

NEW, MODERN MAG/DYNOS FOR SERIES 'A' SINGLES

For the past 3 dozen years, I have been struggling with the 76 year old Miller mag/dyno on my Series 'A' Comet.

It's a darlin' bike, and when it's able, it's is a worthy conveyance. But each spring time, I--and my mates--would try to resuscitate old Man Miller for one more season's riding. Several years ago, I rode it one fine summer's day on a Section tootle around the NW Chicago sub-urbs, including a blast over the border into Wisconsin. I put over 150 miles on it that day--all on one tank of fuel. When the bike was running, it was lovely. But each time we stopped at a tavern for a bit of 'light refreshment', it would take all we could do to get the 'A' going again. At our lunch-break, I even took the carb off for a bit of a clean, but it was not that. Mr. Miller was dying a slow and morbid death. By the end of the day--in 90°+ [F] weather--my riding Buddies soon got rather bored with having to push-start me 'one more time.' With the help of a hill (yes--we have a few here in 'The Prairie State!') I was finally off for home, not daring to shut it off until I got there.

Fast forward to a few years ago, when BBQ Bruce Metcalf (ex-Chicagoan & current S.O. of the Minnesota Section) e-mailed me a web-thing [www.powerdynamo.biz] about a new, modern, state-of-the-art German mag/dyno for single cylinder models manufactured by Powerdynamo GmbH, Strasse am Heizhaus 1, 10318 Berlin, Germany. I 'checked out' their web-thing, as we say, and found the site was excellent with a full description in very good English, complete with photos & dimensions of the unit. The dynamo produces some 60 watts at 12-volts. From the information given on the web, the Powerdynamo is basically the same size & shape as the pre-war Miller, although the new unit is a one piece job with internal gearing connecting the magneto and dynamo--no chain to worry about.

It seemed like an excellent unit--almost too good to be true--but at some €873 [which included international postage in 2009 for a total of about \$1,150 US]; I was concerned with shelling out for something that might not fit the 'A'. So I did a full-sized 'cartoon' of the 'A' Comet engine to scale [left, right, top, bottom], and a full sized sketch of the German mag/dyno and then did a tracing paper 'over-ly'. According to that little exercise, the unit would fit under the Amal remote float carburetor with ample room to spare, and the hold-down bolt hole pattern in the base is identical to the Miller. The standard Vincent 'over the top', hold-down strap can be retained if so desired, but it is not necessary. Amazing. The only problem was that some 0.12" (± 3 mm) would need to be milled off the bottom of the new unit to give the required 35mm spindle height to suit the Series 'A' single's crankcase. Yes--this machining can be done without dismantling the new unit.

I e-mailed Herr Edgar Uher of Powerdynamo with a few questions. He said that to the best of his knowledge, no one had ever fitted one of his units to a Vincent before, but he thought it should work very well on one. He even offered to shave the bottom off for me, but I felt it would be best to do that here with both the bike and the unit 'to hand'.

I took a giant leap of faith and ordered a Powerdynamo. The neat little unit arrived in Chicago from Berlin in less than a week!

What a little beauty! Naturally it doesn't look like a three-quarters-of-a-century old Miller [or a BT-H for that matter] but it is the same general shape and size and it fits into place very neatly. [See MPH727 (August 2009, page 31). Additionally, I knew that a new magneto drive gear center would need to be made to suit the Powerdynamo's drive shaft--no major problem for a trusted local machinist.

The Powerdynamo is now on the 'A' Comet, thanks to Steve Hamel, and it works wonderfully. The 'black box' electronic voltage regulator & electronic advance/retard module has been mounted out of view inside the tool box along with a fuse holder for each--the magneto and the dynamo. At last, the little pre-war beauty is an electrically dependable, worry-free bike. The Powerdynamo puts an end to worrying about run-down batteries in this 'Lights On' state of ours (Illinois), and produces a reliable, cracking great, big fat blue spark at the combustion chamber. [What a concept!] Marvelous. That plus a new Burlens 1 1/8" remote float Amal from The VOC Spares Co., Ltd.--complete with the proper 15° float, and a Honda clutch conversion from Conway's/Godden's, now makes the 'A' capable of popping wheelies, doing burn-outs, and doing 70 mph easily, with plenty more on tap.

What more could one ask?

Life is good.

Glenn Shriver

(Chicago)

PS, The bike is currently part of a vintage bike display at the Fall River, Wisconsin Public Library.