

ASK THE EXPERTS

Got a problem? MCN's team of specialists has the answers



GENERAL
Chris Dabbs
MCN's agony uncle and former road tester with 30 years' biking experience



TRIUMPH
Adrian Clancy
Worked as a head mechanic in New York and now at Total Triumph in Taunton



HONDA
Scott Bullet
Workshop manager and a Honda-approved diagnostic technician at Doble



SUSPENSION
Gareth Evans
Ex-BSB suspension engineer and now boss of Reactive Suspension

I'm thinking about overhauling the suspension on my 1999 Yamaha R1. I know you can get forks serviced with different oil and springs. Can you do the same with the bike's standard-issue rear shock?

A After 15,000 miles the forks will benefit from a service with new bushes and seals. The R1's fork springs were too soft for most riders, but changing them opens a can of worms. The rebound damping controls how quickly the energy stored in a compressed spring is released, so changing the springs changes the amount of rebound damping required.

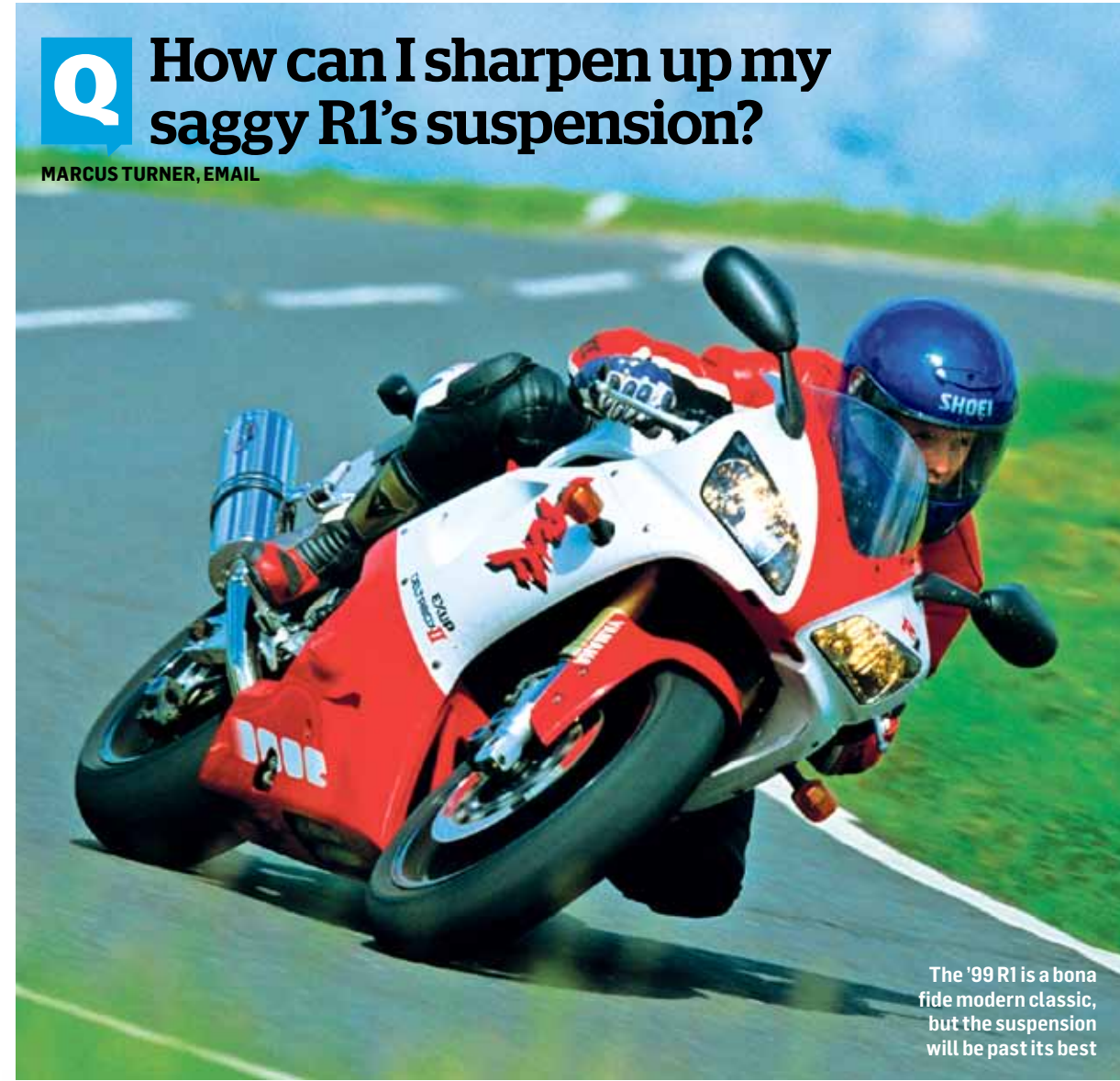
Unfortunately, the rebound assembly in those forks can't be rebuilt to change the damping, so you would need to have a piston kit fitted.

