

The Lowdown On The Drop-In

BY BOB FEATHER

There's nothing slicker than a custom lowered bike prowling the boulevard like a panther on the hunt, crouched down, hugging the ground, and lunging forward with a crack of the throttle.

But lowering kits can be such a hassle. By the time you pull the forks, make spacer adjustments, play with spring rates, and reassemble the whole mess, you could have ridden to California and back! Thanks to Progressive Suspension, and its new drop-in lowering kit, the anxiety is over. The product is as claimed: a true drop-in kit that doesn't even require removal of the handlebars.

It was time to replace the aging suspension on Dude's VTX 1800, and the Progressive Suspension drop-in fork lowering kit presented an appealing alternative. Here's a great looking modification that was easy to install at a reasonable cost. Art Handleman of Valley Motorsports was recruited to do the surgery.

But we would be remiss in our lowering duties to replace the front suspension without doing the rear as well, so we added a set of Progressive's all-new 430 Series shocks. These shocks not only look great, but feature threaded preload adjusters, which allow for toolless adjustment and easy ride-quality tuning with the twist of a collar.

Dude reports that the new rear shocks are a huge improvement over the old ones. At 11-1/2" long, the new 430 Series shocks are 3/4" shorter than the 12-1/4" stock units we replaced. Dude does a lot of two-up riding and is very pleased with the look, ride quality, handling, and comfort.

When it comes to the front end, the ride is supple enough for about 1" and then ramps up quickly to prevent the fork from bottoming out. On rough roads, however, the ride could be considered a bit

harsh, and although the kit doesn't cost much money, this is where the rider pays a price for the cool of a lowered bike.

(Here in southern New England, the roads can be pretty bumpy, and the fully lowered front end was just too stiff for Dude's liking. Dude said the lowered fork action is fine on smooth roads, but just not suitable for riding in our region; had we done this install out West, where the roads are smooth, the short travel might



1 Here's the Progressive Suspension drop-in fork lowering kit and a shiny set of 430 series shocks.

not have been an issue. In the end, Art removed one side of the fork spring lowering kit and replaced it with the stock spring. The bike now sits slightly higher than it did with the lowering kit, but not as high as it did when stock. Dude claims the ride to be less punishing and far more compliant. A happy medium has been reached.

Overall, the Progressive Suspension drop-in fork spring lowering kit takes a lot of the expense and complexity out of lowering your bike. The kit went in quickly and easily with no surprises. If it weren't for the Honda Special Tool #07VMA-MZ0010A (see Step 2), any decent backyard wrench could do this install. So, you have a choice: buy the Honda Special Tool for \$87.20 and do the job yourself, or pay a shop the to do the installation (one to one-and-a-half hour's labor). Either way, the Progressive kit is a big savings! Those of you planning on customizing your VTX for short rides around town may find the short travel and stiff ride to be a reasonable compromise for that low-down look. We submit that a person living in a region with smooth roads would enjoy the best ride upon installing this kit.

Thanks to Libby's MotoWorld for providing technical support data specific to the Honda VTX1800. Libby's MotoWorld, 203/772-1112, www.LibbysMotoWorld.com.



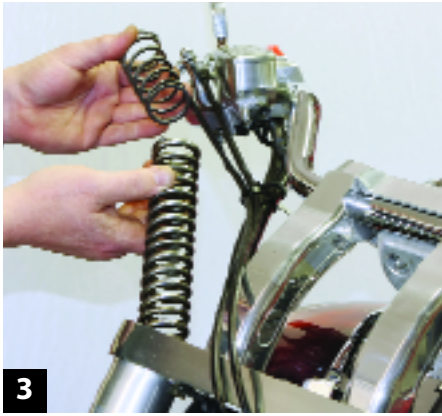
2 Support the front end with a frame jack, remove fork caps, and slowly lower the jack to remove the stock fork springs per Honda's service manual. The two legs are different inside, and the left one requires a Honda Special Tool (available from your local Honda dealer) to remove the damping rod assembly.

hard data

PROGRESSIVE SUSPENSION
Drop-In Fork Spring Lowering Kit for VTX
1800, \$129.95
430 Series Shocks, \$544.95
714/523-8700
www.ProgressiveSuspension.com

Honda Special Tool, \$87.20
See your local Honda dealer.
www.Powersports.Honda.com

VALLEY MOTORSPORTS
203/736-0379
www.VMSOnline.net



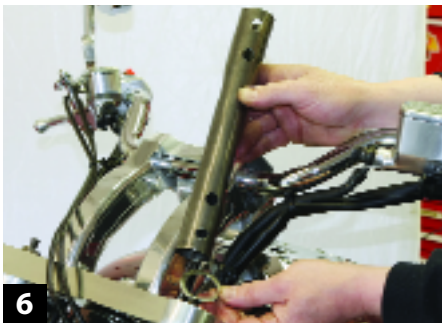
3 With spring caps removed, drop the long spring into the right-side tube followed by the shorter compensator spring.



4 Reinstall the original spring collar next.



5 Twist the lock nut onto the damper rod, and slip the slotted retaining washer in between the lock nut and spring collar.



6 Move to the left leg and drop in the Progressive kit springs as in Step 4, followed by the protective washer and spring spacer.



7 Now install the rebound rod assembly.



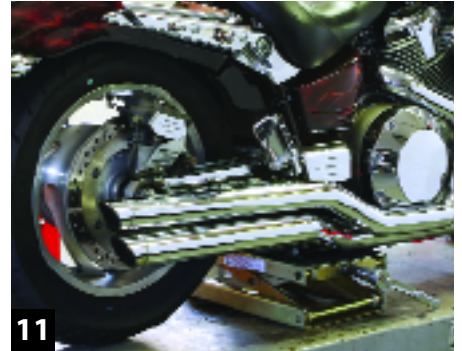
8 Tighten rebound rod assembly to factory specs using the Honda Special Tool.



9 Thread on the fork cap lock nut, and tighten just enough to hold the cap. Repeat on the right leg.



10 Next we raise the support jack and tighten the fork caps to factory specs. The fork is done.



11 For rear shock installation, we reposition the bike on the lift and remove the stock shocks.



12 Using the frame jack, adjust the bike to the correct height so the new shocks can be installed.



13 The Honda VTX now has a mean, predatory look.

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