

Not quite 'WK-ed' – but close

- ▶ First ride of Taiwan-built WK125R
- ▶ Budget street-bike costs just £1699
- ▶ Classic bike feel despite modern looks ▶ Verdict: ★★☆☆☆

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If WKD is the alcopop of choice for late teens then, on this evidence, WK bikes could soon be up there among their most popular motorcycles.

WK is a new name to the UK but the bikes are fairly familiar-looking. They're a range of Taiwanese-built scooters, 50s and 125s but given an extra boost by being brought into the UK by the same company that's behind Quadzilla Quads, who've been in the learner-legal quad market for over 10 years.

So, while many motorcycles from Taiwan haven't been a patch on their Japanese and European competition, WK's experience in the learner market means its bikes come with a 12-month unlimited mileage, parts and labour warranty, are better built than most, and have a variety of UK-specific features – and yet remain good value. MCN first sampled its 50cc supermoto (the SM50) at the end of May and was impressed. Time to see whether its new, more run-of-the-mill four-stroke roadster, the WK125R, could live up to that.

WK's 125 comes in two guises, this unfaired 'R' or a fully-faired 'Sport', both powered by a smooth and worthy 11bhp air-cooled.

But either way, though handsome enough, it's definitely a little 'old school', with enough bagginess around the steel twin spar frame to support a much larger engine.

From the saddle it's pleasing and substantial if a little old-fashioned, with twin white-faced dials, a big, clunky, full beam button, the ability to turn off the headlamps and clip-on bars which give it a kind of cafe racer style too. That said, the bars are easily within reach

and the bike's easy handling makes it a genuinely novice-friendly machine.

Beyond that, many things about the R are a little spongy and soft, although that's not necessarily a bad thing for a learner bike. The budget suspension is a little mushy, the gear selector a little crude, the brakes a little vague... as are, most intriguingly, the clocks. It's fairly easy to tell when you're cruising at 30mph but out on the open road I managed to hit an indicated 90mph while only just keeping up with a bumbling Renault

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MCN'S DAN ASPEL

Scenic. Hmm. The rev-counter was similarly erratic and seemed to bounce around at the upper limits.

None of this put me off, though, as the R is a charming bike to ride with a smoothly adequate engine and the knowledge you have a nicely handling, attractively basic bike for an absolute steal at £1699 (although it should be noted the optional, fruity, stainless steel Scorpion exhaust adds £299 on top).

Throw in a centrestand, odd little underseat helmet-lock, an enormous wrap-around grab rail and more and it all adds up to a very neat commuter or learner for less than half the price of a premium European or Japanese rival.

Less than half the price of Japanese and European rivals but the WK has some nice touches



IAN JUBB



Clocks are old-school and put in an erratic performance on our bike

Resale values aren't something to shout about, but with the initial saving in your pocket it's easier to swallow.

And those rivals really are a lot more expensive. Even with the Scorpion exhaust fitted, at £1998 the WK125R is £1172 less than Honda's big-selling CBR125R and a healthy £1697 cheaper



The WK's air-cooled four-stroke single makes a modest 11bhp

than a KTM 125 Duke. Admittedly, those two are in another league when it comes to performance and build quality, but are they twice the fun as well as twice the price?

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THE FACTS

WK125R £1699

Engine: Air-cooled, 124cc (56.5 x 49.5mm), single-cylinder, four-stroke, five gears, chain drive

Tyre size: 110/70-17 front, 140/60-17 rear

Brakes: 270mm discs (front and rear)

Power: 11bhp

Fuel capacity: 16 litres

Dry weight: 135kg

Contact: www.wkbikes.com

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