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The editor

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“There’s something a bit ‘Marmite’ about riding a bike.”



“ I think we’d all agree that it would be great to see more people on bikes and, therefore, that any scheme to get more people riding is ‘a good thing’. Imagine roads with more bikes, fewer cars and more bike-savvy car drivers – everyone’s a winner. But it seems as though, as far as bike riding goes, you either ‘get’ it or you don’t.

When you try to explain to someone who doesn’t ride a bike why you ride, it rarely gets through. As you try to ‘sell’ the idea, you can see the confusion and bewilderment in their eyes. No matter how hard you try to describe the pleasures and sensations involved, the penny never drops.

I don’t think it depends on what sort of riding experience you’re trying to share with your non-riding listener. There’s something a bit ‘Marmite’ about riding a bike; you either love it or can’t relate at all.

Maybe that’s why riding a bike will never really take off as an experience understood, loved, appreciated (or even noticed) by the masses. Maybe, in fact, that’s part of the reason why ‘they’ never see us when they are driving their cars.

What is it that made you ride in the first place? If riding a bike is such an on-off, love it or loathe it thing, what is it that made you and me decide to ride? Why do we love it, while others run a mile?

Most of us started riding because a mate or parent introduced us to it. Given that, no amount of badgering by pressure groups or government will get more people on to bikes. Still, it shouldn’t stop us trying, eh?

”

Kenny Pryde

Kenny Pryde Editor

BRITAIN'S BEST BIKE MAGAZINE
SuperBike
MAGAZINE

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Who's not going to win in South Africa?



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Small Print

I've just been sacked from my job...

SuperBike is produced at Leon House, 233 High St, Croydon, Surrey CR9 1HZ, part of IPC Country and Leisure Magazines, which is part of the IPC Magazines Group. All enquiries on direct lines above or switchboard on 020 8726 8000. Fax on 020 8726 8499. General e-mail is on: superbike@ipcmedia.com

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Apparently, I wasn't serving...

One year subscription rates 113 issues, priority airmail UK £52.95, Western Europe €137.13, USA Direct Entry, \$135.56, Rest of World £84.99. Send cheques to SuperBike Subscriptions, FREEPOST CY1041, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3BR. Tel +44 (0) 845 676 7778. E-mail: ipcsubs@quadrantsubs.com

a porpoise.

Colour repro at CTT, Sutherland House, London E17 6BU, 020 8523 6705
Printers, St Ives Andover Ltd, Telford Gate, Westport Way Ind. Est., Andover, Hants, SP10 3SF, 01264 387000, and distributors, MarketForce, 5th floor low rise building, Kings Reach Tower, Stamford St, London SE1 9LS.
Tel: 020 7633 3300

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE: MARCH 17

SuperBike is published by Focus Network Magazines and is copyright: ISSN no 0262 8456

IPC INSPIRE
FOCUS
A part of IPC Media, a Time Warner Company

US LEGALESE

SuperBike magazine is published 13 times per year
US agent: Mercury International, 365 Blair Road, Avenel, NJ 07001
Periodicals paid at Rahway, NJ.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SuperBike magazine, 365 Blair Road, Avenel, NJ 07001.

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When you have finished with it, this magazine please recycle it.

Audited sales figure from January - December 2008

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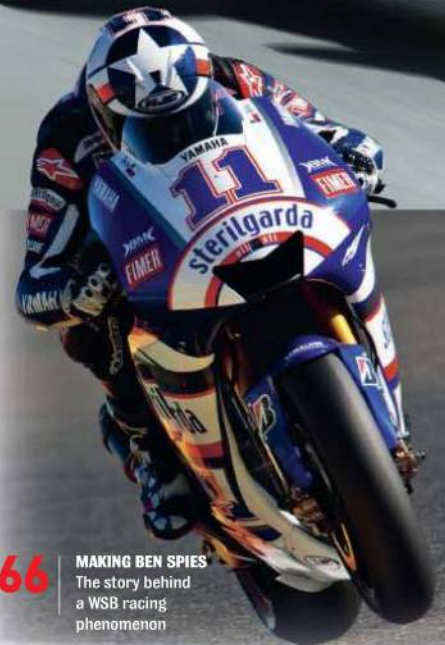
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CHILE OUTSIDE?

Pic: Red Bull

The best place to be at this time of year is the Southern Hemisphere. But these lads go there for a hard time, not a good time. The "Dakar" rally now happens in South America, which is a little safer than Sub-Saharan Africa. This is local hero Francisco Lopez Contardo doing the business on an Aprilia RXV450. He ended up third overall. Super hard.





▶ FLYING DOCTOR

ROSSI FEVER IN INDIA

Valentino Rossi made a personal appearance for Yamaha at the Indian Auto Expo show in New Delhi last month. When interviewed, Rossi said that he would love to come back and race there. Now all they need is an FIM-approved circuit...



