

# Product Review: Mix 'n' Match Zipp 303 Front and 404 Rear

By TRP Staff

When someone says "Speed Shop" you, if you're like me, get visions of neighborhood garages, more chrome than a 1985 Cinelli front fork, and lots of loud cars, revving out their brag-gadocio almost constantly. This vision usually entails white T-shirts with rolled up sleeves (Pall Malls or Lucky's only), slicked-back hair and logos on the sides of cars like "Deuces Wild." There is always a Top 40 AM radio station playing loud – Jan & Dean, Beach Boys, Ventures.

But, for those of us who spend their weekends dressed in lycra, concerned about wattage achieved and the topography of 70 miles of road atop 16 pounds of carbon and aluminum "Speed Shop" means wheels – fast wheels.

Looking through the Speed Shop area of Zipp's website gives you all (and more) the information you want trying to assemble the best wheel-set possible for your intended purpose. Earlier this year and much like the days when I started cycling, I poured over the website with the same intensity I had given to Bikeology and Palo Alto's catalogs when choosing my first Galli groupo. (It was light blue!) After much thought, I chose a 303 front and a 404 rear wheel for my new, perfect wheels for my new, perfect Colnago. Against all tradition and and reputation, I chose clinchers.

As usual, the boxes from Zipp seemingly floated from the UPS to the front door. Assembling the wheels went smoothly until it came to mounting the Zipp brand Tagente tires. Plan to take your time and exercise your thumbs – these babies are tight! The result, however, are wonderfully slender tires claiming 21mm width that feel like their 23s under your butt. I missed the easy mounting of the Tagente tubulars, but didn't mind not having to triple glue them.

I am not a clincher fan. My "normal wheels" are a set of Bontrager RaceXLites tubies almost a decade old now sporting Vittoria CX tires. I have tested the Zipp CSC clinchers as an alternate every-day wheel and found them very, very good – but miss the sound and feel of the tubulars and, frankly, can use every ounce of help the lighter tubular wheel/tire combo give me. My Zipp 303 tubies are, perhaps, the finest wheels I have ever had under me – but those are for "special" so I was a little concerned about this newest acquisition.

I've ridden the new set for about 200 miles on both the old and new bike. Let me say it in public - I love these clincher wheels. Yes, I still miss the subtle singing the tubulars make on a fast, smooth road – yes there are very subtle differences in road feel – but these new 303/404 clinchers make up for those two nits in spades! Wow! They climb, they accel-



erate, they cruise and take turn as good as their tubular brethren. I don't think anyone but an old man who loves old stuff would notice the difference. I did notice increased stability and ease in long, high speed surges with the new combination over the 303 set. The wheels disappear under you – even when you're looking for stuff to write about. I think the best I can say is that riding them I am faster.

The wheels are stiff without feeling too stiff and react wonderfully. The tires, inflated to 125 psi feel more comfortable than anything I've ridden for years. My old and 185 pound butt appreciates it. The wheel-set seems to make chip-seal almost (okay, sort of almost) disappear. After about 20 sets of rail



road crossings, they are as true as they came out of the box (see my weight above about magnitude of kudos due wheelset!)

You can go to the website to get weights and your dealer will quote you a price. The weights are mind-bogglingly light and these wheels are expensive. At the website, Zipp.com you

also can choose exactly the combination you want. Now, with the mix'n-match philosophy of Speed Shop your perfect wheel-set awaits you. Try my set up for conservative advantages in aerodynamics, weight and strength, try something else that tickles your fancy or meets your specific needs – it's up to you.

Even if you don't know who the Beach Boys are ... even if the lyrics of "409" aren't burned into your brain from hearing them a thousand times over an AM radio in a 1967 Mustang – even if you can't even try to hit the top notes of the chorus anymore – these wheels fit into the concept of the song – (apologies to Brian Wilson)

*Well I saved my pennies and I saved my dimes  
For I knew there would be a time  
When I would buy [some] brand new [Speed Shop Wheels]*

*Nothing can catch [them]  
Nothing can touch my [Speed Shop Wheels]...*



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WAVE 2 Pictured



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