

Tips and tricks to get the most from the DRZ4, or any bike come to that!

In the last issue we gave a brief run-down on what to do to a DRZ400 when you first get it home. Cocky as hell, I wrote it with just 1.5ks on the bike's clock. Here, then, are a few more things you should do before riding your new toy – any new toy really.

Get it to Handle

The stock shock spring preload is way out of whack. Wind it up until there is around 5-10mm of static sag – that's the amount the rear drops from fully raised to resting on the spring, no-one on board. This job is best done after you've removed a few bits to make access to the spring easier – see later in the story – but the way to do it is this. Loosen off the locking nuts above the spring using a hammer and a big, blunt drift. Then tip the bike over so it is resting on the front wheel, the sidestand, and your knee, then reach down and wind the spring up. Alternatively, you could use a bike stand, but we're into quick and easy around here. On the DRZ you'll need to wind for a fair while, but when the right sag is achieved lock off the nuts with the drift again. Your DRZ will not handle until you do this. You can play with the clickers until politicians become honest and you can slide the forks through the clamps until you wear the chrome off them, but you must start here to get the bike to handle hits and go around corners.

Once the sag is set move on to the suspension clickers. Please note: because of machining differences, differing oils, even different average temperatures, every set of forks and shock will need slightly different settings to work best. The following settings are a starting point; experiment from here. Try the forks at 12 or 13 out on compression and seven clicks out on rebound. Go for eight or nine out on the rebound on the shock, and 11 out on the low speed compression. Leave the high speed compression at around one turn out. Both ends, but especially the shock, rebound too quickly from stock so slowing the rebound really improves the bike's behaviour. This set-up is very plush and as such is more for easy, all-day riding than slamming into the big hits.

As a final quick handling mod loosen off the triple clamps and slide the forks up so the heads sit 5mm above the top clamp. Be sure to have the air-bleed screws on the fork

caps aligned so they can be easily undone – not under the bars. We recommend checking forks for air build-up at least every couple of days of riding, and EVERY time you get it off the trailer after a long trip. As little as one pound of air pressure can make beautiful forks feel harsh, and air pressure builds up quickly on some models.

Make it Easier to Work On

Just behind the barrel on the right hand side sits a biggish black plastic box with hoses from the rocker cover, the crank, and one venting southwards to the left. This brilliant bit of technology stops the Suzuki from dripping oil on the ground, and also makes carb and shock access atrocious. It can be removed and replaced with a T-piece, but this means the bike will become illegal to use on our superbly maintained roads – your call.

On the other side just above the chain sits the radiator overflow bottle, which blocks the shock spring almost completely. This one can go, but only after some careful thought about how you will use the bike. Our DRZ will be used predominantly as an adventure-tourer, with minimal tight first-gear-and-flog-the-clutch work. On top of this, those who ride it will have enough clues to check the water level if it does decide to boil the coolant. Our experiences have shown the DRZ is reluctant to boil, but if you're in any doubt leave the overflow bottle in place.

And just under where the bottle used to live is an annoying sidestand cut-out switch. Again, removing it – and the one on the clutch lever – makes the bike illegal, but if they are left in place there is a reasonable chance that dirt will build up and eventually jam them, causing a no-go. Trace the wires back from the sidestand switch up under the seat and cut them just before the connector to the main loom. Solder the two ends together, slip a piece of heat-shrink over it and heat it, then tuck it out of the way on top of the airbox. The front cut-out is even easier – follow the wires back from the clutch to the main loom, unplug them and then plug the two loom wires together. The latter will provide your mates with hours of fun because the Suzuki will now start in gear with the clutch out, and it's all too easy to hit the button when you lean over to pick up a glove from the ground. Please don't ask how I know ...