Standard shocks don't respond as well as forks to a revalving. Stock shocks are built to large tolerances to ease mass production, the result is that as the shock heats up the tolerances grow and the damping properties start to fade. Revalving the shock won't cure those problems.

Having the shock serviced is a good idea if you don't have the budget for an aftermarket shock, but spending money on having it re-worked is probably a waste of money.

A fork service will cost about £200 for bushes and seals and expect to pay about £600 for a fork piston kit, springs and a full service. A shock could be £150 for a full rebuild or if you decide to replace your shock, any of the following are worth a look, depending on your budget: Wilbers, Ohlins, Hyperpro or Nitron.

Gareth Evans, Reactive Suspension



Q How can I sharpen up my saggy R1's suspension?

MARCUS TURNER, EMAIL

The '99 R1 is a bona fide modern classic, but the suspension will be past its best

Track bike will need a hooter to be road legal

Q If I was to put my track bike on the road, what are the minimum requirements to make it pass an MoT?
Kris Long, Facebook

A It isn't necessary to have lights fitted to a bike, even a brake light, to make it road legal for use during daylight hours. All you must have is a horn which must emit "a continuous sound" so it must be electric, not a bulb horn. You don't even need a rear reflector because that's for night-time use. If lights are fitted, as long as they are disconnected and taped up to make it clear they are not functional, your bike will be legal after sunrise and before dusk, though not at times when visibility is seriously reduced, such as foggy autumnal mornings. It will have to have road-legal tyres.

Once your bike is old enough to need an MoT, then a 'daylight' option exists. Make sure it's clear at the testing station that you want a 'daylight' MoT at the outset so there's no confusion. The certificate will be stamped 'daylight use only' and you will be issued with a VT32 advisory notice. If it's an off-road machine you're putting on the road, make sure the frame doesn't have a plate on it marked 'not for road use'.

Chris Dabbs, MCN

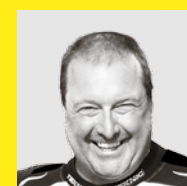


Putting a track bike back on the road can be as easy as fixing the horn

Q Any handy tips to keep cold at bay?

ISAAC KING, EMAIL

I ride all year round so I've got decent kit, but I'm getting 'white finger' now and I'm feeling the cold more in my digits. How can I keep my hands a bit warmer?



I'm a big fan of handlebar muffs and have used the Tucano Urbano ones for a few years now. They're smaller, more rigid and a little more versatile than traditional muffs, and also fit scooters. The beauty is that they protect your hands from the chill factor. A quick Google check reveals that if you're travelling at 50mph when it's 0°C outside it will feel more like -24°C. Ouch. Oxford have also just launched a new compact range of muffs, which look very good indeed.

Heated grips are a good option, cost from £40 and require a minimum of expertise to fit, but think carefully about where you site the control unit as these tend to be the weak point in the system.

If you are sensitive to any vibrations on your bike, you might find heated grips allow a little more vibes through to your hands. But if heat is the only issue (if it's vibration-related, you'll also get white finger in the summer) then heated grips can really help,

especially in tandem with the muffs. Another tip is to fit foam lever sleeves, especially if you commute in heavy traffic and spend a lot of time covering cold metal levers.

