

engine off the bodywork. Then simply rinse with water and allow the engine to dry.

CLEAR COAT ENGINES—Most motorcycle engines manufactured today are made of aluminum, and if not painted/powder coated, have a protective or clear coat finish applied to them. A routine cleaning usually requires little more than washing the bike with soap and water. While these engines do not require the same level of effort to keep looking new as the cast engines, the clear coat can deteriorate over time if not washed regularly.

One-step engine cleaners such as S-100 Total Cycle Cleaner or detergents like Simple Green (diluted with 50% water) are also very effective on grease-laden areas. But we would not recommend using them, or an automotive-type engine degreaser, every time the bike is washed since they might dull the finish over the long-term. Remember, always use the least aggressive means first.

But if using soap and water and a strong detergent doesn't work, try using WD-40 as a spot remover. We've used it to remove paint, tar, bugs, and a host of other unwanted celestial things from our engine without any adverse effects. One item that cannot be removed via conventional means is gasoline that has stained the engine/jug/transmission housing. If the engine is continually exposed to gas, from a leaking fuel line for example, the gasoline will stain the clear coat to a dull yellow that cannot be removed without harming the clear coat finish. If you notice this discoloration, find the source since you may have a potential problem.

Also, avoid using aluminum or metal polishes if possible. Once the clear coat has been removed from the engine/drivetrain, the time necessary to offset aluminum oxidation will quadruple unless another protective clear coat finish is applied.

PAINTED AND POWDER COATED ENGINES—Engines that have been painted but have no protective coating are very susceptible to fading. The most common example of this occurs to the black wrinkle finish on (pre-powder coat) Harley-Davidson engines. Over time, the effects of the engine's heat, using detergents like S-100 Total Cycle Cleaner or Simple Green, and the sun's UV rays will essentially deplete the oils from the paint. The sheen from the black wrinkle finish will start to look faded and dull. Replenishing the oils in the paint by liberally spraying WD-40 or S100 Engine Brightener will help restore the luster to these engine parts.

For painted engines where a factory clear coat has been applied or powder coated engines, a routine cleaning regimen requires nothing more than washing the bike with soap and water. Using S100 Engine Brightener or WD-40 periodically to remove stubborn dirt/tar/gravel is also beneficial to keep the engine looking bright.

CHROME—To keep chrome looking new is as easy as washing your bike as described above (being especially careful that your wash mitt is free of dirt, gravel, moon dust, and plum pits). We do not recommend using a chrome polish regularly since it is by definition an abrasive. Every time you polish chrome, you are essentially removing a microscopic layer that can only be replaced by re-chroming (unlike painted surfaces which can be waxed). Therefore it is particularly important to use the "least aggressive approach" first when working on chromed parts. To remove black heel marks from the exhaust, try using oven cleaner, S-100 Engine Restorer, WD-40 or CRC first before using a chrome/metal polish—and avoid the temptation to use a cloth wrapped around a Pop-sicle stick to expedite the process. It might take several applications but patience is a virtue when it comes to cleaning chrome parts.

Cleaning Wheels

Wheels are everyone's least favorite part of the bike to clean. They do, however, reflect the soul (and sole) of the motorcycle



There are always a couple of things to do before washing any motorcycle, like removing the ignition key so water is inadvertently channeled into the lock cylinder. Also, cover or remove all electrical accessories and leather parts. Even though we removed the GPS receiver on this bike, we still covered the connections. Ziplock™ baggies work well and, when a rubber band is used, they are virtually impervious to water penetration.

and its owner. Chances are if the rims are clean, the rest of the bike is probably spotless too. Cleaning a laced wheel or an aluminum rim is almost the same, but some of the tools are different.

The best way to keep laced wheels looking good is to just keep on top of them—meaning every time you wash the bike, spend the extra 10 minutes on the wheels. We use a soft-bristled, double-sided brush, rag and/or sponge to clean the spokes, hub and rim. If the grunge is too heavy, it's best to pre-treat the wheels with Simple Green (100% solution) or S-100 Wheel Cleaner before scrubbing. A narrow cloth wrapped completely around the spoke and moved in a back and forth motion is a good technique, albeit time consuming, for shining individual spokes. Another tip is to use window cleaners for removing dried-on water spots on clean rims. For reasons outlined above, we'd recommend against using a chrome polish unless it's your last attempt to remove a really stubborn mark.

Clear coated aluminum rims are much easier to clean with just soap and water. Again, Simple Green or S-100 and a shop rag/sponge will usually remove the heaviest grime. A narrow paintbrush/toothbrush is also good for the smaller recesses and cavities on the wheel and prevents scraped knuckles. We also found that WD-40 works on removing whatever tar, grease or dirt is left over after having used the wheel cleaner. Just remember to spray WD-40 on a rag first and then rub it on with your hand since any over-spray on the tires could make them slippery, and, therefore, potentially dangerous. And in this regard, don't put any tire dressing on the tires unless the bike is going to be an unused museum piece.

Conclusion:

Whether you spend \$20,000 for a new Gold Wing, or bought a motorcycle costing a mere \$1000, protecting your investment by cleaning it with some degree of regularity is important. When it comes to cleaning, doing something—anything—is better than nothing at all. Caring for your bike will take less time than you might imagine and is a good way, again, to identify and correct any potential problems. ➡