

Flathead's Floaters!

by Tom Endy

Success:

After about a year of procrastination and talking to anyone who had installed Flathead Ted's newly designed Model A Ford brake floaters, I decided to order a set. They are on my Vic now, and in all the years I have owned the car, and as many times as I have gone through the brake system, the brakes have never been so good. I can easily smoke the tires just like Flathead advertises.

Pre-installation:

If you are contemplating installing a set, my advice is to first obtain both articles published in Model A Times magazine. Read them over several times and fully understand what the task is before you actually begin (Fall 2006 and Winter 2007 publications).

The installation:

Do the front wheels first. Drive the car for a while before you do the backs. This will allow the shoes to center in before you do any final adjustment.

The rear brakes:

The rear brakes involve only replacing the adjusters. However, the emergency brake carrier is in the way. Les Andrews says to remove the rear backing plates from the car and take them over to a workbench to install the adjusters. Seemed like a lot of work. Flathead says to simply "leaver" the emergency carrier out of the way. Leavering is not exactly in the King's English here in the colonies. I subsequently learned that leavering means to take a big crow bar and pry the carrier out of the way. I did remove the backing plates from the car in order to install the adjusters at the workbench.

The rear brakes can hang up:

If the roller tracks on the rear backing plates are worn it can cause the rear brakes to not release when you come to a stop. They will release when the car again begins to move forward. Flathead has developed what he calls "pins" to remedy the problem. The pins are actually an adjustable cam that takes the place of the rear rollers that ride on the tracks. I did not install them on my Vic, as I had already installed new roller tracks. It would be a good idea to order a set when ordering the kit.

Adjusting the brakes:

Once all four wheels on the Vic had the floaters installed. I put the car up on jack stands and adjusted each wheel with the adjusters until they were locked. Then I backed them off until there was just a hint of a drag. Next I used a stick between the brake pedal and the front seat that had notch steps cut in it at 1\2" intervals. At the first notch I adjusted the brake rods so that the fronts had a noticeable drag, the rears had none. At the second notch the fronts had a heavy drag and the rears had a noticeable drag. At the third and final notch the fronts were locked and the backs had a heavy drag.

Brake system condition:

The Vic has a set of Plasmeter cast iron brake drums installed about 15 years ago. The fronts have been turned out to about .020 over standard and the rears are close to standard. About a year ago I replaced all the backing plate hardware, such as roller tracks, rollers, adjusting shafts, and rear cams with Bratton's hardened components. The brake shoes are composite bonded lining (no rivets) as supplied by Mel Gross. The shoes were arced to match each drum.

Continuing development:

Flathead is continuing to develop his product. He plans to offer extra long adjusting shafts (Ford part number A-2042). This will preclude running out of adjustment on brake systems that have the drums turned out, or have thin brake shoes or lining.

His "pins" are a recent development to rectify the problem of the rear brakes momentarily hanging when coming to a stop. The Spring 2008 publication of Model A times magazine has an article describing how to properly install the pins. Flathead has also discontinued gold anodizing visible parts.

Ordering the floater kit:

You can e-mail Flathead and order directly from him (tedspain@gmail.com). The cost was \$130, which included postal shipping from New Zealand. I had them in less than ten days. If you want the "pins" included they are an extra cost. ☺

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