$230 (varies with dealer)

**Wheelbase** 12.5 in. (318mm)

**Width** 10.8 in. (267mm)

**Weight, as tested** 5.1 lb. (2,318g)

**Spur/pinion** 45/15

**Final drive ratio** 49.8:1

**Chassis** Aluminum twin vertical plates, 2mm thick

**Differential(s)** Lockable bevel gear diffs

**Suspension** 4-link solid axle w/bent lower links

**Shocks** Fluid-filled, threaded-body molded-composite plastic w/internal anti-roll springs



SEE THE VENOM CREEPER IN ACTION AT [RCCARACTION.COM/CREEPER](http://RCCARACTION.COM/CREEPER)

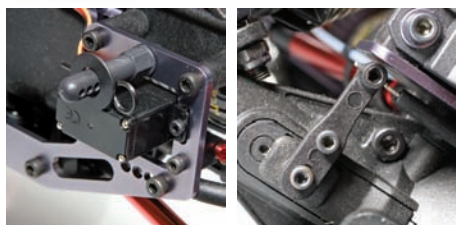


“THE LOCKABLE DIFFS AND INTERNAL ANTI-ROLL SHOCK SPRINGS MAKE THIS COMP CRAWLER AN IMMEDIATE STANDOUT FROM THE REST.”

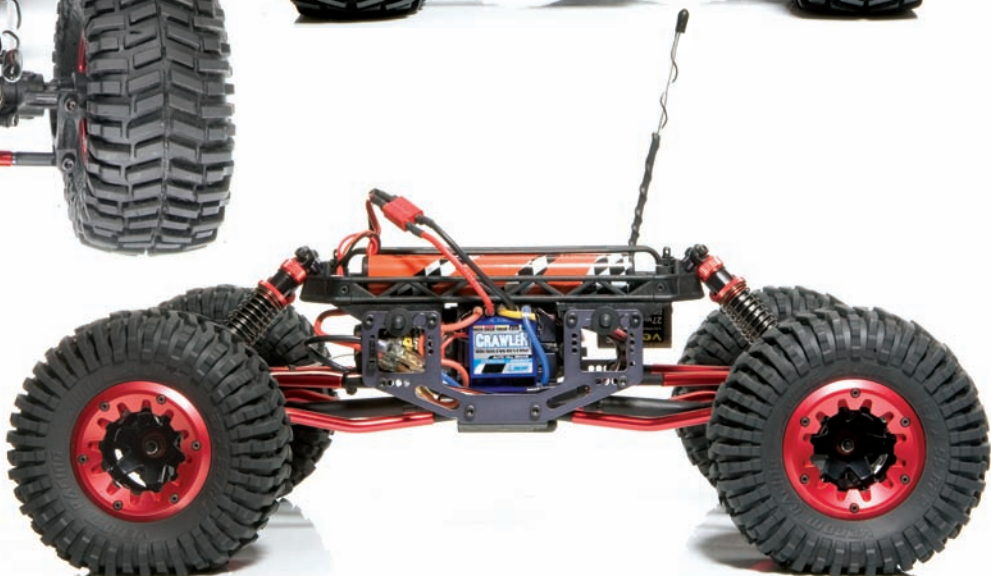




YOU HAVE THE OPTION OF PURCHASING IT WITH EITHER RED- OR GREEN-ANODIZED LINKS, ROCK RINGS, SUSPENSION LINKS AND SHOCKS.



The optional remote diff-lock kit comes with everything you need to get it working. It even includes the miniservo that activates the shift lever on the axle via flexible cable.



## FEATURES

**CHASSIS.** As soon as the Creeper is in your hands, you instantly notice the crawler's first-rate parts fit and finish, not to mention it just looks plain cool. You have the option of purchasing it with either red- or green-anodized links, Rock Rings, suspension links and shocks. Twin 2mm aluminum plates with a deep gunmetal anodizing act as the backbone for the chassis. The rest of the chassis is composed of high-

strength glass-filled nylon parts that feel incredibly rigid. An upper platform provides a secure location for batteries and a mounting point for the shocks. There is enough space to hold a standard 6-cell NiMH pack. Since Venom calls the Creeper a comp crawler, I would have liked to have seen a lower mounting spot for the battery to help the CG and even better, mounted on the front axle for improved traction.

### SUSPENSION & STEERING.

Venom uses a solid axle setup with triangulated 4-link suspension, and out of the box it has 70 degrees of articulation. Actually, this is more articulation than you would want on a comp crawler and you can easily tone it down with heavier weight shock fluid and springs. The molded composite-plastic body, fluid-filled shocks feature internal anti-roll springs that reduce torque twist from the motor and help keep all four wheels on the

ground for full-time all-wheel drive—essential for rock crawling. For additional ground clearance, each lower suspension link is bent. Up front, the Creeper boasts 40 degrees of tire deflection to give it a tight turning radius. This is thanks in part to the universal style driveshafts and extra clearance provided by the design of the steering knuckles.

