

DUCATI TECH TIPS

For a Ducati Simple Service it seems only natural to approach Sports Motorcycles. After all, they prepared Mike Hailwood's winning TT machine. Roy Armstrong, who did our service work and passed on his experience of the big V twins, didn't actually prepare Mike's bike, but he has serviced more Ducati Desmos than most.

Roy's first tip concerned draining the oil. After removing the drain plug--with a six-sided spanner--the bike could be tipped to one side so that all the old oil is drained. Some oil can be trapped in the bottom of the sump because the drain plug is set to one side. Take great care of the alloy washer on the sump plug. If it's left off, the plug will be near impossible to remove the next time you want to drain the oil.

When topping up, there are another couple of points to look out for. Roy says that the plug has to be held dead level in the hole or the dip stick gives a false reading. Also, when checking the level, the bike has to be left standing for at least a couple of hours. It takes this long for all the oil to drain down into the sump. The cylinder heads actually retain 1½ pints; The "book" tells you to change the oil every 1,800 miles, but Roy says that every 1,000 is a better bet unless you do a lot of long runs.

The oil filter was tackled next, and again there is an alloy washer under the bolt head to look out for. Before the bowl can be removed, however, you have to loosen the front carb and rotate it on the head stub. There is a rubber washer under the cover and also a steel one that more often than not sticks to the filter element. When the old element gets thrown into the bin, the steel washer often goes with it.

Fitting the new element is straight-forward but after twisting the front carb straight, tighten it up! More than one Ducati owner has had his carb fall off after a service; Staying with lubrication, the swinging arm should be greased at least once a month. All you need are a couple of strokes from a decent grease gun. This is important because, without this attention, the adjusters will seize solid.

To adjust the final drive chain you simply release the clamps and turn the eccentric with the tool provided in the bike's kit. When tightening the clamps keep the gap even. It is possible, if you use excessive force, to make the ends meet. This will mean that you have crushed the frame.

The chain should be set off the stand, with around 20mm of free play at the slackest point. A final word of warning; if you can't turn the adjusting spanner by hand pressure alone, the adjuster is seized. Don't resort to a hammer. The thing will have to be stripped out and greased.

Unless you are prepared to fork out for the special tools, ignition timing is a dealer's job. Roy insists that the timing NEVER alters, and if you leave the ignition pick-ups alone all will be well. If you do remove the clutch cover for any reason, the pick-up screw is paint marked--and that's the one to leave alone.

If you have the special tool, shown in the pictures, it's simply a question of removing the cover plug and fitting up the wicked-190king knife blade into the end of the crank. A strobe light is then used to check the "blade" against the marks on the cover. One is idle, the other full advance. The electronic ignition feeds two Champion spark plugs, grade L88A and gapped at .6mm or 25 thou.

The clutch adjustment is quite simple although many owners seem to make a hash of it. Remove the little clutch adjuster window from the cover, then unlock,

and screw in the adjuster until the clutch arm on the other side of the casing just touches the end of its slot. Now back off the adjuster until you can feel one mm of free play in the arm. This can be anywhere in the clutch arm slot as long as you have the correct free play--and the arm does not foul the end of its slot on full lift. Naturally you slacken the cable right off, or unhook it to make these adjustments.

To get to the air filters and battery, you have to remove the side panels. These should be pulled off square. If you yank them away from the bottom, the paintwork on the seat unit gets damaged. The battery level can be checked visually, but if you have to remove the battery for any reason it MUST go back the same way around.

If the battery is refitted the wrong way around, the leads are still long enough to connect up. However, when working on the back carb, ie twisting it to get at the main jet, the main body will short out on the battery terminal. This has actually happened in the Sports Motorcycles workshop--the battery exploded, and apart from the not inconsiderable damage to the bike, the luckless lad working on the bike was taken to the hospital.

To gain access to the rear filter the seat has to be removed. You have to remove the petrol tank to get to the front filter and it all gets to be a bit of a hassle. There is quite a temptation to chuck the filters out and thus eliminate the part of the service. If you do just that you will have to jet up the carbs to suit--the motor runs weak without filters and the engine will overheat.

Another common mistake is to overtighten the carb mountings. The intake gasket is a special steel plate set in bonded rubber. If you tweak up the mounting nuts on the carbs, the rubber splits and the steel shows through. This results in the motor breathing through the gasket instead of the carb! As a part of the service, the float bowls should be drained and cleaned, along with the filter in the fuel line.

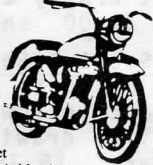
Roy doesn't use any special tools for balancing the carbs. He starts by backing off the throttle idle stops and checking the cables for free play. There should be 1 to 2mm in each cable. Next, the throttles are opened fully, checking that they clear the top of the bore. To balance the slides, Roy feels the back carb while watching the front one. The cables are then altered until both slides open at the same time.

Next, set the mixture screws to 1½ turns out from fully home, and you are ready to tackle the throttle stop balance. Roy does this by "ear" listening to the exhaust note and adjusting the stops until the tickover is smooth and even. Mere mortals would probably prefer to use a car type balancer over the inlets, or a piece of hose to listen to the intake hiss.

Please note that the choke cables MUST have at least 3mm of free play. This is to prevent the choke

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