

The Golden Age of the ‘Savage’ Nitro Truck: HPI Savage X and XL

The HPI Savage line has been around for a while. Founded with the ‘Savage 21’ back in the early 2000s, it has spawned a full 15 different models to date, and more could well be on the way. And there are some good reasons why the Savage family has grown so big and lasted so long; purpose-built for absolute toughness, they are considered by many to be the ultimate bashing (stunt) truck. With huge tyres, super-tall suspension and a whole host of other supporting features, Savage trucks are and always have been able to survive the most gruelling treatment.

But, as you might guess, not all Savage trucks are born equal. Some were always bound to stand out from the crowd and become the quintessential Savage models. And these vehicles, to our minds at least, are the HPI Savage X and XL. The Savage X was so successful that it became the most popular Big Block monster truck in the world – ever – while its bigger brother, the Savage XL, took the Savage name super-size, building its reputation as the loudest, brashiest, bolshiest Savage ever to be built. Both trucks were also honoured with the prestigious AMT ‘Car of the Year – Monster Truck’ Award (the Savage X in 2007 and the Savage XL in 2009), proving the respect held for them by the RC community. While they might no longer be the most technically advanced vehicles in the range, they are undoubtedly the most iconic pieces of kit that the Savage line has produced so far.

Let’s take a closer look at their background. Back when it was released, the Savage X was the third major upgrade of the basic Savage vehicle (being a direct descendant of the Savage 21 and Savage 25). It maintained almost all of the classic features of the earlier Savage vehicles in some form, but you’d be hard pushed to find a component that hadn’t been improved in some way. Upgrading the Roto Start system to a Roto Start 2 design; lowering the engine, radio, and centre gear box by 5mm for a lower centre of gravity and better handling; improving access to a whole host of maintenance points; and altering the design in myriad other subtle ways, the Savage X was a lesson in perfecting an already great design.

But there were bigger alterations, too; the classic Nitro Star S25 engine that had powered a generation of Savage trucks was replaced with the all-new Nitro Star F4.1, which added power and torque to the already acclaimed big block engine. Today it is still considered to be among the most reliable and most durable of the HPI engines, thanks to its innovative crank case design, extra cooling and numerous tweaks to the cylinder, piston, connecting rod and crankshaft that perfected the internal structure. You might find a more powerful 1:8 engine elsewhere these days, but you’ll be hard pushed to find a better loved one.

It was in the April of 2008 that the Savage XL followed, bringing with it a new K5.9cc (.36 cubic inch) engine – the biggest ever installed in an RTR Savage truck – and an elongated chassis to support its greater size and bulk. It had a 390mm wheelbase, 570mm length and immense 7” diameter Terra Pin tyres, making it bigger than the rest of the Savage range in every dimension and more confident to boot. The unapologetically chunky ‘Gigante’ body shell and XL colour schemes were all about making it the most eye-catching truck on the track; the Savage XL was going to perform brilliantly, and look the part while doing it.

HPI also used the Savage XL's size to fit in even more durability features, making it a virtually indestructible machine. The 2.5mm thick aluminium alloy used to create the TVP (Twin Vertical Plate) chassis on other Savage models was bumped up to 3mm; HPI added dual fibre disk brakes, aluminium alloy clutch shoes, larger diff outdrives and axles, pinion bevel gears and a machined brake hub; the clutchbell, dogbones and driveshafts were also reinforced. In short, the Savage XL was not a machine to be messed with.

Both the Savage X and Savage XL have in fact spawned spin-offs of their own, which only enhances their reputation, especially when some of these vehicles have been so successful. The Savage X was the base platform for three new models, namely the Savage X SS (a very similar truck that simply added a bit more engine power and some enhanced durability features to deal with the extra engine grunt), the Savage X 4.6 (which was a ready-to-run version of the same vehicle with just a few more adjustments) and the Savage X 4.6 Reverse (an RTR version with the added benefit of reverse drive). The HPI Savage X SS 4.6 was also honoured as the 'Car of the Year – Monster Truck' by popular German RC car magazine AMT in 2008, a real commendation of the Savage X spin-off range.

The Savage XL, in the meantime, has become the platform for a truly exciting new development: the first petrol-fuelled vehicle to be released as part of the HPI Savage range. Christened the 'Savage XL Octane', this much anticipated (and much delayed) model was due to hit the shelves first in 2012 and then on the 24th of June 2013, but as we speak (August 2013), it is still at the pre-order stage with no confirmed release date. It is to be a 15cc, 2-stroke engine-powered vehicle with a whole host of impressive features including a composite triple disc brake system and oversized fuel tank alongside the proven Savage XL components.

