

FOR ALL KINDS OF RIDERS ON ALL KINDS OF BIKES

SUPERBIKETM MAGAZINE

THE TRUTH ABOUT

2006

NEW BIKES

NEW YAMAHA YZF-R6 **NEW** KAWASAKI ZX-10R
NEW TRIUMPH DAYTONA 675 **NEW** BUELL ULYSSES XB12X **NEW** MOTO GUZZI GRISO 1100



NEW DAYTONA 675
TRIUMPH'S MIDDLEWEIGHT CHALLENGER BLASTS OFF

NEW INSIDE YOUR PROBLEMS SORTED

NEED HELP?

SUSPENSION ■ RIDING TIPS ■ TYRES ■ BUYING ADVICE

PLUS!

PAGE 3 'STUNNA'
LOUISE GLOVER
GETS A FEW THINGS OFF HER CHEST

THE BIG TEST

NEVER TOO OLD!

HONDA FIREBLADE TAKES ON THE 1,000CC PAST MASTERS



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DECEMBER 2005

HOLDING BACK THE YEARS

WHAT BECOMES OF THOSE BIKES THAT ONCE TOPPED SUPERBIKE'S LITRE SPORTSBIKE TEST? SIMON HEADS TO THE SANCTUARY TO LET THREE FORMER WINNERS OUT FOR A PLAY WITH A 2005 HONDA FIREBLADE TO SEE HOW THEY MEASURE UP IN TODAY'S WORLD

Words: Simon Roots Pics John Noble



2004 BEST LITRE SPORT
SUZUKI GSX-R1000 K4

Usurped by Yamaha's slightly better R1 in 2003, Suzuki's flagship sportsbike didn't need to do an awful lot to regain the crown in '04

2002 BEST LITRE SPORT
YAMAHA YZF-R1

Handling improvements were mainly responsible for Yamaha's better showing in the 2002 contest, but it was a close-run thing

Commended one year, castigated the next, the reign of a litre class winning bike is brutally short. The march of progress dictates the short-lived dominance of each bike because just as the king gets to the top of the castle, the other manufacturers plot and scheme to topple the class ruler.

The kingdom of the deposed rulers is hardly a sorry state though. Just because newer models have come along and claimed the crown doesn't make an older bike utterly redundant. Historically, the

Japanese response to defeat has been hara-kiri but these bikes have no intention of falling on their katana; rather they hang on and keep on fighting.

Over the last four years there's not been a bad bike among the numerous incarnations of GSX-R, R1, FireBlade and ZX-9R. But each year one bike has captured our imaginations and performed well enough to be declared our bike of the year. Some years the winner couldn't have been more obvious, other years the winning margins are subtle and slight,

but how do these former champions hold up against the ravages of time? The only way to find out is to run them against the 'worst' litre bike of 2005, in our view the Honda Fireblade.

Now let's get a few things straight before we start, shall we? By worst, we mean fourth best, with the emphasis on the Sergei Bubka-like high bar set by the three other bikes in the class (we're ignoring the MV Agusta because it's a good five grand dearer and not exactly in mass production). ☹



2001 BEST LITRE SPORT
SUZUKI GSX-R1000 K2

OK, this is a 2002 model but essentially, it's unchanged from the K1 which stormed to the title in 2001. An outrageous machine that took the sportsbike world by storm

2005 FOURTH BEST LITRE SPORT
HONDA CBR1000RR FIREBLADE

Bottom of the pile in our litre test this year but how will the 'worst' 1,000cc of 2005 stack up against the best of the previous few years?

HOLDING BACK THE YEARS



2005 BLADE vs 2004 GSX-R1000, 2003 R1 & 2002 GSX-R1000

The 'blade is truly a great bike, as you'll soon see, but is somehow at odds with itself. As a road bike it's probably the 'softest' of the four Japanese bikes currently on offer. By 'softest' we mean easiest to ride whatever frame of mind you're in. Power isn't as harshly delivered or mind-bendingly strong and the ride is accommodating and supple, rather than cramped and edgy. Hardly the right ingredients to make it a top racer you'd think, but the Fireblade, thanks to those meddling folk at HRC and Ten Kate, can be transformed to make it a contender in virtually every superbike series it enters. All of which just goes to show you the beast lies within, undisturbed until the application of lots of money and race engineering skill. Face it, the HRC bikes which dominated the Suzuka 8-Hour and which are competing in the British superbike championship have about...zero components in common with the ones in the showroom.

So now we've got that straight, let's

turn back the clock and introduce our elderly contenders. Age comes before beauty, they say, so first up comes a GSX-R1000K2 from the Suzuki stable. Unchanged from the original K1 version, the big Suzuki's return to the litre sportsbike world caused repercussions in the industry that we're still benefiting from now. A truly seminal bike, the 2001 GSX-R proved that the marriage between power and handling could be a harmonious one – albeit with the odd tempestuous argument – as the bike blitzed race series everywhere. Across the world, dealers rubbed their hands with glee as customers beat a path to their door.

Impacts come no bigger than Yamaha's 1998 introduction of the YZF-R1. Bigger even than the 2001 introduction of the GSX-R1000, the R1 shook the biking world to its foundations with horsepower never seen in a streetbike, let alone housed in a chassis of near 600cc proportions. The second revision to the bike came in 2002 and by

MEET THE TEAM

TESTERS OF TIME

THIS LOT HAVE A COMBINED AGE OF 175... AND SIMON IS ONLY 14

AGE OF CONSENT
SIMON ROOTS
SUPERBIKE ROAD TESTER

AGE OF TREASON
KENNY PRYDE
SUPERBIKE EDITOR

DISPAR-AGED
DAVE THE GOAT
FREELANCE ROAD TESTER





WHERE WE WENT BRUNTINGTHORPE

Bruntingthorpe is fabled among road testers and motorcycle magazines for many reasons. Being a closed circuit we have free reign of the two-mile straight and a handling circuit which mixes fast sweeping curves with more surfaces than a dodecahedron. But don't go thinking we just blat around Brunters, load the bikes into a van and piss off home. When the photographer's away, we play, play, play. Simon's move to the South West, for instance, has opened a new group of great roads which he's calling 'SuperBike's revolutionary new test route'. It's hundreds of miles long and encompasses tight, tricky curves, dull dual-carriageways and even super-fast, sweeping A-roads. It's called riding the bikes, it's revolutionary!

THANKS TO:

A big thanks and an even bigger sorry to **D&K Motorcycles** for the loan of the two **GSX-Rs** and the **R1**. **Garry** counted them all out, but didn't count them all back in again. Go and cheer him up by buying one of his bikes (*maybe not the '04 GSX-R though? – Ed*) from the massive showroom in **Newcastle-Under-Lyme**. Also ta very much to **Sean** at **Big CC Racing** for the dynos done at the last minute.

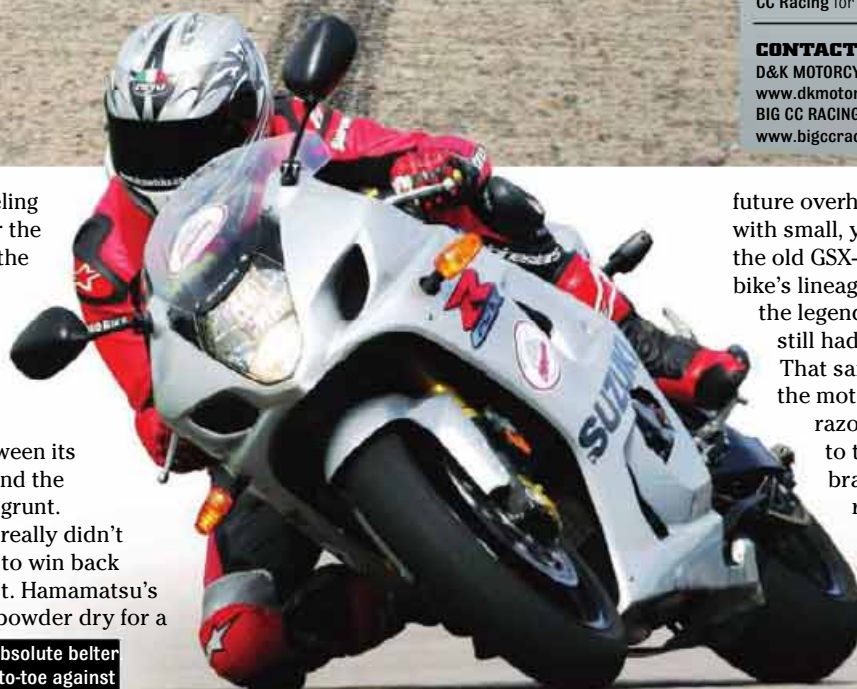
CONTACTS

D&K MOTORCYCLES: 01782 861100
www.dkmotorcycles.co.uk
BIG CC RACING: 0118 9776755
www.bigccracing.com

then we were only feeling mild aftershocks after the earthquake. In truth, the Yamaha struggled to overcome the brutal ambitions of the GSX-R1000, but it delicately applied its handling dexterity to bridge the gap between its considerable power and the Suzuki's even greater grunt.

So by 2003, Suzuki really didn't have to do too much to win back the crown. So it didn't. Hamamatsu's engineers kept their powder dry for a

The K4 GSX-R1000 is an absolute belter. But does it stand up toe-to-toe against this year's Fireblade? (main image)



future overhaul and presented to us a bike with small, yet sophisticated changes to the old GSX-R's form and function. The bike's lineage could still be traced to the legendary GSX-R750 as the Suzuki still hadn't cut its ties with the past. That said, the internal changes to the motor sharpened the GSX-R to razor-like levels while changes to the chassis, suspension and brakes answered the wishes of race-based critics.

If a bike could sweat, surely our Fireblade would be getting hot under the collar at the prospect of these bikes limbering up to rekindle their glory and test how they fare in 2005...

