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The Shocking Experience

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There are so many to pick from; how can we pick the one that serves our on-road and off-road needs?

Over the years shocks have come a long way. Today there are so many types and brands (multi-valve, mono-tube, nitrogen charged, and remote reservoirs to name a few) that it sure gets confusing.

I have had many different types and brands over the years of off-roading. My dilemma has always been the same though. When I had found one that worked great off-road, it was too harsh for daily driving on-road. A friend of mine had told me about a new shock from BDS Suspensions that he was getting, so I waited to see how he liked them. After a couple of weeks of on-road and off-roading, I asked him if they had made a difference. His response was very positive. Since he has been an auto technician for 20 + years and has built and run many types of off-road vehicles, I highly trust his judgment. After doing a little additional research of my own, I decided to give the BDS shocks a try.

Many of you may be familiar with BDS Suspensions. This company has been in the suspension business for 10 years. The 9500 Nitro shock is new to the BDS product line.


So what makes this shock different? When I opened the boxes, I noticed that the shocks mounted with the cylinder inverted. This eliminates the problem of the shock tube hitting the spring perch on the rear of a TJ. The shocks have rolled closed ends with a 46 mm piston. The cylinders are brushed steel for that stainless appearance and clear coated. The 9500 Nitro is charged at 200 psi. The gas charge helps keep the shocks cooler in situations of rapid axle movement.

The BDS 9500 also has CAV Technology engineering built into them. So what is CAV Technology? It is, Correct Application Valving. When the shock is made for a specific vehical like your jeep. The engineers look at the weight of that vehicle and the spring load rate of the Vehicle. They use the rate factor from springs that they sell in there lift kits. This valving controls the rates of compression and return. I spoke with one of the engineers and he also told me that the design of the 9500 is not like any of there stock shocks.


I was also told that the 9500 is unique in that it also has a valve that senses the sprung or unsprung direction of the piston and shaft. This shock is there high end and high pressure nitrogen filled shock. The nitrogen is added to the shock at the same time the dampening oil is added.

I also asked how long should the nitrogen charge last. This is a hard one to answer. It depends on the seals. But with normal use, being recreational wheeling, not hard core off road racing, the charge should last the life of the shock. Like any shock if you start to see oil leaking out of the shock, the seals have gone bad. That also means the nitrogen


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charge has leaked out.

Installation is the same as other shocks except you will have to deal with the 200 psi pressure. Prior to cutting the straps that keep the shock compressed; install all bushings and test fit each end of the shock. Having a floor jack available may be necessary if the shock gets away from you during installation.

With the rear shocks, mount the upper end first. Now this is where it takes a little skill. Cut the restraining strap from the shock, and it will start to extend. As it does, guide the bottom to the shock mount on the axle and slip the bolt through.

If the shock extends too far, use the floor jack to compress the piston rod back up to the lower shock mount.

With the front shocks, it helps if you remove the tire on the side that you are doing first. Using the same technique as described above, secure the top of the shock, release the restraining strap, and guide the lower end of the shock into its appropriate perch on the axle.

If the shock extends too far, place a jack under the shock, compress it, and try again.

Note: Be careful not to get you fingers in between the shock and the perch, it will have 200 psi behind it, now that would hurt.

On to the test drive. Here is where the proof is seen. My first ride with the new shocks was on a road I have driven many times and know the feel of very well. I came to a railroad crossing that I have been across many times. Wow is all I can say; my kidneys are thanking me. It was so smooth I almost forgot I was driving my Jeep. Next was on to a concrete road with expansion joints. Again the ride was greatly improved. The constant thump, thump, thump was cut down to bearable.

Now, off to the trails. I was anxious to see if they would perform like an off road shock should. One of the trails I drove was a wash board road with lots of whooptie-does. The ride was great with no fading from heat as the shocks worked to keep the tires plated on the trail surface. I felt like I had more control, as the tires were able to stay in contact with the trail surface.

Final Thoughts

I finally found a shock that can handle the needs off-roading and ride great on road. The BDS 9500 Nitros did not give me the feeling of riding on a hay wagon. In the past I have found other shocks that were great off road but very harsh on road or good on road but could not perform to the needs of trail riding. I contribute this the fine engineering and BDS's unique "CAV Technology". The BDS shocks perform exceptionally both on and off road and are a perfect match for my Jeep and my kidneys.



Our Thank You's!

MoabJeeper Magazine would like to thank Tom Dube for this article submission.

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