

THE LONG RIVER



Note from F2 Motorcycles Ltd.
There are a couple of minor errors in this review.

Only the Dynasty model is supplied with stainless steel exhaust pipes.

The electric winch is no longer standard equipment following the introduction of reverse gear across the model range.

Prices quoted by the author are correct for late 2022 only.



Photos by Andy Carrott, David Angel and RC RChive

The Cháng Jiāng's namesake – the Yangtze river – flows for a remarkable 4000 miles. And the modern CJ 650 combination is equally capable of going the distance, as Andy Carrott discovered...



It's almost impossible to avoid Chinese motorcycles these days. Much like Japanese motorcycles 60 years ago the names were unfamiliar, but within the space of 20 years the factories became household names and had decimated the British motorcycle industry. I don't think that the Chinese will have the same impact, as there's no low-hanging fruit to pick off these days. Even so the Chinese entry into the small capacity market has taken many sales from the usual suspects, and I'm sure they are taking very serious notice. Such is the growing influence of manufacturers from the developing world I doubt there's a western brand that does not have a link to a Chinese or Indian factory these days. In many cases, traditional companies are now owned by one.

Those of you with an interest in Soviet-era sidecar combinations may well have heard of Chang Jiang. For a while you could buy a brand-new sidevalve CJ that looked almost identical to the first Urals and the BMW from which they were copied. In fact a CJ750 appeared in RC back in the mists of time. I recollect seeing for sale 'restored' Chang JIANGS, but they could just as easily have been brand new bikes masquerading as classics ►



as they simply could not meet modern export regulations and expectations. While they were full of classic style, build quality looked iffy and the performance made a 650 Ural look like a race winner, but all that has now changed.

If you want to buy a new bike and sidecar combination which has been designed as a single unit, then a visit to David Angel's F2 Motorcycles fenland emporium is on the cards. You could of course gaffer tape a chair onto any other bike of your choice, but this brings with it varying degrees of complication (ones that David would also be happy to discuss as he is a dab hand with brackets and clamps. I think he probably had a big Meccano set as a child.) For a fully finished, high specification outfit you could certainly consider a Chang Jiang, and here's why.

Let's start with the engine. The vertical twin 650 engine is made by CF Moto and is based on a model they have been producing since 2012 which I can best describe as similar to the Kawasaki ER6. It's no great reveal that the Chinese factories are heavily influenced by successful engineering from Japan. I'm not sure that CJ goes as far as another Chinese manufacture whose 'own' engine has the same casting marks as a Honda, but the CF Moto engine is quite familiar to Kawasaki riders.

CF Moto have been manufacturing

snowmobiles, quads, and motorcycles since 1990 and also sell their own motorcycles; the latest getting very good reviews in the modern press. If you have ever looked at a KTM LC8 you are also looking at a CF Moto built engine. So no more wheezy old sidevalve.

If we move on to performance and the inevitable comparison with a Ural, I would describe the Russian offering as 'adequate' whereas the Chang is 'good'. The fuel injected dohc 60bhp liquid-cooled CJ pulls cleanly from low revs. Someone has clearly been working hard with Bosch to provide a smooth, flexible, clean throttle response as there is no jerkiness or holes in the power delivery. This engine will cruise at the national limit without fuss and will easily maintain motorway speeds with a couple of thousand revs spare – and without mechanical clatter or sounds of impending doom. 70mph is delivered at around 6750rpm with the redline set at 9000rpm, so there's a bit left to nip past that camper van. The motor also makes a pleasing classic sound through its stainless-steel silencers.

On the subject of the 649cc 8-valve engine, basic maintenance is within the realms of the competent home mechanic. Even the new-fangled electronics that adorn modern motorcycles can be accessed with a cheaply



18" wheels. Linked triple disc brakes: front 320mm floating disc, three-piston caliper, sidecar and rear 256mm disc with single piston caliper

bought OBD device. Any competent motorcycle workshop should be able to do your servicing.

The clutch is light, first gear goes in with a small clunk, and off you go... so long as you remember it is all up. Neutral is at the bottom and the four

Also available in beige. One seriously purposeful-looking combination



forward gears are all up from there. Just four because that's all it needs. This means there is space in the gearbox for reverse. Combinations with a reverse are a pleasure to manoeuvre, as they can be such a lump to physically push in or out of a parking space that's even slightly sloping. Having reverse also brings a degree of entertainment, as most people are not familiar with a bike going backwards.

