

Halogen Bulbs

I have a question you might be able to help me with: I have a '99 Suzuki VL 1500 Intruder, and I was thinking of putting halogen bulbs in the turn signals and running lights rather than the standard #1157 bulbs. My question is this, if a standard bulb draws from 5-15 watts of power and the halogens draw 15-50 watts, will the extra current draw hurt my bike's wiring system? The charging system should handle the extra draw, shouldn't it? I have no extra lights attached to the bike.

Eric Jacobs
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The 50-watt bulbs allow less than 5 amps of current to flow in the circuit, so the wires should be able to handle it just fine. However, you may have a problem with the lamp lenses. They were not designed to handle the heat that these halogen bulbs will produce and might actually melt. As far as the charging system, the bike will handle it just fine as long as you are not using it constantly in stop and go city riding situations. While riding, the system will charge the battery, but at idle (especially with the brake light on) the charging system will have problems keeping up with the extra demand.

2003 ST1300 Clutch

I'd like to know if anyone has a method to get me a lighter pull on the hydraulic clutch of the ST1300. I don't have much strength in my left hand.

Leo Palmer
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Leo, generally hydraulic clutches offer less resistance than a manual one does. The first thing that we would do is to check the feel of the clutch against others of the same model, to make sure that there is not something wrong with your unit. If the clutch is 'normal,' then the next step might be a lever change to allow you to get better leverage, but this would involve custom fabrication. We know of no 'bolt-on' units you can use for this purpose, but perhaps one of the readers can offer some suggestions.

"Click"-Then Everything Went Dead

I have a leftover 1998 Honda Shadow ACE Tourer that I bought new three years ago and it has given me trouble-free service until now. The last time I rolled it out of the garage for a ride, it wouldn't start. I turned the key, the lights when on, I heard a "click," then everything went dead.

Well, no problem, just replace the main fuse, right? The 30-amp main fuse and all the 10-amp subfuses were fine. Going by the Honda service manual, I checked conti-

nunity on the starter relay switch ground. It was okay. I checked for voltage across the battery; it's fine (I keep it charged with a Battery Tender). I checked for continuity on the sidestand switch; fine. I checked continuity on the ignition switch. It's fine.

Voltage across the starter relay switch is about 2 VDC when the start button is pushed. I'm tempted to replace the starter relay as my first trial and error step. The only additional load I have on the electrical system is a Cobra light bar and an Electrical Connection LED taillight conversion kit. Both have been on for two years with no problem, except for when a diode went bad on the taillight kit. I'm baffled.

Jerry Brown
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With 2 volts on the terminals of the relay, we would look at the connectors in line with both sides of the relay feeds. It sounds like you have developed corrosion on the terminals in some of the plug-in points. The best bet is to locate them one at a time, and unplug and clean them all. If this does not solve the problem, then we would measure the resistance of the relay coil and compare it to the specification in the service manual. If the resistance is low, then we would replace the unit.

To Rejet or Not

I have a 2002 FXDL, Harley-Davidson Dyna Lowrider, and I would like to put a set of Screamin' Eagle II slip-on mufflers on it. I am not looking for any performance increases at all, just a bit more sound. I want to keep the airbox stock. And my problem is I have two different opinions from two different dealers on whether or not my carb would need to be jetted.

I am against doing anything to my carb because the bike runs great and it has never had the famous Harley cough through the air cleaner. Also, the expense of a Dynojet kit and airbox kit is something I would also like to avoid. But I don't want to do the wrong thing by not rejetting at all, or rejetting a carb that doesn't need it, so could you please help me out with this confusion.

Bob Carey
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Well, the first thing we would do is put on the replacement mufflers and then run the bike. To do a plug check, make a long high rpm pull, preferably uphill, to make the engine work harder. At the end of this run, pull in the clutch and cut the ignition to keep the plugs the way they looked under load. Pull the plugs and examine the base of the insulators to see if it is running lean. White or blistered insulators indicate a lean con-

dition, but light gray to light brown indicates that it's fine. If it's lean, you need to rejet to avoid engine damage from overheating, but if it's still running okay, and the plugs look fine, as long as you realize you are not getting the best possible performance, it's okay to leave the carburetor stock. The Dynojet kit/Screamin' Eagle air filter combination produced the best performance gains for the money in our test of carbs, pipes and airfilters on the Sportster.

Rejetting the GS500e

We have just purchased a new 2002 Suzuki GS500E. It is extremely cold blooded. I'm told the carbs need to be rejetted (current EPA standards are apparently tough on non-current technology). Dynojet makes kits for up to the 2000 model year but I'm having trouble finding a kit for the 2002. Any suggestions?

Craig Johnson
Missoula, MT

Use the Dynojet model 3128 jet kit for this unit. According to the company Web site, it will work just fine.

Valkyrie Gas Tank Leak

I own a '97 Valkyrie standard, five years old with just over 50,000 miles on it. A few weeks ago, it developed a leak in the gas tank. I took it to my local dealer where a mechanic I know and trust determined that the tank had rusted from the inside out, to the extent that the tank wall in the area around the leak was almost paper thin and would likely be developing more leaks soon. The upshot was that he recommended replacing the tank as the only safe course of action. I now have a replacement tank on backorder from Honda. The shop tried to talk Honda into covering the cost of the tank, but the company wasn't willing, since the bike is so far past the warranty.

I'd be interested in understanding how this rusting could have happened. I ride year round; the bike has never sat unused for any extended periods. Is there something I should have been doing to prevent this? The bike's owners manual says nothing on this issue. I'd also be interested in knowing if you've heard of this happening with other Valkyries, or any other bikes for that matter. It seems to me that it's a pretty unusual problem.

