

DRIVEN REVIEW

Text by Chris Kovachevich chrisk@rcdriver.com

Photos by Walter Sidas and Michelle Bateman

Just when you think that a niche was filled to standing room only, along comes a fresh face that somehow manages to part the crowd just wide enough to wiggle in. Himoto may be a newcomer to the RC hobby market (at least in North America), but its line of nitro off-roaders is both formidable *and* affordable – two things that will definitely facilitate vehicles such as the new Rancho Pro RTR making their way into quite a few RC garages. The big 1/8-scale Rancho comes in two flavors: regular (with a Taiwan-made Vertex .21 engine) and extra-crispy Pro (Team Infinity Japan .27). We are wringing out the Pro for this test. C'mon, now; when have you known us to test anything but the fastest horse in the stable?



FAST FACTS

MANUFACTURER: Himoto

VEHICLE: Rancho

CLASS: 1/8-scale nitro RTR monster truck

DRIVER: Beginner to intermediate nitro enthusiast

PRICE: \$339

SPEED (AS TESTED): 31.56 mph

ADDITIONAL ITEMS NEEDED: Fuel and fuel bottle, 12 AA batteries, glow igniter

HIMOTO USA

Rancho

PLOWIN' THE FIELDS...RC STYLE



THE RUNDOWN—

With any nitro-powered vehicle, the biggest contributing factor to its enjoyment by the average enthusiast is the engine. The folks at Himoto have this area covered with the Team Infinity Japan .27 rear exhaust engine. The engine mounts in line with the drivetrain in a layout similar to that of the Torpeda Buggy, with which the Rancho shares much of its basic design. The



Japan .27 is equipped with a state-of-the-art slide valve three-needle carburetor and a nicely curved exhaust header that dumps into a high-performance muffler. The powerful engine is equipped with a standard-style clutch bell that drives a normal-sized spur gear. A unique feature of the Rancho is that it is equipped with a slipper clutch that integrates into the spur gear. The slipper will contribute to both durability and drivability of the Rancho by providing some absorption of the driveline shocks normally encountered in off-road running. Long, steel driveshafts distribute power to the front and rear differentials which connect to the wheels by heavy-duty dogbone-style driveshafts. The diffs are of a racing-style, six-gear configuration that will provide a much longer life than the more commonly found four-gear setups in vehicles of this type. All drivetrain locations feature bearings for efficiency and durability. Braking duties are handled by dual discs both front and rear, and they work exceptionally well.

DRIVING IMPRESSIONS

Surface: unprepared, loose dirt – your average construction site

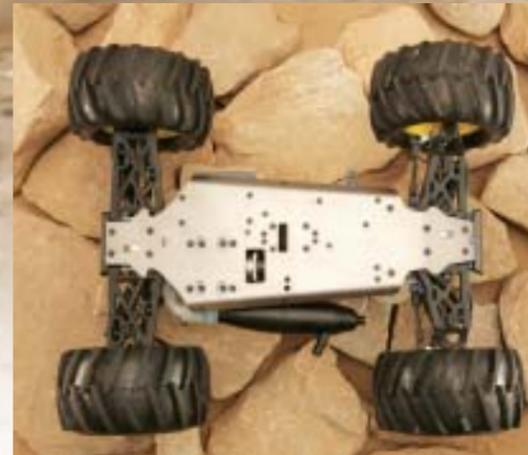
ACCELERATION AND BRAKING- The Rancho is quite impressive with the installed .27 Japan engine; simply stated, there is no substitute for cubic inches. Acceleration is excellent as was proven many times with runs off the miscellaneous piles of dirt around the construction site. The aluminum shocks did an excellent job of absorbing rain ruts and allowed the Rancho to be in control for the speeds attained. Stopping was excellent because of the combined efforts of the high torque throttle/brake servo and on-and-off power and quad disc brakes.

RATING: 9

STEERING- The Rancho is somewhat short when compared to the latest round of truggies, and when combined with deep offset wheels has a tendency to “push” or want to go straight when turned. The steering servo works well, but it is tough to overcome the fundamental geometric limitations of a vehicle that is almost as wide as it is long. Solve these issues with a quick stab of the brake to allow the truck to turn.

RATING: 8.0

JUMPING AND HANDLING- The Rancho drives quite well considering its almost-square footprint. As a result, throttle input tends to be a bit on the sensitive side when pressed to its limits. As long as you use a reasonable amount of throttle control, the Rancho is a fun vehicle to drive without any bad habits. As mentioned earlier, the truck does exhibit quite a bit of push when you attempt turns at full throttle.



INFO CENTER

CHASSIS—The backbone of the Rancho is its heavy-duty 3mm chassis, which is strategically milled out beneath the engine and center differential to allow those heavy components to sit closer to the ground. Purple-anodized aluminum angle braces stiffen the truck from front to back, and rolled-up edges help keep the chassis stiffer.

