

ANY QUESTION

ANSWERED ✓

If we don't know the answer, we'll find the person who does

The steel-frame CBR600 is a classic, but it's not immune from reg-rec problems



OWNING & RIDING

Q Why is my battery's charge draining away?

The fairly old battery on my 1996 Honda CBR600F went flat, so I replaced it. I used the bike just once before parking it up for two weeks, but then the new battery was flat. I've checked the voltage drop with the battery off the bike and it went from 12.47V to 12.34V over 48 hours. When refitted to the bike the voltage dropped much

quicker, going from 12.43V to 12.17V in seven hours. The bike doesn't have an alarm, so what could be the cause?
Des Ellard, email

Answered by Scott Bullett, Doble Motorcycles
This problem affects many bikes and the culprit is probably the

regulator-rectifier. If a diode has gone it creates a short that allows some charge to trickle through and partially charge the alternator windings. The catalysts for all this are usually a poor earth with associated corrosion in block connectors or the loom.

If you know how to use a multimeter you can perform a

milliamps draw test, pulling fuses while it's hooked up and looking for reading changes. Once you've narrowed it down you can start pulling connector blocks apart ready for a cascade of Verdigris.

The long-term solution is to change the regulator-rectifier's earth to go directly to the battery with some chunky, fresh wiring.



Purchasing an unregistered bike like an FZ8 should prove trouble free

Q Can storage damage an unregistered bike?

I got a really good price on an unregistered 2013 Yamaha FZ8 for this year's March registration day, and it struck me that although I am the first registered owner, the bike has sat around in various storage facilities and motorcycle showrooms for two years. If a bike is left for this length of time, does it cause any deterioration? I haven't noticed any issues except corrosion on a front disc, now subject to a warranty claim. Do parts such as tyres, suspension and fluids deteriorate over time?

Frank Collins, Worthing

Answered by Chris Dabbs, MCN

Unlike the brake discs, the rest of the metal components are painted or plated so they should be fine as the storage environment won't have been damp. The suspension and brake fluids will also still be good. However, it is possible that the tyres may have become flat-spotted if the wheels haven't been rotated regularly.

The PDI should have made sure the fuel system hasn't been contaminated by stale fuel, though that is less of a problem with a fuel injection system. If the battery had been 'activated' when it was in storage, that could be an issue, and a good rule of thumb is that an oil and filter change should happen if the bike has been stood for over a year. Other than that you should be fine.

Q BMW S1000RR or Aprilia RSV4?

I'm moving up to a 1000cc superbike from my 2011 Suzuki GSX-R600. I'm partial to the odd trackday, and the bikes I have in mind are either a used BMW S1000RR or Aprilia RSV4. What would you recommend?
Leigh Bishop, email

Answered by Michael Neeves, MCN

If you are stepping up from the GSX-R600, the BMW makes sense for several reasons. It's a four-cylinder like your 600 so it won't be so much of a culture shock. It may feel even more familiar because when BMW were first developing their new engine the test mule was a Suzuki GSX-R1000 K5 chassis. If your budget allows go for a 2012-on S1000RR. That's the smoother Mark II with better electronics and plusher suspension.

The Aprilia is jewel-like, as tiny as a 400 and an absolute weapon, especially on track. Again, go for a later model, as buyers of the early ones could choose their electronics package and may have foregone some elements on grounds of cost.



Honda's Varadero is a trusty beast but it doesn't like a soggy wiring loom

Q Why is my Varadero tricky to start?

My 2009 Honda Varadero XL1000 has become difficult to start if left out in the wet, or after it's had a good wash and rinse. I can tell when it is not going to start as I can't hear the fuel pump prime the system.

Jon Beacham, email

Answered by Chris Dabbs, MCN

The coils, HT leads and plug caps on the Varadero are susceptible to getting damp, so give them a good clean and waterproof the joints with silicone sealant. There could also be an issue with the HISS immobiliser.

Try cranking the engine for 15 seconds while keeping an eye on the FI light. If it starts to flash that will be a code for a fuel injection fault. If there's no flash it's going to be the security system. The HISS unit can't be repaired, but the fault is often at the connector into the loom which is under a panel on the right. If that is clean and it's still misbehaving the HISS unit needs replacing. A new unit is £130.26 and can be fitted by a proficient home mechanic.



Heading off road? Leave the panniers at home

TRAVEL & TOURING

Q How do I crash proof my bike for a big trip?

