



Just because you're forced to do the LAMS thing doesn't mean you have to spend a fortune or buy someone else's problem

# *The* GIXXER ELIXIR

**B**eing forced to get a LAMS-approved motorcycle, when you just want the quickest or best-looking beast on the planet, can plain old suck but it's the way of things. Suzuki gets it. It understands that most rookie riders are going to ditch that LAMS bike the moment they snag that full licence. Which means it also understands many of those riders aren't going to want to cough up a bucket of money on a bike they'll probably sell in the near future.

So Suzuki has thrown a couple of LAMS-approved bikes into the mix that look the part, can do the business on the road and are wonderfully affordable, even compared to bikes in the secondhand market.

Those two bikes are the new Gixxer 250 and Gixxer SF 250. The Gixxer 250 is the naked machine with a higher, wider handlebar, a more upright riding position and a very modest \$6490 ride-away price tag. The Gixxer SF 250 is fully faired, has a sportier look, feel and riding position, and carries a ride-away price of \$6790.

Apart from those differences, the SF has a longer wheelbase and more trail for greater stability at speed, while the Gixxer 250 has a lower seat height and weighs less than the SF. Apart from that, the two are mechanically identical. There isn't a lot of difference on paper but they roll very differently in the real world (see sidebar).

The dual-pronged Gixxer attack is powered by a fuel-injected, 249cc, oil-cooled, single-cylinder engine producing a claimed 19.8kW (26.7hp) at 9300rpm and 22.2Nm of cheap and cheerful fun. The engine is stolen straight from the Hamamatsu factory's V-Strom 250SX adventure machine, as is the steel cradle frame that the SOHC motor finds itself within.

Neither Gixxer is going to set the world on fire but there's enough squirt to grab the green light holeshot and keep ahead of the tin tops, and both will happily cruise along between 90 and 100km/h without throwing a valve through the head. Both tapped out at around the 125km/h mark with my 100kg-plus bulk on them, which is more than enough from a small-capacity commuter.

The naked Gixxer has a claimed wet weight of 156kg, while the SF comes in a few kilograms heavier at 161kg. Five kilograms isn't much but when you're on a motorcycle with less than 20kW of mumbo available, it makes a difference and the naked version is noticeably peppier than the fully faired SF – you can easily pull a first-gear wheelie on the nakedbike, though it's a tougher gig getting the front end up on the SF.

The engine is smooth and willing for its capacity and, based on Suzuki's reputation for making almost indestructible engines, there's a good chance it'll keep going, and going, and

### HOW YOU FAIRING?

The full fairing and associated paraphernalia add an extra 5kg, but look snazzy and should keep you drier for longer plus give you that sportsbike image.

### SIT HERE

The SF's seat height measures up at 800mm, 5mm higher than the naked Gixxer, but both are slim through the waist, which should suit all riders.

### BAR NONE

The SF runs sportier clip-on style 'bars while the naked machine runs a dirtbike-style 'bar. While the riding position is quite different both are still comfortable.



### THAT SOCS

The 249cc engine may look water-cooled but actually uses the tried and tested Suzuki Oil Cooling System (SOCS) to prevent meltdowns.

### BOING!

There's plenty of protection from rear-wheel debris on both of the Gixxers, including an expansive hugger which needs to be removed to adjust the seven-step preload.

### OH, STOP IT

Both versions run the same braking package and it's perfectly suited to the specs of the Gixxer. A 300mm disc up front and 220mm on the back with ByBre calipers.

## I RATE BOTH BIKES FOR THEIR DECENT SUSPENSION AND OVERALL HANDLING

Both machines utilise a non-adjustable 41mm conventional fork of an indeterminate brand, accompanied by a preload-adjustable monoshock on the rear that maintains control over a steel swingarm. The suspension is basic, yet surprisingly effective, especially given my weight and the speeds at which I typically ride. Both bikes adeptly absorb bumps, providing a smooth yet firm ride without excessive harshness.

It's worth mentioning that adjusting the rear preload requires removing the rear hugger but, really, the base settings are good enough that it'll only be the most enthusiast tinkerers who will go to this length.

For standard street use, I rate both bikes for their decent suspension performance and overall handling. Even when pushing hard on twisty country roads at high speeds, it takes considerable effort to make either Gixxer misbehave – and I tried! And even then, it's just a matter of some wallowing on fast, bumpy corners, with larger hits causing a bit of a jarring response from the front-end. However, I was pushing the Gixxers well beyond how Suzuki intended them to be used.

