

D44 Buildup

My XJ rear D44 axle buildup

Intro. Most people, when they say they "found" a D44, they mean in a local yard. I was luckier. Maybe because I try to help so many Jeepers, the Jeep gods smiled upon me, and sent some wicked Jeep karma my way. I "literally" found my XJ D44. A couple of friends and I were out wheeling when we came across a burned out, flipped over, abandoned, wrecked XJ that had been sitting deep in the woods rotting for years. As we got closer, I couldn't believe that it had a D44 rear axle. It didn't look good - the thing had burned to the ground, and had been rusting for years. Still, even though we didn't have the heavy duty tools required for cutting the prize free, Chad's trust Warn 8274 made short work of ripping the gem out, with a loud tearing. It was rough, but we loaded it up anyway, just in case it turned out to be useable, and besides, we were helping to remove garbage from the woods!



This is what we found.



There's the rear D44 in the foreground.

Here's how it arrived home. Boy was my wife pleased at what I'd dragged home! The front turned out to be



unusable junk. Look at that burned and warped aluminium rim!



Inside it didn't look great, but not too bad either. A factory Track-Lok and 3.55 gears. The Track Lok was wasted and spewed shrapnel. It didn't smell nice either!

But - there was some gear oil, and the silicone where the tubes are pressed in was intact, as were the rubber boots on the brake cylinders. I was worried about heat damage, from seeing the melted tranny and aluminium wheels. But I rationalized that any heat high enough to damage the rear axle would also



have burned off the silicone, gear oil, and rubber.



On the bench, checking that it's reasonably straight.



Cleaned up and primed.



Shafts removed, cleaned, and primed.



Housing painted. Looks better already!



The heart of the "new" axle - the famous bullet-proof Detroit Locker. I bought it from my local Jeep dealer, out of the Mopar performance catalogue, for \$600 Cdn - deal of the century. It came in a box, wrapped in the Detroit Free Press newspaper! Note that Tractech actually call it a No-Spin differential.

I just love this thing.



One last pic!



I lied....this is the last one. I wish everything was made as well as this. Did I mention I love it?

Well, no way



I was going to slap the beautiful Detroit in there with 3.55 gears. So I called DriveTrain Direct for one of their "Power Packages" that included genuine Spicer 4.56 gears front and rear and install kits with all new bearings. Boy was I happy when this package arrived!!



Inside, Front and rear gears, and 2 boxes of bearings.



This was kind of interesting. I had assumed that "Genuine Dana/Spicer" meant "Made in America" but I guess not. Note the gears were made in Mexico!!

No problems in over 2 years though.

Likewise for the bearings...I assumed wrong. Note some parts



made in Brazil!



This is the front D30 4.56 gear set and install kit.



The front and rear carrier bearings.



The rear 4.56 gear set and install kit. Does anyone use a gasket for the diff anymore? Might be useful as a template one day for making a rear diff guard...it's still hanging



on the garage wall!



Before the install, I was a little concerned about this wear or groove inside the housing. Hasn't been a problem at all though.



Here's the new seal, bearing, and locking ring installed on the shafts. Note the custom steel machined spacer between the bearing backing plate and the seal....part of my ZJ rear disc conversion, detailed elsewhere on my site.

I built a custom truss while I was at it. Just dumped a



load of \$\$ into it, so why not make as strong as possible. Wish I had made the truss longer though.



Complete with ZJ rear disc brakes, custom truss and spring perches, and ready to install.



Installed. Note the lower shock mount relocation (raised).



Just have to measure for the new driveshaft now.



The front D30 Detroit to match.

Summary: It cost me a pile, but was worth it. I've been abusing it for a couple of years now, and it's been great. Hard to say what I like best- the Detroit, low gears, or disc brakes. A very worth while project.

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