

Budget 50cc shootout

GROUP TEST



Cleethorpes or bust

The scooter market has picked up dramatically this year, thanks mainly to the high cost of fuel and over-inflated car insurance premiums. Cash flow is still a big issue for many families, so reliable, economical transport is becoming a bigger priority than ever before – and as we all know, that's where scooters shine.

In our first group test of the year we're looking at budget 50cc scooters costing less than £1200 – which isn't a lot to pay for something that can provide instant year-round freedom, a dash of excitement and save money when compared with a car or public transport. But what exactly do you get for your money?

As with all of our group tests, we set a few simple rules and send out invitations to the importers. The main criteria for this one was that it had to be 50cc, de-restricted and cost less than £1200. We also wanted to keep the numbers down to a manageable level, so that we'd have enough room to give each scooter some space in the mag – and so that Mau's fish and chip bill wouldn't break the bank! We settled on four different scooters; different in looks, performance, style and with a mixture of both two- and four-stroke engines. They ranged in price from a very reasonable £839.99, up to £1170.

It's fair to say that most 50s don't venture more than 15 miles from home, but they are capable of covering a fair distance if

you've got the patience and time, so we decided to go a bit further afield and headed to the east coast metropolis of sunny Cleethorpes! It's a 70 mile round trip, so we arranged to swap scooters half way there, then once again when we got to the seaside and then again half way back, so we all had chance to ride each scooter and compare them. We also filled them all up before we set off so that we could give you some accurate real world mpg figures. Remember though that we didn't ride them with economy in mind – we just wanted to get to the seaside before the chippy closed, so it was full throttle all the way!

Our volunteers for the day were myself, Mau, plus Charlie and Steff from the office. If you cast your mind back to last year's group tests, you'll remember that the hapless Charlie always managed to either pick the slowest scooter or get lost en-route and we even ended up leaving him in Norfolk without cash or a mobile phone during our maxi scooter group test last summer! It seemed only fair that we let him choose his weapon first for this little

jaunt and it was no surprise that he picked the Pulse Force, an attractive-looking two-stroke. Mau went for the WK One, Steff had the Baotian and I decided to pick the four-stroke Lexmoto Molly, not because I particularly liked the pea green machine and I knew it was a four-stroke so could potentially be quite slow, but I thought I'd get it out of the way early on. Sometimes though looks can be deceptive...

WORDS: Iggy

PHOTOS: RA Photography



Steff gets a helping foot up Cawkwell Hill

Budget 50cc shootout

Baotian Eagle GT

RRP: £1170 (OTR)



GROUP TEST

Baotian is well established in the UK and has been a consistently good seller; it builds some great budget priced scooters – like the Monza we tested in the last issue. The Baotian Eagle GT is a four-stroke, air-cooled 50 with sporty styling, but that's where any sporting potential ends. You should never judge a book by the cover (although I do every time I go to the local library), but Steff decided that the Baotian looked like it'd be fast, so he nicked the keys first thing in the morning; oh how we laughed as he was left for dust by the other three scooters! The Eagle GT was painfully slow, no matter who was riding it.

Speed isn't at the top of every scooter buyer's wish list though, many riders are looking for cheap, reliable fuss-free transport... and with the Baotian that's what you're getting. It costs £1170 on the road and out of the four scooters on the test it was the cheapest to run. We filled all the scooters up before we left in the morning, rode them 30-odd miles to Cleethorpes, did a bit of hooning around for photos and filled them up again after 37.6 miles. The Baotian had used the least amount of fuel, taking just 1.97 litres and £2.68 to fill the tank. That works out at a very respectable 86.77mpg. That figure was achieved at full throttle as well, so imagine what you could do if you were riding with economy in mind.

I thought the front suspension let the quality of the ride down a bit; it was far too soft for my liking and left me feeling like I was on a boat. Other than that (and the sluggish performance) the Baotian is a competent enough scooter, but it's at the top of our price budget and was the highest priced scooter out of the four. I never expected to be able to say a Baotian was expensive (especially when you consider the price of its fantastic 125cc Monza at £1370 OTR), but among the others it was a bit overpriced.

I think we were all quite surprised at just how quickly we covered the 37 miles to Cleethorpes. Despite stopping off at Cadwell Park for a few photos and mucking about a bit, we were at the coast in just over an hour. It gave us time to check out the sandy beach where Steff managed to find a dried up old fish with which to chase Mau along the beach; Mau got his own back by stuffing the smelly creature into Steff's crash helmet... I think Mau was lucky not to get thrown off the pier afterwards!