HOLDING BACK THE YEARS



2005 BLADE vs 2004 GSX-R1000, 2003 R1 & 2002 GSX-R1000

How rich is our sportsbike world if the Fireblade constantly props up our litre bike league tables? It didn't score too well in the 2004 test and then came last of the Japanese bikes in this year's extravaganza. So we've documented the Fireblade's relative failings over the last 18 months but on its own you'd never guess that the Honda would struggle, certainly on track, against rivals from its homeland.

It has every attribute that a great bike should flaunt. In these Repsol colours, it looks vibrant and alive, every element related to the MotoGP arena, while in normal regalia the 'blade still looks purposeful and sharp. The dyno paints a picture of well-proportioned power. The curve rises smoothly to an impressive 146bhp at the rear wheel, all while doing its best to bridge the dips and curb the lumps – although a dip at 5,000rpm is a nagging concern. The Showa suspension cossets a rider too and encompasses ability from zero to hero.

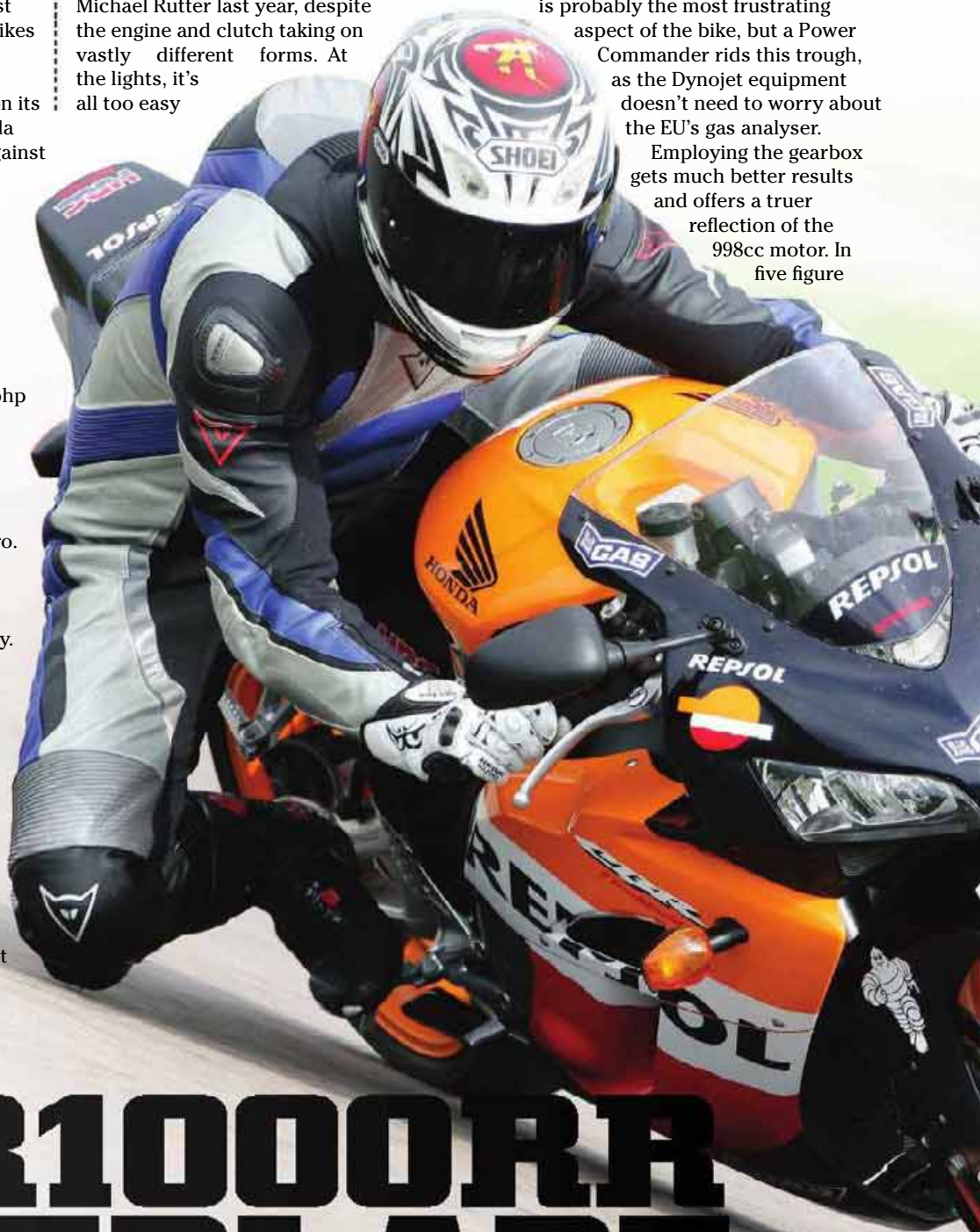
So what's the problem with the 'blade. Well, there isn't one really. It's just that its rivals do things better, tighter and quicker – albeit marginally.

The motor, while smooth as a fine malt, just doesn't leave a tangy taste in your mouth that you'll remember in your dreams. Park the bike up after what should be your most mental ride ever and you get off calm and considered, not wide-eyed and gabbling glory. It meets your expectations, and as such leaves you a little disappointed in this astonishing world where surpassing expectations is the fantastical norm.

Specific problems are more difficult

to pin down. Being hyper critical you could say that it's a tricky bike to launch. At BSB level the traits seemed to affect Michael Rutter last year, despite the engine and clutch taking on vastly different forms. At the lights, it's all too easy

to dip into the Honda's lethargy below 5,000rpm as the clutch plates release, but once momentum has been gathered the 'blade's head of steam is easy to maintain with torque thickly spread across the rev range. For the more relaxed, sixth is all you need as you can trundle through town at 30mph before feeding the eager throttle bodies more fuel that's accepted without hesitation. The dip in power at 5,000rpm is probably the most frustrating aspect of the bike, but a Power Commander rids this trough, as the Dynojet equipment doesn't need to worry about the EU's gas analyser. Employing the gearbox gets much better results and offers a truer reflection of the 998cc motor. In five figure



2004 HONDA

CBR1000RR FIREBLADE

LIMITED EDITION, REPSOL PAINT SCHEME GIVES THE CURRENT FIREBLADE RACER-REP LOOKS TO MATCH THE MOTO GP-INSPIRED TECHNOLOGY UNDERNEATH

TECH SPEC

2005 HONDA CATERHAM FIREBLADE

Price	£8,799
NU Ins group	17
ENGINE	
Type	I/c 16v, inline-four, DOHC
Displacement	998cc
Bore x Stroke	75.0 x 56.5mm
Compression	11.9:1
Carburation	PGM-DSFI twin injector fuel injection, 44mm throttle bodies
Gearbox	Six-speed
Power	146.32bhp@11,200rpm
Torque	75.36 lb ft@8,600rpm

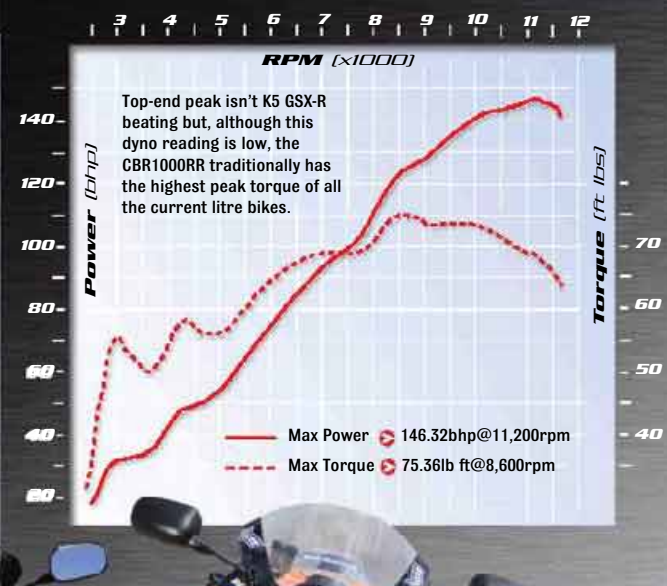
CYCLE PARTS

Chassis	Gravity cast alu twin spar
Suspension	Front: 43mm USD forks, fully adjustable Rear: Fully adjustable monoshock
Brakes	Front: 2x310mm discs, four-piston radial calipers Rear: 220mm disc, single piston caliper
Wheels/Tyres	Front: 120/70 ZR17 Pirelli Diablo Corsa Rear: 190/50 ZR17 Pirelli Diablo Corsa
Rake / Trail	23°/102mm
Wheelbase	1,410mm
Capacity	18 litres (3.95 gal)
Wet weight	208.7kg (459.3lb)
Contact	Honda UK (01753 590500)

ENGINE

The old 'Blade motor was put in the skip as Honda set out to produce an all new block that shared the same bore but with a longer stroke than the old 'un. Almost all of the components were new to the bike; the bottom end gets a new crank and easily serviceable cassette-type gearbox (define 'easy', *Roots - Sceptical Ed*) while the top end saw new pistons, cams, valves and combustion chamber. The use of the underseat exhaust was a massive change of direction for Honda, although the steel unit is a fairly weighty item.

DYNO PERFORMANCE



CHASSIS

New construction technologies are used to produce the aluminium twin spar frame. Steering geometry was changed as the offset was reduced (thus explaining the appearance of the electronic steering damper). The massive cast aluminium swingarm looks fantastic but draws attention away from the fact that the Fireblade is 11-kilos heavier than the bike it replaced. Hmm.

SUSPENSION

The forks are largely based on the previous model but reworked internally and befitting from changed geometry. The Unit ProLink rear system is a hand-me-down product from the RC211V.

BRAKES

Tokico calipers are very popular these days and for good reason. The radial mounting offered Honda the chance to use smaller discs that they took.

