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APRILIA RS125

Scream of

BY ADAM CHILD PICTURES BY MILAGRO

Aprilia's rev-happy RS125 gets RSV style and uprated brakes to make it every teenager's dream



FRAME is now polished for that factory look



RSV-style forged top yoke is new

It may come as some surprise that Aprilia's iconic RS125, the definitive seventeener screamer, is now in its 14th year of production. Yet throughout all that time, through countless updates and improvements, it's remained the learner racer-replica of choice. And Aprilia want to keep it that way – which is why it's received a whole load of improvements for 2006.

WHAT'S NEW?

FIRSTLY, the styling. The new RS now closely resembles its larger brother the RSV1000R. And it looks great. Right now, there are probably thousands of youths across the country drooling over these pictures as much as they do over Hollyoaks on a Sunday morning.

The fairing and tail section are almost identical to the RSVR, as are the wheels (although obviously smaller). The whole bike has shed 5kg, down to a waif-like 126kg. The aluminium frame is unchanged but is

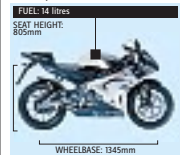


'On the track you ride it 100% on the limit and it's hilarious fun'

APRILIA RS125

★★★★★
COST: £3616
POWER: (de-restricted) **32bhp**
WEIGHT: (de-restricted) **125kg**
TORQUE: (de-restricted) **14.3ftlb**

Available: Late March 2006
Colours: Black, white
Insurance group (de-restricted; est): 12 (of 17)
Info: Aprilia UK, 0161-475-1800



TECHNICAL SPEC

Engine: Liquid cooled 124.8cc (54mm x 54.5mm) two-stroke single. Dell'Orto carburettor. Six gears.
Chassis: Aluminium twin-spar frame. Sachs 40mm upside-down forks. Sachs single rear shock, adjustable for pre-load. Brakes: 320mm front disc with four-piston radial caliper. 220mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres: Dunlop Sportmax GPR 70SP, 110/70 x 17 front, 150/60 x 17 rear.

the crop

polished to give it that factory look.

In the cockpit there are new analogue/digital clocks with an onboard computer to impress your mates with your McDonalds run times. There's an RSVR-style forged top yoke, and the exhaust is also new, with a racy-looking riveted end plate.

The Rotax single-cylinder two-stroke engine is unchanged, but the forks are completely new and the brakes have had a significant upgrade. Now a single radially-mounted caliper grips the floating single disc.

SO HOW QUICK IS IT?

IN restricted form, it's around 15bhp and the bike won't rev freely, but unleash the full 32bhp and it's more than enough to make you giggle. We only rode the bike in de-restricted form and at the end of the relatively short straight I managed to stretch the throttle cable long enough to see the digital speedo just past the 160kph mark – yup, the magic 'ton'.

Below 4000rpm it's a different story – the RS can only muster the pulling power of an asthmatic octogenarian running a marathon. From 4000 to 7000rpm there's enough go to make progress around town, but if you want to have fun you need to keep it pinned above 7000rpm. If the revs

drop below that, it feels like Pat Butcher has jumped on the back.

CAN I DE-RESTRICT IT?

APRILIA UK will be importing both restricted and full power bikes. If you want to de-restrict the bike it needs to be done by your local Aprilia dealer. In simple terms, the power valve doesn't move in restricted form, but is allowed to open freely on the full power bike. There's also some wire cutting to be done.

HOW DOES IT HANDLE?

BRILLIANTLY. The RS125 is so knife-edge sharp, it is affected by the tiniest of rider inputs. It turns very quickly, and once on its side the tyres offer enough grip to allow lean angles that almost have your elbows down.

The suspension is slightly crude, though. The forks are too soft, so the rear lifts on the brakes. And when pushing hard, the rear can skip over bumps. But my teenage years are long gone and I've had far too many pies over the years – whippet-like current Aprilia Superteen racer Conner Behan was also at the test and he thought the suspension was on the hard side. So it depends on how much you love McDonalds, as the front suspension is non-adjustable.

You can brake later than you ever thought possible due to the massive power of the uprated stoppers.

SOUNDS FUN...

NOT half. On track you ride it 100% on the limit, not daring to let off – it's hilarious. But it also teaches you so much about riding. You have to be precise and keep your lines smooth. You need to be in the right gear, caning it to within an inch of its life all the time. You think you're a racer every time you press the starter button. The sound and smell of the two-stroke is highly addictive.