But these vehicles would have been nowhere without the extensive development that went into their immediate predecessors, the HPI Savage X and Savage XL; a pair of classic HPI vehicles that will be remembered long after the last of them has given up the ghost. And that certainly isn't going to happen any time soon!

Rough, Tough and Ready for Action: Our Review of the HSP 94270 and 94270PRO Lightning Trucks

This brand new release from HSP comes roaring out of their factories, ready-to-run and raring to go! Taking the HSP short course truck design to the next level, this has a set of specifications that give it the right to its confident façade, including ultra-strength endurance features and the choice of two high performing motors and related systems. Lean, mean and very, very efficient, the HSP Lightning is about to take your local RC track by storm!

In terms of the core features (motor, battery pack and the like), HSP give you a choice of two specification sets. The plain 94270, the cheaper and clunkier of the Lightning versions, can be found with a high torque RC 540 brushed motor and a highly precise SP03018 electronic speed control (ESC), the duo powered by a supplied 7.2V 1800mAh NiMH battery pack. By no means a bad setup, this will provide the less experienced with everything they need to start collecting that invaluable racing experience. On the next level up, however, the 94270PRO

beats its slower brother hands down with a 3300kV brushless motor and an excellent brushless ESC (45A type) that has its own built-in fan. This set also comes with the power upgrade of a 7.2V 2000mAh battery pack and has the option of installing an 11.1V 3600mAh Li-Po battery for even greater speed. With these choices, you can have your pick of price and race potential – but both are pretty darn good.

The other core features behind these vehicles are no less impressive. Both four wheel drive, both with three channels of 2.4GHz radio control and both featuring high performance front/rear differentials, they deliver smooth and efficient driving, aided by their respective gear ratios of 1:8.133 (94270) and 1:9.354 (94270PRO). Anti-skid off road knobbly tyres are paired with 86x42mm wheels and flattered by shiny radiated wheel rims; they also aid this truck's performance, giving it grip, looks and (thanks to the long-wearing material of the tyres) longevity.

Of course, you'll remember that we mentioned it being kind of tough. If that's a criterion you're looking for, then feast your eyes on these awesome endurance specs! From the aluminium shock towers to the powerful front and rear suspension mechanisms and from the reinforced centre drive joint to the anodized aluminum heatproof guard cover on the motor, this is a vehicle that won't give up without a fight. It also includes front and rear bumpers to protect against sudden impacts and accidents, not to mention the impressive genuine oil filled aluminium capped shocks with progressive springs, which will increase the longevity of the truck. Last but not least, the Lightning trucks include an HSP-standard extra large anodized aluminum radio tray within the tough chassis, providing an exceptionally stable and secure rest for the servo and receiver.

Apart from their huge tyres and impressive durability, the HSP Lightning trucks are made especially suitable for off-road racing by their 26mm ground clearance and easy repair system. The former keeps the underside of the vehicle out of harm's way over even the roughest of off-road terrain, while the latter ensures that if any damage is done, you should be able to alter and replace the parts you need to with ease. That, or it shouldn't cost much to get someone else to do it!

Returning to the subject of looks, the broad range of pre-painted body options that accompany each version of the 94270 Lightning will help you to make the most of its already attractive and beefy-yet-streamlined shape. Fitted with many authentic-looking decorative features and paint details to make it look like a true scale short course truck, the Lightning models are just begging to be displayed in between their rough 'n' tough outdoor runs.

That might not be too much to ask for, considering their relatively small 1:10 size. A length of 462mm is not inconsiderable, and gives the Lightning enough of a sense of presence to be a characterful truck, but means that it is easily portable and wouldn't be too inconvenient to take indoors and show off now and again. Of course, showing it off outdoors and in action is infinitely preferable, but we bet you'll love it so much that you'll take every opportunity! A height of 160mm and a wheelbase of 265mm complete the neatly proportioned model.

The bottom line? With so many great things in common, either of these new HSP models would make a responsive, reliable and durable addition to your collection, packing impressive power and great handling features to make a truck that you'll be proud of. The level of speed you think you need is a personal choice, of course, and we'll leave it that way;

with so many top features shared, we're certain that neither of these short course models will let you down!