The return journey was just as quick and it proved to us that a ped doesn't have to be confined to the local area, they're more than capable of getting you out and about and a 75 mile day trip is easy enough. Why not plan an adventure on your own ped? There's nothing better than getting out and riding with a group of mates, no matter what you're on.



"Many riders look for cheap, reliable fuss-free transport and with the Baotian that's what you're getting"

TECHSPEC:

ENGINE: 49cc, air-cooled, four-stroke
 SUSPENSION: Hydraulic forks (F), shock (R)
 LENGTH: 1660mm
 WIDTH: 663mm
 HEIGHT: 1100mm
 WEIGHT: 85kg
 BRAKES: Wavy disc (F), drum (R)
 WHEEL SIZE: 110/70-12

CONTACT:

www.baotianscooters.co.uk

to advertise call 01507 524004 : 49

Budget 50cc shootout

Lexmoto Molly 50cc

RRP: £839.99 (OTR)



\\The Molly really is an eye-catching scooter //

I do like the styling of the Molly; it's very similar to both the SYM Mio and Daelim Bonita to look at – but why would anybody call a scooter Molly? Any red-blooded heterosexual bloke wouldn't choose a scooter with a name like that. Having said that though, the Molly is an eye-catching scooter with curvy panels, chrome handlebars, clocks and headlight.

It also has a weird-looking chrome rear rack – which to be honest, is neither use nor ornament. I don't really know what you could use it for, maybe it was just designed as a styling detail? Another 'feature' of the Molly is that bright green paintwork which certainly makes the scooter stand out. During the day it was very easy to identify in the rear view mirrors while riding the other scooters, it's like a mobile high-viz vest. The Molly is also available in gloss black if you prefer to blend into the crowd a bit, but being noticed is always a good thing on two wheels, so any help is appreciated.

The Molly was the cheapest scooter among the four on test – a very good price for what turned out to be a surprisingly good scooter. The Molly is compact, so if you're tall or prefer to sit towards the front of the seat, you might find the riding position a bit cramped. I was comfortable

on it, but Mau complained that his knees were hitting the handlebars. The scooter has a nice short wheelbase which makes it feel a bit like a Piaggio Zip to ride; it's light, nimble and can corner quite well. It has a front disc brake and drum rear, both of which were good enough.

Suspension was okay, so nothing really worth moaning about there, especially on a scooter that costs just over £800. The Molly is light enough to do a front end wheelie as well – not that many Lexmoto Molly riders will be buying one for its stunting potential!

The engine deserves a special mention; it may only be a 'boring' air-cooled four-stroke lump, but it has a bit of oomph behind it and wasn't far behind the two-strokes on the flat; it would catch them downhill as well and show 50mph on the clock (obviously with head down, as all 50s need to be ridden!). I was quite impressed at the overall look, ride and feel of the Molly, especially at that price.

On our outward journey, it soon became apparent that although we were all riding de-restricted 50cc scooters they were very different in terms of performance.

Four-stroke 50s aren't built with power or speed as a primary thought, so I wasn't expecting the funky-looking Molly to be



able to pull the skin off a rice pudding, but it surprised me.

The scooter actually accelerates very well and will hit 30mph quite quickly; I was also confident enough to filter on it, safe in the knowledge that I wouldn't be holding the traffic up too much if I got to the front of a queue. It also pulls fairly well up hill, although the power does drop off a bit, as you'd expect. Meanwhile Steff was being left miles behind on the Baotian and even after stopping to let him catch up we'd lose sight of him again within a mile-or-so. I even resorted to giving him a helping hand (or foot to be precise) up the hills.

You expect a four-stroke to be much more economical than a two-stroke, but Molly was actually the least fuel efficient out of the four at 71.52mpg, although that's not a figure to be sniffed at. It cost just £3.25 to cover 37.6 miles. Use an old banger as a second car and you're looking at less than 40mpg, plus the extra cost of insurance, £130 a year road tax, expensive MoTs and parking costs. With a moped it's just £16 a year road tax and depending on age and experience, the insurance will be peanuts too.

You can't beat a small capacity scooter for economy, but there are more economical ones than the Lexmoto Molly.



