

THE WHEEL THING

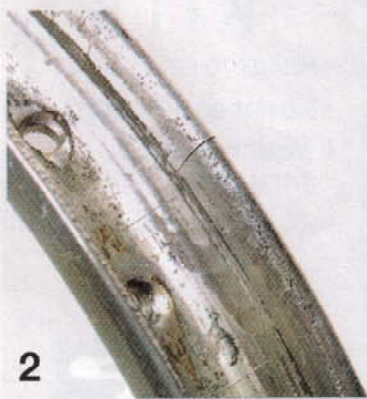
All about the circles of life

► A little respect, please. Wheels are supposed to be mankind's greatest invention, but we treat them like dirt. We bash them with rocks, ignore their needs, bend them and worst of all try to rebend them. The noble wheel is left with very little dignity.

The guys at RK/Excel live wheels. They sell wheels, build wheels and suffer the aftermath of wheel abuse. They gave us some tips on wheel maintenance and then Aaron Holguin of Wheel Wright gave us tips on building wheels so they will outlast the rest of your bike.



1 An added benefit to hand washing is getting close enough to inspect for problems. Besides the obvious broken spoke, look at the bent section of the spoke. That's where they usually break. Prior to breaking, the spoke stretches at this spot. The stretching is visible as a thin section of the spoke. Replace the spokes if a thin section is visible. Also look for gouges or bends in the straight section of the spoke. These types of damage are usually caused by the footpeg of the guy you T-boned.



2 Spin the wheel and look for cracks, wobbles, lumps or valleys. While drying, look for material stress. Pay special attention to the weld and around the nipple holes. Replace the rim if there are any signs of damage.



3 The wheel is only as strong as its components. A high quality rim is the key to a strong wheel. A properly tuned wheel optimizes the strength of the rim. A concentric, straight wheel with equal spoke tension is the most reliable.



4 Every time you ride the bike, check the sprocket bolts—or else. This is a good example of "or else." Look for damage to the mounting tabs of the rotor and sprocket. Pay special attention for damage near the spoke holes. When removing rotors/sprocket inspect the mounting holes/threads. Replace the hub if there are any signs of damage like oblong holes.



5 Aaron Holguin has built wheels for almost everyone. It's important to start with the right parts. You can't put a Honda rim on a Yamaha hub, so don't try. Even if the number of spokes is correct, the angles won't be.



6 Step one is measuring the offset of the original wheel. This makes sure your tire won't hit the swingarm when you're done. Use a couple of straight edges and a flat reference point, such as the sprocket mount tabs.