

HOUSER LONG TRAVEL & ELKA SHOCKS

Widening the Raptor 700R
and adding some travel

By the staff of *Dirt Wheels*

□ Our project Raptor 700 started life as a capable trail machine and received a host of upgrades to make it worthy of track, trail, dune or anything in between. We contacted Trinity Racing for a full-tilt, 734cc engine package complete with a big cam, oversized valves, big-bore kit, head porting, dual exhaust and a custom tune good for 76 rear-wheel horsepower. With all that newfound power on tap (nearly double a stock Raptor's output), we knew we had to beef up the rest of the rolling stock. We installed a Tusk wide rear axle, along with a Houser Racing 1-inch-plus anti-vibe steering stem, Houser Pro-Bounce nerf bars and FasstCo Flexx bars. To match the wide rear, we ordered up a Houser Racing 2.25-inch-plus long-travel system in matching Candy Blue powdercoat, with top-notch Elka Stage 5 shocks front and rear. The \$995 Houser front-end kit comes with wider arms, including their Slicast caster adjustment system, which is an aluminum plug system that rotates and indexes on pegs to easily adjust the front end's caster. Sealed ball joints and

The Elka shocks we installed with the kit were awesome when you're really pushing the Raptor to its limits, but slower riders will want to opt for a softer valving setup. ▶

needle-bearing arm pivots keep the movement smooth.

To see how we installed the kit, log on to www.dirtwheelsmag.com and check our "Project Long Travel" video. The kit takes a couple of hours to install and adjust for the average mechanic, with the only messy part being brake-line removal, as the stock Raptor brake lines are routed through the stock A-arms. Luckily, the stock brake lines are long enough to use with the wider arms, so you don't have to incur the extra expense of extended brake lines. As with all of Houser's products, quality is very good, and the fit and finish of the completed product is exceptional. It added quite a bit of flair to our Raptor and was the conversation piece of the machine at the Sand Sports Super Show in September.



The install was easy and straightforward, and Houser provided detailed instructions in the kit. After the install, we performed an alignment and set the Slicast system at negative 1 degree of caster. We set the toe at 1/8-inch in and went for a ride. In the dirt, it tracks well, turns in quick and soaks up big hits without drama. The extra 1.5 inches of travel that the long-travel system provides can really be felt on big jump landings and in whoops, and



The rear Elka shock's remote-mounted reservoir fits nicely behind the airbox of our Raptor.

◀ *The Houser long-travel system widens the Raptor by a full 5.5 inches, offering increased cornering prowess and 1.5 inches more suspension travel.*



HOUSER & ELKA

the Stage 5 Elka shocks were tuned in very well from the get-go. The Elkas are high- and low-speed compression, rebound and preload adjustable, with a triple-rate front-spring setup and a dual rate in the rear. The rear is a remote-reservoir system, which we had to mount under the seat because of the Trinity Racing dual exhaust. Luckily, our Fuel Customs intake left room to mount the reservoir sideways next to the filter, with easy access to the thumb-adjust compression clickers. Elka has a setting specific to the Houser long-travel system, and it works very well. If you want to build your own shocks to suit the kit, the measurements are all available on Houser's website. Our Stage 5 Elka shocks were costly. The fronts were \$1795 a pair, which is hugely expensive, with a \$1295 rear shock. Elka can also build cheaper options, down to \$595-a-pair fronts, which are preload adjustable only.

The Stage 5 shocks feature a high-flow piston design that flows a claimed 325 percent more volume than their previous-generation shocks, and the new lighter-weight piggybacks are designed for less inertia and increased response. Even the springs have been redesigned to be lighter, and the overall feel from this trick setup is very perceptible over the stock system. In the dunes, the suspension made the Raptor turn in quickly and squat the front end, which led to quick changes in direction and easy berm shots. Through the whoops, we could hold the big Trinity Racing motor wide open in fourth or fifth gear, clicking off 80-plus-mph passes on the Raptor's speedometer. We don't recommend checking your speed in the whoops, by the way.

THE VERDICT

While expensive, this top-of-the-line racing setup provides an incredible difference over the stock suspension that any hardcore rider will love. The extra width quelled the Raptor's top-heavy feel and led it to be a cut-and-thrust type of ride that left every test rider in an ear-to-ear grin. There are many more cash-friendly options that you can spring for, but we wanted to go top-notch for this one, and we weren't disappointed one bit. Contact Houser Racing at (877) 6-GOFAST or www.houser-racing.com, and Elka Suspension at (800) 557-0552 or www.elkasuspension.com. □



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