

Shock Supreme

BY STEVE LITA

So you finally have your dream bike (in this case, mine is a new Star Roadliner Midnight with billet wheels), and you lavish tons of attention upon it: care and maintenance and the latest chromey, billet, bolt-on doohickey. Life is wonderful. But how does your cruiser ride? Can it handle the bumps where the road turns to washboard? What happens when you load it down and carry your companion? Bottom out much?

Face it; it's time to consider investing in some hidden treasure. Many new cruisers are suspended with underslung rear shock absorbers. The nice thing is that this layout hides the unsightly mechanism of the rear suspension's workhorse. But the unfortunate thing is that it presents an out of sight, out of mind attitude when it comes to upgrading what may be one of the most important devices on your motorcycle when it comes to ride quality.

This month we teamed with Skip and Joe at Orient Express in Brentwood, New York, to show you how to equip your ride with best ride equipment: a new Öhlins cruiser rear shock absorber. While the Öhlins brand is well-known to racers worldwide, this is the first foray into the predominantly American phenomenon of cruiser-dome. Öhlins took its years of experience and tooled up to produce the finest shock absorbers available for popular Kawasaki, Suzuki, and Yamaha/Star cruisers.

In this world you get what you pay for. Just take a look at this beauty. Billet-aluminum construction with an on-the-fly adjustable preload setting you can change via a remote hydraulic barrel dial. The stock factory shock boasts a threaded collar preload adjustment, but have you ever tried to get a spanner wrench into the tight crevices under your cruiser? Near impossible on this Star. There's rebound adjustability (the stock shock has none) and shock overall length adjustment as well. I found the instruction sheet to be one of the best written, illustrated, and most detailed I've ever seen. And the Öhlins unit comes with a 12-page owner's manual covering suspension basics, shock design, tuning tips, and inspection and maintenance procedures. It even comes with a plastic owner's manual protective cover. I've never seen anything like it in the motorcycle accessory industry.

Adjusting the length of the shock will change ride height. Be sure to check the headlight angle after adjusting the length of the shock.

hard data

ORIENT EXPRESS
Öhlins
\$995
800/645-6521
www.OrientExpress.com

ÖHLINS SUSPENSION
828/692-4525
www.OhlnsUSA.com



1

The Öhlins Cruiser shock is equipped with a remote hydraulic preload adjuster and mounting bracket. Not shown are the detailed instructions and owner's manual also included.



2

We use a common floor jack on the bike lift to raise the rear of the Roadliner.

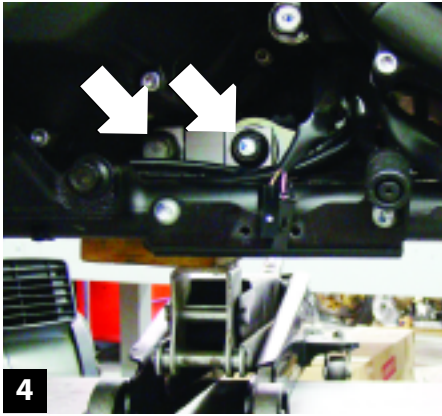


3

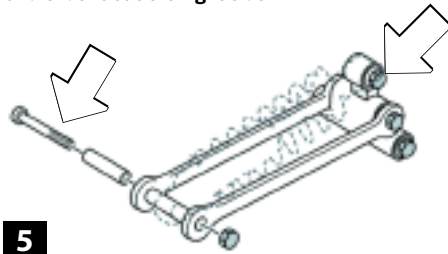
Rear wheel removal will make the job go much faster; access to some bolts is difficult otherwise. The exhaust pipe needs to be loosened, but you don't have to remove the entire pipe from the bike.

Right out of the box, the Öhlins shock comes with similar-to-stock, predetermined settings. My post install test ride required a little fine-tuning to suit my tastes; I dialed in a bit more rebound than factory setting. The good news is that at least the rebound is adjustable.

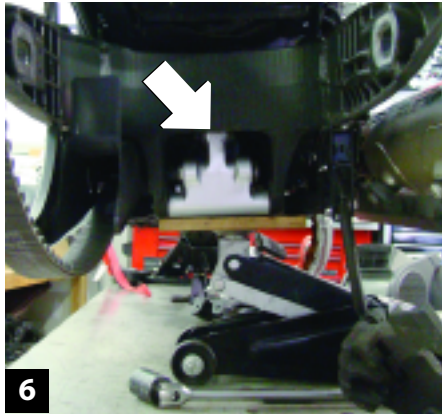
By the way, a less expensive model is available without the remote hydraulic preload adjuster (#YA717), which is \$793.80. Preload is adjustable the old-fashioned way — with hand tools. It's cheaper, but far less convenient. Most buyers opt for the hydraulic remote preload adjuster on new shocks. If the bike is single-passenger most of the time, the remote preload might be unnecessary. If the bike takes a passenger, and or lots of luggage, the hydraulic remote preload adjuster pays dividends quickly.



4 Both of these bolts will need to be loosened. The front bolt is an engine mount, leave it in. The rear bolt is a triangle link through bolt; it will need to be removed. Lift up on the exhaust pipe and slide it out the right side.



5 Here's a detailed view of the stock triangle link the shock rides in. The two bolts (arrows) will need to be removed.



6 Looking from the rear, the upper rear shock bolt is removed from the shock clevis.



7 Once the shock mounting bolts are removed, you may have to wiggle the swingarm up and down a little to allow the stock shock to drop out.

Lower the motorcycle so that the new shock absorber is slightly compressed before tightening the clevis through the bolts.



8 Once the Öhlins Shock is installed, lace the hydraulic preload adjuster hose through a gap above the swingarm. The preload adjuster bracket mounts to the right rear passenger footpeg bracket. Turn the knob clockwise to increase preload, counterclockwise to decrease.

RB



SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND SAVE 67%

RoadBike is the premier magazine for "Motorcycle Cruising" riders of all levels and brands.

- Cruiser and touring motorcycles reviewed
- Improve your riding skills
- Read about exciting tours & great rides
- Find out about the latest products
- Real-world tech & how to articles



SUBSCRIBE TODAY! 12 issues for \$23.95
www.RoadBikeMag.com ■ 877/693-3577

RoadBike
 Motorcycle Cruising