

# Restoring Cosmic wheels

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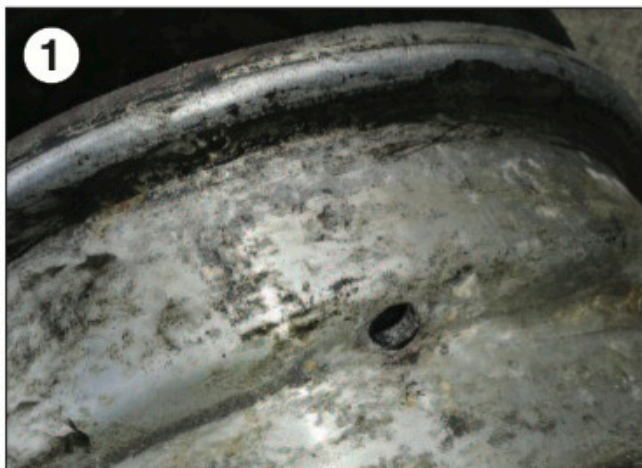


I have done a fair amount of tidying up Cosmic alloy wheels in my time and recently offered to do my friend Charlotte's. They were on her car, *Sammy the Chamois*. Charlotte had been having trouble for some time with them. Two inner tubes had been fitted because the tyres were regularly deflating. I was convinced that if they were cleaned around the inner rims correctly they would be airtight and tubeless as they should be. I took this work on in part to prove this. While I was at it, I offered to paint them as they were when new, rather than the silver *Sammy's* previous owner had painted them.

So first job was to get the tyres removed at my local tyre shop. (Pic 1). None of these rims have been cleaned up for some time, even though Charlotte had paid for this to be done. The black residue is where sealant has been applied. This had little effect because the alloy corrosion in the form of a flour like white powder was very visible. It was like painting sand and expecting it to be waterproof.

Clean up starts with a wire brush on a drill (Pic 2). It is important to remove all of the sealant and powdered corrosion.

Once you feel you have done as much as you can with the wire brush (Pic 3), I like to give a rub with a stainless steel scourer to smooth it all out a bit (Pic 4). Although not pictured, give the valve hole area the same treatment. Finally, using wet and dry paper (used wet) the rims should gleam (Pic 5). Compared with a non-cleaned up wheel it is easy to see which one will be

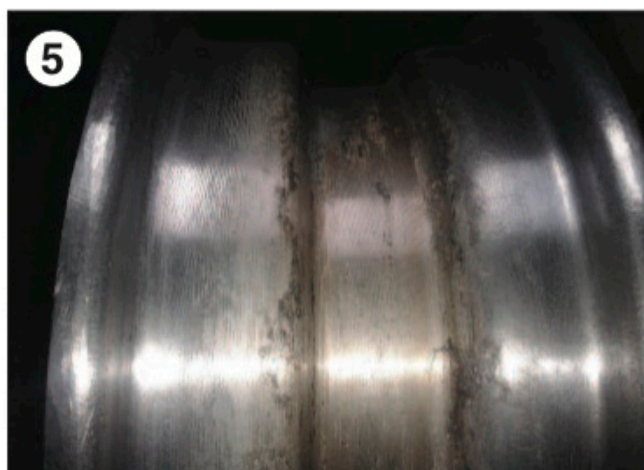




airtight (Pic 6).

At this stage I got the wire brush drill out again to clean up the back of the wheel (Pic 7). They had no paint on to protect them there. Nevertheless, they came up well, a testament to the purity of the aluminium used in Cosmics of this type.

I have to say here that I think hammer-on balance weights don't suit these wheels. I think they encourage corrosion between the tyre and the wheel in the very spot where they start to leak air. My preference is for the stick-on weights. They should be stuck to the back of the wheel out of sight which is why it is worth cleaning and painting the back of the wheels, making sure you use a specific alloy primer. I use Hammerite Special Metals Primer followed by Wilco aluminium paint (Pics 8, 9 & 10).





Now for the fronts. As mentioned, Charlotte's wheels had been silver painted, this was quite hard to remove. I ended up scraping the paint off the raised areas, followed by wet and dry paper, used wet again (*Pic 11*).

I much prefer these to be finished as Cosmic intended, i.e. satin black in the recesses with highlights polished. There really is no reason for them to be painted. It's a real labour of love. The more time you spend on this stage the better the results. You can end up with sore fingers rubbing for hours here.

That done its best to polish the raised areas as bright as you can. I recommend using Solvol Autosol for this. This metal polish has been around for years but I haven't found anything else as good. Then you will have to rub clean the area you want to paint with white spirit or methylated spirit.

Before painting them black I have tried a few methods to keep the paint off the raised areas. By far the best, I think, is simply smearing waxed car polish on the bits you wish to stay paint free (*Pic 12*).

You are now ready to paint the wheels black. I use an aerosol of satin black remembering that several light coats is better than one thick one (*Pic 13*). Don't worry about overspray as the paint won't stick to the waxed areas. Once the paint has dried but not hardened it's an easy job to use something like an old credit card to scratch the pre-polished and waxed areas revealing the finished wheel (*Pic 14*).

Slip your friendly tyre fitter a few quid to refit the tyres and give the fronts a final polish to prevent the alloy corroding and they should look like they are new.

