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This article is an excerpt from Hot XL Magazine, Autumn 1997 Edition: ¹⁾

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"K&N's Thunderslide", An Affordable Carb Kit That Wakes Up Your Stock CV

HOW-TO

K&N'S THUNDERSLIDE

An Affordable Carb Kit That Wakes Up Your Stock CV

Text and photos by Stephanie Feld

TECH & HOW-TO

- ☐ NOVICE
☒ INTERMEDIATE
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Many people are starting to consider Harley's CV carb a real contender in the performance game. K&N Engineering, Inc. must think so too because it has recently introduced a hop-up kit for the CV called the Thunderslide Carb Kit. K&N's ads claim a dramatic improvement in throttle response, horsepower, and mileage. Throttle response, horsepower and mileage; all for under \$150? This I wanted to see.

There are different kits for Sportsters and Big Twins, so we obtained a 1200 Sportster kit to try out on my 1986. In the interest of scientific method, we obtained two CV carbs which were disassembled and thoroughly cleaned. Rich West of Rolling Thunder Cycles in Hempstead, New York, installed the Thunderslide in one of the carbs. He also checked over the other carb, which was set up as a stock CV. Picking the jets for the "stock" carb presented an interesting dilemma. Since the pumper CV was introduced in 1990, 1200 Sportsters have been equipped with a wide variety of jets. We ended up opting for a 42 low-speed jet and a 170 main, which fell about in the middle of the jets used. Everything else was left completely stock.

The Thunderslide is applicable for engines ranging from box stock up to those equipped with aftermarket exhaust, airbox, cams, and even "internal motor modifications." My own Sportster has a factory 1200 top end, Andrews V2 cams, K&N air filter, and a 2-to-1 Supertrapp with an open end cap.

After Rich installed the Thunderslide, I mounted the carb on the Sportster and adjusted the jetting until it was just rich enough for good performance and smooth operation. The kit's jetting instructions were easy to under-



The Thunderslide's black plastic slide and big accelerator pump nozzle are plainly visible on this assembled CV. After you've reinstalled the carb on your Sportster, you're ready to start kickin' butt and takin' names.

stand and after three set-up rides the carb was just right. The bike starts easily and warms up fast on the enrichener. Once up to temperature, the throttle response claims proved true. Snap open the throttle or roll it on quickly, and the Sportster lunges forward with astonishing authority. Higher RPM response is less dramatic but still quite impressive. Fourth gear roll-ons from 60 to 80 mph are accomplished with alacrity; overtaking slower traffic on two-lane roads has become downright fun.

When not under acceleration, the Thunderslide performs like a good bodyguard; so smooth and unobtrusive you tend to forget it's there. But when you need to add some speed it's right there, with attitude!

Mileage figures were the first real surprise of the test; with such good throttle response I thought the around-town numbers



1 The Thunderslide kit has everything you'll need except tools. The star of the show is the "revolutionary" black plastic slide (top center).

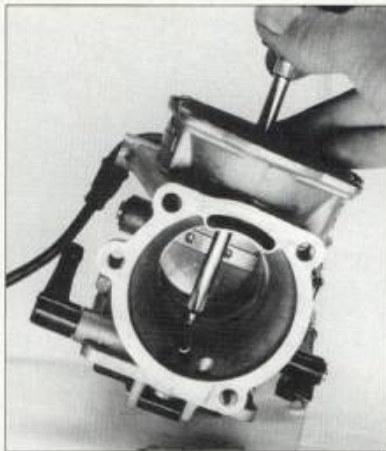


2 Installation is much easier with the carb off the bike. When loosening the big steel nut behind the choke nut bracket, remember to turn the nut clockwise, or the plastic threads will be destroyed.

would be perfectly awful. Surprise, surprise! My Sportster repeatedly got better than 43 mpg around town, and did 45 mpg on highway runs. Well! So far the claims were true about throttle response and good mileage. But how would the



3 Remove the four screws on top of the carb and the big screw on the cable guide in order to remove the carb's top, spring, and slide.



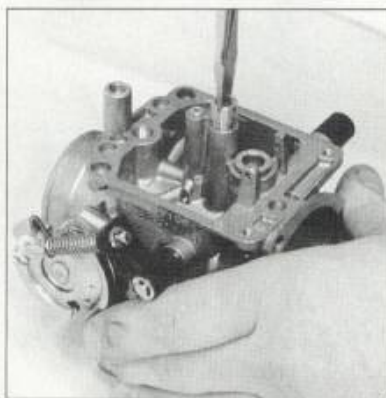
6 Don't lose the small silver section of the emulsion tube that we're pointing to with the screwdriver. It must remain in place to be used with the Thunderslide emulsion tube.



9 Gently bottom the idle mix screw and then turn it out 1 1/2 turns. Note: contrary to what the directions say, many 1200s are happiest with a 45 low speed jet, especially if they have aftermarket pipes. A good starting point for this jet is 1 1/2 turns. If you have a smaller low speed jet, this may be a good time to replace it.



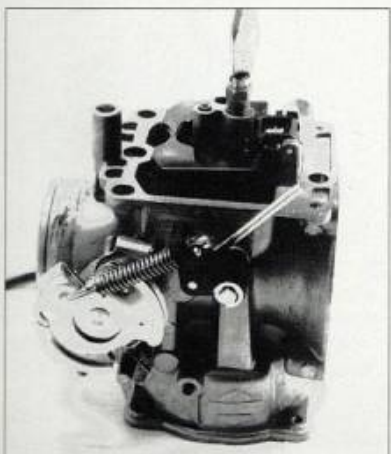
4 Flip the carb over and remove the four screws at the corners of the float bowl (see arrow). Do not remove the screws we're taking out unless you want to inspect the guts of the accelerator pump.



