DRUID DRIBBLE
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For this iteration, let's talk about tires. As a motorcyclist, a tire blowout at speed is about as bad as it gets. Conversely, the friction patch (literally where the rubber meets the road) is key in your maneuvering and pays huge dividends in an emergency be it braking or swerving. Your H-D probably comes with Dunlops which are a very decent all-around tire. Some tires work better in the rain so if you were to move to Seattle area or perhaps the Florida side of the world, a tire that channels the rain is key. You probably can't go wrong with any brand name tire. Is there one tire that is the best? Besides Dunlops, you have a lot to choose from… Metzeler, Pirelli, Michelin, Continental, Bridgestone, and Avon, probably stand out in your mind but there are others. Going "cheap" is not usually the smart buy. Current reviews seem to praise the Michelins, with the Metzelers and Dunlops closely following. For 99% of us, the differences are a wash, and the price, timing, and/or dealer availability may be the key(s) in your decision.

Consider what you do for riding. Is your bike mainly a commuter bike from home to work and back? Do you like peeling out from a stoplight like one would on a ¼ track or scraping the pegs/floorboards in a turn? Do you go on long lengthy touring jaunts? Do you ride 2 up? Do your homework before you decide. "Google" can be your friend. With the deals our Dealership offers, watch their specials and go from there. You also have various motorcycle rallies that have vendors. LSR comes to mind. If you bring your bike in for a service and the tech tells you that they have concerns about a tire, get them changed. Conventional wisdom says to change both as a pair. On trikes, the rear tires will normally outlast the front several times over.

Understand that by and large, most shops will not "repair" a MC tire. Consider that many models are tubeless and that is key. If you are travelling across the Amazon Basin or deep Africa, you may have to settle for a temporary tube and/or a patch. However, few folks here have those types of rides on their horizon. Beware of products like "Fix-a-flat" that sprays a gooey product into your tire. This stuff sticks to the inner rims and must be removed when putting on a new tire. It is a royal pain to remove. Better option…call for a tow.

Are the tires "sticky" thus wear faster or are they made of a harder compound that pushes longevity? Consider that some manufacturers excel in making tires for the Japanese sport bikes or their versions of cruisers/tourers. However, they only dabble their toes in the pool of tires for Harleys.

You need to be a smart buyer though. Actually, look at the tires you are purchasing. You can take a picture of the codes on the tire, and it will tell you how old the tire is. There are websites out there that will tell you how to read these codes. Tires coming out of a Harley shop probably have a decent turnover thus their tires are rarely more than a few months old. However, there are "mom and pop" shops that have tires still on the shelves since the

days of the Panhead. If you have choices, stay away from any tire more than a few years old. Sites say 5 or 6 years but if you don't ride a lot, these tires might be on your bike upwards of 10 years. Newer is always better. Leave the older tires for the uninformed buyer who doesn't read the Druid Dribble. In an emergency situation, your hands might be tied but it would be to your benefit to replace a suspect tire as soon as possible. Dry rot/oxidation is sometimes not easily seen on "new" on the shop's shelf tires or on your bike but age has eaten away at the structure of the tire and combined with the heat of the rolling tire on a hot day on hot asphalt, it will become a matter of "when", not "if". If the tires on your bike are closing in on double digit years, consider replacing them even if "you only drive around town" and the tread looks to be ok.

Some folks get cheap and forego having the tires balanced. There are different styles of weights now. Some affix to the wheel while others go inside the tire and get distributed inside the rim when the wheel is spun. You see these types of balancing options being done on bikes with custom wheels. Regardless, have them balance your tires/wheels.

If you have spoked wheels, ensure your shop checks these as a few lose spokes can throw your tire/wheel combo off and may create a "wobble" that could cause you major issues. If you have a lift at home, consider your T-CLOCS inspection. Lift the bike and spin the wheel. Take a wrench and gently tap each spoke. They should all sound the same.

If you run over a road hazard, take a minute at your next stop to do a quick ck on your tires. You may have a nasty gash in the tread or a nail, screw, piece of glass… sticking out of your tire and not know it. If you immediately suspect something is wrong, don't hesitate to pull over and take a look. Weigh the options as you may be able to limp down the road on the shoulder to that gas station/convenience store where it will be safer for you and the bike. If in doubt, call for a tow.

Best advice here is if you have a flat, quickly get out of traffic and onto a safe area on the side of the highway. Go into the bushes, change your underwear, and then use your cell to call the nearest H-D dealership or use your HOG Benefits to call for a tow. Many local H-D shops will come for you if you are not too far away and will not charge you for the tow if they get the business of changing your tire. Don't be afraid to ask.

Purchase a QUALITY tire pressure gauge. Keep in "somewhere" on your bike. Ck your tire pressure on a regular basis. Occasionally, ck your gauge against another gauge to ensure it is still accurate. Toss the bad gauge in the trash…they do not "heal" sitting on your workbench. We talked a few times about how colder weather will sometimes steal tire pressure. This is especially true if the bike has been sitting for a spell on a cement floor.

Lastly, go for round tires. Square tires are for Hondas…