SCOOTER RIDER MAGAZINE

PRODUCT REVIEWS

SRM KEEPS YOU UP ON THE BEST GEAR FOR YOUR SCOOTERING EXPERIENCE

by BJ Strass

"SNAKE OIL" IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM?

"Snake Oil" was of course the cure all hocked by traveling vendors. Making their way from town to town selling non-effective potions with big sales pitches and good showmanship. By the time the good townspeople found their medicine to be ineffective, the seller had moved on.

Today we use the phrase to describe a proposition or product which has big claims it cannot fulfill. I have a little internal alarm that goes off when a product sounds like Snake Oil. Some people might call this a Bull Sh*t detector. Either way, I tend to be leery of extravagant claims. My Snake Oil alarm was loud in my ears when reading the claims for the Dial-A-Jet.

- More Horse Power - Excellent Running Quality
- Optimizes Fuel - Easy Installation
- Rejet in seconds with a click of the patented 5 position jet dial
- Allows you to run in a broad temperature or altitude range without rejetting

Yeah, right, and I have a great deal on a timeshare in the mideast for only..... Well after reading and rereading and checking out links on testimonials and checking a couple of articles, I was just too intrigued. So I decided I was a sucker and was going to throw away my money. I ordered a Dial-A-Jet.

I made the call to Thunder Products in Minnesota and talked to Lon, the developer of the DAJ. Lon was a nice guy willing to take the time to answer my questions. He didn't push the hard sell and allowed me to explain I wanted to instal the unit on my scooter. He had had no prior scooter experience with the DAJ but felt he could set me up with a unit similar to what would be used on a four-stroke dirt bike. With my credit card number given I awaited my "Snake Oil".

The Dial-A-Jet was originally developed for snowmobiles. These two-stroke engines are high performance and finicky about fuel; they are operated in a broad range of temperatures and altitudes. Under these conditions, if the engine gets too lean, the pistons are burned; if the fuels is too rich the spark plugs foul out. Tough conditions. The DAJ is legendary within snowmobile

circles. Over time the system began to migrate to motorcycles as well. I read some very impressive postings from cruiser riders that put straight pipes on their motorcycles and did not need to modify the carburetor any more than the DAJ. Typically complete rejetting would be absolutely necessary under these conditions.

The unit arrived in a small unimpressive box; I opened the box and.....Crap, that's it.....these small pieces? Boy, did I get screwed! Determined to make the most of my "educational opportunity" I studied the install guide. Installation however, had to wait a couple of weeks as I wanted the fit-up to coincide with the addition of a wired in flashing brakelight. Finally

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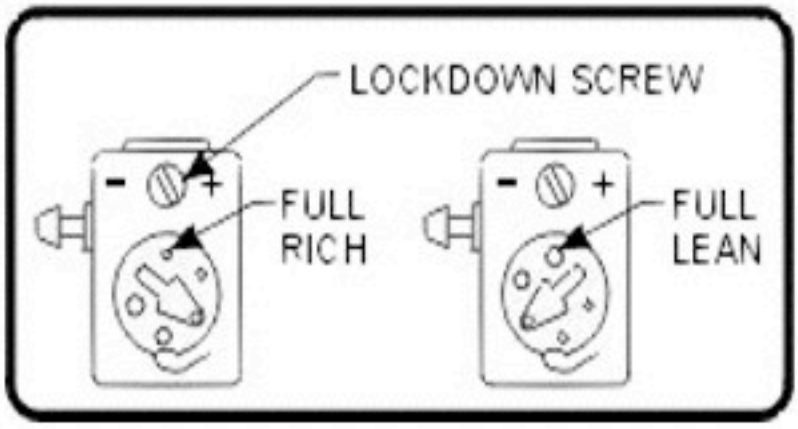
the Sunday arrived and I got into the install. First I have to say this was not an easy install on my Honda Reflex. This was due to the location of the engine and carburetor on this scooter. I removed the entire rear body sections to get to the carb. The next problem was that the carb is almost hidden behind a portion of the frame. Undaunted I began the procedure.

