

# Top Box Options—Bare Bones or Bells and Whistles?

THE REALITY OF today's economy causes many of us to look closely at how our money is spent. While saving a buck makes sense, it often makes more sense to spend a bit more to ensure that your purchase will meet all of your needs and stand up to the abuse that motorcycle accessories must endure.

Being a frugal Yankee, I tend to lean toward no-frills choices rather than forking over more money for bells and whistles. When it came to buying my first piece of hard luggage, I considered several options. I was looking for a reasonably priced top-box that provides protection from both the elements and theft. The choices ranged from basic and inexpensive to full-featured, luxurious and pricey. Two top boxes that represent opposite ends of this spectrum are the Bestem T-box 2008 and the CooCase V36 Wizard Luxury Edition.

## Bestem T-Box 2008—\$59.95

I first heard about the budget-minded Bestem T-box 2008 while searching the archives of several Internet forums. The T-Box is a basic top box made of black ABS plastic. The inside of the box is unlined, which means that your cargo may be scuffed unless you provide some sort of padding. The interior measures 14 1/2" x 11" x 11", which is large enough for a single full-faced helmet, but little else. The rim of the box has a double-wall construction that keeps water out, but there is no rubber gasket, which made me skeptical about my cargo remaining dry in bad weather. It was my tester's luck that an opportunity to test this capability presented itself on our way home from Americade. Thankfully, even without the benefit of a rubber gasket, the interior stayed dry after a good heavy rain. There was no need to simulate the effect with a garden hose.

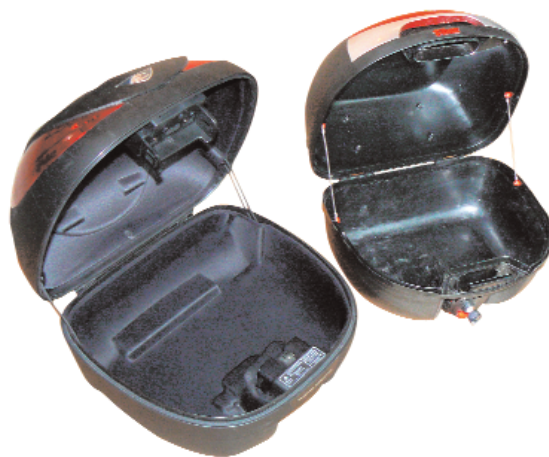
The mounting system includes a black metal base plate and universal hardware that required about two hours to fit onto the SW Motech Alu-rack that had been previously mounted to our Kawasaki Z750S test mule.

The keyed latch is simple and easy to use and features a quick-release system for removing the box from the base plate. One complaint is that you can only open and close the box using the included key, which can be inconvenient. Also, even though the hinges seem sturdy enough, I wonder about their durability over the long haul.

The T-box has a built-in passenger backrest and a red lens whose function is for styling purposes only. If you are a budget-minded rider who is in the market for a basic top box, the Bestem 2008 is a good solution.

## CooCase V36 Wizard Luxury Edition—\$249.00 Basic Edition—\$169.99

At the other end of the spectrum is the CooCase V36 Wizard Luxury provided by our friends at Twisted Throttle. At nearly \$200 more than the Bestem T-Box, the CooCase had to prove its worth to this frugal New Englander.



The CooCase (left) is larger, but there is enough space in the Bestem for a full-face helmet and other essentials.

The top-of-the-line CooCase top case is a premium piece of hard luggage with a luxuriously textured plastic lid panel (which is also removable and can be paint-matched). The CooCase features solid construction, sturdy hinges and a quality latching system. The box has a 36-liter volume, measuring 17.5" x 16" x 12", which easily holds a full-faced helmet with space to spare for a pair of gloves and a rain jacket. The lid has two ratchet-type supports and a rubber gasket to ensure a waterproof seal.

The luxury version of the V36 includes premium features such as a cushioned interior liner to protect valuables from scuffs and damage. Also included are an electronics package that power a keyless entry and automatic locking system, a motion-sensitive alarm system and four small LED running/brake lights housed in the backside of the lid for extra conspicuity. When we say the Luxury model has bells and whistles, we mean literally.

The CooCase mounts directly to many OEM and aftermarket racks using the



The fancy CooCase V36 on the left and the budget Bestem T-Box 2008 on the right.

supplied plastic mounting plate. Fitting the CooCase to our Triumph-mounted SW Motech rack took a bit of customizing, but the quality hardware allowed a secure installation.

For those who want a quality top case, but aren't willing to shell out the bucks for the Luxury edition, a basic version of the case is available for \$80 less. The basic version offers waterproof storage, but without the electronics or padded liner.

## Conclusion

Both boxes do the same job of storing a helmet and other essentials. The CooCase's interior liner, sophisticated electronics, sturdy mounting hardware, tight tolerances and overall quality promise a long and satisfying service life. The Bestem may not have the fancy features of the CooCase, but it is an attractive looking and useful case nonetheless.

If you're looking for an inexpensive topbox capable of carrying your stuff while keeping it secure and dry, you can't go wrong with the Bestem. The mounting hardware, hinges and latching system aren't as sophisticated and it isn't the most rugged unit, but the Bestem is a real value. However, if what you are looking for is a top box that is extra sturdy and pampers you with creature comforts, then look no further than the exquisite CooCase V36 Luxury.

—Ken Condon

## CONTACT

Bestem USA—2189 Flintstone Dr., Suite D-E; Tucker, GA 30084; 678-534-1366; www.bestemusa.com

Twisted Throttle LLC—1080 Kingstown Rd., Bld. 1; Peace Dale, RI 02879; 401-284-4200; www.twistedthrottle.com