

SIX MANIACS

With some new players in town, the stalwart Japanese 1000s may have to step aside. Big power, massive electronic gains and colossal gonads are what 2010 is all about

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Like most pleasures in life, the bigger the package, the better the experience. And the 1000cc flock is as big as it gets. They're where it's at, but the Jap-dominated class has grown, with the addition of two WSB-inspired Europeans, a shit-load of power, and plenty of electronic enrichment.

Although launched last year, Aprilia's RSV4 Factory was late for class and only made an appearance for a back-to-back thrashing with the 'Blade. As you'd expect from a bike developed by Max Biaggi, the exotic V4 leans

heavily towards track action. 2010 sees its group test debut – and a chance to warrant its outrageous asking price.

Also intensely WSB flavoured (and raced before it hit the shops) is BMW's S 1000 RR. The brand-new Beemer ignores the fucked-up Euro regulations and punts out naughty numbers at the rear. Yet it backs the insanity up with king-ding electronics. The German aids are good – too good for the Japs?

Minor updates from Kawasaki and Honda provide a glimmer of hope. The tweaks are

more for function than all-out performance, so the ZX-10R, last year's loser, will have to call on its circuit-based dexterity for success. Even the champion 'Blade, looks like it'll have to work hard to claim the title for a third year running. The Suzuki GSX-R1000 and Yamaha's R1 return unchanged for 2010, bar some new colours.

We spunked a few Gs on a trip to Spain last month. This time, we're keeping it real with two days razzing round Wales, spending £10.90 on crossing the Severn Bridge. Araf!

KAWASAKI ZX-10R

The current ZX-10R blossomed in its first years of life, showing rich promise and hassling the then class-leaders. Uncompromising, raucous and hedonistic, the Green-Meanie exemplifies Kawasaki's sportsbike capabilities. But a lack of change and development is dangerous in this competitive environment, particularly in this new-fangled company. The dodgy bolt-ons, fitted as extras to this bike, do little to enhance it. Just a few years ago, it felt sharp and able. But now, thanks to the grandiose development of its rivals, the Ten feels slow and lacklustre.

A LACK OF CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT IS DANGEROUS

KAWASAKI ZX-10R



Don't be fooled by: The new gearbox. We couldn't notice any of the changes and we reckon neither will you, too

4

TRACK

4

FAST ROAD

5

HOOLIGAN

2

NEW RIDER

4

DESIRABILITY

Highlights

- Three years-old
- Öhlins 'damper
- KIMS traction aid
- Utter nutter
- 179 kg
- 159bhp

£10,209 (otr)

Verdict

The Ten's age is showing and needs too much money spent to rectify. Officially redundant...

Not a lot, fuelling, aggression

Stability, steering, midrange, effort

Final Score 5/10

Engine

Traction control of any form is a production first, thanks to the ignition management system. The engine had reshaped ports and cam profiles for top-end. Valves are titanium, and the crankshaft is 1kg lighter. A new exhaust minimises silencer volume, but increases power. The ram-air system is more efficient, hence the 12bhp gain claim. The rear sprocket is one tooth bigger. There are revised gearbox internals for 2010.

Chassis

The new ram air duct through the frame optimises rigidity around the headstock, which is pushed 10mm forward. Small material and thickness changes to the frame and swingarm create 'optimised stiffness balance'. The lighter wheels cut unsprung weight. The 43mm USD forks keep their Diamond Like Coating (DLC) to improve friction control. An Öhlins steering damper is standard fitment. The brakes were all-new too.

and it's the least precise of the group. From upright to full-lean, it lacks the feedback that its rivals boast. Following Rootsy and Beej on any other bikes through the Welsh valleys made me feel like a complete novice. It makes you work harder, ultimately for less. In comparison to the latest and greatest, there isn't enough weight on the front-end for confidence inspiring heroics. Slamming some softer springs in combats the lack of road holding and also shifts some weight towards the nose. The shock is also not fault free, skipping rather than soaking up swells and adding to the instability party. But the oversprung, underdamped ride remains

ingrained in the Ninja genes. It ain't just the chassis that needs work. We praised Kawasaki for the new motor in 2008. It revived the top-end hooliganism of the original 2004 model, but the new kids on the block easily make 160bhp, and make the Ten's delivery feel ordinary. It fuels smoothly, but loses out through the rev-range to any rival. There's enough everyday power below 8,000rpm to not resort to an inhaler, but the motor is short on midrange, and needs big revs to conquer. Despite all of our bitchin', the Kwacker responds positively to



tinkering. Expect big power gains from a 'zorst and an air filter – the ZX-10R was one of the most powerful bikes in BSB superstock last season. Maybe the hideous stock can makes power evaporate? As track forays have proved, you can take solace in the fact the Zee-Ex loves a caning. 'Nice' isn't in the Kawasaki's vocab. It's a bit like a dominatrix; 'I love you now fuck

off'. But there's redemption in the Ten's KIMS traction system. It's not traction control, but while others protest at power translated to the 'Mac, the Ten grips and rips. We're expecting the usual barrage of emails from ZX-10R owners who'll declare us blasphemers. And once again, we'll respond with the fact that they obviously haven't ridden the rest. ➤



TAKE SOLACE IN THE FACT THE ZX LOVES A CANING

SECOND OPINION

Kawasaki ZX-10R - 6th In the right situation, the Kawasaki competes. It's just that those right situations are few and far between. The motor is a belter, although marred in this instance by the aftermarket Akro can that produces more troughs than peaks on this machine. The ride takes some getting used to. It feels top heavy, heightening both nervousness and confidence depending on your starting point. This lends itself to track riding more than slower road work. Just let the rip-snorting motor scream if you want to go faster.

