

HYOSUNG GT650R

What's in a name?

Korean firm Hyosung's latest 650 twin has the quality to seriously worry its Japanese rivals

BY CHRIS PEARSON PICTURES BY STEVIE PEARSON

At first glance, you might think you're looking at a new-generation Suzuki SV650S, and in truth the latest offering from South Korean firm Hyosung owes a lot to Suzuki's middleweight favourite.

Hyosung themselves make no secret of the design ties between the two machine's V-twin engines, and the new GT650R feels like a Suzuki, too, with a strong midrange and a healthy appetite for revs, consuming the six-speed box quickly on its way.

Sitting on the GT for the first time, the overall feel is substantial and not at all in keeping with its middleweight status; the view of the tank and bodywork from the seat gives the impression of a far larger machine. Thankfully this isn't carried over into the way the GT moves – the steering is light to the touch and the chassis is very nimble and stable.

Bridgestone BT56 tyres are fitted as standard and, although the design is a little dated, this

rubber is more than capable for this level of machine.

The fully-adjustable upside-down forks can be altered to suit most tastes and are more than able of keeping the front end in check. The rear end isn't so tuneable however; only the preload can be jacked up or down, with no damping alteration in any direction. This is adequate for a lot of riders, but sportier pilots may find the limits of this basic unit quickly.

Overall, the GT behaves well, even when the going gets a little heated, and the chassis certainly matches the bike's looks.

The twin disc set-up competently handles braking up front, there is plenty of initial bite and feel, and the floating calipers haul the bike up very well; they just look a bit dated, like a bolt-on afterthought rather than part of a well-designed package.

The V-twin engine, with 79bhp and over 50ftlb of torque on tap, is punchy and very smoothly

carbureted; the twin Mikunis making for a faultless and smooth throttle response throughout the rev range.

This smoothness, in addition to the machine's comfort – aided by adjustable footrests – and the ease of use it creates, makes the bike ideal for heavy traffic situations. Overall, we reckon the GT650R would make a great commuter bike, but one that can also stretch its legs on more open roads.

Although Hyosung are still a small name in the UK, they have been making small capacity motorcycles since 1979. Lately though, they have become very good at putting bikes together and the build quality seen with the GT650R should certainly worry their Japanese rivals.

Also, when you consider that the GT650R is £700 less than an SV650S – and a grand less than Kawasaki's ER-6f – it makes a tempting alternative to a Japanese machine, and is a quantum leap forward for Hyosung.

IN DETAIL



FULLY-adjustable up front



BRAKES let the looks down



ADJUSTABLE footrests



'This home-brewed prototype is well thought-out and easy to ride'

Lean, clean Prototype eco-bike looks odd, but works surprisingly well

BY GARY PINCHIN PICTURES BY PAUL BARTON

LPG may be a common fuel in the car world these days, but when it comes to bikes, Dave Akhurst's special, first featured in MCN last week, is something of a first.

Considering it's a home-brewed prototype based on an old XT500 Yamaha it's well finished, well thought-out and easy to ride.

LPG (or liquid petroleum gas) produces less emissions than petrol-burning engines and reduces consumption by 10%. Thanks to reduced duty, LPG also costs around 40p per litre, but it remains a virtually untapped source of fuel for motorcycles.

"We didn't even know if an LPG-fuelled 500cc single would work with a kickstart," said Akhurst. But giving the lever a hefty boot brings the bike to life just like a petrol engine. But, as there's no choke on the carb it pops and bangs until warm. "Production versions would have an electric start," Akhurst adds.

Open the throttle and the acceleration, through a variable drive belt system, is as brisk as you'd expect from a 500cc two-valve single – nothing startling but a relaxed ride nonetheless.

We didn't get a chance to test fuel consumption, but Dave reckons on 70mpg.