

Clean, Cleaner, Cleanest!



By Mike Jackson

This is a feature about filters; those cylindrical, paper-filled, cartridge-shaped objects produced by HIFLOFILTRO, but called "Hiflo". They can make you serious money.

INTRODUCED five years ago, Hiflo now outsells every other filter in the market.

That it surpassed the original manufacturer's [OEM] specification, and that Bike Alert [which created, and owns Hiflofiltro] has never experienced a single in-service failure, is fair explanation.

Before witnessing Hiflo's clinical production process, Inside Line incorrectly assumed that all filters were similar; nothing in fact could be further from the truth. When examining Hiflo's range of 200+ oil and air filters, which are produced specifically for motorcycle engines, it's immediately apparent this is not a run-of-the-mill product.

To the untrained eye, filters consist of a steel canister filled with concertina-folds of porous paper, sealed with 'O' rings, and retained in cylindrical shape by a perforated steel strip

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and two tin caps. In truth the simplest filter warrants far more than that. Below, we explain how Hiflo's engineers tackle the complexities of keeping oil clean, and air pure, in today's high performance engines. An oil filter in a motorcycle relates to the liver in the human body; albeit it's easier replacing the former with a spanner than the latter with surgery! Engines clearly function better on cleaner lube and fresher air, though most motorcyclists are as guilty of ignoring their engine's liver as all the other taken-for-granted 'internals'.

Filters are frequently the victims of unwitting abuse, a 'clogged or substandard' filter could ultimately inflict enormous consequential damage. In this regard Hiflo is justifiably proud of its unblemished track record, where a score of 'nil' failures speaks volumes. The necessity for efficient filtration and zero failures is not difficult to grasp!

Six years ago, with JT Sprockets already widely recognised, worldwide [Inside Line, September 2001], Chris approached Thailand's prime manufacturer of filters whose customers included Toyota, Peugeot, BMW et al with ambitions for an internationally accepted motorcycle filter. The established since 1955 family-owned Thai Yang Kitpaisan Company was highly receptive to Chris's concept of producing for the global market; never mind it'd entail higher quality levels than demanded by the car giants or/and a more rigorous inspection system. As with any 'clean sheet' product, the choice of raw materials was crucial. [If there's a Hiflo filter within reach, please briefly examine it! Contemplate for a moment the enormity of sourcing its respective 'ingredients'. Japanese steel; glue from Germany; and that distinctive red paper from either Finland or USA. Not every "widget" has quite such an 'international' pedigree, to be sure, but it's these ingredients which make Hiflo 'bullet proof'...]

In creating a definitive oil filter, Bike Alert employed four fundamental criteria: Superior Flow Rate; Ability to Cleanse; Durability; and one other, which was revealed during inspection. Read on....

It is rewarding to see that the diligence invested in the filter's initial high quality design has now paid a handsome dividend, in as much that Hiflofiltro is currently producing for all manner of household names.

Protocol, unfortunately, prohibits their mention. And, on the subject of 'diligence', thereby hangs a tale... At the point that the development engineers had concluded all tests, and were poised to commence volume production, Chris called "Halt"! Regardless of Hiflo's confidence-inspiring specification — linked to competitive pricing, tech application literature, 'snappy' green packaging, and so on. Like Heineken's Lager...Hiflo had to have something other filters didn't have. During several months of deliberately enforced delay he committed to the expense of submitting the entire Hiflo range to Germany's TUV Certification Body — whose technical standards are famously stringent — for approval. Having done his homework he knew that the ever rigorous TUV hadn't yet written a standard. Patiently prepared to await the implementation, Hiflo passed with flying colours, after those conscientious German engineers duly created a new standard for oil filters. Since then Hiflo also achieved additional standards such as QS-9000 and DIN EN ISO 9002. When we pressed Chris to reveal which other filters also complied..? he diplomatically declined to name names but gave us a hint,.... "none of our competitors!"

As already stated, Hiflo's production processes are more clinical than industrial. A scrutiny of the accompanying illustrations is worth several paragraphs of this writer's prose...suffice to say every component part of the completed filter is made within the factory's four walls, allowing for control of each individual operation. With Thailand's visible abundance of labour there are inspections and random tests at each stage of production and the finished filters go through a 100 per cent quality control inspection before they are packed ready to be shipped out. However, before anything leaves the factory, finished filter assemblies are put to test in "the laboratory". Within this sealed chamber a dozen or more new cartridges undergo a high poundage pressure test, simultaneously. The purpose built test rig is

impressive; circular in appearance, and standing five feet high, it resembles a cluster of 15 espresso cafe machines working in unison. If a filter is capable of passing the Pressure Test it'll cope with anything inside a motorcycle engine. Yes, components are rejected off the production line but, encouragingly, discarded parts are scrapped in toto, allaying any fears of re-cycling. In addition to the established line of oil filters, since last autumn, Hiflo's comprehensive new range of air filters has been available through distributors with additional fitments arriving monthly. Identical high standards apply. OK, ...now we've familiarised ourselves with the 'gestation', how does Bike Alert persuade the motorcycling fraternity to insist on a Hiflo replacement, as opposed to OEM? Riders



are long conditioned to choose ABC chains, or XYZ tyres...but, filters? Chris smiles, "I believe our trade customers trust us to supply a superior product. Hiflo is a top end quality filter, competitively priced, always available with international accreditation's such as TUV approval to overcome the old familiar OEM's 'warranty warnings'. I'm convinced this same trust, confidence and knowledge is already filtering through to the end users." Which is why we now see more and more of those HF green spots on dealers shelves.

What is next? we asked. "Oil filters for aeroplanes. We are now at the final stage of FAA (Federal Aviation Authority) approval tests in the USA," replied Chris. An unexpected answer yet, we were not surprised with Hiflo's next evolution; well...after all aeroplane engines use oil filters too... and it certainly appears that Bike Alert and Hiflo are definitely flying away with a long, clean, sweep!

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