

TECH TALK: Tyre Additives

As a follow-up from a previous articles on Tyre Plugs and Tyre Safety, we thought it would just finish off the Tyre Subject nicely.

Once upon a time tyres were made of rubber - solid rubber. They worked, but they produced a dreadfully hard ride. Then, someone came up with the idea of making them pneumatic (filled with air) and tyres became far better as a result, and far more comfortable to ride on.

Over the years our tyres have steadily gotten better. From better rubber compounds to the addition of belts, better biasing techniques, radial designs and better tread designs. Tyre manufacturing has become a well understood science, not an art.

And as motorcyclists our lives depend greatly on those tyres. So, we tend to buy the best tyres made. And the tyre manufactures have never stopped trying to make them even better.

So, one has to wonder why it is that some motorcyclists completely abandon the idea that the tyre manufacturers REALLY know what they're doing when they created our tyres. Some motorcyclists have decided that for a few dollars they can squirt some magic compound into their tyres and never have to worry about a flat tyre again. They believe that this same goop even magically balances their tyres for them and no longer have to rely on a trained mechanic to mechanically do that for them. They believe that if their tyres are punctured after squirting this wonder product into their expensive tyres they can disregard the problem altogether because, like magic, the tyre won't leak its air out through the puncture - it will seal itself automatically. And, they believe, once the stuff is squirted into their tyres they don't have to tell anybody about it.

These are the same kinds of motorcyclists who are easy targets for sales pitches for such things as Slick 50, gasoline treatment additives, and instant weight loss pills.

(I'm not here trying to argue that all additives are useless or hype. But I am going to argue that it should take a lot more than a clever sales ad to convince you to IN ANY WAY deviate from the advice of professional mechanics relative to your motorcycle.)

To go back to motorcycle tyres - virtually all of them are now tubeless by design and are built to resist the loss of air from a puncture - without you having to add anything to them other than air. If the puncture is large, the built-in puncture sealant will not be totally effective. But, that is not a bad thing! A large puncture means that you have had significant damage to the belting of the tyre. It should be replaced, not covered up!

There is no excuse not to have your tyres mechanically balanced when mounted. No amount of internal 'balancing

goop' substitutes for a properly mounted and balanced tyre to begin with.

So, products that are designed to be squirted into a tubeless tyre, it seems to me, make very little sense. Do you think that a tyre manufacturer like Dunlop would fail to make the very best and safest tyre they are capable of making for use on motorcycles? Do you think they never heard of puncture sealants? Do you think that they should have to stand to a warranty if the inside of a tyre has been coated with a chemical compound that it was not designed to have to deal with?

While on the subject of putting something into your tyres, if you have a tyre repair kit that includes a pressurised can of gas to inflate it after the repair, you MUST TELL YOUR SERVICE MAN THAT YOU HAVE USED IT BEFORE YOU ASK HIM TO REMOVE YOUR TYRE! Some of those compressed gasses are flammable and can explode if the tyre is exposed to a spark while their beads are being removed from the tyre rims! **YOU** would be responsible if that mechanic were to be injured.