Lean, green and very mean. The Kawasaki ZX-10R doesn't do novices

You can forget the temperature when you've got roads like this



AND YOUR TESTERS ARE...

Alastair 'A-Force' Fagan - Road Test Ed



Thanks to years of patronising Scottish restaurants (McDonalds, to me and you), Alastair no longer feels the cold and can ride through a winter's day – so long as there's an apple pie at the end

Simon 'Rootsy' Roots - Dep Ed



Rootsy needs to be plugged into the National Grid before he goes out. He's got so many wires poking out of him to power his heated gear that he looks as if he's just come from intensive care

Benjamin 'BJ' Kubas Cronin - Features Ed



Our very own Channel Islander likes his weather clement, although if it gets too cold he puts on another Jersey – geddit? Beej uses the power of smoking tabs to get him through the cold winter months

**APRILIA
RSV4 FACTORY**

If there was one bike that Vatsyana would have chosen for the Kama Sutra, it would have been the Aprilia RSV4. The Italian oozes sex appeal, loves to be spanked hard and makes all the right noises – as well as all the right moves. Even the seating position could be mistaken for one of the positions in the Kama Sutra as your knees lovingly caress your ears.

At least there's no hidden agenda with the RSV. The clue is in the 'Factory' tag. From the extreme riding position to the tallest first gear and most agricultural 'box in the world, it's immediately apparent that the Aprilia isn't an easy-going Honda clone. Simply

put, it's a homologation exercise for Aprilia's WSB race efforts. Walk away now if you're looking for a relaxed ride.

Two days in Wales exaggerated its poor road protocol – it's like the rev-hungry R6; too focused on what the stopwatch says rather than anything the rider has to say. Unless you're racing the Aprilia, or trackdays are more important than sleep, you should only lust after the RSV4 in the same way that you love your impossible-to-maintain smoking-hot supermodel girlfriend.

Despite a total disregard for anyone other than skilled thrashers, the RSV has a magical impact; it really sucks you in. Dip below 100 per cent commitment, however, and the 'Priller loses interest and treats the jockey on top with disdain.



“AT LEAST THERE'S NO HIDDEN AGENDA WITH THE RSV4”



The traffic in the Brecon Beacons can be shocking at rush hour

The crux of its misdemeanours on the Queen's highways lay squarely with the motor. Aside from the booming soundtrack, anything below 7,000rpm is a waste of time. The jerky, three-stage throttle is unpredictable, wheelies are impossible, and the iffy fuelling combines to give little connection to the rear wheel that saps a rider's confidence. I've had more feel from a strimmer.

All of this is irrelevant when the needle hits the powerband. Torque and the V4's characteristics tag team and substitute for the lack of peak power – but dyno figures are immaterial when an engine feels this good. It's difficult to

keep it in the go-zone, though, the abundance of engine braking hampering your efforts and causing frustration.

It's no revelation that a bike developed by a couple of ex-GP riders is stiff and unforgiving, mirroring the motor's barbaric attitude. It's relentless and doesn't want to stop charging. The race-bike geometry and super-rigid chassis offer race-bike steering that can be intimidating. It's the quickest of the lot to turn-in, lives for peg-scraping and loves big-lean.

Like the BMW swallows its budget Sachs equipment, the Aprilia manages to house Öhlins

suspension that elsewhere gets Ducatis pitching and diving like an overpaid footballer. But no matter how soft the springs are, the chassis takes over to ensure the ride stays firm. The RSV4 just about copes with UK roads and maintains a decent amount of stability. As long as the surface is half-smooth, the mechanical grip (and outright grip from the aptly employed Pirelli Supercorsas) guarantees fast lap times with a planted stance.

At £16,500, the RSV-4 Factory is too expensive. Simples. If Aprilia had finished the job and the Factory wasn't so erratic, we could excuse it to some extent. There's lashings of carbon, trick wheels, Brembos and Öhlins, but you might as well save a few grand and get the R version.

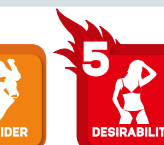
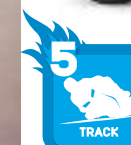
**SECOND
OPINION**

Aprilia RSV4 Fact. - 5th
If you're looking for a devoted trackday machine, then you've just found it. On circuit, the Factory makes so much sense. It's achingly accurate, proportionally powered and stimulates the senses like no other machine. If you can afford the extra few thousands, then you'll be rewarded with Italian engineering at its best. Getting to the track is another story. Sharp fuelling, edgy steering and super stiff suspension turn the dream into a near nightmare the moment you leave the track.