In simplest terms, the DAJ is a small system that mounts at the rear of the carb in the rubber boot that delivers air from the air filter. The float bowl drain screw is replaced by a spigot and a tube is run up to the unit. The unit inserts a small brass tube into the rubber boot at the rear of the carb. The idea is when the engine is under load, it will pull an additional atomized fuel/air mixture into the carb. The DAJ has a click adjustment to determine the amount of enrichment needed. After much trial and error I found a mounting location that would clear the frame and allow the unit to work (assuming it does work, that is).

I wired in the brake light, reassembled everything and went for a short ride. Is there a difference? Hmm, it seems to accelerate a bit quicker. This is not the riding conditions I really need to test out the unit. What I needed was a long ride to check the changes where the scooter could use it most. This have to wait another week.

I suppose I should first explain why I was looking for a solution. My scooter was running lean on fuel. The symptoms were poor performance in the mountains and up hills, and particularly when running down the interstate, the engine would heat up if my speed was above 65mph for very long. I have found lean-run to be very common with many motorcycles and scooters without fuel injection, particularly if they are used mostly at lower altitudes. This happens due to the need to ensure the engine emissions are low for regulatory testing and because they are not tuned for specific altitudes (a scooter bought in Colorado would have the same tuning as one bought in Florida). The solution is changing the carburetor jets (rejetting). This involves a lot of removing the carb and trial and error. If the carb is not easy to get at, this is a real pain. Also if you later change something else, like a higher flow air filter or performance exhaust, the jetting must be modified again. On most motorcycles and many scooters the carb is fairly easy to get to, but not the Reflex.

So the weekend comes around and I go out for a day of riding. A run up the interstate quickly proved I could now run at a constant 70mph. Awesome! No heating up. So I head for a run through the coastal range. All along I begin to notice an improvement in hard acceleration. Up into the hills the change is most noticeable. On one steep section I went up three weeks earlier at 30mph, now was climbed at 37mph. A huge



DAJ ADJUSTMENT DIAL

change. I also noticed the engine seemed to run smoother throughout the RPM range. I was ecstatic. No "Snake Oil".

Now I am sure you are reading this and saying to yourself, "Sure, I bet the gas mileage is horrible now". Nope! Overall, I get about the same. I often run the scooter harder now, because I can. When it is under hard load I do see a small decrease in mileage, however, when riding conservatively, the mileage is about the same or slightly increased.

I have now used the DAJ on tours, and daily riding under many conditions for over a year and am completely pleased with its performance. Of the many changes and mods I have made to my scooter, This has been the most usable and has had the most profound effects. The ease of mounting the Dial-A-Jet will have a lot do with the accessibility of your carburetor. A Helix, for example would be a pretty easy installation with likely only a seat removal needed to get to the carb. Small Scooters with the engine at the side could be even easier. As it's positive effects are said to be even more

effective on two-stroke engines, small scooters with performance exhausts could benefit greatly. However, the unit does not work on fuel injected machines.

Other then the Dial-A-Jet, Thunder Products makes other performance items. Their TPI Valve is designed to modify stock air filter intake boxes to give more airflow and it should be scooter compliant as well. If you want to make the jump to a Dial-A-Jet you will need to know some basic info on your scoot as they do not have a listing of what fits what. For example my Reflex info was "liquid cooled, four-stroke, one cylinder engine of 250cc size and about 21 horsepower". With this basic description they can fit you up. I do pretty much all my own work and maintenance, but if you do not have the mechanical expertise to install the unit and want to have it done by your dealer, be forewarned. If they are not familiar with the DAJ you may get the "Snake Oil" or "it'll void your warranty" speech. So make sure your dealer is onboard for the mod.

