

IT might be a Johnny-come-lately, but the new four-stroke has what it takes

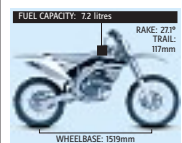


'Kawasaki has stepped right into the frame with its new 450'

KAWASAKI KX450F

★★★★☆
COST: £5087
POWER: 55bhp
WEIGHT: 99kg
TORQUE: 37.5ftlb

Available: Late November. Six months parts-only warranty.
Colours: Green/black only
New for 2005: New model
Info: Kawasaki, 01628-856750



TECHNICAL SPEC
Engine: Liquid-cooled, 449cc (96mm x 62mm) dohc four-stroke single.
Chassis: Aluminium twin beam frame. 48mm USD forks, adjustable for compression and rebound damping, single rear shock, adjustable for preload, rebound and high/low speed compression damping. Brakes: 250mm front disc with twin-piston caliper, 240mm rear disc with single-piston caliper. Tyres: 90/100 x 21 F, 120/80 x 19 R.

FUEL CAPACITY: 7.2 litres
RAKE: 23.1°
TRAIL: 117mm
WHEELBASE: 1519mm

lighter than the Bullworker of older Ducatis and the machine is beautifully balanced on the move. The one drawback is the white wheels – they'll be a bugger to keep clean.

GO ON, MAKE ME BUY ONE...

WELL, although the Monster series has been around for 13 years, this S2R is by far the most stylish – traditional Ducati trellis frame, twin one-sided pipes, striped tank and screen are all appealing.

And it's not just the S2R that's available in restricted form.

The firm's 749, M620 Monster and 620 Multistrada all come with certification of type approval from Ducati.



TRELLIS frame and twin pipes are traditional Ducati

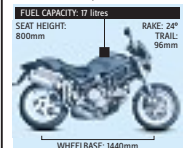


RESTRICTOR kit stops throttle butterflies opening fully

DUCATI MONSTER S2R

★★★★☆
COST: £5995
POWER: 33bhp
WEIGHT: 173kg

Available: Now
Colours: Red/white, orange/black, black/white
New for 2005: Official 33bhp restriction option
Insurance group: 13 (of 17)
Info: Ducati UK, 0845-122996



TECHNICAL SPEC
Engine: Air-cooled, 803cc (88 x 66mm) 4v Desmodromic 90° four-stroke V-twin.
Chassis: Steel trellis frame. 43mm USD forks, single rear shock, adjustable for pre-load and rebound damping. Brakes: 2 x 300mm front discs with twin-piston calipers, rear 245mm disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres: 120/70 x 17 front, 180/55 x 17 rear

Head-to-head

MV Agusta Brutale S 750 v 910

BY MICHAEL NEEVES PICTURES BY HOWARD BOYLAN



THE 910 packs more punch but the 750 is better all round

750

Launched in the summer of 2003, the 749cc, in-line four-cylinder Brutale is more than an F4 750 superbike with its clothes off. The Brutale is one of the most beautiful and best handling 'super naked' bikes ever. Now at £8999, it's £1500 below the 910. **16/20**

The 750 makes all of its punch right up in the higher reaches of the rev-range. At high speeds, when you're in the mood, it's electrifying, like a two-stroke on steroids. It sounds incredible too. At medium speed, where you spend most of your time, the lack of torque is a gear-twiddling pain in the arse. **7/10**

Power: 108bhp
Torque: 51ftlb
Top speed: 151mph
Standing quarter-mile: 11.45secs@122.51mph
Top gear acceleration (40-120mph): 16 secs **14/20**

MV has just slashed £1500 off the price of the 750, but it's still more expensive than competition like the Speed Triple, Tuono and Super Duke. But if you've got the dosh you get one very sexy, fast, fine-handling, hand-built bike. Everything about it screams quality – from its Marzocchi forks to its Sachs Racing rear shock. The biggest hitters in the super naked class beside the Brutale are the Aprilia Tuono, KTM Super Duke and the Triumph Speed Triple. While the others are roomy enough for six-footers, the Brutale is tiny; if you're 5ft 10in or over, you're going to struggle to fit. With the smallest motor in its class it's nowhere near as grumpy as its competition, but that's the point at where the 910 comes in. **14/20**

Sorry MV, but it's the original Brutale 750 which gets our vote. It's £1500 cheaper than the 910, has a smoother motor and delivers a more satisfying kick in the pants when you're going for it. And with the money you save over the 910, you could buy a set of race cans and a Power Commander to make it even quicker – which would go some way to make up for its feeble mid-range power. **16/20**

67/100: The original and the best

Price: £8999 **Engine:** 749cc in-line four **Chassis:** Tubular steel **Weight:** 185kg.

910

This new 910cc version promises more mid-range torque. Not able to fit the full-house 1000cc superbike engine in its beautiful chassis, the 910 uses the 1000's pistons but with a slightly shorter stroke. It's a whopping £10,500. **15/20**

The 910 makes the kind of mid-range torque the 750 could only dream about. But what it makes up in the grunt department it loses elsewhere. The bigger engine vibrates horribly, and that rush of power at the top-end you get on the 750 has gone. It still sounds great though. **6/10**

Power: 122bhp
Torque: 65ftlb
Top speed: 155mph
Standing quarter-mile: 11.23secs@127.99mph
Top gear acceleration (40-120mph): 12 secs **15/20**

It's hard to justify another £1500 for the extra 160cc you get with the 910. Engines apart, it's almost identical to the 750, but you do get adjustable footrests, a quick-release sprocket and a taller front Dunlop D208RR tyre to replace the old 65-section Dunlop D207RR. The new profile gives the rider far more feedback and confidence. The Brutale 910's extra capacity brings it closer to the competition in terms of everyday usability, but it's still not enough. The Speed Triple, which is nearly £3000 cheaper has a peach of a motor. Its three-cylinder engine is far smoother and has more poke right through the rev-range; it's roomier, handles just as well and looks every inch as good as the MV. **13/20**

Phew. £10,500 is a lot of dosh to spend on a motorcycle, no matter how beautiful and soul-stirring. Granted, MV has given us what we all wanted – more mid-range. But in return they've given us more vibes and less of a top-end rush. What they should have done is stuck the F4 1000 superbike engine in there, which would have given us the best of both worlds. **14/20**

63/100: Bigger isn't always better

Price: £10,500 **Engine:** 909cc, in-line four **Chassis:** Tubular steel **Weight:** 185kg.

A test between two identical bikes?

So how do the different sized engines stack up on the road?

What are the hard performance facts?

What do I get for my money, and how do they stack up against the competition?

Which one should I buy?

And the winner is?

Specs