“IT'S RELENTLESS AND DOESN'T STOP CHARGING”

APRILIA RSV4 FACTORY**Don't be fooled by:**

The adjustable chassis. It's just a homologation tweak to keep the old GP boys happy at the races

**Highlights**

- 🔥 **V4 motor**
- 🔥 **Fully adjustable chassis**
- 🔥 **Ride-by-wire throttle**
- 🔥 **90s Öhlins suspension**
- 🔥 **179 kg (kerb weight)**
- 🔥 **156bhp**

£16,500 otr

Verdict

Woo-hoo on track, shit on road, the Aprilia was never designed to have lights and a horn fitted

🟢 **Track pace, top-end, handling, the idea**

🔴 **'box, throttle, fuelling, road skills, the execution**

Final Score
Score relates to other bikes in this test only

7/10

Engine

The 65° V4 lump has double overhead cams that turn the intake cams, which then turn the exhaust cams via a gear. The engine is just 225mm wide, which is 175mm narrower than an inline four. To keep the weight down the engine cases are made from aluminium alloy with magnesium in non-stressed parts. Twin fuel injectors per head; one in the port, one in the airbox, as well as variable length intake ducts and a cassette gearbox. A slipper clutch is standard.

Chassis

The chassis uses GP technology. The head angle, swingarm pivot and engine position are fully adjustable. The chassis is very light and weighs just 10.1kg, while the swingarm is 5.1kg. The fuel tank is partially located under the rider's seat to help centralise the bike's mass and make room for a large airbox, while the fairing is purposefully kept as minimal as possible to show off the frame while still providing good aerodynamic abilities. The wheels are forged aluminium.

You wanna be here, don't ya? With the sun on your back, there's nothing like it

SUZUKI
GSX-R1000

Aside from the K9's glut of canine jokes, maybe a year of floating on the scene was good for the GSX-R1000. Thanks to BJ's brutal longterm, the Suzuki convinced us that it's a better ride heading into Twenty-Ten. His year of fiddling has proved that there's a wicked wolf lurking behind the placid sheep's clothing. Who says longtermers are irrelevant?

It's also had time to make a serious impact on 2009's race scene, dominating the British superstock series. OK, Alastair Seeley weighs less than one of my turds, he's extremely talented and his K9 received significant loving,

but superstock racing has a close reference to the bikes me and you ride everyday, and it's clear that the GSX-R has an abundance of talent. It also seems to the choice in BSB Evo, where stock performance counts.

Although we've previously moaned about a lack of raw excitement, the free-revving mothership of a motor is the Suzuki's ultimate forte. If you exclude the scandalous BMW from the medley, it's the fastest here and it constantly lets you know it, with a stunning midrange frenzy that never stops thrusting. It gets more bitchin' the harder you ride and it feels indestructible on the limit. It's the most user-friendly and easiest to ride up to 100 per cent with the widest spread of usable power, superb fuelling

IT'S ALSO THE EASIEST TO
RIDE UP TO 100 PER CENT

SUZUKI GSX-R1000



Don't be fooled by: McDonalds. Their Double Cheeseburger, although smaller than a Quarter Pounder, has an extra 100 calories over the classic

5

TRACK

5

FAST ROAD

3

HOOLIGAN

4

NEW RIDER

3

DESIRABILITY

Highlights

- Showa BPF
- Electronic damper
- S-DMS power switch
- She ugly
- 205 kg (kerb weight)
- 158bhp

£10,250 (otr)

Verdict

A good bike but not sensational. In a class as hot as this, the Gixer needs more to succeed

Motor, fuelling, anyone's bitch

Not a BMW, bland, 'slapper habit

Final Score
Score relates to other bikes in this test only

8/10

Engine

The shorter stroke motor smooths out torque across its entire range. The compression ratio is up from 12.5:1 to 12.8:1, with re-designed cam profiles and combustion chamber. Crankcases are now two-piece, while the crankshaft features an end lubrication system for durability, the first ever on a Suzuki production bike. The crankshaft has a forged steel alloy, smaller balancer shaft. Ram-air feeds a new airbox, which is lighter, yet retains the same capacity.

Chassis

The big news was the BP fork and longer swingarm, joined by the all new twin-spar aluminium frame. The three-spoke alloy wheels are lighter, saving 410g unsprung weight. The BP fork is fully adjustable, lighter, and has a 43mm inner fork diameter. The steering damper has been tweaked, and remains electronically controlled, increasing damping forces as speed rises. The rear shock is also fully adjustable. The front monoblock brakes are 23 per cent stiffer.



and the smooth bottom-end to midrange transition. But that doesn't win a 1000cc group test.

As mentioned before, BJ's longtermer unlocked a dark side to the Gixer. With just some cans and a Y-piece, the motor evolved into a bona fide lunatic (with more midrange than plenty of BSB bikes), offering no choice but to lay down fat lines on corner exits.

This simple ease-of-use translates to the handling. The GSX-R is like your cuddly platonic friend that could do no wrong. While others pile on the dramatics, the Gixer remains unfazed and guzzles anything you can throw at it.

It feels assured on its springs, its bulk contributing to its

Even back to standard, BJ's bonkers Gixer is still a handful



poise, and along with the 'Blade it makes for excellent road etiquette. The Showa Big Piston Fork isn't the true anti-dive system found on the ZX-6R, but ensures you can run into corners hot and bury it into the apex (as long as the temperamental brakes don't get too hot). The rear is a too soft for banzai action and this can lead to weight transfer issues, but sorted it's a proven lap aficionado.

