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PROS AND CONS OF WIRE WHEELS



There are two types of motorcycle wheels available on the market today for custom bike builders or for motorcycle owners who want to upgrade their original wheel set. The two types are wire (also referred to as laced or spoke) wheels, and the one-piece solid type wheels... each having it's own appeal and following.

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1. The typical wire wheel has a central hub connected to the rim of the wheel via spokes made of wire. These spokes are generally quite solid and will not easily bend as would typical wire cord. Nevertheless, they mechanically function as wires under tension, holding the rim true and providing strength and flex to the wheel. Alternatively, there are also wire wheels available that attach to an inner rim that is then centered and fastened into the outer rim.



2. The one-piece billet type wheel is usually made from a single block of material and can be forged into just about any design desired. Aluminum, magnesium and steel are all common materials used in making these wheels.



A. Wire Wheels – Pros

They are nostalgic, lightweight, pretty, and capable of absorbing some of the shocks the road dishes out. Wire wheels have more flex, which can be an advantage or disadvantage, depending on your needs. A wire wheel will ride smoother than a solid type, but under hard cornering that flex is a disadvantage. However, most people don't ride that hard and would never notice the difference.

B. Wire Wheels – Cons

1. Over the last several years several manufacturers have come up with various wire configurations that are pretty sharp. However, with that said, wire wheels do have a few

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down-sides to them and, in fact, can be much more of a maintenance pain than the one-piece type wheel.



2. The wire wheel is difficult and time consuming to keep clean of dirt, rust and corrosion (in humid climates). Spokes, and there are many on a single wheel, need to be maintained/adjusted on a regular basis because they do loosen up and could lead to a potentially dangerous situation.

3. Wire wheels tend to be lighter weight than the solid billet type wheels and because the wheel's mass is concentrated largely out at the rim, rather than closer to the hub, it takes more energy to accelerate or stop your motorcycle.

4. If the spokes are physically attached to the wheel rim it is very difficult to ensure no air leakage, thus requiring an inner tube and tube-type tire. If the rim is sealed properly, or the spokes seat into an inner rim (as mentioned earlier), you can run tubeless tires on your wire wheel rims.

C. Fits into the "nice-to-know" category:

1. Here are a couple of things to consider regarding tires that require inner tubes:

a. Tires with inner tubes can experience major failures when they are damaged (e.g. blowout) where tubeless tires do not (slow pressure loss), due to the vulnerability of the tube and to the different type of manufacturing process.

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- b. Flat tires with inner tubes can't be fixed with a motorcycle tire repair package when you're on a trip. Have a flat...? Call a tow truck.



2. Newborn Tires:

- a. At some point in your motorcycle ownership life you will have to buy new tires. When tire companies are manufacturing the tires you buy and install on your bike, they use a mold. For most companies, before all the ingredients that are used to manufacture the tire are poured in, the mold is sprayed down with an oil substance so the tire won't stick when it's ready to be removed from the mold. Some companies simply rely on the smoothness of the mold and don't use a mold release substance.
- b. If the company *did* use a non-stick substance, the slippery residue remains on the new tire until worn off during normal riding. For this reason it is recommended that you ride 50-100 miles before you start jamming on the brakes lest you suddenly find yourself up close and personal with the pavement. This also a good distance for any initial tire "break-in" regardless of the mold used.

Hope this helps.