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Spank Oozy Trail295 Bead Bite Wheelset - Review

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Spank's range of Oozy components includes everything from handlebars and pedals to stems, rims, and complete wheelsets, all of which Spank says have been designed with all-mountain and aggressive trail riding in mind. As you might imagine, this means that while weight is obviously a concern, these are parts that are also intended to be ridden hard or even raced in enduro events. And that pretty much sums up the Oozy Trail295 wheelset - relatively light given their intentions at 1680 grams (*27.5" weighs 1,700g, 29" weighs 1,800g*), yet wide enough to run a set of high-volume tires at low pressures without suffering from excessive casing roll. It's not the rim's 29.5mm outer and 24.5mm inner width that makes them interesting, though, as Spank has incorporated a number of notable design points that, while being hidden from view when the tire is mounted, should have a large impact on their performance. This includes an interesting shape to the rim bed that Spank claims boosts rim rigidity and strength without adding much in the way of weight, as well as their ridged 'Bead Bite' rim walls and bed that are said to offer a more secure joint between the tire and rim to prevent burping when running low pressures. The 26" Oozy Trail295 wheelset reviewed here retails for \$599 USD.

Oozy Trail295 wheelset

- Intended use: all-mountain / trail
- Sizes: 26" (*tested*), 27.5", 29"
- Width: 29.5mm outer, 24.5mm inner
- 28 straight pull spokes, three cross
- Single spoke length for set
- Alloy nipples
- Alloy freehub body
- 15mm / 20 mm thru-axle (*incl.*)
- 12 x 142 / 135mm QR compatible (*incl.*)
- Rim weight: 420g (26")
- Weight: 1680g (26" *wheelset*)
- MSRP: \$599 USD

Not Your Average Aluminum Rim

Carbon rims are getting all the attention these days, aren't they? That's not too surprising given the technology involved in manufacturing them, but it doesn't mean there aren't interesting things going on with aluminum rims, especially when you consider the cost per gram ratio that makes them much more attractive to the large majority of riders out there. The 26" Oozy Trail295 rim is said to weigh a very respectable 420 grams in 26", which is close to par with many carbon options out there, although rim width and height does vary widely among the competition. To be honest, I'd have a pretty hard time talking myself into a set of carbon rims that cost more than a well used hatchback when I could pick up a two aluminum hoops for a fraction of the cost and spend that extra coin on something I really need, like a pet serval cat or bicep implants. And while the Oozy Trail295 rim flies well under the radar compared to most of those carbon über-hoops, they actually sport a couple of interesting features that sets them apart from run of the mill aluminum rims that get pushed out of the extrusion machine twenty four hours a day.



The most obvious of the two is the rim's strange looking rim bed that, rather than being mostly flat or slightly concave as you're likely used to seeing, sports a ridge that sits in the center of the concave well and that runs completely around its circumference. If you were to slice an Oozy rim open to inspect its shape you'd see that this profile - Spank refers to it as Oohbah - creates more of a 'W' shape than the classic shallow 'U' section that you would otherwise expect to see. The goal is to create a much more rigid rim and the theory behind it is sound: picture taking a thin piece of aluminum that's only a few millimeters thick and flexing it front to back in your hands. Not take that same piece of aluminum but in a corrugated profile and do the same thing. You'll find that the latter is much harder to bend yet weighs only marginally more than the flat piece. A simplified explanation for sure, but those are the basics.



pb Spank says that the rim's 'W' cross section adds rigidity without adding grams. The rim bed isn't sealed, so you'll need to use the some tape and valve stems (not included) if you're going to run them tubeless.

Spank has included a new feature on the Oozy Trail295 hoop, called Bead Bite, that they say has a massive effect on limiting the chance of burping a tire. The simple yet clever design consists of three rows of 0.2mm tall ridges which run along each of the vertical and horizontal faces of the bead seat, meaning along both the rim wall and the rim bed. According to Spank, this feature "*dramatically increases frictional forces on the tire bead, reducing the bead's ability to move vertically or horizontally and thus improving stability and reducing burps.*" If you've been reading about new rims and wheelsets lately you'll likely note that many are employing a hook-less rim wall design that doesn't even feature a bead hook, which is clearly in contrast to what Spank has come up with. To their credit, Spank says that the goal of the Bead Bite design is to improve tire security regardless of what kind of non-tubeless or tubeless rubber you mount up.



pb *Tiny 0.2mm tall ridges run around the circumference of the rim and are said to help hold a tire securely in place.*

Spank is obviously quite proud of the Oozy rim design and what they've been able to do with the aluminum extrusion, but does this mean we'll never see a carbon rim from Spank? That's very much the case, although it sounds like it comes down more to where the company believes carbon shouldn't be used rather than being due to their investment in aluminum manufacturing. After all, it would be relatively easy for them to source an economical carbon rim design that's produced in Asia and slap some stickers onto it. Mike Dutton, Spank Brand Manager, explains the company's thoughts on using carbon fiber: *Spank has taken a stance in our manufacturing facilities and product range against the use of carbon for components that take a lot of abuse and may require more frequent replacement. We feel that handlebars and rims, for example, are not suitable products for materials which are not recyclable. The abundance of mass produced carbon components in the market lately has also brought down standards, and is starting to pose a safety threat to consumers. Spank has invested heavily into the development of production processes, materials, and product design, with the goal of offering consumers a safe, environmentally responsible affordable solution to carbon without compromises. We aim to offer World Cup level*

components at a competitive weight and performance compared to carbon ones many times their price.

