Rattles and Squeaks: Fix That Noisy Motorhome!

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The first thing we noticed driving away in our nice new Motorhome was how noisy it was. It was hard to hold a conversation above the rattles and squeaks that seemed to come from everywhere. Inquiries to the salesmen, the manufacturers and other owners brought the typical response of "Well, they all do that. You have to expect it".

After dozens of phone calls, time spent crawling around under the chassis and fiddling with everything that could possibly make a noise, we now have a quiet Motorhome. The time spent to actually fix things was about half an hour. Time spent finding out HOW to fix them would run into countless hours of frustration, fruitless phone calls and stress.

So this is how we did it..... Try this at your own risk, but it worked for me.

1. The Chassis: Well, no problem with the Argentinean-built Benz - very simple and solid construction. But from new, every time the vehicle rolled side to side as we drove along there was a loud creak from under the floor around the rear axle area. This was constantly there on anything but a mirror-smooth road, it could be heard from outside the vehicle when backing it onto a site or walking along next to it. Fearing a structural fault, I spent a lot of time on this one crawling round underneath the vehicle checking everything I could see, but to no avail. Calls to the dealer and to the manufacturer drew no help - hadn't heard of this before but let the dealer have a look at it for you. Yeah, a 12-hour return trip from where we live and no assurance they could fix it - on the phone they sounded as perplexed as I was.

Finally someone gave me the name and phone number of a particular person involved in the actual assembly of the Motorhome. I lost his name a number and feel bad that I never thanked him properly. "Oh yes, from what you describe there will be somewhere where the fibreglass coating on the floor is rubbing on the steel bearers - there is supposed to be Silastic between them, sounds like the boys missed a bit".

Time spent to get Required Information: 30 seconds. Time to find Someone Who Knew: Many, many hours.

Now we knew what we were looking for the rest was easy. Had two mates rock the vehicle from side to side while a third person slowly walked around the inside of the vehicle. At one particular point her weight on the floor instantly stopped the noise. Finding the "dry" spot and injecting silicone into it proved too difficult, so we decided to shore up the offending floor area a millimeter or so using timber blocks trimmed just a little short, with shims of stiff rubber to increase the pressure until the noise was gone. A bit of Silastic was then spread around to hold it all in place, then a spray of paint to finish it off.

2. The Door. The loudest noise came from the door. It was an excellent design, very secure screen, but obviously designed for a Caravan. Just holding the door and shaking it sounded like a kid's rattle. The solution here was to partly remove the striker plates and pack Zinc Oxide grease into the lock mechanism. This is a grease designed for use in automotive catches, gearshifts and the like - ordinary bearing grease is not thick enough and would be expected to run when the door is exposed to very hot sun. Shake the door vigorously before you screw the striker plates back and be careful. It is easy to strip self-tappers, but if you use rivets it is a nuisance to get at it again.

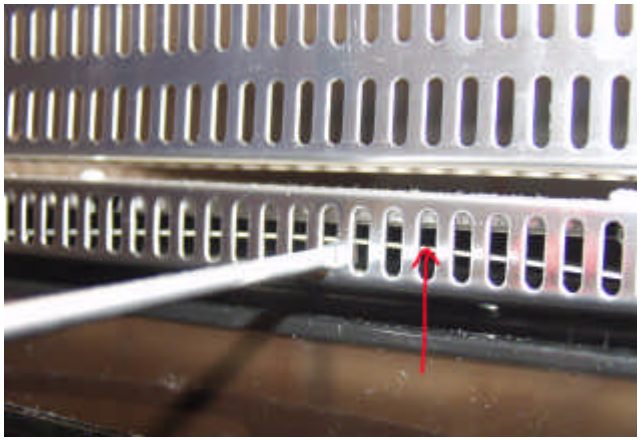
The door actually came open on several occasions as we drove along - again it took a number of phone calls before we found The One Who Knows at the door manufacturer - it was a simple assembly error, the recesses in the wall for the locking bolts were far too shallow. Five-minute fix. Once you know what to do.... But why was it delivered like this?