Keith Roissetter, Infinity Motorcycles



Bike-It heated grips £40

BANISH COLD HANDS



Tucano Urbano heated muffs £129



R&G Racing heated grips £40



Oxford heated grips £47-£75.99



Wemoto lever sleeves £1.99



Tucano Urbano muffs £40-£49

Should my Explorer 1200 just get lost?

Q My 2013 Triumph Explorer 1200 has done 5500 miles and the top-end has become very noisy. Apparently there is a fix, but I'm considering trading the bike in instead. What do you advise?
Craig Drechsler, Australia

A This problem affects some 1200 Trophies as well as Explorers. Some engines have looser tolerances than others, which means excessive clearance in the valve guides and perhaps the camchain tensioner. If a UK bike is noisy it's shipped back to the factory to have the problem rectified. In Australia your dealer should take care of it for you.
Adam Clancy, Total Triumph

Don't panic, that rattle can be fixed



Do I have to manually prime my fuel injection?

Q I am fitting a new engine into my Honda CBR600RR. After reconnecting the petrol tank to the fuel rails for the injectors, will the system automatically prime itself and draw fuel through the lines again, or must I prime the system manually. If so, how do I do it?
Harley Marginson, Facebook

A Once you've got it all back together, switch on the ignition and listen for the fuel pump to prime and blow out all the air, then you will be good to start up for the first time.
Scott Bullet, Doble Motorcycles

MCN LAW

Your legal questions

INSURER WON'T PAY AS MY BIKE WAS OUTSIDE

Q My Honda Blackbird was stolen from outside my house two months ago and I have been in dispute with my insurance company as they refuse to pay me the value of the bike. Normally I keep the bike in my locked garage but this time I left it outside on the street as I was only leaving it for one night, under a cover, before going out on it again. The insurer is claiming that it is a term of my policy that the bike should have been kept in my locked garage overnight. I did not know this. Can they do this?

Vince, Hampstead

'The insurer will be able to supply you with the T&Cs which should deal with the point'

A It is quite normal for a policy to cover where a vehicle will be parked; be it on a drive, on the street or in a garage overnight and this will alter the premium according to the risk. Obviously street parking rather than garaging presents a higher risk.

It appears that your insurer understood you would keep the bike in a locked garage every night. If this is not the case then you should raise a complaint with them and if it is not settled to your satisfaction consider a breach of contract claim against them.

The insurer will be able to supply you with the policy terms and conditions which should deal with the point in dispute. If the policy wording contains the term stipulating overnight garaging then you are unfortunately unlikely to receive the money.

It is important to be realistic when taking out insurance and if you know you are likely to be parking a bike on the street then make sure the insurance policy reflects this. If insurers can get away without paying, they will.



Andrew Campbell
Solicitor and author of the MCN Law column for the last five years

Andrew Campbell, Bikelawyer.
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CHOOSE BEFORE YOU LOSE NIFTY AND THRIFTY COMMUTERS

[MCN bikesforsale.com](http://www.mcnbikesforsale.com)

What £3000 bike will be comfy and frugal for my motorway commute?
Marccxr2t, MCN forums



The tourer option
HONDA NT700V DEAUVILLE £2100-£6995

It's not exciting, but comfortable cruising, excellent economy of around 55mpg, unflappable reliability and ease of use are on offer instead.
64bhp | 236kg | 19.5l | 805mm seat



The sports-tourer option
SUZUKI GSX650F £2800-£6295

Although on face value it's a 'Bandit with a fairing' the GSX650F's blend of real world performance, practicality, fun factor and 50mpg.
86bhp | 216kg | 19l | 790mm seat



The adventure option
SUZUKI DL650 V-STROM £2530-£6125

It may be built to a budget, but it's a real performer, delivers mpg figures in the 60s and is versatile. Sublime engine and comfy.
60bhp | 189kg | 22l | 820mm seat