

Bulking Up

A BOLT-ON KIT FOR A BEEFIER LOOK

By George P. Blumberg ■ Photos by Bob Feather

THIN IS IN. FROM THE ATKINS AND SOUTH Beach diets to the exercise machine Chuck Norris hawks on cable television, everyone's cashing in on getting thin. But in the cruiser world, that is where it's at — that is, according to styling docs Joe Schweng and Matt Mrdeza. Joe, a manufacturing and prototyping expert, and Matt, an aerospace design engineer, own and operate KewlMetal. The company makes accessories for the Honda Valkyrie and VTXs, Kawasaki Mean Streak, Suzuki Marauder, and Victory Kingpin.

KewlMetal recently introduced a bolt-on front end kit that gives these big cruisers an even beefier look. Was it really a fast fat fix? Only one way to find out. Our friend Giff Foster of Weston, Connecticut, volunteered his VTX1800 for the project. Giff decided to install KewlMetal's fat fork covers, along with a number of other matching components, including bullet marker lights from Show Chrome. A man of impeccable taste (favoring black T-shirts with skulls for formalwear), Giff wisely chose the flamed fork guards, feeling the gargoyle-style ones would clash with his serpent-shaped valve stem caps.

Ace mechanic Kevin Jasmin at Stamford Motorsports in Stamford, Connecticut, handled the installation. Everything fit together beautifully with no pushing, grunting, or "magic hammer persuasion tool" required. All hardware is provided, and the instructions are clear. We were impressed with both the precise machining of the parts and the quality of the chroming. Here's a look at how it all went down.

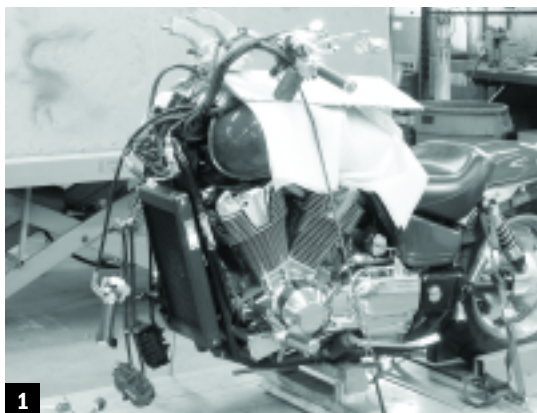
SOURCES

Upper fat fork tubes \$179.95
Lower fat fork tubes \$179.95
Fork caps \$39.95
All of the above (set) \$399.95
Chrome triple trees (with your old trees exchanged) \$249
Upper triple tree covers \$39.95
Lower triple tree covers \$35.95
Dual bullet light mount kit for windshield-mount bikes \$99.95
Brake manifold cover \$79.95
Flamed fork guards \$129.95

KEWL METAL
4125 Overcrest Drive
Dept. RB
Whittier, CA 90601
562/695-3599
www.kewlmetal.com

Mini bullet market lights \$49.95
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www.bigbikeparts.com

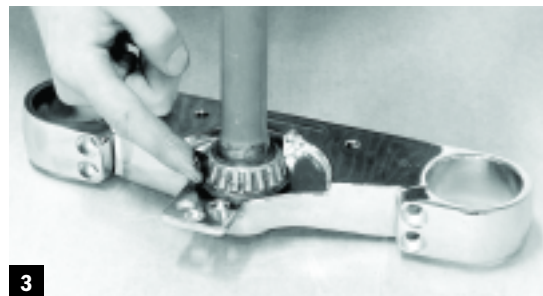
STAMFORD MOTORSPORTS
170 Selleck Street, Dept. RB
Stamford, CT 06902
203/323-3141
www.stamfordmotorsports.com



Kevin has removed the entire front end in preparation for our project. A cloth has been placed over the fuel tank to protect against scratches.



Here are the new upper and lower fork tubes, triple trees, covers, filler plates, and mounting hardware.



Kevin installed the stock Honda bearing on the new steering stem and applied a generous amount of waterproof bearing grease.



He slid the new assembly into place and installed the top bearings and slotted stem nut, and then used a special Honda tool to torque the nut to 30 ft-lbs.



5 Kevin swung the new triple clamp back and forth through its range of motion, to seat the bearings. He then loosened the slotted nut and re-torqued it to the final Honda spec of 12 ft-lbs.



6 Next, he temporarily mounted the top triple clamp to help position the fork tubes. He applied a drop of motor oil to the nut and washer for ease of disassembly.



7 Kevin lubed the heavier of the two O-rings in the kit with WD-40 and slid it down the fork leg to the point where the leg flares. Then he slid the KewlMetal fat fork tube down to meet the O-ring.



8 Next, he slid on the smaller of the two O-rings until it met the fat fork tube, where he tucked it into place.



9 Kevin slid the fork legs up into the triple clamps until the top of each leg was flush with the top of the upper clamp. He tightened only the lower triple clamp pinch bolts to 17 ft-lbs., leaving the top clamp bolts loose.



10 He then removed the top clamp and installed the upper fat fork tubes with O-rings, the same way the lower tubes were installed (see 7 and 8).



11 Kevin replaced the top clamp and torqued the nut to 74 ft-lbs. He then tightened the upper clamp pinch bolts to 41 ft-lbs.



12 He assembled the two halves of the new brake line junction cover and left it hanging. Later, the cover would be mounted under the lower triple clamp, once the triple clamp cover was in place.



13 Kevin set the bar risers in place and then tightened the whole bar assembly to the top triple clamp.



14 He added the KewlMetal flame accents to the lower fork legs and reinstalled the wheel, brakes, and fender.



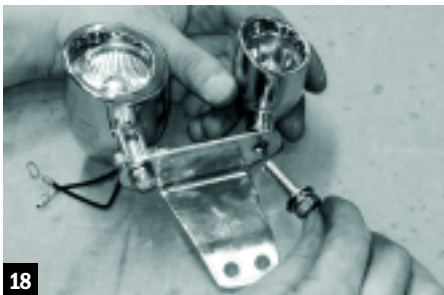
15 Kevin bolted the headlight bucket back on, and then mounted the new lower triple clamp cover and chrome brake line junction cover.



16
He put the headlight bulb back in its bucket.



17
Kevin added a bit of silicone adhesive to hold the decorative fork leg caps in place.



18
For good measure, we added a set of Show Chrome signals and running lights. (It's a separate installation from the fat front end kit.)



19
Giff's VTX now has a Kewl custom front end and a great phat look! RB

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