Beautiful Noise

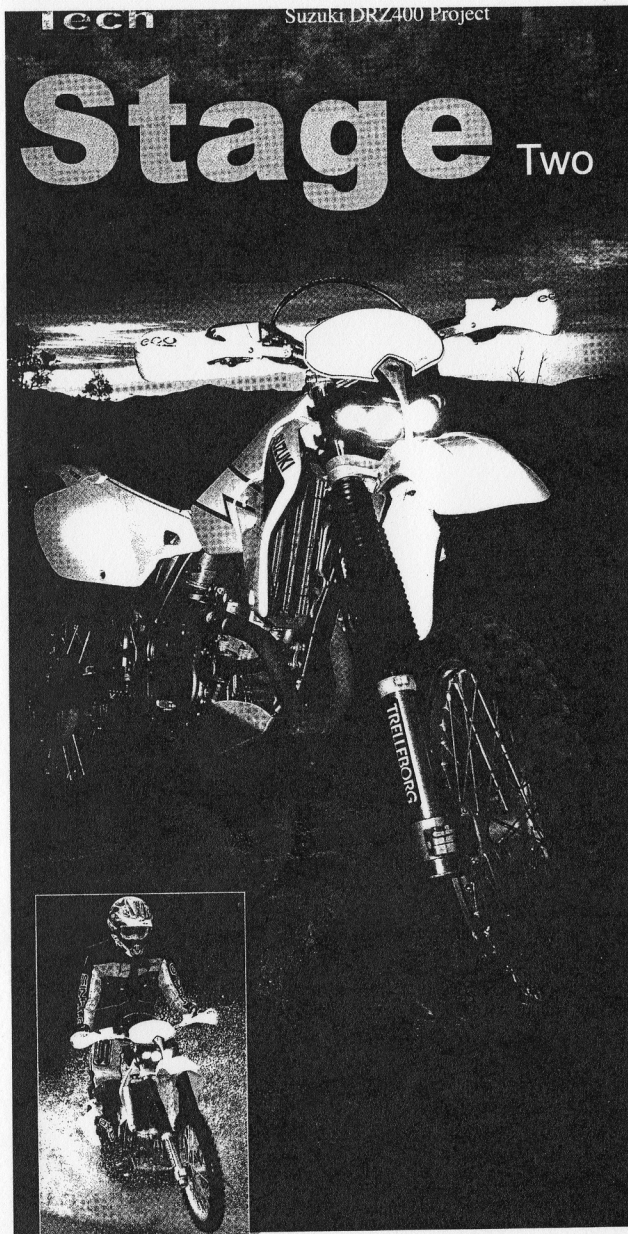
There's no way to say this politely: the stock muffler makes the poxiest noise I've heard, and that's without any butchering. It was almost embarrassing to take it into town, and it wasn't like this when the bike was first released. I suspect the baffle has been dicked with by experts who, unfortunately, were deaf.

A B&B muffler insert makes a big improvement, removing the harsh bark as well as boosting horsepower. There's an extra couple of horses in the mid-range and up top so for those on a budget this is definitely the way to go – \$108. For even more power and a 2.5kg weight loss, a complete new muffler is the smart move. We went for a Barrett, but only if Jason Barrett could demonstrate that it worked. We met at Husky Imports' dyno room for a reckoning.

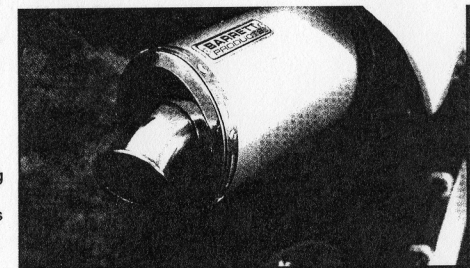
First things first. I mentioned in the last issue that our DRZ400 felt like a 'good' one. It starts brilliantly, pulls cleanly and generally feels like a Wednesday bike. On the first dyno run Jason's eyebrows went up when the beast pulled 41hp straight up. Frankly, I was picking it to be making 36 or maybe 38, so I was surprised as well. The Suzuki has a very deceptive engine, delivering the power so smoothly that many riders have been fooled into thinking it slow. It's not, and better still it's the most reliable 400/450 in production at the moment, hence our project bike. It was nice to see it all confirmed on the dyno.

