

>Lexmoto Street 125



Sober sides

Lexmoto goes upmarket with the Street 125. Is it worth 400 quid more than the Arrow 125? Pete Henshaw rode one over Dartmoor to find out...

Remember the Honda CG125? Even the most ardent of scooterists couldn't have failed to notice this ubiquitous four-stroke single. A simple, naked 125cc motorcycle with clutch and gears, air-cooled pushrod motor and the ability to go on forever (if you changed the oil regularly).

Honda made millions of them and they kept on selling, even when surrounded by hordes of more

modern auto alternatives. It sounds like a no-brainer – basic motorcycle with zero weather protection, or a convenient scooter with built in protection, luggage room and auto transmission? Yet the CG kept on selling. As late as 2006, it was outgunning any number of 125 scooters in the UK, only overtaken by Yamaha's YBR, a more modern take on the same naked concept. Today, the market for a basic naked 125 remains strong, quite apart from all the 125cc cruisers like Suzuki's GZ and Honda's sports bike-ish CBR 125. Maybe it's middle-aged commuters, ex-bikers who want a 'proper motorbike' to ride to work on.

The upshot of all this is that several Chinese factories make CG125 or Suzuki GS125 copies in a whole range of styles and Devon-based Llexeter have been bringing in the Arrow 125 for some time. At £999, dealer-supplied with a 12-month warranty and full spares back up, it's good value, but it does look garish and a bit cheap. Plus that CG-based motor is getting very long in the tooth.

So now we've got this, the Lexmoto Street 125. Out goes the old Honda motor; in comes a much younger unit copied from Suzuki's overhead cam GS. In comes smart, sober styling that should appeal to its intended market, alloy wheels, a rev counter and even a gear indicator. Oh and an extra £400 on the price.

At £1399, is it worth the extra money? To find out, I took the bike through the middle of Exeter,

over the top of foggy Dartmoor, then back along the coast, finishing with some fast (it's all relative) dual-carriageway.

OVER THE HILLS

What strikes you about the Street when first climbing aboard (and you do have to throw your leg over, as this isn't a step-in scooter) is how conservative it looks. Dark blue with big black sidepanels, black alloy wheels and not a lot of chrome. It looks smart and classy in a way a lot of Chinese bikes with garish decals miss out on. I liked it, but then I'm 40-something and probably bang on the Street's target market.

Pull out the manual choke (mounted on the Mikuni-copy carb), fire up and we're away. The Street has a surprisingly sporty riding position, a slightly lean-forward that threatened to give me backache (but actually didn't). They're thinking about offering tubular bars as an alternative, able to swivel and give some adjustment. Over a few hours out on the road, it was quite comfy and the lean-forward stance is handy when bowling along faster roads. The seat is a low 770mm and the whole bike is slim and easy to pilot through traffic. The seat's easily big enough for two as well, though going two-up won't help that bowling ability. Which brings us to the performance. If auto scooters have one advantage, it's that they can nip away from the lights, safely ahead of traffic. On a geared





LEXMOTO WHO?

Lexmoto is a new brand promoted by Llexeter. They've decided that leaving the original Chinese brand name on the tank doesn't work in the UK – people can't pronounce it for one thing and overtly, Chinese bikes have suffered from the less scrupulous importers. So they'll be selling their bikes and scooters either with the Lexmoto brand or the more youth-orientated Pulse badge.



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125, you waste time changing gear. Like most of its ilk, the Street is quick enough to keep up with urban flow, but you have work harder than you would with a scoot. We certainly had to use the gears climbing up onto Dartmoor, but do that and the Street has decent performance for a 125 – they claim 10bhp for the motor, which feels about right. You can, if you insist, wind it up to its 10,000rpm red line, but it won't go much faster through the gears – change up to 6-8000 and it gets along well enough. I found the gears a bit stiff and notchy, but they might improve with age. Then again, they might not.

