

HYPERDRIVE

Last year there were only two superbikes worth your cash. BMW's latest K 1300 S adds a third, and potential winner, to the mix

WORDS BY: BENJAMIN 'BJ' KUBAS CRONIN
PICS BY: FLOW IMAGES



It's a sad fact that draconian and ever harsher speeding laws (and not just on these shores) do nothing to help a superbike's cause. The throttle goes both ways, true, but would you really want one of these to sit in average-speed checks for most of its life? Unless you've ridden or owned one you have no idea how easy it is to creep over limits by far more than a mph - or 30. And, of course, they take a little more experience

It's hard not to tell you to just buy a GSX-R1000, or similar, at this point. They tour just as well, are lighter and just as fast. Their other benefits are sportingly obvious. The main reason to splash your cash on big cc's is because these are the heavy hitters - even non-bikers know that a Hayabusa means business. That kudos can be worth the bike's own weight in egotistical gold. Huge knackers aren't something missing

“EVEN NON-BIKERS KNOW THAT A HAYABUSA MEANS BUSINESS”

to ride; just imagine your eighteen-year-old self let loose on a superbike...

There are worrying signs that the law-makers are going to start looking at motorcycles' speed again, which means headline warp-cruisers will be the first against the firing wall when the revolution comes. It's the US market that truly keeps them alive, and could be their ultimate saviour if the politics ever go shit-shaped.

from this test, it's just that they vary, much like in real life. Last year, the Kawasaki ZZR1400 just edged it over the Hayabusa. With only two bikes to choose from, both different propositions, our conclusion was more one of choice. Thankfully, BMW's new K 1300 S has roared into the fray, armed with the goods to turn this into a proper test. Could it be the new King of the class? Let's hit hyperdrive and find out. ▶

SUZUKI HAYABUSA

'Epic'. A word that could have been formed solely for the Hayabusa, had it not already existed. Everything about the bike - its size, presence, look, and turn of speed - could all be described using those four letters at some point.

In the case of looks, though, perhaps not in the good sense. More 'epic ugliness' if we really think about it. I'm not half as offended by the 'Busa as Alastair, but when it next gets both ends done by its makers, I hope Suzuki move on in terms of styling. But what it lacks in style it more than makes up for in performance.

A command performance, in

fact, conducted by the raging 1,340cc engine. It's what the Hayabusa's really all about, the reason these are lusted after.

Just over 178bhp and 145Nm of torque makes this the most powerful engine in class by a margin, which for some is simply a must-have. It's far smoother than the original, and much stronger through the entire range, with a top-end that will blow your mind. It's the one part of the bike that'll never get old, and it only gets better if you start throwing exhausts and Power Commanders at it. Our 'termer made 190bhp in 2008 with a few quid dropped on it. Not tempted by that? You really should be.

Even in stock trim, the engine never fails to delight. I rode one through most of last winter, but the



The Suzuki Hayabusa completed its pre-flight checks before take-off

IN STOCK TRIM THE ENGINE NEVER FAILS TO DELIGHT

SUZUKI GSX1300R HAYABUSA



Don't be fooled by:

The looks. If you squint a tad it could be the old machine, but the new one would eat it for breaky, then poop in its slippers for good measure



Highlights

- 🔥 New from 2008
- 🔥 Torque-heavy motor
- 🔥 Four-piston callipers
- 🔥 Three power modes
- 🔥 220kg
- 🔥 178bhp

£10,000 (otr)

Verdict

Devastating speed machine seeks: rider under six foot for fun, frolics, and 186mph

🟢 Handling, torque, poweeeeeeeeer...

🔴 Heavy, mildly confused, styling, ground clearance

Final Score Score relates to other bikes in this test only **8/10**

Engine

Displacement is up by 41cc through a 2mm stroke increase. Compression is also up to 12.5:1. Titanium valves save weight, while single injectors become twins. Throttle bore is now down to 44mm. New ultra-fine atomising injectors, a revised exhaust valve angle, and polished intake ports all enhance combustion efficiency. The exhaust has a pre-chamber under the engine that reduces the weight high in the seat unit.

