



TOP FUEL
TERROR

MEGATECH

ROLLING THUNDER

by Erich Reichert

If you've never seen a Top Fuel dragster before, you might want to add that to your list of things to do in life. There's no really good way to describe the experience of a 6000hp dragster blasting past you at nearly 300mph with flames shooting out of the exhaust headers. To say the least, you'll never ever see anything like it again.

When we first got the box from Megatech with their new Rolling Thunder Dragster inside, I was pretty excited. I'd been waiting for it to come for a while and when I finally got the box open, all I could say was "Whoa!!!" I felt like a kid at Christmas as I started tearing at the box with packing peanuts flying everywhere. With the body on, the rail looks nasty with the engine's cooling head sticking out of the back. The Rolling Thunder looked so real that I couldn't wait to get it running. I ran right outside to break it in and see what it could do. Wanna come? I know you do: Let's go!



FAST FACTS

MANUFACTURER: Megatech

VEHICLE: Rolling Thunder

CLASS: Nitro dragster

DRIVER: Intermediate and advanced drag racer

SPEED: 45.3 mph (in the area of our test lot)

PRICE: \$399.99



MEGATECH ROLLING THUNDER

“Launching the car is greeted with a slight twist of the chassis and smoke pouring out of the exhaust stinger. The only thing that keeps it from looking any more real is the absence of fire spitting out of the headers as the rail pulls off the line.”



DRIVING IMPRESSIONS

ASPHALT—Getting the engine broken in was a small feat in and of itself because it was a brand new motor, and a high output one at that. After a few minutes of yanking the pull-start cord, the engine sparked to life and I began to make carb adjustments. By the time I was done and the Thunder was ready, I had leaned out the low end about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a turn and the top end needed about two turns to the lean side. I couldn't wait to get the car running, so I topped off the tank after the last break-in tank and took the dragster down to the end of our parking lot at the office.

The coolest thing about the Rolling Thunder dragster is how realistic it looks when it runs. The super long chassis plate has enough flex to allow the car to bounce up and down as the car pulls up to stage at the line. Launching the car is greeted with a slight twist of the chassis and smoke pouring out of the exhaust stinger. The only thing that keeps it from looking any more real is the absence of fire spitting out of the headers as the rail pulls off the line.

