

**40
BIKES**

2-STROKE BUYER'S GUIDE!

CCC
02977

DIRTBIKE

NOVEMBER 2016

DIRTBIKEMAGAZINE.COM

**HONDA'S
OFF-ROAD
SHOCKER!**

**ALL-NEW
CRF450R &
ELECTRIC-
START
CRF450RX**

**TEST
SPECIAL:**

- YAMAHA YZ450F
- KTM 350SX-F
- HUSKY FX450
- SUZUKI RM-Z450

SSR 450:

**A TRAIL-WORTHY
450 MACHINE FOR
UNDER \$5000!**

**BAJA
DOMINATOR!
HONDA XR650R**

Att'n retailer:
Please display until Nov. 17



BIKE TEST: SSR MOTORSPORTS SR450S

Breaking the **\$pend** Barrier

Made in Asia and priced right!



➤ Some of the most fabulous tech in the world comes out of China, but until recently we didn't have much evidence of that in the motorcycle world. Chinese bikes have a reputation for being heavy, having meek performance and offering crude control feel. But, that is changing. A

year ago when we tested SSR Motorsports' SR150 and SR189, we checked out the early SSR SR450S. As much as it looked like a serious effort, it still had a few clunky parts. Fast-forward a year and the difference is remarkable. This SR450S looks like a finely engineered dirt bike.



The fit and finish of the SR450S is far superior to most Chinese-built dirt bikes. The machine is comfortable, performs well and sells for a great price. For our dry conditions, we weren't fans of the stock tires.

THE LOOK

There is a saying: if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is probably a duck. In the case of the SR450S, if it looks like a Honda, is it a Honda? No, it isn't, but it is a pretty nice copy. In fact, it is such a nice copy—or clone if you will—that we feel a little uncomfortable. This is not a case where a company took an existing design and improved it or made it its own. The fact that it

is a clone of a machine introduced a decade ago helps a bit. As much as it looks like a Honda CRF450X, though, don't count on the parts being interchangeable.

The upside is that for once a Chinese manufacturer has not merely made a bike that is a visual copy of an existing machine while ignoring the tech. It would take a discerning rider to tell the difference between this bike and an existing Japanese production model. All of the control efforts are



The welds and finish on the aluminum frame are quite nice. The engine looks like an exact copy of a Honda CRF450X, but don't count on parts interchanging. The engine runs cleanly with no unexpected mechanical noise.

just what you would expect—nice, light and smooth. The riding position is natural and comfortable. The seat foam even feels right.

THE RIDE

Where the SSR differs from the mid-2000s vintage Honda 450 is in carburetion. The SR450S uses a 36mm carburetor with a handlebar-mounted remote choke instead of the famed Keihin FCR (39mm or 41mm). Using the kick-start or the button, our test machine fired easily and quickly, and it ran happily as soon as it was warmed up. Claimed horsepower is in the low 40s, and that sounds pretty close. We had a 2008 Honda CRF450X along as a yardstick. It was jetted and had an FMF header and spark-arrestor muffler, so it ran quite well with excellent response. In comparison, the SR450S wasn't as snappy at low rpm. Once you got higher in the rpm range, the bikes felt closer; however, with the baked, dry conditions we tested under, we were feeling traction limitations as much as we were power.

The exhaust note on our bike was very quiet. The pipe looks like a quality unit, but there is no spark arrestor. Like the Honda CRF450X, the SR450S does have an air-injection system, so it would appear the machine could possibly meet CARB emission and sound standards for an off-road machine, but at the moment it is designated as a closed-course competition machine. The clutch and throttle are both smooth, and we had no trouble with shifting. In fact, everything about the performance reminded us of a stock CRF450X. In addition to the carburetor, the SR450S has an 11.0:1 compression ratio compared to 12.0:1 for the Honda. It also has stainless steel valves rather than titanium. Nevertheless, the SR makes good power, and it feels like it makes the power it claims. Our bike felt lean at low rpm and at the initial crack of the throttle. The lean feeling was more pronounced when we were in slow

technical riding and the engine temperature went up. After about 25 percent throttle opening, the performance was fine and, frankly, all that the stock CST tires were capable of handling in the dry, packed and rocky conditions we were riding in. We've ridden with various CST tires before, and in loam they work pretty well. The rear was acceptable for our riding conditions, and it wore well. The front was out of its element on the packed, dry surfaces.

