

ROAD TEST

THE BIKES



BMW G650 XMOTO £6195

This is the supermoto version of BMW's new G650 X series of bikes. Unlike bigger BMWs the Rotax powered Xmoto has no telever suspension, shaft drive or ABS – and it's better for it.



HUSQVARNA SM510R £5999

One of the most extreme supermotors you can buy. Just like a pure racing machine the Italian-made Husky is built purely for performance. If you live near a kart track this is the bike to own.



BMW HP2 MEGAMOTO £12,595

The Megamoto is huge in every respect, from the size of its 1170cc flat twin engine to its massive price tag. This is what happens when BMW engineers start rifling through the parts bins...



KTM 690 SUPERMOTO PRESTIGE £6195

The 690 Supermoto replaces the old 660 SMC, which has its own one-make racing series running at New Era club meetings. Styling based on KTM's big 950SMV-twin.



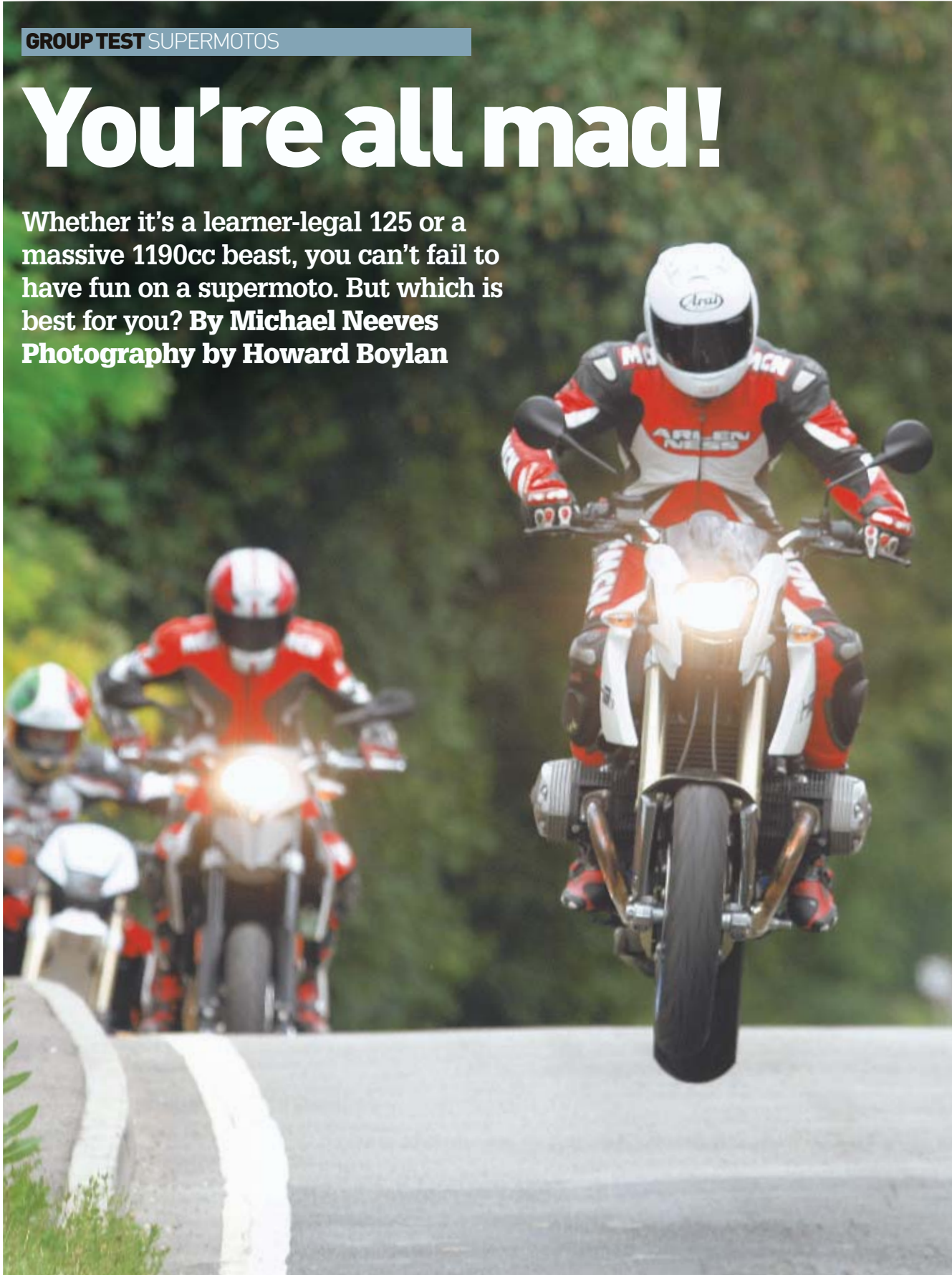
PULSE ADRENALIN 125 £1399

For a first bike the Chinese 11bhp Adrenalin is great value. It offers all the cool styling of a proper supermoto at a fraction of the cost.

GROUP TEST SUPERMOTOS

You're all mad!

Whether it's a learner-legal 125 or a massive 1190cc beast, you can't fail to have fun on a supermoto. But which is best for you? **By Michael Neeves**
Photography by Howard Boylan



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SUPERMOTOS used to be stripped down motocross bikes with road wheels and tyres but now the breed has evolved to become much more than that. Depending on your experience, depth of pocket and size of kahunas there's a supermoto for nearly everyone. But to find out which best suits you we've taken a bike from each of the main supermoto genres.

In the cheap and cheerful corner is the 'my first supermoto', the 11bhp Pulse Adrenalin 125. BMW's G650 Xmoto represents the softer, road going single-cylinder supermoto, and for those wanting slightly bigger teeth there's the KTM 690. For nutters we have the hardcore Husqvarna SM510R and for those that like their supermotos mega-big there's the brand new flat-twin 1170cc BMW HP2 Megamoto. Finally we'll compare all of these against the highly acclaimed Ducati Hypermotard, the best all-rounder supermoto we've yet tested. Let the madness begin...

THE CHEAP AND CHEERFUL: PULSE ADRENALIN 125

