



Varadero is a full-size bike, while the YZF has a big-bike feel



Keeway (left) is slow and feels poorly built; our Derbi (right) leaked coolant



Honda CBR undercuts the similar Yamaha YZF by more than £1000

**BEST BUILD QUALITY**

## HONDA XL125V VARADERO

The Varadero feels like a much more luxurious and bigger bike.

Even a 6ft 4in tester managed to fit on it in reasonable comfort. The only disappointment with the Varadero is that the V-twin engine didn't sound anything like a twin.

The CBR125R and Yamaha YZF-R125 also feel like 'real' bikes, with everything from the appearance of the clocks to the feel of the clutch and brake levers impressing with their quality. That quality is emphasised all the more as soon as you step onto one of the cheaper Far Eastern bikes and realise how things shouldn't be done. By far the worst offender was the Keeway Speed 125, which felt like it might fall apart at any moment. The Kymco Sport was marginally better but still felt like it had been built in a back street garage.

While the Daelim Roadsport 125 had a fast fuel-injected engine that left the Varadero, Yamaha and Kymco for dead in a dual

carriageway drag race, again the general build quality felt poor, loose and shaky. And given that it's almost the same price as Honda's baby Blade you really ought to find a way to come up with the extra £171 to buy the CBR.

**BEST BUY OVERALL**

## RIEJU RS3

While Aprilia's RS125 is undoubtedly the best bike in this test, it doesn't necessarily represent the best value for money. At £4219 it's also the most expensive 125 we tested and it's not going to be cheap to run a thoroughbred two-stroke race replica. At almost £1000 less, the Rieju RS3 offers a similar fun factor while leaving some money over to pay for riding kit, insurance and other running costs.

The build quality of the Spanish machine isn't quite up to the same standard as the Aprilia's, but the Rieju is a hoot to ride and, like the Aprilia and to a lesser extent the Honda CBR, had our testers fighting for the next go on it. The RS3 provides fun by the bucket load. *RIDE*

## RESTRICTED (A1) LICENCE THE LAW

First, you need a provisional motorcycle licence. A full car licence should include provisional motorcycle entitlement. If you don't have a car licence, apply for a provisional licence. Next, book onto a Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) course: a day of classroom training and practical exercises. A CBT pass lasts two years, and entitles you to ride, unaccompanied, a bike of up to 125cc with L-plates. To lose the L plates, you'll need to tackle the theory test, the Module 1 off-road test and the Module 2 road-riding test. You have to pass the theory test before you can book the practical tests. An A1 licence limits you to 125cc bikes of up to 14.6 bhp.

## Verdict

While you're never going to be travelling at insane speeds on a 125cc group test, we found it's still possible to have fun on little learner bikes, if only because you learn to hoard speed, minimise braking, and time every gearchange to perfection to jealously guard your revs.

But we kept returning into this question: given a seemingly simple engineering challenge, why can't all manufacturers make their single-cylinder 125cc four-stroke engines perform more on a par with each other? There was a huge difference in performance between the bikes we tested here. Cost comes into it but, as Rieju have proved, it is feasible to buy engines from another maker (in this case Yamaha) and build your own bikes.

Build quality is what really divided the bikes in this test. There's only £171 between the Daelim and the Honda but they are worlds apart in terms of quality. So until the new batch of Far Eastern manufacturers can produce better-built bikes that are significantly cheaper than their Japanese, Italian and Spanish rivals, there's really no contest.



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