GOOD STUFF

There is a long list of things that are impressive about the SR450S. The aluminum frame and swingarm are very nicely constructed, and all of the welds are clean and consistent. All of the suspension parts look professionally built with fine machining. As much as they look like Showa products, they are not, but they must be extremely similar. Apparently, SSR test rider Jeff Willloh races an SR450S with Showa suspension internals. He is currently leading the 30 A class in WORCS. The WORCS races are no joke, and a number are exceptionally rough. If the SSR is handling those events, that says a lot about it.

Some of the detailing, such as the grips, handlebar and footpegs, is nice. In fact, the pegs look like the aftermarket pegs most riders quickly install on Honda CRF450Xs. The wider-than-Honda's pegs require a little care when you kick-start the SR450S, but you won't be doing that much. The e-start works fine. Honda's venerable 450X has a number of less-wonderful features, such as a smallish 2.1-gallon tank and a fussy side-entrance airbox. Unfortunately, SSR copied those traits as well. While the Honda uses a quick fastener on the airbox cover, the SR450S bolts the cover shut. The SR450S also has an ignition switch (with a key) complete with fork lock, so the machine the SSR was modeled after was likely an international model from a country that allows the 450X to be ridden on the street. Since the introduction of the 450X,



Without fuel, the SR450S weighs in at 272 pounds.

companies, including Honda, have done a great job of getting the weight lower on machines with perimeter aluminum frames. SSR hasn't made any in-roads here; the SR450S has a bit of a top-heavy feel that current technology avoids.

Despite our nitpicking—and much of it is similar to what we said about the last Honda CRF450X—the SR450S is an impressive general-purpose dirt bike. The suspension action is a bit crisp and a little more resistant to initial movement compared to the well-broken-in 450X we used as a yardstick. For certain, more riding time would help. We suspect, though, that the frame may not have the refined feel of the Honda's frame. Honda spends a great deal of time, energy and testing to make an aluminum frame that flexes properly. It combines cast, forged and extruded parts and different types of welding at various points on the frame to get the desired feel. Wall thicknesses are critical as well. The SR450S frame feels crisper than a 450X, but you'd need to be a discerning rider to feel it. With a front tire better suited to our riding conditions, we would be happy to ride an SR450S. It is a solid, effective bike with plenty of performance. Considering the MSRP of \$4699, this is a screaming performance deal. That is roughly the price of a well-used Honda CRF450X. The bike does have a limited 90-day warranty. SSR has been in business in the U.S. since 2002, and it stocks all the parts for the bike. The parts are priced as reasonably as the bike itself. The bottom line here is that it is a respectable machine, one that is off-road competent and priced low enough to get folks excited and pumped to ride on a brand-new machine. Add in the quiet factor, the good feel through the cockpit and what appears to be a beefy constitution, and we have all of the ingredients for a true price-is-right dirt bike. □



The SSR front brake is a Nissin, and it works well. The rear brake worked fine, but doesn't match a Honda brake in power and feel.



The control feel and effort required is well within current industry standards. SSR has made big strides here in the last year.

BIKE TEST: SSR MOTORSPORTS SR450S

Engine typeElectric-start, 449cc, 4-stroke, single-cylinder, liquid-cooled
 Displacement.....449cc
 Bore x stroke.....96mm x 62.1mm
 Fuel delivery.....36mm carburetor
 Transmission.....5-speed
 Final drive.....Chain
 Fuel tank capacity.....2.1 gal.
 Spark arrestor.....No
 EPA legal.....No
 Running weight.....265 lb. (claimed)
 Wheelbase.....59.0"
 Ground clearance.....13.0"

Seat height.....37.8"
 Tire size:
 Front.....CST 80/100-21
 Rear.....CST 110/100-18
 Suspension:
 Front.....47mm inverted w/ reb. & comp.-damping adj.; 315mm travel
 Rear.....Single sock w/ spring preload & reb. damping adj.; 270mm travel
 Country of origin.....China
 Suggested retail price.....\$4699
 Manufacturer.....SSR Motorsports,
www.ssrmotorsports.com