To use reverse you pull the small lever on the left of the handlebars then prod the gear lever down one and away you go. You can still access your forward gears, so shunting about between reverse and first is easy, but once it's over don't forget to return the bar-mounted lever to its original position otherwise you risk coming to a stop and going through neutral into a reverse, which can be embarrassing at the traffic lights when they turn green. There is a gear indicator that will remind you if you remember to look.

Stopping is equally straightforward. I have ridden a handful of combos and this was the first that stopped in a straight line. No drama, no pulling to the left or right, just stable braking. It didn't provoke the wrestling match that I've experienced on other machines despite there being just a single disc on the front, which can cause twisting of the forks on a combo unless a hefty fork brace is fitted. The conventional



front brake lever operates the 320mm floating front disc with three-piston calliper, but it's almost superfluous because the rear brake pedal operates all three discs at the same time and is superbly balanced (rear and sidecar are 256mm disc with single piston callipers).

I don't know if this is down to David's meticulous pre-delivery inspection and set-up, or done in the factory, but the result is stable, effective braking. And, it needs to be said, that's a godsend to novice combo riders who have enough on their plate! Don't let that put you off trying three wheels, it's all a matter gaining experience, after which it's a rewarding mode of travel.

Going, stopping, now the bit in between. Handling. With a low centre of gravity and 'highway' (ie. quite firm) suspension, the CJ steers and handles really well. A low c-of-g is

One engine: 649cc dohc 8-valve; 60bhp@8000rpm; 62Nm@7000rpm. Max speed 80mph, cruising speed 65mph. Gears: four forwards and one back

essential for good handling and to prevent lift on left handers. This is another area where the CJ scores highly, again to the benefit of novice riders. I owned a Royal Enfield 500 Bullet with a fibreglass Velorex sidecar. To say it was a bit frisky on left-handers is an understatement. The CJ is reassuringly stable in comparison. This doesn't mean it's a less engaging ride for experienced sidecar users, it just means there is less likelihood of a nasty surprise and you can ride with confidence.

The substantial 41mm front forks and five-way preload adjustable rear shocks are by established manufacturer KYB.

Looking at the available models, there's the wonderfully-named Pekin Express, which is styled more like an adventure bike style than its Dynasty stablemate. They share the same geometry and suspension. The wide and braced bars give plenty of leverage, but the steering is not as light on as some outfits equipped with leading link forks. This is one of my few criticisms, but even so the CJ handles well; for instance the bars reassuringly return to centre if you hit a nasty bump or pothole. The ride quality was very good on the main roads of my road test (helped by the sprung saddle) but was a bit jiggly on the fen roads around F2.

You may recollect I said 'high specification'. All



Mostly modernised, but still a machine from a bygone age. And there is nothing wrong with that!

IN THE DETAILS



models get the 20-litre fuel tank (with a four litre reserve), lockable boot, spotlights on the sidecar, sprung saddles, adjustable heated grips, LED lights plus a built-in reversing light, an extensive toolkit, combined analogue digital dash with speed, trip, rpm, gear indicator, two USB sockets, 12V socket, steering damper, interchangeable wheels including a spare, heavy gauge steel bodywork, sidecar rack and stainless steel exhaust.

The Dynasty has gloss paint and a padded sidecar, whereas the Pekin Express is matt with

light protectors, nudge bars, chunkier tyres and a 12V winch. Yes, a winch. Options include a sidecar screen, boot rack and a fuel can. If you plan to do a lot of motorway work, for the benefit of your neck and arms, I recommend a rider's screen. That's my other major gripe – there doesn't appear to be a factory option, but I'm sure David can advise what will fit.

As for styling, the shape of the sidecar harks back to the WW2 military BMW that was copied by the Russians and then by the Chinese. I could also add it was copied by Harley-Davidson for the XA army bike, but that was very much a limited production compared to the communist bikes and is now quite rare. Seats and tank also have the DNA of that original BMW R71, so it's not unreasonable to call the styling 'classic'. What is unavoidable are the lines of a modern liquid-cooled engine and its associated plumbing.

