

SPEEDPLAY SYZR PEDALS

Bet you are looking at this picture and thinking 'why is a road mag reviewing a mountain bike SPD pedal?' True, the SYZR is marketed as Speedplay's MTB and CX pedal but one could argue it is more than that...

Especially nowadays, with more and more of us exploring our wonderful network of unsealed 'gravel' roads perhaps it's time to gear accordingly. Think of the SYZR as an 'off-road' pedal for the roadie.

At first glance the SYZR is an interesting steer from Speedplay's familiar 'lollipop', and while they look like your standard 'SPD' they have been designed to provide the identical feel and power transfer of the Speedplay Zero. Indeed, it's this power transfer that puts the SYZR in a different category.

When first released the SPD's mud-clearing abilities of its small metal cleat system was revolutionary, especially in comparison to the big plastic cleat common with other systems at that time. One of the differing features with the SPD system is that it is designed to 'sit' on the rubber of the shoe's sole, in turn aiding mud clearance but also stopping the metal of the SPD cleat seizing against the metal of the SPD pedal in wet and muddy conditions. This of course results in your pedalling always being 'sponged' by the shoe's sole but everyone accepts this bit of slop in the system considering the lack of an alternative. Not so with the SYZR; to avoid the metal against metal sticking problem Speedplay have integrated four ceramic roller cams into each cleat contact point, thus allowing a true rubber-free solid connection.

Because of this true contact the



SYZR really does feel like a road pedal, especially out of the saddle. Marry them with a top shelf 'off-road' shoe (I tested these with Giro VR90s) and you've got a perfect match for your roadie orientated gravel biking adventures.

For a supposed 'off-road' pedal they also engage very similarly to your road version, as in it's a 'toe-in first' movement to clip-in; quite the contrast to the standard 'stamp on it and wiggle it and it's around there somewhere' common with MTB pedals. And because of the small size of the cleat Speedplay has designed a 'Funnel Guide' at the front of the cleat to help ease your shoe in.

The SYZR comes with the normal Speedplay features like a grease injection port on the end of the spindle and the multiple choices of axle material (Titanium, Stainless and Chrome-Moly) and length (50, 53, 59 and 65mm).

The cleat set-up is quick and fairly fool-proof, as normal with Speedplay because of their non-centring free float characteristic. This results in putting it all together and going for a ride, as opposed to constantly tweaking your cleats for the first few rides and risking knee issues along the way.

I've had the 'pleasure' of testing these through light snow, ice, wet sand, varying grades of gravel and sloppy mud without any problems to date with the clip-in or clip-out and without any stickiness of the float. Even trudging through a stodgy mud section on purpose to try and recreate some decent CX-like conditions didn't produce a fail. On tarmac you can feel the difference, really having that same sturdy feel of a road set-up while all the time the recessed cleat means we can easily and safely walk around with them.

Careful though, we'll be wearing peaks on our helmets next. – RUSSELL JONES