



Feature

DIY BIKE FIT

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPEND £100 OR MORE TO IMPROVE THE FIT AND COMFORT OF YOUR BIKE. **DAN JOYCE** HAS SOME SUGGESTIONS YOU CAN TRY AT HOME



DAN JOYCE

Dan did his first DIY bike fits over 30 years ago after a serious back injury made his bikes unrideable. He can now do century rides without discomfort

Above: Dan on a Cinelli HoBootleg test bike in 2016. It fitted him reasonably well but a shorter stem and a seatpost with more layback would give a more relaxed riding position

Try sitting more upright and further back. When you're aiming to get more comfortable on your bike, it's sometimes that simple. I'm a journalist not a bike fitter but I've ridden hundreds of bikes and had four bike fits: one more or less endorsed what I was already doing; one felt awkward but didn't hurt; two were painfully wrong. Bike fitters may or may not be experts on bike geometry and physiology. None of them is an expert on what you find comfortable. You are.

A good bike fitter will at least get you in the ballpark for fit; I'm not suggesting that bike fitting is snake oil. But bike fit theories tend to be extrapolations of measurements that seemed to work for racing cyclists in the prime of their lives. Systems based on such measurements work fine for sports people in their 20s and 30s. For others, not so much.

And there's another fly in the bike-fitting ointment when you're primarily looking for comfort. The current trend, on road and off, is for steep seat angles, short head tubes and (particularly for mountain bikes) long top tubes. These have the effect of tipping you forward onto the handlebar.

On road this can work well for aerodynamics and for applying maximum power through the pedals. Off road it'll help you weight the front end on climbs and descents, and a supple suspension fork will stop your hands being jackhammered. Yet there are drawbacks. Common ones include numb or tingling hands, aching shoulders, a sore neck and lower back pain. Sound familiar?

What follows is a list of things you can try to improve comfort. If you're comfortable, you'll enjoy it more and you'll ride more.