▶ POCKET ROCKET

SACHS SPEEDJET ARRIVES

New 50cc scooter from Sachs – cool for kids and commuters

We shall gloss over the conceit of calling a 50cc scooter a 'Speedjet' for the moment. Anyway, German firm Sachs has launched a new 50cc scooter, dubbed the Speedjet RS. It's got a liquid-cooled two-stroke motor, wavy disc brakes and natty paint scheme. And at £1,599, it's not a lot dearer than some less well-appointed Chinese options.

▶ SILVER LININGS

HASLAM SCHOOL TO SILVERSTONE

Race school upping sticks means new learning curves

The Ron Haslam race school has been based at Donington Park since its inception, but the current uncertainty over the future of the circuit has forced Haslam to relocate to the revamped Silverstone. Visit www.haslamraceschool.com for more details.



▶ SPY SHOTS

MV Agusta working on middleweight three-cylinder exotica? *SuperBike* reader snatches spy shots

TRIPLE TREAT?

An all-new MV Agusta is normally a once-in-a-decade event but, right after launching the 2010 F4 and Brutale, the firm is hard at work on an even more important machine, in the form of its new 675cc three-cylinder supersports bike.

The prototype for what is probably the most important new MV Agusta since Claudio Castiglioni relaunched the firm with the F4 back in 1997 was spotted testing at Almeria, in Spain, where the bike brazenly took to the circuit on a public track-day. Its disguise – the prototype was clad in stock F4 bodywork – worked surprisingly well, but one camera-wielding rider *SuperBike* reader spotted it and photographed the machine. Although his pictures have been widely spread on the internet since then, *SuperBike* is the only UK magazine to have the full set of high-resolution shots. Preferring not to be named, the photographer told us: "I didn't get to see a lot of it, as they closed the garage doors pretty quickly whenever it came in. They were testing it alongside four or five of the 2010 F4s, and they had the first garage in the pit lane so they could pull straight in and get it hidden before anyone could properly look."

Underneath those butchered

F4 panels lies a completely new chassis and engine. The motor is known to be a 675cc three-cylinder, based on similar technology to the four-cylinder engine in the latest F4. That means it's packed with technology, including variable-length intake trumpets, fly-by-wire throttle control, a radial valve layout and

frame beams. From these shots, it appears that the engine plays more of a structural role than in the F4, as the aluminium parts are significantly slimmer.

Whereas an earlier prototype sported chassis parts from a Yamaha R6, including a conventional swingarm, this newer version sports a hand-fabricated single-sided arm which is likely to be much closer to the production design. Again, it's less bulky than the single-sider on the F4, as you'd expect, with less weight and power to cope with.

MV has been developing the machine since 2007, but still has plenty of work to do. In late 2008, the firm's boss, Claudio Castiglioni, said: "It's true we're working on a three-cylinder bike, but it's a long-term project, not something to be launched soon."

The production version is expected to keep a distinctively MV-esque shape, and is likely to gain a set of under-seat exhausts rather than the single side-mounted pipe of the prototype. To avoid confusion, the much-rumoured "F3" name is also likely to be retained for production. On the original F4, the designation came from the fact it had four cylinders, with the "F" referring to the fact Ferrari had a hand in helping its engine design. Whether or not Ferrari chipped in this time is unknown.

Price-wise, it will be the entry-level MV Agusta, possibly below £10,000. So, while it won't be a direct competitor for Japanese 600cc machines, it should undercut mass-produced 1000cc bikes. Once production is underway, further variations on the three-cylinder design seem certain, including a naked version, styled to compete with Triumph's Street Triple and Ducati's smaller Monsters.

"Even at 675cc, 130bhp should be well within its reach, given the output of MV's other engines"

the latest electronics, including adjustable traction-control. It's also likely to have been designed with scope to increase its capacity beyond 675cc if necessary. Even at 675cc, 130bhp or more should be well within its reach, given the impressive dyno figures from MV's other engines.

Chassis-wise, it's sticking to MV's tried and tested layout, using a combination of aluminium castings at the swingarm pivot and steel tubes to provide the main

WILL IT EVER HAPPEN?

The new three-cylinder MV Agusta might be vital to the company but its future hangs in the balance... along with that of the entire firm

MV Agusta's current owner, Harley-Davidson, announced plans late last year to sell the sportsbike brand as quickly as possible, ending what appeared to be the first period of real financial stability the company has had since it was re-launched in the mid-Nineties. While the new triple will make the company more tempting to potential purchasers, there are few Western bike companies currently in the position to buy MV, making it increasingly likely that it will eventually go to Asian ownership. Several Chinese companies might be tempted, seeing MV as an established name with strong technology and a foothold in the European and American markets. More on page 48.

