

BOCHE BANTAM MZ TS150

What happens when you want the biggest bike for your money under £400? You get an MZ TS150

Eagle as Jane Holstead found out when she had to go biking on a budget. Photography by

Ian Dobbie.



I recently found myself having to replace an 11-year-old Honda 50 that had finally expired and suddenly discovered how much I'd saved in fares getting around London — £400 a year. Another bike was the answer, but with only £400 to spend, which one?

As I'm still on L-plates it had to be under 250cc — not too small, though, as I wanted more power than the Honda. I wanted the feeling that I could pull out of dangerous situations, braking not always being the safest answer in emergencies.

I wanted it to have relatively cheap running costs and insurance. And, as I was worried about having a bike that was too heavy for me to handle, I had to be able to lift it on and off the stand.

It had to be reliable. I freely admit to being the world's worst mechanic but I couldn't rely on standing beside the road looking feeble in my rather inelegant wet weather gear.

I needed the bike to take me through London commuter traffic every day and on occasional longer journeys, and when I passed my test it would have to take two in reasonable comfort. I really wanted a new bike because I got tired of problems with an old bike.

Armed with a copy of *Which Bike?* I went through the prices and, sadly, it seemed that I could only have a maximum of 90 to 100cc or a second-hand larger bike for the amount I could afford. Then I spotted the MZ TS150. It was cheap, about the size I wanted . . . but I immediately assumed there was a catch. So I asked around all my friends who knew anything about bikes

and demanded the truth.

The answer was the same each time: the MZ is a reliable working bike, not a racer; the tyres are no good in the wet; they can be difficult to start. The plus points were all there, though.

The place I'd been taking the Honda — BVS Motorcycles in Stockwell — were MZ dealers, and boss Barry Sandle helpfully agreed that the TS150 was the best for me, putting one on the road for £375. Fully comprehensive insurance through BVS was £50, much less than I'd been quoted elsewhere.

Despite thinking the bike looked too big for me when I collected it the next day, it felt very comfortable and easily balanced. It also felt much safer with the manual clutch, compared with the automatic Honda, and very easy to put on the stand.

Admittedly, it was difficult to start at first but after three weeks I now start it second kick, provided I put the correct amount of effort into it. I don't think starting's any problem for the average girl, though it's a fair stretch to get my foot high enough when the bike's on the main stand.

Warned about the tyres by so many people, I've been driving carefully and so far haven't had any problems, even when doing practice emergency stops in the wet from two to 20mph. The rear tyre started to slip slightly but the bike was still under control.

The MZ is not a fast bike but it has enough power to get me safely through London traffic and is quick enough pulling away from lights without over-revving



Though the price of the MZ is under £400 you get a full set of instruments.



Engine of the TS150 is based on the same motor as the BSA Bantam.

since it's still running in. For the same reason, I haven't yet taken it to top speed but the manufacturers claim 65mph.

By my calculations, the MZ runs very economically, even with the additional cost of two-stroke oil, working out at 85 miles per gallon. The exhaust can occasionally be dirty, with clouds of blue smoke, but it is running-in on a rich mixture. Mixing the oil and petrol is no problem as the petrol cap has a measure on the underside for a tankful. There's space in the side cover with the toolkit to carry a small bottle of two-stroke oil.

Looking at the cheaper bikes from other

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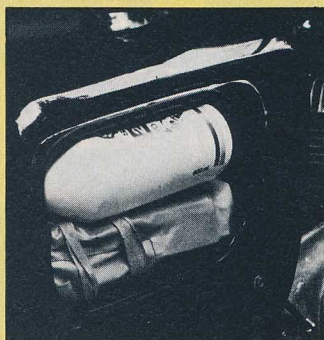


You even get the hump with a TS150 - a possible sore point for male riders during emergency stops.

manufacturers, economies seem to be made by cutting down on extras. This doesn't apply to the MZ. It has features more usual on larger bikes, like side and centre stands, an air pump, enclosed chain (which is not only cleaner but means less maintenance) and adjustable suspension for carrying a passenger. The toolkit should cover any job that needs doing and there's even a spare spark plug. I added a second tyre lever and a tyre pressure gauge. The bike has the usual display of instruments (including a rev counter), turn signals, a very powerful horn and headlamp with a flasher and a steering lock.

Basically, I'm pleased with my choice so far but I've got the feeling that I'll be thinking about changing up to a 250 next year (if only because a heavier bike is more stable in high winds - I get blown all over the road) and I can't see any reason to change from an MZ.

To me they even look attractive, though I've had the occasional comment on looks from riders of more conventional bikes. Quaint and eccentric seems the polite way of describing it. But, like most women, I'm not overly worried about the packaging if the cost of the contents is kept down. **WBZ**



There's just enough room in the side panel to cram a bottle of two-stroke oil alongside the toolkit.

MODEL:	MZ TS150
Price inc. VAT:	£367 plus del.
Warranty:	Six months parts & lab.
Engine:	Two-stroke single
Capacity:	143cc (58 x 56mm)
Lubrication:	Petrol, 33 to 1
Comp. ratio:	10 to 1
Carburetion:	24mm BVF
Ignition:	Coil & cb
Max. power:	11.5 bhp @ 6,300 rpm
Max. torque:	10.8 lb-ft @ 5,500 rpm
Primary drive:	Chain, 3/8 x 3/16 in
Clutch:	Wet multiplate
Gearbox:	Four speed
Final drive:	Enclosed chain
Mph/1,000rpm:	10.1 in top
Fuel capacity:	2.75 gals
Electrics:	6v 12ah battery, 90w dynamo, 40/45w headlamp
Frame:	Pressed steel loop
Suspension:	Telescopic fork (f) Swing arm with 2-pos manual spring preload adj. (r)
Brakes:	6.3 in drum (f) 5.9 in drum (r)

DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase:	51.4 in
Seat height:	30 in
H-bar width:	25 in
Grnd clearance:	5.5 in
Rake/trail:	na
Dry weight:	286 lb

EQUIPMENT:

EQUIPMENT	Turn signals, mirror, tyre pump, speedo, rev counter, toolkit, side stand,

PERFORMANCE:

Top speed:	65 mph
Speeds in gears at max. power revs.	21 mph, 35 mph and 64 mph.
St. ¼-mile:	20.5 secs
0-to-60 mph:	20 secs
Actual speed at ind. 60 mph:	na
Av. fuel consumption:	85 mpg
Tank range:	230 miles
Importer/Manufacturer:	Wilf Green Ltd, 330 Queens Road, Sheffield 2, Yorks.