

BMW S 1000 RR

With two Rs in the name, the most anticipated bike of recent history had better be good - we thrash it senseless at Portimao

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Right, let's start with a neurological exercise. Rid your brain of any previous dreary BMWs and related experiences, and ditch the mental pipe and slippers. Heated grips, chiropractor-free ergonomics and fuel economy aren't on the S 1000 RR's agenda. This is a new dawn for BMW, and for motorcycling.

They've even managed to make the thing look good, teaching the Japanese a lesson in side-exit exhausts. Asymmetric endurance-style headlights boss the front, while a factory-as-fook swingarm sorts the arse-end, and looks like it's been half-inched from the WSB garage. It's fast even before its turned a wheel.

And that may be an issue with the S 1000 RR. Coming straight from the drawing board into Superbikes, the RR has been teasing us with a season of WSB racing and its new-fangled tech for several years now. It's also

been the worst kept secret, with many a Jonny riding the S before this official launch. We've all been building it up into something incredible before even riding it. It's like convincing yourself that Sienna Miller is going to be awesome under the sheets.

So what's it like? Well, the riding position is nothing new. It's spacious, yet aggressive, and there's something very GSX-R about it before the scratching begins, with same spec master cylinders and levers, and an identical raucous induction growl lending it familiarity. Even the clocks are very similar, complete with lap-timer and gear indicator.

As I head down the hill into Portimao's first turn, the nimbleness and quick steering at slight lean angles is reminiscent of a CBR600RR. It's easy to boss. But that small-bike sense of easy domination goes out the window when you open the throttle. ➤

Like a jaunt up Kilimanjaro with a promise of a blowie at the peak, the motor gets builds with real anticipation as you get near the top. The full, undiluted power delivery is addictive, all the way to the monster redline at 14,250rpm. There are no punches or jolts, and the curve feels very linear, gradually building

up into a raging paroxysm. It's nothing short of bonkers-fast and, again, very Gixer-esque, but with an extra dollop of testosterone and steroids. Expect to see dynos edging towards 170bhp. And with the exception of MV's fraudulent F4, the Beemer is sure to take charge in traffic light GP and drag-strip shootouts.

An optional, but must-have, quickshifter adds to the rousing warp-speed sensation, as does relatively short gearing in the lower cogs. Immense power meant having to wrestle the front, and constantly pressure the rear brake, in order to stop it looping. It was still trying to mono as the 'box was being coaxed into fifth. It's an animal, but one that's on a leash, and its ease of control will accommodate most.

The fuelling is mint, as you'd expect from a Beemer. Throttle feel and connection is also top-notch in all the optional modes, so long as you're not trying to wheelie. The

ride-by-wire throttle isn't as three-stage as the RSV4's euthanasia system, but still offers little help to stunt-monkeys. This iffy glitch is otherwise inconspicuous in use.

The 2009 R1 revolutionised manual corner exit. The Beemer laughs at the Yam's cross-plane crank and pretty black lines, and pisses past it down a straight. But even the Beemer's über-trick electronics haven't shoved the class into new extremities.

Your brain, along with your arsehole, is telling your right wrist not to open the throttle. Mid corner, the bike is settled, ready for your next slice of input. Gently turn



the gasser and pray that there's no highside. That would be the story with the rest of the 1000s.

But none of this is relevant with the S 1000 RR. Its takes corner exits into another decade; the Dynamic Traction Control is simply stunning. There's no way of getting around the difference other than to close down your brain, switch off your in-built safety systems, and set your right hand free. Dirty great black tyre marks aren't unusual on a circuit, but these lines, beginning on the apex of every corner, certainly are.

The S 1000 RR's DTC operates seamlessly on the very edge of adhesion. Pops, bangs and

general intrusion are absent from this system. You'll swear it's not working. The only hint of intervention is when you're on the absolute limit, when it slips for a near-imperceptible nanosecond, and then digs in and fucks off. I wouldn't bet my right bollock on it, but it's very nearly idiot-proof, combining ultimate track-pace with the gentle placation of the European safety zealots.

