

FRONT WHEEL LOCKS

No, not the dreaded gravel plough crash jobbie, the ones you put on the front wheel to keep your baby safe(r) in strange places at night. There was a lot of fuss last year over the cylindrical barrel locks of Ducati (and others) under the seat wheel D locks being able to be opened easily with a biro. Videos turned up on the net of little Johnny cracking one of these things open in under 10 seconds (generally helped greatly by the fact that the bike wasn't attached at the time I suspect). It all ended up with Kryptonite embarking on a massive lock replacement program (see <http://www.kryptonitelock.com> and follow the news story links).

It was enough to make any Ducati ST owner wonder about their own front wheel lock adequacy. It soon becomes obvious that Ducati have only fitted the Kryptonite locks to motorcycles distributed in the United States and derivative markets, the rest of us have got a different type made by Viro, the principal of which is a large conglomerate European centric company with a manufacturing base in Italy.

So, while we know the locks are only meant to resist moderate force and make it inconvenient for thieves, how good are they? I have found their best use is to join the front wheels of two carefully parked bikes together. But are they easily rendered ineffective by a quick flick with a biro? Probably not as it turns out!

I decided to go find out for myself since this little topic has bugged me from time to time, so I went and got a bic. No go, too small - it doesn't go close to fitting in the hole. But the back end of an Artline felt tip pen goes in beautifully! Well I jiggled and poked and twisted away for about two minutes, way past any threshold of patience I reckon a thief would have. There was a few times I thought I nearly had it, but it stayed locked! And I didn't have the bike under my arm to make it more awkward, something a thief would need to contend with!

I keep my lock lubricated with a bit of Inox spray (a water displacing lubricant with a retention additive) so it is performing as intended. If anyone wants to try their luck on a dry lock to amuse the rest of us please go right ahead, but I don't think I'll worry about my lock any more.

If you want to up the security level a little there's a neat little disc lock from XENA with an inbuilt alarm system. It lets off a loud shriek as soon as the thief (or, more likely, you) try to move it. There's good info on these at <http://www.xenasecurityusa.com/index.html>. I bought an XM14Y for \$75 from a local bike shop and this would fit most motorcycles. It is hardened steel with a 14mm diam pin, painted yellow. They come in stainless too for \$40 extra. They have a little carry case that straps on the bike frame so you've always got it with you, its done about 4,000k's and shown no sign of detachment, see photo.



I hope this makes you rest that little bit easier knowing your baby is just a smidge harder to take away while you are recovering from her tender caress, after a great day's riding, to that exotic destination, with your perfect partner,

By Vince Sunter