

GOTTA HAVE GEAR

SWING SPEY FLY REEL BY GALVAN REELS | Review by Brian Clark



Moist. Saturated. Sodden. Drenched. Soused. Soaked. For a region known for dank, dark, gloomy, gray days, there sure are plenty of colorful adjectives to describe the Pacific Northwest. Fortunately, relentless rain and swollen rivers gave us an excellent opportunity to put the shiny new Galvan Swing reel through its paces, and the reports are bright and sunny.

When a modern fly reel with a sealed disc drag fails, it's usually the result of water intrusion. I suppose steelhead have been caught on clear, sunny days without a raincloud in sight, but I've never seen it done. It doesn't seem possible

for a good day of steelheading to be too wet or too cold, and that combination creates challenging conditions for optimum fly reel performance. But with a sealed carbon fiber + stainless steel disc drag system based on the chassis designed for the saltwater-focused Grip model, Galvan has nailed the drag design for the two-handed game.

Given that steelhead catch rates are frequently almost as dismal as the weather, Galvan has included another design perk that's at least as important as the drag system: a closed cage frame which ensures that a running line (the thin line behind the head, especially common on Skagit systems)



cannot slip between the spool and the frame. When this happens — and it did happen to me on the same trip with a different reel that won't be named here — it can damage the running line itself and costs valuable fishing time to unpick the mess. If you want any hope of connecting with an elusive steelie, your fly should be spending that time in the water. The closed cage makes a real difference.

Catch rates aside, the Swing is a stylish way to fish. The clicker is gentle and melodic. The solid backside of the Swing's frame is a classy nod to traditional steelhead reels, and it adds just the right amount of weight to balance longer rods. I ran the S 6-7 reel seen here on a 11'7" 7WT from CF Burkheimer, and I couldn't be happier with the weight distribution. Fortunately, Galvan is making the Swing in full range of sizes, all the way down to 2-3WT and 4-5WT reels for Micro Spey / Trout Spey rigs, plus this 6-7WT, and then bigger 8-9WT and 10+ sizes (with very impressive backing capacities) for salmon and the really long rods.

If you aren't already familiar with Galvan Fly Reels, it's high time you became acquainted — they're one of a small and dwindling number of fly fishing gear manufacturers which remain proudly independent, family-owned, and family-operated. Based in Sonora, California, the company

started in Boni Galvan's garage in the early 1990s; the family remains in control and deeply involved in the entire process, all of which — from design through assembly — happens in their facility. They machine all their reels from 6061-T6 aircraft aluminum and offer a lifetime warranty to the original owner.

I first learned about Galvan on my first steelheading trip to Oregon and northern California back in 1996, and even back then it was clear that they were developing a devoted following among West Coast anglers. Esteem for the brand has only grown since; for over three decades, they've never cut corners and have developed one of the best reputations for quality and fair dealing in the industry.

With classic good looks, the sealed cage, solid seals, an authoritative drag system, and plenty of backing, the Galvan Swing eliminates variables. Even if you don't get to listen to the reel sing, the Swing enables you to focus on the casting, the swing, keeping your extremities warm, studiously not catching steelhead, and pondering how on earth it's possible for a river to be so incredibly wet.

MSRP US\$530-655

depending on size; this S 6-7 retails for US\$555

Website: www.galvanflyreels.com/product/swing

