

## Dirt Bike **PRODUCT TEST**

# SHOEI VFX W

In the helmet world, it's all about faith and trust. Shoei has a huge advantage in that department. Newer helmet makers are everywhere, and they can meet all the SNELL and DOT standards in the world, but they don't have the reputation that Shoei banks on as one of the few makers that is based entirely in Japan.

**THE PROBLEM:** Helmet manufacturers from China and Taiwan are making huge improvements in quality, and it's showing up in finish and styling. Some of the top-line helmets from clothing companies, in particular, have modern shapes with outrageously good graphics that make the old Shoei helmet look archaic.

**THE PRODUCT:** The new VFX W has a new shell shape with an aggressive look. The predominant features are ridges that run around the helmet that give the whole package a much more modern look. Functionally, the top ridges act as locators for the helmet strap and provide routing for air in the interior. The lower-most ridge looks like it might function like a neck brace to keep your head from pivoting too far rearward, but Shoei insists that this wasn't a design goal and that the feature acts to promote air flow. They do admit that the helmet was developed to fit with a Leat brace. Shoei engineers say they had to develop new molding technology to keep resin from accumulating in the ridges and bringing unnecessary weight. They also were very picky about sizing, making four different molds for the six different sizes available. The interior makes up the difference, but Shoei's research shows that different density EVS foam is required to make the different size helmets act the same in a tumble. It's all beyond the understanding of most riders, and that's why faith and trust are such a big factor in the helmet market.

All helmet companies are paying special attention to air-flow now. Shoei had a change in direction there; instead of having little doors and sliders everywhere that open and close the vents, the W has permanently open ports. If you want to close them, you can always plug them up, but the company's research shows that virtually no one wants that.

**THE WORD:** We love the new helmet. Frankly everyone on the DB staff used to wear Shoei helmets most of the time, but we were gradually wooed away by the appearance of the newer offerings from China. And we still believe the quality and safety of a premium Japanese helmet are the best in the world.

Beyond styling, we like the new Shoei better than the old one for several reasons. First, the goggle strap ridges are a huge benefit in brushy trail. When you scrape under a branch, you can have your goggles pulled all the way down to your neck with other helmets. And the same branch would knock the old plastic scoop off the old hel-



*The new Shoei VFX W is the most aggressive new design from Shoei in years.*



*The cheek pad release is called the "Emergency Quick Release System." It allows a medical worker to pull the red rings and release the cheek pads, allowing the helmet to be removed with virtually no drag on the head, which reduces the trauma to the downed rider.*

met, leaving a little hole in the shell. The visor, too, is less prone to snag on foliage.

The price of the new W actually is somewhat lower than its predecessor, starting at \$399 for solid colors. Don't expect a fancy bag and an extra visor; Shoei says it would rather spend money on the helmet itself than the extras. Contact any dealer that carries products from Helmet House, or contact Shoei directly at (714)730-0941. [www.shoei-helmets.com](http://www.shoei-helmets.com) □