

Z750 LAUNCH

- ▶ AGGRESSIVE STYLING
- ▶ ZX-10R WHEELS
- ▶ 108BHP
- ▶ SPORTS HANDLING
- ▶ VERSATILE
- ▶ VALUE FOR MONEY

£5,000+otr (est)

The first time I clapped eyes on the Z750, it was sitting quietly in the corner of a Kawasaki pressroom, dimly lit and understated. It's clearly the very close relative of the 'thousand', but somehow different. The 'thousand' grabs your attention by dressing up like a cheap whore with colour matched wheels and polished rims, garish plastic engine covers and 'that' exhaust system. In stark contrast, the baby Z's less of a tart and looks much better for it. It sports a conventional four-into-one system with oval can, ZX-10R wheels, magnesium engine covers and a new screenless bikini fairing. It looks hard and purposeful yet still retains just enough 'look at me' to stand out from the crowd.

Swinging a leg over, you're rewarded with a welcoming riding position. There's no familiarisation process needed, everything is where you'd expect it to be. Kawasaki has also kept the seat height quite low, so laydees and dwarves can get in on the action.

On the move it becomes apparent that the 'Big K' has tried to aim this bike at all types; 'easy to ride' is an understatement, 'piece of piss' is far more accurate. Unlike Moby, the Z750 disguises its bulk very well. It feels small and nimble despite its 195kg mass and handles town-riding well. The ease with which it'll mount a pavement and slalom between startled pedestrians when chased by an excitable Spanish taxi driver surprised me as much as them. When allowed to stretch its legs, the 750 shows a sporty side and produces the sort of fun normally reserved for race reps. On fast flowing roads it swaps quickly from full lean left to full lean right, and back again without protest or instability. Cranked over, ploughing the tarmac with the pegs, the bike tracks well and feels very neutral – ground clearance being the only factor stopping more lean angle. The suspension is set up a little too soft as standard for really aggressive riding, but when ridden smoothly, mid-corner stability was more than up to the job of embarrassing the occasional Spanish sportsbike rider.

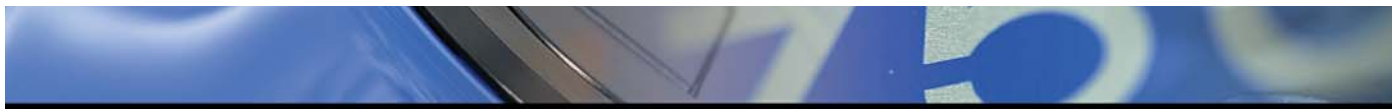
The competent chassis is greatly aided by the high levels of grip produced by the excellent Bridgestone BT-012s. It may seem like overkill to fit sports tyres to a street bike, but it's worth remembering that the original Z-series bikes were sportsbikes in their day, and Kawasaki deserves credit for making its tyre choice.

The sleeved Z1000 engine, now 748cc.

Words: Steve 'Care Bear' Chidley
Photography: Double Red & Oli Tennent

Z750 LAUNCH

'Care Bear' jetted off to the Costa del Sol to find out if the new Z750 is a snorting, raging bull or just a loosely stuffed straw donkey...



feels very strong at the bottom because it lacks the amyl-nitrate top-end rush that we've come to expect from recent Kawasaki motors.

That's not to say it's slow, and I have no doubt that when tested back to back with other bikes of this type it will leave them staring at its attractively sculpted rear end. In fact, so linear is the delivery that it can feel flat for what should be a 'screaming' in-line four.

This also adds to the user-friendly nature of the bike, it's just as comfortable driving off the torque as it is having its neck wrung. The linear power delivery, smooth fuelling and positive gearbox make the Z750 so easy to balance on one wheel that at times it was like clown school, with journos wheeling at the slightest hint of a straight road.

Speaking of cunning stunts; stoppies were also blindingly easy, despite the budget brakes. They performed surprisingly well, producing

"...IT MOUNTS PAUEMENTS and slaloms through pedestrians..."

good initial bite and plenty of power; on occasion showing up the slightly under-damped 41mm forks.

Kawasaki has made a real attack on the 600 naked bike class with the Z750, even if they do still insist on cheating with bigger engines. The larger capacity may well work in its favour, making it appeal to a larger audience. Indications suggest

that even the insurance will be on a par with the 600s (see box-out).

The only question mark hanging over the new Z is the clutch. More than one of the bikes suffered a badly slipping clutch to the point of a loss of drive. In every case it was adjusted and the problem never returned. Kawasaki claim that the production bikes won't be affected.

Kawasaki has created a bike that lends itself just as easily to town riding as it does scratching around mountain roads.

It's as enjoyable and easy to operate as your right hand, and at around five-grand, will have some other Japanese firms more than a little concerned.



WHAT'S THE COMPETITION THEN?

Despite being a 750cc bike, Kawasaki is aiming the baby Z squarely at the naked 600cc class. So that's the Suzuki Bandit 600, Honda Hornet 600, Yamaha Fazer 600 and Suzuki SV650.

Now looks are a matter of personal preference, but I think it's got the competition licked - and the bigger capacity will allow it to show them a clean pair of heels in a straight line.

The only real competitor in the handling stakes will be the SV, but until there's a back-to-back test I'm going to sit on the proverbial fence with that one.

It seems very likely that the new Z will steal some sales away from its big brother, and the naked litre bikes too. The Z750 is still a fairly big bike with plenty of poke, but will cost less to buy, insure and run. Either way, expect it to be a big seller.



Insurance matters...

A 27 year old male, middle rated job and postcode, 2 yrs NCB, bike is garaged and alarmed and used for under 3000 miles per year, it would cost £368.35 fully comp. (Fazer 600, £362.29, Hornet 600, £358.33).

Specifications

Technical Highlights Kawasaki Z750

Engine	Liquid-cooled, 16v, in-line four-cylinder
Bore x Stroke	68.4 x 50.9mm
Capacity	748cc
Compression	11.3:1
Fuelling	Electronic fuel injection
Claimed Power	108bhp @ 11,200rpm
Claimed Torque	75Nm @ 8,200rpm
Frame	High-tensile steel
Front Susp	41mm telescopic forks
Rear Susp	Monoshock, adjustable preload and rebound
Front Brakes	Twin-piston callipers, 300mm discs
Rear Brakes	Single-piston caliper 220mm disc
Wheelbase	1425mm
Seat Height	815mm
Dry Weight	195kg
Fuel Capacity	18 litres
Price	£5,000 + otr (est)
Contact	Kawasaki UK (01628 856600)

The Z1000 donor engine has been sleeved to give a displacement of 748cc from a bore and stroke of 68.4 x 50.9mm. The cylinder head has re-shaped intake and exhaust ports, a modified combustion chamber and the valve pitch has been adjusted.

The Z1000s 38mm throttle bodies have been downsized to 34mm with

the same 'twin butterfly' arrangement.

The (large) Z1000 radiator meant that there was no need to keep the oil radiator in order to keep the 750 cool.

The frame is also taken from the Z1000, but has been 'stiffness balanced' to suit the new engine's characteristics.

At the front, non-

adjustable 41mm telescopic forks do the steering, with a rebound and preload adjustable monoshock at the back helping to keep it all smooth and steady over the bumpy bits.

Twin-piston calipers operate on 300mm discs up front, and a 200mm disc is grabbed by a single-piston caliper at the rear, to bring things to a controlled halt.