YOU'VE got to feel sorry for the little Chinese-made Pulse. Everywhere we went we had to drag it kicking and streaming – quite literally. With a top speed of around 55mph and all the acceleration of a snail going uphill, the other riders had three choices during our test: to simply leave it behind and let it catch up whenever we stopped; all ride at 55mph; or revert back to our moped-riding days and be resourceful. The latter option was the best, not to mention the most fun.

Using one of the other supermotos as a 'slipstream bike' we could pull the Pulse along a good deal faster than it could manage on its own. The only problem with that was that with every single mile-per-hour so hard won you never want to roll off. The net result was some breathtaking overtakes and corner speeds that stretched the Chinese tyres to their limits. The other way of going faster would be to simply grab on to another bike; that way the Pulse would hit nearly 90mph, although the engine wouldn't like this much...

There's a serious side to all these antics though, and that is that you can find ways to be stupid and have fun on this little bike just like you can on any of the others. Supermotos, even little ones, fill you with mischievousness. We had more fun on the A47 from Peterborough to Leicester than you would ever have on a Hayabusa.



The cheap Chinese Pulse 125 is a fine first bike

The Pulse Adrenalin doesn't have the power to wheelie or broach 55mph but on our kart test track it can still be hustled about. Better still with a stomp down the gearbox and a dab of back brake and clutch you can 'back it in' to corners, with the rear tyre yelping for mercy.

It looks the part, too, and is particularly impressive from the front when you see it in your mirrors. It's built down to a price of course, and is pretty crude in places close-up. But if this is your first bike you can't really go wrong; it's fun, funky and cheap.

THE SOFT OPTION: BMW G 650 XMOTO

ON the face of it the funky little G650 Xmoto (pronounced 'cross', not 'x' moto) looks like it could be for those who want to take their first step on to the single-cylinder supermoto ladder. It costs the same as the KTM and just £200 more than the Husky. Not only that but you get one-year's fully comp insurance free and the option of a £99 per month finance deal.