As mentioned, the B&B baffle added 2hp to the first run and tamed that ugly rattle-cackle from the rear, then we pulled the stock muffler off and tried the Barrett. I kid you not, that DRZ4 pulled 45hp, but peak power is far from the most important consideration. Many mufflers give masses of power up top but only at the expense of grunt through the

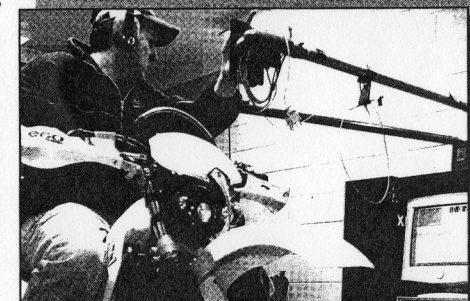
All three globes fire at once



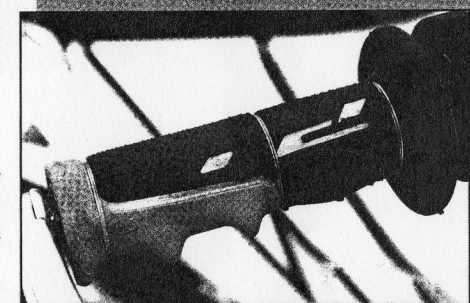
MAIN: The DRZ looks – and is – lighter and leaner
INSERT: Don uses the stronger mid-range to keep the front wheel dry



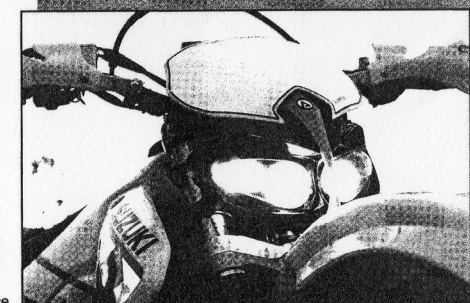
Say hello to 45hp



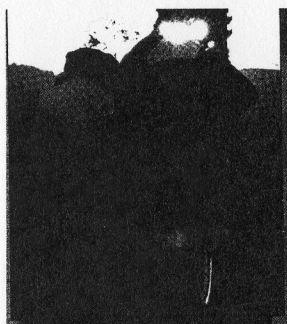
Jason Barrett was surprised at our DRZ's output



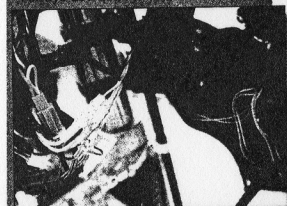
Pro-Grip's weight 447g. Note the wiring



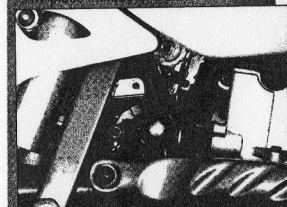
Sidetrack



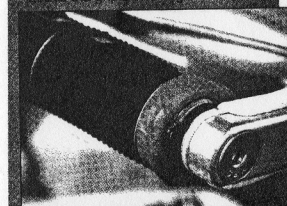
Always use quality connectors



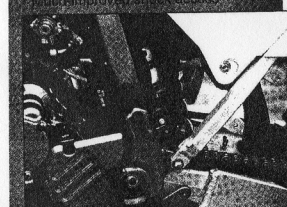
Place instead of a box



Leave the grip a slight ridge intact



Multi-point shock access



Go Sidetrack

mid-range. This may be fine for motocross, but it sucks in the bush where peak revs are reserved for firetrails. The Barrett boosted power by two or three horses virtually straight off the bottom and kept that into the upper mid-range. There it matched the B&B baffle – already 2hp up from stock – before climbing strongly again in the higher revs. It was all pretty impressive so the DRZ went back on the ute with the Barrett bolted firmly in place.