Suzuki's policy of 'short-wheelbase and long swingarm' has cured the torrid side-grip issues of the K7/8 and sharpened up the steering to some degree. This combination has left some stability problems left unanswered when you're hard on the gas, but it's nothing an aftermarket damper can't fix. Be warned - using a stiffer damper will slow the steering.

When the pack is this close, style can go a long way. Owning a bike you can be proud of is like swaggering into the pub with your fancy new Doris dolled up

to the nines. Unfortunately, the GSX-R1000 retains its ugly inbred family looks. So let's hope Suzuki carry on its manifesto of upgrading models every two years and gives it some surgery.

Suzuki's used to be the hooligans choice, but now they're anything but. There's nothing inherently wrong with the Gixer Thou', but it doesn't have the engaging thrills and feel-good factor of any of the rest.

SECOND
OPINION



SUZUKI GSX-R1000 - 4th
It's a travesty that a bike this good finds itself this low down in the pecking order. Ridden without the context of its rivals, the Gixer ticks all the boxes. Brawny motor, focused chassis package, sharp looks; they're all there. It's just that the Yamaha, Honda and BMW do everything better, are able to outgun, outhandle and outshine the GSX-R in every department. Mind you, you'll need to be well acquainted with the throttle stop to notice these small deficiencies and ownership is unlikely to be unhappy.

An immense machine, but there are three better bikes to come. Amazing



YAMAHA
YZF-R1

Fuel? Check. Oil? Check. Tyres? Oh, fuck. Having to spunk £12.5k on the overpriced R1 is grim enough, especially when the fully-loaded Beemer has the same price tag. Having to squander more money on tyres to replace the stock Dunlop Poo-One-Eights really is extremely poor. I suppose when you make a billion pound loss you have to try and save a few quid here and there.

Once again, despite near universal plaudits in 2009 and a trio of world championships, the Yamaha leaves the showroom

with ancient Dunlop rubber fitted. This immediately obstructs performance and makes riding problematic, rendering attempts at Ben Spies-type heroics useless. The front-end feels vague, the rear prone to spinning, combining to give a broken toilet seat sensation. Add some decent hoops, and it becomes a different bike. It's like whipping the wellies off Usain Bolt and giving him his spikes back.

Despite its huge physical presence, the R1 can still boogie. Suitably booted, its track pace is undeniable, constantly at the top of the timing sheets

at previous circuit appearances and it would have gone quicker but for the crappy, wooden brakes.

It's not far off the best of them on the roads, either. The soft and supple suspension tracks well (despite feeling like it's sunk in its springs, forfeiting poise) and you can rely on the blistering front-

bias for rapid changes of direction. But you can feel its morbid obesity when ridden against the best and, bar the Kawasaki, lacks the killer instincts and precision of the rest. Twisting the adjusters clockwise will back-up the thrashers.

Thankfully, 2009's engine of the year can work around poor grip and compliment the ham-fisted. It's the next best thing to traction control, and the ideal bike to learn



The R1 still rises to the challenge, but is its cross-plane crank still da mustard?



The whole cross-plane crank issue stole the Yamaha's handling glory

SECOND
OPINION

Yamaha YZF-R1 - 3rd
Crap tyres, appalling fuel consumption and lights that barely warrant the name. If you're using an R1 on a daily basis then these issues may get you wondering whether the whole cross-plane crank revolution was worth getting excited for. But get beyond the trivialities and there's a bike still worthy of the hype. The motor is so easy to use, aided and abetted by a chassis that longs to please. Going fast and pushing your limits has never been so easy. Paying for it, on the other hand, has never been as difficult.

THE CROSS-PLANE CRANK IS
A WELCOME ADDITION

YAMAHA YZF-R1



Don't be fooled by:
Claims that this is at the bottom of the pile. The Yamaha still rocks



Highlights

- Cross-plane crank
- Awesome sound
- Six-pot anchors
- WSB champ
- 206 kg (Kerb)
- 155bhp

£12,499 otr

Verdict

A pricey option with potential, but we can't see why you'd want one of these over a Beemer

Motor, sensation, potential, front-end

OE tyres, brakes, clutch

Final Score
Score relates to other bikes in this test only

8/10

Engine

The engine features a cross-plane crankshaft, and a very short stroke, coupled with the largest bore dimensions ever used on the R1. A primary coupling balancer reduces the vibration produced by the asymmetric crankpin layout. Lightweight forged aluminium pistons and ceramic-composite plated cylinders improve heat dissipation, and a 'closed-deck' coolant passages do not pass from the cylinder into the cylinder head.

Chassis

The aluminium Deltabox frame features a combination of aluminium types to achieve the desired rigidity. Gravity casting is used on the head pipe, engine mounts and pivot support assembly, while the outside tank rails are CF die-cast, allowing thinner walls. Lateral rigidity has been adjusted to help high speed stability and the engine is mounted 9-degrees more upright than the '08 model, and 12mm further forward in relation to the drive axis.



It looks good, but £12.5K good? If you've got the money, let us know

to get sideways on. Although not yet perfectly refined, and worries of varying tolerances still valid, the cross-plane crank has been a welcome addition to production motorcycles. This particular bike was spot on.