Styling is every inch the aggressive hooligan and its liquid-cooled 652cc, fuel-injected, four-valve Rotax engine promises to be the epitome of smoothness and user-friendliness. And, of course, BMW is a by-word for quality so you should never be left stranded at the side of the road.

With its conventional forks, swingarm, chain drive, non-ABS brakes and even switchgear, the BMW prom-

ises to be a proper little mad terrier. But surprisingly the Xmoto is as much a let down as the Megamoto is a revelation.

Just like the race-bred Husqvarna the BMW has an arse-crushingly hard seat, which makes anything more than 15-20-miles onboard painful. But while the Husky compensates with race bike performance the BMW doesn't give you anything in terms of speed or excitement.

The G650 handles well enough, but the engine isn't smooth like the 690 Supermoto or punchy like the SM510R. In fact, at high revs the Rotax engine feels crude and strained. Vibes right through the rev range shake hands and turn blood into raspberry milkshake.

The Xmoto, like the Husky is very good for very short,

'Vibes turn blood into raspberry milkshake'

brain-out blasts, but for longer jaunts the KTM is a mile ahead. And here's why...

THE RACE REPLICA: KTM 690 SUPERMOTO PRESTIGE

THIS is the best single-cylinder supermoto here. If you ignore the big-cheese megapriced Megamoto and the little 125, the KTM is the clear winner. KTM has been making off-roaders for years and knows how to bolt a

good one together. And of course nowadays they're making equally good road bikes, too.

This is the new £6195 KTM 690 Supermoto Prestige. Compared to the standard £5895 model it has cast rather than spoked wheels, a steeper steering head angle for faster turning, and comes in metallic grey. The 690 is packed full of all the good stuff from the Austrian firm's off-road heritage and newly-found road experience.

On one side it's practical, with an electric start, comfy seat and smooth engine. It has funky futuristic angular bodywork and upswept pipes and top cycle parts like WP suspension and Brembo brakes. On the other it's rugged enough to ride off-road and bash around and delivers all the right supermoto kicks like a punchy, powerful engine, agile handling, superb brakes and a voracious appetite for making you act the fool.

From a pure performance point of view it's miles ahead of the BMW, is more comfortable and yet is exactly the same price. While it's not in the same league as the ultra-focused Husqvarna it's far more usable everyday. That said, remember it still is a supermoto so after an hour your neck muscles will hurt like crazy, your bum will be numb and the 13.2-litre fuel tank will contain only fumes.

The KTM has got all the boxes ticked from performance to practicality and if you're not bothered about the cast wheels and steeper steering geometry, go for the standard orange one and save yourself £300.

THE RACER: HUSQVARNA SM510R

RIDING the Husky any distance is about as impractical, uncomfortable and annoying as a full-blown, track-prepared R1. Its racing suspension is back-crushingly hard and makes the bike flighty over bumps. The seat is like granite and the super-powerful engine rough and so full of vibes

Continues over



The Xmoto is well put together, but put in the shade by KTM

Whether it's got a learner-legal 125cc engine or a thumping great 1190cc monster inside it, you just can't fail to have fun on a supermoto

ROAD TEST

THE BIKES IN DETAIL

SPECS

BMW HP2 MEGAMOTO

★★★★★
Cost: £12,595
Power (claimed): 113bhp
Torque (claimed): 84ftlb
Dry weight (claimed): 178kg
Colours: White/blue
Info: 0800-777119

TECHNICAL SPEC

Fuel: 13 litres **Rake/trail:** 28.5°/99mm
Wheelbase: 1615mm
Engine: Air/oil-cooled 1170cc (101 x 73mm) 8v four-stroke Boxer twin. Fuel injection. Six gears. Shaft drive.
Chassis: Tubular steel frame. Fully-adjustable 45mm forks. Fully-adjustable single rear shock.
Brakes: 2 x 320mm front discs with four-piston calipers. 265mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres: 120/70 x 17 front, 180/55 x 17 rear.



