

ROCK-BANGER'S BALL



THE NEW 44-INCH PIT BULL ROCKERS

BY David Freiburger

PHOTOGRAPHY CHAD REYNOLDS

OUR OPINION ON THE NEWEST Pit Bull Rocker tires doesn't exactly mesh with the popular Internet chatter. Most of that digital buzz came out in 2005 when Pit Bull introduced the Rocker tire, which was vaunted as a super-supremo rockcrawling unit that was perhaps a bit loud and short-wearing. Those reviews were based on the then-new 35-inchers, but now there's a bigger dog ready for adoption: the 44x19.50. We think they are more all-around performers and also the best road-going 44s we've seen.

These newer, huger meats are the largest in the Rocker line, which stretches from 33x13.50s to 44x19.50s. All the

Pit Bull meats are renowned for being remarkably round and smooth-riding on pavement considering their size and bias-ply construction, but we also found these 44s to be impressively quiet. We wondered how that was possible with massive slabs of tread blocks, and the answer seems to be that the tread surface is quite crowned. When the 44x19.50s were mounted on 15-inch-wide wheels on our Jeep, street pressures of 18 psi provided a centered contact patch just 8 inches wide despite an edge-to-edge tread width of 14 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches, so the largest tread blocks at the outer edges were not slapping the pavement. Also, even with bias construction, the Rockers did not flat-spot overnight (though it wasn't any colder than high 50s here in SoCal). At 18 psi, the overall section width was 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, the height was 42 $\frac{1}{2}$, and the

static loaded radius was 20 $\frac{1}{2}$.

That SLR number reveals about 2 inches of squat, which is mostly in the very wide, rounded tread area. Dropping the inflation to 10 psi just started to lengthen the contact patch. We wheeled them mostly at 8 psi and a bit at 5 psi, but were hesitant to go lower because this first batch of 44-inch Rockers is for 16.5-inch wheels and we did not have beadlocks. These tires would perform much better on beadlock wheels, which would allow extended wheeling at lower pressures to break in the carcass, but nonetheless it seemed that these big, four-ply tires on our midweight Jeep were a bit stiff. Doing some time in the rocks confirmed that notion, as the tires didn't conform to obstacles and envelope them for superior progress. Wear-in will improve this, but it seems that the extreme size of the



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SPECS

Tire: Pit Bull Rocker

Size: 44x1950-16.5

Type: Bias

Load Range: C

Max load (lb. @ psi): 3,640 @ 30

Sidewall: Four-ply nylon

Tread: Four-ply nylon

Approved rim width (in.): 12-14

Tread depth (in.): 26/32

Tread width (in.): 14.8

Section width (in.): 18.4

Overall diameter (in.): 44.4

Static loaded radius (in.): N/A

Revs per mile: N/A

Weight (lb.): 142

Test vehicle: Modified Jeep CJ8, curb weight - approx 6,000 lb.

Sizes available: 33x1350-15, 16, 16.5 & 17, 35x1450-15, 16, 16.5, 17 & 20, 37x1350-15, 16, 16.5, 17 & 20, 39.5x1650-15, 16, 16.5, 17 & 20, 42x15-15, 16, 16.5, 17 & 20, 44x1950-15, 16, 16.5, 17 & 20

1 The slab-block tread design of the Pit Bull Rocker is quite variable (complete with Texas and California and maybe Delaware or something in there too). Note the very crowned shape of the tread seen at the top of the photo. We were concerned that we'd shred the smallest, finlike tread features at the edges, but that proved nearly impossible.

2 We attempted hillclimbs at high and low speeds in granite, shale, and hardpack. Performance was on par with that of other tires we've had on the same Jeep.

3 Though the sheer girth of the tires consumed most obstacles, the envelopment of terrain by the tires was minimal. This photo shows the 44-inch Rocker at 8 psi. Lower pressures with beadlock wheels, plus some break-in of the carcass, would help a lot, especially on light- to midweight rigs.

4 Whether on jagged rock or smooth, traction was rarely a problem. When the tires did hunt, we craved for a bit more flex, which might have led to lugs biting into crevices and ledges.

tread blocks on the 44s does not allow as much conforming to the terrain as might be enjoyed if the same tire design were in a smaller size; some work with a grooving tool would help. But in the size tested, it seems that the performance in the rocks can be credited more to sheer girth than to design superiority.

While in the rocks, we also used our 7.17:1 axle gears and Air Lockers to exercise all the tire-ripping torque that we could, purposely grinding the sidewalls on igneous rock and spinning the tread surfaces on as many jagged points as we could find. The Pit Bulls proved bombproof. We couldn't even erase the little doggie cartoons off the sidewalls. After multiple hillclimb attempts at high and low wheel

speeds, the tread surface seemed hardly abused at all. We didn't put enough street miles on the tires to accurately comment on how that off-road durability might translate to on-road longevity.

Our ultimate assessment of the big Rockers reflects on how times have changed. In a world where 44-inchers are neither the largest tire nor unusual for trail rigs, and where a tread design this outlandish is no longer freakishly aggressive, we consider the 44-inch Rocker to be today's ultimate all-terrain. We mean that in terms of *all*-terrain, as in street to rocks to snow to mud. It may not be perfection for any single purpose, but it's the most driveable 44-inch tire you'll find that also refuses to be humiliated in hard-core off-road situations. 🐾



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