It's also going to prevent tyre and grip degradation, too. On the same circuit, on damn-near similar rubber, the KTM RC8 R and 1198S rear hoops looked like they'd been through a 12-round bout with an angle-grinder. The BMW's looked



Turn the ABS off, and you can still wheelie to your heart's content

IT TAKES CORNER EXITS INTO ANOTHER DECADE; THE S 1000 RR'S DYNAMIC TRACTON CONTROL IS SIMPLY STUNNING

BMW S 1000 RR

Highlights

- Fooking fast**
- Outstanding DTC**
- Sachs suspension**
- King of the road**
- 183kg (dry weight)**
- 193bhp (claimed)**

£11,190 (Sport - £12,500) (otr)



Don't be fooled by: BMW claiming that the S 1000 RR is a 100% in-house job. The wheels are Chinese, dontcha know.

5 TRACK

5 FAST ROAD

4 HOOLIGAN

3 NEW RIDER

5 DESIRABILITY

Engine

The big-bore, short-stroke 999cc motor gets an injection of BMW's F1 technology, particularly the four-valve head, and only weighs 59kg. It comes with a sophisticated engine management system (BMS-KP) that looks after everything. The crank is forged from a single piece of steel and runs a traditional angle of 180°. Lightweight titanium valves are also fitted, as is a very good slipper clutch. Advanced DTC sets a new standard for production bikes.

Chassis

An aluminium bridge frame made from four castings tilts the motor at an angle of 32°. The steering head angle is 66.1°, which is very steep. At the rear, the swingarm is relatively long for good traction. Huge 46mm Sachs fork holds a light and extra stiff wheel, while a Sachs shock looks after the rear with an option of increasing ride-height by 10mm. Both have dual-damping. Brembo Radial calipers bite Brembo 320mm discs and there's a Race ABS option.

Verdict

A genius mix of CBR600RR, and Gixer Thou'. Say hello to the potential 2010 champ

Power, electronics, fuelling, handling, price

Not convinced by the ABS, limits to gizmos, not a riot

Final Score
Score relates to this bike in isolation **9/10**

Specification

ENGINE	
TYPE	999cc, Liquid-cooled, 16 valve, DOHC, inline-four
BORE X STROKE	80mm x 49.7mm
COMPRESSION	13.1:1
FUELLING	Electronic fuel injection
CLAIMED POWER	193bhp@13,000rpm
CLAIMED TORQUE	112Nm @9,750rpm
CHASSIS	
FRAME	Aluminium bridge
F SUSPENSION	46mm inverted Sachs fork, fully adjustable
R SUSPENSION	Sachs monoshock, fully adjustable
FRONT BRAKES	Four-piston radial calipers, 320mm discs
REAR BRAKES	Single piston caliper, 220mm disc
DIMENSIONS	
WHEELBASE	1,432mm
SEAT HEIGHT	820mm
KERB WEIGHT	183kg
FUEL CAPACITY	17.5L
PRICE	
PRICE FROM	£11,190 otr BMW UK - 0800 777 155 BMW-motorrad.co.uk

Of all the bikes the class-leading 'Blade needs to fear most - the S 1000 RR is top



SECOND OPINION

Stavros Parrish talks....

"I absolutely loved it. It would have been nice to get an R1 and a 'Blade there to settle the title there and then, but it's going to be very good. It pulled like the proverbial, and without doubt has the best electronics package on a production bike. The traction control is stunning and you'd be a mug to turn it off. I bet tyre manufacturers are doing their nut in, as tyre wear was virtually invisible. You could do a season of trackdays without slinging in a new rear."

"I know Fatty (Al) had a slight issue with the brakes but I had the same bike all day had nothing but excellent stopping power. The thing I really like about the Beemer is its flexibility. It's a great motorcycle for everybody, all categories, and will help any ability improve. The build quality looks good too. The only blemish I'd note would be that it's not as exciting a package as my R1."

barely scrubbed-in, with the front hoop soaking up the majority of the punishment.