Joe Marshall
Sandston, VA

First of all, your dealer is right, the best course of action is to replace the tank if the area of corrosion is large. As far as it being an uncommon problem, we are not aware of any model-wide difficulties with the tanks. Usually, when we hear of corrosion prob-

lems like this, they involve bikes that are kept with the tanks almost empty and stored for months. Even if the bike's tank is not kept full, the sloshing action of the gas as the bike is being ridden is enough to keep the walls coated and prevent rust.

Smoking Bandits

I have a 2001 Suzuki 1200 Bandit, now with 10,000 miles. The bike runs fine, except for excessive oil usage. It can go from the top of the sight glass to out-of-sight in under 300 miles. Anyone who is following me says they notice a puff of smoke from the exhaust when I close the throttle. I was using Silkoline Pro4 10w/40 oil. Thinking that oil might be too good for this type of motor, I am now using a heavier grade of oil, i.e. thicker, in an attempt to stop the oil blowing by the rings.

I think the problem is that the holes in the oil control groove in the piston has been drilled in the wrong place, i.e. too high up, as it intersects the plane of the oil ring. The only cure is a new set of pistons, but Suzuki doesn't really want to know about it, surprise, surprise.

Mark 1200
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The key to your problem may well be the fact that the bike smokes when you close the throttle. Usually, when this happens it indicates bad valve guide seals. When the throttle is closed, the increased low pressure in the combustion chamber pulls oil from the top end past the bad seals. This oil is then burned with the air fuel mixture and produces the smoke.

The oil holes in the piston ring grooves are there to provide a path through the piston to the crankcase for any oil collected by the rings. A leakdown test will tell you whether or not you have a leakage path past the rings into the combustion chamber area.

Annoying Noise

My '01 Honda Gold Wing has a loud whine between 1500-2500 rpm. I believe it is coming from the alternator drive assembly. What can be done to eliminate this annoying noise? I understand that the drive assembly is a split gear with spring tension and that other Gold Wings have a similar problem. Is it possible to get to the drive assembly without removing the motor?

Fred Hahn
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There are two likely culprits for the kind of sounds you are describing. If the noise has been there since the bike was new, one possible reason for the sound is insufficient clearance in the alternator drive gears. This is unusual, but can happen due to mis-

matched gears. But, to inspect and repair this problem requires major disassembly, and the problem is very rare.

A more likely cause of the problem is worn bearings in the alternator, and inspection and repair can be accomplished by simply unbolting the alternator assembly, inspecting the parts and replacing components as needed.

Out With the Old, In With the New

I bought a '98 BMW R1100GS last April. The previous owner thought it had the original battery. I wasn't happy with how fast the starter turned the engine over, so I replaced the battery with a maintenance-free type. The new battery turned the engine over at the same rate, so I guess the original battery still had plenty of power.

When I had the bike serviced at my dealer, the chief mechanic told me the maintenance-free battery was not recommended. He said it did not have the same amperage as the standard lead-acid battery, and while the battery may have enough power to start the bike, eventually it may not have enough to run the ABS. He said I should switch back to a lead-acid battery. I've discovered the wonderful difference between maintenance-free and lead-acid batteries, so I will not be happy to change back. On the ABS issue, do you agree with my mechanic?

Chuck Gilmore
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Assuming that the maintenance-free battery in question has at least the same ampere hour rating as the original, and also assuming that your charging system is working properly, there should not be any problem with using the battery on an ABS equipped bike. The starting system uses much more power than the ABS ever could, unless there is something really wrong with your starter system...like a bad starter motor.

Honda Overheating

Just read your article on the GL1800 overheating problems and I wonder if a solution isn't to be found via the one I used to solve the overheating of my 1985 Honda V65 Magna. After replacing the thermostat (twice), the hoses, the cap, etc., without positive results, I installed a manual switch for the fan. *Voila!* To test the worth of the manual system, I parked the bike in the sun, started it up, turned on the fan and let it run for 30 minutes at idle. The temp never exceeded normal.

My experience with water-cooled Hondas is that the OEM thermostat allows the coolant to get too hot before activating the fan. I found that even in very hot weather, so long as I switched the fan on soon after start-

ing the bike, the water cooling worked just fine. Until I installed the manual fan switch (as an override to the thermostat which, still activates the fan when the manual switch is off), I had to shut the bike down while riding through town, i.e., at stoplights, etc., because the temp gauge would go into the danger zone. My '89 Honda Transalp also gets too hot at times and I'm also going to install a manual fan switch for it.

It sounds as if the GL1800 cooling issues are more complex, but if I had one I'd install the manual fan switch.

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Barback Installation

I am about to install barbacks (raising the handlebar up 1" and back 1/4") on my 2003 R1150R, and wonder what effect, if any, this is likely to have on the bike's excellent handling and generally very responsive feel. My assumption is that, although I am a brisk rider, I do not ride at the %'s level where such a change would be noticeable (or if noticeable, not detrimental). I have never seen anything on this subject and think it may be of general interest. Thanks for such an excellent magazine.

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Since the changes you are making are above the steering head, the addition of the risers should not affect handling in any way.



Downtime Files

is a joint service of *Motorcycle Consumer News* and the American Motorcycle Institute of Daytona Beach, Florida.

Please keep in mind that since the AMI staff has not seen your motorcycle, the answers given are best-guess assumptions based on prior experience and education, and may not necessarily be correct. When in doubt, take your motorcycle to a qualified shop.

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