

ko propo vantage esprit 2 radio review

Advantage KO

(or how to get four radios for the price of one)
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Advantage KO.

A very slim volume.

Since I first started racing I have used fairly "basic" radio equipment, only having very limited choice of adjustments, servo reverse being the norm, my later "Competition" radios normally having some sort of end point adjustment, for brake and throttle travel, plus some form of travel adjustment for the total steering movement (rate pot). My last JR radio having been with me some six years. Recently I have



noticed the increase of computer controlled radios, by many top drivers, radios that almost drive the car for you, could this be the answer to better driving, but at what price tag? Well KO PROPO have broken

down all the barriers with their latest stick radio, the Esprit Vantage. This radio offers so much to a driver that even after two months of ownership I'm still only scratching the surface of its options.

What you get

A rather bland silver box held the magic of the Vantage within its polystyrene walls, keep this from young children. The very slim grey/green case falls very easy into the palms, two 90° finger grips sit in a textured panel allowing a "loose" grasp of the radio. Both control sticks are adjustable for length, with a central Allen screw. I like short sticks for max control. Analogue trims are below, to side of the steering/throttle, a spare trim to the left

of the steering can be assigned to another function (ABS, Traction Control). The throttle stick has a 60/40% offset, this "travel" on the throttle side, can help if you're a bit of a throttle jammer. Above the sticks the rotary knobs and two push buttons can be programmed for so many different features, it's almost mind bending. Below the sticks are the LCD display screen and the touch pads for programming the radio. The set comes with complete nicads and a mains charger. A really "mini" high performance receiver completes the combo, not forgetting some bed time reading, sorry the in-depth instruction manual.

Read, Read, Read

If you're like me and are new to this type of radio equipment then you have to read the formidable ninety page instruction manual, or find a friend who has (or a willing Editor). There really isn't any other short cut. I did find it was best to "use" the radio as I thumbed the pages, it makes it much simpler.

Two main facts are the secrets to programming of the radio, the "mode" you're in and the system level you want to run. Once this is understood it's fairly easy to get up and functioning. But I would recommend at least for a couple of months you take the instruction manual whenever you go racing or practicing, in fact you would be well advised just to set a track day aside just to "set up" the radio.



The LCD display is very clear, the adjustable contrast allowing it to be seen even in the brightest conditions.

How to set it up?

One of the biggest hurdles to overcome is to decide how much you want from the radio, four levels of control are available, each level has more functions "switched on", some are simple to understand, others not. Many of the functions will just not be needed by 90%, although it is nice to have them at hand. Also you have to decide which functions will work with the type of car you are driving, several of the more complicated functions, such as the "throttle swing" will only work with an IC car. I think one beauty with this radio being that with each model you store (up to ten) in the memory, a different level of system control can be used.

As I race several different cars, electric and IC I used level four, with all the cars, this gave me all the bells and whistles.

But if this is to be your first radio, and it does make a great deal of sense financially as a first time buy, level 2 will give you all the functions needed.

A la Mode

To start the ball rolling you have to go into one of the two "modes" of operation, System or Direct. System sets the main parameters or functions, this is accessed by holding down the down/up keys on the right hand panel, and switching on the radio.

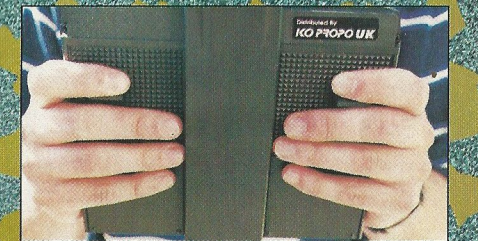
This will allow you to go through the basic controls. Most of the options will be single

"screens", but the "set-up" menu has a sub routine which chooses what all the analogue trims/buttons do, in my case I used the following:

- Et1 — Steering Trim
- Et2 — Throttle Trim
- Et3 — Steering Travel (Rate control)
- Et4 — Brake Adjustment
- Et5 — Off
- KgA — Off
- KgB — Off
- KyC — Off
- BT1 — Tim 2 — Five minute alarm
- BT1 — Tim 1 — Lap timing

The first four trims/knobs choices are fairly standard uses, Et5, BT1 and BT2 demand a decision to be made by you for their functions. The most important "screen" being the System Level, level one being the most basic, if your unsure what to go for then start with level one, as you find it's limitations move on through, the ramp will grow with you as you become more experienced.

