



Left: Despite improvements to its aerodynamics and ram-air system our '02 ZX-9R was actually slower than our last test model, 167.7 mph vs. 170 back in '98. We laid the blame on a mysterious hp drop.

Right: Instrumentation is adequate but the design is starting to show its age. But, the ZX-9R's pilot is still the most comfortable in the Open Class, as cockpits have become more cramped over the years.



Left: Where the older ZX-9R used to wear six-piston Tokico calipers, the new one uses lighter four-piston Nissans—some of the very best available. We were very impressed with the power and feel of the front stoppers, although the rear unit was not so impressive.



Below: The swingarm is now braced for 20% greater stiffness, and the 49-state exhaust system now uses stainless steel headers with a titanium exhaust canister tuned for improved mid-range. Besides saving weight, it's also repositioned for greater ground clearance.



Left: We had no complaints over the ZX-9R's suspension, which felt properly balanced for good handling. Note the upper shock mount; where the clevis is connected to the chassis, Kawasaki has made provision for shims (see arrow) to be easily inserted or removed to adjust the ride height for fine tuning of turning characteristics. A set of five shims is priced at \$169.32 (part #92026-1586).



TESTERS' LOG

My first impression was that the Ninja worked well for the tight-road, aggressive riding I most prefer. Where normally I spend the first part of my day coming to grips with the handling characteristics of a new machine, on this Kawasaki I immediately felt comfortable. I attribute this to the geometry and balance KMC engineers have achieved.

Yes, in this class there remain more powerful choices but we must not get carried away with hp escalation. After all, how much do we really need, or more importantly, can we actually use? I'm the first one for all-out performance, but anyone who tells me they bought another machine because of its power advantage has better have an AMA professional license. This motorcycle did everything I asked of it extremely well and with ease. In this world of extremes, what more could I ask? Obviously, I like this one.

—Danny Coe

It's evident that Kawasaki's engineers actually considered that someone might ride the 9R further than up the canyon and back on Sunday mornings. The somewhat relaxed, semi-aggressive rid-

ing position didn't place too much weight on my wrists or stress in my neck, and there is plenty of room between the seat and pegs. Because of my height, I did pick up a little buffeting as air spilled off the windscreen. If only the windscreen were an inch or so taller.

While our dyno runs indicate that the '02 is down a bit on hp from our 1998 test bike, the power delivery is very smooth and friendly, which makes the 9R easy to ride. Real-world performance between the two is nearly identical.

One thing that impressed me is how rock-steady the bike feels under all conditions and yet how responsive it is to steering inputs; think about it and you're headed that way. I liked the Nissan 4-pot calipers up front—good feel and plenty of power. The Tokico rear brake worked okay...as long as I was able to keep the rear wheel on the ground!

Low speed running while cold is a little ragged, but worst of all is the inability to restart the engine while in gear. Come on guys, you know better than that. Otherwise, what a hoot!

—Walt Fulton

2002 Kawasaki ZX-9R

SPECIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE DATA

ENGINE

Type:liquid-cooled, inline four
Valvetrain:DOHC, 4 valves per cyl.,
adjusting shims under buckets
Size:899cc
Bore/stroke:75.0mm x 50.9mm
Comp. ratio:12.2:1
Carburetion: ..Keihin CVKD 40mm x 4
with K-TRIC
Exhaust:4-2-1

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission:6-speed
Final drive:No. 525 O-ring chain
RPM @ 65 mph/redline ..4440/12,000

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase:55.7"
Rake/trail24.0°/3.9"
Ground clearance:6.5"
Seat height:32.25"
GVWR:860 lbs.
Wet weight:470.0 lbs.
Carrying capacity:390 lbs.

