

DRIVEN REVIEW

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FAST FACTS

MANUFACTURER: CEN Racing

VEHICLE: Mini Madness

CLASS: 1/18 scale monster

DRIVER: Everyone looking for small scale fun

PRICE: \$149 (estimate)

SPEED (AS TESTED): 15.7 mph



Cat-like reflexes, monster truck looks, and a 540 motor in a 1/18 scale truck. Sounds like a recipe for fun if you ask me. As I sit down each month to write these words you read, I try to find that little something that will draw you in and make you want to flip the page to see what's in store. This month, I think the first sentence pretty much sums it up: "Cat-like reflexes, monster truck looks, and a 540 motor in a 1/18 scale truck."

POWER and PUNCH
in a small package

CEN MINI MADNESS



DRIVING IMPRESSIONS

SURFACE: ASPHALT/ CONCRETE/GRASS

As with most review testing, my first few minutes were spent having fun in the driveway and front yard. Due to low ground clearance, the Mini Madness really struggled through the grass, so I kept activity limited to the driveway and street.

JUMPING AND HANDLING—Despite its monster truck looks, the Mini Madness doesn't handle like a monster truck. With a track width that is wider than the truck's wheelbase, the Mini Madness handles great. To my surprise, it was fun to try to flip the truck. Drive the truck full throttle into a tight turn, stab the brake and the truck will just not roll. The inside rear tire will lift; but that's about it. On smoother surfaces, like my garage floor, the tires will actually squeal as the truck works through a corner. At almost 16 mph, it may not sound fast, but you need to remember that the Mini Madness has a wheelbase of only seven and a half inches. Small jumps are no big deal for the Mini Madness, but I tumbled the truck quite a few times on larger jumps. Those 2.2" tires act as fair-

ly-sizeable gyroscopes on such a small truck. After learning the truck's in-flight attitude, things improved a bit.

RATING- 9

ON AND OFF-POWER STEERING—The small size and fairly wide track width of the Mini Madness make for a good bit of fun while driving. Not once did I have a complaint or the slightest issue with steering. With a RTR weight of less than four pounds, it doesn't take much to make the truck respond to steering inputs. Whether on or off the throttle, this little truck goes where you point it. The little truck reminded me of a cat chasing a scared mouse, darting to and fro with seemingly effortless precision.

RATING- 10

ACCELERATION AND BRAKING—The standard size 540 motor doesn't have a problem getting less than four pounds of truck moving; but I was surprised to see that top speeds didn't extend past 16 mph. With a 540 and 2.2s, I expected top speeds on par with

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CHASSIS—The current trend in 1/10 scale monsters is to run a Twin Vertical Plate (TVP) design chassis. The Mini Madness carries this trend over to the small scale crowd by way of a set of composite chassis plates. Each chassis plate has slots for the battery, receiver, and motor. Battery access is made easy, thanks to rubber "wings" that retain the battery in the chassis. **STEERING**—A standard size steering servo takes residence between the front bulkheads of the Mini Madness. A Kimbrough servo saver transfers torque from the servo to the knuckles through adjustable toe links. The front steering knuckles feature built-in steering stops to limit knuckle travel. **SUSPENSION**—Cantilever suspensions are normally used on solid axle vehicles to increase suspension travel. Despite using independent suspension, the Mini Madness has cantilevers at each corner. Wait...it gets better. What's unique is that, unlike most cantilever setups, the cantilever ratio is 1:1. Typically this 1:1 ratio wouldn't increase suspension travel. The increase in travel comes from eliminating the cantilever pushrod and replacing it with a second shock. Now both shocks are allowed to compress and these two short shocks serve as one long shock. Confused yet? It's real easy—there are a total of four cantilevers and eight friction shocks keeping the truck under control. **DRIVETRAIN**—A 21-tooth pinion and 78-tooth spur transfer power from the motor through a slipper clutch to the 3-gear transmission. The tranny's input and counter gears are metal while the drivegear is plastic. Steel diff cups send torque to 1/8" steel dogbones. **BEARING**—Supported steel stub axles and aluminum drive hexes round out the drivetrain.