TAMBURINI STYLING

These pictures don't give anything away about the final styling of the bike, but what is certain is that MV Agusta's legendary former designer, Massimo Tamburini, has had a hand in its development.

Although now retired, Tamburini oversaw the completion of the F3's styling before he left, heading a team that also included Benelli Tornado designer Adrian Morton. Cues including under-seat pipes, a single-sided swingarm and relatively uncluttered, smooth bodywork are all

trademarks of Tamburini designs. The massive cooling outlets in the sides of the prototype F3 are likely to disappear in favour of a more subtle solution along the lines of the smooth-sided F4.

Using panels from an earlier model as a disguise is nothing new for MV Agusta; in the mid-Nineties, as the F4 was developed, the firm ran a fleet of test hacks wrapped in Ducati 916 bodywork. Well, you wouldn't want any old disguise, would you?

Ignore the rough lines; it'll be a beauty



“It’s packed with technology: fly-by-wire throttle, radial valve layout, traction-control...”

Big gaps behind the 1000 F4 fairing give the game away

bullet hit detector

This month's industry bitching, back-stabbing, general idiocy and grateful thanks...



GET WELL SOON

Commissions to *Visordown* editor Ben Cope, knocked off a BMW S1000RR last month by a myopic pedestrian who stepped out in front of him in London Village. It was a sore one too – he ended up with a plated collar bone and broken shoulder blade. Ouch. A reminder that we all need to be careful out there...

AND THEN THERE WAS ONE

The flickering flame that is the editorial spirit at *Performance Bikes* magazine sputtered even lower last month, when half the 'team' upped and left. Ben Wilkins, justifiably peeved (we imagine) by senior management's continued reluctance to properly appoint an editor, handed in his notice, having decided to follow Steve 'Rosie' Rose to bumpkin-publishing firm Mortons. He was, of course, summarily ejected from the humourless steel-grey bastions of Kamp Bauer within minutes. Apparently Wilkins is going to head up Mortons' *Classic Motorcycle Mechanics* pamphlet, although rumours persist that he's to help Rose launch a new title which will sink *PB* (easy), and put some serious holes in both *RiDE* and *Classic Bike* (less easy). Good luck, Herr Wilkins!

STEADY NOW

Our old chum Richard Hallett used to work on one of the cycling magazines in IPC towers, but left a while ago. So it was a surprise to see him on the BMW R1200 GS launch last month. Sgt Major Hallett was there 'representing' doomed webzine *Visordown*. It seemed to go to his head a little, though, and he blotted his copybook by talking a bit too much, then throwing a GS Adventure at the landscape. We advise going a little steadier next time.

THE PRO HAS ARRIVED

We've already mentioned a Wilkins and an ex-IPC man, above, so now let's have both. Former SB road test editor Jamie Wilkins has turned up at Future Publishing's Pro Cycling road bike magazine as 'acting editor'. Good luck to them both.

THANKS THIS MONTH:

Phil Stade, freelance design saviour and Dave Bradford, freelance words messiah.

NEWS

► 'PRILA DOES DAKAR

APRILIA RACING CHANGES TACK

When the Aprilia racing department lost its hegemony in the 250cc Grand Prix championship (and opted out of the Moto2 class), the Noale factory moved some of its race engineers to work on an Aprilia RXV 450, with a view to turning it into a Dakar Enduro race

bike. The Aprilia, a 450cc 77° V-twin machine, in a field dominated by single cylinder bikes, did better than many Dakar hands expected.

Race engineer Gigi Dal'igna played down the factory's ambition with the usual 'we're here to learn' quote, but it didn't stop the bike, ridden by Chilean

Francisco Lopez, winning three stages of the off-road epic through Argentina and Chile. Lopez finally finished third overall on the new bike, behind winner Frenchman Cyril Despres (claiming his third Dakar victory) on a 690cc KTM. Second place went to Pat Ullevalseter, also riding a KTM.



FZ8 FAZER

800cc is the new 600cc. Yamaha's mini-Fazer gets a 200cc capacity hike

Fazer fans have been holding their breath to the point of asphyxiation since Yamaha gave us a brief glimpse of its new FZ8 naked roadster, late last year. Well, they can breathe easily now, as the firm has finally revealed that it will also launch a half-faired version. And yes, it will still be called the Fazer.

Initial indications suggest it will derive more from the R1-based FZ1 than the outgoing 600cc version. More info will be posted on www.superbike.co.uk when we get it.

