

## LEXMOTO ZSX125

## ARE CHINESE BIKES THERE YET?

They've been getting there for a while, now Chinese bikes may have made it...

By Phil West

This bike is much more than just AN Other, 'cheap-as-chips', Chinese 125. It's a wake up call. A barometer for how fast China's motorcycle industry is advancing. The question is: Is it now time we all woke up and took notice?

It's the latest from Lexmoto, the slightly tongue-twisting ZSX125, and, thanks to its swoopy styling and impressive spec, shows that Chinese bikes are now pretty much as good looking and credible as they are budget-priced.

Lexmoto say the ZSX "sets the standard of Chinese motorcycles" and, as one of the largest importers, with over 60 dealers and a line-up that comprises nine 125s, ranging from a slightly crass, old-school Chinese £849 cruiser to the brand new upside-down forked £1599 supermoto, they're probably in a better position to claim so than most.

At first glance, the £1499 ZSX impresses, too. The styling reminds of a Gladius or Fazer and is pretty much bang-up-to-date while much of the spec - modern switchgear, alloy wheels, part-LCD clocks - is what you'd expect of a mainstream, modern machine as well. So far, so good.

Instead, it's only when you peer a bit closer that you start to notice that quality isn't quite up to par and some of the components are a little bit suspect. So, for example, the tyres are crude and the suspension a tad on the flimsy side with twin shocks at the rear that are like the springs from bikes.

Mechanically it's a little on the cheap side, too. The air-cooled single is carbed in the old fashioned way, meaning that there's not only a 'bar-mounted choke lever but also a fuel tap - remember them? - down on the left side panel.

While the detailing in a few areas still has plenty of room for improvement: the plain steel, black-painted exhaust

### WHAT'S THE STORY?

Lexmoto's new ZSX125 is a good indicator of how far - and fast - the Chinese bikes have come in recent years, being not just as keenly priced as ever but also now being stylish and with an up-to-date spec. So, is it finally time to take 'Made in China' motorcycles seriously?

looks a potential rust trap and the multi concentric circle design of the tacho faces looks like its designer had been playing with a Spirograph, the overall quality of the plastics, I have to say, is more Duplo than Apple. Worst of all, the sidestand is a too-short, spring-loaded abomination which reminds of three generation-ago Ducatis and surely will leave more than one tearful learner with smashed bodywork.

None of that, however, bothers me overwhelmingly. The ZSX rides reasonably well, starts on the button first time, performs as you'd expect of an air-cooled 125 commuter (topping out in the high 60s or so but just about enough to survive in cross-city traffic) and is certainly less embarrassing than equivalent Chinese 125s of old. Sure it's ride is a little boingy, its tyres basic, its brakes a little crude, but, ultimately, it's just £1499 too, a price that's, say, a full £1000 less than Yamaha's YBR125.

### Verdict

First China got the price right. Now, with the ZSX, they've pretty much got the style right. Won't be long before the quality's right, too. So, are the Chinese there yet? No, not quite. But at this price and with this style it matters less than ever...



New ZSX125... you'd not be coy about being seen on it and it's a grand cheaper than an equivalent Japanese bike

SIMON LEE



Expect to see 60mph on the digital speedo. Tacho is somewhat over-styled...

### THE FACTS

#### LEXMOTO ZSX125 / £1499.99

Engine:	Air-cooled, 125cc (58.5x46.5mm), sohc, single, 5-speed gearbox, chain final drive.
Claimed power:	10.5bhp @ 8500rpm
Torque:	6.8ftlb @ 7000rpm
Frame:	Tubular steel cradle, box-section steel swingarm
Suspension:	Telescopic forks, no adjust, front, twin shocks, rear
Front brake:	Single disc, twin piston caliper
Rear brake:	Drum
Fuel capacity:	18 litres
Seat height:	760mm
Contact:	www.lexmoto.co.uk
RATING	★★★★★



You'll be glad of that centrestand... the sidestand is a spring-loaded nightmare

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