UPGRADES

After sticking a pipe on and sorting out that lightweight midrange with a Power Commander, further weight loss is your best bet with the 'blade. There's no simple solution but to spend cash on carbon bits or if you're in the money a set of aftermarket wheels could be the cure to some of the Fireblade's ills. Ten Kate Racing (www.tenkateracingproducts.com) list many parts that they use on their race bikes on their website and if you trawl through the catalogue you should be noting down the reference numbers for stiffer fork springs and a new rear shock for the ultimate 'blade.

territory the Honda screams forward, but it's always a surprise to see your speed as the Honda somehow masks how illegally you're travelling. The thrill only really comes from your eyes, your other senses remain essentially un-moved. Often, you feel that the Honda reacts lazily, but that's far from the truth and there's enough

power available in almost every situation to keep the most demanding of riders happy.

Reality comes in the form of a corner, and usually you approach one on the Fireblade far too quickly. Thankfully, your responses are matched by the Fireblade's as the pads grip to the 310mm discs like a

HOLDING BACK THE YEARS



2005 BLADE vs 2004 GSX-R1000, 2003 R1 & 2002 GSX-R1000

woman in labour. The radial arrangement ensures this power remains consistent.

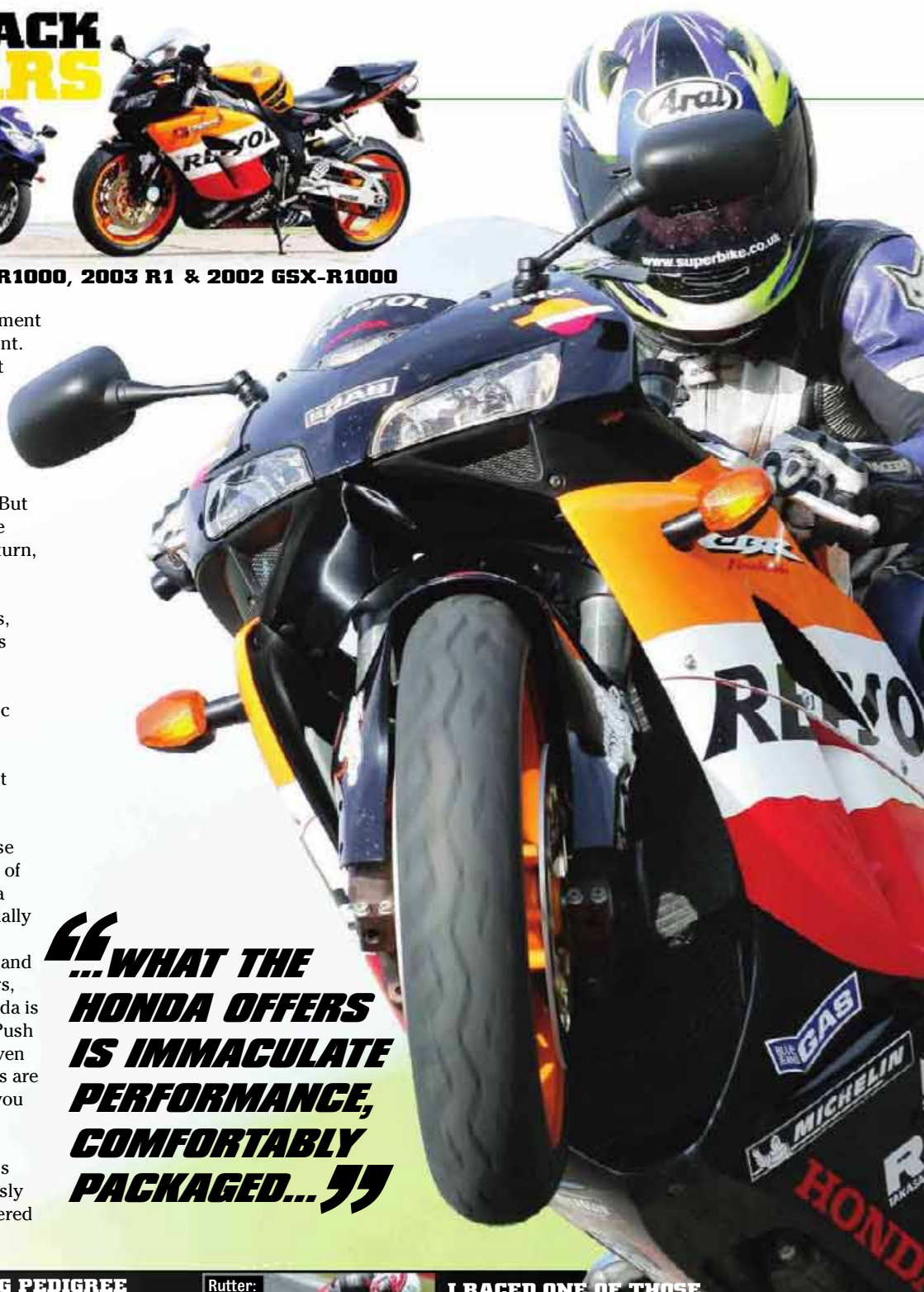
The front suspension is a little soft as standard and the 'blade's nose nods south leaving the excellent Pirelli Diablo Corsa tyre (some Honda bikes are on the Pirellis, others come with the Bridgestone BT-014) to rein in some of the slack. But fear not, Honda's engineers know the secret recipe of how to make a bike turn, grip and go.

The 'blade doesn't turn in with the voracity of its rivals, but in many ways, that's no bad thing as the Honda offers stability and growing confidence as if it's going out of style. The addition of the almost too-clever-by-half electronic steering damper is an admission by Honda's engineers that without one life could be a little too interesting, but it offers security in abundance when conditions dictate.

That said, the extra muscle and guise needed to get the 'blade through a set of tight bends or through a flick-flack of a clear roundabout is noticeable; especially on track or passing through Milton Keynes. But extra mass is extra mass, and for all the feedback the Fireblade offers, you can't escape the fact that the Honda is harder work to hustle than its rivals. Push it hard, and the Fireblade responds, even though you think it won't. The rewards are sweet, but can remain distant unless you really push yourself.

It's certainly a very well balanced machine. Confidence in the front end is matched by the rear being harmoniously married to the amount of power delivered through it – indeed it shares the same

“...WHAT THE HONDA OFFERS IS IMMACULATE PERFORMANCE, COMFORTABLY PACKAGED...”



HONDA FIREBLADE: RACING PEDIGREE BRITISH SUPERBIKES

Close, but no cigar. **Michael Rutter** just missed out in 2004 and, at the time of writing **Ryuichi Kiyonari** looks like just missing out in 2005. Mind you, the 'blade has a lot of things in its favour, not least the best backing you can buy in the form of **HRC** and **Michelin**. The race bike bears so little resemblance to the stocker it's almost on a different planet. The in-house effort of the **Stobart** team in 2005 shows how difficult it is to set a 'blade up right, even if you have (briefly) got **Jeremy McWilliams** on your side.

WORLD SUPERBIKES

Chris Vermeulen had a great season in 2004 and stuck it to the **Ducati-men** on a few occasions, eventually finishing third in a championship that lacked factory support. The **Ten Kate** team continued their development into this season but with the introduction of the brutish **Suzukis** the **Honda** has failed to dominate in the way many predicted.

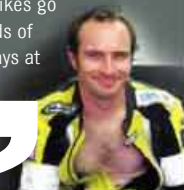
Rutter:
close,
no cigar



WSB Ten Kate Fireblade

I RACED ONE OF THOSE PAUL YOUNG

“ I only rode this for two races and we had problems but I reckon I could have developed the potential of it, after all I managed to get it on the front row. There are a few problems. It's heavy and hard to stop but with the motor, the low rev limit really hampered it. It makes good power but where it stops revving at 12,000rpm the other bikes go on to 14,000rpm. This meant loads of gear changes and say at Clearways at Brands I was having to snick two gears where the other bikes would just shoot off.”





2005

HONDA CBR1000RR



RIVALS IN 2005

We rated the **Fireblade** as the fourth best bike of 2005 because each of the other manufacturers had really upped their game in the last two years. The **Honda** lost out by just being a notch less exciting than its rivals.



Suzuki's new GSX-R1000
- huge, yet controllable power



Kawasaki's rabid ZX-10R - suits
the mentalists out there



Yamaha's R1 offers a good
blend of both these bikes

WHAT WE SAID WHEN IT WON

Well, it never won our group test in 2004 and was way off the pace in 2005, but at the launch AI said,

"If you've got to have the big bike thrill, and want it in an easy, user-friendly package, I'll be surprised if anything else will top the Honda in 2004."

WHAT WE SAID WHEN IT LOST

The one true negative is the lack of power. It simply gets left behind, particularly at the top end of the revs where the others are making most of their power.



MY OLD LONGTERMER
KENNY PRYDE
SPRING 2003 TO NOV 2004

This was described as a 'gentleman's express' and that's spot-on. Refined enough, **fast** enough, **smooth** enough, **compact** enough, **well-balanced** with **awesome** brakes - but a lack of something indefinable. Every 1,000cc bike needs a bit of **mania** in it and Honda had engineered it away. Very close to being utterly fantastic but, in the end, it lacked... **something**.



