

WORDS & PICS //ANT LYON

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Suzuki's DR-Z400E steps toward a radical reinvention

Despite its aging design, Suzuki's DR-Z400E remains an enduring favourite for weekend warriors and tour operators across Australasia and the reason is simple. Its bullet-proof build quality, comfortable ergos, torquey motor and capable handling make it a bike that you can trust to provide years of faithful service.

In years gone by ADB has had a couple of DR-Z400 project bikes plough through our

pages, and when the opportunity arose to do it again we jumped at it. The DR-Z's only downside is that Suzuki has let it remain largely unchanged in the face of cutting-edge offerings from most other dirt bike manufacturers.

But rather than ruin a good bike with a fire-breathing Jekyll-and-Hyde transformation, we gave the reins to *Australian Motorcycle News* editor Matt Shields to take a trusted trail tool and morph it into a modern machine.



PRO CIRCUIT 496 EXHAUST

\$699.95

MONZA IMPORTS (03) 8327 8888

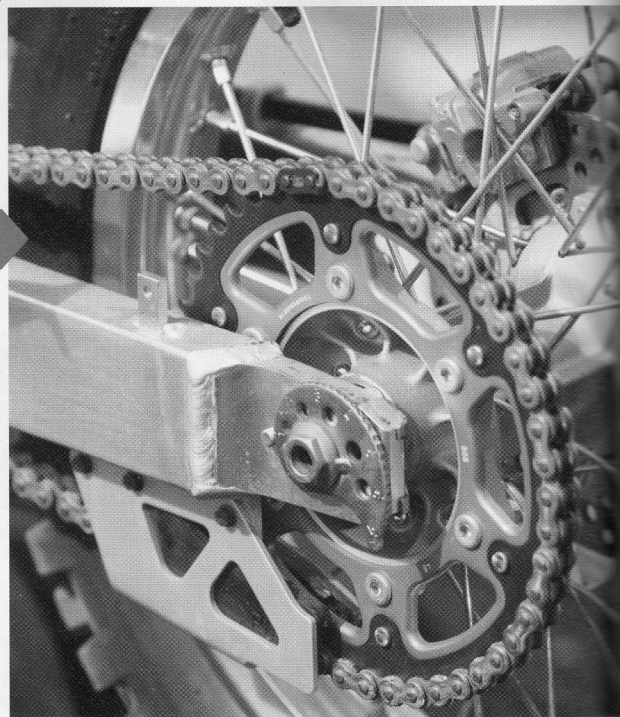
While the stock DR-Z produces nice responsive power, there's always room for a more. Pro Circuit's 496 not only saves weight while beefing up the power curve, but has a forest-friendly spark arrester to protect your favourite riding spot from fire. Unfortunately the silencer also needs the Pro Circuit header as it won't fit on the stock item.

CHAIN AND SPROCKETS

(\$155 for sprocket combo, \$195 for chain)

A1 ACCESSORIES (07) 3806 1800

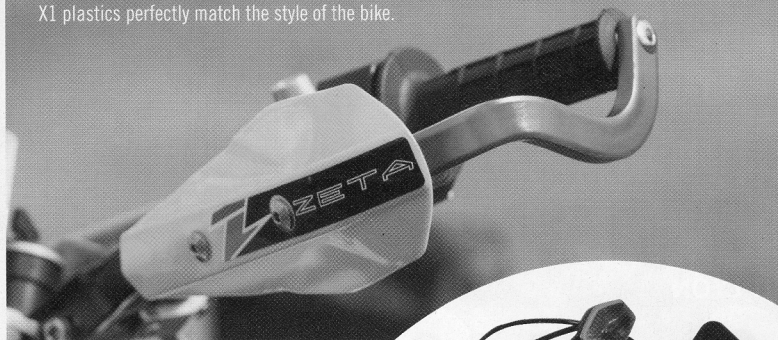
To reduce unsprung weight as much as possible, we've chosen to replace the standard sprockets with Stealth Supersprox. The trick looking anodised rear combines an alloy centre with a hardened steel outer ring to give the ultimate combination of light weight and durability; while the front sprocket features scalloped grooves to resist dirt build up. Linking them together is a DID X-ring gold chain that will last longer than your grandmother's teeth.



ZETA ARMOUR HANDGUARDS & X1 PROTECTOR SHIELDS (\$142.50)

STEVE CRAMER PRODUCTS (03) 9587 1466

As the DR-Z is destined for some serious bush work, a set of quality hand guards was one of the first things we needed to fit to save both our levers and Shieldsy's fingers. Zeta's Armor wrap-around guards are strong and quick to fit, while the trick blue anodised alloy and yellow X1 plastics perfectly match the style of the bike.



THE BIGGEST LOSER

You certainly get your money's worth with the DR-Z, the only problem is for the serious weekend warrior she's more overdressed than Bat Girl in a ball gown.

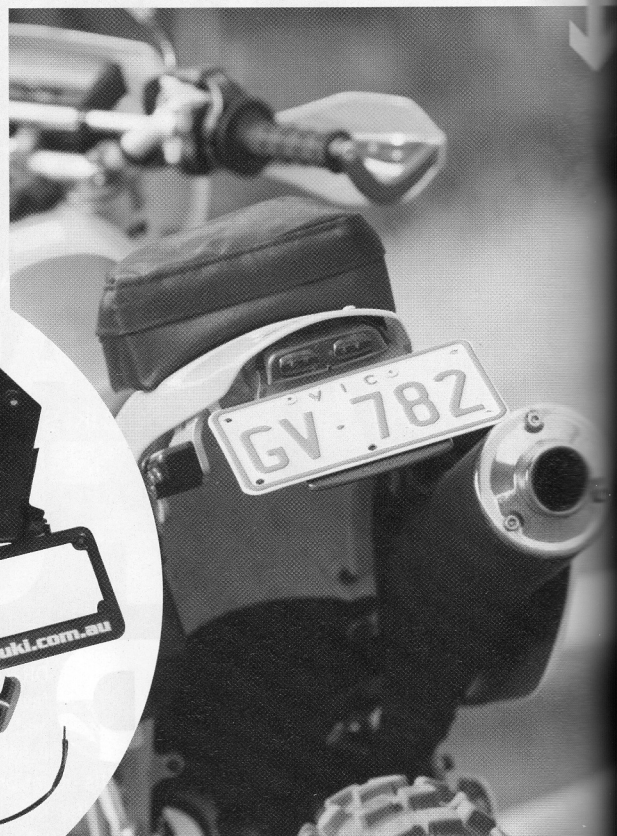
With the screwdriver and 8mm sockets spinning furiously, she was dropping her gear faster than a stripper on speed. Soon the top chain guide, indicators, mirrors, reflectors, pant protector (WTF?!), and that gigantic upside-down concrete pourer of a number plate extension at the rear were relegated to the parts bin.



ACERBIS LED TAILLIGHT \$69.95

OFF ROAD IMPORTS (02) 4577 7022

After removing the trail fat, we only wanted to fit the lightest replacement parts we could source. Taking the place of the Beyonce-sized rear is this super-slim number plate extender from Acerbis. We've slipped it in between the guard and rear subframe extension and secured it with two screws.



NEXT TIME IN STAGE 2

With its first steps now made toward releasing the DR-Z's huge hidden potential, we'll be continuing the bullet-proofing and weight-loss program and will refine her handling with some professional suspension work. Lastly, to entice Shieldsy out of the AMCN editor's chair and into the trees, we'll be customising the cockpit with some trick Universal bars and RHK grips. Stay tuned! **ADG**