

## FLITE DT/EASTON WHEELSET **PRICE: \$1290 DISTRIBUTED BY: WHEELWORKS.CO.NZ**

Mountain bike wheels have a tough job to do: they're subject to all kind of force from the rider torquing hard uphill, they're side-loaded under heavy cornering, and as well as being pummelled from the ground up, they're often landed on from big heights. That's why wheels are one of the places on your bike it's really worth getting quality. For some riders, this means carbon rims – I'm pretty convinced good quality carbon rims are stiffer and stronger than aluminium rims are under 'normal' use (I wouldn't count Aaron Gwin's tyreless World Cup run in this category!). But carbon rims are also pretty expensive.

Wheelwork's Flite custom, hand-built aluminium wheelset offers the same quality hub options and attention to detail build as their pricier carbon wheelset options (reviewed in issue 77), but at a cheaper price. Flite offers lots of options for hubs and rims in their custom wheel builds; I opted for reliable DT Swiss 350 hubs, along with 32 DT Swiss Competition spokes with aluminium nipples and wide Easton ARC 30 aluminium rims.

When I received them I wasn't surprised to find they were 100% true without any wobbles. I then mounted up some 2.3 and 2.4 tyres (tubeless) to the Easton rims with

a floor pump without issue.

How did they ride? Like high quality hand built wheels – that is to say there was no twanging or popping of spokes under cornering loads, which is not uncommon with new machine-built wheels. They remained quiet and true throughout testing. The DT hubs spun smooth, and if previous DT 350 hubs are anything to go by they'll be extremely reliable over the long term.

I opted for Easton's new wide ARC 30 rims because wide rims support big volume tyres so well. The lack of fold-over from the carcass under heavy cornering is very noticeable, and the main reason wide rims have taken off like they have – they really offer a performance increase you can feel. The Easton ARC 30s provided ample support for the 2.3/2.4 tyres I ran on them.

Any niggles? Not really, but I was reminded that in contrast to some good quality carbon rims, alloy rims dent when running tyre pressures a touch too low (and found that out when the rim went 'bong' when dropping onto some rocky stuff). I can't say they dented any more easily than another alloy rim would have, but in any case it wasn't enough to affect the sealing of

tubeless tyres, so it wasn't an issue in use. One might even call this pilot-error...

Do they lose anything to carbon rims? That depends – while 32 evenly tensioned spokes keep the wheel true and strong, most of the carbon rims I've ridden feel 'stiffer', in a way that I like. Having said that, in my experience carbon rims provide the most notable improvement on 29er hoops, and even more so if they're under heavy or aggressive riders. On the plus side for the alloy rims, it's unlikely a rider will 'destroy' an alloy rim in a race like they might a carbon rim, so there are pros and cons. Carl Jones is currently running the very wheels I reviewed here at the EWS round in Aspen Colorado, and he's a lot faster than me, and they don't seem to be holding him back...

Like all of Wheelworks' offerings this pair has a lifetime guarantee against broken spokes, comes fitted with tubeless tape and valves, and includes Wheelworks wide range of personalization options including having your nickname written on the rims. While Wheelworks don't tend to be the cheapest option, their lifetime guarantee and excellent customer service set them apart from cheaper options.

**Carl Patton**