I already mentioned the pre-delivery preparation which F2 provide. This was born out of necessity from past years of selling Urals – quality control was not a phrase the factory was familiar with for many years – so David has always given the bikes he sells a comprehensive going over before

Left: Kayaba 41mm front forks with an adjustable steering damper



Seat height is 780mm, and the seat has its own suspension unit

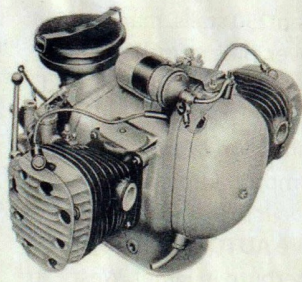
sale. This include ACF treatment to protect against corrosion. The CJs sport a smattering of stainless steel, including the silencers. The bodywork feels solid and the paint looks good, but only time will tell how they fare. They have been on sale in France for over three years and the feedback from dealers is that there are no particular reliability issues. Spares are also reasonably priced; an air filter cost £13 at the time of writing.

Anyone who contemplated buying a Ural in the past shouldn't have any hang ups about buying a CJ. Build quality is not just in a different decade, it's in a different century compared to previous Chang Jiang offerings. The engine comes from a well-established manufacturer, building to western standards. Fuel injection is by Bosch and the suspension is Kayaba. The Chinese have most definitely upped their game with the Chang Jiang. There's 12 months tax and a two-year warranty included in the price, which was £15,450 for the Dynasty and £15,650 for the Pekin Express when we went to press.

That might sound quite steep if you glance at the price of a new Enfield 650 twin which has been fitted with a sidecar, but the specifications between these alternatives are radically different. Only one was designed and equipped to be a sidecar combination, complete with reverse gear, capable of considerably more than a quick trip to the coffee shop. The CJ is the only 'purpose built' combination currently available new in the UK. **Rc**



航空工业部优质产品



长江 750 发动机外形图

DOWN THE LAZY RIVER



The CJ750, one seriously rugged sidevalve. Today's CJ650 follows in its wheeltracks



The old CJ750 is to the new CJ650 what a T140 is to a Speed Twin – a similar relationship to that of the original Enfield 750 Interceptor and the modern 650 Interceptor. If you're looking for 'marque heritage' or 'model DNA' then it might be found in the company ethos, but don't examine the current bike's engineering looking for telltale characteristics of the marque.

However, we're a magazine with the word 'classic' in our title and we had several encounters with CJ750s back in our early days, so can't resist telling you a little about these back-to-basics flat twins. Chang Jiang have

built sidecar outfits for some seven decades. The first was reverse-engineered from the Zundapp K500 and was manufactured from 1951. It was followed in the mid-1950s by a machine based around the Soviet Irbitski Mototsikletny Zavod M72, a 746cc air-cooled shaft-driven sidevalve which itself replicated much of BMW's 1938 R71 design. When the Soviets stopped production of their M72, much of the tooling found its way to China to fulfil an order of 1000 sidecar outfits for the army, and production continued all the way into the 21st century.

That first M1 Chang Jiang was joined in the mid-

1980s by the M1M with 12V electrics, reverse gear and an electric starter. The M1S (for Super) used an ohv design which delivered 32bhp but never quite caught on with the global network of Chang Jiang enthusiasts. Until production finally dried up in 2017, Chang Jiang built tens of thousands of 750s for home-market military and government contracts and increasing numbers of private sales. 'Chang Jiang gave a new dimension to the sidecar,' explains the company brochure, 'by democratising its use.' These days, Chang Jiang build around 2000 sidecar outfits a year powered by the all-new 650 machine.

For many years, John Lawes at BEMW (Bowbury Engineering and Motor Works) flew the flag in the UK for the CJ750. Indeed, he loaned us the bikes which were featured 15 or more years ago. John reckoned that 'the CJ runs smoothly and effortlessly up to main cruising speeds. To get the best from the machine, change up early and change down late. The original did not need or benefit from high engine speeds, and neither does this 1990s version.

'Like the R71, the CJ's horsepower is produced by horses with very thick, hairy, legs.'

Rowena Hoseason