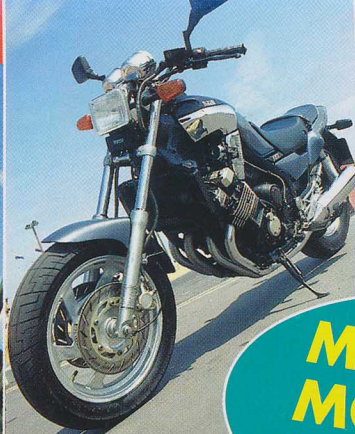


# Grey Bike

## STREETFIGHTER FZR250 PROJECT



SOMEWHAT  
SLIGHTLY  
FAZED  
FZR250

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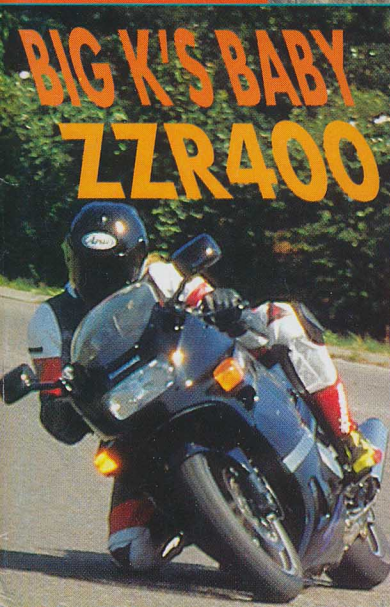


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MODEL HISTORY - FZR SERIES  
TUNING - NSR250  
RACING - NC21 & GSXR400  
TECHNICAL - READY FOR THE ROAD?

**PLUS: ZXR400**

**MVX250 ★ XR200**

**FZR400SP ★ LTD700**



**BIG K'S BABY  
ZZR400**

**SHADOWFAX VT1100C**



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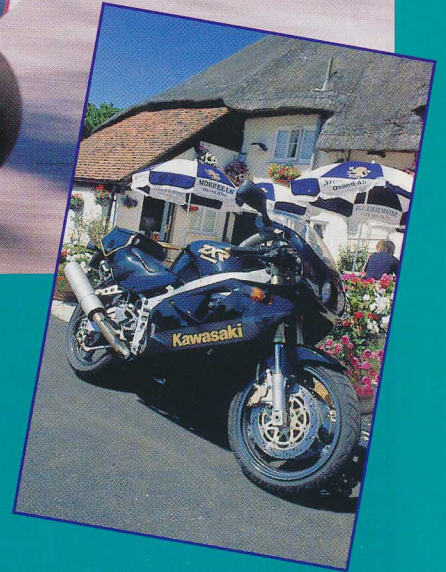


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KEV Racing's GSR400RRSP in action at Mallory earlier this year.



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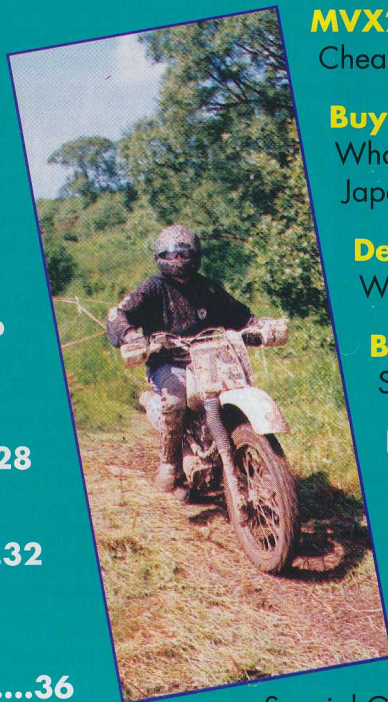
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## Grey Bike Road Test



Oh lordy, not another ageing 400? Yep, but you're still getting a lot for your money, as Tom Isift discovered.

# ZXR400



**The** 400s class is one of the biggest and most important classes to the Japanese factories. It might seem to us that all the R&D money gets spent on making the litre bikes nudge 180mph, but in reality the serious money is in home-market 250s and 400s. Because of the strange Japanese licencing system (where you are obliged take a degree-level exam, and display bike handling abilities on a par with Mick Doohan, before you're allowed to ride a Honda C90) most people never get further than a 400. And even getting to a 400 licence costs a small fortune and takes years.