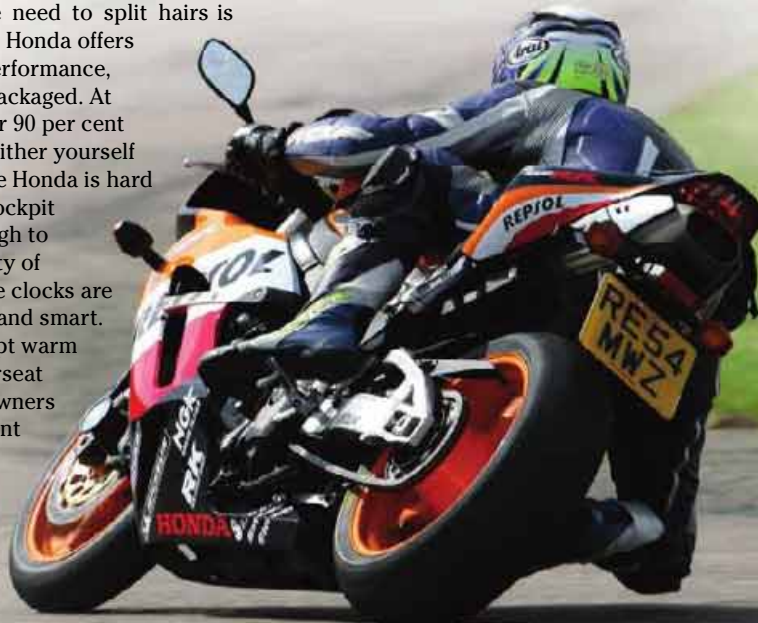
DOWN THE SHOPS

Hondas traditionally **retain their rrp** down the shops and even now, 18 months after the launch and with a new bike round the corner, you need to play **hard ball** with a Honda dealer to get **any** money off. The **second hand** market tells much the same tale with strong money still being asked for by most sellers. Chances are, you won't get a second hander for much less than **£7,000** for a 2004 bike unless it's done lots of miles. If it has, it could be worth a punt as the **Fireblade** is finished well and eats miles like it's a pre-breakfast snack.

front-end confidence that you find when riding the CBR600RR, allowing great lean angles through late braking and deep cornering - and compliments don't come much better than that.

If you're happier at a more genteel pace then the need to split hairs is negated as the Honda offers immaculate performance, comfortably packaged. At anything under 90 per cent capability, of either yourself or the bike, the Honda is hard to beat. The cockpit is roomy enough to knock off plenty of miles while the clocks are sophisticated and smart. Pillions are kept warm with the underseat exhaust and owners can be confident in Honda's reputation for building some of the most reliable bikes in the world.

Put simply, this is the best 'worst' bike you can buy in 2005. Being a Honda, prices remain strong, either as new or in the second hand market, but even at list price the Fireblade is still worth every penny of the asking price. ☺



HOLDING BACK THE YEARS



2005 BLADE vs 2004 GSX-R1000, 2003 R1 & 2002 GSX-R1000

A couple of days buzzing up, down and around the country on a K4 Suzuki (exactly the same spec as the original K3) is just what motorcycling is all about. Live for the moment and embrace the GSX-R without fear of police, tractors, gravel and the weather and it's the closest feeling you have to flying. No matter how many miles you do

on one, you get off wondering just what Suzuki needed to do to improve the bike. But we live in a post-K5 world and we all know that Suzuki's latest and greatest has easily become the fastest and wickedest bike on the planet, usurping the previous creation completely. But the K4 is still a hugely respectable machine.

Being the class bully in 2003, it always commanded respect from both its rivals and its riders and this example looked perfect. Apart from one small exception.

The rear wheel sported a tyre made by the OE manufacturer, Bridgestone,

just not one that Suzuki recommended. A rear BT-020 touring tyre, instead of the suggested BT-012, looked to be a stop-gap solution to get the bike part exchanged with D&K Motorcycles but it proved to hamstring the GSX-R every time you wanted to get the Suzuki's immense power down. The GSX-R has never been a respecter of tyres, least of all ones designed to fit on the back of a continent bashing sports-tourer.

The 2003 update didn't have to do much to remain ahead of the game, but even so the K3 has more revs and the motor seems to spin much quicker than the previous version. The changes didn't add huge figures to the dyno charts, about 6bhp, mainly because they were refinements rather than revisions, but even so, the K3 motor is a pearler and is 3bhp stronger than the Fireblade while it has a few hundred more revs to play with than the Honda right where it hurts.

It headed off down the two-mile test strip like a bat, late, out of hell, requiring rapid gear changes to keep the engine buzzing around the 11,000rpm mark, eventually topping out just ahead of the Honda at 182mph (in near perfect conditions) all the while reading the



2004 SUZUKI GSX-R1000 K4

SHARPER NEW LOOKS HERALDED A SHARPER NEW GIXXER GOOD ENOUGH TO GRAB THE 2003 CROWN. TOP-NOTCH PERFORMANCE STILL BASED ON AN ENGINE FROM HEAVEN

TECH SPEC

2004 SUZUKI GSX-R1000 K4

Price	£6,499
NU Ins group	17

ENGINE

Type	l/c 16v, inline-four, DOHC
Displacement	988cc
Bore x Stroke	73.0 x 59.0mm
Compression	11.7:1
Carburation	Electronic SDTV fuel injection, 42mm throttle bodies
Gearbox	Six-speed
Power	149.92bhp@10,800rpm
Torque	78.31 lb ft@8,200rpm

CYCLE PARTS

Chassis	Aluminium twin spar
Suspension	Front: 43mm USD forks, fully adjustable Rear: Fully adjustable monoshock
Brakes	Front: 2x300mm discs, four-piston Tokico radial calipers Rear: 220mm disc, dual piston caliper
Wheels/Tyres	Front: 120/70 ZR17 Bridgestone BT-011 Rear: 190/50 ZR17 Bridgestone BT-020
Rake / Trail	23.5°/91mm
Wheelbase	1,410mm
Capacity	18 litres (3.95 gal)
Wet weight	201.3kg (442.8lb) weighed wet
Contact	D&K Motorcycles (01782 861100)

STYLING & DESIGN

The most noticeable change to the K1 version is the GSX-R's new nose. The stacked headlights get the most attention but the big news here was the moving of the air intakes to be closer to the highest pressure on the fairing. An LCD light found its way onto the rear and the instrument cluster is all new. Suzuki made the tank smaller to better accommodate riders at speed, and this is where the new larger screen helps.

UPGRADES

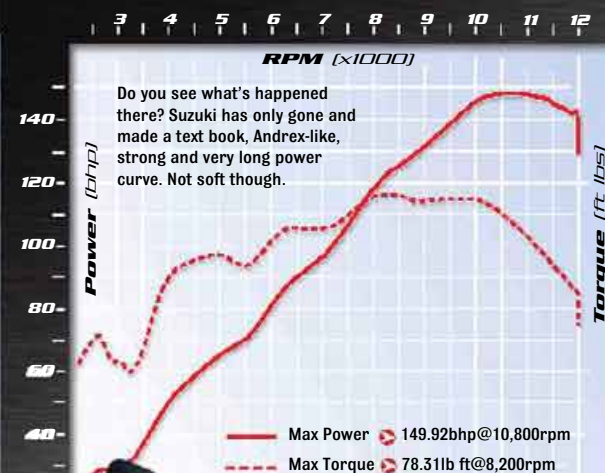
There are so many bits you can buy for the K3/4 that it's difficult to know where to begin. A Yoshimura full system and Power Commander is the right place to start to get a bit more power out of the thing, but to also perfect the odd glitch in the fuelling. Crescent Suzuki is expert in the art of the GSX-R and can prise all sorts of power out of a Gixer depending on how much money you throw at them. The brakes are sharp from the outset but a few years of squeezing may have seen the best from the hoses, so these should be replaced with some aftermarket versions. A revalve and respring at the front adds more refinement to the front, while an Ohlins or WP shock adds controllability and adjustability beyond the stock unit. After that, go wild with your money on wheels, carbon fibre bodywork, rearsets and steering dampers.

regulated 186mph – although the bike was reading this in fifth gear. The Suzuki's mid-range is also a strong point in a bike full of positives and again just noses ahead of the Honda's roll-on figures. It pulls like a pack of mules (*it's a 'barren' - collective noun Ed*) from 3,000rpm into the torque-

ENGINE

The close relationship with the GSX-R750 can be seen at the top-end where the head is still very similar to the 750cc lump. A larger revision was made in 2005. Lots of little changes (like cylinder ventilation holes, new oil passageways, and an increase in the ECU's processing power that issues eight different ignition maps, two for each cylinder depending on which gear you're in) were added to some medium-sized modifications like the introduction of double-barrel throttle bodies, smaller injectors using four holes to improve the mixture into the chamber and titanium internals in the silencer.

DYNO PERFORMANCE



CHASSIS

The dimensions of the K3 chassis are the same as the K1 model, but that's not to say Suzuki left the frame out of its 2003 revision. It's a new unit that's been braced with internal extruded spars and then painted black. Changes to the subframe mounting points addressed problems that the K1 developed in crashes. Steering geometry changed to make the bike turn sharper. Rake is at 23.5° (down a degree) while trail was reduced to 91mm (down 5mm)

SUSPENSION

Suzuki upgraded the front forks on the K3 1000. The Kayaba units were coated with diamond-like carbon to reduce 'stiction' while the internals were revised with changes to the valving to improve the damping and new, stiffer springs added.

BRAKES

Radial-mounted Tokico calipers were an addition in 2003, the first time they'd been seen in the class. Using the same units as found in the Kawasaki ZX-6R at the time Suzuki chose different pads that didn't quite have the bite of the Kwaks but at least the calipers were now more rigid and their power enabled the discs to be reduced by 20mm to 300mm. The torque arm was removed from the rear caliper.



laden mid-range where it just digs so deep to get you anywhere you want with a tweak of throttle. Here, its torque curve hovers between 65-73lb ft meaning that stomp is instant and omnipotent.

A fuel injection system as good as Suzuki SDTV unit didn't need much

looking at and minor changes (mainly mapping changes and increasing the diameter of holes in the injectors) heightened the control of the GSX-R. Being hyper critical, the poise of the chassis allows you to open the throttle a little earlier that often has a little snatch,

HOLDING BACK THE YEARS



2005 BLADE vs 2004 GSX-R1000, 2003 R1 & 2002 GSX-R1000

but it's hard to find and even harder to criticise given the level of the whole package.