Braking duties are handled by Brembo's entry-level brand, Bybre, and feature a single 300mm front disc gripped by a twin-piston caliper on



**1.** Pete gets down to business on the Gixxer. He was impressed with its unflustered performance when he turned up the wick on bumpy back roads

**2 & 3.** Dashboards on both bikes are fairly basic but have all the information a rider needs

**4.** Brembo's budget braking brand is well up to the job on both Gixxers

**5.** Air-cooled single-cylinder engine is unbreakable

**6.** Pete thinks about getting his knee down. Because he can...

end up powering some farm-built go-kart 50 years from now. The six-speed gearbox isn't as sweet as the engine and, well, feels like it could have come from a 50-year-old farm-built go-kart. I'm exaggerating, of course, and it shifts fine if you're assertive with the lever, but both machines throw up false neutrals between second and third gears regularly if you don't shift with purpose when you've got the throttle pinned. This will probably get better with more kays on the clock.

The shape of the Euro 5-compliant exhaust is fairly extreme and Suzuki has tried to make both silencers more appealing by adding chrome covers, but the lack of chrome elsewhere means, to my eye at least, it's only managed to highlight the odd-looking silencers rather than soften them. And it'd probably be easier to forgive if they sounded great, but they reduce most of that lumpy single-cylinder thump to something more akin to a gasp.



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the front, while the rear employs a 220mm disc squeezed by a single-piston caliper. The braking performance is perfectly adequate for the performance level. Although feel through the non-adjustable front lever is somewhat wooden – that will improve with time (there was only 200km on the odo) – there’s ample power at both ends.

A dual-channel ABS system is in place and, while the front ABS is a bit intrusive, the system is offering a practical and effective safety blanket while you’re learning your craft. Also keeping the cast-alloy wheels grounded is commonly sized 110/70-17 and 150/60-17 rubber, which means vast options for stickier or more durable tyres if you’re not happy with the MRF Revz fitted to both bikes as standard. The MRF rubber performed pretty well... no moments, scares or complaints here and I rode in both wet and dry conditions.

For novice riders, the Gixxer and Gixxer SF both tick the performance box just fine. They both offer relatively solid engine performance, competent and predictable handling, and brakes that are up to the task. However, in the realm of LAMS bikes, other considerations come into play beyond performance. Seat height and weight, for instance, are significant factors for many new riders and both score high here.

The Gixxer 250 boasts a seat height of 795mm, while the SF has a slightly higher height of 800mm. These numbers are really accessible and combined with the low weight and slender profiles of both models, they’ll make Learner life just that little bit less intimidating.

Both seats are firm but comfortable, and the slim junction between the 12-litre tank and the seat helps get those pins towards the ground. Despite the compact size of both machines, the



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## FOR NOVICE RIDERS, THE GIXXER AND GIXXER SF BOTH TICK THE PERFORMANCE BOX JUST FINE

riding position is comfortable – even for larger riders like me – and I had no hassles moving about or hanging off either bike. The tank, seat and rear-end are identical between the two models so the feel from the cockpit, apart from the difference in ‘bars, is the same.

There is surprisingly good pillion accommodation, with a pillion pad that looks decent, and there’s a set of sturdy grab handles fitted. I’m not sure I’d be dragging too many pillions on a bike of this size and, if you’re on your Ls or Ps you’re not allowed to anyway, so most owners will use the pillion accommodation space as a useful place to strap gear.

Considering their affordable price tags, the finish of both bikes is commendable. Aside from that silencer, the matte black and matte blue paint schemes are well executed and don’t look tacky, which some schemes appealing to a younger audience can tend to do.

The dash is a straightforward digital display – no pretty colours here, but it’s easy to read in any light and, without modes and a thousand menus to

## BUT WHICH ONE?

Despite sharing so many components, the two Gixxers look really different and also are quite different to ride

THE VARIATIONS between the two may be small, but there’s a notable distinction when riding them.

The SF features lower clip-on style ‘bars that place more weight on your wrists, providing the SF with a sportier feel and appearance.

It’s not a full-on sportbike crouch, but rather it sits on the sportier side of Comfortville. Additionally, you enjoy better wind and weather protection from the full fairing and stubby screen.

On the other hand, the Gixxer is more comfortable due to its higher-mounted handlebar and more upright riding position. Instead of adversely affecting the nakedbike’s handling, the ‘bar offers excellent leverage, making it feel like you have control over the bike, especially when navigating corners. With a shorter wheelbase and less weight, it’s a livelier and arguably more entertaining ride. The lighter front-end even makes wheelies possible on the naked machine.

In terms of performance and handling, the SF feels slightly sluggish compared to the Gixxer.

Unless you’re specifically seeking the sportbike look, the Gixxer 250, with its lower seat height, less weight and greater manoeuvrability, is the preferred choice for the type of riding these bikes are designed for.

