


FULL-SIZE SIDE BY SIDE TEST

PREDATOR X18 INTIMIDATOR





Fast, fun and cost-effective

By the Staff of Dirt Wheels

□ You've seen them on the trails, at the dunes and in the pages of *Dirt Wheels*: these highly modified, \$50,000-plus Rhinos, Teryxs and Rangers. Wealthy folks are investing tens of thousands of dollars in machines that were originally designed to get hunters in and out of the deep woods, and they produce results that are no more sport-worthy than an average stock quad.

While Polaris did a decent job in coming out with a sport UTV with the Ranger RZRS, even that machine is only an upgraded version of a machine that was meant to drive slowly on tight trails.

Over the years, we have tested compact, purpose-built, long-travel buggies such as the Drakart and ATV Racing Specialties cars and given them rave reviews. The latest entry into this segment is called the Predator Off Road X18 Intimidator.

The X18 (\$28,000) and the \$17,000 X18K (Kit car) are compact, two-wheel-drive, long-travel buggies that will run circles around even the most modified Yamaha Rhinos on the planet. The core of the X18 is a strong, two-seat, Mig welded, Chromoly chassis, and a 2.2-liter Chevy Ecotec engine. This is the same engine used in most of Chevrolet's mid-sized and compact cars. In racing, the engine finds itself in another off-road class called Trophy Lite (Mini Trophy Trucks), Midget Cars and many other racing disciplines.

In the X18, the four-valve, dual-overhead cam, four-banger engine is mated to a fully automatic CVT transmission, just like you would find in most 4x4 ATVs and UTVs sold today. In stock trim, the CVT will allow this car to get up to 70 mph. With different, easy-to-change clutch settings, speeds could break the 100 mph mark.

COCKPIT

The cabin of the X18 is laid out just like a race car, with easy-to-read

gauges, accessory switches, a removable steering wheel and a passenger grab handle. The clean-looking dashboard also contains two keyed ignitions. One is a beginner, low-speed ignition, and the other is the full-power sport ignition. This is a great safety feature all high-horsepower ATVs and UTVs should have.

More safety in the cockpit is found in the five-point, Simpson seat belts and window nets. Both seats are not only adjustable, they have some suspension damping and are heated. That's a nice touch, especially for cold, winter mornings or night rides that we love to do.

Even more, the cabin is fully enclosed with a gel-coated Fiberglass roof, side panels and an ultra-thick aluminum skid plate. Entering the vehicle is not hard, as the doors are easy to step over and the window secures in place with little effort.

SUSPENSION

Outside of the car, fully independent, long travel suspension is found on all four corners. Up front, large Chromoly A-arms allow for an incredible 20 inches of travel. You are lucky to get a foot of travel out of an everyday, modified UTV. On all four corners of the X18, suspension movement is controlled by two reservoir-equipped Vogtland shocks. One shock houses the large coil spring to hold the 1950-pound car off of the ground. The other is equipped with two external bypass circuits that allow you to easily fine-tune the compression and rebound damping depending on the type of terrain you are driving on.

Twin shocks of the same design are also found on the rear corners of the car. There they are connected to large Chromoly trailing arms (similar to a Can-Am Outlander) offering up 18 inches of travel. The arms, front and rear are all powder coated for an easy-to-maintain finish.

INTIMIDATOR



In bone-stock trim, you can launch the Intimidator off stadium-style jumps and it will land soft. Huge whoops are no problem either for the compact, Mini Class One style buggy.

Further out on each corner, four-piston calipers, steel braided brake lines and drilled rotors handle the stopping chores for the 170-horsepower rocket. The brakes have bias controllability allowing you to adjust the amount of front or rear brake input you want the pedal to have for any specific type of terrain. In intermediate terrain, you would want to have more rear brake. For very hard-packed or tacky terrain, you would want more front-brake pressure. And in the sand, a neutral setting works the best.

MORE NUMBERS

As the car sits on the trail, it has an 85-inch wheel width, a 103-inch wheelbase, is 64 inches tall and 143 inches long. Those specs are important if you drive mostly tight trails or want to haul your vehicle in a certain sized trailer.

If you do want to transport the machine in a small, enclosed trailer or toyhauler, with the use of stock Volkswagen Bug wheels and tires, the wheel width only measures 74 inches, making transportation easier.

The X18 uses 31x10.5-15 Mickey

Thompson tires mounted on 15-inch cast-aluminum Walker Evans wheels.

Lighting accessories include one buggy whip, two running lights, brake lights, blinkers, one interior light and prewiring to accommodate four roof-mounted spot lights.