Road work with this GSX-R is amazing. Pick a gear and get into all sorts of trouble as you find yourself practising deferential speeches to some faceless beak. Stunts are a whiff of clutch away, even in third, but urban speed restrictions see the GSX-R behaving as if your high-jinks had never happened.

But it didn't take long to see the main sticking point, or rather not, of this particular bike. The huge levels of power available to it simply overwhelmed the rear BT-020 the very millisecond you start to feed the power in while leant over. Get past an apex and where you'd normally feed power on as aggressively as you dare, the GSX-R would be a sniff away from crashing.

Mind you, the feedback from the GSX-R's chassis was superb, letting you know from the first corner that things weren't quite as they should be. Lift the bike up out of Bruntingthorpe's corners and the tyre would start satisfactorily spinning while on the roads the path of the tyre could be easily plotted. This was good for shits and giggles but it doesn't really get you to where you want to be quickly and you're riding on a knife-edge every time you go out.

At least the GSX-R's front end was a

darn sight more dependable. With the reassurance of a steering damper for the exits, you can really concentrate on carrying as much speed as you can into a turn. This means squeezing the front brake with much more confidence than the earlier version (thanks to the powerful and predictable Tokico radial calipers), initiating the turn easily and then settling the bike into a stable course through the first part of a turn. The slightly soft front springs unsettle the feeling from the front to a very small degree but overall it just feels so much more agile than the K1 model. Kinks can be carved though quicker and while the steering is much lighter, the stability remains rock solid.

From an ergonomic perspective, the GSX-R lost much of the clumsy feeling that the old bike exhibited, but I'd hesitate to call the positioning perfect because the tank still gets in the way of where you want your legs to be. At least all the controls are much lighter than before; the clutch was airy, the throttle eager and accurate and the brakes super-sharp and hungry for work.

I don't think the Suzuki will ever win

GSX-R1000 K4: RACING PEDIGREE

BRITISH SUPERBIKES

Crescent Suzuki had to work hard with the new GSX-R1000 to run and develop it to the level of the virtually bespoke Ducati 998 that **MonsterMob** ran with **Shakey Byrne** at the helm. **John Reynolds** had a good season, finishing **second** while **Yukio Kagayama** fought well all season before suffering huge injuries at **Cadwell Park**. A year down the line and the **K4** and Reynolds finished the season as champions. **Adrian Archibald** won the two big **TT** races on the Suzuki in the year that **Dave Jefferies** died on the island.

WORLD SUPERBIKES

2003 saw the slow dawning of the 1,000cc litre four-cylinder bikes in WSB and **Gregorio Lavilla** ran the **Alstare Suzuki** to relative success, although the regulations put restrictions on the air intakes of four cylinder litre bikes that were both **controversial** and **power-sapping**. This put the **Ducatis** in the ascendancy and predictably the Suzuki never made it to the top step of the podium, but Lavilla did manage three seconds and four thirds on his way to a commendable fifth in the championship (the only four cylinder bike in the top ten). 2004 saw the Japanese factories pull out their support so the Suzuki only appeared lower down the order.



Reynolds, BSB champ in 2004



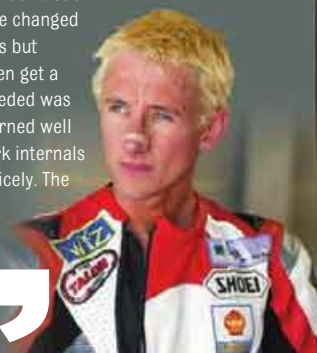
Lavilla's GSX-R chased the Ducatis all season long

I RACED ONE OF THOSE

LUKE QUIGLEY

LUKE WAS THIRD IN THE 2003 SUPERSTOCK CHAMPIONSHIP

Oh, that was a fast bike that, the only problem was that everyone else was on them. It had loads of torque, and would pull from 4,000rpm. All we did to the motor was blueprint it and stick on a Power Commander. We changed the clutch after a few starts but apart from that it didn't even get a refresh all season. All it needed was a slipper clutch really. It turned well and the Ohlins rear and fork internals sharpened everything up nicely. The brakes were a massive improvement over the old model as they were strong but they didn't fade anymore.





2004

SUZUKI GSX-R1000 K4



RIVALS IN 2003

Against an ageing Honda and the dinosaur Kawasaki there was no contest, but it had to go some to beat the sharp handling Yamaha R1. And going some is exactly what it did to whup their sorry asses.



Kawasaki – dead in the water, their ZX-9R just wasn't in the game.



Honda – hampered by not being able to make their 'Blade' a full blown litre bike



Yamaha – neither enough power or posture to retain the 1,000cc title



WHAT WE SAID WHEN IT WON

"It's rare that a manufacturer comes up with a new model which addresses all our complaints and gives us what we want. We complained about the brakes and they've almost made them too good. On top of that they gave us more power, reduced weight and made it look better."

WHAT WE SAID WHEN IT LOST

"The Suzuki slips below its former lofty heights because, while it may be the lightest on paper, it just doesn't have the dancing feet of the ZX-10R and R1. It can match their engine performance and speed but can't match their track skills."



MY OLD LONGTERMER JON PEARSON

JULY 2003 TO DEC 2003

It was as **comfortable** on the motorway as it was **winning TTs**. That 'do anything' feel and the incredible **mid-range surge** were what set this bike apart from its rivals. As a way of travelling from any A or any B you can imagine it's still **hard to beat**.



DOWN THE SHOPS

There are a few **brand new K4** examples still in the shops, including the very sexy **black** version, and at around **£6,700** there's no easier way of doing **180mph**. The second hand market is alive with plenty of good, (and the occasional shitter) examples. **The GSX-R** was hugely popular in **2003** but oversupply to the UK and the launch of 1,000cc sportbikes from **Honda, Kawasaki** and **Yamaha** forced prices down in 2004. Bargain hard and you can get a **low mileage** private bike for under **£5,000** but make sure it's as clean as a whistle and hasn't been down at a track, or worse still, raced to within an inch of its life.

a catwalk battle and the generic design throughout the range appeals less and less the more money you spend on the bike, but it's far from ugly and this silver option offers a rare touch of class for Suzuki. Compared to the big and bulbous looking K1 version, this model looks fresh and dynamic, even in the company of the dapper Fireblade.

Polished? Yes, very. But it's still a touch behind the Honda if you want an immaculate riding experience. Even with a cry-baby rear tyre fitted, the GSX-R1000 offers contemporary performance at frighteningly affordable prices. If money's an issue, there is no issue.

POSTSCRIPT

I enjoyed the GSX-R so much that I didn't want anyone else to ride it, so on one lap of my 70-mile test route around Salisbury Plain I decided to lob it into a ditch so no-one else could play with it. Was it that dodgy back tyre? I'd like to say yes, but in fact it was a shower of rain that had just hit a corner a couple of minutes before and I didn't pick it out as I was riding into a low setting sun. So the front wheel lost grip and down it went. Chocolates, flowers and every apology in the book has been sent to D&K Motorcycles.

“...STUNTS ARE JUST A WHIFF OF CLUTCH AWAY EVEN IN THIRD GEAR...”



HOLDING BACK THE YEARS



2005 BLADE vs 2004 GSX-R1000, 2003 R1 & 2002 GSX-R1000

A bike's development cycle isn't designed to react to new models being released with quite the impact as the original GSX-R1000 had on the market. With Suzuki out of the big-bike game for so long, all Yamaha thought they had to do was to keep ahead of the FireBlade and ZX-9R. But then the Hamamatsu manufacturer stirred.

'Fuck' was probably the reaction in Iwata as news leaked out about the new GSX-R, but by the time the world was reading about the mighty new class winner it was too late for Yamaha to react to the power of the Suzuki. The goalposts moved in 2001 and with only a year to cobble a response the 2002 R1 is the best reaction Yamaha could have hoped to produce.

Massive horsepower gains to pitch the R1 toe-to-toe with the Gixxer were not possible given the timescales afforded to them (fuel injection and an increase in revs were improvements but they hardly lit the touch paper), but at least the R1 was undergoing subtle chassis and suspension changes that would add craft to a class that had suddenly been engulfed by brawn.

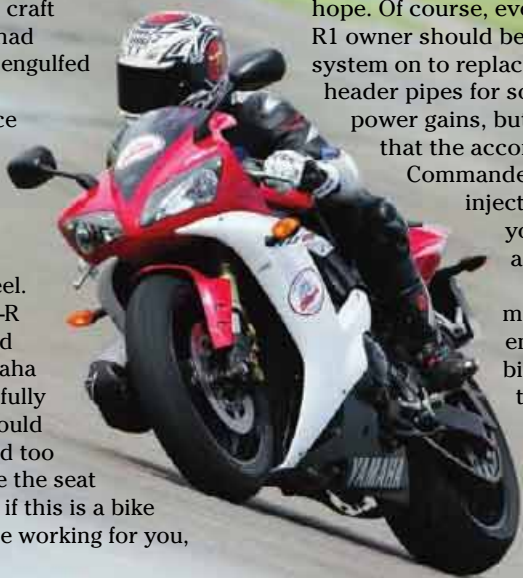
The difference between the two oldest bikes and the way they wage war is easy to both see and feel. Where the GSX-R is big, bulky and brash, the Yamaha looks so beautifully sculpted you could cry if you stared too long at it. Grace the seat and you feel as if this is a bike that'll always be working for you,

not wrestling away control. Spin the starter motor over and there's no doubting that this will be more behaved than the GSX-R ever could be.

In litre bike territory, peak power is often an alien concept, unless you're at the track, so factors such as the delivery of that power, torque and responsiveness become more relevant. Even so, it's obvious that the R1 is the beauty to the Suzuki beast, and while there's no lack of urgency, there's certainly not the substance of its main rival.

