

# Sub 125

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'Whizzing through busy streets and sliding around country lanes shows how flickable and light this little tyke really is'

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TESTED: CHEAP 125s

## Tune into SFM

When German quality control meets Chinese production costs

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This isn't your everyday run-of-the-mill Chinese bike from a manufacturer you've never heard of before. While SFM may not ring a bell to most, their former parent company ZF Sachs should. ZF Sachs has been building motorcycles since 1895. In 1998 ZF Sachs sold its motorcycle division, which was subsequently renamed Sachs Fahrzeug- und Motorentechnik. More recently the firm rebranded after a buyout and became SFM. Newly-formed, SFM has done well in the electric bicycle market and has now decided to re-enter the motorcycle sector with three new 125s. The enduro ZX, the commuter Roadster and the Supermoto-styled ZZ tested here, are the German marque's first motorcycles since re-forming and they're aimed squarely at image-

### WHAT'S THE STORY?

■ German firm SFM, formerly Sachs, has three new 125cc offerings for the image-conscious youth. The enduro-styled ZX, supermoto ZZ and commuter Roadster are all built in China and powered by Suzuki replica engines, but the machines were designed and developed in Germany. MCN got first ride.

conscious youth. Yes, they are built in China and each bike uses a Chinese built engine. Hold your horses, though, that doesn't mean quality has been compromised. SFM says the design and development process was conducted in Germany by their own teams. And it has its own German quality check

engineers in China, who according to a SFM spokesperson, "cherry pick quality components and personally sign off production at the plant".

I believe them. The ZZ is clean cut and the styling is bang-on. Plastics are thick and chunky, the decals aren't peeling and everything feels solid and properly bolted together. It uses a modern beam frame, which the firm says "delivers high stability, particularly on bends". Wiring is tucked away neatly and the whole package is tight.

The level of quality makes the price all the more surprising: £1999 for the ZZ and the ZX, while the Roadster is £1599. That's cheap, especially with £200 currently being knocked off all SFM models. We're talking very little money for entry-level machines.

SFM has also thrown in a few luxury items to sweeten the deal further for lustful teenagers. There's a bashplate and rim tape, while high, wide handlebars promote the correct elbows-out supermoto riding position and the seat

### SACHS HISTORY

**1895** The Schweinfurter Präzisions-Kugellagerwerke Fichtel & Sachs General Partnership was founded in Germany

**1963** Sachs buys Nurnberger Hercules-Werke GmbH

**1974** Sachs introduces the world's first Wankel engine motorcycle, the W-2000

**1997** Development of new 125ccs

**1999** Large-capacity motorcycles developed

**2000** Production of 650 and 800cc Roadster range begins. (The range consists of 125, 650 and 800 Roadsters, B805 limited-edition special and XTC125 sports bike)

**2007** Management buyout

**2008** Sachs is renamed SFM (Sachs Fahrzeug und Motorentechnik) for trademark reasons.

delivers a big bike feel. The switchgear is relatively classy and the digital dash relatively comprehensive, including oil, engine temperature and gear indicator, trip, odometer, rev counter, average fuel consumption and even a lap time counter. When your 11 litres of petrol is all used up, however, there's no warning light – just a good old fashioned reserve tap to give you the last half litre. Strangely, the cheaper Roadster with a 17-litre tank has a fuel gauge beneath the rev counter.

Like most 125s, don't expect much to happen in the way of hardcore thrills. Both chassis and four-stroke, carburetted engine are built by Qingqi in China, a firm that has worked with Suzuki since 1985. The new-for-2013 engine is officially licensed by Suzuki and based on the DR125, a proven if perhaps uninspiring motor.

Top speed is 60mph but get ready for a long wait if you're expecting to reach such mind-altering speeds. In the lower gears and around town the 11.5bhp