MOTOR AND ELECTRONICS—A standard 540 motor provides a good amount of torque to get the Mini Madness up to speed but isn't fast enough to intimidate newcomers to the hobby. **WHEELS AND TIRES**—A set of chrome, six hole wheels with 12mm drive hexes add a little "bling" to the Mini Madness. Glued to the chrome wheels, you'll find a set of 2.2 mini-pin tires that provide plenty of traction in most situations. **BODY**—Cross a desert racer with a monster truck and you'll have the body for the Mini Madness. The body is pre-trimmed and decal'd with "Mini Madness" decals that would look at home on the cover of a rock band's album. White, black, green, and blue "paint" graphics are printed on the body. **FINAL ASSEMBLY**—Install eight AA batteries, plug the 6-cell stick pack into the included wall charger and go. That's it!



a RTR stadium truck. I also expected to see a fair amount of wheelie potential due to the short wheelbase of the Mini Madness; but thanks to the truck's low battery placement, the only way to get the front end up is to hit a little reverse, then nail the throttle. Bringing the little truck to a halt wasn't an issue. From wide open throttle to full brakes, the truck doesn't get loose or unpredictable.

RATING- 9

SURFACE: CONSTRUCTION AREA - LOOSE DIRT

JUMPING AND HANDLING—A seven and a quarter inch wheelbase can get you in trouble when trying to tackle large off-road jumps. I had to make a few bobbled attempts before I got the hang of airing the little truck out. Initially I was a bit over-eager and bit off more of a jump than the little truck could chew. Thankfully, I didn't break anything. Through rough sections, the truck would bobble and bounce. Friction shocks effectively became pogo sticks in rutted, washed out sections. Oil shocks should improve things a bit. On smooth, loose areas, the Mini Madness is a blast.

RATING- 7

ON AND OFF-POWER STEERING—On-power steering was more of a throttle steer affair. I have a habit of swinging the rear wide and drifting through turns on the dirt, but with the short wheelbase and 2WD setup of the Mini Madness, I found myself spinning out a few times while taking tight corners under the throttle. Off-power, there was a good bit of weight transfer and the truck felt pretty well planted. I attribute this in part to the wide track width of the Mini Madness.

RATING- 8

ACCELERATION AND BRAKING—In the dirt, I found myself wishing the Mini Madness was 4WD. A light truck, loose dirt, and 2WD make for a good bit of wheel spin out of the hole, if you don't work the throttle. If you simply nail the throttle trigger, the rear tires will shoot a bit of roost into the air as the truck looks for traction. Braking was just as stable on the dirt as on asphalt with a bit of a slide.

RATING- 8

CEN MINI MADNESS



Dual friction shocks and cantilevers with a 1:1 ratio at each corner suspend the Mini Madness. The whole setup provides 1.5 in. of suspension travel.



The Mini Madness' steering knuckles feature upper and lower pivot balls as well as steering stops to limit steering travel. A standard size servo provides plenty of torque to steer the 2.2 tires.



A standard 540 motor provides grunt to get the Mini Madness moving. Steel diff cups, dogbones, and stub axles transfer power from the 3-gear diff to the rear wheels.



A 21-tooth pinion and 78-tooth spur gear transfer power from the motor to the transmission through a rather sizeable slipper clutch.



Up front, a spring-loaded bumper absorbs the majority of head-on collisions. This feature was well-used throughout testing.



Rubber battery retainers make battery swaps quick and easy. CEN's ultra-compact ESC features one-touch setup and nestles snugly between the Mini Madness' frame rails.

The receiver box and ESC fit well between the frame rails. Access to the receiver is as easy as removing a single body pin and sliding the RX out.



The Mini Madness features a solid, compact bushing supported by a 3-gear transmission.

Chrome, six hole 2.2 wheels with mini pin tires provide increased stability and good traction in most situations.

TECH SPECS

SCALE: 1/18

DRIVE: 2WD

LENGTH: 11.5 in. (292mm)

WIDTH: 10.75 in. (273mm)

WEIGHT: 45.68 oz. (1295g)

WHEELBASE: 7.25 in. (184mm)

TRACK: Rear: 10.75 in. (273mm),
Front: 10.75 in. (273mm)

PINION/SPUR: 21/78

GROUND CLEARANCE: 1.5 in.
(38mm)

TIRES: 4 in. (101.4mm) diameter,
2.1 in. (53.4mm) wide

WHEELS: 2.1 in. (53mm) diameter,
1.9 in. (48.9mm) wide

SUSPENSION TRAVEL:
1.5 in. (38mm)