The supernatural abilities of the traction control cause a spiralling affect. Getting on the gas earlier means greater terminal speed, and more punishment on upshifts, which in turn means the brakes, and slipper clutch have to very special too. The Beemer's brakes are generally good, with power and consistency, and only a barrage of kamikaze laps produced fade.

The Brembo calipers don't have the glitz of Ducati's Monoblocs but still offer ample anchorage. We're not 100% convinced by the performance though, as there appeared to be a level of variance between some of the discs on the launch bikes. After laps of continuous abuse, I had severe judder through the lever on several of the bikes.

The 'Race' ABS is a touch more agricultural than Honda's version, and more intrusive over bumps. Downhill sections with braking swells led to the ABS getting overwhelmed, but only on the absolute edge. There's no doubt it'll be an excellent safety aid on the road.

Working in partnership with the DTC and ABS is an anti-wheelie system. BMW are keen to rubbish the 'anti-wheelie' tag, so we'll call



You're a beautiful man, Stavros

You're a tubby bitch, Fagan



The sublime DTC means that opening the throttle at big lean isn't madness



The asymmetrical face takes a little getting used to, and so does the BMW's

it 'wheelie-control'. When the front wheel is off the ground, it allows five seconds to pass, then the spark and fuel is cut. It's all very fancy, but there's no adjustment to the variables, making the anti-wheelie a savage interference. It's just like running out of go-go juice and clattering into Susan Boyle at the same time. BMW reckon that fairing the throttle will reduce its invasiveness. It doesn't.

Turn the traction off, and you instantly notice how genius the

system is. The RR bucks and protests at the same inputs you fed it with the electronics turned on. The rear Metzeler started to tear, and it highlights the softness of the wallowing suspension.

The 100% in-house job is all nice and patriotic, but the downside is the use of Sachs suspension. BMW admit to it being a cost-shrinking exercise, and we can't help but wonder how well the sublime chassis would roll with some top-spec Showas fitted.

GETTING ON THE GAS EARLIER MEANS GREATER TERMINAL SPEED

It's instantly obvious that it's a plush set-up with a soft initial action and, unless you're eight stone, the bike works towards the bottom of the stroke. It's nothing like the diving dramatics of a Ducati's all-show-no-go Öhlins though, and the RR is going to take bump-absorption and road-

tracking to another level. It's going to be boss on the Queen's 'Mac.

It doesn't sacrifice track pace either. Portimao's multiple corners, cambers and gradients can punish motorcycles to the max. The abstract nature of the circuit exposes ill-handlers and allows the talented to prosper. The S 1000 RR

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The different fuel modes explained...

An easy-to-reach button on the right-hand switchgear enables you to toggle between various maps and electronic functions. You get one minute to confirm your decision by pulling in the clutch and shutting the throttle.

'Rain' - During our first session at Portimao, BMW insist on us riding in 'Rain' mode. This, apparently, kills the power to a claimed 150bhp and softens the throttle pick-up dramatically, lending it an elasticated resistance. It feels more like a spammed-up 600 - around 120bhp. Traction control works at lean angles of up to 38°.

'Sport' - Full power, but with a slightly punchier throttle and soft fuel map. DTC functions at lean angles of up to 45°.

'Race' - Again, full power, but with a faintly more aggressive gasser. Traction control works at lean angles of up to 48°.

'Slick' - This is the angry mode, the man's selection. Full power with a sensitive throttle (nothing like ferocity of the 'A' mode on the new R1), and DTC working up to a massive 53° of dangle angle.

If you're going to buy an S 1000 RR, go for blue and white, not the 'baby sick'



ate it for breakfast.