VERDICT

THIS has got to be every teenager's dream bike. It looks outstanding, it's reasonably comfortable, has good build quality and the engines have a reputation for putting up with punishment. It's more than quick enough for a 125, the brakes are awesome and it's so much fun to ride.

On the down side, the suspension is not as plush as I was expecting. And if I'm really picky there is no redline or gearshift indicator, which is slightly annoying. Apart from that it's hugely enjoyable, with a fun factor of 10 out of 10. Kids, start bugging your parents now...

Head-to-head

The great 750 showdown: Suzuki GSX-R750 K5 v K6

BY MICHAEL NEEVES PICTURES BY HOWARD BOYLAN

THE K5 (left) is a year older, but is the K6 (right) better?



GSX-R750 K5

As the major bike makers wow us with ever faster 1000cc sports bikes and revvier 600s, don't overlook the K4/K5 GSX-R750. The 600-sized GSX-R750 – the only serious three-quarter-litre sports bike still made – is one of the best all-round, value-for-money sports bikes ever made.

Launched in 2004, unchanged for 2005 but for colour schemes, the K4/K5 was all new. With chassis dimensions identical to the superb-handling GSX-R600 and weighing 163kg (lighter than many 600s) it mixes incredibly light steering with rock-solid stability. Its revvy 749cc in-line four delivers just the right amount of power for its chassis.

Top speed: 164.32mph.
Standing quarter-mile: 10.87secs @ 135.45mph.
Top gear acceleration (40-120mph): 13.85 secs
Braking 70-0mph: 54.5 metres
 The K5 is very rapid thanks to its revvy (and torque-laden) powerplant and light weight, but it still couldn't match the K6 under braking – even though we tested a K5 with wavy discs which give stronger initial bite.

The old GSX-R750 is the roomier of the two bikes. It's more relaxing to ride on longer journeys and you've even got good rear vision, through its long protruding mirrors (not on the new bike). The most noticeable thing is just how easy the K4/K5 is to ride. Throttle response is flawless, the gearbox silky, the steering light, the ride quality exemplary and the engine flexible enough to deal with everyday traffic without having to constantly change gear.

Most riders would lap a track quicker on a GSX-R750 than a 1000. The 750 has the same rev-hungry, exhilarating power delivery as a 600 and is every bit as easy to get the most from. Couple that to a stiff chassis that manages to extract the most from the available tyre grip and there aren't many bikes that are going to get quicker...

The K4/K5 is still a pearler of a bike – fast, easy to ride, packed with attitude – and you can get a good one for under £6k.

Price: £4550-£6295 **Engine:** 749cc inline four **Weight:** 163kg **Top speed:** 164mph.

GSX-R750 K6

The new K6 GSX-R750 hasn't got loads more power than the old bike – that would just make it as hard to ride fast as a 1000. No, all the improvements have gone into making the GSX-R750 smoother, grunter, more compact and sexier. Best of all, at £7799, it's still knockout value for money.

How much difference does a year make...?

What makes these bikes tick?

On the test strip

On the road

On the track

And the winner is?

Specs

The new K6 is much sleeker and more aerodynamic. It's also shorter, lower and more compact. It shares its chassis with the all-new GSX-R600. The new motor is up 1cc and has updated fuel injection and a stubby MotoGP-style exhaust complete with a variable exhaust valve. It also has adjustable footrests, new forks and instruments.

Top speed: 167.87mph
Standing quarter-mile: 10.83secs @ 136.53mph
Top gear acceleration (40-120mph): 13.00 secs
Braking 70-0mph: 53.7 metres
 Extra power and better aerodynamics help the new 750 slip its way to a better top speed and better roll-on acceleration, while 10mm bigger brake discs help it to stop quicker over a shorter distance.

It's hard to imagine how Suzuki could possibly improve on the old GSX-R750, but they have. The new motor is instantly smoother. Like before, there's no need to dance up and down the gears to make progress, as the engine's new-found flexibility means you can ride around all day in top gear. In fact, the K6 is smoother everywhere: the gearbox, suspension, the fluidity of the controls and the brakes. Even the looks have managed to make the old version look dated.

...Except the new version. It's not that much quicker than before, but it's far easier to get the most from. With a smoother throttle response and more mid-range, balancing the K6 at full lean is a piece of cake – and there's instant power when you fire it out of a corner. It's a cinch to flick from side to side, too. A slipper clutch also now comes as standard.

The K6 is one of the best sports bikes anywhere. The GSX-R750 is the sports bike of choice and the latest is better than ever.

Price: £7799 **Engine:** 750cc inline four **Weight:** 163kg **Top speed:** 167mph.