A Lean, Mean, Bashing Machine: Our Review of the HSP “Savagery” Nitro Monster Truck

The name of this truck is pure genius. It implies everything you could want from a nitro powered off road monster truck – power, ferocity, endurance, ruthlessness on the track, the lot – in just one word. Savagery. Yes, it sounds like the name of a champion. The question is, can this vehicle live up to it? Well, with a strong basic model and a lot of upgrade options to choose from, we think it's perfectly possible to create one that can.

We'll begin by looking at the features common to all HSP 94862 Savagery trucks, however. The model itself is a 1:8 scale size creation that measures 510mm from end to end, 380mm from side to side and 250mm from top to bottom, so it's off to a good start. It may not be as truly monstrous as a 1:5 scale petrol brute, but its overall 325mm wheelbase will give it an undeniable presence on the track. And, speaking of first impressions, it's quite a looker too; there are four sweet pre-painted designs available for its tough polycarbonate body, which is well-formed and provides an authentic appearance.

But what can't this outer layer tell you? Take a look at the insides and you'll find a number of impressive features that are shared by every version of the HSP Savagery. Impressive durability is catered for by the DHS Aluminium 6061 type chassis, which comes with an anodised titanium finish and effective aluminium shock towers; the monster truck also features tough front and rear bumpers and full four wheel A-arm double wishbone suspension to protect the main vehicle from wear and tear. The additional shock absorbers are oil filled and aluminium capped, featuring progressive springs with 55% more travel than previous HSP shock designs. It's a promising set of features which will surely make this truck last.

The next question is, are the rest of the features worth all this protection? The answer is a resounding yes. This truck is designed for top level performance, from its high torque, metal geared steering servo (complete with factory installed aluminium alloy servo saver), which can move a monstrous 13kg, to its easy-replace twin disc brake system, which ensures you can have a powerful brake response for as long as the truck lives. Handling is further improved by the main and differential gear options for each wheel – a great advantage for manoeuvring at speed – and the four wheel drive system, a staple for trucks at this level. The 2.4GHz digital radio also comes pre-installed. Especially noteworthy are the trims included in the steering system, which add to the efficiency of the vehicle; steering trim with end point adjustment (EPA) and throttle trim are both notable enhancements.

In addition to this, users will benefit from pre-installed front and rear anti-roll stabiliser bars, a front and rear sway bar link and new extra-light gear boxes. The engines available, although there are some key variations between them, are all made to an advanced, high compression, 3.44cc, fully ball raced nitro motor design, serviced by an extra powerful slide carburettor. The model even includes an extra large polycarbonate fuel tank – in all its versions – that offers an impressive 125cc volume to lengthen your run times.

This whole system is supported by wheels and LH4 tyres as effective as they are eye-catching. 150mm across, 90mm wide and expertly textured for uni-directional off-road driving, the chrome finished beauties give the HSP Savagery a sizeable 78mm ground clearance, keeping its underside out of harm's way on rough terrain.

All in all, we have few quibbles with the HSP Savagery's main design, from its size and appearance to its steering features, general strength and engine performance... So why have we left a question mark over the vehicle's champion potential?

The unfortunate truth is that not all HSP Savagery models are created equal. The key difference between the versions is the engine size; it's such a vital part in determining whether a vehicle will be a success or a failure and, in this case, your decision is the make-or-break. With options starting from a tiddly 18CXP engine, you need to be careful that what you're getting will be powerful enough to break you out of the nitro beginners' zone.

The good news is that with enough searching and a little more money, you can bump up your Savagery's engine to as much as a huge 28CXP spec, giving you all the power you'll need to become a champion. It's also worth mentioning that those less confident of handling such a monster can happily buy a few grades down, getting all of the great features listed above and probably for a cut price, then make the upgrade themselves when they feel they are ready for it.

Another optional upgrade is the inclusion of a high flow air filter/cleaner, which comes pre-installed. Most sellers choose to include this, but if it's important to you then make sure you check.

So, what's the overall conclusion? If you make sure you get the engine size appropriate to your needs, then this truck is an excellent bet. Its core systems – steering, power, damage limitation etc. – will offer all that you need for a truck that will be powerful, responsive, manoeuvrable and long-lasting. And since you have to make the call on the engine spec, the HSP Savagery will be just as savage as you want it to be.

