

OLD V NEW

'02 KAWASAKI ZX-6R ★ '03-'04 KAWASAKI ZX-6R



OLDER bike is far more comfortable, with less of a reach down to the bars

2002 ZX-6R

- ✓ Can do trackdays or go touring
- ✗ Styling is now two generations old



THE next incarnation of the 636 looks and feels totally different to its forerunner

Kawasaki ZX-6R

Apart from 'super-sized' engines and green paint, the first and second generation 636s share very little. Our panel explains...

KAWASAKI ZX-6R OWNERS' PANEL

ROB DODGE, 35



RAMSGATE-BASED builder Rob got his first ZX-6R (an '02-model) after a five-year lay-off from biking. He currently has a 2003 ZX-6R and does 6000 road miles a year.

MARK YATES, 32



MARK, a managing director from Margate, clocks up 4000 miles a year on his '03 bike. He likes the extra performance compared to his previous 2002 model.

MICHAEL BALL, 42



MICHAEL commutes on his '04 ZX-6R (a company bike, lucky sod) and does more than 12,000 miles a year. He got the bike after his '02 model was stolen.

PERFORMANCE

Rob Dodge: "After my break from bikes the power of my '02 ZX-6R felt phenomenal. Although it was quick, the engine was so smooth that it allowed me to build up my confidence; there are no nasty surprises lurking when you twist the throttle open. It was bog-standard apart from a Dynojet kit which the previous owner had fitted to smooth out the power delivery. My 2003 bike is even better, though. There's more of everything: mid-range, top-end power, and it's smoother, too. It's perfect around town and thrashing through the bends."

Mark Yates: "You can definitely feel the difference between the power on the old and new bikes. My 2003 version is much more responsive and

picks up a lot quicker than the '02 bike, not to mention it being faster at the top-end, too. On the new bike you only need to flick the clutch to get it to wheelie in second gear, whereas the old one wasn't so willing. There's not much wrong with the old one though – and the best thing about it was the extra mid-range it had compared to other 600s thanks to its extra capacity. Like the new bike it means you don't have to thrash it everywhere, and there's enough power lower down the rev range just to potter around if you're not in the mood for a thrash."

Michael Ball: "The later bike is much more responsive. Where the old bike would wheelie with a bit of provocation, it's hard to keep the wheel down on my '04 bike. It's quicker at the top end and

there always seems to be more revs available. It's incredible. I had problems with carb icing on my first ZX-6R and would sometimes stall at junctions on cold days, but the new bike's fuel injection gets rid of this problem."

RIDING

Rob: "My new ZX-6R is definitely more track-focused than the old one. It's not as comfy and the riding position slants you forward so you slide into the back of the fuel tank and all your weight is placed on your wrists. It's not ideal for everyday riding, but not unbearable. If I had to use my bike every day for work (instead of just weekends) I'd still be happy. Although I've softened off the suspension at both ends, it's still quite firm for the road. It feels a bit livelier than the old one, but

KAWASAKI bored its 600cc engine out to 636cc for 2002 to boost mid-range power



OLD



DATED analogue clocks and 14,500rpm red-line

NEW



PARED down full digital display. Rev limit 1000rpm higher

OLD



NO radial callipers, but the brakes are still strong

NEW



RADIAL callipers even better, but still fade if pushed to extremes



'03-'04 ZX-6R

- ✓ Faster, smoother, much sharper handling
- ✗ Extreme riding position, over-hard suspension

MODEL GUIDE

2002 (ZX600-A1P)

Kawasaki bucks the supersports class trend by boring their previous ZX-6R out to 636cc, giving the screaming four-cylinder bike a much needed boost in mid-range power. The suspension is improved, too. The bike is only produced for one model year. Colours: Green, red or silver.

2003 (ZX636-B1H)

A totally new ZX-6R is released which is sleeker, sharper and more aggressive looking than ever before. Designed to win the hotly-contested supersports road bike war, it comes with upside-down forks, radial mount brakes and a more powerful engine. Colours: Green or blue.

2004 (ZX636-B2H)

Silver colour added to range.

AN EXPERT SAYS:



Andy Croucher,
mechanic at Kent
Motorcycles,
Ramsgate

"There are no problems with either; they're mechanically sound and don't suffer from corrosion. The older ZX-6R is very popular as it's so easy to live with - it's comfy enough to go touring on but it's still got the power and handling for trackdays. The later model is far more sports focused - in fact the standard suspension settings are too hard for the road. We softened off the suspension on our demo bike last year, especially at the rear, which made it more compliant on the road."

this ultimately makes it feel more involving and exciting to ride."

Mark: "The old bike definitely felt more sports tourer than sports bike. It was more comfortable, but never felt quite as sharp as my new one, which has much better handling. You can change line easier and it's more confidence-inspiring; you get the feeling that the new ZX-6R will bail you out if you get yourself into trouble. Strangely, although it doesn't look it, wind protection on the new bike is actually better. The brakes on the new bike are better but they still fade under hard use; I reckon I need to fit some braided steel lines this year."

Michael: "With the mileage I do, I really appreciated the comfort of the old bike; in fact I probably would have kept hold of it if it hadn't been pinched just over a year from when I got it. The riding position of the new bike forces lots of weight on to your wrists, which can be a particular pain around town. It's set up too hard for the road as

standard as well, so I've softened off the suspension at each end. Wind protection isn't too bad on the new model, since you're forced to sit low under the screen. There's not much in it handling-wise; they're both superb."

