

FINE  
CHINA

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CFMoto is setting new standards in Chinese motorcycle manufacturing – not only with the bikes but also with marketing.

FOR MANY YEARS, if you asked a motorcycle enthusiast or commuter to name a Chinese motorcycle brand they would not be able to, except perhaps to name the rebrand (something like Llexmoto or Zingbikes). Just possibly they might know that Lifan, for example, is a major manufacturer but that would be rare. This is due to the Chinese motorcycle industry's propensity for re-branding (re-badging) and little has changed to this day.

In more modern times an exception has arisen, and that is CFMoto. CFMoto has been a revelation in the Chinese motorcycle industry in many ways as they have adopted a more 'western' attitude to business philosophy and marketing. They are one of the few Chinese motorcycle manufacturers that sell internationally using their own brand and trying to promote brand recognition. CFMoto is now considered a serious motorcycle company internationally as they have striven to develop models that the bigger motorcycle factories have not.

These models include a range of 650cc bikes. CFMoto's bikes have received great reviews around the world (Australian MOTORCYCLIST ran a pair of them across Australia and back) and have propelled CFMoto to the position of most recognised Chinese motorcycle brand. In addition to this CFMoto is making a name for itself by manufacturing highly styled and large displacement (by Chinese standards) UTV and ATV vehicles. CFMoto also developed China's first large displacement touring line (the Chinese industry considers any displacement over 500cc to be 'large'). These bikes utilise a liquid cooled parallel twin engine that delivers 41.5 KW of power.

One of the aspects of business that CFMoto is to be commended for is its willingness to explore markets that other Chinese motorcycle manufacturers do not. To export to Australia takes an ECE certificate and many Chinese companies will not invest the money necessary to get one because of the limited market opportunities Down Under. CFMoto actively pursues the UTV market in Australia and has been earning rave reviews from Australian motorcycle magazines.

The CFMoto touring bike 650NK uses quality parts, which shows the kind of commitment to technology and specific riding details that CFMoto offers and other Chinese manufacturers ignore. It is another reason why CFMoto, despite being a much smaller company than the Chongqing giants, commands the motorcycle magazine headlines when it comes to Chinese bikes.

It's not just CFMoto's eye for technical detail that impresses but also its modern attitude to marketing. A cursory glance at the CFMoto website (the original Chinese one, not one of the many international websites) will show the difference in their attention to detail from other Chinese motorcycle traders. To many Chinese companies a website is just a necessary evil and they are unwilling to commit the effort, thought and money necessary to make a professional version. CFMoto's website is comprehensive and useful, much more than just a necessary afterthought. To get an idea of what I am saying here, look at CFMoto's website and then compare it to the websites of much bigger manufacturers like Zongshen, Loncin, Lifan and pretty much anyone else. For example, have a look at the

Zongshen website and you'll see that their 'news' section hasn't been updated since 2014.

CFMoto (in cooperation with WK Bikes) first entered the isle of Man TT in 2013 and became the first Chinese manufacturer to do so (in fact the only other Chinese manufacturer to enter a bike into serious motorsports racing was Loncin in the 125 MotoGP many years ago). With Gary Johnson on board the bike registered a commendable 109 mph practice lap in its first year and has since gone on to improve year after year culminating with Johnson claiming 4th spot in the lightweight TT (just 2 seconds off the podium, beating Suzuki and Kawasaki).

CFMoto's success has prompted big exporters like Loncin and Zongshen to market their own brand names with Zongshen electing to market the 'Cyclone' range in a brand recognition campaign. In addition to this CFMoto seems to have kick-started the scramble for the development of bigger displacement engines. Companies that have never produced an engine over 250cc (with the exception of certain ATV engines) are now actively seeking technical nous from abroad and sinking hundreds of thousands of dollars into engine research and development.

In terms of the Chinese motorcycle industry, CFMoto has become quite a catalyst for evolution.

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