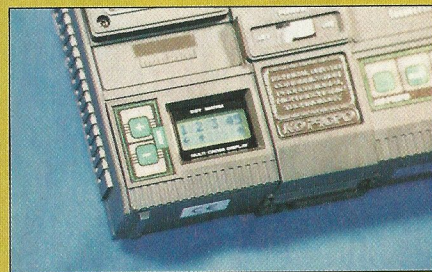
All the other "screens" are dead simple, you may find though once you start programming



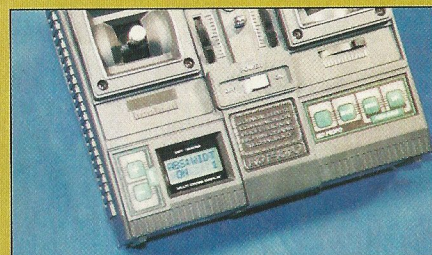
The "finger grips" really give a great deal of support.



Crystal changes can be a little difficult, the "module" removal not being particularly easy.



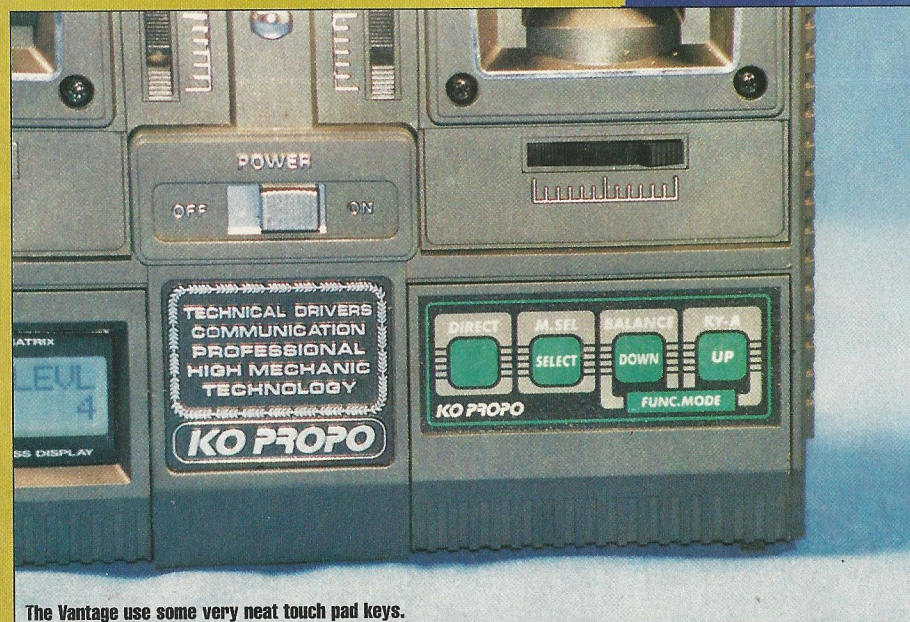
Trim warning display.



ABS screen.



Where it all starts, the System Mode.



The Vantage use some very neat touch pad keys.



This screen has a sub-menu, use it for all the "trims".

you have to return to the servo reverse function, to get the correct direction for steering say.

The other thing to do while in "system" mode is to assign the model name. I had six cars to do and it did take a little time. Having to scroll through all the English and Japanese characters was a bit of a pain.

Now your in

Once the basic parameters are set, change to "direct mode" (just press the Direct pad), select model (M. Sel) and away you go. All the functions scroll through in a continuous chain, some are single "screen" a lot demand the use of the select pad to run through a sub-menu, if there is a sub menu the very useful operating diagrams will show them.

In 90% of cases level two will give all the adjustments you will ever need if you race an electric powered car OR AN I.C. CAR. In level three the only functions I may use will be the auto start, and throttle punch. With level four I might use the steering punch or steering speed position.

This does not mean with time and practice I may find a use for many of the other functions.

