

RADIO FLYERS

Von Braun's slick new mufflers

EXHAUST SOUND IS IMPORTANT TO HARLEY people. In fact, it's equally important to the folks in Milwaukee who build our bikes, which is why, several years ago, there was a movement within the Motor Company to copyright the distinctive potato-potato-potato cadence of the most famous V-twin motorcycle engine ever produced. We all know that the copyright was denied, but that hasn't diminished our love for that most distinct sound. So when an aftermarket exhaust company sets out to develop a new muffler system for Harley-Davidson motorcycles, it does so with trepidation and care. One such company is Von Braun, makers of a wide range of quality Harley exhausts for current H-D Touring models. We put our hands on a set of VB Radio Flyers so we could mount them on a 2011 Road Glide. And though we can't reproduce on paper the sound they generate, close your eyes for a moment and imagine a pleasing baritone burble that's not offensively loud, yet is slightly deeper than the potato-potato-potato rhythm you expect to hear from a stock set of cans. Think in capital letters: Potato-Potato-Potato. And it only gets better as engine revs build.

In truth, the Radio Flyers have a slightly higher volume than the stock units, but more to the point, it's their tone that makes them so appealing. And by keeping the volume within reason, they're not obtrusively loud so we can still listen to the bike's sound system while tooling down the road. Think of it as the best of both worlds: you get to enjoy your favorite tunes coming from the speakers while listening to your favorite sound of all time, that big, bad V-twin engine of yours.

But we replace exhaust systems on our bikes for more than

just the aural gratification they give us. We also want style and performance. While style is a subjective thing, I can't deny that the Radio Flyers clearly enhanced the look of the Road Glide that we put them on. Foremost, the Flyers' 4"-diameter muffler bodies flow smoothly into their CNC-cut end caps for a cool look, important criterion for a custom bagger. Von Braun's mufflers and end caps come in two finishes: chrome and black mufflers with either silver or black end caps, producing four variations. We selected the black mufflers with black end caps for our conversion.

That brings us to the performance aspect of why we trade out our bikes' exhaust system. The proof is in the pudding, as they say, and the place to taste the pudding is on a dynamometer. For that we went to our buddy Rob of Rob's Dyno in Gardner, Massachusetts, for a baseline run with the stock exhausts, and

Our 2011 Road Glide is up on Rob's dyno and ready to have its stock mufflers swapped for a new set of Von Braun's.



TOOLS NEEDED

- Blue Permatex threadlock
- 1/2" socket
- 9/16" deep socket
- Torque wrench (ft-lbs.) ■



2 Rob starts by using a 9/16" deep socket to remove the stock muffler clamp.



3 He uses a 1/2" socket to remove both muffler support bolts.



4 Rob pulls the stock muffler from its pipe. He has to gently wiggle it from side to side to get it to come loose.



5 He moves the stock clamp from the stock muffler to the new Von Braun Radio Flyer muffler and slips the muffler onto the stock pipe.

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6 After aligning the muffler to the stock bracket and checking that the muffler will rest against the bracket without being forced, Rob secures it using the stock hardware, blue Permatex, and a 1/2" socket.



7 Rob can now torque the stock muffler clamp to 38-43 ft-lbs. using a 9/16" deep socket.



8 After he does the same for the other muffler, he makes the end of the right muffler protrude from under the saddlebags as much as the left. Here's how the new pipes look on the bike!

the real deal with the Von Braun pipes. We had the benefit of making the muffler swap while the bike remained on the dyno, which also gave us the opportunity to test the systems back to back on the same day. As you can see from the accompanying dyno sheets, there's more to the Radio Flyers than just a pleasing sound. **MB**

SOURCES

ROB'S DYNO SERVICE

Dept. AIM
Gardner, MA 01440
978/895-0441
www.RobsDyno.com

VON BRAUN EXHAUST

30 Wampeche Rd., Dept. AIM
West Tisbury, MA 02575
774/563-8735
www.VonBraunUSA.com

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