BUILD IT YOURSELF AND SAVE

As we noted earlier, Predator Motor Corporation does sell this car as a kit for a substantial cost savings to the customer. For the \$17,000 "Kit" price tag, some assembly is required. You also get to supply your own seat belts, window nets, wheels, tires, shocks, engine and it comes with the 8 to 1 transmission. Chevy has several versions of this powerplant that will bolt right into the X18, including a 2.4-liter model and a Supercharger option. Brand new, complete engines can cost as little as \$3000-\$5000. You could find one out of a junked car for around \$500. Imagine spending that little for an ATV or UTV replacement engine.

So the kit price isn't a bad deal for most people interested in a UTV or the people out there who are used to paying \$70,000-\$120,000 for high-



A Chevy Ecotec four-cylinder engine powers the X18. It has over 170 horsepower. This powerplant is also used in desert truck racing as well as some forms of sprint car racing. There are tons of aftermarket parts, such as turbos and superchargers, to make this engine even faster.



Out back, large, chromoly trailing arms provide 18 inches of movement. That muffler is quiet, has a spark arrestor and is Green Sticker legal. You can even make this car street legal in some states, like Arizona and Utah.



Triple fans help cool the large radiator. Predator Motor's cooling system will never need to be upgraded, no matter how big you build the motor.



A full complement of gauges and switches allow you or your passenger to monitor or control temperatures, lights and the horn. This also has two ignitions. One is a slow-speed learner option and the other gives you full power.



Long, strong, chromoly A-arms give the X18 twenty inches of wheel travel on the front end. The Vogtland shocks have dual, external bypass circuits that control rebound and compression dampening.

horsepower, Corvette-powered buggies. And from what we have seen, some of those machines are not nearly as reliable as the X18 Intimidator.

The fully built car is California Green Sticker legal, smog compliant, and comes in seven color choices: green, black, white, yellow, blue, red and orange. The kit is sold as an unfin-



A five-point safety harness helps control the passenger's movements. The seats also have suspension springs under them and are heated. Yes, heated.

ished vehicle, so you have to take care of the DMV legwork yourself.

TEST DRIVE

When we strapped ourselves into the cockpit of the X18, we felt as if we were sitting in a high-dollar, Class One, SCORE Baja racer. You have clear view all around you, especially to the trail in front of you, thanks to



Huge spindles and hubs will allow you to mount any-sized buggy wheel. The bolt pattern is a Wide 5 Volkswagen setup. With the use of stock VW wheels and tires, the car will be narrow enough to transport in smaller enclosed trailers and toy haulers.

the excellent seating position. Those seats are probably the most comfortable off-road seats we have ever sat in. There was plenty of leg room for our six-foot-plus driver. In fact, the seat wasn't even at its furthest back setting. If we moved the driver's seat forward, a five-foot-tall driver would feel comfortable as well. Try doing that with any UTV.

Bypassing the learner key, we went right for full power. The learner ignition box is adjustable, so you could let someone get used to driving at 30

DOMINATOR II

THE RESULTS ARE IN!
2008 ATV MOTOCROSS
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Racing Axles
Just Keep Winning!

Out of 20 Top Pro Racers, 15 Riders used the Dominator II Racing Axle; two riders used Lone Star Axles; two used the stock axles and only one rider used the Team Industries Axle. No Durablues.

- Features Adjustable Width
- Pre-installed Sprocket Hubs on some models

THIS IS A TRUE TEST OF STRENGTH & DURABILITY

When Top Pro Riders Overwhelmingly Choose the Dominator II Above all other Axle Manufacturers, You Can be Assured it's the Very Best Axle Available.

Other Axle Manufacturers Consider High Speed on a Flat Track with no Turns a Test of Strength. SORRY!! We Don't Think so.



REDLINE PERFORMANCE MACHINES:

2600 Melville Road Prescott, AZ 86301 Call: (928) 771-9363, www.team-rpm.com



The X18 corners like a go kart. It never feels tippy and has virtually no body roll. When you slam on the brakes, it skids to a stop quickly and stays in a straight line.

mph, then bump the speed limiter to 50 mph, and so on. This is a great feature.

With a mashed throttle, the car launches forward smoothly. There's enough wheel spin to be exciting and keep you on your toes. Most UTVs get very boring when you add all of the extra weight of a long travel suspension kit and increase traction with better tires.

The X18 spun the 31-inch tires con-

INTIMIDATOR

trollably like you can on a 450cc quad. Steering input is precise and quick, allowing you to slide into the faster corners or carve through the tight ones. Even though this car is wider than any UTV we have tested, we didn't find ourselves having to slow down or back up to get through the tight sections of our off-road, desert test track.