SUSPENSION

Front:46mm cartridge forks,
fully-adjustable
4.7" travel
Rear:Uni-Trak swingarm,
stepless damping adjustment
5.3" travel
Front:dual 320mm discs,
four-piston calipers
Rear:220mm disc,
single-piston caliper

TIRES & WHEELS

Front:120/70ZR17 Bridgestone
Battlax BT012F on 3.50" x 17" wheel
Rear:190/50ZR17 Bridgestone
Battlax BT012R on 6.00" x 17" wheel

ELECTRICS

Battery:12V, 8AH
Ignition:TCBI digital advance
w/throttle position sensor
Headlight:60/55W x 2

FUEL

Tank capacity:5.0 gal.
High/low/avg. mpg:44.2/39.8/41.8



PERFORMANCE

Measured top speed167.7 mph
0-1/4 mile10.33 sec.
@ 134.93 mph
0-60 mph3.04 sec.
0-100 mph5.98 sec.
60-0 mph117.1'
Power to Weight Ratio1:3.88
Speed @ 65 mph indicated61.0

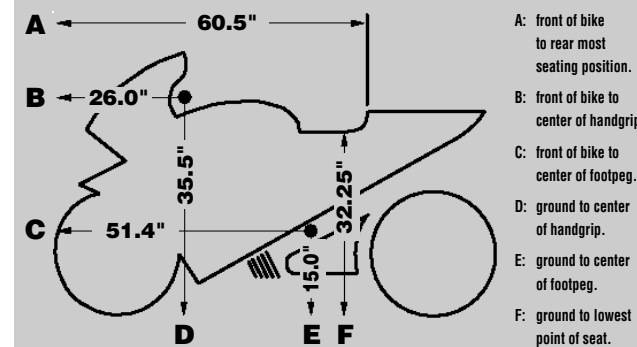
M/C RATING SYSTEM

EXCELLENT
VERY GOOD
GOOD
FAIR
POOR

Open Sportbike

Engine ●●●●○
Transmission ●●●●○
Suspension ●●●●○
Brakes ●●●●●
Handling ●●●●●
Styling ●●●●●
Riding Impression ●●●●○
Instruments/Controls ●●●●○
Attention to Detail ●●●●○
Value ●●●●○
OVERALL RATING ●●●●○

ERGONOMICS TEMPLATE



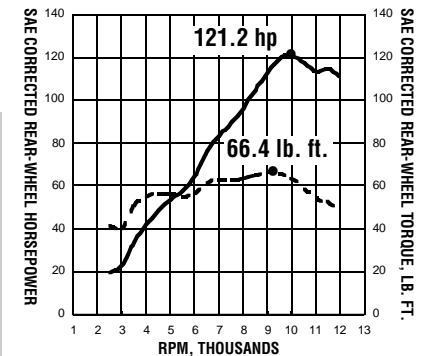
MISCELLANEOUS

Instruments:speedo, tach,
odometer, tripmeter,
clock, coolant temp.
Indicators:hi-beam, t/s, neutral,
oil pressure
MSRP:\$9,499??
Valve adj. interval:12,000 mi.
Warranty:12 mo., unlimited miles
Colors:Lime Green/Black Pearl or
Candy Gold Spark/Black Pearl

DYNAMOMETER DATA

Low end ●●●●○
Mid-range ●●●●○
Top end ●●●●○

At low rpm, the lack of fly-wheel weight demands adept clutch and throttle control. Mid-range performance is exceptional; smooth, responsive and powerful. The top end is strong, but not by comparison to class rivals. The ram air sounds great.



TEST NOTES

PICKS

- Carbs tuned so well that you ask, who needs fuel injection?
- Superb transmission adds significantly to riding pleasure
- Ergonomics appropriate for the road, not just the track

PANS

- Too many safety features for your safety
- Break-away turn signals too eager to break-away
- The inside of the fairing is cluttered

STANDARD MAINTENANCE

Item	Time	Parts	Labor
Oil & Filter	0.5	\$24.90	\$30.00
Air Filter	0.5	\$26.59	\$30.00
Valve Adjust	1.5	\$80.24	\$90.00
Battery Access	0.3	MF	\$18.00
Final Drive	0.3		\$18.00
R/R Rear Whl.	0.3		\$18.00
Change Plugs	0.8	\$27.80	\$48.00
Synch Carbs	0.8		\$48.00
Totals	5.0	\$159.53	\$300.00

Note: MCN Labor rate changed to \$60/hr. from \$54/hr. in May 2002