



Knock-Off Spinner Tool

By Greg Paris

A few months ago, I was talking to Mike Ostrov about how I could determine whether my knock-off spinners were too tight or too loose.

Well, let me back up. Last year (2006), when Mike came to visit me in Portland, I needed to put my new Pirelli Cinturatos on #1146. I installed them and then took out my lead hammer and softly secured them. Mike observed my tentative blows and quickly chastised me. Something about "I'm glad I didn't actually take a ride with you before I realized how you secured your knock-off wheels!" He took the hammer out of my hands and proceeded to give the spinners several good

whacks. I was sure he was going to hit some spokes or the Elite's bodywork. He didn't, but it did cause me some mental activity.

Back to the story. As an engineer, I couldn't figure out how to quantify "a few hard whacks" and convert it into a torque specification. When I phrased my question this way, Mike told me that there were a few tools available to help install centerlock spinners. As usual, I was only interested in the best.

Mike told me of a tool he'd seen from an inventor/Lotus owner who lived in California. He gave me the phone number of Sarto Rocheleau. Sarto has developed several tools, covering many disciplines over his career. I called him, and we began a dialog which would lead to Sarto sending me an early production version of his knock-off spinner tool.



Underside of knock-off spinner tool

The tool arrived a few days later and I was definitely impressed with the engineering and tooling of this tool. It must weigh 4 or 5 pounds and is carefully machined to exacting tolerances.

The inside reveals a soft plastic center capture which fits over the spinner's center. There is an alloy cradle which fits over one ear of the spinner and a sculpted alloy block to capture the other ear, after a screw with knurled nut is tightened. It is really an ingenious tool. The best part is that it actually works. Let me explain.



Fitting tool over bottom ear



Tightening tool over top ear.

Simply unscrew the knurled nut and slip the fixed cradle over one ear of the spinner. Tighten the knurled nut finger tight as shown in the right photo. You are now ready to use the torque wrench and socket to loosen the spinner.



Tool in place, ready to do its work

The torque wrench does not come with the tool, but the socket does. I have an SK Tools torque wrench, which can be adjusted from 0 to 250 pounds of torque. Such a range is required, as the optimum torque for the wheels is about 220 pounds-feet. Sarto will include a handy "emergency" breaker bar for the boot, shown below in both closed and extended configurations.

To remove the spinner, simply adjust the torque wrench to its maximum value, and depending on which side of your Elite you are working from, loosen the spinner.



Emergency Breaker Bar in normal and extended positions



Tightening the spinner is just the reverse, but is infinitely more satisfying. Why? Because it is in the tightening process that the tool proves its value. Adjust the torque wrench to 220 pounds-feet and tighten. What is so special? Well, there is no chance that you will ruin the body or paintwork of your precious Elite and you will never accidentally hit one or more spokes and ruin a wheel. Note: On the front wheels, you may need to chalk the wheel to keep it from spinning.

That is the good news about Sarto's excellent tool. The not so good news is that all of that precision tooling and engineering that makes the tool so simple to use costs money. The tool sells for \$250. Initially, I thought that was too high. However, then I reasoned that just one slip of the swinging hammer which ruins a wheel and you could have essentially had the tool for free. I don't even want to think about the cost of a smash into that Elite's fibreglass and paint, or worse yet, the damage to car and passengers from a lost wheel at speed. That is why Sarto's Knock-off Spinner Tool now occupies a prominent position on my tool rack. The tool can be purchased from Sarto now: sarto477@yahoo.com or soon on the East Coast of the USA at rdenterprises.



Greg