

TORTURE-TESTING 9 OFF-ROAD BIKES >>

DIRT RIDER

"I CAN DO THAT!"

- FREESTYLE MX
- SUPERCROSS
- MOTOCROSS
- ENDURO
- WORCS
- GNCC
- BAJA

FIX YOUR OWN FORK

WE SHOW YOU HOW



DREAM RIDES:

- McGRATH'S CRF150R
- JIRI DOSTAL'S KX450F
- DIRT RIDER CRF450R

Ivan Tedesco's
Factory Honda CRF450



Dropping In On: Chris Real

Chris Real is the sound master. His company, DPS Technical, is the leader in sound advice and information. He's constantly performing environmental sound studies for vehicle manufacturers for international and U.S. EPA certification as well as public sound testing at events, shooting ranges, freeways, racetracks and private property recreation areas or tracks like Jeremy McGrath's. He's also our go-to guy for all our sound tests here at *DR*.





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Dirt Rider: Chris, if you could give a letter grade to the state of sound in off-road motorcycling, what would it be?

Chris Real: I think that the state of sound in off-road motorcycling deserves a D. As a complete industry we haven't given a good effort, and our performance on this issue is way below our true ability/capability at best. In fact, the vast majority of students in this "class" don't want to hear the lecture or even show up for class. They only want to talk about it when they have to, and when it's test time they would rather cheat on the test than put the effort into passing the class.

DR: If we're ignoring the issue, what are we specifically turning away from?

CR: In the U.S., we aren't doing all we can do to limit sound from motocross bikes, both from an OEM standpoint and from an aftermarket standpoint. We have the loudest bikes in the world, and the least amount of rule compliance. It's important to remember that MX bikes are marketed as "closed-course competition use only" vehicles. This is racetrack use, not backyard tracks next to your neighbor and not for riding on public property, such as in the forest or on the trail. Enduro bikes with proper mufflers are intended for this. Enduro bikes aren't usually the noise-complaint generators. The sound difference between an MX bike and an enduro bike is drastic. The typical acoustic vanishing distance (distance you can no longer hear a bike from) on a single vehicle goes from about 800 feet on an enduro bike to about 3200 feet for some MX bikes. This causes people to mandate larger buffer zones or outright bans on riding areas.

DR: What needs to be done to improve our sport's sound issues?

CR: Strict enforcement from sanctioning bodies, racetracks and riding areas. They need to quit allowing products (aftermarket or OEM) that hurt our sport. Trail stewards need to put awareness pressure on riders in their areas. Dealers need to know how far sound travels and what it sounds like to people who aren't participants. Dealers will sell the products that people ask for. Manufacturers will sell product that's in demand. We, the industry, need to build the demand.

DR: What about current sound limits and the way they're implemented and enforced? Are they realistic and/or effective?

CR: The sound limits at the present time are a good starting point, and they're realistic and effective when uniformly enforced. Every bike can meet the limits while still performing at a very high level. The reduction

of sound levels to about 94-96 decibels (by the SAE J1287 stationary test) has solved many of the noise complaints on public land. Racing at 99-101 decibels in stadiums is still a problem. The racing is so loud that it's often painful and probably unsafe for the crews and spectators. Many outdoor tracks create big noise problems for their neighbors. This costs us all riding areas.

DR: On the recreation side, is sound as big an issue as it is in racing?

CR: Recreational riding suffers the most from noise. Many riding areas get closed or are never opened due to noise complaints and concerns. I think that it's extremely important to minimize sound from recreational riding, either on public property or on private property, such as backyard tracks. The vast majority of riders ride recreationally, and a two-year-old race bike often becomes someone's trail or recreation bike. So loud race bikes hurt recreational riding as well.

DR: What happens if the current level of sound coming from off-road motorcycles doesn't change?

CR: This is a sad but easy question to answer: We'll have fewer riding areas, fewer and shorter trails and more tracks shutting down as time goes by with no change. Also, there will be a lot more legislation against motorized recreation.

DR: What's the best thing our readers can do to help eliminate excessive sound from our sport?

CR: Sound reduction is easy. Put a quiet pipe on the bike and put an insert in the exhaust. Repack and maintain the muffler. Make the muffler selection based upon the type of riding you're going to do. Noise is harder to control. Noise is the response to excessive sound. If the sound from your motorcycle is disturbing someone, then we need to be aware of the other person's viewpoint. Once we get that person or community mad at us, we've become a visible and audible target and will usually lose the fight because we are truly loud. We need to take the stealth role, "If they do not hear us, then they will not see us." If the sound from the source is impacting the neighbor to the point that it's disturbing, the source is too loud. If we're bad neighbors or disturbing to the community, we as individuals and as an industry *always* lose in the long run.

Ask yourself these questions.

1. How many off-road riding or racing areas have each of us lost in the last five years?
2. How many new riding or racing areas have we gained in the last five years?
3. What's always the top complaint against motorized recreation? (No matter if it's bike night at the biker hot spot, a proposed new riding or racing area, a riding area close to other recreation, ski boating, a boom box stereo in a car or even an airport.)

Our European motorcycle counterparts have learned the hard way. They have very limited riding areas, and in many countries aftermarket exhaust systems are illegal.

We're a very talented industry. We can solve this if we try.

For more information on sound check out Chris' website at www.chemhelp.com. Shoot him an e-mail and ask what you can do to become a smarter rider.