Field tests showed a huge improvement in both peak power and delivery. The DRZ now has more snap off the bottom, easily lofting the front in third and stepping the back out nicely in the open. The delivery is still very smooth though so the Suzuki has lost none of the remarkable user-friendliness that attracted us to it in the first place. Best of all the bike is now much less offensive to listen to. The muted growl is much less likely to annoy the populace.

Pendulum Swings

You've gotta love the way the stock headlight is mounted to the beast. It has a big metal frame that slips over the forks and weighs in at just a touch less than a D8. This system is truly unique to Suzuki and has been around for years; why the factory sticks with it is beyond us when there are so many better ways to do it. The headlight itself is no lightweight either although it redeems itself by providing excellent illumination.

There are two ways of reducing weight here, and it really has to be reduced – it swings forward of the bars making for ponderous steering. The first involves junking the big fat bracket and mounting the stock headlight to the headlight surround via a couple of home-made alloy brackets. The surround can then be attached to the forks using after-market rubber headlight straps. This brings the light closer to the forks and reduces the pendulum effect, as well as getting rid of the weight of the bracket/frame/D8. It also costs less than \$10!

As the pictures show though, we've taken the quick way out and gone for an Acerbis Diamond headlight. The Diamond has three halogen globes and gives more than enough light to guide you from the bush at night – it's even brighter with the yellow plastic roost-guards removed. You can take the simple path here and wire one of the two large globes into the low-beam circuit and be happy with the other large globe and the smaller spottie as the high beam, but that wasn't good enough for us. We wanted all three to light up at once.

Wiring it up isn't hard but here are a few wiring tips which may come in handy: use only good-quality connectors from Dick Smiths and not the cheap ones from auto accessory stores; soldering all wires before crimping a connector to them and then soldering the connector to the wire makes it all a lot more

secure; and use female connectors on the wires that the power comes from, so that with their large plastic covers in place they can't brush against the frame and short out.

Start by removing the stock light and sitting the Diamond in place with one side attached to the left fork-leg. (I gotta say this. Elsewhere in this issue Baz reckons that 'forks' should be 'fork' because there is only one of them. There isn't; there're two fork legs which combined become 'forks'. American mags talk about a bike's fork, which means they must have single-sided bits to hang the front wheel from.) Back to the light ... Leave the full length of wire from the globes because the Diamond can then be moved out of the way without being removed completely. Take one wire from each globe and twist then solder them together. Slip the plastic cover over the wires, put a female connector in place and crimp it tightly, then solder the wire to the connector. This is now the earth lead for the globes.

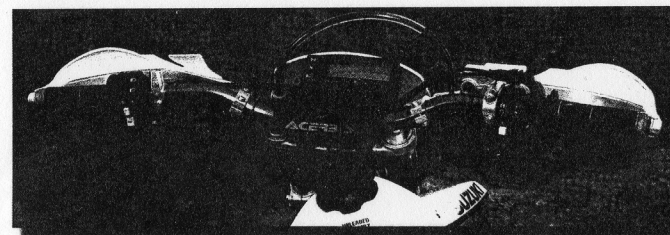
Take the remaining leads from the small globe and either of the large ones and solder them together. Use a male crimp and cover on this one, then do the same with the lead from the remaining globe. Now cut the headlight plug from the DRZ, and solder and crimp the leads, using a male on the earth lead – Black/White – and females on the high beam – two Yellow – and low beam – White – wires. Tidy it all up by binding the leads from the Diamond in electrical tape, plug the headlight into the loom and make sure it all works.

To get all three globes to work on high beam, and therefore get the best possible light, move on to the headlight switch. Remove the switch-block from the bars and remove the screw holding the high/low beam switch. Don't be tempted to pull all the gizmos from the switch-block housing because there're some pretty small bits in there that love to fly free. There are three wires coming from the high/low switch – White, Yellow, and Yellow/White. The White has to be bridged to the Yellow/White, so take a small piece of wire, strip off the insulation and pre-solder it. Bend it in a U-shape then hold it in place with needle-nosed pliers while you solder it to the wires. This is very easy to type, but hell of a fiddly to do. Once finished, check that it works, carefully route the wires back in place in the switch-block and put it back on the bars.