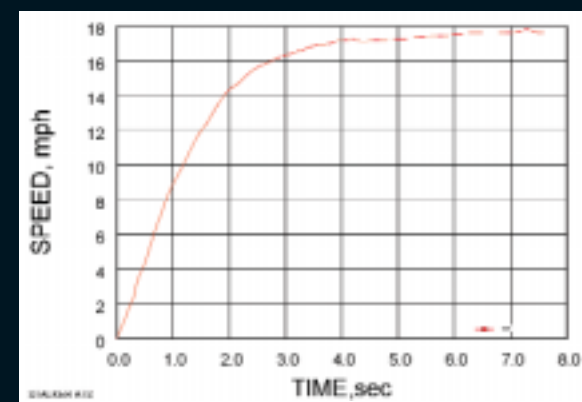
HELPFUL HINTS

GOT TO GET: Eight AA transmitter batteries

RECOMMENDED UPGRADES:

Oil shocks, peak charger, Deans connectors

RADAR DATA



CEN MINI MADNESS



CONCLUSION

The Mini Madness is a unique vehicle. With monster truck looks and cat-like reflexes, the Mini Madness is fun to drive. After swapping in a Novak 5800 brushless system, the truck really came to life. Durability is excellent. Between Greg, my four year-old daughter and my own bad driving, we couldn't do more than bust a servo saver. Whether you're looking for your first RC or simply something for a change of pace, give the Mini Madness some consideration. ☺

Links

CEN Racing, www.cenracing.com, (717) 792-1923

Novak Electronics Inc., www.teamnovak.com, (949) 833-8873

For more information, please see our source guide on pg. 225.

WHAT WE LIKED

- ☺ Included 1800mAh battery
- ☺ Very nimble
- ☺ Included charger lowers initial cost

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- ☺ Four-wheel drive would be nice
- ☺ Oil shocks
- ☺ Long charge time with included charger



A 7.2V stick pack, wall charger, radio, tools, and pre-painted and decaled body are all included with the Mini Madness. You'll need to pick up eight AA batteries to get going.



AUTHOR'S OPINIONS AND RATINGS

■ **CHASSIS**—There's not much to the chassis. A couple of composite TVPs span from front to rear bulkheads. I liked the low battery placement and sealed RX box. Thanks to a simple chassis layout maintenance is fairly easy. Rubber battery holders make for a tool-free battery swap.

RATING-7

■ **DRIVETRAIN**—Motor, pinion, spur, 3-gear transmission...it doesn't get much simpler. The drivetrain is nearly bulletproof for such a small vehicle. I was surprised to find aluminum drive hexes; but would like to see, at a minimum, a bearing-supported driveline.

RATING-7

■ **STEERING**—When driving a truck with a seven inch wheelbase, you'd expect spot-on steering and that's exactly what you get. Despite the monster truck appearance, the Mini Madness doesn't handle like a monster truck. Carving corners with the Mini Madness is a point-and-shoot affair.

RATING-9

■ **SUSPENSION**— Thanks to a cantilevered dual shock setup on each corner, the Mini Madness has pretty respectable suspension travel for being such a small vehicle. The suspension arms are durable and took a pretty severe beating from me as well as everyone else in the office. My only complaint is the stock friction shocks. I'd love to see smoother, oil-filled shocks.

RATING-7

■ **MOTOR**— A 1/18 scale truck with a standard size 540 motor screams overkill, but I was surprised to see that top speed was only 15.7 mph. On the other hand, a stock 540 will handle the toughest abuse and run for years.

RATING-7

■ **RADIO, BODY, WHEELS AND TIRES**— The included 2-channel AM radio was comfortable in my hands. The included wheel and tire combo help provide excellent handling and didn't wear too bad under constant asphalt abuse. The stock body seems a bit small in relation to the wheels and tires.

RATING-9

■ **DURABILITY**—In a word...impressive. I know for a fact that everyone at the office thrashed on this little truck, then sent it to me to review. Although obvious battle scars were present, the little truck always bounced back for more. The spring-loaded front bumper protected the Mini Madness through the worst abuse we could throw at it. The only damaged part was a busted servo saver inflicted during Greg's thrash test. The servo survived. So did Greg.

RATING-10

■ **EASE OF USE**—Other than plugging in the stick pack to the included wall charger and installing AA batteries into the radio, there's not much required to get the Mini Madness into action.

RATING-10