

250F MX SHOOTOUT: IT'S A NEW GAME

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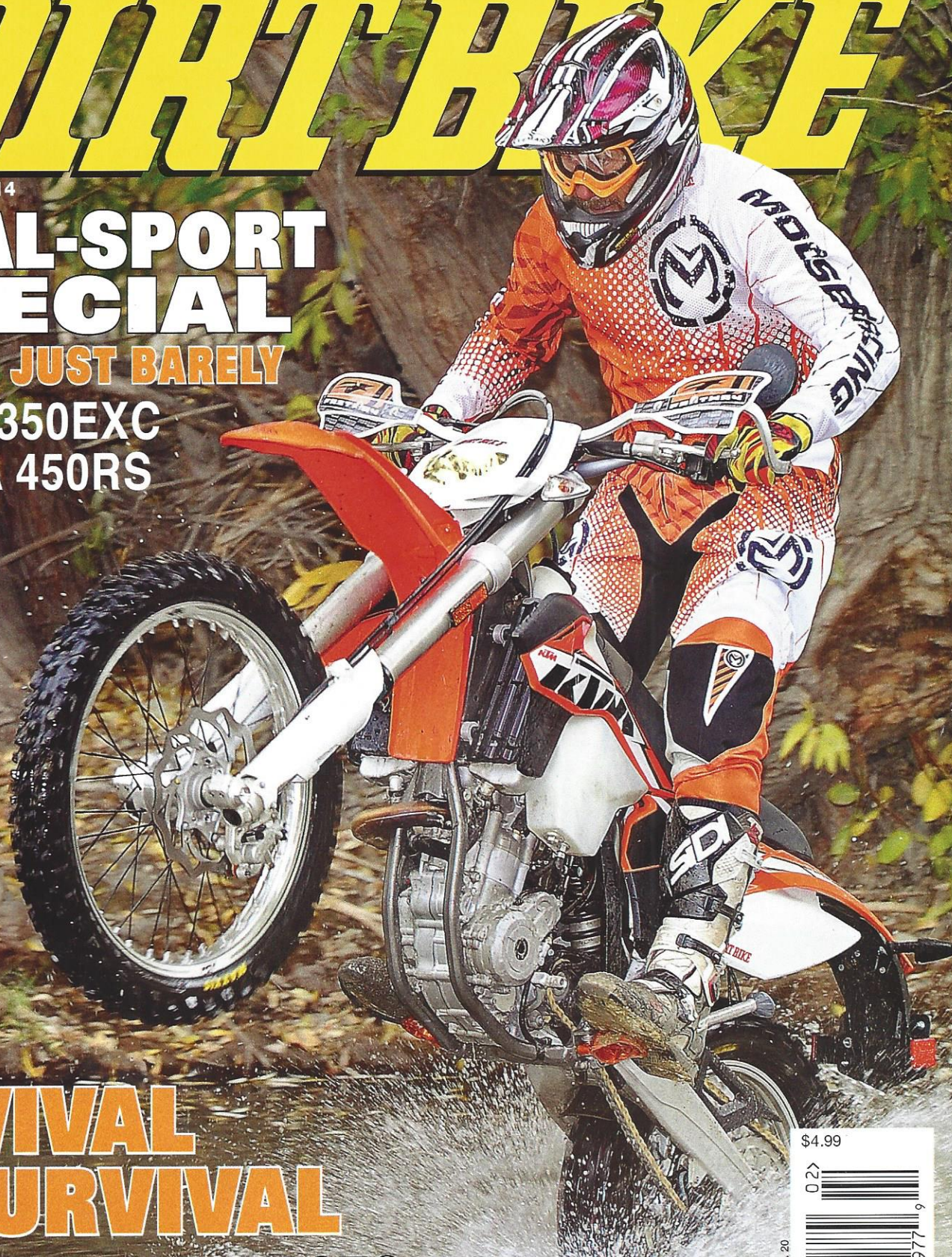
# DIRTBIKE

FEBRUARY 2014

## DUAL-SPORT SPECIAL

LEGAL, JUST BARELY

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- BETA 450RS



## REVIVAL & SURVIVAL

- 17-YEAR-OLD DR650
- 24-HOUR KX450

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*Wait, isn't that a 17-year-old DR650?*



# DR DONE RIGHT

## Revitalizing a forgotten soldier

Suzuki's DR650 is Play-Doh. It's been in the background of Suzuki's line for almost 30 years without headlines, awards or acclaim. The problem is that no one really knows what it is. It can't be called a dual-sport bike, not with lightweight dirt bikes like KTMs and Betas usurping that title. It's not an adventure bike because of its limited range, and it's no commuter without a windscreen or storage. Yet it survives, year after year. Why? Because it's like putty. You can take it and form it into anything you like. Last year we gained new respect for the DR after we rolled one between our fingers and molded it into an inexpensive adventure bike. Now, we have a reincarnated, 17-year-old dual-purpose bike built by the guys at Seat Concepts. The DR continues to change shape right before our eyes.

