

Reviews

Gear up

COMPONENTS, KIT, AND MEDIA SELECTED
AND REVIEWED BY BIKE JOURNALISTS AND CYCLING UK STAFF

Put to the test

Is there a product you'd like us to test? Write to: [Cycle, Cycling UK, Parklands, Railton Rd, Guildford, GU2 9JX](mailto:CyclingUK@parklands.co.uk) or [@editor@cyclingsuk.org](mailto:editor@cyclingsuk.org)

Growtac

Equal brakes

Expensive but very effective mechanical discs

£379/pair growtac.com,
veloduo.co.uk

You may be thinking: I could buy a pair of drop-bar hydraulic disc brakes for that! A set of Shimano 105 or SRAM Rival 1 brakes costs about £550 and includes brake/shift levers, which the Growtac Equals don't, so it's a valid point. Yet these jewel-like callipers are about the same weight as hydraulic ones and the braking performance is equally (sic) good.

Mechanical disc brakes don't have the best reputation, deservedly so for many cheap models. But the 'mechanical bad, hydraulic good' idea is simply wrong. I've used Avid BB7 mechanical discs for years, mostly the MTN version. I prefer the firmer lever feel and the fact that the braking force ramps up rapidly; I don't want more lever movement for more subtly graduated braking.

These Growtac Equals are similar to BB7s in that they're single-moving-piston callipers with independently adjustable pads. They're short-pull brakes, like the BB7 Road, so are primarily for drop-bar bikes.



Pros & cons
+ Powerful, rub-free braking
+ Lightweight
- Expensive

With the right levers, however, you could use them on an XC or trail mountain bike. There's a lot of scope to adjust the brake leverage at the calliper. You can set them to come on *hard*.

As well as testing them in North Yorkshire, I used them on a cycling trip in Spain, which involved long and high-speed descents. There was no noticeable brake fade, and a sudden rainstorm only made them noisy rather than ineffective – unlike the rim brakes of a clubmate, which failed to stop him entirely at a downhill roundabout.

The Equals have required minimal attention over the three-month test period but did take a while to set up right initially because of the adjustability on offer. They come with two sets of cable outers: normal and compressionless. The idea is to use normal outer

under the bar tape, where there are tighter-radius bends, and compressionless thereafter. You join the two with a metal connector like a ferrule that's open at both ends. You then wrap electrical tape around the connector, which looks a bit bodged.

I was only able to use (mostly) compressionless outer for the rear brake. For the front, I used ordinary outer throughout because (long story) I was using post-mount callipers on adapters rather than flat-mount callipers. The cable run from fork to calliper was accordingly awkward. Braking was good nevertheless; it's the rear brake that benefits more from compressionless outer due to longer distance to the calliper.

The Equal comes in various colours, plus a flat-mount option (£339/pair). ●

Dan Joyce

Other options



PAUL KLAMPER (POST MOUNT) £515/pair

More expensive and heavier (211g/calliper) but reputedly even more powerful. Available for short-pull, long-pull and Campagnolo levers. Flat-mount options, too.
paulcomp.com



AVID BB7 ROAD S £150/pair

I prefer BB7 MTN callipers with long-pull road levers (e.g. Tektro RL520) but for standard drop-bar levers these still work well. IS/post mount only. 190g/calliper.
sram.com

Verdict

Short-pull mechanical disc brakes that are as good, overall, as any drop-bar hydraulics I've tried. They're more than twice the price of Avid BB7 Road brakes and aren't twice as good – but they are better. There's more scope to finesse the brake feel, and the callipers are lighter and more compact.



Cycle's test promise

At Cycle, we are proudly independent. There's no pressure to please advertisers as we're funded by **your** membership. Our product reviews aren't press releases; they're written by experienced cyclists after thorough testing.