**DRIVETRAIN.** A sealed gearbox protects all of the gears and is designed with a cen-

## PERFORMANCE

I found the assembly of the Creeper relatively straightforward. The manual is light on text, so take your time and heed the helpful build notes scattered throughout. I discovered that adjusting the pinion/spur gear mesh is a bit of a pain once the Creeper is fully assembled. The upper deck and suspension links make it difficult to negotiate a wrench and it's hard to see. Out on the rocks, I quickly became a fan of Venom's lockable diff design. The difference in maneuverability between locking and unlocking the front diff is huge. When the diff was unlocked, the Creeper could make turns approximately 10 inches tighter than when it is locked. In rock crawling comp terms, that is a big benefit when it comes to clearing gates. This innovative feature also comes into play whenever the Creeper got bound up during a climb. When trucks with locked diffs start to bind because one tire becomes wedged between rocks, they will not be able to progress, or they end up breaking if forced to move forward. The only option is to take a reverse to try another angle—a maneuver that will cost you penalty points. With the Venom remote diff lock, you can unlock the diff and let the power go to the wheel that is not stuck to try to pivot yourself out of the problem. Once the truck is out, you can lock the diff again. This lockable diff feature is a lot to think about but adds another dimension to the Creeper's performance.

Skidplates on each axle came in handy for helping the Creeper clear obstacles that have stopped my other crawlers, and the front skid does a good job of protecting the steering linkage. Unfortunately, the tranny does not come equipped with a skidplate and caused it to get hung up. Venom addresses this issue with an optional tranny skid (VEN-8370). The Creeper has gobs of articulation, which can get you into trouble. The more there is, the easier it is to get the truck twisted up in the rocks. The internal anti-roll springs seemed to help keep the wheels on the ground and resist the torque twist coming from the powerful Venom Fireball rock crawler motor. Heavier weight shock fluid and stiffer springs will help calm the excessive articulation. I was pleased to see Venom include memory foam for its soft Ridge Line tires, but they did not seem to react as fast as I like. I drilled an additional hole into each wheel, and that did the trick to improve traction. I was quite happy with the Creeper's overall performance and can't wait to try out the optional dig unit as soon as it becomes available.



tered driveline for optimum efficiency. A rubber plug allows access into the gearbox for making pinion/spur gear mesh adjustments. The center drive-shafts are beefy units with steel couplers mated to telescoping glass-filled nylon shafts. Each axle is equipped with skidplates, while the inside features hardened-steel bevel gear diffs with steel universal-style shafts connected to 12mm hex drives.

**TRU-LOK LOCKING DIFFERENTIAL.** Venom stepped outside the norm for a comp crawler with its Tru-Lok locking differentials, which is by far its most notable part. This feature allows you to manually lock or unlock the diffs through an external slider that actuates a diff-locking ring. Typically, comp crawlers only use full-time locked diffs, and that makes sense if you had to choose between a locked or unlocked diff. But what if you could easily switch between

the two so you could have climbing ability and maneuverability? Venom also offers an optional remote diff-lock kit that allows you to take full advantage of the lockable diffs with your transmitter. I installed one on the front diff of my Creeper.

**BODY, WHEELS & TIRES.** A realistic-looking, tuber-style polycarbonate body with metallic diecut stickers helps the Creeper stand out from the rest. At each corner, you'll find 6-

## PLUS/MINUS



- » Innovative features like lockable diffs
- » Great performance and scale looks
- » Excellent parts fit and finish



- » High CG battery tray
- » Pinion/spur gear mesh is difficult to adjust

## VERDICT

The innovative features that Venom developed into the Creeper such as the lockable diffs and internal anti-roll shock springs, make this comp crawler an immediate standout from the rest. Adding to that are its high-quality components, scale good looks and terrific box-stock performance. Like any of the other rock crawler kits, the Creeper needs a couple of tweaks to be fully competitive at comps, like moving the battery lower on the chassis and installing the optional wheel weights. Then, if you take another step and add the optional remote diff lock kit and dig unit, this truck will be a solid contender.

### SOURCES

**A123** enerland.com  
**Hyperion** distributed by MaxAmps.com, maxamps.com  
**LRP** distributed by Team Associated teamassociated.com  
**Venom Racing** venom-racing.com  
**Zegers R/C Graffixx** zegersrcgraffixx.com