### A DUAL-SOMETHING BIKE

If this bike were a human, it would be getting its driver's license about now. It was born in 1997 when there was such a thing as a dual-purpose bike. That was the term we used for big bikes that could go off-road in the day. When more dirt-oriented machines arrived, the term dual-sport was coined simply because they were more "sporty." Now the dual-purpose term is back to describe bikes like the Suzuki and the short-lived Husqvarna Terra. They might not be capable of winning a National Enduro, but somehow that's liberating. It takes the pressure off the owner who just wants to go off-road exploring. And that's where Seat Concepts went with this particular bike.

It was originally purchased for \$1500 and used to prototype an after-market seat. Then it sat in the back of the shop until someone looked at it long enough to see something more than a dusty old bike. Then the project began. The first order of business was to come up with a goal. It was decided to push the DR toward the dirt. It's possible to do that without compromising any of its street abilities, whereas going in the other direction is much more difficult. It doesn't take long to identify the bike's shortcomings, which are glaring enough to be easy to address.



**SUSPENSION:** The DR has very primitive suspension, with an open-bath fork and a steel-bodied shock that has no adjusters. A North Carolina company called Cogent Dynamics (CD) has made improving the DR's stock condition a mission in life. The shock got extensive remanufacturing and came back with ceramic hard coatings, plus a rebound adjuster. CD also has various springs available if you fall outside the bike's optimal rider weight of 160 pounds or so. The investment in the shock alone was significant but absolutely necessary if you really want to improve the DR's DQ (Dirt Quotient). The fork received a modification that essentially made it act like a cartridge system with a real valve stack.

CD shock mod: \$589.95

CD fork mod: \$175.99

**POWER:** Back in the '80s when this bike was designed, it produced adequate power for a 650-class machine. By modern standards, however, it's pretty tame. ProCycle has a big-bore kit that changes everything. It punches the bike out to 790cc, effectively ending any horsepower complaints. The kit works best with a change in carburetion. You could, perhaps, install a Keihin FCR carb, but it would be a little crazy to spend over \$1000 just on a carb. ProCycle has a more affordable 40mm Mikuni pumper carb for much less. In terms of sheer performance, the Mikuni is excellent, but it uses a slide rather than a butterfly valve, so you have to deal with a stiff throttle return spring. It's a good trade-off. An FMF Q4 muffler replaced the massive, rusted-out stocker.

ProCycle big-bore kit: \$659.95

ProCycle carb kit: \$459.95

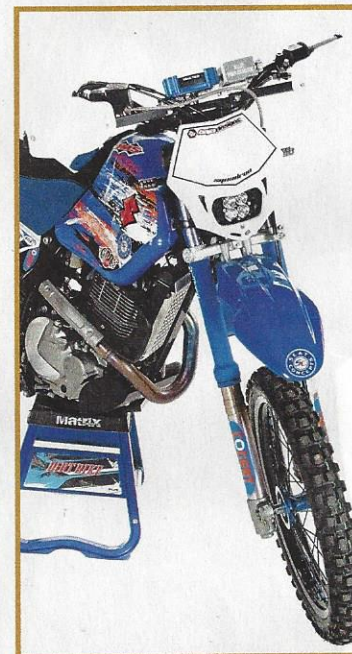
FMF Q-4 muffler: \$329.98



*This bike was originally purchased off Craigslist for \$1500, and then it went through a restoration that made it into something very different.*



*The DR motor got a big-bore kit and a Mikuni pumper carb, resulting in crazy-low-rpm torque.*





**WHEELS:** Once upon a time you had to change tires every time you went dual-sport riding. Dirt tires wear out quickly on pavement, and street rubber is scary in the dirt. Nowadays we have affordable wheels to solve that problem. The stockers were set aside for the street, and a set of Warp 9 wheels were given Dunlop DOT knobies and an oversize rotor (Warp 9 includes the rotor and sprocket in each wheelset). The rear rim that Warp 9 laced up was wider than stock, giving the bike a wider contact patch. That company also has a number of nice billet aluminum upgrades, like folding levers and a chainguide.

