

ANY QUESTION

ANSWERED ✓

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

OWNING & RIDING

Q Why has my 1200 Multistrada lost 40bhp?

I picked up a 2012 Ducati 1200 Multistrada last year and it's given me brilliant service through this mild, but damp winter. But it seems to have lost 40bhp overnight and won't rev over 7000rpm. There aren't any error codes and the tank is breathing properly, but it feels flat.

Andrew Bone, email
Answered by Neil Barrett, Cornerspeed Ducati
I am certain it's the exhaust valve at fault. Due to its exposed position, corrosion causes it to seize in the closed position. It doesn't flash up a fault code because the ECU sees the right resistance as the servo motor sweeps back and forth at start-up, but

the return spring can't pull the butterfly valve open as the revs rise and the servo eases off.

Any bikes that suffered this during their warranty period have had the whole £1000 exhaust system replaced.

However, the valve is only there to comply with EU emissions regs by reducing noise at low revs, so you can disconnect the servo cables and lockwire the valve open. That would normally trigger fault codes and a get-you-home engine map. But an ECU reflash will take out the O2 sensors and adjust the weak fuelling to match the increased gas flow, so you'll get better low-down performance as well for about £230.



Crusty exhaust valve will leave the mighty Strada feeling flat

Q What budget waterproof gloves are available?

I'm a novice rider on a budget, and I want some waterproof gloves that aren't too bulky so I can feel the controls.

Harry Forbes, Welwyn

Answered by Keith Roissetter, Infinity Motorcycles
Waterproof gloves tend to be aimed at the winter market and are layered accordingly, hence the thickness. Something a bit lighter, in spec and price, should

see you through the wet days for the rest of the year.

Our pick starts at £17.99 with the Richa Dusk, and the Buffalo Trackers could be worth a punt at £19.99. The ARMR Moto WPL330 don't seem too thick and shouldn't break your wallet at £29.99. Have a look in the sale bins of your local shop as most will be clearing waterproof gloves to make room for this year's summer gloves.



Spada Junction



Spada Freeride



Richa Dusk



Buffalo Tracker



ARMR Moto WPL330



Weise Grid



Repair worn wiring to keep your R6 revving smoothly and sweetly

Q What's causing my misfire at high engine speeds?

I have a 2005 Yamaha R6 that I use for trackdays. It has developed a misfire at high revs and it seems that there is no spark getting to the number three cylinder. I've changed the coil packs over, but still no joy. Do you think it's the wiring or the ECU?

Colin Carpenter, email

Answered by Chris Dabbs, MCN
This is almost certainly a wiring issue, as an ECU problem would affect more than one cylinder. You have to check that you have continuity by doing a resistance check on the wires from the ECU to the coil packs. There's no need to disconnect the battery, just make sure the bike is switched off. Do an earth-check to the feeds to coil one and two. Now do the same with the grey feed wire for coil packs three and four and compare the readings. It should show a big resistance figure, indicating a break in the wire from the ECU.

The easiest way of fixing it is to get two to three feet of 12V wire and unbind 4-6 inches of the loom at the ECU and coil pack ends. Check the break is between those two points with the meter, then solder in the replacement wire to bridge the break before tidying it all up again. Make sure the new wire has got some slack so you can tuck it away from any chafing points or hot components like the cylinder head or exhaust system.

Q Can I afford to skip valve clearance checks?

I've owned my Triumph 790 Speedmaster for 10 years and have never had the valve clearances checked. It's got 53,000 miles on it and never misses a beat. My mates say if it is running OK, leave well alone, but what are the pitfalls of my 'wilful neglect'?

George Gardiner, email

Answered by Clive Wood, Triumph specialist
The latest lubricants mean a modern bucket and shim engine like your Speedmaster will generally only experience real wear to the valve seats. But because bucket and shim motors get quieter, not noisier, as they wear it can lull you into a false sense of security until the valves and seats are so worn that you are looking at cylinder head work. If you consider that a valve-clearance check costs £150 against four figures for head work it's got to be worth it for the peace of mind. In fact I'd recommend it whenever you buy a used bike, as you are not the only one tempted to skip this vital task...



Triumph use top-spec materials, but valve checks should not be skipped

Q How do I get melted plastic off my exhaust?

I have managed to get plastic from a bike cover melted onto my exhaust (I thought I'd left it long enough to cool). How can I remove it?

