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## 2010 Zipp 101 Wheelset

By Matt Reece

Zipp Speed Weaponry is perennially at the forefront of wheel design and technology. Their wheels have become commonplace at every major road race, and at last year's Hawaii Ironman, there were 1,936 Zipp wheels in the race. (The next highest total was only 229.) New for 2010, the Zipp 101 brings the superior qualities of the entire Zipp lineup to a more affordable aluminum model. Do your best to forget that this is Zipp's entry-level model- they're still Zipp's. Lamborghini makes an entry-level model, too- but it's still a Lamborghini.

Also do your best to forget that they're aluminum. Many manufacturers and consumers are so obsessed with carbon everything that we can forget that aluminum is still a great material. A well-educated rider will choose high-end aluminum over low-end carbon every single time.

What's most noteworthy about the 101 is not its cost, its weight, or its aerodynamics. Rather, it is cost versus weight versus aerodynamics that make this wheel shine.

At \$1,300, the wheel's certainly not cheap, but it is cheaper than any other wheel that's been built with the inspiration of a Zipp engineer behind it. Having ridden both, I often compare the 101s to the Mavic Ksyrium SL Premium- another solid, all-around pair of wheels. You'll pay an additional \$200 for the Zipp wheels, but the improved aerodynamics more than make up for the slight increase in weight. At 1523 grams, the wheel's not silly light, but it is still reasonably light. When you get on the wheels and climb, though, the noteworthy stiffness makes them feel even lighter.

While it is a new wheel, Zipp is not new to the wheel game, and they've put their 22 years of know-how into the 101s. Carrying technology over from their new 404 Carbon Clincher, the 101 uses a wider rim shape, dubbed the "toroidal" shape, which increases both



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aerodynamics and stiffness. The 101 is the first aluminum wheelset to use the toroidal shape for superior aerodynamics. Zipp claims the 101 is actually more aero than most V-shaped aero rims, while maintaining a shallower profile and less weight. Win, win, win.

A wheel is more than just a rim, though, and Zipp uses their tried-and-true CX-Ray spokes to lace the rims to the Zipp hubs which have become synonymous with quality. Zipp builds, engineers, and distributes all of their wheels at their facility in Speedway, Indiana.

I'll confess: After the kind folks at Zipp let me use their 404 Carbon Clinchers for a while, I wasn't super excited to trade them for the 101s. I put them on, though, because that's my job.

I rode the 101s with Zipp's 700x23 Tangente clincher, a tire Zipp designed to further the aerodynamics of all of their wheels. Long ago, the bike industry came to the realization that round objects are far less aero than elongated, airfoil shapes. Zipp teamed up with tire manufacturer Vittoria to create a dimpled tire that they believe is faster than any other clincher available. At 290tpi, the tire has the durability and comfort of anything we've come to expect from a respected manufacturer like Vittoria.

The 101s were extremely predictable- they certainly exceeded my expectations while climbing and cornering, and they held their speed well in the flats. At the end of the day, I was left desiring nothing. The wheels did everything I asked them to do.

At first, I ended most descriptions of the wheels with "for aluminum." They're light- for aluminum. The ride really well- for aluminum. They climb nicely- for aluminum. But eventually I found myself dropping the caveat entirely and proclaiming the 101s to be what they really are: They're light. They ride really well. They climb nicely.

There's a point of diminishing returns on just about everything. I can pay a lot more for wheels. For an additional thousand dollars, I can get a lighter wheel, or a more aero wheel. But most of us compare performance benefit to cost, and on that scale, the Zipp 101 sits at the very highest point.

They're only \$1,300, for Pete's sake, and they're Zipp's.

[www.zipp.com](http://www.zipp.com).

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