

REVIEW: '08 Kawasaki ZX10

REVIEW BY HEIN JONKER

Kawasaki came out swinging in the beginning of 2008 with a heavily tweaked ZX-10R ...

Model years 2007/08 have been big for Team Green, and the stampede of new bikes just keeps on coming. Kawasaki is taking its attack on the market seriously, not resting for a moment, it seems, as its superbike effort has been stepped up with a heavily revised ZX-10R. This can only serve the company well, as the mighty Ninja is the latest (and last) entry from the Big Four to up the ante. Kawasaki proudly proclaim that Japanese Superbike racer Akira Yanagawa was the willing guinea pig chosen to help bring the 10R back to the ring to take another swing. The '08 bike is basically a ground-up restoration, so let's dive in and see what's new.



Plenty of tweaking and twiddling happened in and around the 998cc liquid-cooled, DOHC, 16-valve, inline-Four. Focus was on top-end poke without sacrificing the mid-range grunt and greater power at higher revs. Improved and more precise throttle response, with a reshaped ram-air system in order to quiet intake noise (Ugh! Why do that?). A new ignition system where the bike's brain will make the decision for you as to whether or not you really need all the power you requested at that moment when it considers a truck load of other factors.

Although Kawasaki likes to think of this motorcycle as a race-bike with lights, it still received enhancements to make it behave on the street. If you can't tell by looking at the bike, an all-new exhaust system resides mostly under the engine, looking an awful lot like systems on other bikes these days. The gearbox has received several tweaks; first, fourth and fifth gear ratios were lowered; all the power in the world is useless if you can't control it. Concave components (stampings) were turned inside out to become convex in order to reduce stresses, wall thickness was increased. Wheelies are fun, but the wheelie monster ZX-10R could use a little more bias toward the front, in my opinion. The sing-arm is now made with pressed instead of cast-aluminium beams and even the sub-frame was overhauled, becoming narrower, and it now mounts to the frame's upper cross-member in order to give the rider more feedback as to what the rear suspension is doing.

Super-slick Diamond Like Carbon (DLC) coating graces the fork tubes for less stickiness on the fully-adjustable 43mm inverted fork. Relocating springs to the bottom of the fork is said to reduce oil frothing. Rear suspension changes include dual (low and high-speed) compression damping on the fully-adjustable rear shock, and a new mounting spot for the Uni-Trak linkage connects the shock to the top-braced swing-arm. Lighter and stiffer five-spoke wheels causing less un-sprung weight which should translate to better handling and suspension control. Braking duties are handled by radial mounted Tokico callipers that crush down on 310mm (10mm bigger than last year) petal rotors, and feature reduced thickness from 6 to 5.5mm. The rear petal disc is 220mm. Street riders weren't forgotten, a reshaped fuel tank has more flare (we wish we could come up with a really good "Office Space" reference) to allow the rider to rest his or her weary arms whilst caning the bike through a turn. The top of the tank has a recess added to make room for the helmet's chin bar when in a full tuck behind a new, flatter windscreen. The seat also got some work. It's now shorter front to back, narrower at the front and softer (Thank you!).

Lastly, a new front fender directs cool air toward the radiator; redesigned mirrors now have integrated turn signals and are easily removable for race day, as is the new license plate holder/rear signal combo. A new LED taillight keeps others on the road aware of your presence and intentions.

PRICE

R119 995.00 Incl. 14% VAT

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