Chassis

Overall length is up 55mm, but the wheelbase is unchanged. The swingarm is stiffer to take the extra power of the stock engine and also to suit the tuning scene. New Kayaba inverted forks use harder wearing Diamond-Like Coating instead of TiN. The calipers drop two pistons to four and the discs are down 10mm, but they bite harder. The new dash is as Flash Gordon as ever, retaining analogue dials.

engine can be so docile that I never felt the need to use the S-DMS switchable map system.

We expect lots of goodies these days, but the Suzuki doesn't really need them to impress. When you first twist the throttle to the stop and start snicking through the gearbox, you will momentarily go completely insane. It's a truly mental amount of stomp to acclimatise to and it takes a while to adjust. Yes, a superbike is as quick, but they don't have the same tidal-wave of torque.

The torque makes all the difference in feel, and a Hayabusa charging through its torque curve, towards a million-miles-an-hour as the countryside goes pastiche, evokes emotions and a feeling of raw power that even superbikes can't provide. Further still, in the upper reaches it feels far more GSX-R1000 than you'd expect.

The sporting twist is made more evident by the chassis' behaviour. It's roomier than before, though

more head-down than the rivals here. It handles exactly like the thing it is; a fat sportsbike, with an abundance of stability. It turns and steers surprisingly quickly for a big bike with such low bars, but is only ever unstuck by its own mass - and your own inputs.

The suspension is beautifully set-up for the road, taking some nasty bumps to unnerve it. On track it's not too shabby either, despite the limits being painfully obvious. Heavy track braking sees the fork remain composed, but the extra speed soon has the sheer mass conspiring against it. Respect to Suzuki for making it this good at something it's not supposed to do.

That's also part of the problem, along with the riding position. It's sporty enough to not quite be the hyperbike we want, and constricting enough that many may not get on with it. But it must be saluted for being bonkers in the extreme. This bike goes up to eleven. That's one better, right?



Andy celebrates his first successful use of chloroform

AND YOUR TESTERS ARE...

Benjamin 'BJ' Kubas Cronin - Features Editor



Beej loves any machine that has to be restricted to 186mph, but despises the restriction itself. "It's like health and safety gone mad," is his usual rant as he pings off the limiter in top

Alastair 'A-Force' Fagan - Road Test Editor



186mph is like a 30-limit to our not-so-tame racer. The feral flyer loves speed, nearly as much as he hates rubber - the only explanation for killing each rear tyre on test

Andy 'Beaky' Saunders - Art Editor



The closest Andy has come to 186mph was a fluke 180 at the pub's dart board. No matter, because he's very willing and more than able to max out any of these manic machines

SECOND OPINION



SUZUKI Hayabusa

The 'Busa is definitely the sportiest bike here and carries the most potential hardcore ability of the three. It's always good fun rocking-up to a trackday on one of these rocketships and surprising some numpties. The big Suzook is as comfortable on its side as it is upright, chewing up the rear tyre as it drifts out of turns. It feels like a GSX-R1000 on steroids. But the simple fact is, I couldn't walk into my garage everyday and find the old girl attractive. Those steroids have had an adverse effect...



The 'Busa's looks may not be to everyone's tastes, but it's certainly striking



SECOND OPINION



BMW K1300 S
 Ooh, BMW - you are building some tasty metal, aren't you. If it wasn't for the big-buck price tag, it might have swapped places with the Kawasaki. The old 1200 had a bonkers motor but the 1300cc lump is just psycho. Everything connected to the engine works impeccably, too. It's super-smooth. The Duolever suspension isn't my cuppa and won't be for many, especially if you like feedback from the front-end. If miles, comfort and a smidgen of skulduggery are yo' thang, it's got to be the Beemer.