STEERING—The Rancho uses typical (for both 1/8-scale buggies and truggies) bellcrank steering with a built-in adjustable servo saver. Several adjustments are possible with the three-position Ackermann plate, and the well-designed steering knuckles allow full travel of the wheels.

SUSPENSION—The suspension of the Rancho is well designed with a racing-style steering knuckle front and a more traditional rear hub carrier. A unique feature of the Rancho is its spring-mounted lower control arms. Without breaking the lower control arm, these springs absorb the expected shocks that a beginning enthusiast will subject the vehicle to—nice innovation on the part of the folks at Himoto. Four equally sized, oil-filled shock absorbers with coil-over springs handle damping chores. The shocks are constructed of aluminum and feature dust boots to help prolong the life of the shock seals. We discovered no leaks or any other bad habits during testing, and if anything needs to be changed, it would be to lighter viscosity shock oil for better response. There are many tuning options with five upper shock-mounting positions and two lower positions available. The Rancho also features fully adjustable toe-in and camber in the front and adjustable camber in the rear.

DRIVETRAIN—The drivetrain of the Rancho features a unique slipper clutch that separates it from other truggies currently on the market. The slipper absorbs drivetrain shocks and allows equal transfer of power between the front and rear wheels for improved climbing and crawling abilities. **ENGINE SYSTEM—**Team Infinity's .27 engine is factory installed on nicely designed, finned and anodized engine mounts. This pull-start engine is easy to fire and tune with no problems after a few break-in tanks. It certainly has the guts to move the Rancho with authority, offering good bottom- and top-end performance. Certainly some of this performance can be credited to the SH Golden Dragon aluminum pipe which is mounted with a really nice shock absorbing spring. A 150cc fuel tank is quick-filling and leak free.

ELECTRONICS—The supplied two-channel FM radio is adequate for the task at hand. It is equipped with EPA adjustments for both throttle and steering channels and provides easy adjustment both on the workbench and on the fly. The transmitter is equipped with a plastic steering wheel, which does not provide as good a grip as the usual foam. The range of the radio system was good, and I encountered no glitching or other bad habits. Servos worked smoothly and were adequate for their intended uses, particularly the steering servo, which was surprisingly powerful and quick.

BODY, WHEELS AND TIRES—The Rancho is equipped with composite, snowflake-style wheels shod with medium-compound, chevron-treaded tires. Lightweight steel hexes attach the wheels to the drive axles—a great feature for durability. The Rancho comes with a nice-looking, lightweight pickup body. Arriving pre-painted and trimmed with a cool-looking (and highly visible) yellow flame-style paint job, our test truck certainly looks the part of a racing truck. Four individual body posts secure the body and have a good combination of resiliency and stiffness that should contribute to a long life for the body.

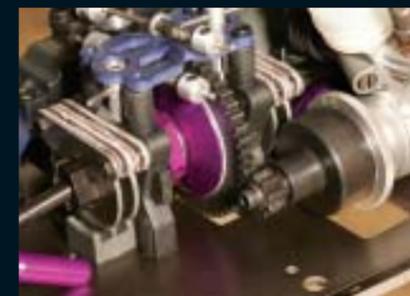
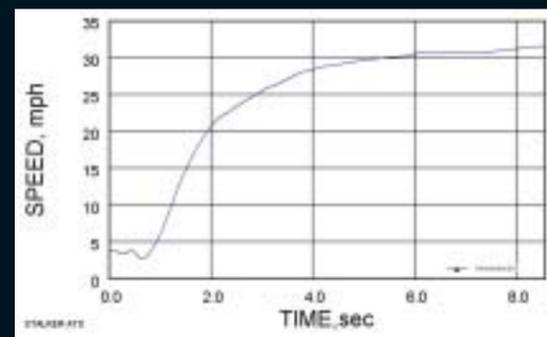


TECH SPECS

SCALE: 1/8
DRIVE: 4WD
LENGTH: 19.3 in. (490mm)
WIDTH: 15.7 in. (400mm)
WEIGHT: 139.3oz. (3950g)
WHEELBASE: 12.6 in. (320mm) to 13 in (330mm)
TRACK: 12 in. (305mm)
GROUND CLEARANCE: 3 in. (78mm)
ENGINE: Team Infinity Japan .27

BATTERY: (4-cell holder for AA cells)
TIRES: Himoto Chevron Tread
WHEELS: One-piece snowflake design, deep offset
ACCELERATION:
 0-10 mph: 1.22 sec.,
 0-20 mph: 1.92 sec.,
 0-30 mph: 5.38 sec.; 8.45sec @ 31.56 mph in 298.39 ft.

RADAR DATA



The inline style of engine mounting allows the Rancho to utilize a traditional two-shoe clutch driving a center-mounted spur gear—good, solid design.



