

STAN'S NOTUBES THE CROW TYRES

RRP\$99.90 EACH

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Stan Koziatek made a name for himself as the inventor of the Stan's NoTubes tubeless system but in recent times has branched out into lightweight rims, disc rotors and now 'The Crow' tyres. Utilising a soft 120TPI casing The Crow tyres are claimed to have a much stronger bead than comparative tyres on the market making them ideal for use with the NoTubes tubeless system. Dual compound rubber allows for firmer centre knobs while the side knobs are tacky for increased cornering grip – although calling them 'knob's' is probably stretching the definition a fair bit as they can't be much more than 1.5mm tall. Designed to be fast rolling with minimal tread The Crow gains it's traction by using low pressures – in the 16-40psi range depending on the rider's body weight – and can be used with tubes or ideally with NoTubes sealant.

We've been running a pair of the 29 inch and a pair of 26 inch tyres for the last couple of months and upfront we'll say their performance has been surprising. The 26's were fitted to American Classic 350 rims without a problem. The 29's were fitted to 28mm wide WTB Dual Duty rims with the only issue being they needed to be inflated to the maximum 40psi before the bead would snap into place. At a genuine

2 inches wide the tyres have a rounded profile and large volume. They definitely give the bike a 'commuter' look, like a set of slicks has been mounted for riding to work. The 26 inch version has a claimed weight of 410 grams, on the scales ours weighed in at 438g and 443g. Likewise the 29 inch version has a claimed weight of 500 grams but the pair we had were 508g and 512g.

Based on the NoTubes recommendations of pressure based on rider weight we set the 26's at 18-20psi for a 55kg rider and the 29's between 26-33psi for riders between 75 and 93kg. Rolling resistance is minimal with these tyres, there are simply no knobs or significant tread pattern to slow the tyre through its revolution and subsequently they build speed fast and once there continue to keep spinning with low drag.

But the question we most wanted to answer was: How do they grip? The answer is: great, but we must qualify that. The entire test period the tyres were ridden in Rotorua where the trails are not known for their slipperiness. Having said that the first session out was a drizzly night ride and they performed well, only breaking traction when running across mud where the tyres simply had no way of cutting through. But considering The Crow's as anything other than dry weather tyres is madness.

Despite running the recommended low pressures we never encountered issues with tyre roll yet enjoyed the advantages in traction the low pressure had to offer. This is the beauty of The Crow tyres;

they're specifically designed to run at a comparatively low pressure that you can get away with due to the casing construction and NoTubes sealant. The result is the large volume of The Crow conforms to the shape of the terrain and provides a larger contact patch with the ground resulting in excellent traction. Cornering was initially cautious, hunting out mini berms, roots and anything else that would catch a wheel if the tyre were to let go suddenly, but we soon got to trust them enough to find changing lines mid corner was possible. And The Crow's seemed right at home on gravel.

Dusty corners with a hardpack base caused a couple of scares – but that seemed to happen on other full knobbed tyres too. Locking the brakes up on loose surfaces is not a good idea as you'll lose more control than on a knobbed tyre so if you have problems modulating your brakes you'll soon learn with these.

Inevitably comparisons to semi-slicks arise as these tyres will appeal to those who ride them. Weight-wise there are lighter tyres out there, however those other tyres do give up some casing strength and volume. The low pressures allow a smoother ride yet The Crow's roll as fast as the best in the business. They're not going to suit everyone or all of the terrain around the country. But if you're a racer sort that rides hard packed trails in summer, or you're out to set a new PB at the likes of Colville or the Rainbow Rage then you should check out The Crow tyres.

