Ducati ST wheel removal / chain adjustment on the go

Gone touring and suddenly find the need to adjust the chain? Well, chains get sloppy quickly when they start to go, and when you've watched what happens on someone else's bike when their chain is getting too loose you know you don't want that for yourself. Or worse still, maybe you've got a flat tyre and found that magic repair kit just didn't cut the mustard - so you HAVE to take the wheel off and thumb a ride to town to find a more permanent repair? If you didn't know before, round about now you discover Ducati doesn't provide the basic tools to remove either of the wheels off a tourer.

Actually the whole rear wheel set-up system might be great for handling but it is a bit pathetic for maintenance. And, just when you've got the spanner thing sorted, you find it is necessary to stop the rear axle turning to do it all up again. This was not a problem at first, but because I had been lubricating under the axle alignment indicators in an endeavour to stop bending them when I undo the rear axle nut the axle soon started to slip before the nut was tight. Then you suddenly find there's no convenient way to hold the back axle either! And there's no lock pin etc to make sure it all stays there so it better be jolly tight!

A solution to the wheel removal problem is to make up a combination 28mm and 30mm spanner to suit the diagonal length of the under seat tool box and fit the front and rear axle nuts respectively. This necessitated buying a roll of cheap spanners from Supercheap Auto for about $60 and cutting two ring ends off and welding them together as per the photo. It was painted with pretty silver paint but the paint soaks up grease like a magnet! Never mind, when you've whipped it out to reef off a wheel on your travels, whoever it is with the shagged tyre that is now not a complete tragedy out the back of nowhere doesn't exactly care!

To stop the rear axle spinning, for a minute there it appeared Ducati had been smart and the other end of the spark plug spanner was going to fit the axle. But no, it is 3mm too big and would be too marginal for the spark plug job if ground down to fit, drat. So an adaptor tool is needed, see photo. The adaptor has 15mm and 17mm hex ends, which connect the spark plug spanner and back axle respectively, and it is a snack to use. It is just like it looks, a fully threaded bolt with two nuts screwed on it hard and a take no prisoners grade of Loctite to hold it all together, then fiddling round on the grinder until satisfied as to function if not form. It really should have a bit of gun metal blueing compound on it for protection, for now its only got a light oil.

To take the front wheel off you'll need a hex key for the brake callipers and a couple more of those spare spanners from the Supercheap roll need to get chucked in too for the front wheel axle retaining bolts, chain adjuster bolts and whatever else you reckon you'll need. Oh, and please remember to nip those chain adjuster bolts up after you've tightened the back axle. Otherwise they soon loosen and unscrew until your attention is caught by the fascinating tinkling noise of the adjustment insert being eaten up by the brake disk or the sprocket, and the bolts become hideously bent in the process. Too many people have first hand knowledge of this particular design deficiency, better to save yourself the grief!

That whole back wheel thing is getting a bit monotonous now, undo the wheel, go straighten the right wheel positioner again, etc. Several times a year for me with the k's I put on back tyres. Does anyone have a better solution to replace these pieces of junk that pass as rear wheel alignment guides? But at least the wheel removal tool additions above make it possible to sort out a problem in the field without a major production effort, as you can line the wheel up pretty well by eye after a bit of stuffing around centralising the front wheel.

By the way this information was developed to suit an '03 ST4S, don't know about the rest, just check first eh?

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