It may have taken them their entire history, but BMW are finally building some ruddy good bikes

BMW K1300 S

Some may wonder why we excluded the K1200 S in last year's hyperbike test. The truth is we considered it, but decided that it was better to leave it out rather than subject it to the savage public shoeing it would have undoubtedly received. We really weren't fans. It just felt unfinished.

It was the fastest thing BMW had ever made and could cut record laps round the Nurburgring, but had too many issues to challenge the establishment.

However, all is forgiven as the replacement K1300 S is far removed from BMW's first effort, even if the look remains as subjective as the Suzuki's. It's fast and modern, yet super-comfortable with enough gizmos to make even Batman jealous.

The K can be fully equipped, if you've the pocket-depth - and just you try escaping from a BMW dealership without adding at least one tasty treat. The big sellers are traction-control (ASC), next-gen electronic adjustable suspension (ESA II), a quickshifter, ABS and, of course, heated grips. The ABS comes as standard, but you can order one without should you wish, lowering the price accordingly. We'd opt for the lot because it all works and we're greedy.

Where the Duolever front end used to terrify me, the 1300 has

turned this right around. The change in geometry, materials and the addition of ESA II make all the difference. While it's still not perfect, I'm now in tune with its left-field philosophy rather than dead-set against it. Its handling feel is one some never truly come to terms with, but if you can - get ready to reap the benefits.

Setting ESA II to 'Normal' and 'Comfort', the ride is as you'd expect, though not completely compromised if you want to turn it up a notch. On 'Sport' mode, the Bee-M comes closest to matching the cornering skills of the other two. In some areas it's got them completely licked, though not always obviously.

The lack of traditional feel from the front is at fault, because it holds you back until you learn to trust it completely. I'm sure it's more stable than either of the other two. The problem is that you know it's rock-solid, but somehow it manages to feel otherwise. There's that general feeling again. The ABS brakes act agriculturally at times, too, but are powerful and effective enough to make the difference when it counts.

And this is the one bike of the three I'd trust most to get me out of a mess. As you have less suspension reaction on a choppy throttle or overheated corner entry, it doesn't throw an immediate strop if you have to change line mid-turn. It just shrugs it off and does it. This can be a



Side effects of heavy chloroform use include slouching and inane grinning



“ THIS IS THE BIKE I'D TRUST TO GET ME OUT OF A MESS ”

BMW K1300 S



Don't be fooled by:

The BMW badge. It's a brave new world for them, we even expect a supersport machine sometime in the not too distant future

3 TRACK, 4 FAST ROAD, 1 HOOLIGAN, 3 NEW RIDER, 3 DESIRABILITY

Highlights

- Extra 'leccy options
- ABS as standard
- Bigger bark and bite
- Two-stage shaft-drive
- 228kg
- 155bhp

£13,025 (otr)

Verdict

The electronic future of hyperbikes. Supremely capable, if you can dig it

Handling, gizmos, bloody fast, comfy

Handling, weight, fuelling, styling

Final Score
 Score relates to other bikes in this test only

8/10

Engine

Capacity for the almost entirely new 55° inclined motor is up 136cc to 1,293cc by increasing bore and stroke. It powers all three models in the K range. BMW's sophisticated electronic fuelling runs the lump on the extremely lean side, even coming with 'knock' control, as compression is very high. Maximum power is delivered 1,000rpm earlier than the 1200, while an impressive 70 per cent of torque is available below 3,000rpm.

Chassis

The suspension geometry has been modified to improve steering neutrality, while increasing agility. Both wheels and Duolever apparatus has been tweaked, now made in alloy rather than steel. Unsprung mass is reduced by a kilo. The rear is likewise firmed up and the 'S's wheel-load distribution is claimed to be exactly 50:50. EVO ABS brakes are standard. The chassis feels at its best when in use with optional ESA II.