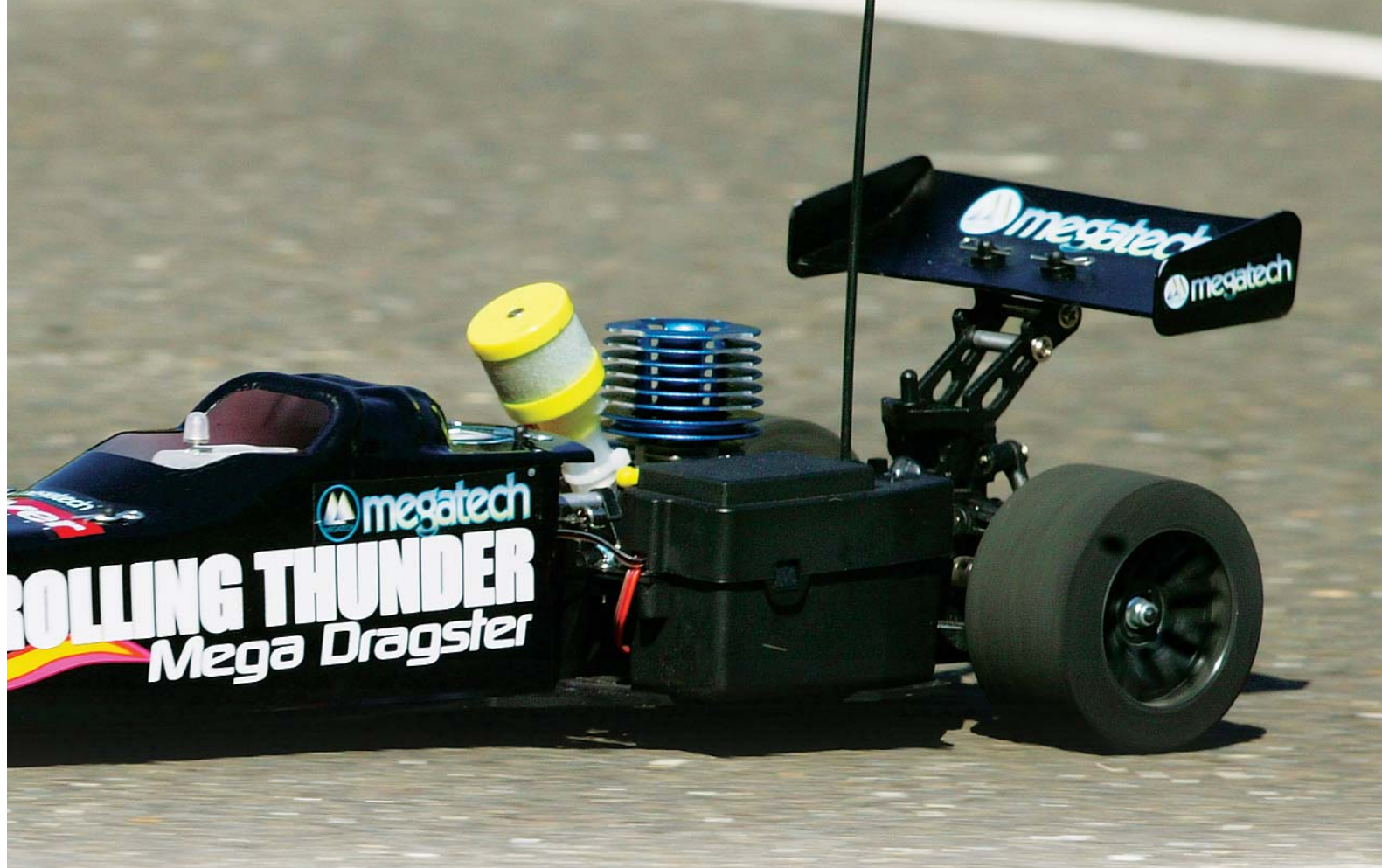
The M16 engine gathers power

quickly and sends the dragster hurdling across the pavement. I soon learned that the parking lot you share with your co-workers is not the place for something that is claimed to hit 60+mph. For safety's sake, I decided a local parking lot that was empty would be a much

better place for my pseudo drag strip. The lot wasn't much bigger than our parking lot at work, but it was long enough to get the car shifting and I was able to throw down a few quick runs. On our 250-foot test lot, the Rolling Thunder topped out at 45.3 mph, an impressive number considering I had to lift just past halfway in order to keep the car from smashing into the curb at the opposite end.