1 & 2. The two models demand a slightly different riding style

3. Well-designed fairing on the SF doesn’t look built down to a price

4. The Gixxer’s headlight is typical of a modern nakedbike

5. Pillion seat looks fine but will more likely be used as a place to store luggage

6 & 7. Two distinctive styles give two distinctive options for L and P platers at a price that will suit most budgets

# MONEY TALKS

## LAMS naked



### CFMoto 300NK

Engine 292.4cc single  
Power 20.5kW @ 8500rpm  
Torque 25Nm @ 7000rpm  
Weight 151kg (wet, claimed)  
Seat height 795mm  
\$5790 ride away

## LAMS sportbikes



### CFMoto 300SR

Engine 292.4cc single  
Power 21.4kW @ 8750rpm  
Torque 25.3Nm @ 7250rpm  
Weight 165kg (wet, claimed)  
Seat height 780mm  
From \$5790 ride away



### BMW G 310 R

Engine 313cc single  
Power 25kW @ 9250rpm  
Torque 28Nm @ 7500rpm  
Weight 164kg (wet, claimed)  
Seat height 785mm  
\$9190 ride away



### Kawasaki Ninja 400

Engine 399cc parallel twin  
Power 35kW @ 10,000rpm  
Torque 37Nm @ 8000rpm  
Weight 168kg (wet, claimed)  
Seat height 785mm  
\$8995 ride away



### KTM 200 Duke

Engine 199.5cc single cylinder  
Power 19kW @  
Torque 19.5Nm @  
Weight 146kg (dry, claimed)  
Seat height 830mm  
\$5895 ride away



### Yamaha YZF-R15M

Engine 155cc single  
Power 13.5kW @ 7500rpm  
Torque 14.2Nm @ 7500rpm  
Weight 140kg (wet, claimed)  
Seat height 815mm  
\$6299 ride away





SPECS

**ENGINE**

Capacity 249cc

Type Single-cylinder, SOHC, 4 valves

Bore & stroke 76.0mm x 54.9mm

Compression ratio 10.7:1

Cooling Air/oil

Fueling EFI

Transmission Six-speed

Clutch Wet, multi-plate

Final drive Chain

**PERFORMANCE**

Power 19.5kW @ 9300rpm (claimed)

Torque 22.2Nm @ 7300rpm (claimed)

Top speed 130km/h (est)

Fuel consumption Gixxer 2.9L/100km, SF 2.7L/100km (measured)

**ELECTRONICS**

Type Suzuki

Rider aids Dual-channel ABS

Modes Not applicable

**CHASSIS**

Frame material Steel

Frame type Cradle

Rake 24°

Trail Gixxer 95mm, SF 96mm

Wheelbase Gixxer 1340mm, SF 1345mm

**SUSPENSION**

Type Suzuki

Front: 41mm telescopic fork, non-adjustable, 120mm travel

Rear: Monoshock, adjustable preload, 133mm travel

**WHEELS & BRAKES**

Wheels Cast aluminium

Front: 17 x 3.0 Rear: 17 x 4.0

Tyres MRF Revz

Front: 110/70R17

Rear: 150/60R17

Brakes Bybre

Front: Single 300mm disc, twin-piston caliper

Rear: Single 220mm disc, single-piston caliper

**DIMENSIONS**

Weight Gixxer 156kg, SF 161kg (wet, claimed)

Seat height Gixxer 795mm, SF 800mm

Width Gixxer 805mm, SF 740mm

Height 1035mm

Length 2110mm

Ground clearance 165mm

Fuel capacity 12L

**SERVICING & WARRANTY**

Servicing First: 1000km

Minor: 5000km

Major: 10,000km

Warranty Three years, unlimited km

**BUSINESS END**

Price Gixxer \$6490, SF \$6790 (ride away)

Colour options Matt Blue or Matt Black

**CONTACT**

suzukimotorcycles.com.au



navigate, it's really simple. It still provides all the information you need, including an oil-change indicator light, an adjustable shift light, twin trip meters, an odo, tacho, clock and fuel gauge.

The Gixxer 250 and Gixxer SF 250, like the mini V-Strom, are produced in Suzuki's Indian manufacturing plant, which is why it can offer these two at such keen prices. It's important to note that Suzuki doesn't just farm out production to some shonky local manufacturer, the Gixxers are built in a Suzuki facility, to Suzuki's exact standards, so I wouldn't be concerned about the quality of the product.

If you're dismissing these bikes as 'cheap', then they're probably not intended for you. The Gixxer 250 and Gixxer SF 250 are targeting riders seeking a LAMS-approved bike that combines good looks, decent performance and affordability. Suzuki has undoubtedly succeeded in hitting the mark in this regard. 🏍️



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1. Muffler lets the looks department down, Pete reckons

2. Quite a classy-looking bike from any angle

3. We don't recommend L-platers do this to warm up the rear tyre on a cold day

4. Why? Because Pete has an ambition to wheelie every motorcycle model on the planet



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Cheap and cheerful but the two machines feel and look well-built. 👍



PROS AND CONS



The exhaust could be sleeker and the gearbox could be slicker.