Hubs and Spokes

Each wheel is hand assembled with twenty eight straight pull Sandvik triple butted spokes in a three-cross layout, and they thread into alloy nipples at the rim in order to keep outer rotating mass at a minimum. Given how aluminum nipples tend to deform much easier than common steel nipples, you're best off using a four-sided spoke wrench and a good amount of care when it comes time to give them a true. A set of clean looking hubs are found at the other end, and Spank has designed both the front and rear hubs' flanges in a way that allows a single spoke length to be used throughout the entire wheelset. That means you'll only need to stock one spoke length in your spare parts bin, and although straight pulls still aren't as common as classic J-bend spokes that you can get from any bike shop, eliminating the most common point of breakage - the bend - should mean that you won't ever need to replace one.



pd *Both the front and rear wheels use twenty eight straight pull spokes, and the entire wheelset employs a single spoke length to keep things simple.*

The hubs themselves are all about compatibility, and Spank even includes a number of different axle adapters with the wheelset so as to allow you to fit them to most any frame and fork made in the last few years. This includes 12 x 142mm and 135mm QR rear axles, as well as both 15mm and 20mm front setups, both of which come with the wheelset. You can also purchase adapters for 12 x 135mm rear thru-

axles and a QR front setup if you're in need of either of those two less common options. Both hubs spin on sealed bearings, and an alloy freehub body helps to shave some grams. Want to fit one of SRAM's X-Dome cassettes? There is an XD-compatible freehub available for \$85 USD.



pb Drive comes from a classic three pawl freehub, with each pawl depending on its own flat steel spring in order to improve reliability.

On The Trail

We mounted up a set of high-volume Specialized tires, a Butcher and Purgatory, onto our 26" Oozy Trail295 wheelset without any hassle. No levers required, which is always a good thing, and the fit between the rims and tires was snug but not tight enough to bring out any four letter words. Both tires seated up straight right off the bat without needing to go to overly excessive pressures, which isn't something

that we can say about all of the rim and tire combinations out there - hands up if you've ever had to work up a sweat pumping until the tire is rock hard for it to seat properly. That wasn't an issue for us. We ran the wheels with the rear setup for a 12 x 142mm axle and the front for a 15mm thru-axle, which is how they come from Spank, but went and did an axle conversion to see how difficult the job is. The answer is not very, although the front hub's adapters were tight enough to require a set of pliers to pull them off. However, we'd much prefer this than having them fall off on their own every time the front wheel is off the bike. The driveside adapter on the rear hub actually threads on, and while it shouldn't really be tight enough to require a big wrench, there are some tool flats if you need a little help, as well as a slot machined into the opposite side of the axle that allows you to use a hex key to keep it from spinning - just be sure not to over-tighten it when you thread it back on. The freehub slides off easily once the driveside adapter has been spun off, giving you access to the pawls and drive ring if you need to give it a wipe down and some fresh lube.

And how do they perform in the dirt? Well, at the risk of sounding a bit boring, the Oozy Trail295s were invisible to us once mounted up and put to use. This is a very, very good thing if you ask us, though, because them not making a single peep or causing one iota of trouble means that Spank has come up with the right balance of weight and reliability for the aggressive trail riding that we do here in British Columbia. Not having to think about the gear under you usually means that something is right, and that was the case with these black wheels. Tire pressures even dipped well into the low 20s without any hint of the bead unseating, despite one of the test riders weighing well over 200lb and not being shy about carrying some good momentum, and it wasn't long before we had absolute confidence in them not giving us any trouble. One thing we were concerned about was removing a tire after it had been mounted for awhile - would the Bead Bite ridges provide so much grip so as to make getting a tire off a pain in the ass? Not at all. We could unseat both beads with our hands, and didn't even require lever to get the first bead up and over the rim wall. It seems like Spank have nailed the fit with the tires that we used during our time on them.



And what about the rims' special Oohbah corrugated profile? To be honest, we didn't really notice a jump in wheel rigidity when we swapped from a set of more run of the mill wheels, although that doesn't mean that it's not there. Keep in mind that the Oozy Trail295s spent a lot of their time on a 5" travel trail bike with high-volume tires that we ran in the mid- to low-20 PSI range, a forgiving setup that likely takes the edge off of any claimed gains in stiffness. And, to be fair, both the front and rear wheels are still as true as the day they came out of the box, which certainly has us thinking that they're more than strong enough for pretty much any heavy hitting rider out there on a burly trail bike. Spoke tension has not dropped away, either. Oohbah at work? Maybe.

Issues

There's nothing to really to take the Oozy Trail295 wheelset to task over, and they gave us zero issues while on the trail. The aluminum bodied freehub didn't want to let go of the ten speed SRAM cassette that we slid on when we first pulled them out of the box, although the slight gouging (*pictured above*) that held it in place is hardly uncommon with aluminum freehubs and we managed to pop it off after a few minutes of fiddling around. This could also be a non-issue depending on the type of cassette used. The only other thing that a few riders commented on was how plain the wheels look, although this one is entire subjective. The Oozy Trail295 wheelset packs a load of performance and reliability into a very reasonably priced package, and some riders said that they wished the wheels looked flashier to match that. How much that matters to you will come down to how under the radar you like to fly, and Spank is planning on releasing red, blue, silver, and emerald green options in the near future.

Pinkbike's take:



High-end carbon rim'd wheelsets are interesting to read about, no doubt about that, and we always look forward to riding a set of ultra expensive wheels that turn heads, but it's really hard to argue their case when you can pick up a set of sub-1,700 gram aluminum wheels for \$599 USD, and they're reliable to boot. The Oozy Trail295s aren't flashy, and they're probably not going to make your riding buddies oooh and aaah like they would over a wheelset that costs four times as much, but they sure as hell make a lot of sense, don't they? - **Mike Levy**

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