

Aarrgh, S...#&*.F... Over She goes - On her side - Again!!

Of course you all know what I'm talking about? Those mongrel times when your pride and joy slips out from your feeble grasp - at about one f'n km/hr. Ask any real biker about what the most dangerous speed on a bike is and, without a doubt, they will tell you it is from 1 to 3 km/hr! So, did you get your body under it as she went? Great, the wounds will soon heal and that's (hopefully) a few less scratches you'll have the disappointment of looking at. Plus you'll have known you did everything you could to save her, apart from not making whatever the stupid mistake was in the first place!

How often has this happened to you? You can't leave "How often" out of this question, except for a very short while at the beginning of that great motorcycling journey on which we have all embarked! So, she's been on the ground, got snatched up quickly by super human strength supplemented by embarrassment adrenaline and she's looking at you, slightly pockmarked and unhappy like. You, however, still have a few choice things to say about these events. Once they've all been said, and your stupidity fully understood by the apparently caring bystanders (why are they chuckling?), what now?

Most likely you are looking at a broken blinker, bent / broken handlebar lever and scratches on all the bits that stick out, but you'll be able to ride her home - if you're not already there! So, you buy a new blinker and lever and mirror or whatever else that is stuffed and it doesn't look so bad any more. What about the paint? And the scratches on the muffler? You've found out what they cost to re-spray or touch-up the paint or replace the muffler and it ain't cheap!

For the paint, you will only be happy with the touch-up option if your eye is not so critical. Or maybe you leave it alone and think of it as little boo-boo marks, or just go get the damaged panels professionally painted to match the others. And there's a budget repair do it yourself option I will describe too. Only you can make the call. Fortunately, it happens that the scratches will become less irritating as time goes by, not more. You do get used to them!

Well, this does happen to all of us. Some of us run straight off to the panel shop regardless, and the others, well, we like to ride and spend our dosh on the journey. Fortunately my current ST4S has not (thankfully refuses to) participate in these unladylike 1 km/hr excursions towards mother earth (touch wood) or attached obstacles. The previous one was much less accommodating and she graced me with these little tricks on three separate occasions before I finally tore her to shreds on a road side "safety barrier" as punishment for being so rude!

Pushing her away from a petrol pump to make room for someone else, standing on the wrong side and not realising the side stand partially lifted when it snicked the concrete plinth as we went by was the most annoying. Another was running out of steering lock on an oddly cambered uphill road while doing a u-turn, with maybe a bit of pillion fidget - fortunately got my body under her that time. And the last was putting her on the centrestand poorly in the garage and not realising how close a column was - just a mirror blemish. Grand total two blinkers and one lever replaced - and a few scratches to deal with. I remember the previous bike picked up pannier scratches trying to squeeze through the gap left by my "I've told those bloody kids not to park their ... cars so close to the garage" children. And there was some unexpected mud at a campsite in Mt Beauty. And gawd knows what came before that, but there would've been something!

So, when you've picked up some new scratches and the amount of stone chips has already started to cheese you off as well maybe you do go for a respray. Personally, I couldn't just leave untreated scratches on the bike. "Maybe they'll just polish out?" you hope? Well, maybe they will, but try it last. Don't even bother trying up front because this can only possibly work on the shallow ones where there is plenty of colour showing in the scratch, but all you'll do is make it harder for paint to stick to any others you want to fix. I've found that it is a great help to take the job of removing the blemishes seriously (including stone chips while you're at it) but do it low budget because you really can add a lot more value to your life by spending the dosh on other things.

So, for cheap f/u repairs, pull the panels off and get stuck into them with a razor knife (ie Stanley knife). Trim off everything that sticks up so it is flush or below the surface. Then find matching automotive paint from the local auto shop. There are a lot of similar reds (if you're "lucky" enough to need red) but I took a mirror along and settled on "Dupli-Colour" Ford Monza Red after much holding up of cans in the sunshine. Difficult thing for a Holden man to do - all part of the punishment for being so damn clumsy in the first place I suppose!

You put the panels flat and puddle paint into the scratches with a really small hair brush or the corner of a bit of cardboard. If you can be bothered, puddle a bit of automotive clear on later which will help to flatten it up more and stop polish being caught in the grooves and showing up as white lines. I have tried painting over complete areas and solvent rubbed it straight off. I think the end result is much less irritating if you trace all the minute defects than try and paint over a bunch of close together ones. It is surprising how these fine lines just blend in and disappear after looking at those horrible garish scratches!

Mufflers are a bit different - If there was any damage to an aluminium wrap around section you will have to decide whether it should be flattened back down, trimmed neatly off or repaired by riveting a patch over it (take it off first). Whether your scratches are on s/s or aluminium you need to get rid of the raised scratches by patiently filing them flat with a small fine second cut or warding file. Then you need to make the surface smooth which you do with a bit of 1600 wet and dry and a fair bit of patience. Be careful not to extend the damaged area simply by accidentally rubbing other bits - I find it best to wrap the wet and dry around something flexible and small, like a paddle pop stick, depending on the blemish. Keep wetting it down and be patient - it works. Then you need to polish the whole thing to blend the remaining blemishes in. I use a terrific cheap product from the cleaning aisle of the supermarket called "Metal Magic" which I find is way better than any of the expensive auto metal polishing products, but you can use what you like!

Handlebar end weights can be prepared pretty much the same as mufflers, but here you get the bonus that, once anyway, you can turn them round so the blemish is harder to see after you've daubed a bit of paint on. Obviously these are easily resprayed with Dupli-Colour, depends on how keen you are to preserve what's left of the factory finish / colour.

The other thing you may confront is repairing those textured black wrinkle finished plastic surfaces that appear on the bottoms of panniers and other non-descript areas of especially non-Ducati bikes. I've found that flat black Harley engine wrinkle touch up paint is the best thing, next is boot polish. But trim all the raised bits of the scratches first. Note that the underlying plastic is a slightly different colour which is lighter and Armourall, whilst a wonderful product for revitalising naked plastic and rubber surfaces, doesn't change that. It is always less visually noticeable if the touch-up is slightly darker than the original than the other way round.

Doesn't it blank you right off having to do it all 'though? Still, at least this way you've still got most of the moolah in your pocket and can take your chic away for the weekend, which adds much more value to life than losing the bike for the same weekend (or more) while someone else gets ready to take your money away. Guess you've got to choose between going out and risking more scratches (it'll happen again!), or getting the last lot taken away...

I hope that its a long time before any of us need to seriously consider how we will repair these dangerous speed induced blemishes to our lovely Ducatis.

Kindest regards,
Vince Sunter