Warp 9 wheelset: \$779.95

Folding levers: \$77.95

Chainguide: \$59.95

### DUAL-SPORTINESS:

The DR comes from a time when blinkers were larger than today's headlights. Modern stuff can be had easily. Extreme Dual Sport has LED blinkers that are mounted on springs so they're almost unbreakable. Like all LED blinkers, they require a different flasher. For the headlight, Baja Designs Squadron LED unit was installed, which resulted in a massive upgrade in light output. The stock speedometer was replaced with a Trail Tech Voyager GPS. And one of the coolest finds of all was the Highway Dirt Bikes handguards, which have mirrors that fold out when needed. The coolest part is that you can actually use the mirrors to see behind you. What a novel concept. For organized dual-sport rides, a billet roll-chart holder from Billet Innovations was used with a bolt-on dashboard.

EDS blinkers: \$59.95

EDS flasher: \$39.99

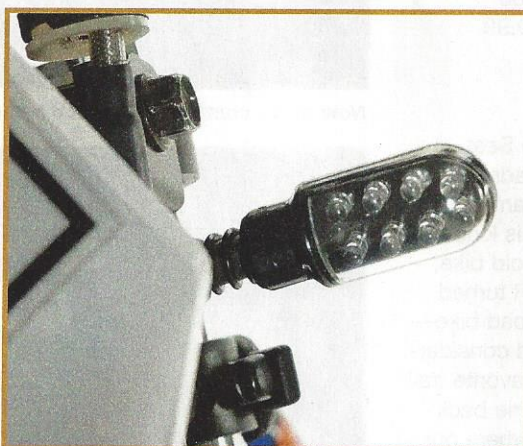
Baja Designs headlight: \$329.95

Trail Tech Voyager: \$279.95

Highway Dirt Bikes handguards/mirrors: \$150

Billet Innovations roll-chart holder: \$89

Billet Innovations dash: \$65



*Warp 9 makes good wheels at a good price. Having two sets with different tires is a good plan of action.*

*◀ The stock blinkers are big and fragile. EOS makes compact LED versions.*

*Organized dual-sport rides require roll-charts and, interestingly, GPS. ▼*





**COMFORT & STYLE:** For the owner of this bike, the most important improvement is in the comfort department. The guys at Seat Concepts originally purchased the DR to make a seat kit. Once that was accomplished, they became a little obsessed with the bike and wanted to restore it. They quickly found that OE plastic was a little expensive and a lot ugly. That's how DSA Concepts was born. Seat Concepts branched off into Dual-Sport Adventure Concepts to make replacement plastic parts, and the DR was the first project. DSA Concepts makes injection-molded side number plates and a rear fender kit for the DR that are less expensive and more modern-looking than the stock stuff. The whole project was finished off with some luxuries like a GPR damper, Fastway Adventure pegs and an EarthX lithium battery.

DSA side number plates: \$104.99  
Front fender: \$89.99  
Rear fender kit: \$164.99  
SC seat kit: \$159.99  
Suede seat cover upgrade: \$100  
Fastway Adventure pegs: \$249.99  
GPR damper: \$495.99  
EarthX lithium battery: \$219

**THE DR IS IN:** By the time the Seat Concepts guys were done, they admitted that they had gotten a little carried away. It's a little hard to justify this kind of expense and work for a 17-year-old bike, but we're glad they did it. The DR turned out to be a stunningly good off-road bike—not "good for what it is" or "good considering." We took the Suzuki to our favorite trail zone expecting very little and came back with deep respect. It went everywhere our modern bikes went—it just did it a little slower.

It still has limitations that no amount of money or work can fix. It weighs over 300 pounds and is a little wide and low. That means it can get stuck in tight situations, but it made up for it on dirt roads and wide trails, where it could idle fast and keep up with anything. The bike had such torque and pleasant manners, it was just plain fun. And to think, it could be ridden to work on Monday too.

This isn't the definitive guide of what you have to do to make a DR rideable. It's a wish list that every Craigslist bike like this has in the back of its motorcycle brain. Consider this particular Suzuki one of the lucky few that gets all its wishes granted. □



Seat Concepts started a new company called Dual Sport Adventure Concepts to make modern bodywork for older bikes.



Now that's comfort. Yes, that's a suede seat.



Mark Tilley became a big fan of the DR790.

## CONTACTS

[www.bajadesigns.com](http://www.bajadesigns.com)  
[www.billetinnovations.com](http://www.billetinnovations.com)  
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