KAWASAKI ZZR1400

Kawasaki's ZZR1400 is a master-stroke in hyperbike design. It ticks all the right boxes and stays clear of the ones it doesn't relate to - unlike the Suzuki. It's funny to consider that of all three here, its water-balloon styling is actually the most attractive, if more conventional, overall shape.

Kawasaki realised that competing with the Hayabusa in its own vein was a mistake, as they had with the ZX-12R that the '14 replaced. Asking what people want from a bike like this clearly produced all the right answers, yet they mated just enough sporting pretension with good manners to

keep it interesting.

Their first 1400 isn't that far removed from the 2010 bike, originally updated in late 2008. Differences are small and subtle, but enough for it to hang on to its favoured-son hat, just like last year. So nearly not, though, as we couldn't find one to test before a kind Bristol gent offered us his '09 bike right at the last minute.

This particular bike sounds awesome due to the obvious aftermarket cans, but what I find most pleasing is the improved throttle and power delivery.

The first model had a nasty little surge around 4,000rpm, that could catch out the unwary in shitty conditions. No electronic saviour here, Kawasaki hasn't had the first electronic coming yet, let alone the second. That glitch is

THE ZZR IS STILL ABLE TO TRANSFORM SCENERY TO SOUP

KAWASAKI ZZR1400



Don't be fooled by:

Global warming. Biggest hoax ever, or a way of keeping developing nations in their place? Discuss...



Highlights

- 🔥 **Monocoque frame**
- 🔥 **186mph speed limiter**
- 🔥 **Bum-plush**
- 🔥 **ABS option**
- 🔥 **224kg**
- 🔥 **163bhp**

£9,720 (otr)

Verdict

Verdict: Still the best hyperbike, this time by the slimmest of margins only, though

🟢 **Engine, comfort, control, road manners**

🔴 **Soft, clearance, least ugly of the three ugly sisters**

Final Score
Score relates to other bikes in this test only **9/10**

Engine

As well as bringing the bike in line with Euro3 regs, Kawasaki has revised the intake porting to improve flow characteristics. The lateral spray angle from the injectors has been increased from 15° to 20° in order to provide better atomisation. The reworked exhausts enhance torque in the lower rev range, by enlarging header pipes 1-4 and 2-3. The piston profile has been changed for less mechanical noise, too.

Chassis

The frame is an aluminium monocoque, now using a die-cast process for less weight, that passes over the engine. A conventional twin-spar would have made the bike too wide. Different casting techniques are used in order to adjust rigidity levels of individual sections of the frame to allow flex in the right places. The ZZR's frame has 230 per cent of the longitudinal rigidity, and 90 per cent of the torsional rigidity of the frame used in the ZX-12R.



When the ZZR1400 grips, it goes. You've just got to get it to grip...



now absent, allowing more control over the ample anger buried within the engine. It's not as brutal as the Suzuki, or gung-ho like the BMW, but still a hyperbike able to transform scenery into soup.

Drive is almost seamless, though remains surprisingly perky and it jumps up eagerly when asked. But it doesn't flood you with the pace the Hayabusa can. It's easier to keep the ZZR some place saner, if only just. The star of the show is the throttle, which at last continues Kawasaki's fine tradition of nailing a pukka gasser. It's key to keeping things sweet, as every movement is responded to precisely. It helps to make the bike more usable on the roads than the Suzuki, as does the chassis.

It's superbly competent at the daily grind, even if it'll never match the 'Busa on the sporting front. The Suzuki handles more like a sportsbike, but the Kawasaki is true hyperbike through and through. You know right away there have been compromises made on the suspension's set-up, but it's not at all bad. The high bars give excellent control and enough leverage to chuck it about quickly.

But on those rare occasions where you find yourself chasing your mates hard, or on track, those benefits are wasted by damping that suddenly goes on holiday. Get it in and settled, and you're just about OK, but it really doesn't like it. We could have starting fiddling, but that'd just ruin its superlative inspiring road manners.