TECHSPEC:

ENGINE: 49cc, air-cooled, four-stroke
SUSPENSION: Hydraulic forks (F), shock (R)
LENGTH: 1680mm
WIDTH: 630mm
HEIGHT: 1020mm
BRAKES: Disc (F), drum (R)
WHEELS: 3.00-10, front and rear

CONTACT:

www.lexmoto.co.uk

Budget 50cc shootout

Pulse Force

RRP: £1049 (OTR)

/// To look at it, you'd expect the Pulse to carry a premium price tag ///



GROUP TEST



The Pulse Force 2T is a lovely-looking scooter; I'd not had the pleasure of riding anything from the brand before so it was a nice surprise to see the scooter up close on the morning of the test. To look at it you'd expect the scooter to carry a premium price tag, it's got that striking paintwork, polished edges on the spoked alloy wheels, an anodised end can on its sports exhausts and powerful disc brakes both front and rear. It also has a fancy digital display complete with rev counter – something you don't usually get on a scooter in this price bracket.

Charlie usually gets the bum end of the deal when we're out on group tests (he's the road testing YTS lad, so just has to take what he's given). This time, in a moment of unnatural kindness, we decided that Charlie could have the first pick of the peds and (as you'd expect) he went for the best-looking scooter first... but would it perform as well as it looked?

Well in a word, yes. The Pulse Force quickly established a lead and left the rest of us behind. That's the last time Charlie gets a choice! Thankfully he was only keeping the scooter for the first 15 miles (well, if he decided to stop anyway). But he knows

where his bread is buttered and without us he wasn't getting any chips, so he kindly waited for us ready for the uphill challenge. You may wonder what it is, but in simple terms it's where you find a large hill, take four de-restricted mopeds and see how they get up it from a standing start.

The Pulse was the quickest up the hill, not surprising for a two-stroke that had been consistently quick, but what I did find a bit surprising was that the four-stroke Molly wasn't far behind – and the Molly was as quick downhill too. The Baotian struggled to get up at more than 20mph, but we gave Steff a push. The WK One would have been third, if we hadn't been larking around, but Mau took advantage of the situation and shot ahead while the rest of us gave Steff a helping boot up the hill.

The only thing worth criticising on the Pulse were the mirrors; the left-hand mirror came loose throughout the test and we eventually took it off; the right-hand mirror also came loose. We'd tightened them up before leaving and even took an Allen key with us, but to no avail. I'm sure a bit of PTFE tape around the threads would have helped though.

TECHSPEC:

ENGINE: 49cc, air-cooled, two-stroke
SUSPENSION: Hydraulic forks (F), shock (R)
BRAKES: Disc front and rear
WHEELS: 130/60-13 front and rear
LENGTH: 1880mm
WIDTH: 700mm
HEIGHT: 1200mm

CONTACT:

www.pulsemoto.co.uk

to advertise call 01507 524004 :55



Budget 50cc shootout

WK one

RRP: £999 (OTR)



///The WK One isn't a bad little scoot ///



WK Bikes is based just around the corner from our offices in Horncastle. It's better known for the Quadzilla range of quads and buggies (which it also imports) and has recently been appointed as the UK agent for the prestigious new Lambretta scooters which you can see a preview of in this issue.

The WK One forms part of the WK Bikes range. It's a nice enough scooter to look at, but it doesn't shout 'steal me' to any light-fingered thief, which, depending on where you live, or where you park, is quite a bonus. The WK One has a two-stroke, air-cooled engine which is always more popular than a 50cc four-stroke. They have a bit more excitement about them, they sound, smell and accelerate like a scooter should, rather than sounding like hover mowers.

Mau and Charlie were the first of our riders to get the keys to the WK. Mau (as I'm sure he won't mind me saying) is a steady kind of rider, not into excessive lean angles or heavy-handed throttle action, so he didn't really have any major complaints about the way the WK One handled during his first stint. Charlie doesn't ride scooters that often; he's a mild mannered sub editor (when we're not kidnapping him) so didn't really have much to compare the WK to and didn't seem perturbed by the WK in any way either. Then you get me and Steff; Steff Woodhouse is a superbike riding, speed freak currently in charge of a 162bhp Ducati Diavel long-termer and likes to push things to the limit. I ride anything and everything for T&G and various other publications, so can usually pick up on subtle differences between different scooters – especially when riding them back to back.

Steff got on the WK One when we got to Cleethorpes and quickly handed it over to

me to have a go on. With most scooters you can just jump on and ride them, but the WK One felt a bit strange; the front end was very vague during cornering; it just didn't feel as it should. You'd tip it into a bend and feel like the front end was going to wash out. We even stopped to check the tyre pressures, thinking it may have a slow puncture; we had a look to make sure that the directional tyre was fitted the right way around, we wobbled the front wheel, checked there was no play in the steering bearings, forks or headset and scratched our collective heads.