The Rancho's FM radio has EPA for both the steering and throttle channels, making it ideal for setting the throttle and brake travels.



A unique spring shock absorber that is installed behind the front lower control links should contribute to the durability of the Rancho during those inevitable fixed object collisions.



Steering is accomplished with a vertical mounted servo driving an adjustable link that attaches to the steering bellcrank.

HELPFUL HINTS

GOT TO GET: 12 AA cells for radio and receiver, fuel and glow igniter

RECOMMENDED UPGRADES: Recommended Upgrades: Five-cell NiMH receiver battery **COMPETITORS INCLUDE:** Traxxas T-Maxx, Team Losi LST2, Team Associated MGT, OFNA Dominator, HPI Savage



AUTHOR'S OPINIONS AND RATINGS

Ratings: 1 to 10 (poor to excellent)

Rating Category: RTR Nitro Truggy

■ **CHASSIS**—The 3mm hard-coated aluminum chassis works well in providing a solid basis for the suspension. Lots of good thought went into the countersunk screws (a *must* for off-road operation) and aluminum standoffs for the upper plate.

RATING-9

■ **SUSPENSION**—The Rancho uses a proven suspension design augmented with the unique spring mounting of the lower control arms. The aluminum shocks are well suited to the task and do a good job of damping. The Rancho is controllable over a variety of surfaces and lacks only a little bit in the turning area.

RATING-8

■ **DRIVETRAIN**—The unique slipper/center spur arrangement contributes a lot to the durability of the Rancho's drivetrain. Though not state-of-the-art, the steel dogbone drive works well, and we encountered no failures in our vigorous test.

RATING-8.5

■ **ENGINE**—Lots of horsepower is available from the Team Infinity Japan .27 engine. Good running and easy tuning are qualities that are a must in this segment of the market, and our engine came through 100 percent. The progressive power band allowed good control of the big Rancho, making the driving experience more pleasant.

RATING-9.5

■ **ELECTRONICS**—A 27MHz FM radio system is included with the Rancho. Only the plastic wheel mars this system; it is somewhat slippery and hard to grip. The servos are adequate for the job at hand – smooth working with well-adjusted linkages. A high-torque, metal-gear servo is used in the steering position, and a high-speed throttle servo is standard.

RATING-7.5

■ **BODY, WHEELS AND TIRES**—A good-looking pickup-styled body is included with the Rancho. It fits well and looks good with its screened paint in bright colors. The wheels are plastic deep dish in a highly visible yellow color and both strong and lightweight. The medium compound chevron treaded tires are not equipped with foam inserts and are a bit on the bouncy side as a result.

RATING-7

■ **DURABILITY**—The Himoto Rancho is a very durable vehicle. We encountered no failures of any type during our test. The unique shock-absorbing nature of the lower control arms saved us from a couple of encounters with solid objects – a nice feature that works well.

RATING-10

■ **EASE OF USE**—The Rancho is a very user-friendly vehicle. This monster truggy is well laid out; the radio box is easily accessed for AA battery installation; the engine starts and runs well, and we encountered no breakage during our test. The Rancho is a good value and should provide lots of enjoyment with very few problems.

RATING-8.5



The Rancho features six gear differentials in both front and rear for durability.



Coil-over, oil-filled shocks and aluminum steering knuckles contribute to the good handling of the Rancho.



The rear suspension of the Rancho is comprised of a lower composite arm and an adjustable upper control link.



The .27 engine featured in the Rancho is both easy to tune and fast—a great combination in any vehicle.



A well-designed and sealed radio box is a necessary item for the damp and dusty conditions we all encounter.

WHAT WE LIKED

- ⊙ .27 engine
- ⊙ Durable construction with unique lower control arms.
- ⊙ Attractive, brightly painted body.
- ⊙ Nice shielding over the brake discs to protect from fuel spills

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- ⊙ Transmitter wheel should provide better grip.
- ⊙ A lighter viscosity of shock oil would provide better performance in a larger number of circumstances.

CONCLUSION

The Rancho is a complete, ready-to-run vehicle. The folks at Himoto have achieved a good, solid design resulting in a durable, fun-to-drive vehicle.

The engine runs well, and the .27 engine provides brisk performance for this type of vehicle. Offroad handling could be improved with lighter shock oil combined with a firm insert for the tires, but these items frequently need upgrading in vehicles of this type.

The Himoto Rancho will make an excellent first nitro vehicle. The engine starts easily and runs well with a minimum of adjustment. All electronics were properly adjusted and worked well throughout our test. ☺

Links

Byron Originals, www.byronfuels.com, (712) 364-3165

Himoto, distributed by Myers Trading Co., (252) 946-1248, www.himotoUSA.com

For more information, please see our source guide on pg. 193.