And it's on the road where it longs to be, especially in long fast corners or meandering valley routes where a steady and measured pace flatters the bike further. I'd go for the non-ABS version personally, as there's no interference during heavy-braking entries. The judder can be rather distracting when you're trying to concentrate on the exit.

Everything else is top drawer, excepting the rather bland instrument cluster. It's as comfy as the BMW, more so than the Suzuki and wind-protection is very effective, leaving you inside your own warp-bubble of quiet madness, on demand.

Put the pieces together and it feels more like a complete package than any of its rivals, meaning it's still top dog.

SECOND OPINION



Kawasaki ZZR1400

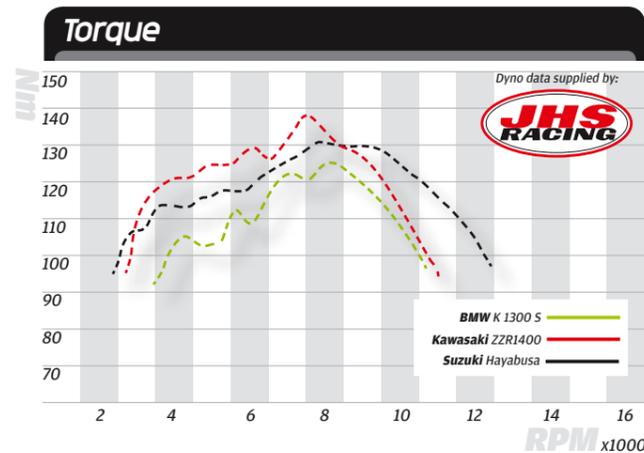
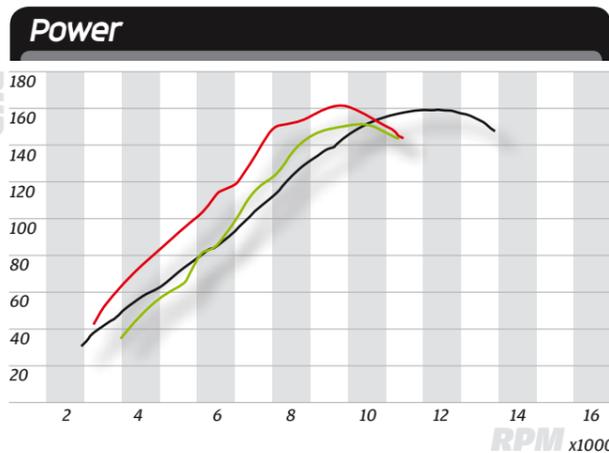
The Kwacker is what a hyperbike is all about. It hasn't got the raucous attitude of the 'Busa or the sophistication of the Beemer but, instead, a perfect balance of power, handling and comfort. And it doesn't look wank, and it doesn't cost the price of a semi-detached in Croydon. It's definitely the most versatile of the bunch and you won't miss the terminal pace of the others unless you're on the Autobahn. Ground clearance will be an issue for thrashers, though, but no biggy really.