Paralever shaft drive is unnoticeable, as good as a chain



Punchy Boxer engine and lightweight chassis equals fun

SPECS

BMW G650 XMOTO

★★★★★
Cost: £12,595
Power (claimed): 53bhp
Torque (claimed): 44ftlb
Dry weight (claimed): 147kg
Colours: Red/grey
Info: 0800-777119

TECHNICAL SPEC

Fuel: 13 litres **Rake/trail:** 28.5°/98mm
Wheelbase: 1500mm
Engine: Liquid-cooled 652cc (100 x 83mm) 4v four-stroke single. Fuel injection. Five gears.
Chassis: Cast aluminium frame. 45mm forks, adjustable for rebound and compression damping. Fully-adjustable single rear shock.
Brakes: Single 320mm front disc with four-piston calipers. 265mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres: 120/70 x 17 front, 180/55 x 17 rear.



XMoto seat is thin and hard... and comfy as a razorblade



For a 650cc engine it's strong but pushes out big vibes

SPECS

HUSQVARNA SM510R

★★★★★
Cost: £5999
Power (claimed): n/a
Torque (claimed): n/a
Dry weight (claimed): 119.7kg
Colours: Red/white
Info: www.huskysport.co.uk

TECHNICAL SPEC

Fuel: 9.2 litres **Rake/trail:** 28.5°/97mm
Wheelbase: 1495mm
Engine: Liquid-cooled 501cc (97 x 67.8mm) 4v four-stroke single. Fuel injection. Six gears.
Chassis: Tubular steel frame. Fully-adjustable 50mm Marzocchi forks. Fully-adjustable single Sachs rear shock. Brakes: Single 320mm front disc with four-piston Brembo radial caliper. 240mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres: 120/70 x 17 front, 150/60 x 17 rear.



Brembo brake gives stopping power as clinical as a wall



Husky's engine delivers instant power but is brutal with it



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that they rush up through the chassis into your body like an electric shock. The only concessions to practicality are the side-stand and an electric start. The 510 is a race bike with lights, pure and simple. It's so completely focused that in every day conditions it's next to useless. But get it in its proper habitat, just like an R1 track bike, and the Husqvarna is simply awe-inspiring.

This is a superbike in its purest, spine-tingling, most grin-inducing form and so naturally well-balanced that it doesn't matter if you're not. The staple diet of the superbike: wheelies, stoppies and slides are so easy to achieve that your mates will suddenly think that you've miraculously transformed into a riding god.

Husky's 501cc motor isn't

for the faint-hearted as power is always instant and brutally hard hitting. It's fine once you get used to it but don't just crack it in first or second because, if you're not ready, it'll flip you straight on to your tail.

A radial-mounted Brembo front caliper biting a pizza sized 320mm disc gives enough power to have you over the front. On a smooth, tight kart track that stiff suspension and well-set up chassis lets you decimate any other two-wheeler.

If you had an hour left to live, this is the bike to spend it on. It's just so much fun that everyone should ride it at least once in their life.

THE GIANT: BMW HP2 MEGAMOTO

THE new HP2 Megamoto looks humungous in pictures and imposing in the flesh. It's the very last bike we



The Husqvarna is too race-focused to be practical everyday

thought you could easily have fun on. How wrong we were. If BMW crafted all their new sports bikes like this they'd be laughing into their bratwurst.

Despite appearances the HP2 is light (just 178kg dry) and not blighted by BMW's usual vague Telelever front end, or their I-know-better-than-you anti-lock braking

system. Yes it still has shaft drive and two gigantic great cylinder heads poking out of either side, but you notice neither on the move.

What you do notice is its storming, torque-laden, wheelie-provoking engine, which pops and bangs like a demented race bike through its standard issue Akrapovic exhaust can on the overrun.



Hats off to BMW. With the Megamoto it's made something very special indeed



The KTM does everything well – and doesn't break the bank

The cool, blue-painted tubular steel space-frame chassis keeps the BMW agile and accurate and makes mincemeat of both tight, nadsy country roads and 100mph A-road sweepers. The conventional upside-down forks and Ohlins rear shock work in harmony to let you glide over potholes, but have enough control in

them to let you hustle the Megamoto around the kart track we took all the bikes to, faster than a Hypermotard.