One I do want to try is the ABS (Anti Lock Brake) function. At present I'm not sure if the "pulse" the ABS uses for hard braking will work with the current generation of high frequency speed controllers, but as KO also make speedos it seems reasonable to expect that they would have tested this function.

Several "throttling" adjustments can also be made, in both of the top two levels, again I'm not sure if the current speedos could cope. However if they do, then even the most "insensitive" driver should be able to mix it with the best.

If it's IC

For all you "noisy" drivers, sorry IC, the depth of adjustment will take many months to grasp. The ABS does indeed make a major difference, with the four basic adjustments, total control can be yours. With an Off Road car running in a long final, the brakes can be made to last much better than the drivers concentration, and by using trims Et5 and Et3 the ABS can be adjusted to the grip level during the race.

All the throttle/speed/position options can be used, giving the best traction to suit the track conditions, again I feel off roaders will benefit the most with the range of adjustments available.

Is it really that good?

Well the simple answer is yes, there is so much contained within its slim case, I've not even scratched the surface, this is a total package, no other stick radio comes even close to it. Within the short confines of the review it's impossible to describe what it can do for you. But in the short time I've had it I wondered how I ever raced without it. For a lot of drivers it will help to make you drive better, but it won't make you David Spashett or Craig Drescher.

To date here's my top ten functions:-

- (1) Operation Timer - Do I really spend that much time racing, when do I sleep!!!
- (2) Trim Warning buzzer - I can't blame the car now when it turns left at the start of a final.
- (3) Ten Model memory - Only one radio can carry now yippee (just ten crystal changes - Ed).
- (4) Steering Balance - It turns the same left and right.
- (5) Timer 1 - That couldn't have been five minutes, I dumped.
- (6) Timer 2 - See! I was quicker than Andrew.
- (7) Lap Navigation - That lap should have been much quicker?
- (8) Throttle High Point - It just won't go any faster.
- (9) Steering Travel - I'm still using the same servo.
- (10) Automatic Start - Coming through...

Likes

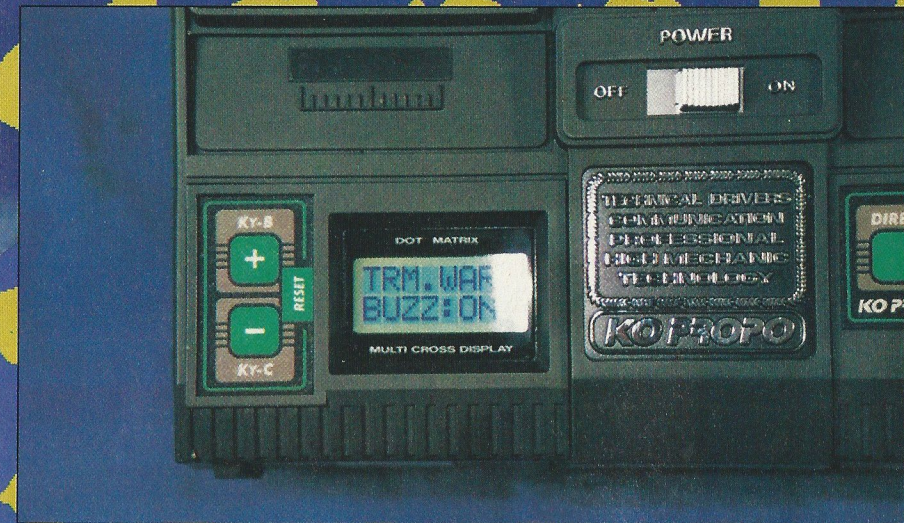
Easy to hold
Light weight
Nicads included
Adjustable stick length
Small receiver
Easy read L.C.D. screen
Touch pads
So many functions
Trim warning buzzer

Dislikes

Module difficult to remove
Took a lot of time to set up
Instructions manual a little complicated
So many functions

Recommendations

Quick set up guide by Heathkit
Should really make the tea too.



Trim warning buzzer on.

