

A HANDY "QUICK CHECK" FOR YOUR BIKE

by Ron Keall

- roll the bike out of storage and lift it up while it is still moving. The wheels should continue to spin silently for some time. If not, check for tight bearings, rubbing brake pads, untrue wheels or rubbing fenders or racks. Leave the wheel truing to the shop unless you are willing to invest some time learning this valuable and rewarding skill.
- drop the bike gently down after checking the wheels. Does it rattle? Ask why and try to find out what is loose.
- check the tire pressure and adjust it to the range suggested on the sidewall. You will need an accurate gauge and a good pump. Consider purchasing a floor pump or an electric model as this can make the job much easier.
- apply the front brake and rock the bike forward and back. Any play or "clunking" from the fork indicates a loose headset which should be fixed.
- push the wheels from side to side at the rim. There should be no "play" (looseness) at all. The wheel should not wobble as it turns nor should there be any noise (grinding, rubbing, squeaking).
- you should not be able to twist the handlebars side to side while straddling and immobilizing the front wheel.
- the brake levers should not "bottom out" on the handlebars and the brakes should not squeal if you apply them while riding.
- check brakes by walking along beside the bike while applying first the front and then the back brake. The rear wheel should jump up a few inches when the front brake is applied and the rear tire should skid when the rear brake is applied.