Small wonder, then, that the 400s class is where much of the innovation takes place. In an area where most of the race-reps look and feel the same, each factory is constantly searching for a USP (Unique Selling Point) that will set their product out from the crowd. So what is the ZXR400's USP? A pair of Hoover hose-pipes running from the inside of the fairing into the petrol tank. Of course we all know that they're air intakes, and we all know that they're purpose is almost completely cosmetic, but that's the full SP on the ZXR's USP and that's A OK with us.

Let's face it - the ZXR looks like a pukka piece of tackle, particularly in this black paint scheme. The swoopy seat unit, the twin-headlamp fairing, the upside-down forks... it all looks seriously purposeful. Okay, it isn't as svelte as the later ZXR400s, but even so it does look pretty damn sexy.

But is it as good as it looks? Actually, it's better in many respects. Sure, it's a little long in the tooth these days, and it's been replaced by slicker, sexier machines, but that doesn't mean it has to be consigned to the scrap heap. The engine is the same basic unit that still powers the latest ZXR400s, and in it's day this ZXR's suspension was the hot stuff. So that still makes it pretty hot stuff. Okay, it's not state-of-the-art, but things haven't moved on that far in the intervening years, and the ZXR proves it.

Using a water-cooled double overhead cam in-line four-cylinder engine, the ZXR displaces 398cc from a bore and stroke of 57mm x 39mm. Peak power is 59hp at 12,500rpm, which is industry standard and all the Japanese allow themselves for 400s. That's still enough to take you to the (restricted) top speed of 112mph in fairly short order.

The ZXR is typically Kawasaki-ish in that it needs a firm hand and plenty of revs to get the best from it. Like all small four-strokes, particularly of the race-reps, the harder you wring its neck the better it likes it. Okay, you can pussy-foot around under 6000rpm and the ZXR will respond, but it's a bit like using your Testarossa to do the weekly shop at Tesco — a criminal waste.

This particularly specimen suffered from a carb glitch just off tick-over, which meant giving it plenty of revs to get it away cleanly. However, once on the move the ZXR performs well. Below 4,000rpm it's faint and

asthmatic, but when the tach is swinging between five and eight grand the ZXR is getting into it's stride. This isn't V-Max mid-range, but for a four-stroke four-cylinder 400 it's reasonably flexible. From 8000rpm upwards the ZXR gets into its stride and pulls like a bastard. It isn't the fearsome rush you get when a stroker comes on the pipe, but there's still plenty of frenetic activity to keep the adrenaline junkies happy.

Through each of the well-spaced gears the ZXR really flies if you keep the tach swinging in the upper reaches of the rev range. It red-lines at 14,000rpm, but peak power is 2,000rpm lower down the rev band, giving a useful over-rev facility if you need to hang onto a gear just that little bit longer. Once the ZXR's motor is on the boil it's a small matter to keep it revving between 8,000 and 13,000rpm, making full use of the slick-shifting gearbox and light clutch. And if you keep the ZXR's motor spinning you will be rewarded with performance that few will find disappointing. It isn't the berserko power and acceleration you get from a litre sportster at full-chat, but it's fast, exciting, manageable and it's an awful lot of fun.

And doesn't stop when you get to the corners — the ZXR handles like a good 'un. On a fast run out along the leafy lanes of Buckinghamshire (this model came from BladeRunners in Chesham) the ZXR performed like a dream. With power at 59bhp and speed still limited, the ZXR feels best on tight twisting backroads, where it's superb handling can compensate for its relative paucity of power compared to larger ZXR versions. The ZXR400's racy steering geometry (23° 45' of rake and 82mm of trail) means that you can pitch it in to a turn harder and faster than just about anything else. In fact the steering is so fast that it has a tendency to oversteer until you get used to it.