Big, bad, blisteringly fast and still the best of today's hyperbikes



	SUZUKI HAYABUSA	BMW K 1300 S	KAWASAKI ZZR1400
ENGINE TYPE	1,340cc, liquid-cooled, 16v, inline four	1,293cc, liquid-cooled, 16v, inline four	1,352cc, liquid-cooled, 16v, inline four
BORE X STROKE	81 x 65mm	80mm x 64.3mm	84 x 61mm
COMPRESSION	12.5:1	13.0:1	12:1
FUELLING	Digital fuel-injection	Electronic fuel injection	Electronic fuel injection
TESTED POWER	178bhp @ 9,600rpm	154bhp @ 9,250rpm	163bhp @ 9,500rpm
TESTED TORQUE	143Nm @ 7,000rpm	127Nm @ 8,250rpm	137Nm @ 7,500rpm
CHASSIS FRAME	Cast aluminium	Aluminium, engine-load bearing 'bridge'	Aluminium monocoque
F SUSPENSION	Kayaba usd fork, fully adjustable	BMW Duolever, central spring strut	43mm inverted fork, fully adjustable
R SUSPENSION	Monoshock, fully adjustable	Paralever shock, preload and rebound adj	Monoshock, fully adjustable
FRONT BRAKES	Four-piston radial calipers, 310mm discs	Two-piston caliper, 265mm disc	Four-piston radial calipers, 310mm discs
REAR BRAKES	One-piston caliper, 260mm disc	One-piston caliper, 240mm disc	Two-piston caliper, 250mm disc
DIMENSIONS WHEELBASE	1,485mm	1,585mm	1,460mm
SEAT HEIGHT	805mm	820mm	800mm
DRY WEIGHT	220kg	228kg	224kg
FUEL CAPACITY	21L	19L	22L
PRICE FROM	£10,000 (otr) Suzuki GB 0845 850 8800 Suzuki-gb.co.uk	£13,025(otr) BMW Motorrad UK 0800 777155 BMW-Motorrad.co.uk	£9,720 (otr) Kawasaki UK 01628 856600 Kawasaki.co.uk
0-60:	2.81s	3.11s	2.82s
0-100:	5.23s	6.07s	5.39s
0-150:	11.22s	14.27s	11.94s
Stg 1/4 Mile:	10.15s @ 145.26mph	10.79s @ 134.98mph	10.31s @ 142.31mph
Standing Mile:	27.97s @ 182.35mph	27.65s @ 172.63mph	26.43s @ 184.01mph
Top Speed:	185mph	175mph	186mph



THANKS TO: • Vines of Guildford who lent us their magnificent fully loaded K 1300S at the last minute. Call 'em on 01483 207000 vinesbikes.co.uk
• A huge thanks to our lovely reader Kevin Hunt who came to our rescue with his mint ZZR1400. Love youz!



CONCLUSION
The inclusion of BMW's trick bit of kit hasn't quite had the desired effect on the class. It has, however, become my personal favourite here. All the German bling and superb performance has really turned my head. But as any ex is always likely to remind me, it's not all about me.
Once again, we have more of a choice than a definitive finishing order, which can depend entirely on you. There's no doubt that the most 'Fast Bikes' machine here is the Hayabusa. If your hyperbike must be the best handling, most powerful and fastest, the choice is singular. But remember it's far nicer for riders under six-foot and

is the least comfy of the trio. Nor is it the most powerful (normally priced) production bike any more, losing out by a single bhp to a new German 1,000cc superbike. But it's still all kinds of crazy, the mothership of all motherships. If you're still on an old version, stop mucking about and try the real deal, you'll be amazed.

We'd urge a look at the BMW if you can manage the stretch to it. The BMW highlights the now glaring omissions of the other two, in the lack of modern niceties. Its own take on rolling could, and likely would, put a lot of you off, but there's so much to like and admire, and its rivals will always be catching it from now on. OK, the traction control isn't the most sophisticated, and the shaft-drive

occasionally loses composure, but for a BMW the rest of the pay-off is remarkable. Any 1200 owner upgrading is going to wet their knickers after the first good ride.

But, by the tips of its fingernails, the Kawasaki tops the order once again. Only two things keep it ahead of the BMW; price and normalcy. As a hyperbike, they're almost on a par, but the Kawasaki feels like a 'normal' bike. It's a machine you can just jump on and ride fast. The throttle connection is fantastic, which is intrinsic to it floating our boat - and makes stunting a breeze.

The only other point worthy of consideration is the expectation that the next model will sport everything this one's missing, and that might be worth waiting for. 

“ IT'S STILL THE MOTHERSHIP OF ALL MOTHERSHIPS ”



The ZZR1400 remains our best bike, but the Hayabusa remains barking mad