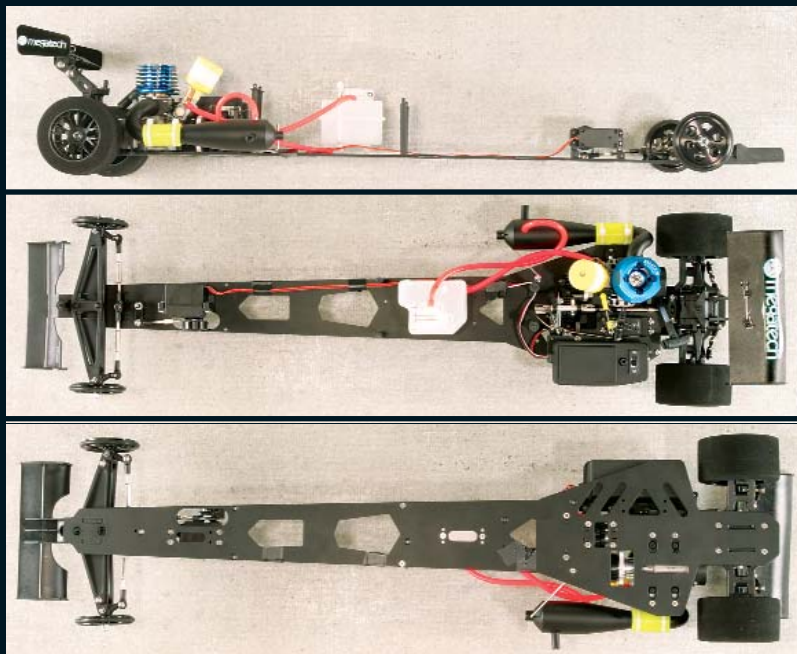
Speaking of keeping the dragster in one piece, the stock braking system is comprised of a single aluminum brake disc that slowed the dragster quickly and remained consistent through all of my $\frac{1}{10}$ quarter mile tears. The two-speed required a little bit of adjustment. The car was shifting too early, causing the rear end to get squirrely when it slammed the gears. It even caused it to go into a full drift on a couple of passes; a handful to hold onto with the car's nearly two-foot wheelbase. Once I had the car shifting on time, I just had to tweak the car a bit by adjusting the linkages that baby-sit where rear shocks would normally be.





INCLUDED ACCESSORIES

The Megatech Rolling Thunder comes with the same 2-channel radio that's included with their other kits. Although it looks like a ray gun and the trigger is a little uncomfortable, it's packed with features such as dual rate that otherwise don't usually make it into RTR radios.



comes with a beautifully painted top fuel dragster body with yellow flames on a black background, and is finished off with front and rear wings molded out of black plastic. Ultra-grip foam drag slicks are mounted on black BBS style rims.

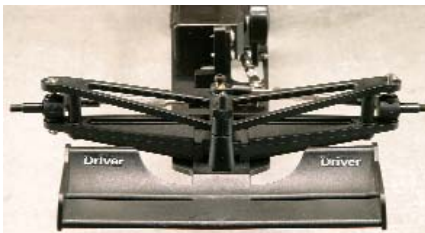
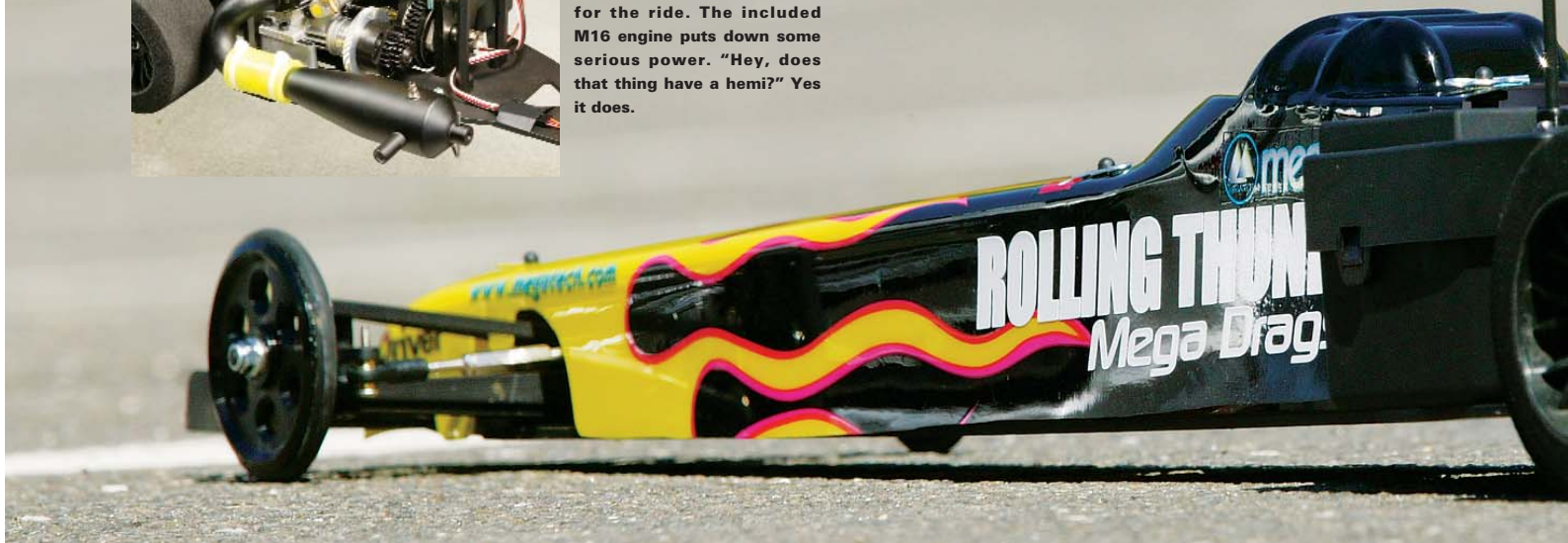
INFO CENTER

