

The 800 Vulcan is one sweet ride; and about as bulletproof as they come! However, due to factory constraints (budgetary as well as federally mandated) there are some things that need changing ASAP, for comfort, longevity, and performance. There are a lot of other things that can be done, but most of them are a matter of personal choice (cosmetics).

The *first* thing that needs to go is the stock 55/60 headlight! It just doesn't throw enough light to see much beyond 10', and it isn't adjusted properly from the factory. The headlight isn't a sealed-beam; it uses a standard H4 halogen bulb, and replacements are easy to find. 55/100, 80/100, and 90/130 watt H4 halogen bulbs can be found at most motorcycle dealers or automotive shops. I put an 80/100 in my '99 800A (NAPA; \$10.00 US) a couple of years ago, and the difference is tremendous! No problems have shown up in the way of power draw or heat. Adjustment is easy; the procedure is found in MOM (Motorcycle Owners Manual). A rule of thumb is to position the bike upright (not on the kickstand) 25' away from an exterior door on a house. Adjust the headlight vertically so the light beam is centered on the doorknob.

Next let's look at the stock seat. It feels nice and cushy when you sit on it in the dealer's showroom, but 30 miles down the road your butt starts getting uncomfortable (red; numb) and your back starts complaining. This is because the open-cell foam that provides that nice cushy feeling compresses when you sit on it, and before long it's compressed right down to the fiberglass seat pan; so the vibration inherent in a single-pin V-Twin numbs your butt and every bump in the road is transmitted directly to your lower back.

The solution is found with an aftermarket seat. The Big 3 with VROC are Mustang, Corbin, and Saddleman/Travelcade. There are other seat manufacturers, but these 3 are time-proven with VROC for performance, comfort, and customer service. They are all made with closed-cell foam, which feels hard at first (because it is), but will not compress as you ride, thus providing more comfort. Go to:

<http://www.mustangseats.com/kawconstst.htm>

and click on the "Vulcan 800 and 800 Classic" link.

The Mustang Wide Vintage series is the choice of many for 2-up riding; the Mustang Wide Solo for the selfish ones (like myself). They are built wider, more like a bucket seat, and provide excellent support. Also, they tend to move the rider back an inch or so; for long-legged types like myself, that provides a much more comfortable seating position. The models with backrests are nice, as they provide extra support for both rider and passenger. Unfortunately, backrests are not available for the Solo seats, and cannot be retrofitted (I've asked). The Fastback is nice, but there isn't much of a seat for the passenger; same for the Squareback. These are good for the solo rider who only occasionally takes a passenger.

Go to:

<http://www.corbin.com/kawasaki/9596vulcan800.shtml>

and:

<http://www.corbin.com/kawasaki/9596vulcan800a.shtml>

Corbin makes good seats; they're not quite as wide or bucket-shaped as the Mustangs, but for some people the Mustang is *too* wide. Corbin is known for making the seats in just about any color of leather you wish, and will also (for a fee) customize the seat to your specifications.

Go to:

<http://www.saddlemen.com/cruiserindex.html>

Be sure to check the application chart to see what seats are available for the Vulcan 800s. These are also excellent seats; some are available with gel pads inset into the seats.

As an alternative, contact Steve Chandler (Piper, VROC #524):

sales@pipersenterprises..com

You can send your stock seat to them (of course you can't *ride* while this is being done) for renovation. They will replace the open-cell foam with closed and make any modifications (lowering, tapering the sides, and moving the step) that you desire. They are well-recommended.

Now that your behind is taken care of, go to:

<http://kuryakyn.com/index.asp>

Click on the "Footpegs" and "Grips" links under "Metric Cruisers" (yes, you may look at the other goodies while you're there!). The ISO-Grips and ISO-pegs are well-liked by VROC for reducing vibration and providing more comfort for hands and feet.

OK, that's comfort. Now let's look into performance; unleashing more horses from your 800 that will shove you back in that new seat and make you grab on harder to those new grips!

First things first. You *must* go to more free-flowing pipes before you do any airbox mods. This is because once you modify the airbox and rejet the carb, the bike will be gulping *much* more fuel/air mixture (don't worry, this will actually *enhance* your fuel economy in the long run), so it has to be prepared to get rid of the burnt gases much faster. Besides, the stock pipes are heavy, ugly, and sound like a sewing machine! Before we go any further, you will *not* need to rejet your carb if you change pipes. If a manufacturer/mechanic/dealer tells you different, they are just trying to get your money.

So, go here:

<http://www.vanceandhines.com>

and check out the pipes from Vance & Hines. Hint: The CruZers were made specifically for the smaller displacement cruisers like the 800. Virtually *all* other pipes (even from other manufacturers) were originally made for larger engines (1200cc +) and "modified" to fit on the smaller bikes; this does *not* mean they were redesigned to provide maximum efficiency for that engine. Click on the "Metric" link, then on "Cruzer" in the menu, then "Hear It" icon for a sound byte of what the pipes sound like (turn your speakers UP!). Go back to the first page and repeat the process for other pipes. Be sure to check the application chart to see which pipes will fit your bike. As of the present, only the StraightShots and Cruzers are available for the 800, according to the V&H Fitment Chart.

Now try here:

http://www.cobrausa.com/exhaust/index_exhaust.cfm?pg=bike&bikeID=23

There is a link to 6 downloadable sound bytes of the Cobra Slashcut exhaust on the Vulcan 800 engine. The "Sample" bytes download smartly even on a dialup modem; the "Complete" files take quite a while on dialup.

Now; go here:

<http://shermcycleproducts.com/arbox.htm#>

These are airbox modification kits available for the 800. All are variations on a theme; they use a K&N free-flowing air filter and a different design of airbox to introduce *much* more air into the carb than the highly-restricted factory airbox system. These kits come with all appropriate hardware to change airboxes, as well as new jets for the carb (yes, now you *will* have to rejet) and instructions. Your choice is dependent on what *you* think is the best aesthetically. The HyperCharger is vaunted by some as providing ultimate power; it does have a certain "ram air" effect. Be aware, however, that it seems to be much less forgiving in carb tuning than the others.

Before you pick one, go here:

<http://www.angelfire.com/ak5/russwolf/morepower.html>

Here you will find the beginning of information on the Scooterize (this is the 800 version of the "Coyote Kit" used by many 1500 riders) and Grampsized modifications. They modify the factory airbox to provide the same effect as any of the airbox kits listed above except the HyperCharger and the Force Winder. Be aware, however, that they are labor-intensive; you will be doing a great deal of cutting and grinding of the existing plastic factory backing plate. The good part is that either entire process runs under \$100.00. There are several 800 riders in VROC who have done these; myself included. I endorse them wholeheartedly! My Scooterized '99 800A has wiped the road with many other cruisers I've run with; including a modified Road Star, a *heavily* modified V-Star 1100, more Harleys than you can shake a handlebar at... damn near everything I've tried except crotch rockets! If I stay off the throttle (ie, ride *legally*), my fuel economy has reached 50 mpg many times.

This is just a sample of the things that are available for the Vulcan 800; but it is a compilation of what many have called "the good stuff" to get started with. If you have any other questions, email me or post them to the VROC Newsgroup. See you on the road!

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The Russian Wolf
Salcha, Ak
1999 Black 800A