At a standstill, the Beemer's stance fools you into thinking it'll be nose-heavy. It actually has a perfectly neutral balance that no other bike I've ridden can match. This balance means there's no compromise front or rear, and it rewards you with stunning feedback from either end, despite the saggy suspenders.

The steering is quick and precise, but the RR struggles to match a 'Blade in the tighter sections. Later in the day, we jacked-up the back by 10mm

with the standard ride-height adjuster. This transformed the sluggish resistance in the slow stuff and, because of the DTC's genius functionality, didn't sacrifice rear grip on corner exit. More weight on the front brought more confidence and helped a little with the suspect ground clearance, although the new Metzeler Racetecs flatter the S and behaved impeccably.

We also had a twiddle with the suspenders. The standard set-up will suffice on the road, but will be too soft for many on track.

However, the multi adjustable

suspension is sensitive to changes and really works, even if the fork tops and shock adjusters look like Toys-R-Us 'my-first-suzzies'.

All rebound and compression damping have ten-way adjusters. All are set at five from the crate and, bar the preload, are all adjustable by the tip of the ignition key. Adding just two clicks of compression to the front banished the dive, and a few clicks on the back gave confidence from mid-corner onwards. These simple changes also got the Beemer to hold a line more convincingly.

No doubt the Beemer is going to be supreme on the road. Its suppleness, user friendliness and safety/performance features conspire to deliver a devastating formula. It's likely to be untouchable as a road-only option.

The soft suspension and pliable stroke deliver the inherent BMW stability, especially under heavy braking. It sticks two fingers up


at BPForks and you'll struggle to get this puppy riled. The planted bombardment of mechanical grip is unrivalled, yet the RR has the skills to throw shapes on track. It's amazingly versatile.

Some will find the RR a little devoid of character, particularly pitched against ZX-10Rs and Gixers, and certainly the hedonistic RSV4. But its depth of skills far outweighs

any lack of charisma. It'll cater for every ability, flattering novices and keeping the hardcore scratching too, with enough gadgetry to render the XBOX redundant.

Its track pace is heavily reliant on the traction control and if you're splashing out high digits, you might as well go full-bore and get the complete spec',

mit DTC and ABS, not to mention the awesome £400 'Motorsport' paintjob, too.

BMW have come in and embarrassed the Japanese, and the other Europeans, at their first attempt. This is no holiday romance. Shimmy aside Mr Fireblade, there's a double-R'd bastard coming through. 



BMW HAVE COME IN AND EMBARRASSED THE JAPANESE. SHIMMY ASIDE MR FIREBLADE, THERE'S A DOUBLE-R'D BASTARD COMING

RIDING TROY'S WEAPON BMW S 1000 RR RACE BIKE

The Full-Factory Option

Shortly before the road bike launch, we got the chance to test Troy Corser's full-factory Beemer at the same venue. Needless to say, the bike was set-up for Troy and very much like his R1 of 2008: unforgiving, impossible to ride and scary-fast.

The Öhlins suspension couldn't have been more different from the production Sachs. The rear was super-stiff, which meant you feel everything through your ringer. It boasted a front-bias too, which made the rear overtake the front heading into most turns, and there was fuck-all grip from the rear when firmly in a corner. In all, it was a monster to handle around Portimao.

Of all the WSB bikes we tested on the day, the Beemer was without doubt the fastest, exaggerated by a throttle

designed by Satan - it's not surprising to hear that this was the rider's biggest complaint.

I wasn't even touching top-cog as we headed back down the hill into turn one, and the thing was still trying to flip halfway down the straight, not to mention on the crests of the numerous gradient changes.

Of course, Troy's bike has TC, anti-wheelie, and other sexmotic gizmos. Instead of using Motec or other proven hardware, BMW chose to develop their own electronics. It's obvious they work, but unless you're riding to within a few tenths of the limit, they don't function. Fuelling, mapping and TC are all adjustable for individual corners, so only Corser's lines and lean angles were activating the leccy bits. My TC was my sphincter, and it was permanently tripping.