You can check out the web page for Thunder Products at www.ThunderProducts.com or contact them at:
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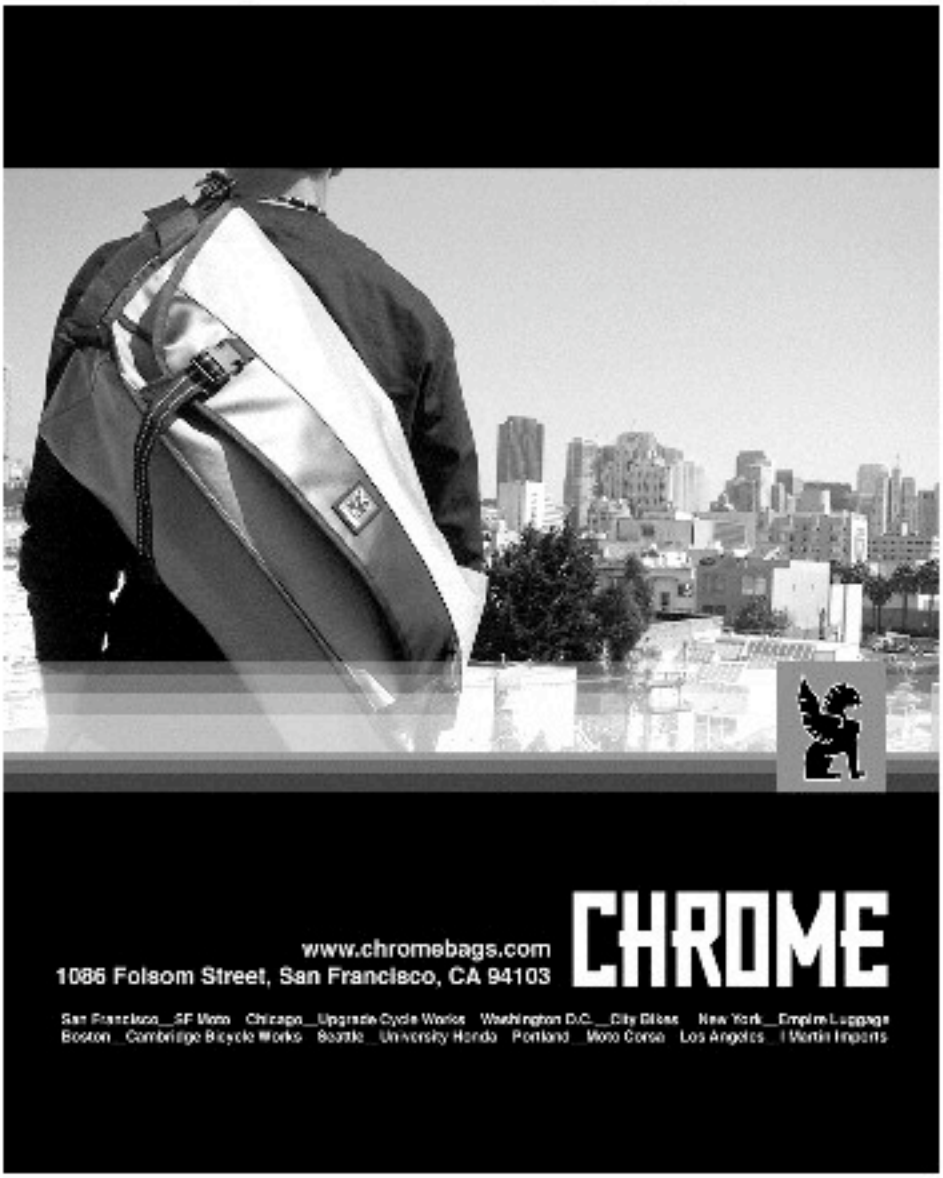

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search for your scoot. One thing to know beforehand is your scooters model name and number in Europe and Japan. As most of the K&N scooter market is not domestic they often do not list the american model (example: the Honda Reflex is listed as "NSS250 Forza") though I have been told by a K&N representative that availability is good for listed models. A bonus is that K&N also have oil filters for some scooters as well.

UNDER PRESSURE

Exacting tire pressure is a concern for many reasons. First, safety. Under inflated tires can heat up and fail. Also a tire that is poorly under-inflated (or over inflated) will cause handling and braking problems. Secondly, tire wear will be considerably increased with incorrectly inflated tires. A recent and inexpensive gadget on the market can help ensure your tires are where they should be. They sell under many names like "Tire Minder" but accomplish the same, if the tire is correctly inflated the valve cap is green. If inflation is low the cap will show yellow for caution and red for immediate attention. These units are supplied at different pressure ratings and so make sure you know your front and rear tires pressures when purchasing. Check at your local scooter/motorcycle shop.