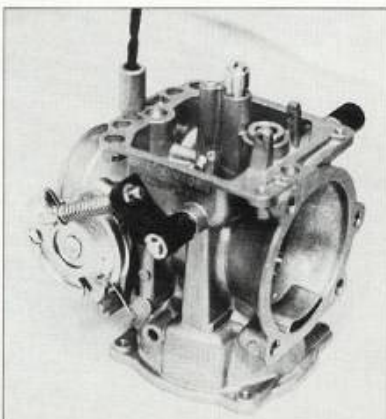
7 Install the Thunderslide emulsion tube. Select a main jet (the instructions are very helpful about how to do that) and screw it into the emulsion tube.



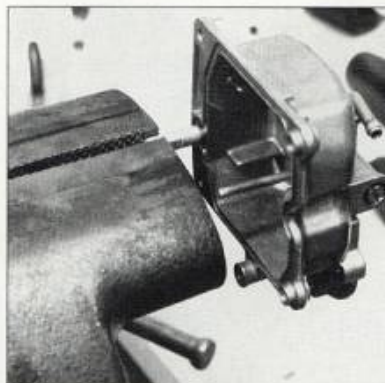
10 Locate the accelerator pump nozzle on the edge of the float bowl (we are pointing to it). Remove the bowl gasket.



5 Remove the float bowl, then remove the stock main jet and brass emulsion tube. Sometimes they come out together.



8 Using the supplied drill bit, carefully pierce the aluminum plug covering the idle mix screw. Remove the pierced plug with the supplied screw.



11 Clamp the nozzle in a vise, and twist the bowl to remove the nozzle. Also remove the stock spring and check ball that live under the nozzle.

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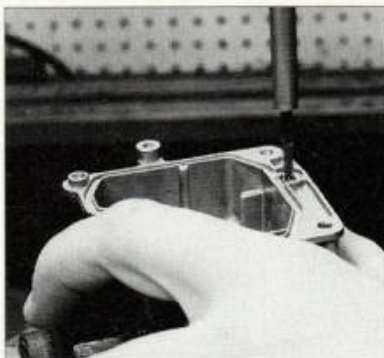
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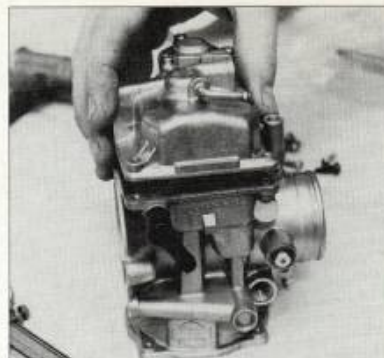
12 Using the shouldered drill provided, enlarge the pump nozzle hole until the shoulder hits the edge of the bowl. Be sure to clean the hole thoroughly with carb cleaner to remove all the aluminum shavings.



13 Drop the Thunderslide check ball and spring into the enlarged hole. Align the Thunderslide nozzle so the squirt hole faces the brass tube in the center of the bowl (see arrow). Tap nozzle lightly into place using a soft or brass hammer.



14 Measure the float level and make sure it is correct. Read your service manual for how to do this and the required specifications.



15 Reinstall float bowl. If your bowl gasket looks questionable, replace it. Be sure the accelerator pump rod and boot are seated in the pump housing before tightening the float bowl screws. You're now finished with the bottom of the carb.



16 Carefully pull the rubber diaphragm off the stock slide. Make sure you remember which is the "up" side of the diaphragm. Install the diaphragm onto the Thunderslide kit's black plastic slide, sandwiching it between the snap-on plastic washers.



17 Press the rubber washer into the recess of the needle retainer (the white plastic "spider"). Install the E-clip on the Thunderslide needle, then drop the needle into the slide. The spider drops in on top of the needle; be sure none of its "legs" cover any of the small holes in the slide. Drop the slide assembly, then the spring into the top of the carb. Then button up the carb. Don't pinch the rubber diaphragm or forget the big screw you loosened on the cable guide. That's it!

Thunderslide measure up against the stock CV on the dynamometer?

To find out, Chris Maida and I rode up to Momentum Racing in Fairfield, Connecticut. We spent a hot, noisy afternoon swapping carbs on my poor Sportster and flogging it on their Dynojet 150 dynamometer. Judging from how good the bike felt on the road, I fully expected to realize K&N's advertised gain of 10 horsepower over the stock CV. Imagine our shock when our own runs showed a peak gain of about three horsepower and four ft-lb of torque at 3500 RPM; only about six percent better than stock. "Something's gotta be wrong," I told Chris. "This bike runs like an animal with the Thunderslide installed. I know it's making more power than that!" One of Momentum's mechanics verified that things were hooked up right and a plug check verified that the Thunderslide was jetted correctly. Chris and I tried again and again, but the results were identical.

I'm not sure what to say about the dyno results. To tell you the truth, I don't really want to believe them. Maybe we were doing something wrong that day, or could it be true that some performance gains just can't be measured by a full-throttle, third-gear run in a closed room. I do know that my Sportster feels incredibly strong since we installed the Thunderslide. Even Rich at Rolling Thunder was impressed when he took it for a test ride. If that means I've only got three more horsepower than a stock carb, those must be three mighty big horses.

If you are interested in this kit, check out the accompanying photos to see how easy it is to install the Thunderslide.

K&N's Thunderslide Carb Kit retails for around \$140. These kits are manufactured by Dynojet for K&N. Dynojet also sells Thunderslide kits; same guts, different name on the box. ■

SOURCES:

K&N Engineering, Inc.
PO Box 1329, Dept. HXL
561 Iowa Avenue
Riverside, CA 92502
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