

FACTORY CONNECTION RM-Z450 SUSPENSION MODS

BY THE TESTING STAFF OF *TRANSWORLD MOTOCROSS*

RATING: 10


By most accounts the 2010 Suzuki RM-Z450 is a great handling machine. But for the new year, Suzuki decided to make a few key updates to both the chassis and suspension in order to make it just that much better when compared to the '09 version. Thanks to these improvements, the turning of the '10 bike is improved along with straight-line stability over rough, chopped-out straights and huge whoops, begging the question: what else is left to develop? Like almost every bike, however, there is always room for further improvement and tinkering, and we just couldn't leave the '10 RM-Z450 well enough alone. With this in mind, we handed over the Zook's suspension to the experts at Factory Connection.

Factory Connection is the main sponsor behind the Geico Powersports/Honda race team, and they have long been known as the experts in getting the suspension on the red machines working flawlessly. FC, however, also knows a thing or two about getting the various other colors out there working well. And over the years, we've tested quite a few bikes outfitted with FC suspension modifications all with great success, so when we took delivery of the finished suspension, we knew that we would be in for a treat.

In stock trim, the suspension on both the front and rear of the RM-Z450 tends to be a bit on the soft side for faster or heavier riders. In our instructions to FC, we told them to keep the suspension plush on the initial stroke, yet give the bike more resistance to hard hits and big landings. Up front, the forks received numerous changes that included revalving, new Works outdoor spring seats for improved oil flow, and Works oil flow collars that help improve bottoming resistance and control. The shock was given a little more attention with the aim of smoothing out the action while improving bottoming resistance. After revalving the shock, a new spring and fluids were added along with an external reservoir that is designed to increase the nitrogen volume of the shock, thereby reducing heat build up and giving the bike a more consistent feel over rough, square-edge chop. Lastly, the shock also was given a Team Works preload ring with bearing for more consistent spring action, and a Showa rebound adjuster housing that provides 20 more clicks of adjustment.

Out on the track, the changes to the suspension were obvious. The shock and forks worked flawlessly together and the soft feel of the stock suspension was gone and replaced with an overall firmer feeling ride that soaked up big jumps and hard hits without being too firm and rigid. It's a difficult task to accomplish—stiffening up the stock setup while simultaneously maintaining a plush

rider-friendly feel—however, FC managed to do just that. With the stiffer settings, the forks performed very well. No longer did they want to dive in corners; they remained in the sweet portion of the stroke, offering the optimal suspension performance for any given situation. What truly stood out for many of our testers, though, was the shock. Along with being firmer, the shock now has a very smooth progressive feel that resists bottoming, but still is plush enough to handle high-speed straights without kicking or having a harsh feel. Thanks largely to the external reservoir, the shock maintained a more progressive/plusher feel for an extended period of time. The extra volume allows for more nitrogen in the shock, making for lower temperatures, which translates into better shock action further into a long moto. Just like we've found with the stock suspension settings, however, maintaining the proper sag level of 105mm is a must to attaining the maximum performance out of the RM-Z shock. If you run too much sag, the bike will still handle well in a straight line, but will then have a vague feel through turns. To put it simply, check the sag often to ensure optimal performance out of the suspension.

After giving the suspension of our RM-Z450 to Factory Connection, we were rewarded with a bike that performs very well in nearly every circumstance. We've ridden it at various tracks throughout the SoCal area and have hardly had to adjust even the clickers—the final product provided from FC is really that good. We didn't think it was possible, as the RM-Z450 already handled nearly flawlessly in stock trim; however, our 2010 RM-Z450 is now a favorite amongst the test riders here at *TWMX*. 

MODIFICATIONS RM-Z450	PRICE
FORK REVALVE	\$180
FF5 FORK FLUID	\$26.95
WORKS OIL LOCK COLLARS	\$54.95
WORKS OUTDOOR STYLE MX SPRING SEATS	\$139.95
SHOCK REVALVE	\$180
GSF SHOCK FLUID	\$17.95
SHOCK SPRING	\$109.95
WORKS SHOCK REMOTE RESERVOIR	\$249.95
WORKS PRELOAD RING WITH BEARING	\$109.95
SHOWA REBOUND ADJUSTER HOUSING	\$24.95
UPDATE ONE PIECE SHOCK OIL SEAL	\$25.95

Visit: factoryconnection.com

RIDER: BRENDAN LUTES