By Nick Plumb, former Dakar racer and now Touratech UK MD
Here are my top protection components. First up are panniers, if you're off-roading then leave them at home, if you're on road then they'll act as crash bars. A lower seat makes a huge difference in confidence and lets you paddle your bike out of mud. Bars for an adventure bike are a must. Fairing bars bolt onto those bars and also protect the

vulnerable radiator. I recommend full plastic wraparound handguards; they move around and bend a bit, and have no solid bar going through them, so they provide protection in an impact and save your levers but won't catch your hand. Most adventure bikes come with a detachable rubber insert on the pegs. Take these off, and check the footprint is wide enough for your boot. Standard teeth are generally not sharp

enough, so as soon as you get a little bit of water on them your feet will slip straight off. Check how much a replacement headlight is for your bike; the cost of a guard will quickly seem like a really good idea. It only takes one stone to flick up and crack it. On the road the stand isn't a problem but riding on a soft track you'll need a wider footprint so the stand doesn't sink in, especially for big, heavy adventure bikes.

TECH WATCH

Q What's so special about Yamaha's crossplane triple?

Strictly speaking, a triple can't be 'crossplane' because the name comes from the cross shape of the crank when viewed end on. A triple with 120-degree crank spacing is more of a 'Y' shape than an 'X' shape. In fact it's just like the 120-degree spacing of the tuning forks in Yamaha's logo. But what the triple does do is exploit the inertial torque cancellation effect as achieved by the crossplane in a four.

The benefits Yamaha claim about 'clean torque' is inherent to triples with 120-degree crank spacing – and they're as true of the Triumph Street Triple as they are the MT-09.

So how significant are the benefits of reducing inertial torque? The real benefit of an engine which cancels out some or all of its inertial torque is in throttle control for the rider. If it isn't cancelled out, inertial torque increases with increasing rpm following a square law, which makes it difficult for the rider to control as its effect is constantly varying with the change in rpm. By cancelling or minimising its effect, the linear combustion torque becomes much more dominant. The disadvantage is that you trade inertial torque cancellation for balance – which requires a balance shaft, adding cost, weight and friction (lost bhp) to counteract this.

Engine balance rather than precise control of torque output has always been considered more important, as comfort is high up the list of priorities. And with the rise of traction control mitigating the effects of fine torque control at the



MT engine has a crossplane philosophy

limit, this will stay the case unless you're talking of the nth degree of throttle control.

Yamaha's R1 wasn't the first bike with a crossplane crank. Some 40 years ago, Helmut Fath employed it in his 'home built' four-cylinder URS of the 1960s for his sidcar world championship exploits. That engine had lots of other new tech before its time too, but that's another story.

Q Which no-frills locks will keep my commuter bike safe?

I've just bought a cheap bike for a commute. It's doubtful anyone would want to nick it, but I think I should get a cheap disc lock. What are my options?
Sam Brant, Camberley

Answered by Keith Roissetter, Infinity Motorcycles
The Roxter disc lock (which is an Oxford Titan in disguise) is available for £12.99 and seems very good for the money, as does

the Oxford mini-shackle lock at £19.99. Mammoth produce the £9.99 Original and also the £15.99 Blast.

Whatever you use, invest in a minder cable. They're only a couple of quid and give a really useful reminder that can save a lot of money, and more importantly a lot of embarrassment. And yes, that is the voice of humbling experience you hear.



Roxter from £12.99



Oxford mini-shackle from £19.99



Mammoth Original from £9.99



Mammoth Blast from £15.99

MCN LAW

Your legal questions

Q I hit a pedestrian, but how do I stop him from taking a step too far?

Last October I hit a pedestrian at a crossing. I was doing 25-30mph but misjudged the lights. I was too close to stop safely as they went amber, and they turned to red as I went through them. This lad stepped out as soon as the light turned red, looking the opposite way to the traffic. I clipped him but stayed on. I asked him how he was and he said he was fine, just bruised and shaken.

The police found we were both to blame, me for not stopping and him for stepping out without checking it was safe. However my insurer tells me he is now claiming for whiplash and soft tissue damage. I can't help but feel he is making up the injuries – he really did look fine and some time has passed. Is there something I can do to stop the claim?

Max Evans, email

'Request that he is examined by an independent medical expert'

A It seems your insurer has received a letter of claim from this man's lawyers which presumably states that you ran him over as he was correctly proceeding across the pedestrian crossing. Suggest to your insurer that they obtain the police report which you state apportion blame between you.

Make a request to your insurers that he gets examined by an independent expert. With whiplash and soft tissue injuries medical experts often have to rely on what they are told by the claimant, although a contemporaneous visit by the man to A&E or his GP is likely to be enough for him to be believed.

If he did actually sustain injuries his claim will likely succeed, but it will be reduced significantly by virtue of his share of the blame.



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