The bike will happily bop along at 50-55mph on the flat and on the dual-carriageway heading back. With the help of a little tailwind, it was indicating 65mph. The test bike had a mere 100km (60-odd miles) on the clock when I picked it up, so a few

more clicks would probably see it topping 70mph. The motor's also surprisingly smooth, without the aid of balance shafts or the like. There's some tingling through the seat over 8000rpm, but that's about it. The mirrors blur in sympathy over about 60mph, but they're still useable.

Duro tubeless tyres cover the Street's alloy rims and they felt fine to me, gripping well on the twisty B-roads that wind through Dartmoor's foothills. In fact the whole bike feels good and secure on the twisty stuff, helped by pre-load adjustable twin rear shocks. The forks are very soft though, clonking over bumps and diving a lot under braking. Talking of brakes, those of the Street are a bit schizophrenic – the front disc has a four-pot caliper that gives one-finger slowing, down 20-25 per cent hills, but the rear drum does very little to help.

You get a nice matched pair of big, legible speedo and rev counter (and the speedo has big mph markings, hooray!) with a little fuel gauge as well. I was intrigued by the gear indicator, which tells you which of the five ratios you've selected. Nice idea, but so dim that it's unreadable in daylight. If you want to know which gear you're in at night, or riding through a forest, then this is the bike for you.

Switchgear is all straightforward, though a lights on/off switch meant I forgot to switch them on a

couple of times – I was cursing a Dutch tourist for bumbling through Devon fog without lights, when I realised I was lampless too... The Street comes with centre and sidestand (the former awkward to operate), a helmet lock plus a small amount of useful space under the seat – it's nothing like a scooter's underseat space of course, just enough for a pair of overtrousers. A rack is standard, and Llexeter offers a 15, 26 or 37 litre topbox that will fit, from £59.99 to £69.99. One other little touch – the front mudguard is long enough to keep crud off the engine, which is handy for year-round commuters

Let's not forget that geared 125s are the most economical bikes you can buy – keep the revs down (which you can't on an auto) and they really do sip the fuel as if the last oil well was about to run dry. Over a mix of city traffic, B-roads and that dual-carriageway, the Street averaged 125mpg. It's also got a generous 13-litre tank, enough for a 350-mile range. Not quite enough for London-Glasgow without refuelling, but close.

The Street looks and feels well put together, without the rough edges some Chinese bikes suffer from. It costs more than the real bargain basement stuff, but it's £600 less than a Yamaha YBR and does much the same job.

WORDS & PHOTOS: Pete Henshaw



TECHSPEC:

ENGINE:	Air-cooled four-stroke single, 124cc
MAX POWER:	10.2bhp @ 8500rpm
TRANSMISSION:	5-speed manual
WHEELS/TYRES:	18-inch front and rear
BRAKES:	Front disc (4-pot caliper), rear drum
LENGTH:	2050mm
WIDTH:	720mm
WEIGHT:	113kg
SEAT HEIGHT:	770mm
FUEL CAPACITY:	13 litres
PRICE:	£1399 (plus registration)
CONTACT:	http://www.lexmoto.co.uk/

SPARES TOO

Everyone and his dog knows that although the plethora of Chinese bikes and scooters have different bodywork, underneath many of them are the same. Most geared 125s, for example, are based on the CG125 or GS125. Which means that even if your Chinese import isn't sold by Llexeter, they may be able to sell you spare parts for it. Their website lists 90 brands, so there's a good chance they'll be able to help you out.

SPARES WEBSITE:

<http://www.chinesemotorcyclepartsonline.co.uk/>
www.chinesemotorcyclepartsonline.co.uk

ALTERNATIVE CHOICE: YAMAHA YBR125



Price: £1999

The bike that really took over where the CG125 left off; highly rated by owners and big enough for six-footers to ride. Similar performance and economy to the Lexmoto, but with the added cache of a Japanese brand name. Does that make it worth an extra £600? You decide...