



If ever there was a bike company with a chequered past, it's Benelli. They've had more ups and downs than the Big One at Blackpool Pleasure Beach; but with new management and a healthy dose of cold hard cash introduced by the Qianjiang Group when they bought the firm in 2005 (not to mention a technical director who has worked tirelessly to eradicate any outstanding technical issues), their future looks much brighter.

**It's good to see something a little bit different now and again; we get tired of sitting on yet another cloned scooter, slightly tweaked from a dozen other lookalike machines – and there's only so much you can write about their sticker kits and LCD dashboards.**

Thankfully, this brand spanking new Benelli 49X hits the spot. It may not be Italjet Dragster radical or Sachs Madass weird, but it's not your normal run of the mill scooter either. Look at the contours of the colour-coded rear bodywork as it arcs backwards to meet the tail lights; marvel at the detailing of the seat, its upholstery trimmed with intricate stitching and embossed with the scooter's subtitle 'Quattro Move'; fine detailing like the go faster stripe on the rear hugger and those well-crafted motocross style bars, aircraft style fuel filler and that bad boy two-stroke engine

Sometimes you just know you're going to like something before you even ride it. I'd not even seen photos of the Benelli before it landed on my doorstep (I'd had a quick peek at an artist's impression, but that was about the lot). Thankfully I was impressed and as I looked around the beast I warmed to it even more. Those well-executed styling cues mentioned before help to turn what could look like an ordinary scooter into something desirable; and it had the local scooter lads intrigued as I razzed around the village and gathered a posse together... OK, to be honest they caught up with me on their kitted-up peds, so it was more like I was being followed as opposed to being a posse leader.

It doesn't matter how you dress a four-stroke 50 up, it will never have the same instinctive appeal as a nippy little two-stroke. They may smoke a bit in the mornings and you have to mess about filling the oil reservoir up every now and again, but they still sound and perform so much better than their modern eco replacements. That wisp of smoke and sweet smell of semi-synthetic as you start the scoot is unbeatable and all part of the riding experience. In years to come when two-strokes have been completely outlawed, illegal underground sniffing chambers will be opening around the world for desperados like myself to get their kicks. Smoky old engines will fire into life and release their vapours on a pay per fume basis.

In the meantime, we can still just about enjoy the fragrance out on the roads. The latest two-stroke engines may have been strangled to pass strict emissions tests, but they still do the trick. Wind the throttle open on this derestricted, air-cooled Benelli and it moves faster than a four stroke 50 – and it sounds much nicer too. The scooter we had on test had zero miles on the clock, but it still just about topped 50mph. Now that's a top speed not to be sniffed at. Obviously in restricted form the scoot will only hit the dizzying heights of 30mph, but at least the potential is there should you wish to unleash it.

The Benelli sits on 10-inch wheels and is shod with Chen Shin tyres. Once warmed up, the tyres performed quite well and they're actually fairly sticky. I grew up on 10-inch wheels; the older pressed steel split rims didn't promote the best handling, but the 49X felt fairly stable



**Above: Clean lines and sharp styling**  
**Below: Very strong front brake**



# > Benelli 49X



## TECHSPEC:

<b>Engine:</b>	49.26cc single cylinder air-cooled two-stroke
<b>Fuel system:</b>	Carburettor
<b>Transmission:</b>	CVT
<b>Emissions:</b>	Euro 2
<b>Front brake:</b>	190mm disc
<b>Rear brake:</b>	Drum
<b>Tyres:</b>	120/90-10 (front), 130/90-10 (rear)
<b>Dimensions:</b>	Length 1805mm, width 695mm, height 1100mm, 1275mm wheelbase
<b>Dry weight:</b>	96kg
<b>Price:</b>	£1599 OTR
<b>Contact:</b>	<a href="http://www.benelli.co.uk">www.benelli.co.uk</a>

on its little alloy hoops. Its suspension was fairly good too – quite hard, but it did the job so I can't complain. The only real cost-cutting measure as far as I can see on this scooter is the weedy rear drum brake; luckily, the front disc makes up for it and is plenty strong enough to perform a half decent stoppie.

On a practical level, the seat is quite high and wide. I'm 5ft 10in and struggled to get both feet flat on the floor, so if you're shorter than me, it's worth having a sit on one before you buy. Luckily the scooter is light enough to manage, so providing you don't mind leaning on one foot, smaller riders should still be able to cope.

The Benelli features a fairly deep and roomy underseat space; it also has a couple of cubby holes behind the legshields and a bag hook, although the raised centre tunnel means you won't be placing too much shopping between your legs. The way the frame and rear end of the scooter finish means you'll not be able to fit a rear rack easily either, but this scoot is aimed squarely at teenagers, so a rack would ruin their street cred overnight anyway.

The dash layout is fairly simple with an analogue speedo, fuel gauge and a clock; they may be a bit plain looking, but they're easy to read on the move, with the exception of the digital clock, which is a bit tricky to see because it's blocked by those mean-looking handlebars.

Overall, I was impressed with the scooter. If clean lines, sharp styling and the exclusivity of a brand new model are what floats your boat, you might just want to head down to your nearest Benelli dealer and see what all the fuss is about before your mates beat you to it.

WORDS AND PHOTOS: Iggy

## ALTERNATIVE CHOICE: PEUGEOT RS12 BLASTER



**Price: £1579**

If you're looking for something funky with a two-stroke engine, then you can't go far wrong with the excellent Peugeot RS12 Blaster. The Blaster is liquid-cooled and claims to be the fastest accelerating 50 on the market. It's most definitely a good engine and if you like styling to be minimalist, you'll love the Blaster.

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£1599 OTR



Benelli 49X - Quattro Nove

Quattro Nove X



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Pictures are for illustrative purposes only (49X Road Model Shown). To find your nearest dealer call 0844 412 8450

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