There's no need to chase revs with the R1. You twist the throttle and the revs and engine follow you. The rear wheel feels directly linked to your right hand, proving that electronics can still give a rider connectivity. It's literally a V-twin at the bottom, a triple in the middle and a howling four-pot as you hit its crest.

Yes, it lacks terminal speed, but you could tow a caravan to Butlins in Skegness with it and the R1 wouldn't groan much - apart from the clutch-judder that riddles most

bikes. The motor's characteristics and versatility are unrivalled, offering some redemption for the lack of peak power, and ensuring the Yam tails the BMW with supreme drive and usability.

The soundtrack and eccentric manners of the Yam's motor fool you into thinking you're going quicker than you are. As long as you've got a good'n, it's fantastic all the way through the revs, although the tach doesn't start at 4,000rpm without reason.

It ain't comfy, it ain't pretty, and it ain't anything like the weapon that Ben Spies won a championship on. It ain't worth the money either, but when Yamaha gets the execution bang-on and the chassis to forge the perfect double-act, the R1 may be a worthy challenger. ➤

HONDA
FIREBLADE

It's astonishing what a lick of paint can do – just ask some of the ladeez that appear in our middle pages. Aside from a nose job that's slenderised the front and a tweaked arse, the only noteworthy update for 2010 is a heavier crank – and it's obvious the new item isn't a performance enhancer. But the 'Blade doesn't need much tweaking. Or at least it wouldn't had a certain German not turned up and crashed the party.

The seating position feels like a default setting, our spines curved and leathers pre-shaped to accommodate. It has a strange authority and presence,

demanding respect after a few years on the top perch. We almost breathe a sigh of relief when we return to the Honda after brief affairs elsewhere.

In a world dominated and dictated by technology, maths and science, the liberated Honda reveals with a complete deficiency of rider aids (excluding the C-ABS), and carries its raw pace by pure, unadulterated talent. It's the complete package, without relying on a tech' fest.

The big bore, short stroke motor excites without having either huge power or any other wizardry. In the real-world, without numbers and dynos, the 'Blade only loses out to the BMW over the last few percent of thrashing; on the last few hundred yards of long straight – as you would do if you were 20bhp

“ A WELL RIDDEN 'BLADE ISN'T GOING TO GET MULLERED BY A BMW ON THE ROAD ”

HONDA CBR1000RR



Don't be fooled by:
The ABS system adding 10kg. You won't notice the weight and it's well worth the extra £600



Highlights

- Best at most
- Road and track blend
- New crank
- Super-versatile
- 172 kg
- 161bhp

£10,321 (otr - non ABS)

Verdict

The winning streak is over, but it's still a hugely capable bike – and the bargain of the bunch

Absolutely everything about it...

...apart from it not being a BMW S 1000 RR

Final Score
Score relates to other bikes in this test only

9/10

Engine

The compact and lighter lump uses a separate sleeveless cylinder block that aids rebuilds in racing. The head configuration adds power and sheds weight, with shorter valve lengths. Titanium intake valves shave 500g, towards a total saving of 2.5kg from the engine. The forged pistons are 1mm wider and have a 1.5mm shorter stroke, for higher revs and faster pick-up. A slipper clutch is added. 2010 sees a new, heavier crank.

Chassis

Mass centralisation is again the key here. The four-piece cast aluminium frame saves weight and increases rigidity. It's 300mm slimmer, with a new steering head cast for the ram-air. The swingarm is 11mm longer. The suspension is essentially the same, but the fork span is down by 10mm and the offset is up by 2.5mm for sharper response. New monoblock calipers add braking power and shed weight, along with new lighter wheels.

The evidence that the boys had been skinning up was irrefutable



short. Various roll-ons surprised us as we expected the Beemer to romp away. It didn't, gaining only a few metres. A well ridden 'Blade isn't going get mullered by a BMW on the road. The Honda's bulkier midrange, usability and superior fuel guzzling guarantees that.

Trackdays and lap times are now the 'Blades downfall. We never thought we'd say that so soon. The designer of the 'Blade said on the launch that they could make 190bhp and Honda is going to have to bring something fresh to the mix. Hopefully a revised gearbox will be added, too.

As techno queens brag, the Fireblade doesn't even have twin-speed suspension. Why? It doesn't need it. It still boasts the best set-up for fast-road and track, without compromising. It's supple, yet still manages to be totally focused in any environment and offers bump management that's still second-to-none. It turns quicker



and holds a line better than the BMW, especially in the tight stuff. Confidence in the front trickles through the bars and every degree of lean feels so controllable.

Whereas the BMW can bite hard, the Honda's wheels remain in-line with amazing stability and greater mechanical grip from the rear. The

to do so. That's gotta hurt. But what the Honda lacks against the Beemer, it can subsidise through fairly minor modifications. A few grand should see you right for a full system and the new Bazzaz electronics package. The chassis doesn't need touching.

Then there's the harsh reality

“ NOTHING HAS CHALLENGED THE HONDA – UNTIL NOW ”

function and feel of Honda's C-ABS system is better – but we're not convinced by any ABS on track yet.