CHASSIS—The chassis of the Rolling Thunder is one very long piece of aluminum. The chassis allows the car to flex, keeping the weight on the nose under hard launches. An aluminum radio tray supports the radio gear and there is a plastic box for the receiver and battery pack. **SUSPENSION**—The dragster's front end is built on a wing-shaped arm that has carriers molded on. The king pins have a spring above them, making it similar to older style pan car front ends. The rear is built on a double wishbone platform with solid linkages in place of rear shocks to hold everything stiffly. The linkages can be adjusted to add tweak to the car if needed. **STEERING**—No Ackerman adjustment here: A single bellcrank pushes on the steering rods to get the car pointed in the right direction. Nothing fancy needed...it's a dragster, remember?! **DRIVETRAIN**—A 2-speed transmission puts the pedal to the metal through a locked rear diff. The diff is housed in a bulkhead similar to that used in other Megatech kits, which should make it easy to find parts for the Thunder. The M16 engine is where the Rolling Thunder really shines: it features a true ABC construction sleeve, Turbo Channel induction, and a Hemi head combustion chamber. **BODY, WHEELS AND TIRES**—

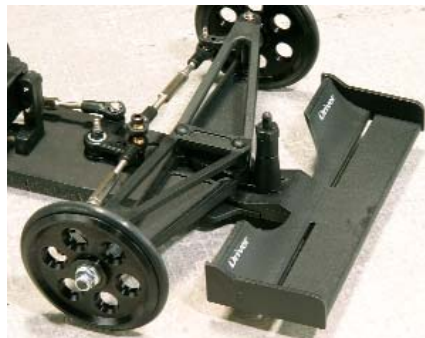
MEGATECH ROLLING THUNDER



The rear end is where everything is...literally. The rest of the car is pretty much along for the ride. The included M16 engine puts down some serious power. "Hey, does that thing have a hemi?" Yes it does.



Here's a good look at the front suspension. It's reminiscent of older pan cars with the spring mounted in between the steering block and the carrier.



The car's front end is mounted on a wing-shaped one-piece bulkhead/front arm. As simple as it may seem, the dragster isn't really going to do a lot of turning.



The M16's 3-shoe clutch works very well and with that much power on tap, you'd better have a smooth trigger finger or round and round you'll go.



The kit's rear wing sits high up on a very realistic looking wing mount. Although it's not adjustable, the wing helps keep the car planted.



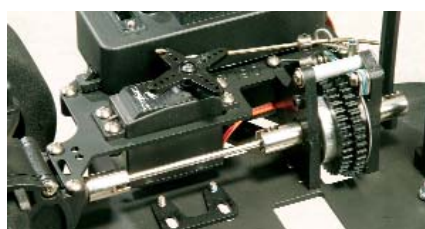
The car is steered (what little you'll need to do) by a single bellcrank that pushes on the steering rods.