Will Allaway, Gloucester

Answered by Tony Hoare, MCN
The simplest solution is to run the bike so the pipe gets hot and the plastic becomes malleable, then scrape it off with something that won't melt or mark the pipe. A wooden lollystick is ideal, you can also use a kitchen blowtorch as the heat source, then use metal polish to get rid of any discoloration and remaining crud. Cold Oven cleaner will also soften off any gunge sufficiently to be scraped off.

TRAVEL & TOURING

Q Are Burma's borders now open to adventurers?

By Kevin and Julia Sanders, World Record holders for circumnavigating the globe. They now run overland expedition company Globebusters.com
Burma is slowly opening its borders to independent travellers but it is still really raw, pretty much closed off to the outside world for over 50 years and only just opening up to tourism after political reforms in 2011. Tourism is in its infancy but they are trying hard. You can't roll up to the border, show your papers

and hey-ho, you're in. An agency must organise your paperwork and get permission. This means submitting copies of everything in advance. Your agent then gets government permission for entry and gives clearance for customs to enter your bike. Just to arrive at the Burmese Border is a feat in itself, but crossing Burma is like discovering the Holy Grail of overland motorcycling. However, you still can't cross the country independently, you need to be part of something organised. You can

hire a motorcycle, but they aren't allowed in the capital so head to Mandalay Motorcycle Rental to hire Honda enduro bikes. Instead you could always take your own, but you will need government permission in advance and you must be accompanied by a Burmese guide. Use motofreight.com to get your bike to and from Bangkok and ride in. Alternatively, you could join us on a tour; GlobeBusters run a 38-day Delhi-to-Bangkok expedition which includes Burma.



A Burmese adventure is possible, with a bit of prior planning

TECH WATCH

Q What is blueprinting?

Blueprinting used to be chapter one in the engine tuner's handbook. It is stripping an engine to its components, then refining them to more closely match the original engine designer's intent; ie removing the inevitable tolerances and imbalances introduced by variations in manufacturing and production.

Blueprinting consists of three main areas: 1) **Balancing**: if pistons, rods, crank, cams and any other reciprocating parts are accurately balanced, less energy is wasted through vibration and bearings get an easier time. Even with a factory assembly check, pistons can vary in weight by a few grammes, rods can be out of true by a similar amount and a crank can be anything up to

four or five grammes out of balance.

2) **Gasflowing**: if all ports and areas of gas flow are smooth and even, there's less disruption and impedance to getting air and fuel into, through and out of the combustion chamber. Factory production techniques can create things like burrs from valve seats being pressed in, height differences in the intakes where inlet rubbers meet the manifolds, or overhanging exhaust gaskets – even valve cutaways in the piston crown aren't always even.

3) **Tolerances**: if the clearance between moving parts is optimised, less energy is lost through friction. This includes piston/bore clearances (which vary when hot), freeing up any tightness in the cams and crank to make sure they spin freely, tidying up sharp-edged gears, and optimising everything from valve seats to piston deck heights to valve timing.



Even two-strokes can be blueprinted

Doing all this means your standard engine will make its designed power and runs the way it was meant to. But blueprinting is a painstaking, time-consuming and expensive process. And the efficiency of modern manufacturing methods means these gains aren't always worth the expense, unless you're serious about racing and trying to free every ounce of power.

MCN LAW

Your legal questions

Q How does someone with a brain injury claim?

My daughter's helmet saved her life in an accident a year ago, but her skull was fractured and she had a bleed on the brain. She is back home now but can't fully look after herself, so my wife and I spend a lot of time caring for her at her house. The police believe the car driver involved was to blame for the accident, but so far we have been more concerned about helping our daughter recover, rather than making a claim for compensation.

She certainly can't work at the moment and we would like some guidance on claiming for her as she won't be able to fully comprehend the legal and compensation system at the moment.

Jeff, Bucks

'She will need a "litigation friend" to make decisions on her behalf'

Q It sounds like your daughter is (at least for the time being) what the legal profession calls a "protected person". This is a person who lacks the mental capacity to make certain decisions for themselves, in this case as a result of brain injury.

Being a protected person does not prevent her from pursuing a claim but she will need a "litigation friend" to make legal decisions on her behalf. This should be someone that can be trusted and relied upon to always act in her best interests such as you or her mother.

The first port of call is to instruct a solicitor to obtain the police documentation relating to the incident. This will give her solicitor an excellent idea of the prospects of a successful claim.

In cases of mental incapacity the usual three-year time limit for bringing the claim to court does not apply. Time only starts to run when capacity is regained.



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

Andrew Campbell, **Bikelawyer**.
Visit www.bikelawyer.co.uk or email andrew@bikelawyer.co.uk or call 01446 794169

Bikelawyer
Motorcycle Accident Solicitors