You sit low in the car but still have tons of ground clearance for clearing rocks and other trail obstacles. The car never feels tippy. You feel more like you are in a go-kart than in an off-road machine with more than a foot of ground clearance.

We were very impressed with the overall ergonomics, comfort and handling of this vehicle. At 155 foot lbs of torque from the 170 horsepower, 2.2-liter Chevy motor was equally as impressive, and the automatic CVT transmission worked awesome. You could let off the throttle for a sharp turn or bump, then jump right back onto the throttle for an instant response and forward movement.

You could reach 70 mph in a hurry,

no matter how choppy the terrain. And by choppy, we mean driving through whoops and bumps over a foot tall or deep. The long-travel suspension soaked up the hits with excellence. Since we were unfamiliar with this brand (Vogtland) of shocks, we tried to abuse them and find their limits to no avail. We couldn't get them to heat up, bottom out or provide any ill will. They soaked up five-foot drop offs as well as three-foot G-outs without blinking an eye. The lack of wheel travel and shorter wheel-base of a standard long-travel UTV would never allow you to drive as hard as we did in the X18.

CONCLUSIONS

The X18 is not a UTV. It doesn't have four-wheel drive, it doesn't have a dump bed and it doesn't have a trailer hitch. The X18 is a fast, well-handling, two-seat, off-road car capable of high speeds over smooth or very rough terrain. It's a blast to drive in sand, in the woods or the desert. It is built with quality components and proved to be very reliable in our abusive testing. It's equally as impressive driving at slow speeds as it is capable of high speeds.

Sure, \$28,000 or even \$17,000-plus is a lot of money for a toy. But so is spending \$12,000 on a stock UTV then dump-

RK

Racing Chains

*Josh Creamer
Kawasaki
Team Green*



GB520EXW ATV/OFF-ROAD CHAIN
XW-Sealed Ring Chain

www.RKExcelAmerica.com
Contact your local motorcycle dealer to order

ing another \$20,000 into it, just so you can have a better machine than your neighbor or camping buddy.

If you want a machine that performs like a sports car on flat terrain, flies like a quad over jumps, handles like a Trophy Truck in the whoops and can hold up to that type of punishment, look into the Predator X18 Intimidator. But if you do, make sure you invest an extra \$10 for a rearview mirror so you can watch everyone else eat your dust. Or better yet, install car-to-car communications system like the one from www.mobileradiocommunications.net, so your riding buddies can find you after the dust settles.

The X18S will also be available as a SCORE legal car for \$30,000 before November's Baja 1000. There are several other desert and short-course racing organizations creating divisions to accommodate this type of car. Predator also sells upgrade shocks from Fox, roof racks and other components to suit any customer.

Stay tuned to *Dirt Wheels* and www.dirtwheelsmag.com for the latest developments and improvements coming from Predator Motor Corporation. Or to contact them directly, call (951) 259-3339 or visit them online at www.predator-offroad.com. □



2009 PREDATOR X18 INTIMIDATOR

Engine Type	Liquid-cooled four-cylinder, DOHC 4-stroke	Rear	Trailing arms w/18"
Bore x Stroke	86mm x 94.6mm	Brakes:	
Displacement	2189cc	Front	Dual hydraulic discs
Starting	Electric	Rear	Dual hydraulic discs
Fuel system	EFI	Tires:	
Fuel capacity	16 gal.	Front	31x10.5-15
Transmission	Fully Auto CVT	Rear	31x10.5-15
Length/width/height	143"/85"/64"	Dry weight	1950 lb.
Wheelbase	103"	Colors	Green, black, white, yellow, blue, red, orange
Suspension/ wheel travel:		Price	\$28,000; \$17,000 (kit)
Front	Dual A-arms w/20"	Contact	(951) 259-3339
			www.predator-offroad.com

Autolite

EXTREME ENVIRONMENT?

XTREME SPORT[®] IRIDIUM[®]

ENHANCED SPARK PLUGS



- Engineered with .6mm Iridium Enhanced Finewire for better ignitability and more focused ignition*
- .6mm Iridium Enhanced Finewire reduces fouling and creates a faster more complete fuel combustion, improving power
- Improves overall engine performance
- Experience longer spark plug life and easier starts*

Available at your local motorcycle parts and accessory dealer. For more information on Autolite, visit www.RKExcelAmerica.com

*Compared to standard plugs. © 2008 Honeywell International Inc.