Having ditched the carbs for 2002, the fuel injection is largely a success although it leaves a little to be desired where the feedback from the rear-end doesn't quite blend with the polish of the rest of the bike. Maybe I'm looking for excuses after my big crash on the 2003 version, but the R1 doesn't quite lay power down with the finesse you'd hope. Of course, every self-respecting R1 owner should be putting a full system on to replace the original spindly header pipes for some impressive power gains, but the bonus here is that the accompanying Power Commander cleaning the fuel injection system allows you to confidently apply the gas.

The Yamaha's mid-range is plump enough to get the bike wheeling in the lower gears, and to get a real wriggle on from third upwards, but it's the top-end that feels fantastic



2002 YAMAHA YZF-R1

THE CAT AND MOUSE GAME WITH SUZUKI AND THE GSX-R CONTINUED IN 2002 WHEN THE R1 GOT A NEW CHASSIS AND MORE POWER. IF IT WERE A LOOKS CONTEST HOWEVER...

TECH SPEC

2003 YAMAHA YZF-R1

Price	£6,199
NU Ins group	17
ENGINE	
Type	I/c 16v, inline-four, DOHC
Displacement	998cc
Bore x Stroke	74.0 x 58.0mm
Compression	11.8:1
Carburation	Mikuni/Mitsubishi EFI, 40mm throttle bodies
Gearbox	Six-speed
Power	102.41bhp@9,200rpm
Torque	65.98 lb ft@4,900rpm

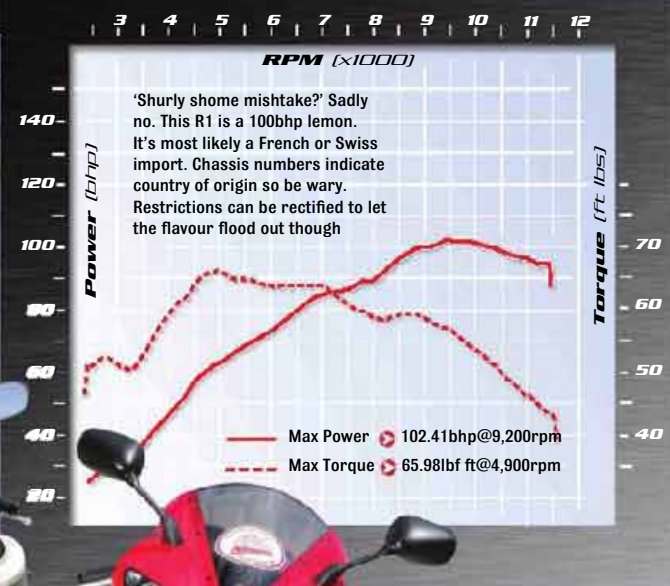
CYCLE PARTS

Chassis	Aluminium twin spar
Suspension	Front: 43mm USD forks, fully adjustable Rear: Fully adjustable monoshock
Brakes	Front: 2x298mm discs, four-piston Sumitomo calipers Rear: 220mm disc, twin piston caliper
Wheels/Tyres	Front: 120/70 ZR17 Michelin Pilot Power Rear: 190/50 ZR17 Michelin Pilot Power
Rake / Trail	24°/103mm
Wheelbase	1,395mm
Capacity	17 litres (3.7 gal)
Wet weight	198.5kg (436.7lb) weighed wet
Contact	D&K Motorcycles (01782 861100)

ENGINE

Refinement was the name of the game here. Fuel injection was the big news for 2002 but changes to the intake tract, airbox and EXUP valve all pointed towards subtle changes rather than a complete overhaul of the machine. The exhaust headers were changed and became all titanium but Yamaha still hadn't added ram air on the bike, hinting that this was up its sleeve later.

DYNO PERFORMANCE



CHASSIS

With the seminal R7 as guidance Yamaha made the frame more rigid and also changed the positioning of the motor within the frame (placing it 20mm higher up) to help balance the new machine.

The swingarm's pivot point was raised 17.5mm to compensate, while the swingarm was redesigned and made asymmetrical. Yamaha changed the subframe mounting to make it a bolt-on unit, helping the bike survive a crash. Trail was increased to help keep a bike on line through a corner.

SUSPENSION

The new trail figures came via radical changes to the offset through the yokes. The fork diameter increased 2mm to 43mm and the range of adjustability was increased, all while saving weight. The rear shock's spring rate was increased too.

BRAKES

Sumitomo calipers reduced weight through adopting aluminium pistons and blend a strong bite with good response. Improvements in the chassis allow for excellent trail braking into turns.

ERGONOMICS

Rather than chase power, Yamaha's engineers polished the chassis and suspension to counter the threat from the GSX-R1000. Bars were lowered and the pegs were raised to add focus to the riding position. There's not as much wind protection as the incarnations of the GSX-R though.

UPGRADES

A full system helps to free more power out of the motor, freeing airflow from the OE header pipes. Naturally, these work best with a Power Commander. A steering damper would be the next best buy as the R1 with its sharp steering can fly loose on occasion. Next up is a focus on the rear end and a new rear shock should aid the rear tyre's grip when faced with an open throttle. The brakes could also do with a helping hand compared to more modern machinery so brake lines and a fresh set of pads should help the halt. www.comptechshop.com are the UK distributor of Graves equipment from the States, an outfit that ran an AMA effort with the 2003 bike.

on the Yamaha. From around 9,000rpm a good example (and this wasn't a good example, see the dyno) really starts flying, taking over where the torque leaves off, producing over 130bhp on its way to the 140bhp mark. While not quite in the champion's league of performance, it's plenty fast enough to see 170mph

on the neat dash, although the motor is hamstrung by the diminutive size of the R1's fairing leaving your body to ruin the overtime put in by the aerodynamic department.

Ancillary parts are strong too. The gearbox works well, even though it's worked harder than the GSX-R's, and the

clutch has a lovely springy showroom feeling to it.

The GSX-R, in either form, will be faster than the R1 down any straight, but the key here is that to get to the start of a straight you need to finish a corner, and this is where an R1 rider should feel more comfortable than a

HOLDING BACK THE YEARS



2005 BLADE vs 2004 GSX-R1000, 2003 R1 & 2002 R1

GSX-R1000 pilot – at least in K1 mode.

The OE tyres on this model had been cleverly replaced on this example. The Dunlop 208s, that originally came on the R1, had been substituted for some Michelin Pilot Powers and after warming them up they offered grip and feedback well beyond the Dunlop originals, which, well shall we say were the down fall of many a 2002 R1 and rider. The Powers warm up quickly and work well with the front end of the Yamaha, allowing confidence to grow organically with each corner and before you know it you are attacking curves with your haunches up, hunting out crazy lean angles on your deft way to the apex.

Unlike the GSX-Rs, you feel as if the

**“...BEFORE YOU KNOW
IT YOU ARE ATTACKING
CURVES WITH YOUR
HAUNCHES UP, HUNTING
OUT CRAZY LEAN
ANGLES AND CRAFTING
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APEX...”**



2002 YZF-R1: RACING PEDIGREE

BRITISH SUPERBIKES

2002 saw the big litre bikes hit the track in full-blown Superbike guise (although only Yamaha and Suzuki ran teams capable of winning races). Virgin ran the R1 with Steve Plater and although Reynolds took the first four-cylinder win of the year on the GSX-R1000 the new Yamaha bike managed a couple of wins in its maiden season. Ex GP stars, Sean Emmett and Simon Crafer, also ran throughout the season but not even drafting in top riders could stop Ducati's dominance of the home series with the 998 taking the top four spots with Plater coming home as first four cylinder bike in fifth. Suzuki took all the headlines at this year's TT.

WORLD SUPERBIKES

It was still a time when 750s walked the earth in the WSB series, but in European superstock (and British superstock come to that) the Yamaha struggled against the Suzuki GSX-R1000 that not only had loads of power but also a year's worth of development under its belt. Gianluca Vizziello took third position on the R1 in the overall standings after Vittorio Iannuzzo romped away with the series on the Suzuki.

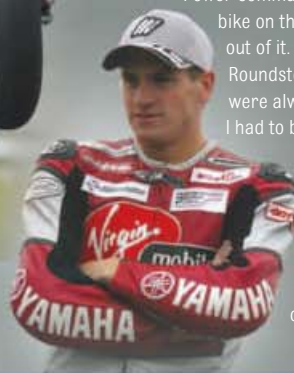


I RACED ONE OF THOSE

TOMMY HILL

“TOMMY HILL RACED AN R1 IN THE SUPERSTOCK CHAMPIONSHIP, FINISHING TOP YAMAHA RUNNER IN 2002.

That R1 was a bit of a nightmare to be honest. Most people were running Suzukis and I remember that the power difference between them was huge. We changed all the normal stuff, pipe, Power Commander and all of that and we stuck our bike on the dyno and we were only getting 143bhp out of it. It was common knowledge that the Roundstone GSX-Rs were getting 160bhp so we were always playing catch-up. It handled well but I had to brake later, corner harder and it was a struggle really. Conversely, I rode the 2003 superbike at the start of last season and it was great. In Cartagena I was about a second and a half quicker than Gary Mason, and I was supposed to be on the old bike.



”



2002

YAMAHA YZF-R1

RIVALS IN 2002

The R1's main rival came in the form of the **Suzuki** that had taken people's breath away the year before – one year later and people were still **panting** over the **GSX-R**. So with two main contenders, this lot didn't really get a look in.



Honda – bored out to 954cc over the winter and the smart restyle was finding plenty of fans



Kawasaki – ZX-9R had a few changes (new swingarm, brakes, engine internals) to try and match its sportier rivals.



The Triumph Daytona 955i was unchanged in 2002 and effectively remains in this form to date.

WHAT WE SAID WHEN IT WON

"Bikes are about corners, as much as straights, and the R1's finesse and complicity is worth more than the few horsepower it lacks to the Suzuki."

