

Wheel Jockey

— UWE WACHTENDORF

There are many benefits of using a chain to drive the rear wheel of a motorcycle, but ease of maintenance isn't one. In reality, chain drives can be a real pain in the ass, especially if you're the type who enjoys travelling long distances. When I was young, many motorcycles came equipped with a centre stand, an extremely practical appendage that allowed riders to easily access the rear wheel of their motorcycles. Centre stands, like really long sideburns and platform shoes, slowly disappeared over the years, a victim of the push by manufacturers to make motorcycles lighter, faster and less expensive to build.

Although a few select motorcycles still come fitted with a centre stand – or at least have one available as an option – most of us have to suffer the frequent demands of proper chain maintenance without one. Two common ways to lubricate a chain involve hoisting the rear wheel off the ground by using a specially designed stand – something that isn't even an option while touring – or tediously pushing the bike forward in small increments.

A couple of years ago, I came across a much easier and more practical solution for chain drives. The Wheel Jockey is a hand-sized roller stand that allows you to freely spin either wheel of a motorcycle while it's leaning on its side stand. Constructed of aluminum and steel components, the Wheel Jockey is solidly constructed, yet it's also relatively light (around 1 kg), so it can easily be stowed along with a small can of chain lube when you're touring.

The Wheel Jockey can handle motorcycles weighing up to 295 kg (650 lb.); a heavy-duty version called the Big Boy, which can handle up to 431 kg (950 lb.), is also available. I used a Ducati Diavel Carbon to test the Wheel Jockey, and

although the 227 kg bike didn't strain the load limit of the Wheel Jockey's design, its massive 240 mm rear tire was certainly an effective test of the tool's range.

The enclosed instructions warned that when you initially use the Wheel Jockey, you might roll the bike right over the unit or have difficulty correctly positioning it under the wheel. It also promised that with a little practice, users would quickly get the hang of using it with their bikes. Taking a little extra time to line up the Wheel Jockey in front of the Diavel's rear wheel paid off, as it rolled up perfectly on my first try. All you have to do is position the Wheel Jockey on level ground with its rollers two inches in front of the tire and then roll the bike forward. Once it's on, hold the front brake as you lower the bike onto its side stand.

I expected that spinning the Diavel's truck-sized rear tire would be difficult, and although it did require a little bit of muscle, I was still able to spin it with only one hand while the other applied lube to the chain. Once done, I only had to roll the bike forward to unload it; a non-skid pad on the bottom of the Wheel Jockey prevented it from sliding around.

Since the Wheel Jockey can be used for more than chain maintenance, it's also a useful tool for motorcycles with belt and shaft drives. Once you have a tire on its rollers, it's easy to clean a wheel, inspect a tire for damage, or provide quick access to the tire's valve stem to check air pressure. Checking the tire air pressure is something that we all do frequently, right?

The Wheel Jockey can be purchased directly from the manufacturer's website (wheeljockey.com) for \$59 USD. Given that it should withstand many years of regular use and that it eases the pain of dealing with chains and tires, it's a reasonably priced tool and one that I highly recommend. **MMM**