We've never had anything to really challenge the Honda – until now. It's taken fat power and an electronics package from BMW that betters HRC's own race kit

that you could pick up a second-hand 'Blade for half the price of the BMW. We've already had emails asking which way to attack that conundrum. The deficit between the bikes certainly isn't double and the endless superlatives of the Honda are still supremely valid. ➤

SECOND
OPINION



Honda CBR1000RR - 2nd
After spending most of the decade in the litre bike wilderness, the 'Blade enters the Teenies as the most competitive alternative to the Beemer. It's everything that you image a Fireblade to be – powerful and purposeful – and plenty that you don't – subtle and suave. Its polish counters the BMW's rawness. Every mile ridden builds belief in the ability of both man and machine, and if there's ever a machine to tackle the perfect lap, then this is it. It may not look like a stunner, but don't judge this book by the cover.



Fast forward three months and you're in heaven



BMW S 1000 RR

There we were, lamenting BMW for creating bitchin' cars and lacklustre two-wheelers, and along came the S 1000 RR. Prior to that, we clung to the HP2 Sport as BMW's pinnacle of sporting intent. That dark hour has vanished.

BMW drivers used to automatically acquire the tag of 'massive twat'. The RR is also going to encourage a new breed of absolute bell-ends, offering no choice but to ride like you're being chased by Jimmy Somerville brandishing a cucumber.

Obviously, 180bhp is partially responsible for the mischief, but these huge numbers have never been so usable. The BMW's delivery builds with pace and aggression, yet there's no bulges or surges to separate midrange

or top-end – just one long stretch of hard-hitting clout. Even in 'Rain' mode, where power is cut by around 30bhp, the BMW punts out more power than a 2007 'Blade.

The Dynamic Traction Control (DTC) offers a bipolar attitude to the S Thou'. While superior to the HRC race kit I used last year, the system doesn't saturate the power and offers safety. It's very nearly highside-proof, except for the nanosecond of spin. On the flipside, it promotes new levels of throttle jockeying. You could have a knackered remould on the back and still exit corners quicker than your buddy on his new R1. Running wide as the electronics take over, and the limits of adjusting the system are the only tarnishes.

The traction control has a spiralling affect that subconsciously makes you quicker. The Beemer grips hard, cannoning on corner exit, firing you into the next bend 10mph faster. This then



SECOND OPINION

BMW S 1000 RR - 1st
BMW didn't bother with the toe in the water approach, preferring to dive bomb straight into the deep end with the S 1000 RR. When you combine the best looks, chassis and motor in class with a very healthy dose of new-age gizmology, you can't fail to be impressed by the Teutonic techno package. This is what happens when you add five years of development to make a GSX-R1000 K5 better. After doing all the hard work, Suzuki must be kicking themselves that they weren't responsible. Sieg heil BMW!

“ THE SUPERNATURAL EQUILIBRIUM THAT WAS PRESENT ON THE LAUNCH AT PORTIMAO HASN'T VANISHED HERE IN THE UK ”

punishes the Brembos, ABS, and slipper clutch – the RR is pushing the boundaries in every aspect.

The supernatural equilibrium that was present on the launch at Portimao hasn't vanished here in the UK. Somehow, BMW has managed to concoct a very special blend of balance and handling – it's like you're sitting in the middle of a see-saw, soaking up both ends with amazing poise.

The bike is so neutral with no apparent bias, yet still maintains magical steering at the front and doesn't sacrifice the rear poise either. No other motorcycle has this combination.

Yes, the cost-cutting Sachs suspension is a little soft, even on the road, but the Beemer just goes to show you don't need an Öhlins badge to go fast. Previous Sachs efforts have been cheap,

badly set-up examples on shoddy machinery. The S 1000 RR flatters the cost-cutting kit, with ten-way damping adjusters that really work – start on '3' for the road and work your way up for the track.

You could have sparrow limbs and weasel nuts, and still thrash the BMW close to its limits. We've spent two busy weeks with the S Thou' and the Beemer has stood proud, offering little to grumble over. BJ is sceptical of the electronics and how they banish rider input and control, but if you don't like being faster and safer just turn everything off.

Day-to-day assessment highlighted a dislike of slow speed manoeuvrability – it's a bit fluffy right at the bottom, and the clutch/throttle action is a tad ropery on the cruise. But we don't care. 180bhp and racing technology was never meant to peak in town to please commuters. The quickshifter ain't bang-on either, but would you

kick Beyonce out of bed for having one fun bag slightly bigger than the other?



BMW S 1000 RR



Don't be fooled by:

The fact that the S 1000 RR is a faster, more capable bike than the £60k Fireblade I rode in BSB last year. It's still a road bike



Highlights

- Fast as fook
- Amazing TC
- Sachs suspenders
- Chinese wheels
- 183 Kg
- 180bhp

£12,500 (otr)

Verdict

The last time the Germans had this much of an impact it came in the form of a doodlebug

Everything...