WHAT WE SAID WHEN IT LOST

"You have to be wary of a little petulant behaviour in the heat of the moment. Sublime though it can be, watch out for that loose back end because it might bite you on the arse."



MY OLD LONGTERMER SIMON ROOTS SPRING 2002 TO NOV 2002

This was my first ever **big bike** – and what a beauty. Having spent years on lithe, nimble **600s** I was expecting the **R1** to feel like a **bus**, but **Yamaha** managed to make it feel nearly **600 small** with power that I could barely believe. **Quick**, a little bit intimidating, but loads of fun.



DOWN THE SHOPS

New models will be **very rare** now so you need to look at the second hand market where residuals **favour the buyer** these days. Buy from a shop, with the security that brings, and expect to pay around up to around **£6,500** for a low mileage late **2003** model. If you go private then you could see prices dip below **£4,500** if you catch the market at the right time. Not as many **R1s** took to the track as the **GSX-Rs** of the time, but it's still worth checking tell tale signs (things like **lockwired sumps**, heavily **peppered radiators**, new bar ends on a tatty bike) just in case.

ergonomics of the bike encourage you to turn. The screen is much lower, the bars are closer to you and your weight seems much further over the front wheel than the Suzukis and the Honda, and as you put pressure on that front tyre and suspension they communicate back, generally telling you more, more, more – except when the head starts flapping after a crest nervously shakes over a cats-eye when the lack of a steering damper (combined with the short wheelbase) suddenly starts yelling less, less, less.

Coming to a stop is easy enough



with the Michelins gripping well, but this is an area where new bikes have really got it sussed, and it shows. The improvement over the K2 GSX-R is clear, but the radial calipers of the K3 shine through in both their performance and the confidence you have in using them.

We've mused over why three R1s have been totalled by us. The OE tyre played some part in these downfalls, but the swingarm, chassis and shock don't quite communicate in the same way as the front end does. We know of two other magazine write-offs making us think that the R1 flatters us when it's good but then gets all stropy at the wrong time of the month.

But this example goes to show how looks can deceive. I'm certain that the previous owner would have had no idea this was a restricted bike (have you not looked at that dyno yet?), but even on this 100bhp version the Yamaha could still nose in front of the Suzuki through the turns, only for its nemesis to exact revenge as soon as the curve opened out. Same as it ever was then...

HOLDING BACK THE YEARS



2005 BLADE vs 2004 GSX-R1000, 2003 R1 & 2002 GSX-R1000

Treating this old-timer like an antique piece is no way to respect the legacy of the mighty GSX-R1000. It's still potent now and just five minutes on the original version is enough to tell you that the marque has always been remarkable. This is a bike that lived by the sword, and very often, died by the sword. The only way to treat it is as aggressively as it treats you. Unless you really take the Gixxer by the scruff of the neck, it's in charge.

Just take a look at its performance figures. The 8,000-miled 2002 GSX-R was just 4mph shy of the 2005 Honda Fireblade and while its acceleration and roll-on figures aren't

quite as sharp as its modern equivalents, 178mph is still incomprehensibly fast for a road-going machine. The dyno was equally telling as it hit 144bhp at the crest of a super smooth curve. The torque of the GSX-R was even more impressive, eclipsing the Honda's by 3lb ft and hovering over 75lb ft for nearly 5,000 revs, smack bang where you want it in the mid-range.

What these outstanding figures translate to is a machine that still impresses every time you ride it. Back in its day, it would gap its rivals by five, maybe ten lengths down each and every straight, but those days are gone and now it's the bike doing the catching up. But it's never far away from the front.

The motor may seem a little uncultured by today's

pampered and smooth standards, noisy, gruff and belligerent, but on song there's nothing quite like it. The top-end may be barely different from the little GSX-R750, but you'd never guess the big bike's little bike background. As the airbox pumps air into the bike's heart the exhaust sings out its familiar four-cylinder song and the revs wind round clockwise like old analogue amp dials at Woodstock.

Expecting agricultural fuel delivery from the original incarnation of the SDTV system, it's refreshing to feel that Suzuki's engineers weren't far out with their first efforts. Slow passes through town or uncharted territory expose a rawness to the power but there's flexibility aplenty even in top to see the bike roll from 30mph to top whack in a little over half a minute. An alternative test is to leave the bike in third and fourth and just focus on the road and let the bike do all the hard work. The GSX-R loves this as the rev counter floats between 5,000 and 11,500rpm. Elsewhere in the range there are no nasty surprises that can induce un-intentional slides or worry the suspension unduly. In the same way that the clutch is wonderfully light



2001 SUZUKI

GSX-R1000 K1

IT CAME AND IT CONQUERED. FEW BIKES HAVE SUCH AN IMPACT AS THE K1 GSX-R1000 BUT A LOOK AROUND ANY RACE PADDOCK THAT YEAR TOLD YOU ALL YOU NEEDED TO KNOW

TECH SPEC

SUZUKI GSX-R1000 K2

Price	£5,699
NU Ins group	17

ENGINE

Type	I/c 16v, inline-four, DOHC
Displacement	988cc
Bore x Stroke	73.0 x 59.0 mm
Compression	12.0:1
Carburation	Electronic SDTV fuel injection, 42mm throttle bodies
Gearbox	Six-speed
Power	144.32bhp@10,500rpm
Torque	78.40 lb ft@8,050rpm

CYCLE PARTS

Chassis	Aluminium twin spar
Suspension	Front: 43mm USD forks, fully adjustable Rear: Fully adjustable monoshock
Brakes	Front: 2x320mm discs, six-piston Tokico calipers Rear: 220mm disc, dual piston caliper
Wheels/Tyres	Front: 120/70 ZR17 Michelin Pilot Power Rear: 190/50 ZR17 Michelin Pilot Power
Rake / Trail	24°/97mm
Wheelbase	1,417mm
Capacity	18 litres (3.95 gal)
Wet weight	199.7kg (439.3lb) weighed wet
Contact	D&K Motorcycles (01782 861100)

CHASSIS

Suzuki reinforced the frame and swingarm (of the GSX-R750) to help it cope with the forces from the 1,000cc motor. The frame's wall thickness was increased from 2mm on the 750 to 2.4mm on the 1000 while the swingarm was the recipient of heavier bracing.

UPGRADES

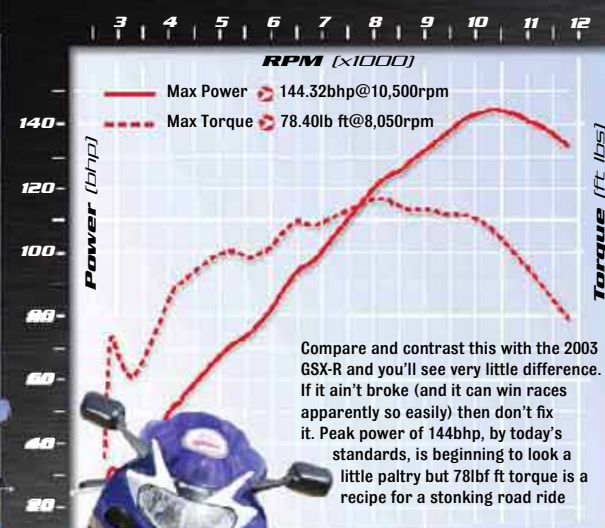
Get some brakes, for gawds sake. Superstock teams really struggled with the stock set-up, often going for braided hoses and stock pads as a stop-gap solution. Aftermarket calipers and discs are an option to we non-racers though and PFM or AP solutions offer much better feedback and consistency of performance than the stock items. The motor doesn't need much more than a pipe and Power Commander, although a high mileage motor may need a little tickling to keep it feeling as fresh as a daisy. Clutches didn't last long on the original bikes so check to see how much life is left. The suspension may also be feeling the years as well and a revalve at the front and replacement at the rear should get the GSX-R feeling in fine fettle.

ENGINE

Despite bigger holes, the GSX-R1000 engine weighed 10-kilos more than the 750, the model that was the basis for the big thou' (er, it doesn't really work like that – Tech Ed). Capacity was increased through a 1mm bigger bore and 13mm longer stroke. A heavier crank, strengthened internals and the use of a balancer shaft (to reduce vibrations) were countered by titanium header pipes.



DYNO PERFORMANCE



SUSPENSION

Kayaba forks and shock not only reduced weight over their 750 counterparts but improved damping and ride characteristics

BRAKES

The six-piston conventionally mounted Tokico callipers (radial mounted brakes were found only on face bikes in these days) had a tendency to fade after abuse.



and the gearbox just so, it's a motor that just works so well wherever you play with it. It may have 144bhp to its name but because the power is so well distributed over the range it never turns nasty, unless you seriously provoke it.

Even if you do abuse the throttle, the Suzuki's chassis is all but unflappable. And why's this? Well, if you've got a GSX-R750 as a blueprint then it would take a fool to deviate from these proportions. Suzuki's engineers are no fools, so abiding by the principles that made the 750 a cult bike for a generation was a no-brainer. Of course, certain changes were incorporated into the GSX-R1000's frame (namely thicker frame walls and a heavily

braced swingarm) but the soul of the 750s abilities remained core.

The original big Gixxer feels exactly that, big. While the motor was given huge amounts of attention it seems that the ergonomics of the bike were only given half a thought. The frame feels quite wide and the tank plays your legs wide, not giving you the perfect feeling of having every part of your body close and available to exert influence. Despite this, the GSX-R feels controllable, even when the engine starts to take over.

The steering damper initially gives the impression that the GSX-R will be slow to turn as it feels as if it's filled with molasses. But it's precisely because

it's a naturally quick steerer that the damper is such a constraint at slow speed. Of course, in a modern context, it's relatively slow to turn, not helped by quite a stretch to the bars, but the GSX-R is stable throughout a corner and only the worst bumps or potholes upset the bike's line. Through a series of three consecutive crests the GSX-R could be aimed and fired to an exit and each time the front wheel landed lopsided I expected all manner of consternation, but nothing came. Sweet.

