

MOTOCROSS
ACTION MAGAZINE

SHOEI VFX-W HELMET

Shell-shocked



WHAT IS IT? A radically new lid from the trendsetter in premium motocross helmet design.

WHAT'S IT COST? \$399.99 (solid colors), \$529.99 (graphics)—Your local dealer or www.helmethouse.com.

WHAT'S IT DO? Shoei needs no introduction. The Japanese company has been offering safe and eye-pleasing helmets to American racers for decades. At one point in history, Shoei offered the most popular helmet design in motocross (their VFX look was cloned by several boutique helmet companies). However, with more less-expensive "Shoei clones" and a swelling market of competition in the premium price range (over \$350), Shoei has decided to set itself apart. The new VFX-W, Shoei's latest helmet, has features that focus on increased safety, comfort and aesthetics. Our goal was to find out if the VFX-W truly is different from Shoei's previous bread winner, the VFX-DT.

WHAT STANDS OUT? Here's a list of things that stand out with the Shoei VFX-W helmet.

(1) Shape. The MXA wrecking crew has long been enthralled by the look of Shoei helmets, dating back to the mid-'90s. From the front, the VFX-W shares the DNA of all the previous VFX helmets. It is when you turn the helmet that you realize that Shoei's designers have embraced "edge styling." Edge styling's overriding characteristic is hard edges, creases, ridges and rills that give a sense of movement to an inanimate object. There is no doubt that the VFX-W's shape, with its sharp beltline, is an acquired taste, but overall it was a hit with test riders. The creases do provide the perfect slot for your goggle strap. On a side note, Shoei got rid of the snap-on plastic vents, which were prone to breaking. Hooray!

(2) Foam. The shell's liner is the most important part of a helmet. Shoei uses a dual-density EPS lining, which is softer at the crown and more dense around the sides of the helmet. The softer lining is meant to crush during an impact and reduce the force to the head. The MXA wrecking crew has always preferred dual-density shell liners to single-stage liners.

(3) Fit. The fit is deceiving. We won't kid you, this helmet is a hassle to get on. It requires serious effort to get your head in the helmet. On the first few attempts your temples take some serious abuse, but once on, the VFX-W is the best-fitting Shoei helmet we have ever tried on. We compare the difficulty of getting the helmet on to squeezing into a Formula 1 car. It takes some effort to get in, but once situated, everything falls readily at hand.

(4) Shell sizes. Shoei has four different sizing molds (extra-small, medium, large and extra-large). The extra shell size means that size gaps aren't achieved by varying padding thickness. A few riders complained about the cheek pads, which were extended further out on the chin bar compared to the VFX-DT. This chipmunk-cheek feeling lessens once the padding begins to break in. The VFX-W tipped the scales at a hefty three pounds, five ounces.

(5) Safety. With an eye towards post-crash safety, Shoei incorporated what they have coined the "Emergency Quick Release System." The system allows medical personnel to remove the cheek pads while the helmet is still on the rider. Very smart, but they need to get the AMA to approve the helmet removal system for Pro racing.

(6) Liner. The three-piece liner is designed to rout air through the interior to keep your head cool. We didn't notice any major gains in ventilation compared to the VFX-DT.

(7) Visor. We hated the VFX-DT's rear-mounted visor. Shoei's new visor is an improvement. It does a much better job staying put when landing from jumps.

(8) Place of manufacture. The Shoei VFX-W helmet is made in Japan.

WHAT'S THE SOUAWK?

It may be cruel to say, but we think that Shoei went to school on the Arai VX-Pro3. And they get a passing grade, because Shoei has closed the gap between the two high-end helmets (except in weight).

MXA RATING



Only one helmet had ever received five stars from the MXA wrecking crew. Now there are two.