

REVIEWS

Tested: SRAM GX 1x11 Mountain Bike Drivetrain

1x takes one more step toward being a basic human right

JANUARY 6, 2016 BY GLORIA LIU



THE SRAM GX 1X DRIVETRAIN IS ALMOST IDENTICAL TO SRAM'S HIGHER-END X1 AND X01 GROUPS, PRIMARILY DIFFERING IN MATERIALS AND MANUFACTURING. Photograph By Jonathan Pushnik

Although SRAM has steadily trickled down the technology from its top-of-the-line, **XX1 one-by-eleven** (1x11) mountain group since 2012, a 1x drivetrain—a single **chainring** with a wide-range cassette to provide a similar gear range to a 2x system—was still a premium offering unless you wanted to hack it with a conversion kit. But when SRAM released its GX group last spring, it slashed the minimum buy-in to \$564, and as low as \$3,500 for a complete bike with GX. And just like that, more of us could dream of one day owning a clean-looking bike with simpler shifting and more handlebar real estate.

GX is almost identical to SRAM's higher-end X1 and **X01 groups**, primarily differing in materials and manufacturing. The biggest saving: The X01 and XX1 10-42 cassettes are machined from a single piece of steel, while the GX version is held together by stainless steel pins. More affordable materials are also used in the crankset, crankarms, chain, and the derailleur—which otherwise share the same features as their X1/X01 counterparts. The weight penalty: 221 grams over the \$1,335 X01 group.

Tested on my **Scott Contessa Genius 710**, GX shifting felt clean and responded to the same light, quick touch as its premium counterparts. When the terrain really undulated and I was toggling gears often, the shifting was just slightly less refined compared with the X1/X01-equipped bike I'd also been recently riding. But GX was still accurate and reliable, and I could swiftly dump two to three gears when needed. The derailleur is designed to keep the chain taut and quiet, and it does, and the chainring's alternating narrow and wide teeth prevent chain drop. GX is compatible with SRAM's higher-end 1x11 groups so you can save on replacement parts. And it's also available as a 2x with the 10-42 cassette for a monstrous gear range.

I recently lent the GX bike to another editor. Afterward, I asked for her impression of the shifting. She shrugged, "It was good. I never would have thought about it if you hadn't asked." Changing gears on the trail should always be such a nonissue. And now it can be for more of us.

Weight: 1,831g