

PRODUCT EVALUATION

FOX FLOAT R SHOCKS

Little brothers to the most successful shocks in ATV racing

By the Staff of Dirt Wheels

□If you race, you need aftermarket shocks. It's that simple. The best racers in the world wouldn't dream of showing up on the starting line with stock hardware. There are some exceptions, but the front shocks on many ATVs are there to keep the frame from hitting the floor in the showroom. They're heavy, they lack true adjustability, and most pros use them as weights to keep the EZ-Up from blowing away.

In the ATVA Nationals last year, six of the top ten used Fox Float X Evol front shocks. Unfortunately, they cost over \$1400 a pair. You would probably run them, too—if you were a pro with someone else to pay the bills. For the rest of us, Fox recently introduced the Float R shocks, which are designed to offer similar performance without the big price tag.

First, you have to understand why the Float X Evol shocks are so expensive. They are designed to be super adjustable. Air shocks already have



◀ On Zaca Station's cross-country course, the Fox Float R air shocks worked flawlessly and eliminated eight pounds of weight from our Honda 450R.

The new Fox Float R shocks sell for about half the price of the Float X Evol shocks, which dominate the Pro ranks. ▼



infinite adjustability because you can add air pressure to simulate an increase in spring rate. But there are two problems with air. First, it doesn't deal with heat very well. But on an ATV front shock, that's not a factor, because the heat build up is minimal (not so in the rear, where there's only one highly stressed shock and less air flow). Second, air is very progressive. Compressing a 100-pound coil spring requires an additional 100 pounds for every inch, even the final inch. An air shock might require 100 pounds for the first inch, then 200 additional pounds for the second inch, and so on. It all depends on the volume of air being compressed—the smaller the volume, the more progressive. The Float Xs have a secondary air chamber that increases air volume as the shock is compressed (Evol is short for extra volume). With different pressure

in the two chambers, you have even more adjustability.

The new R shocks don't have that feature, but they do have a fairly large air volume. They also do away with the remote reservoir, instead placing the floating piston in the body of the shock. Remote reservoirs help dissipate heat, but as we said, there isn't much heat buildup with front suspension.

So the Rs are less adjustable and, in theory, less heat resistant than the Xs. In the real world, can they still do the job? We installed a set of Rs on the front of a Honda 450R that was set up for fast trail use. The other chassis modifications on the Honda were a Fox Podium X rear shock and a Precision steering damper. First, the weight difference was surprising. The stock Honda shocks are fairly typical, with a steel body and a

piggyback reservoir. They have adjustable high- and low-speed compression, adjustable rebound and threaded preload rings. The weight? Six pounds apiece. The Rs weighed slightly over two pounds each! They're even lighter than the more expensive Xs. So before we even started, we had eliminated eight pounds, half of which was unsprung weight.

We set the air pressure at 60 psi, which is a little stiffer than stock. That gave the Honda much better turning manners. It cornered much flatter, and stability increased dramatically. But the best part was the improvement in ride quality. Even with what simulated a stiffer spring rate, the front end seemed cushier. Little impacts and square edges that caused grief on the stocker became no problem. You can attribute this to

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FOX R

the negative spring, which softens initial travel, but some credit has to go to the reduction in unsprung weight. There's absolutely no question that the Float Rs represent a massive improvement over stock. Do they reach the same level of performance as the Float X Evols? That depends on who you are. We never experienced heat problems, but that isn't to say that it would never happen on a really rough track with a pro-level rider. Most of our testing was performed at Zaca Station, near Buellton, California. The ATV track there is fairly hard-packed with square-edged holes and small tabletop jumps, and the cross-country loop has moderate chop. If you were to ride super hard on a track with massive sand whoops and big jumps, you might need the more expensive shocks—but frankly, not many riders are at that level. Fox says the application for the Float R shocks is trail riding, but most racers will be delighted with them. The price is right around \$700, which is a steal. Look for them at any dealer or contact Fox at (800) FOX-SHOX; www-foxracingshox.com □

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