Features

10 model memory
Steering speed
Throttle speed
ABS
Traction control
Throttle acceleration
Up timer
Down timer
Lap navigation
Clear LCD screen
Trim alarm
Mini receiver
Built in nicads
AC main charger

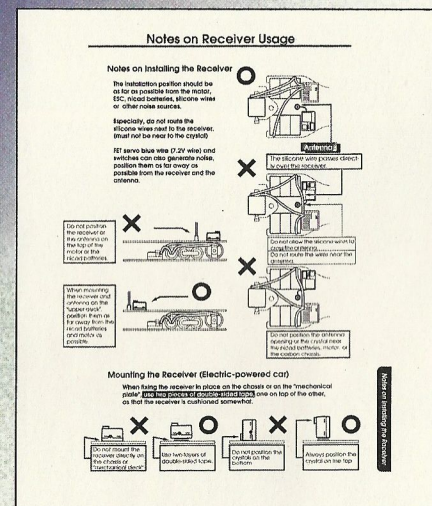
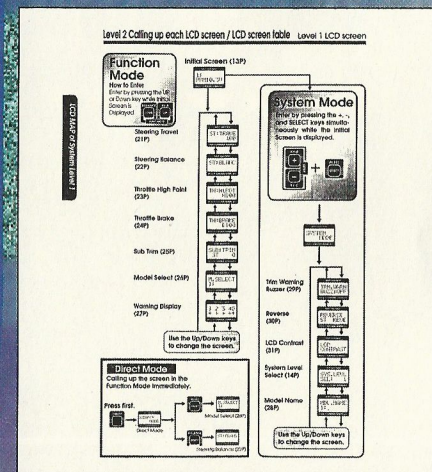
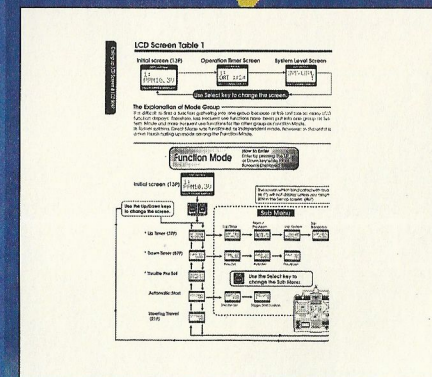
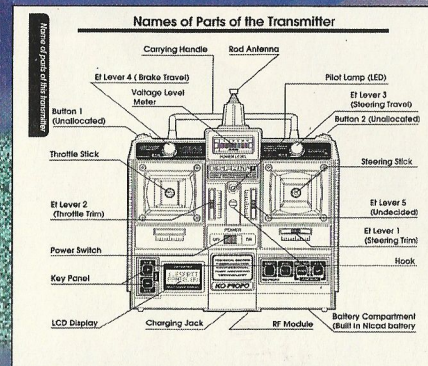
The Ed's View

Like Jason I have recently changed to the Vantage, my long suffering JR X756 having a very severe and expensive loss of memory. From the outset the Vantage felt much more comfortable, the "finger grips" making the set far more secure and it's much lighter.

Programming was very similar to the 756, but the four levels of functions gives a lot more versatility to it. Just like Jason I think it will take many months before I will be able to get the best from the Vantage, and I do think it will "flatter" my driving talents once set-up.

For a beginner the Vantage made a great deal of sense, as the radio will offer all they will ever need without buying another set.

The Vantage is available now from most good model shops, more details available from KO PROPO, Tel No (01784) 469275 Fax (01784) 469639



Mini receiver.

system facilities

Level (1)
Trim warning
Servo reverse
LCD contrast
Model name

Function Mode
Steering travel
Steering balance
Throttle highpoint
Brake highpoint
Sub trim (S/T)
Model select
Trim warning

Level (2) = Level 1 + :-
Set up
Trim rate
Reverse
LCD contrast
Sys level
Channel select
Aux channel
Model name
Recall

Function mode
Up timer
Steering curve
Throttle curve
Brake curve
Throttle speed point
Sub trim (T/S)
Model select
Warning display

Level (3) = Level 1+ Level 2+ :-
Model Copy
Adjust VR

Function mode
Down Timer
Throttle Pre Set
Automatic Start
Throttle Speed (p2)
Steering Speed
A.B.S.

Level (4) = All levels+
Function Mode
Steering Speed (2 way)
Throttle Speed (p3)
Throttle Acceleration

Total Number of Functions 33