

## OHV ROAD TEST- 1995 Ford Bronco with rear locker



On our last run to the Log Cabin Mine I got the opportunity to drive George's 1995 Bronco. It is referred to as the "full size" Bronco because the two other versions that Ford produced were much smaller. My first impression of this 4x4 is that it is too big, similar to a Hummer, making it difficult to maneuver in tight spots. Like many first impressions, I

found this not to be entirely true.

Behind the wheel you settle into a very comfy and roomy interior. This "big boy" is loaded with power steering, power windows, power brakes, A/C, cruise control, auto trans, 351 engine, etc. Very quickly you notice there is some real muscle power under the hood. The 351 CID engine equates to a 5.8 liter and it means business. The muscle power is transferred to the dirt through the automatic transmission, aftermarket 4:56 differentials with a rear locker and front Tru Trac, and 33 inch tires. These appear to be the only significant modifications to the stock vehicle.

As you pull off the highway, you begin to appreciate this larger than average 4x4. The longer and wider wheel base means less "rocking and rolling" in the rough spots. The stock suspension also gives a somewhat cushy ride. It has a surprisingly small turning radius and the power steering is a breeze. Wow, it is much easier to maneuver than I expected.

To get a real sense of it's off road capabilities, I tested it in stages. I stayed in 2wd without the locker until it would go no further, then went to 2wd with the locker, then 4x4 without the locker, and then 4x4 with the locker. In 2wd without the locker it responded much as you would expect from any 4x4. When the hill became steep you would hear one rear wheel begin to spin and the engine rpm increase. Push the little button to engage the rear locker, and presto, you doubled your traction and off you go (note: you should stop and put it into neutral when you engage the locker). With the extra muscle under the hood we did not need to use low range and we were very surprised how well this vehicle performed in 2wd with the locker. We only had to use low range on a long decent so the brakes did not overheat. It is generally wise to use low range to prevent the automatic transmission and engine from overheating, but the temp gage never got over halfway (although I heard the fan clutch engage several times).

We finally encounter the situation when we needed the 4wd. Going uphill and transitioning from one road to another, I high centered the vehicle. Although it has 33 inch tires, the ground clearance is not great, especially for this wheel base. The running boards had been removed for

this trip so there was no damage when we high centered. Fortunately I had stopped before we became a teeter-totter and I was able to back up and put it in 4wd (the locker was already engaged). There were only three solutions to this problem: get winched or pulled over this hump, go another way, or give it the gas and fly over this hump. I took flying lessons once so that appeared to me to be the best solution (remember, this is not my vehicle). We took off and headed for the moon, and this solved our problem. We landed cross-way on the new road but were able to get turned back onto the road.

Although that little stunt might sound a bit foolhardy, there is a bit more to be said about this vehicle. It comes from the factory with dual shocks in the front and is heavy duty from top to bottom. It was manufactured with the Ford truck components, not the passenger car components.

Bottom line, this is a very comfortable and capable 4x4 vehicle. Like every 4x4 there are some shortcomings. We did have to squeeze between a few trees (the mirrors do fold back) and a little more ground clearance would be nice. Although I did not check the gas mileage, we only used 1/3 tank of gas in a full day of OHV activities (it holds approx. 25 gallons). On the highway with the cruise control you feel like you are in an airplane on autopilot.

I want to add one note about "lockers". On several occasions I have heard the concern "but I don't have lockers". Although I don't do this, I generally want to say "so what". Lockers are nice but certainly not a necessity. Our 4x4 vehicles give us access to the great outdoors, and fortunately it is at our backdoor. Enjoy it while you can!

Written by Mike Johnston 9/11/12

About the author:

He currently owns three 4x4 vehicles, 1999 F150, 1989 Montero and 1969 Bronco. He was a Parts and Service Zone Manager for Ford Motor Company in the mid-1970s and raced a Bronco at that time. It is possible that he has a bias for Ford products.