



Daiwa Exceler

The Best of Budget Bass Reels

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If you don't have a fortune to spend on a bassin' reel, consider these modestly priced offerings

CAN YOU HANDLE the truth about fishing reels?

Well, the truth is that you really do get what you pay for when buying a reel. So, yes, those \$150 to \$500 reels are worth the money — if you've got it to spend.

But according to some of our *Bassmaster* readers, not all of you do, or you feel your limited fishing time doesn't justify the expense.

Don't fret. *Bassmaster* can help you with that, too.

We surveyed trustworthy retailers from across the country who sell a variety of brands and asked them for their recommendations of the best bass fishing baitcast reels under \$80 and spinning reels under \$70.

And they delivered.

Remarkably, many of the same models were mentioned by most of the dealers we contacted. Those choices are noted later in this story.

We settled on those price ceilings because they are well below premium reel prices, yet offer the kind of features and quality that bass anglers expect.

We asked the retailers to base their choices on three major issues:

1. Reels that sell best under those price points.
2. Reels that produce the fewest warranty claims and can withstand the rigors of bass fishing.
3. Reels that offer the best quality and features for the price.

Naturally, this kind of survey is subjective and not scientific. However, we believe that if anglers are consistently buying reels and not complaining about them, they must be pretty good for the price.

And finally, prices mentioned within this story may vary from one retailer to another. Many prices were taken from 2007 retail catalogs and are subject to change.

(Continued)



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BAITCAST REELS



Abu Garcia Ambassador C3, \$79.99



Shimano Callisto, \$39.95



Bass Pro Shops Extreme, \$79.99

SPINNING REELS



Okuma Alumina AL-20, \$69.99



Quantum Array, \$39.99

BAITCAST REELS

Brands like Abu Garcia's Revo, Shimano's Curado, Quantum's Tour Edition, Team Daiwa's X Series and Ardent's XS 1000 reels continue to be the preferred reels of serious anglers.

And while the market for performance-packed baitcast reels under \$80 has been limited, there are signs that could be changing.

"We're seeing significant interest in the midprice reels, and companies are responding with features previously found only on higher priced reels," explains Tim Elie of the family-owned Outdoor Pro Shop in Rohnert Park, Calif.

The Daiwa Exceler is one of those. At a retail price of about \$69.99, it's a reel that Elie says he has no problem selling to someone buying his first baitcast reel or someone looking to add to his baitcast tackle inventory.

"It's got features you typically find on a more expensive reel," he insists.

Roger Eckhardt, manager of Sav-On Tackle in Sante Fe Springs, Calif., says nothing out there in that price range can touch the Exceler.

"It has taken everyone by surprise," he says. "It's got a lot of good metal parts, deluxe handle, eight ball bearings and an offset sweep handle with a 6.3:1 gear ratio."

Daiwa's Megaforce drew similar raves at \$59.99 and for similar reasons.

"It comes with the Twitchin' Bar that previously was only offered on the Daiwa Viento that sells for around \$200," adds Geoff Walker of Mark's Outdoors in Birmingham, Ala.

The Megaforce has five ball bearings and two roller bearings, plus a high-speed gearing of 7:1.

Ray Halter of the Rodmaker Shop in Strongsville, Ohio, says Pflueger has a couple of baitcasters worth examining: the Echelon (\$64.95) and Criterion (\$49.95).

The Echelon has a graphite frame, anodized gold spool, five double-shielded stainless steel ball bearings, adjustable brake system and a 6.3:1 gear ratio. The Criterion has four double-shielded bearings and a 5.1:1 gear ratio.

Other baitcast reels receiving praise from some retailers include

the Quantum Code (\$79.99), Okuma Alumina (\$79.99), Bass Pro Shops Extreme (\$79.99), Abu Garcia Ambassador C3 (\$79.99) and Shimano Callisto (\$39.95).

SPINNING REELS

The spinning reel market under \$70 is considerably more competitive, giving anglers many more choices.

Interestingly, the spinning reel that received ringing endorsements from nearly all retailers was the Daiwa Exceler, the sister product to the top rated baitcast reel.

The Exceler was the top seller for many retailers last season for a number of reasons.

"It has the Digi-Cut gear found previously in more expensive models, is supersmooth, has six ball bearings and comes with an aluminum spare spool," says Eckhardt.

It is being offered at \$69.99.

If this is still out of your price range, you won't go wrong replacing it with Shimano's Sahara (\$59.99) or Sedona (\$49.99), both longtime favorites with budget-minded anglers. The Sahara has a fast 6.1:1 gear ratio, four ball bearings and an aluminum frame. The Sedona has a graphite body and slower gear ratio.

"We sell a ton of Saharas and never have them come back in for warranty work," says Elie.

Okuma's Epixor (\$59.99) also was praised for its smooth drag, 10 ball bearings and reliability. It's not one of the best known brands, but is becoming more popular nationwide for its low price and quality performance.

"It's my top seller and the reel I get the most feedback on from customers," says Greg Smith of the Trading Post in Edwardsburg, Mich. "I've had very few problems with them, and if I do, Okuma replaces the reel, no questions asked."

Other reliable spinning reels retailers mentioned include the Bass Pro Shops Pro Qualifier (\$69.99), Daiwa Regal XIA (\$49.95), Quantum Array (\$39.99), Okuma Alumina (\$69.99), Daiwa Sweet Fire (\$14.99) and Mitchell 300Xe (\$44.99).



For reel buying tips and how to store test a reel, go to www.bassmaster.com.