Bigger, Better, Faster, Stronger: Official Upgrades to the HSP 94123 Flying Fish Drift Car

Remember the original 94123 version of the Flying Fish? When the 94203 model was released as its successor, we thought it was all over for the original and, well, for the basic brushed motor version, it could be. The 94203 is so slick, so functional, so fantastic that no one can really say the basic 94123 is better. But the story doesn't end there; the 94123 Flying Fish strain has launched a comeback, and big time! Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for us to introduce the HSP 94123TOP and 94123PRO, the brushless drift cars that could yet revolutionise your RC collection.

Specialised for drifting in all of the great ways that made the original Flying Fish so popular, the 94123TOP and 94123PRO are certain to perform on that front. Arriving already set to the front/rear camber, toe-in, and body level settings that HSP believe will deliver the best drift,

these vital variables are also fully adjustable for easy tweaking and personal customisation. In short, they've made it easy for you, but you're the one in charge. The same high performance anti-skid solid compound drift tyres also feature here, fitted to robust pre-mounted wheels with chrome plated spoke rims for a killer combination of the directional speed and toughness required for real drifting action. Four wheel drive is, of course, another feature of this car, providing the means for achieving consistent drifting action whatever the conditions, and you will also be able to count on the enhanced strength suspension arms, which are designed to increase the lifespan of the drift car.

These models also follow in the impressive footsteps of the original 94123 with their quality handling features, giving you perfect control throughout your moves. The high performance brushless ESC that is exclusive to the TOP/PRO models is paired with the top-of-the-range #80310 2.4GHz intelligent digital radio control system from the original, and intelligent, interference-resistant system used through the HSP range to give you ultimate command. The responsive front steering system will also be invaluable for executing sharp turns, while the high performance front/rear differentials and 1:6.052 gear ratio add the finishing touches to a vehicle that will respond quickly and efficiently to your every command, enabling controlled driving and drifting.

Likewise, the toughness of these models will also see them through many an unplanned manoeuvre, as well as the ones you've perfected! The extra large front bumper incorporates a defensive foam layer, providing protection against sudden head-on impacts, while the quality materials of the chassis (graphite mixed ABS Monocoque) and the working parts (mainly anodized aluminium and alloys) lend the car further strength. Protection from wear and tear is also provided by the same oil filled aluminium capped shock absorbers used in the original Flying Fish, complete with progressive springs, and HSP's now standard shock towers to the front and rear of the vehicle.

So far, so good, but many will be thinking: "But the basic 94123 had all of this, too... What's so special about these?" Real HSP fans, on the other hand, will already have guessed. If you're familiar with the TOP or PRO labels added to HSP cars, you know they can only mean one thing – a super-efficient brushless motor powering all the rest of that top-class gear. Replacing the brushed class standard RC 540 motor and brushed ESC featured in the original 94123 model with one of two hot brushless versions starting at 3300kV, the 94123TOP and 94123PRO are really upping the 94123 series' game.

With one of those fantastic motors, the 94123 Flying Fish becomes a real dream come true. Not only is it a great drifting car, as evidenced by the specialised drifting, handling and protection features described above, but it is also a super-fast on road race car in its own right. Even if drifting were never to be a part of its day-to-day, it would still be an excellent racing vehicle for either indoor or outdoor use, a real champion in the right hands. Perhaps now you're beginning to see why we're so excited by the new versions of this car!

And HSP aren't done, either. Additional features such as the LED head and tail lights enhance the enjoyment and professional look of these vehicles, which come with a range of attractive pre-painted body colour schemes to choose from. This ensures that you can truly have a vehicle to match your tastes, and one which will look good whatever the light conditions. And you needn't worry about assembly and care either; these vehicles arrive in all-inclusive fully pre-assembled kits and are fantastically easy to care for – perfect!

So, to sum it all up? What we loved about the old Flying Fish models was the way they incorporated all of these high-class drifting features while still being a great car for simple road racing – and all for a price comparable with your average on road car. It was like getting two cars in one, for the price of one! These two new models, with their high performance racing motors, have raised the Flying Fish's game again, and give you a brushless on road race car that can compete with the best (not only brushed motor models) as well as being up there with the drifting champions. It's two cars in one again, and this time the sides are evenly matched. So whether you're a racer with a side line in drifting, or a drifter who likes the occasional race, you need never buy another style of on road car again! An RC revolution? Just you wait and see.