

'97 BMW R850R Stalling Solved

I am writing this to you in the hope that other BMW owners can save themselves a big headache if they have this information: My bike started to cut out on me for no apparent reason, at any speed, hot or cold.

This started out very slowly, until it got to where it was happening with more and more frequency. On my way south on I-95 one evening, it cut out at very low speed. I pulled over and let the bike sit for about 45 minutes. Then it restarted as if nothing had happened. This phenomenon of stalling, letting it sit and then restarting went on for a while. Finally, heading north on the Florida pike, it cut out at 70 mph. I restarted it and got to a gas station. But I could not restart it again, so I paid almost \$400 for a tow.

The BMW dealer had it for two weeks (no faults showed up on their computer), but had no clue what the problem was. So they decided to put a new Hall sensor in the ignition, to the tune of \$200.

I let BMWNA know about the problem and they sent out their field rep, who also had no clue. I was told I may have to put in a new "computer," very expensive. I got the bike back and, of course, it was still cutting out on me.

So I took it to a little shop I buy tires from. All they do is fix bikes, they don't sell them. Their head mechanic told me he knew what it was the minute I told him about it! "It's the fuel filter," he said, which in a BMW is in the tank! \$14 and change for the part and \$98 in labor and the bike is running the way it ran before...perfectly.

Ken Charof
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H-D Drooling From The Air Cleaner

I own a 2001 Harley Ultra-Class. My problem is my bike emits oil out of the air cleaner. Before I ever took delivery of my bike I had the dealer install a Stage 1 Screaming Eagle kit for EFI models. I kept the stock mufflers. I first noticed the problem last October. I was on a trip with a friend (he has a 2000 Road King, no modifications), and we had been traveling most of the day at 75-85 mph, when my bike started smoking badly. I immediately shut it down and expected the worst, as we were in the middle of nowhere, South Dakota, but MTS had a tow within 2 hours, (I highly recommend these guys.)

Anyway, what had happened was the bike had puked a fair amount of oil out of the air filter. The H-D Dealer said I had a misaligned oil pump, and fixed it under warranty. I felt like I was being sold a left-handed monkey wrench, but the warranty paid for it. The rest of the trip, I would find a small amount of oil puddled on my engine, just below the air filter. This prob-

lem has persisted despite numerous trips to my local dealer. On my last visit, they claimed Harley had finally come up with a fix. This turned out to be just rerouting of the Screaming Eagle kit to reposition where the oil is dumped, above the air intake versus below it.

I've just returned from another trip, and the oil is still puddling below the air filter. I admit it is not much—more of a film than a puddle. But to me they are trying to fix a symptom and not the problem. It seems to me there is too much sump pressure.

I mentioned my friend's bike because he has had no such problem. Should I take the Stage I kit off and go back to stock?

Have you guys heard of this before? Any help would be appreciated.

Robert Neal
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We don't think the Stage One Kit is the problem. The first thing we would check is the breather system located in the head to make sure that crankcase pressure is being relieved properly. Another good possibility is a problem with the scavenge side of the oil pump. Your bike does not use a timed breather valve as the earlier models do, and if there are problems with the pump, the result can be a build-up of oil in the bottom end.

Another Idea: Reroute It To The Ground Or Mount A Drool Bucket

Re: "Dyna Charging System Output" from nomadmax@hotmail.com in the March '03 Downtime Files.

Dear Mr. Howard, I read your letter and see that the second part of your question (about where to route the breather hose) went unanswered. This "oil misting" is a common complaint on Harleys, and can be cured in a number of ways:

1) The most obvious, and, in my opinion, the best, is to simply run the breather tube itself down under the frame of the bike (away from the tires, of course), and cap it off with a breather filter. The oil mist will then spew directly to the ground, and not get on any part of your bike no matter how hard you push it.

2) The second solution, as you suggested, is to get a catch can. There are many, many variations of this. Some people make their own out of film canisters and such, see: <http://www.sportster.org/tech/oil-in-ac/> for one such homemade solution.

The guys on the Buell sites also suggest such contraptions, made of aspirin containers. If you want to spend money on a catch can, just take a look in any major vendor's catalog (like J&P Cycles or Dennis Kirk). You can get them in polished aluminum all the way up to billet chrome. These cans vary

in price from about \$40 for a Pingel unit to over \$150 for the billet models.

But remember, these cans all have to be mounted somewhere, and emptied often, or the accumulated oil will overflow. Being the lazy type myself, I chose solution #1. Hope this helps...

Moshe K. Levy, Owner
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Cause Of Fuel Starvation In Portland

I am writing in response to Dan Sekerak's driveability concern in the October 2002 issue. This problem sounded familiar but when I saw that he was writing from Portland, Oregon, I had to answer.

Does this problem only happen when riding in the rain? When using a tankbag? Occasionally, under these circumstances, the rubber pad under the tank bag will seal to the tank around the gas cap, preventing air flow into the tank. This results in a loss of fuel flow to the carbs. Of course, when you stop and look into the tank, the vacuum is broken, the problem disappears and you can continue on until the next time.

Ask me how I know this. I don't know if this will help you, Dan, but it may help other riders in such cases.

Good luck, and keep the rubber side down.

Dave Lemmer
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Where To Buy A Battery Eliminator?

I read with interest your recommendation of a battery eliminator for kick-start-only bikes. I have a Honda XL185 oldie-but-goodie which could benefit from this conversion. However, I can only find one source for a battery eliminator on the internet, and my local independent parts store doesn't seem to have heard of it.

Can you recommend any suppliers of these items?

Phil Loizeaux
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There are many sources for this item. I get mine from J.C. Whitney.