And yes, some blokes reckon that soldering wires makes them prone to fatigue, but over the years I've had more non-soldered wires come loose than soldered ones break.

High Risers

Another key point with most Japanese bikes is the state of the bars. While we doubt that the rumours of the factories sourcing their bars from licorice factories are true, we can't



discount it completely. Ten grand for a bike with bits that bend sounds a touch rough but there's no point in whingeing, you've just got to fix it. We went for Acerbis PHS bars because our last set has lasted five years, gracing two class-winning Safari bikes before being torture-tested by Sidetrack's gentleman tester on countless trail rides. While the purchase price of \$295 may sound steep compared with stock steel bars, the lack of replacements required over time does a lot to level the playing field. It should also be pointed out that the PHS bars come complete with mounting kit and bar pad, making them the cheapest tapered bars to mount to your bike.

The CR bend we opted for results in the bars sitting 20mm higher than the Suzuki's stockers, which is an improvement for your back when standing and for strength when sitting. The bend is very comfortable in the wrist, but the bars are quite wide. We're leaving them this way for the time being but if we take the bark off too many trees the hacksaw will come out.

We took a punt on the grip choice and went for Pro-Grip's new – and weird – 797s. These have big lumps to hold your outer two fingers and as Don and I put them on there were plenty of comments about how they'd feel. The result? Surprisingly good. As Don said, they felt natural straight away and within seconds you forgot about them. A really wet ride will reveal more, so I'll write more after November's Tassie adventures.

Barkbuster Egos were the obvious choice to finish off the bar set-up, and if it hadn't been for a conversation I overheard in a bike shop the other day I'd simply say 'use 'em' and leave it at that. This conversation was sobering, with neither the customer nor the salesperson having any idea of how to install new grips. When you think about the consequences of loose grips this is serious business, so it's probably worth firing off a paragraph or two here.

Remove the old grips and get the bars and throttle housing as clean as possible; this isn't easy on the DRZ because the grip is almost bonded to the housing.

Take the new grip and work out if it – like the 797s – has to sit at a particular angle on the bars. With this clear, splash a little petrol inside the grip and slosh it around before tipping it out again. Don't get it on the outside of the grip because it actually dissolves the surface of the rubber. As soon as you tip the petrol out, slide the grip onto the bar or housing, and rotate it to the correct angle. Do it quick! As the petrol evaporates the grip sticks to the bars and it sticks hard. Make sure that it will stay there with three separate wire ties on each grip, and use stainless wire – available from hardware shops.

The grip's resistance to tearing can be reduced drastically if the ridge is cut from the end when mounting the Barkbusters. Cut into the end of the grip and leave the ridge intact, which usually means moving the throttle housing 5mm further onto the bars so the grip clears the Barkbusters. Mounting the Egos is simplicity itself thanks to the trick mounting system, as long as you remember to get the right mounting kit to match your bars. And, finally, there's little point running Barkbusters if the levers hang down underneath them. Move the levers further inwards to clear the BB frame or shorten the levers themselves to fit. We run our levers inside the alloy BB frame where they'll get the best protection.

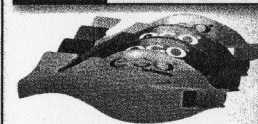
Next Issue

The Suzuki has copped a fair bit of grumbling here but the fact is that I can't think of a better bike for general adventure riding. Sort the small stuff like the headlight and the oil drip tray, get the suspension dialled in and it is a brilliant bike to toss around. In the next issue we'll be taking the plot into more serious territory with big-time suspension upgrades and one of the new 26-litre Safari tanks that Robin Box from R&V Aqualine has just produced. There'll also be a couple of trail-friendly mods, and I'm getting weird ideas about water pump protection.

To do this though I'll have to clock up some serious kays. It's a tough life, but ...

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