

Commuter bike checkup

How is my commuter bike doing after 21.000KM?

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Jan. 10, 2021



This week my trustworthy commuter bike started making strange squeaking noises when braking. It has been just over three years since I started cycling on it. People frequently ask me how the bike is performing and how the Gates Carbon CDX belt drive is doing? Time to have a look at the bike after 21.000KM!

Commuter bike

My bike is a modified Sensa Cintura that has become the best bike I ever owned. It is very reliable and I use it multiple days a week, pretty much all year round. The bike as gained a following, I have received comments, questions and reactions from all over the world! If you haven't seen them, you should check out the previous posts:

- [Creating the ultimate commuter bike](#)
- [Removing paint from a bike frame](#)
- [One year on the commuter bike](#)

- [Replacing my bike's headlight](#)
- Related is my minimalistic road racing bike, [which also uses a Gates Carbon Belt Drive](#)
- Both my bikes can [track my rides using an analogue cycling computer](#)



My Commuter bike in January 2021 - sharp eyes among you will spot the child's seating mount - as some things do change, ha!

21.000KM

It has been a while since I have written about my commuter bike. This is because there is very little to write about, ha! I have been riding it for months and months, years and years, and it has proven to be the most reliable bike I have ever had.



I use the bike all year long - under pretty much all weather conditions

Squeaking Noises

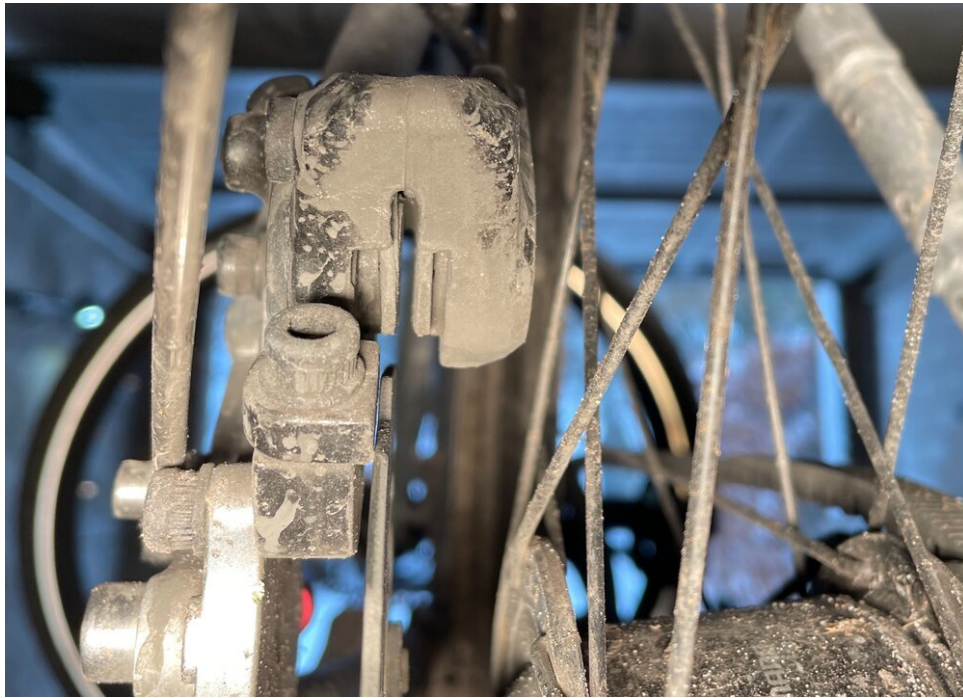
Then all of a sudden my bike started making strange noises under braking this week! It sounded like "metal scraping metal"... not good! It has been freezing these days and somehow the roads have been extra dirty because of snow mixed with salt and sand.



Investigating my rear brake

The sound came from my rear brake, a Shimano hydraulic disk brake. I never had any

problem with it and I suspected that it was either stuck or something was stuck inside it. I removed my rear wheel from the bike's frame to clear the brake and to be able to investigate the system a little bit better.



Removing my wheel to investigate the rear brake - note all the dirt!

Upon close inspection I noticed that one of the brake pads was loose! The 'fork' that was supposed to keep it aligned was no longer in place. I removed the brake pads and all of a sudden I realised where the metal scraping noise was coming from...



My hydraulic brake pads were worn out! Note the damaged fork in the upper right (which is supposed to keep the pads in place)



After some cleaning you can clearly see how 21.000KM look on a set of brake pads!

Replacing the pads was easy enough, just order some replacement pads at your local bike shop (velominati rule #58). Know that there are different compounds available to fit in your hydraulic disk brake. The main difference is how durable they are versus how snappy they 'bite'. I opted for a hard and long lasting compound.



New brake pads installed



You can see the light coming through right next to the disc - nothing is obstructing it and the squeaking noise is gone!

Gates CDX Carbon Belt Drive

After only 1800KM I ran into trouble with the original CDN drive. Since [I wrote about it](#) both Sensa and Gates have taken notice, they no longer sell the CDN system! Instead the CDX system is now standard and that's a good thing!

The Gates CDX Carbon Belt drive has proven to be very reliable on my commuter bike. After about 10.000KM I replaced the remaining CDN parts (the belt and the front sprocket), and ever since I have not had the slightest problem with my drive. I check my belt's tension every two / three months using the handy app: [Android](#) and [iOS](#)



This front CDX sprocket and CDX belt have powered my bike for $\pm 11.000\text{KM}$ - replacing the previous CDN parts that lasted for about 10.000KM



The rear CDX sprocket is still looking great (albeit a bit dusty) after 19.000KM !

Schwalbe Marathon Plus Tour tires

After experimenting with road racing tires on my commuter bike I was quickly fed up with flats! I like my daily commute to be hassle free and opted for Schwalbe Marathon Plus Tour tires. They're real beasts and Schwalbe's claims that they are "unplattable" (insert German accent here) are valid! Over the past $\pm 11.000\text{KM}$ that these tires are fitted on my bike, I haven't had a single puncture!



The Schwalbe Marathon Plus Tour tires are very reliable



Only some signs of wear after 11.000KM - and not a single puncture!

Conclusion

My commuter bike is living up to its "ultimate" status as I hoped it would be. It has become the most reliable bike that I have ever owned.

The bike shows its signs of wear and tear, but that is not a problem for something you use often and intense. I hope to be able to safely use it for many more kilometers to come!



You instantly forget that you're riding a 21.000KM bike if you see the sun rise on a brand new day!