Valkyrie Electrical Outage

Regarding the letter about the electrical outage on the Valkyrie: I had something similar happen to me on my way back from Canada. We had stopped in Millersburg, PA. When I tried to restart my Valkyrie Tourer (a 1998 model), there was nothing. I proceeded to inspect the battery side of the starter solenoid and found all the connections were as green as grass with corrosion. I had some WD-40 with me and my toothbrush, so I proceeded to clean all the connections until they were bright copper

again. Then put it all back together and it fired right up. I visited my friendly Honda dealer where I had purchased the bike (Blue Ridge Powersports in Harrisonburg, VA. Thanks, Gary and Greg) and Gary, the chief mechanic, coated the contacts with dielectric grease as a precaution, and I have not had any problem since.

Larry Broach
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Softail Mosquito Killer

Last November I sent my 2002 FLSTC/I to my local dealer for winter storage. While it was at the dealer, I had them install the Screaming Eagle Big Bore Kit Stage 2 (catalog #29914-01 complete with the required ECM calibration). Now that I have the bike back for the summer I have a question that you might be able to answer for me. When I start the bike up, it runs fine for about 20 seconds, then as it is still warming up it starts to smoke like a 2-stroke with way too much oil in the gas. This lasts for a couple of minutes and then everything seems to go back to normal. Once it's warm, I get no more smoking at all. I don't know if what is happening is normal or not, and the dealer doesn't seem too concerned. When it is smoking, it makes so much smoke that it actually fills the garage and front yard. I am embarrassed, as I don't want the neighbors to think I am trying to mess up the neighborhood. The smoke is a whitish blue. It looks to me like it is running rich. I have only put on 125 miles since the kit was installed.

Roger L. Christensen
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Since you have only 125 miles on it, it is very possible that the rings are not bedded in yet, and that the problem will go away in very short order. Another possibility is that you are having a problem with your crankcase vents and are recirculating some oil into the air intake. Check the air cleaner and see if there is accumulated oil on it right after start up.

K75 Transmission Rattle Resolved

I owned a 1994 K75S. I too, had a noise from the transmission that was the same as the one described by David Wilson in the Feb. '03 Downtime Files. One dealer rebuilt the transmission (bearings, O-rings, seals and gaskets) but the noise remained. Afterward, the dealer decided to fall back on BMW's standard response: "They all do it."

I took the bike to another dealer for a spline lube. I asked them to check the transmission over to see if they could locate the cause of the noise. It was determined the input shaft was worn, allowing the clutch

disc to wobble on the shaft. The noise was most likely the disc hitting the flywheel and/or the pressure plate. With the shaft and disc replaced, no more noise.

Later, I had a retired dealer tell me this was not an uncommon problem.

Len Parkin
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Re: Eric White's Fuel Brand Considerations

Eric, I read your letter in MCN. I can't really comment about the quality of Shell gas, but I do have a tip. Check your local WalMart or auto supply store for Techron gas additive. It is the actual ingredient Chevron adds to its gasoline to clean injectors. I've used it in my VWs for years with great results. I also run a tank mixed with Techron thru my bikes every once in a while. It also will clean any carbon deposits that may have formed on the backs of the valves, and this will help get rid of low speed "stumble."

Robert Odit
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Robert, thanks for your note. I'm a believer in Techron fuel additive myself and I run it through my cars twice a year, and have been doing the same with my bikes for years.
—Dave Searle

Re: Honda VTX Plug Fouling

I got your e-mail address from the VTX Riders Forum on Delphi Forums. The person posting said you were interested in hearing from VTX owners with plug fouling problems.

My bike is a 2002 VTX1800C which I purchased in September of 2002. The bike currently has about 1700 miles on it.

I fouled my first set of plugs at about 800 miles. The dealer (JAF Honda in Scotia, NY) had performed the post break-in service at 600 miles but didn't mention any problems regarding the plugs, yet just 200 miles later the plugs were fouled badly enough that the bike would hardly run. I contacted JAF and they said they were unaware of any fouling problems with the VTX. They said it may have been caused by my riding style, especially during the break-in period, saying I was probably too easy on the throttle. I replaced the plugs with the hotter plugs that come in the 2003 VTX at my own expense (four plugs at \$24 apiece).

While I admit to riding "gently" for the first 600 miles, I've since tried to ride more aggressively. I have even gone as far as making regular high-rpm runs in 3rd and 4th gear (to keep my speed down, somewhere near the legal limit) in an attempt to "clean her out." Despite this, my 2nd set of

plugs looked carbon fouled (not oily but rather covered with a black velvety coating) at about 1100 miles. I cleaned them and have run them to 1700 miles, but they look very black again.

Some general observations I've made which I believe are related to the fouling problem are:

Poor fuel economy—I average right about 30mpg, many other riders who do not foul plugs report 35-42 mpg.

A strong gas smell from the pipes—I can often smell gas when I stop at traffic lights.

Heavy carbon build-up at the end of the pipes—The exhaust outlet is very sooty. My other bike (Honda Spirit 750) has much less of a build-up at the end of the pipes.

All these things point to a bike that is running way too rich, yet the dealer is sticking his head in the sand and blaming me for "riding like an old lady!"

I hope enough VTX owners come forward to force Honda to address this problem in an appropriate manor.

Ray Rutnik
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This is very interesting information...I agree that it sounds like the bike is running very rich, and the idea that you have to burn the carbon out is ridiculous. What is the condition of your air cleaner, and is there any way that you could have something blocking the air inlet?



Downtime Files

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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.

Send your typewritten questions and photos if possible to:

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