...except limits to electronics

Final Score
Score relates to other bikes in this test only

10/10

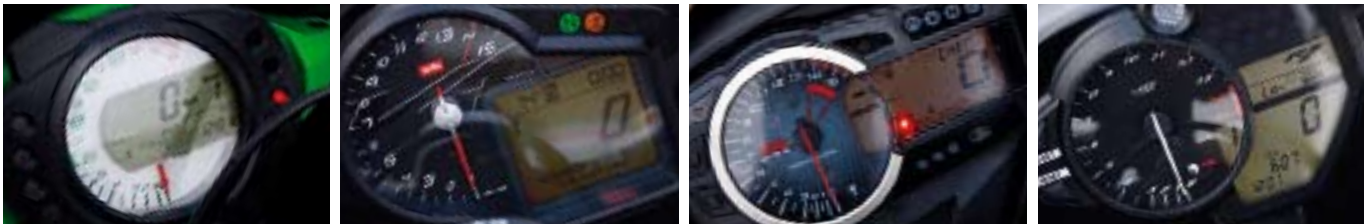
Engine

The big-bore, short-stroke 999cc motor gets an injection of BMW's F1 technology, particularly the four-valve head, and it 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.

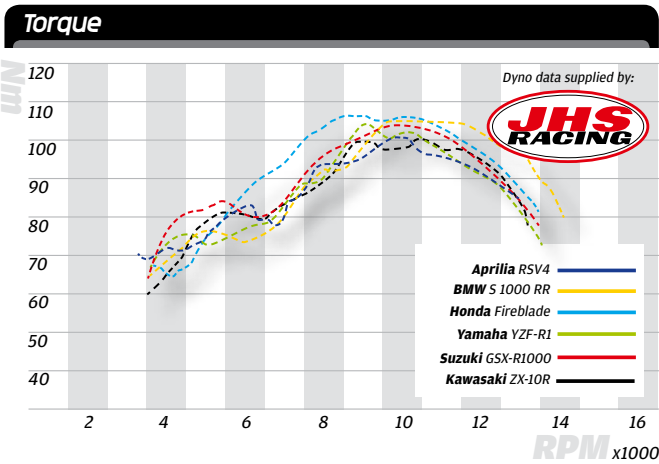
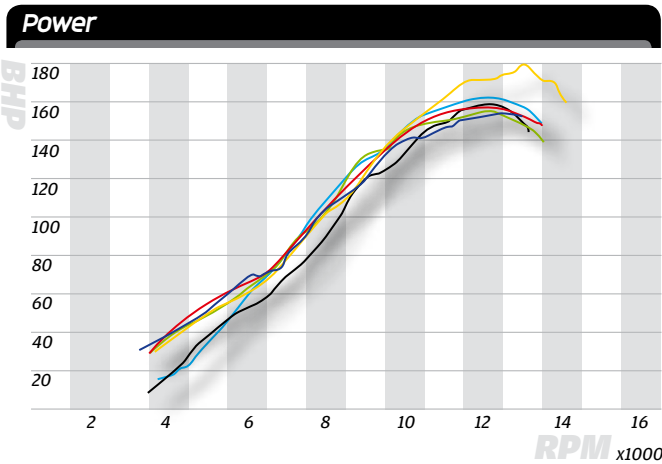
Chassis

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 forks hold 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.