The seat is comfortable and the riding position roomy (although a bit top-heavy at a standstill for shorties) and the sheer quality of the BMW throughout, from its crazy styling to the carbon-fibre tank cover,

'The Megamoto is stretching the supermoto tag a little'

Akrapovic pipe and Ohlins rear shock almost, but not quite, justifies its astronomical £12,595 price tag.

The Megamoto is stretching the supermoto tag a little; it's not as light, potent or as flickable as a true, single-cylinder nutter bike but it's nearly there and it's far more comfy at the same time – like having a massage, with a happy ending...

VERDICT

ONE thing is clear and that is that supermotos bring out the worst in you. These bikes are all more fun than a sports bike on the road.

But chances are that instead of being nicked for speeding you'll get a brown envelope through your door from the police showing you pulling a wheelie past one of their camera vans.

But which is best? For a first bike the Pulse Adrenalin 125 is the cheap and easy way to get your supermoto kicks and the Megamoto, while undeniably impressive, is dream garage material, thanks to its whopping £12,595 price tag.

The G650's lack of performance and refinement places it among the big boys and the Husky's sheer single mindedness means it's for the hardcore only.

The KTM is our supermoto of choice; fast, smooth, funky and affordable... unless you've got nine grand, in which case you should go and buy a Ducati Hypermotard.

THE BIKES IN DETAIL

SPECS

KTM 690 SUPERMOTO PRESTIGE

★★★★★

Cost:	£6195 (Standard model £5895)
Power (claimed):	63bhp
Torque (claimed):	48ftlb
Dryweight (claimed):	152kg
Colours:	Grey
Info:	01280-709500

TECHNICAL SPEC

Fuel: 13.2-litres Rake/trail: 26°/112mm
Wheelbase: 1460mm.
Engine: Liquid-cooled 653.4cc (102 x 80mm) 4v four-stroke single. Fuel injection. Six gears.
Chassis: Tubular steel frame. Fully-adjustable 48mm WP forks. Fully-adjustable single WP rear shock.
Brakes: Single 320mm front disc with four-piston Brembo radial caliper. 240mm rear disc with twin-piston caliper. Tyres: 120/70x17 front, 160/60x17 rear.



KTM finish is well received, right down to the atly wheels



Looks ungainly but this modern look sets the KTM apart

SPECS

PULSE ADRENALINE 125

★★★★★

Cost:	£1399
Power (claimed):	11bhp
Torque (claimed):	n/a
Dryweight (claimed):	n/a
Colours:	Black
Info:	www.chinesemotorcycledealers.co.uk

TECHNICAL SPEC

Fuel: 10.6 litres Rake/trail: n/a
Wheelbase: 1400mm
Engine: Air-cooled 124cc (57 x 48.8mm) four-stroke single. Five gears. Carb.
Chassis: Tubular steel frame. Non-adjustable upside-down forks, non-adjustable single rear shock.
Brakes: Single front disc with twin-piston caliper. Rear drum brake. Tyres: 110/70x17 front, 130/60x17 rear.



Minimal dash layout is in keeping with the supermoto style



The Chinese-built 125cc engine will suffice for the learner

❖ DUCATI HYPERMOTARD 1100S – £8999

THE reason the Ducati isn't in the main test here is because it's more road bike than supermoto. We reckon it's still the ultimate though.

It's conceivable that you could take any one of our five supermotos on an off-road section of track and they'd cope. They all have rugged plastic bodywork so even if you did take a tumble they'd be durable enough to take it and you'd probably not even notice they'd been down.

But could you ever imagine going off-road on this £8999 'S' spec Hypermotard?

It would be a bit like running through a field wearing your wedding shoes. And if you were even to lightly scratch the highly polished, bright red bodywork, it would be

enough to make you cry.

This is a 'supermoto' exclusively for the road. Although it still offers zero wind-protection the seat is comfortable and the riding position roomy. The big air-cooled 1078cc V-twin is a thing of growling, throbbing loveliness with a beautiful

throttle response; so good in fact that combined with its utter agility, stability and handling poise you can use and abuse the Ducati like a toy.

The Hypermotard isn't just the best all-round supermoto here; in my mind it's bike of the year, too.



You'd be brave, and mad, to thrash this beauty in the dirt