Because of its bulk, its difficult to hustle in the same way you can with the Yamaha but it remains accurate and offers feedback that you rarely get on

HOLDING BACK THE YEARS



2005 BLADE vs 2004 GSX-R1000, 2003 R1 & 2002 GSX-R1000

older bikes such as these. As power is fed through to the rear wheel the lack of rebound damping has a tendency to make the bike run a little wide if fully on it, but the Michelin Pilot Powers on this particular bike grip really well on the exit and help to keep everything tidy and quick. The rear could be swamped by the Suzuki's power but the Kayaba suspension remains manfully up to the job, even though it's four years old and with a good few miles under its belt.

It's not all good news, mind. The GSX-R's brakes were never the bike's strong point, but no way in the world was I expecting them to feel so wooden

on their first squeeze. The forks dived down, but there was so little feeling from the pads that it was only your eyes that were telling you the story that you were indeed slowing down. The pads seemed to improve as they bedded themselves back in, to the point that you didn't have to accommodate them in your riding as you had to do earlier, but they're still far from phenomenal.

For a bike that was conceived in the last century – millennium even – it's still very much applicable to today's riding and will remain so for years yet. It's a modern classic ahead of its time; write it off at your peril.

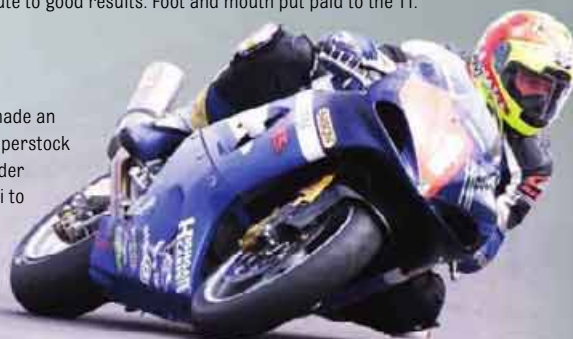
GSX-R1000 K1: RACING PEDIGREE

BRITISH SUPERBIKES

The 1,000cc Superbike was yet to be approved by the sport's ruling body, the ACU, so racing these bikes could only be done in superstock form. Paul Young took the title on a virtually sponsorless K1 Suzuki, just showing the world that the GSX-R1000 could be competitive without huge money being thrown at it. David Jefferies on the V&M R1 provided the only real competition while most of the field were on Suzukis with the GSX-R the easiest route to good results. Foot and mouth put paid to the TT.

WORLD SUPERBIKES

Again, no WSB racing but the Suzuki made an immediate impact on the European superstock championship with current MotoGP rider James Ellison (right) taking the Suzuki to the championship at the first time of asking after a season long battle with Walter Tortoroglio.



I RACED ONE OF THOSE

PAUL YOUNG

I remember the K1 with much fondness, in fact there are several places that we've raced at this year where I've not gone as quick – it's almost embarrassing. The motor was strong, 145bhp, and bullet proof. It still ran the standard headers and the only thing we changed all year was a set of steels in the clutch. I got over the brake problems by buying 26 sets of discs. We had a new set for qualifying and racing, so that solved the problem of them overheating and turning into dishes. Suspension changes were pretty standard. It just worked well together.



YZF-R1 SPEED TESTING

Rider: Dave the Goat
Top speed: 157.31mph
Time: 38.80 seconds
Distance: 2,216.992 metres



ACCELERATION

Speed (MPH)	Time (Secs)	Distance (Metres)	Accel (Gs)
10	0.64	1.345	0.72
50	2.67	28.855	0.86
100	6.75	172.546	0.68
130	12.39	469.391	0.48
150	25.30	1,287.586	0.27

Standing ¼ mile: 11.10s @ 127.09mph

BRAKING

Stopping distance (70mph): 53.42 metres

TOP GEAR ROLL-ON

40mph-80mph: 5.00 seconds
40mph-120mph: 11.00 seconds

FIREBLADE SPEED TESTING

Rider: Dave the Goat
Top speed: 181.74mph
Time: 29.25 seconds
Distance: 1,809.684 metres



ACCELERATION

Speed (MPH)	Time (Secs)	Distance (Metres)	Accel (Gs)
10	0.75	1.412	0.60
50	2.65	26.760	0.86
100	5.71	131.268	0.80
130	8.70	285.885	0.68
150	12.01	493.797	0.57
160	14.39	659.297	0.51
170	17.81	911.642	0.44
180	26.63	1,598.065	0.31

Standing ¼ mile: 10.60s @ 142.41mph

BRAKING

Stopping distance (70mph): 52.599 metres

TOP GEAR ROLL-ON

40mph-80mph: 5.95 seconds
40mph-120mph: 11.50 seconds

GSX-R1000 K2 SPEED TESTING

Rider: Dave the Goat
Top speed: 178.22mph
Time: 34.75 seconds
Distance: 2,226.315 metres



ACCELERATION

Speed (MPH)	Time (Secs)	Distance (Metres)	Accel (Gs)
10	0.57	1.267	0.80
50	2.69	29.480	0.85
100	5.52	127.027	0.83
130	8.44	278.114	0.70
150	11.96	499.601	0.57
160	15.17	722.989	0.48
170	22.03	1,230.791	0.35

Standing ¼ mile: 10.50s @ 143.05mph

BRAKING

Stopping distance (70mph): 54.663 metres

TOP GEAR ROLL-ON

40mph-80mph: 5.45 seconds
40mph-120mph: 10.75 seconds

GSX-R1000 K4 SPEED TESTING

Rider: Dave the Goat
Top speed: 182.55mph
Time: 31.15 seconds
Distance: 1,997.642 metres



ACCELERATION

Speed (MPH)	Time (Secs)	Distance (Metres)	Accel (Gs)
10	0.77	1.389	0.59
50	2.71	27.346	0.84
100	5.52	123.386	0.83
130	8.27	265.874	0.72
150	11.32	456.853	0.60
160	13.61	615.185	0.54
170	16.80	851.832	0.46
180	24.39	1,449.837	0.34

Standing ¼ mile: 10.45s @ 144.86mph

BRAKING

Stopping distance (70mph): 52.244 metres

TOP GEAR ROLL-ON

40mph-80mph: 5.30 seconds
40mph-120mph: 10.65 seconds



2002



SUZUKI GSX-R1000 K2

RIVALS IN 2002

Suzuki blew the 1,000cc scene to bits with the introduction of the **GSX-R1000**. The R1 and 'Blade' hadn't changed much since the previous models (the ZX-9R hardly ever changed) but while they were still great bikes both were blown away by the **GSX-R**.



Honda – still running the 'Blade' at its 929 capacity, with new fuel injection and new upside-down forks



Kawasaki – the ZX-9R had a revamp in 2000 but was still off the pace in out and out performance terms



The Triumph Daytona 955i had last been seriously updated in 1999



WHAT WE SAID WHEN IT WON

"It is the fastest, it is the best handling, it looks stunning and has simply moved the whole game on 20 per cent. It doesn't just win, it annihilates Yamaha's R1."

WHAT WE SAID WHEN IT LOST

"If absolute power were all that mattered we'd all be riding turbo Hayabusas. But bikes are about corners as much as straights and the R1's finesse and complicity is worth more than the few horsepower it lacks to the Suzuki."



MY OLD LONGTERMER KENNY PRYDE MARCH 2002 TO NOVEMBER 2002

Ah yes, the **K2**. It's coming back to me now. **Big** and **bulbous** at the front and **scary fast** in comparison to every other bike I had ever ridden. Add to that **brakes** that weren't as good in terms of feel and (lack of) **fade** as rival bikes in the class and that's why I was never really comfortable on it. Honestly? It was **intimidating**.



DOWN THE SHOPS

Scour the **classifieds** and you'll have to look twice at some of the prices on offer. I saw **£3,600** for a **15,000** mile **K1** model and that's **terrific value** for a bike that can cling to the coat tails of a nearly **nine grand Fireblade**. Head to the shops for more peace of mind and you're probably looking more at **£5,500** for a late **K2** version. Look out for those **ex-race** bikes though, there will be a fair few out there, waiting to snare the unwary.

THE FINAL ANALYSIS

WHAT BIKE WOULD WE BUY FIRST OUT OF THIS LITTLE LOT?

Well it would have to be the Fireblade, simply because it is the best bike on test. It may not be the most powerful or have quite the most flexible motor but what it lacks in raw power it gains handsomely in overall refinement rarely seen in the motorcycling world. For some, this finesse has gone too far, critics say Honda has polished the soul out of the Fireblade, but that's an unfair criticism of a bike that can be hustled with the best of them – so long as you know how. It's creamy smooth, built to last and is every inch the race replica in these Repsol colours.

Pushing it hard is the K3/4 GSX-R1000. The numbers tell you that it should have won this titanic bout but while the engine goes for the stick approach, the Suzuki never has a tempting enough carrot to beat the

Honda. It's cheap though and, for a bike that starts and stops so well, it very nearly took the honours.

The real surprise of the test was the K2 GSX-R1000. It forces you to completely rethink the second hand market since its awesome engine and more than capable chassis are almost a match for bikes costing twice the price. If you're after a track tool to go alongside your road bike then try and find a bike for about £3,000 and run rings round the boys with their precious new toys.

And sadly, the wheezing R1 comes in last. Had it have been a full power version it still would have struggled against the K2 GSX-R, reflecting how tight the market was in the early years of the millennium. The front end is fantastic, but

the superlative feeling from the forks is never a match for the power and price of the K2 Gixxer and unless you're spending a small fortune on trackdays the GSX-R makes a better day-to-day tool. It's tough to call the R1 worst on test, perhaps we should just settle for fourth best... **SB**