OWNING

Rob: "My current ZX-6R is an ex-demo bike but it's still in perfect condition. Although I can't feel the difference the upside-down forks make, I love the look of them, along with the radial brakes and aggressive styling. Mine's in green, which is the only colour to have. The old bike had its advantages, though; being that bit more comfortable it was nicer to ride on long distances, not to mention better for my girlfriend on the back."

Mark: "I've had problems with both bikes burning a bit of oil, but I'm sure that's more down to me not running them in properly."

Michael: "I use it every day and in all weathers. I try to keep it as clean as I can but it's never going to be as pristine

as a bike which only gets used on a sunny Sunday morning. I don't like the new bike's number plate holder; it's plain ugly. The parking light switch is better on the new bike. You could accidentally leave the lights on with the old bike when putting on the steering lock, leaving you with a flat battery."

PANEL'S VERDICT

Rob: "It's impossible to fault either model, but I prefer the more aggressive looks and extra power of the new bike."

Mark: "They're both great bikes, but if you're after something that bit sharper and more aggressive, it's the new one for me every time."

Michael: "I actually prefer the old bike just for the comfort, even though the performance of the new bike is better."

YOU CAN BE IN MCN!

If you've owned a Triumph Daytona 600 AND a TT600 you can be in a future Old v New. Send an e-mail to michael.neeves@emap.com

LATER bike is sharper, faster and much more aggressive looking



2002 KAWASAKI ZX-6R (ZX600-A1P)

COST NEW IN 2002: **£6695**
USED PRICES: **£3525-£4150**

Insurance group: 14 (of 17)
Servicing: £300 main, £130 minor

TECHNICAL SPEC
Engine: 636cc in-line four
Chassis: Aluminium twin spar
Weight: 174kg
Power: 99bhp (measured)
Top speed: 156mph
MPG/range: 32mpg/125 miles

2003-2004 KAWASAKI ZX-6R (ZX636-B1H/B2H)

COST NEW IN 2004: **£6850**
USED PRICES: **£4200-£5150**

Insurance group: 15 (of 17)
Servicing: £300 main, £130 minor

TECHNICAL SPEC
Engine: 636cc in-line four
Chassis: Aluminium twin spar
Weight: 161kg
Power: 102bhp (measured)
Top speed: 165mph
MPG/range: 32mpg/125 miles

ONE DAY WITH... MALAGUTI DRAKON 50 NKD

LOOKING this good costs money



50s don't get much cooler... or costlier

WHAT IS IT?

EITHER the coolest moped of all time or the biggest anticlimax - depending on your point of view.

In a bid to make it look like a proper grown-up bike, Malaguti's styling department has thrown every idea in its sketchbook at this 50cc tiddler - including outrageous features like a 0-25mph timer for the urban traffic light GP.

But no matter how far they've gone with pumping up the looks, they can't change the fact the Drakon 50 NKD has to be restricted to 30mph to be legal for 16-year-olds to ride. As such it has flat-as-a-fart performance that's entirely out of kilter with its image.

WHAT'S SPECIAL?

EVEN seasoned riders mistake it for a much bigger bike.

Tech wizardry includes GP-style braced swingarm (though the upper part is made of plastic!), underseat exhaust and radial-mount front brake. The rev-happy two-stroke motor has a six-speed box to keep it spinning hard, and for the Playstation generation there's an onboard computer to show revs, speed, temperature - and lap times.



DIGITAL display adds cred...



FLAT-OUT is the only way to ride this bike

HOW DOES IT GO?

YOU need to be flat out everywhere, even on the derestricted version, which will shriek its way to an indicated 59mph in top (a genuine 50, maybe). Keep above 5000rpm and it zips along nicely, but below that it feels like Lisa Riley has jumped on the back - which is pretty much the same feeling you can expect from the 30mph version. The gearbox needs a slicker action given how often you need to use it.

The radial front brake isn't as powerful as it looks, but is just about enough to stoppie

the Drakon. The wide tyres let you get some decent lean, enough for the all-important knee down.

IS IT WORTH IT?

AT £2499 the Drakon is £250 more than Aprilia's equally good-looking RS50 Tuono. Then there are options like Rieju's sleek RS-2 Naked, which is £500 cheaper. That's the price of a year's insurance or a lads' holiday in Ibiza. However, when you're talking about buyers who won't be seen in last month's trainers, the extra cost to be latest/coolest may not matter at all...



...AS does underseat pipe

MALAGUTI DRAKON 50 NKD

★★★★★
COST: **£2499**
POWER (restricted): **2bhp**
TORQUE (restricted): **1.7ftlb**
WEIGHT (claimed): **112kg**

Available: Now
Colours: Black/yellow, black
New for 2005: New model
Insurance group: 2 (of 17)
Info: www.barrus.co.uk

TECHNICAL SPEC

Engine: 50cc (40.3 x 39mm), liquid-cooled two-stroke single
Chassis: Steel perimeter frame, 36mm forks and single rear shock, 280mm front disc with two piston radial caliper, 218mm rear disc with two-piston caliper.
Tyres: 100/80 x 17 front, 130/70 x 17 rear

MCN SAYS:

- ✓ Funky styling
- ✓ Loads of gadgets
- ✗ High price
- ✗ Vague gearbox feel

