

F4 Customs Speedglass Windshield

THE WAY DON Frank, founder and President of F4 Customs, tells it, the first time he saw a Speedglass automotive racing windshield, he wanted one for his motorcycle, but such an item was not available.

"Speedglass was the creation of Jeff Percival and sold exclusively by Percy's High Performance, a supplier of gaskets and fabricated plastic systems, to the auto racing and aerospace industries," explains Frank. "They didn't make it for motorcycles and had no immediate plans to do so. That is when I got the idea to approach them for the worldwide rights to market Speedglass to the motorcycle market."

Speedglass is a high grade of virgin optical polycarbonate material with a proprietary coating applied to both sides of the window after molding. The patented forming and coating process provides a thin, exceptionally hard outer sheet with the high optic polycarbonate underneath it. Professional NASCAR racers such as Jimmy Johnson, Jeff Gordon and

others like it because it is lighter than glass, nearly shatterproof, has superb optical clarity and is very scratch resistant.

After negotiating the worldwide distribution rights, F4 Customs, LLC was created to market Speedglass exclusively to the motorcycle industry worldwide through a network of dealers and their website, <http://www.f4customs.com>

Eighteen months ago, I replaced my stock windshield with F4's GL1800 Standard. The F4 windshield I chose is identical to the original width, height, angle and adjustment capability. I was happy with my stock windshield and rode with it in the lowest position. I typically ride alone and prefer to look over the top of my windshield rather than through it. F4 Customs has 10 different windshield products for the Gold Wing. Based on riding preference, style, size and height of the rider, models exist for different situations and preferences. F4 Customs also makes replacement windshields for Harley-Davidson's FLHT, FLHX, Road King, Road Glide and Softail, and has them for a number of cruisers, including all Valkyrie models—including the Valkyrie Interstate, Royal Star and earlier 1500 Gold Wings. If you own an earlier Gold Wing and always envied newer models with the center air vent, now is your chance to get one.

Opening the box, the first thing I noticed was that the F4 windshield is thicker. When you remove the Styrofoam cover, you'll notice how clear it looks. Once the old windshield was removed, it felt heavier than the F4 windshield, even though the F4 is thicker.

F4 Customs provides detailed step-by-step instructions, with pictures for each step in the process. The instructions clearly walk through the process of removing the old windshield and installing the new one. Being a bit clumsy, I was glad to have my magnetic pickup tool nearby. This is an area of the bike where nuts - if dropped - easily disappear into deep, inaccessible pockets in the bowels of the bike. But other than my magic magnet-on-a-stick, no special tools are required. Installation is straight-forward, taking about an hour with two people.

F4 Customs promises that their windshield is chemical resistant and so scratch resistant it will hold up to cleaning with steel wool. They state that the surface is so smooth that rain will bead up and blow off. They guarantee the best optical clarity and say the windshield is shatterproof. After 18 months of riding, we can validate some—though, not all—of the company's claims.

Optics

The F4 Customs windshield is noticeably clearer than the stock windshield. While the OEM windshield may look similar right out of the showroom, it will show the results of microscopic road sand striking it, bugs dive-bombing into it and imperfect cleaning practices after less than a year of riding. Yet after 18 months, my F4 looks brand-new.

Scratch Resistance & Cleaning

Although seeing the YouTube video of the windshield wiper wrapped in steel wool going back and forth for hours across a stock windshield and an F4 Customs windshield—with the F4 windshield showing no ill effects—I was unable to bring myself to clean my windshield with steel wool. I did, however, do something no competent motorcyclist would ever do—I cleaned it a few times with Windex and a paper towel, to no ill effect.

This F4 Customs Speedglass windshield is far easier to clean than a stock windshield. First, you don't have worry that the cloth you're using might not be the right thing or if the cleaning solution might be problematic. Go ahead, use the paper towels in the dispenser at the gas station with no worries. Second, the Speedglass coating is to windshields what Teflon coating is to frying pans. Nothing sticks to it for long, which means that cleaning bugs and gunk from the windshield after a long ride requires minimal effort. For the most part, I've cleaned the windshield with only water and a clean cotton towel. After 18 months, it shows no swirls, scratches or pits. Even looking at the windshield in direct sunlight, it looks almost new.

Rain Performance & Shatter Resistance

While rain on the F4 windshield did bead up and slide off quickly, this particular attribute did not impress me as being significantly different, or better than, a suitably well-waxed stock windshield.

I did no extraordinary testing to verify the veracity of F4's claims of the windshield's durability. No stones were sent hurtling toward the bike at 80+ mph. I did not deliberately drop the Gold Wing on the windshield nor did I take a tire iron to it. If any existing owners would care to volunteer their windshields for such a test, please let me know.

Summary

Is the F4 Customs Speedglass windshield right for you? Yes, if your bike is several years out of the showroom and your stock windshield's soft surface has been the victim of sand-blast, suicidal bugs, less-than-careful cleaning and the occasional airborne stone, and it is driving you nuts. With an MSRP of \$319.95, the F4 windshield may seem expensive at first, but it's actually a pretty good value. It is a high quality product that, while only a fraction of the cost of your bike, brings satisfaction and a noticeable improvement every time you ride. Plus, you can forget about spending money for fancy cleaning products or wax or Rain-X type treatments for your windshield. Highly recommended.

—Steve Larsen

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