

NEW  
KIT

WE SAY  
The Wave is a  
reliable replacement  
for your spider and  
chainring



HEAD  
TO HEAD

CYCLING  
BEST  
ON TEST

# ABSOLUTE BLACK DIRECT MOUNT OVAL

★★★★★ £69.99

## What is it?

Absolute Black makes a variety of chainrings, and this direct mount ring is available in 36-48 tooth sizes and compatible with just about everything. We replaced a SRAM Force 1 spider and X-SYNC ring weighing 147g, with this 40-tooth, 100g, one-piece oval ring.

## Design

Each ring is CNC machined from 7075 aluminium with an appropriately weblike spider and 3D narrow-wide teeth profiles. These alternate between 2mm chisel shapes and square 3.5mm-wide anvil-like teeth designed to guide and grip each chain link. The oval shape means the ring's radius varies by 10mm between highest and lowest points, so the spacing between frame and chainring must account for this.

## Performance

When pedalling, initially the oval shape is obvious, but within minutes it's harder to notice. Although difficult to subjectively claim any speed increase, riding the oval ring gave a consistently positive feel, with eager acceleration and slightly higher average speeds. A round ring's usual dead spot is more noticeable on steep climbs, but an oval ring partly compensates for that, allowing more even pedal strokes, each with less force. Chain retention was faultless on and off road in all conditions, and the ring is extremely stiff, with a very hard-wearing finish.

**HIGHS**  
CNC machining, chain retention, positive ride feel

**LOWS**  
Benefits are hard to quantify

## The verdict

Oval rings aren't for every rider, but Absolute Black's offering is light, superbly made, reliable and certainly didn't slow us down.

# PRAXIS WORKS DIRECT MOUNT WAVE CX

★★★★★ £75

## What is it?

Praxis Works has made a name for itself with high-quality cranks, chainrings and bottom brackets. This direct mount Wave CX ring is available in 38-42 tooth sizes and fits three-bolt crank arms. Our 40-tooth example weighed in at just 97g.

## Design

Machined from 7075 T6 aluminium plate, the Praxis ring has an approximate five-arm construction. Chain retention relies on the 'wave' arrangement of the 2mm-wide, CNC-shaped, staggered teeth, which apply alternating lateral force to each link. This doesn't rely solely on the insertion friction of other wide-narrow designs with heavily shaped teeth, and so evenly spreads the chain's load across more of the teeth.

Praxis recommends only using with a clutch rear mech, and using an upper chain guide for peace of mind.

## Performance

We raced this in eight cyclocross races, and as well as giving perfect chain retention through mud, grass and sand, the hard anodised surface has suffered only very minor abrasion, supporting Praxis' claim that the Wave design wears more slowly than the competition. Ring stiffness was never in question, even at maximal effort, and its pedalling performance felt equally slick in every gear of a wide ratio 11-speed cassette.

**HIGHS**  
Clever Wave design, as tough as they come

**LOWS**  
This model is only available in three sizes

## The verdict

The Wave CX is a top-class alternative to the big names that we're confident won't let us down.