In the end we satisfied ourselves that nothing major or dangerous was wrong with the scooter and just carried on riding it. We kind of got used to the way it cornered after a few miles. Ridden on its own it would have felt okay to the average rider, but after riding three scooters that we could just throw around at will, it came as a bit of a shock to the system. The only thing I could put it down to was the tyre profile. Sometimes certain tyres behave differently and take a bit of getting used to – maybe this was one of those?

Aside from the handling issue, which may have just been a problem on our test scooter, the WK One isn't a bad little scoot. It has a wavy front disc, nice-looking red rear shocker and a decent flat rear carrier which could take a topbox; it also has a good sized underseat space.

The WK would do 43mph on the flat and closer to 50 downhill, which isn't bad from a 50. Comfort-wise the seating position leaves your legs sitting high on the floorboards which could be a tad uncomfortable for taller riders.



TECHSPEC:

ENGINE: 49.2cc, air-cooled, two-stroke
SUSPENSION: Hydraulic forks (F), adjustable shock (R)
WHEELS: 120/70-12 (F), 130/70-12 (R)
BRAKES: 190mm disc (F), 110mm drum (R)
LENGTH: 1839mm
WIDTH: 664mm
HEIGHT: 1131mm
WEIGHT: 95kg

CONTACT:

www.wkbikes.com

Budget 50cc shootout

Conclusions

STEFF:

Let's set the scene: I'm in my office and my phone rings. It's Mau; a scooter test is just around the corner, but a drawback came with the words 'fifty' and 'cc'. What the hell!

The day arrived and the choice was a Baotian Eagle GT, a WK One, a Lexmoto Molly or a Pulse Force 2T. It was a toss-up between the Baotian and the Pulse – I chose the Baotian. Pulling out of the car park it was instantly apparent I'd made the wrong choice as the others flew off into the distance! It was a lonely ride, but eventually I found them at the bottom of a hill waiting; my instant thought was to keep going, but my conscience made me stop (another mistake because they wanted to see how fast the bikes would go uphill). At 11mph, I seriously thought about getting off and pushing!

Not all was lost though because downhill the Baotian left everything else in its dust, well, exhaust fumes! Other than its straight line abilities, this would be a good machine; it's reasonably comfortable, handles well and looks the part.

The Molly wasn't my style, but what a scoot; fast (for a 50), comfortable, fantastic chassis feedback and it handled like something twice its value; 8/10 if I had to score it.

For me, the Pulse Force was the best machine; the styling is spot-on, the handling second to none; the quickest machine by some margin, brakes that worked better than all the others and all for under £1200. Great value! If I was in the market for a budget scoot this is the one I'd buy.

The WK One didn't feel right to me; it was like either riding on flat tyres, or the whole thing was twisting. When tipped into a corner it felt like half went one way and the other half in the opposite direction. Not for me I'm afraid.



MAU:

A glance at all four of the scooters on test showed that buying a budget bargain doesn't mean that you have to settle for budget looks and they all looked good in their own different ways. But how would they all stand up to the rigours of our day's outing?

Being four-stroke machines, it was obvious that the Baotian Eagle and the Lexmoto Molly wouldn't have quite the same performance edge of the two-stroke Pulse Force and the WK One (well before the test I would have thought it would be obvious), but I was pleasantly surprised at just how well the Lexmoto Molly did actually perform – it wasn't that far behind the two-strokes all day and gave them a good run for their money. The only problem encountered with the Molly (apart from the name) was the physical size of it; being quite a small scooter, my large frame struggled for space and I found it difficult to manoeuvre, especially on corners.

The Baotian Eagle certainly looked the biz, but being a four-stroke I had expected that it wouldn't match up to the performance of the two-strokes on test – and it didn't. However, once you had wound it up in a straight line, the top end speed wasn't that bad, although overall the two-stroke scooters were always going to be difficult to beat. This indeed proved to be the case, as both the WK One and the Pulse Force were always first away from the lights and handled any inclines encountered quite well – especially the Pulse. However, after riding all four scooters and revisiting the WK One, it became obvious that there were front end handling issues which I can only describe as like riding with a flat tyre – and this cost it points. By contrast, the Pulse Force handled extremely well and coped with all the varying riding conditions. In my opinion it was also the best-looking scooter of the bunch, making it the all-round winner in my books.

