Review: eXotic Carbon 29er Fork

by Jeremy

Who:
From www.CarbonCycles.cc:

> In 1994 we developed an innovative military aerospace shock absorber system melding carbon fiber with aluminum to take advantage of the distinctive advantage of each material.
>
> After developing this complex and innovative technology, we quickly realized the potential for our love of mountain biking. So using aerospace theory & high technology we started to design & produce bike components for our own enjoyment. Other riders soon wanted to know more…
>
> Today, CarbonCycles make the highest quality carbon fiber bicycle components. Our design and manufacturing processes are truly innovative & our components perfectly balance light weight & strength.

Product Tested:
eXotic Carbon 29er Fork

eXotic 29er fork mounted to Redline Mono 9

Website's MSRP:
$ 366.78

Specs:

- Stunning flagship carbon mountain bike fork with 7075 Aluminium steerer, carbon fibre tube stanchions and forged 6061 Aluminium dropouts.
- This fork is disc brake specific.
- Weight: 680 gm
- 1 1/8 inch threadless ahead steerer
- Uncut steerer length: 265mm
- Diameter of carbon tubes: 34mm
- Rigorously tested to DIN standards

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- FoamX3 technology increases the impact strength of carbon fibre by up to three times by inserting low density foam during the manufacturing process.
- XBar Utilises XBar (pronounced cross-bar) technology to increase lateral strength by 30%.
- Rider weight limit: 95kg (210lbs)

About Me:
6'1?? 215lbs, 28 year old male. I'm a mountain biking enthusiast who enjoys rocking the big 29er wheels. I'm mainly a XC/trail rider.

Full bike setup: fully rigid, with 2.35 inch tire Panaracer Rampage up front

Testing Grounds:
San Juan Trail, Fullerton Loop, Chino Hills State Park, Sea Otter, El Morro and various other southern California trails as well on the streets of Placentia and nearby cities.

First Impressions:
I'm a big fan of carbon, especially for the way it looks. Adding a component with carbon weave has to be one of the best looking things you can add to a bike. But being a husband and father of two has limited the addition of carbon bits to my bike. The carbon weave eXotic fork is truly gorgeous.

Carbon weave is so pretty.

When you hop on the bike you immediately notice that the carbon fork lightens the bike up a lot. I originally started out with a steel fork then moved to an 80mm suspended fork. Now going back to rigid, I immediately noticed the weight difference. I believe it was a drop of about 1.5 lbs.

Strengths:
As a poor Clydesdale I have always stayed away from carbon products. I feared the weakness that many carbon products are "known?? for. So it was with a bit of trepidation that I took on the eXotic Carbon Fork, especially since the website clearly states that the weight limit is 210 lbs and I am 210 lbs when I first get out of bed, fully relieve myself and stand in my birthday suit on the scale (yes, a pretty picture… I know). But, as always, I'm willing to take one for the team.

I was skeptical about the whole "Xbar?? technology that claimed a 30% increase in lateral strength and "FoamX3?? which increases impact strength by inserting foam during the manufacturing process. But after riding this fork hard over the past few months I have to admit that I'm surprised at how well it has held up. I have not held back on the eXotic fork. I've take my normal jumps and drops. I've run it through rocky sections of the trail. I even put on a 7 inch rotor up front to test how well it does when stressed by a bigger rotor. About the only thing I won't do is ride through a section that I know I'll fall on (got to protect the clearcoat). After all of this riding, a check of the fork this morning shows absolutely no problems. The crown looks great. The stanchions look super nice, almost brand new. The clearcoat is still clear and the dropouts show wear from the quick release but that's normal. I am definitely impressed.

Tackling a short downhill section on the eXotic fork

The eXotic carbon fork is SUPER comfortable. Compared to a steel fork, there is really no comparison. The feel of a steel fork is nice, but not comfortable. A steel fork dampens some trail chatter but it's still steel. To think it would do more than that is dreaming. I think of a steel fork as just beginning to mute out trail chatter.

The eXotic carbon fork, on the other hand, takes a significant step up in muting trail chatter. The chatter doesn't quite vanish as it would if I was running a nice suspension fork, but the carbon fork does make riding easier on the hands and arms. On one particular local trail there is a section of about 4 miles that is fast, rolling fireroad. On the downhills I can easily reach speeds of over 30 mph on the rigid. This fireroad, though, is typical So. Cal fireroad. It's hardpacked, has washboard stutter bumps and is rutted in many places. When I previously rode this section of trail with the steel fork my hands would be exhausted and sometimes even stinging from the trail. But with the eXotic carbon fork my hands still feel strong afterwards.

Comfortable on the dirt covered rock

The carbon fork lightens up the bike but particularly the front end. I feel this a lot when climbing a trail that has lots of roots or rocks. Lofting the front wheel is so much easier when it is 1.5 lbs lighter than a suspended fork. I especially noticed this when I was switching back and forth between a full suspension bike that weighs nearly the same as the bike with the carbon fork. Raising the lighter front end to clear roots and rocks, especially when I'm tired, requires less effort saving my strength for turning the cranks.

Weakness:
As with all carbon products, the clearcoat covering the carbon needs to stay in pristine condition. Once you scratch up the clearcoat, you've got to be extra careful about the component. Because of this, I took extra caution with my brake housing. I did not take extra caution while riding around on the trails. I decided to install a Sette Clear Frame Patch Protectors on the spot where the hose would rub the fork.

Other than this precaution, I had no issues with this fork.

Sette Frame Patch Protectors to protect the carbon's clear coat finish from the dreaded brake hose

Summary:
The eXotic Carbon 29er fork has performed extremely well over the review period. It has been comfortable, strong, light and very easy on the eyes. I would highly recommend this fork for those looking to ride their mountain bike rigid.

Click here for more information about the eXotic Carbon 29er fork.

The fork is dirty, but ready to roll

Popularity: 52% [?]

This entry was posted on Friday, June 6th, 2008 at 12:00 pm and is filed under 29er, Articles, Main, Mountain Biking, Products, Reviews. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

8 Responses to "Review: eXotic Carbon 29er Fork"

1. RL on June 6th, 2008 at 4:02 pm

   So how did having a rigid affect the geometry and riding of your mono9? Did you feel any flex at all?

2. Moe on June 6th, 2008 at 4:40 pm

   I'm really impressed with eXotic's quality, durability and price. Their carbon stem is top notch too, I think it would go perfect with your bike (no, I'm not giving up mine).

3. Review: eXotic Carbon 29er Fork on June 6th, 2008 at 4:51 pm

   [...] Go to the author's original blog: Review: eXotic Carbon 29er Fork [...]

4. Jeremy on June 6th, 2008 at 10:27 pm

   The affect to geometry was minimal. The fork's rake is 43mm which is similar to the White Brothers fork that was previously installed on it.

   Flex? None that I noticed. The fork does a little shimmy when I apply the brakes, but only when I'm riding on pavement. The shimmy does not show up on the trail.

5. Aaron on June 7th, 2008 at 7:58 am

   Thanks for the follow-up review. I still love mine, too, but I haven't been able to do a lot of *real* riding on it yet because the trails have been soaked ever since about a week or so after I got it.