

SAVVA Technical tip 142 – Avoiding flat Tyres

Let's start off by stating that one of our greatest motoring fears is to sit on the side on side of the road with a flat tyre. My concern is: will the spare be ok? will the jack work? will the wheel nuts come loose, will the wheel spanner fit? etc, etc. Horrors! I had a flat last week - fortunately in my drive way. I was quite surprised as all the tyres are in excellent shape. Naturally, I blamed some idiot for leaving nails etc on the road. Seeing it had a tubed tyre and rather than take it to one of these modern hi-tech tyre shops with all their electronic devices that have never seen a tube I took it to an old Johannesburg tyre company, Jeppe tyre. They specialise with cars and trucks tyres so know the drill when it comes to older cars. In other words I made my problem theirs.

The proprietor, Roy Greenberg has been around for ever and it's even rumoured he learned the trade working on Roman chariots – let's just say he is an expert with early wheels and tyres. You should have seen his face when they pulled out the tube. It was “frot” and for some reason much larger than it should have been and looked as if it was made of chewing gum. The rim was also so badly rusted it needed major de-rusting. How this wheel ever held air is a miracle and to quote Roy – and you drive on the highways with an old two tonne car at fifty m.p.h. - point taken. I've had the car for about 20 years and must confess I had no idea what went on in the tyres. It was a case of out of sight out of mind. The result was two wheels were ok'ish and two had to have tubes replaced. The cost of new tubes, de-rusting, balancing etc was negligible compared to other motoring costs.

We change oils, check battery water levels and attended to other maintenance items on a regular basis but ignore tyres, tubes and rims. A suggestion - every so many years have the tyres taken off the rims and check the condition of the tubes and rims. Especially wheels with spokes where water can enter the spoke holes and the build-up of rust can then chafe and damage the tubes. The cost is minimal and it's a lot better than sitting on the side of the road with a flat tyre. On a bike it's even more so as they don't carry a spare and it's nightmare taking a wheel off on the side of the road.

Picture – a new tube against the old one!