Here's a good look at the locked rear differential. The gear case/bulkhead is shared with Megatech's Razor XT, so finding parts for the Rolling Thunder should be easy.



The radio box has plenty of room to house the receiver, battery and even a failsafe if you choose to install one.



A 2-speed tranny puts the power to the wheels via a locked rear end. Learning to drive a dragster has its own learning curve, as any excessive wheel spin will definitely send the car for a wild ride.



TECH SPECS

SCALE: 1/10
WIDTH: 7 in. (177.8mm)
WHEELBASE: 24.5 in. (622.3mm)
OVERALL LENGTH: 30 in. (762mm)
WEIGHT: 59 oz. (1,671g)

CHASSIS

The chassis is a very long piece of aluminum that allows the car to flex under power, keeping the weight on the nose of the car.

DRIVETRAIN

The 2-speed transmission sends power to the wheels through a solid rear axle.

SUSPENSION

The front king pin is supported on a spring. The rear has a double wishbone suspension with linkages that hold the lower arm to the bulkhead instead of shocks.

BODY, WHEELS AND TIRES

The body is done nicely in black with a yellow flame paint job. The kit also includes a black plastic wing and high-traction foam drag slicks.

RATINGS

DURABILITY: So what would you do if you had a preproduction kit that had to go back to the manufacturer when you were finished with it? What if they raised the bar by telling you it was one of only three in the country? I bet you'd be pretty careful with it. Well, despite Megatech's trust in me not to destroy their dragster, accidents will happen. On one of our more courageous passes, the car went out of radio range. I had wisely installed a failsafe, which made quick work of slamming on the brakes. Unfortunately for me, though, the brakes kicked in right about the time the car broadsided a light pole down at the end of the lot. I went running after the car and was more than relieved to find that the lightning hadn't in fact struck my Rolling Thunder. I had noticed earlier that some of the parts were similar to ones used on the Megatech Nitro Razor XT. I straightened the radio tray that had bent slightly and replaced the dented plastic radio box with a shiny new one, and the dragster was on its way.

EASE OF USE: The Rolling Thunder comes with everything you need to get running. All you have to do is gas it up and break in the engine and you are ready to race. Off the line, the dragster has a ton of power and you will quickly learn that drag racing is more about finesse than it is about mashing the throttle like a caveman. The car responds well to adjustments and was easy to tune. In the hands of a knowledgeable racer, the Rolling Thunder can handle well and be great fun.

What we liked—

- ⊙ Looks so cool when it runs!
- ⊙ Some parts cross over from other kits, keeping parts hunting simple.
- ⊙ Tons of power on tap with M16 engine
- ⊙ Fairly adjustable

What could be improved—

- ⊙ Radio is a bit uncomfortable
- ⊙ Solid rear end makes power transfer a little uneven, especially on shifts
- ⊙ Adjustable wings would be cool.

CONCLUSION

I found the Megatech Rolling Thunder to be a well built dragster out of the box. It had enough chassis flex to provide ample forward bite and enough adjustment for even the most discriminating of racers. The solid axle rear end puts the power down with authority, and if you aren't careful with the throttle, the Rolling Thunder can and will get away from you just like a real dragster would.

I had to raise the shift point to alleviate some of the wheel spin from early shifting. Another possible solution would be to use a fluid-filled diff like the ones found in most nitro touring cars. With the various weight fluids, you would have better control over power transfer and be able to utilize the top end of the engine more efficiently by lowering the shift point back down. The chassis' suspension or lack of suspension keeps the weight forward and the nose on the ground. The fixed-link rear end keeps everything locked down, but the linkages that replace rear shock add a very handy tweak adjustment to the chassis.

Links

Megatech Intl., www.megatech.com,
 (201) 662-2800

For more information, please see our source guide on pg. 201. ⊙

Additional items needed: Glow igniter and fuel

ITEMS USED



Megatech High Velocity Racing Fuel—MTC503, \$12.99



Megatech Meganiter 2—MTC16161, \$14.99