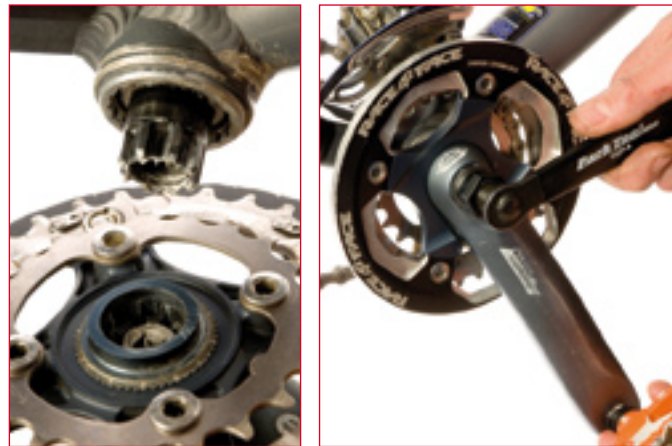


GETTING TO THE BOTTOM (BRACKET) OF CREAKS

Every so often your pride and joy may give out the odd creak or 'crick' that can seem like Chinese torture on a long ride...or it may have a symphony of creaks 'n groans that you've become accustomed to (you

may have no friends by this stage). Whether the creaks are annoying you, or your riding buddies, here is a run down of the most common causes to an old ailment.

↓ Probably the most common and easiest to fix is the loose crank bolt. Whether you have a square, ISIS, or Hollowtech (Shimano) crank, they all rely on having the crank bolts nice and tight to remain silent and in good condition (tight fit). If allowed to loosen on a ride and remain unchecked, the crank will flog out and need replacing. If the crank bolt is tight and the cranks are still creaking, check for corrosion between the alloy and steel of the axle – use a Scotchbrite pad to take any off and apply a thin film of grease to the clean crank/axle and retighten.



↓ Next in line in the 'easy to fix' jobs is a loose pedal or dry pedal thread. Hollow cranks like Shimano's Hollowtech range are like sound boxes for creaks – first check the pedals are tight; if they are, remove them and see if the thread is moist with grease. If the thread is dry, wire brush it clean and apply grease or anti seize, then refit and tighten. Remember – both pedals do up when rotated towards the front of the bike; also cranks are alloy, so if you have a long pedal wrench go easy on the grunt.



↓ There are two main types of bottom bracket at present – internal bearing, and external bearing. You can tell which you have by checking for alloy bearing housings on either side of the bottom bracket shell in the frame. Alloy housings mean external, just an axle protruding means internal. If your bike has an uninterrupted seat tube (frame goes from bottom bracket all the way up to the seat post), you will find that water and mud from the rear tyre will eventually make its way down the seat tube and collect in the bottom bracket. On an internal type this will cause corrosion between the bearing housing and the left hand cup that secures it to the frame. The unit will have to be removed and the rust cleaned off with a light sanding or Scotchbrite pad. Before refitting check there is no paint on the face of the bb in the frame, if so carefully clean it off with a straight edge like a steel ruler. Clean and grease the threads and the bottom bracket unit, especially where the left cup goes over it. Refit to the frame remembering that the right side is a left hand thread and left side right hand thread.



↓ On external types of bottom bracket there can be two areas that need checking. On Shimano and some others one of the cranks is attached to the axle with a spline and pinch bolts, these bolts need to be torqued up to the correct tension or the crank will loosen and may fall off.



↓ The other area to check is the tension of the external bearing cups in the frame. If fitting a new set or having continued creaking problems, have the bottom bracket shell faced at a competent shop to provide a square and even face for the unit to seat into.



↓ Other areas that are candidates for the creak are as follows: Seat clamp/saddle rails – mark the position of the saddle on the seat post clamp, then disassemble and clean thoroughly. Apply a thin film of grease to the parts and reassemble. This also goes for the seat post and seat tube of the frame – clean and grease them to prevent corrosion and seizing.



↓ The handlebar/stem area gets a lot of sweat and other crud from the front wheel thrown up. Mark the position of the bar, if there is corrosion showing Scotchbrite off then clean and apply a thin film of grease to contact areas.



↓ The least common area of creaking, but worth checking even if only to prevent wear to the frame, is the rear quick release (QR). On some bikes the QR is not effective enough to prevent the wheel from moving slightly when the disc brake/power is applied. This can not only cause creaking, but can chew out the drop out area – make sure the QR is always tight or fit a more effective one (the best value for money are the Shimano range that have an offset to the lever).



Workshop brought to you by Gus at

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