3. The Stove Hood: Again, not designed for a Motorhome. Remove the four screws holding the exhaust grill (be careful of the wiring to the light - just pull the wires off as you remove the grill). The exhaust grill has a vertical steel section front and back that rattles constantly against the steel frame around the hood.

Cut some strips of adhesive-backed felt tape - this is sold through Craft shops, (Craft people use it for all sorts of things) and stick them to both front and back as shown in the photo and re-assemble - remembering to put the light wires back.

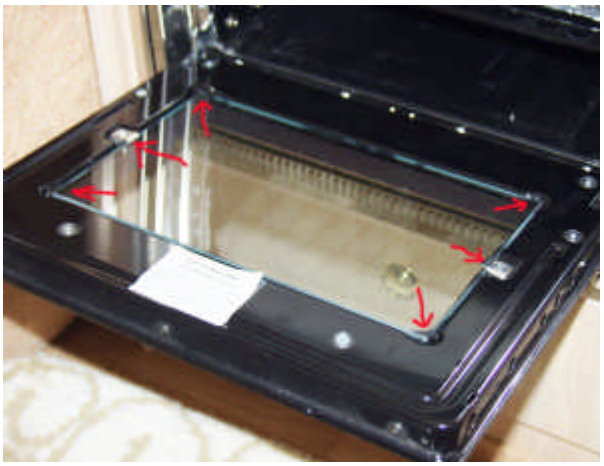
4. The Stove: There were two problems here:

a. It is hard to see, but there is a curved steel sheet behind the grill along the top of the stove - presumably a heat shield. It simply sits on the top of the oven body - and rattles a lot.



The solution is to use something to lift the curved steel sheet free of the top of the oven and spray in some graphite grease powder on both sides where the contact with the top of the oven box is made. This is VERY messy stuff - if you spill it on the floor remove if promptly with a little Jiff or similar.

b. The Door: The door glass is held somewhat loosely in place by two brackets - and so it rattles. It can't be rigid or it will crack when heated.



Remove the glass and place a small amount of Silicone designed for high temperature applications under each corner and under each bracket and replace the glass. DON'T use ordinary Silicone..... This stuff is hard to find - try an industrial bearing supplier.

Perhaps surprisingly, the racks in the stove don't seem to be much of a problem, but travelling with an appropriately sized cushion in the oven - just enough to fit snuggly between the

gas burner and the shelf - will make sure this remains quiet.

5. Fold-down shelf

The design is very functional, and this is a surprisingly useful feature. But... the rivetted hinges are very loose fitting and are a source of constant rattles on poorer roads. Packing the hinges with Zinc Oxide grease helped a bit, but the simple fix was to place two small pieces of sponge at the end of the sliders.

This compresses the slack in the hinges when the shelf is in the folded position and the noise was fixed. But again - why is it constructed like this? It would be easy in manufacture to use nylon spring washers or similar to prevent the thing from rattling in the first place!

6. Creaks and groans from timber partitions: In my vehicle there are some partitions which are by design not meant to be rigidly attached to the ceiling. So they creak at times, but this is nowhere near as annoying as the above problems.

We improved things to a degree by carefully injecting a Lanolin-based lubricant ("Lanoguard") between the offending surfaces. Don't use WD40 or similar - can stain timber and attract dust. Supplied in a bottle with a trigger spray, this is great stuff to lubricate drawer sliders, blind runners and the like.

Conclusion: It is obvious that the Motorhome industry is still in it's infancy in regard to it's manufacturing processes - we are expected to put up with design flaws in components that would never be tolerated in a car or a truck. From people I have talked to these kinds of problems are seen in practically all the manufacturers - after all, they source their components such as stoves from the same suppliers.

It should be a very simple matter to correct these and similar problems in manufacture. One can only assume that the people who design them never actually use them.

Now, about the wind noise around the windscreen.....

- Geoff