Turn on all the toys and your gran could be riding like this by tea time



	KAWASAKI ZX-10R	APRILIA RSV4 FACTORY	SUZUKI GSX-R1000	YAMAHA YZF-R1	HONDA FIREBLADE	BMW S 1000 RR
ENGINE						
TYPE	998cc, liquid cooled, 16v inline four	999.6cc, liquid cooled, 8v, 65° V4	999cc, four-stroke, DOHC, 16v, inline-four	998cc, liquid-cooled, 16v, inline-four	999cc, liquid-cooled, 16v, DOHC, inline-four	999cc, liquid-cooled, 16 valve, DOHC, inline-four
BORE X STROKE	76 x 55mm	78mm x 52.3mm	74.5 x 57.3	78 x 52.2	76 x 55.1mm	80mm x 49.7mm
COMPRESSION	13.0:1	13:1	12.8:1	12.7:1	12.3:1	13.1:1
FUELLING	Fuel injection	Magneti Marelli electronic fuel injection	Electronic fuel injection	Electronic fuel injection	Electronic fuel injection	Electronic fuel injection
TESTED POWER	159bhp @ 12,000rpm	156bhp @ 13,000rpm	158bhp @ 11,900rpm	182bhp @ 12,500rpm	162bhp @ 12,000rpm	179bhp@13,000rpm
TESTED TORQUE	101Nm @ 10,200rpm	102Nm @ 10,250rpm	104Nm @ 9,950rpm	115.5Nm @ 10,000rpm	107Nm @ 8,600rpm	106Nm @9,750rpm
CHASSIS						
FRAME	Aluminium twin-spar	Twin-spar adjustable aluminium	Twin-spar aluminium	Aluminium Deltabox	Aluminium twin-spar	Aluminium bridge
F SUSPENSION	43mm inverted fork, fully adjustable	Öhlins 43mm inverted forks, fully adjustable	Big Piston Showa Fork, fully adjustable	43mm telescopic fork, fully adjustable	43mm inverted fork, fully adjustable	46mm inverted Sachs fork, fully adjustable
R SUSPENSION	Monoshock, fully adjustable, twin speed	Öhlins monoshock, fully adjustable	Showa Monoshock, fully adjustable	Monoshock, fully adjustable	Monoshock, fully adjustable	Sachs monoshock, fully adjustable
FRONT BRAKES	Four-piston radial calipers, 310mm discs	Four-piston calipers, 310mm discs	Four-piston calipers, 310mm discs	Six-piston, radial calipers, 310mm discs	Four-piston calipers, 320mm discs	Four-piston radial calipers, 320mm discs
REAR BRAKES	One-piston caliper, 220mm disc	Brembo two-piston float caliper, 220mm disc	One-piston sliding caliper, 220mm disc	One-piston caliper, 220mm disc	One-piston caliper, 220mm disc	Single piston caliper, 220mm disc
DIMENSIONS						
WHEELBASE	1,415mm	1,420mm	1,405mm	1,415mm	1,410mm	1,432mm
SEAT HEIGHT	830mm	845mm	810mm	835mm	820mm	820mm
DRY WEIGHT	179kg	179kg	205kg (kerb)	206kg (kerb)	172kg	183kg
FUEL CAPACITY	17L	17L	17.5L	18L	17.7L	17.5L
PRICE						
PRICE FROM	£10,209 (otr) Kawasaki UK (01628 856750) Kawasaki.co.uk	£16,500 (otr) Aprilia UK 0208 290 8800 Aprilia.com	£10,250 (otr) Suzuki GB 0845 850 8800 Suzuki-gb.co.uk	£12,499 otr Yamaha UK 01932 358000 Yamaha.co.uk	£10,321 otr Honda UK 0845 200 8000 Honda.co.uk	£12,500 (otr) BMW UK 0800 777 155 BMW-motorrad.co.uk
0-60:	3.05s	3.18s	3.03s	3.12s	2.94s	NA (Biblical deluge stopped play)
0-100:	5.66s	5.81s	5.54s	5.58s	5.56s	NA (Biblical deluge stopped play)
0-140:	9.61s	10.18s	9.60s	9.89s	9.55s	NA (Biblical deluge stopped play)
Stg 1/4 Mile:	10.37s @ 145.03mph	10.60s @ 143.06mph	10.34s @ 145.18mph	10.45s @ 142.35mph	10.32s @ 145.33mph	NA (Biblical deluge stopped play)
Standing Mile:	26.06s @ 185.00mph	27.18s @ 174.52mph	26.26s @ 180.96mph	26.45s @ 179.35mph	26.51s @ 175.55mph	NA (Biblical deluge stopped play)
Top Speed:	185mph	178mph	182mph	181mph	178mph	186mph



THANKS TO: • Beth, Martin, Fi, Luke, Simon and Scott from each manufacturer's PR departments • The Lord above for stopping the snow • Wales for being surprisingly great in the middle of February

CONCLUSION

Once upon a time, there were six motorcycles. One of them was amazing and made the others look silly. The end.

Reading through the previous pages, it sounds like we're giving the majority of the litre bikes an absolute pasting – and we are. But this is only in the context of a bike that has cropped up and caused utter devastation in the ranks. A genius piece of German engineering is that bike.

Right, let's talk moolah and finishing order. The recession might be starting to lift but 1000cc sportsbikes continue to cause fiscal uproar with all of the contenders costing over £10k – a

IT SOUNDS LIKE WE'RE GIVING THE MAJORITY OF THE LITRE BIKES A PASTING – AND WE ARE

conscious milestone. Used bike sales should now see another upsurge, but once again we've never had it so good as far as new metal goes.

The Kawasaki may be the cheapest but, sorry Ninja fans, it's also the least talented at the top table. Now in its third year, the ZX-10R can't rely on its track prowess to brag. We know there's an all-new model in the making (says an ex-Kawasaki employee) and it can't come soon enough.

The Aprilia finishes fifth simply because it's utter shit on the road. ➤



It should place higher, simply because of its sheer involvement and engaging ride, but at £16.5k, the RSV4 looks drastically overpriced – especially against the £4,000 cheaper BMW. Buying one as your summer thrasher will lead to acute frustration.

The fight for the podium is properly Rosie Gaines – closer than close. A year is usually enough time to become uncompetitive,

but the GSX-R has swayed our opinions. It's a grower – but not a show-er. If you like ugly bikes and your 1000cc monster to whisper rather than holler then the GSX-R may be your only option.


The R1 gets the nod for third, mainly due to its motor. When Yamaha get the execution bang-on and the chassis right to forge the perfect partnership, the R1 will be in the hunt again.

If money isn't an issue, the simple equation goes like this. £12.5k = BMW S 1000 RR. The Beemer doesn't just win, it annihilates the opposition. And all at the Bavarians' first attempt.

BMW could have priced the RR at £15k and would still have walked it.

None of us at FB could afford any of this line-up. Between us we'd probably scrape together enough for the BMW electronics upgrade package. Without all the wiz-bang technology, the standard RR drops a notch or two, regardless of its 180bhp. The 'Blade then comes into play.

The 'Blade has reigned as a worthy king until this point, but defeat was inevitable after our very first ride of the Beemer.

And if any of the blurb you've been reading in recent pages hasn't convinced you yet, we've just heard that God has chopped in his Honda and ordered an S 1000 RR. Should keep him happy... 

“ THE BEEMER DOESN'T JUST WIN, IT ANNIHILATES THE OPPOSITION ”