Once set up in the turn the ZXR holds its line well. It can get a bit twitchy over the bumps, but nothing too serious, and generally the chassis does a good job of keeping you sunny-side up. The front fork's are trick 41mm upside-down affairs with adjustable preload and damping, while at the back the rising-rate monoshock is similarly adjustable. Larger Kawasaki ZXRs are infamous for having rock-solid rear shocks, but happily this 400 was an exception. There was adequate

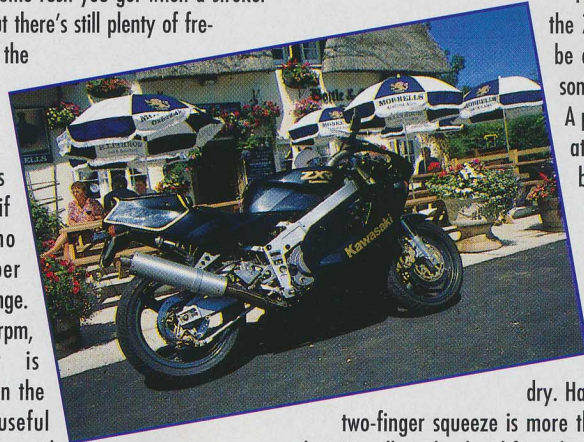
travel and the stock damping rates were about right for my 190lbs bulk. All in all the suspension package is pretty good at both ends, even without fiddling, although you could twiddle away at fine tuning if you really felt inclined.

The outer limits of the ZXR's handling can be explored thanks to some excellent brakes. A pair of 310mm discs at the front, gripped by four-piston calipers, give masses of stopping power - small wonder when the ZXR weighs in at a mere 350lbs dry. Haul on the brakes (a two-finger squeeze is more than adequate) and the ZXR pulls up hard and fast. The brakes lack the feel of something like an FZR or GSX-R, but they have the same power nonetheless. Certainly the ZXR can be stopped on a sixpence, and that ability, coupled with the ultra-quick steering, makes it a superlative back-road scratcher.

The riding position on the ZXR is pretty cramped, with much of your weight put on your wrists, but the agony of town-riding is off-set by the at-one-with-your-machine feeling you get when you get out on the open road and give it heaps. Neat touches such as adjustable levers give the ZXR a grown-up, big-bike feel, and a pair of mirrors that actually afford a good view of what's going on behind you are a positive delight.

A ZXR400 H1 costs around three to three and half grand. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with the ZXR, but for the same money you could be looking at an NC30, or a nice TriArm. Neither of them will beat the Kwacker in the handling stakes, there's very little to choose in the way of performance, although you'd get better bottom end power from the NC, and the ZXR does look drop-dead gorgeous in its black paint scheme. As usual, the ultimate choice is down to the buyer, but for my money I would be having a serious look at Honda's NC30 before I committed myself.

Although it isn't state-of-the-art anymore, the H1 ZXR is still capable enough for most people, and what it lacks in 'this week's model' appeal it makes up for in its superb handling. Apart from the latest 250 strokers, there can't be all that many bikes out there that offer this kind of cornering, no matter how much you want to pay, so if scratching is your game, you'll love the ZXR400.



**The ZXR looks like a pukka piece of tackle - the swoopy seat unit, the twin headlamp fairing, the upside down forks - it all looks seriously purposeful.**



**Tom Isitt**

## SPEC:

<b>Motor:</b>	Liquid-cooled DOHC 16 valve in-line four	<b>Frame:</b>	box, chain final drive Aluminium-alloy beam frame	<b>Front Brakes:</b>	damping adjustment 2 x 310mm disc with four-piston calipers
<b>Displacement:</b>	398cc	<b>Rake:</b>	23° 45'	<b>Rear Brake:</b>	Single 207 mm disc with twin-piston caliper
<b>Bore x Stroke:</b>	57 x 39mm	<b>Trail:</b>	82mm	<b>Front Tyre:</b>	120/60 x 17
<b>Comp Ratio:</b>	12.1:1	<b>Front Forks:</b>	41 mm USD telescopic with preload and damping adjustment	<b>Rear Tyre:</b>	160/60 x 17
<b>Max Power:</b>	60hp @ 12,500rpm	<b>Rear Suspension:</b>	Rising-rate monoshock, with preload and	<b>Wheelbase:</b>	1385mm
<b>Max Torque:</b>	27ftlb @ 12,000rpm			<b>Dry Weight:</b>	350lbs
<b>Carburettors:</b>	4 x 32mm Keihin			<b>Fuel Capacity:</b>	14 litres
<b>Transmission:</b>	Gear primary, six speed				



Model - ZRX400. Year - 1991(H). Mileage - 5,158. Price - £3400. Test Bike Supplied By BladeRunners.