► METZ MEANS LEANS

METZELER SPORTEC M5 INTERACT

The new sportsbike tyre from Metzeler 'knows' how far you're leaning – and grips accordingly

Remember when two compounds on a single tyre carcass seemed like a pant-wettingly clever advance in technology? Well, in the world of rubber, the march of innovation continues apace. Metzeler's latest tyre, the Sportec M5 Interact, has two compounds and no fewer than five different tension zones around its steel belt. Metzeler claims each one of these zones has its own individual performance characteristics, "achieving the best grip for each lean angle". The theory is that a greater number of tension zones gives a more continuous transition from one compound to another, rather than flipping from hard straight to soft. According to the technical blurb, this new structure has also led to an eight per cent increase in footprint size – at every lean angle. Which should equate to a proportionate improvement in grip. The pattern of the tread is also new, and resembles the Greek letter pi. Mathematicians among you will know that pi is not a filled-pastry comestible but the ratio between the circumference and diameter of a circle. See what they've done there? Aside from its symbolic aptness, this pattern is reported to increase stability in the dry and water-drainage in the wet.

Finally, if a rough estimate of chicken-strip width is not sufficient to judge your cornering prowess, the new M5 Interact has a lean-angle indicator. Basically, this is a series of markings on the shoulder of the tyre, against which you can assess the degree of lean you've achieved – something your mates will want to hear all about, we're sure.



**So you
think
you
know
the
bmf?..**





► **FIRST RIDE** BMW R1200GS

Success can be measured in many ways, but a good benchmark is selling shed-loads of bikes and rolling around in cash. As such, BMW's R1200GS can be called a success. For 2010, BMW has given it a new engine with a bit more power and painted it a new colour. Hardly a big change, but why change a winning formula?

FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTENT



Words: Bob Gray Pics: Jason Critchell/Paul Bryant

What can I tell you that you don't already know about this bike?" asks BMW PR shill Scott Grimsdall as he kicks off the presentation of BMW's new R1200GS and R1200GS Adventure. And it's a fair point. BMW still sells 85 trillion R1200GSs a month in Oxfordshire and, according

to its marketing emperor Tony Jakeman, the dealers sell two GSs for every Adventure. It's a galactically important model, then, and has been since appearing as an 1,100cc version back in 1993.

What makes it important is not clear, though, because on paper the bike just

shouldn't work. Beyond its industrial looks, it's still a heavy, technically unconventional motorcycle powered by a large opposed-twin engine – just what we never wanted. And yet there's no denying the GS is a great bike because it turns its hand to anything (touring, scratching, shopping or

off-roading) with surprising ease and ability.

No surprise, then, the changes BMW has made to the bike for 2010 are small; blink-and-you'll-miss-them small, actually. The biggest (or should that be smallest?) change is to the engine, which has remained pretty much untouched since

its capacity was upped to 1,200cc in 2004. While the new engine looks virtually the same, it is significantly different internally, and BMW has tried hard to make it a little bit more of everything without losing the central character that made it so good in the first place.

As such the new power >



Luggage-carrying capacity and shaft-drive remain excellent and unchanged



Added electronic options increase rider control

At the front is BMW's Telelever system, which cleverly splits braking force from those working the suspension, meaning the suspension doesn't dive like conventional forks and carries on suspending even during hard braking (which is as sharp on the GS as any bike you've ridden). On some of the treacherously twisty roads we rode on the launch, this was really useful because the bike didn't seem to get as flustered as me, when faced with a sudden blind bend.

Pushing buttons

It's worth mentioning ESA Enduro at this point too. With a stab or two at a button mounted on the left switchgear, you can change the bike's suspension from soft and wallowy for touring comfort, to taut and jarring for sporty riding. And the difference is noticeable. While the bike can of course be ridden fast in comfort mode, it feels better in sport mode. The same is true in reverse. At a standstill, you also have the ability to alter the rear preload to offset for luggage, a passenger or both. When riding solo, though, setting the ESA Enduro for two people has the effect of sharpening up the steering – to the point where you start to worry about chucking around such a large lump of metal.

In terms of differences between the two models, chucking them around is perhaps the biggest giveaway. The more road-biased GS's tyres feel a little more planted at bigger lean angles and, because the expanse of bike before you seems smaller, you feel a bit braver when getting a lick on. Of course, the Adventure model is pretty handy too. The deeper tread of the tyres means they move around a little more when pushed, and the bike's extra weight sometimes makes itself felt.

But both bikes would still be capable of giving sportier models a run for their money on an average road – especially as their height gives you the advantage of being able to see and plan better.

Along with the ESA Enduro electronics, you also get ABS and ASC to play with. ABS stops you locking the wheels and ASC tries to stop them spinning (killing wheelies in the process). By pressing and holding various buttons, whistling certain sequences of notes and holding your breath for 30 seconds, it is possible to disable the different systems by different amounts – my preferred option being ASC off, ABS on. In this combination of modes, you can wheelie or accelerate hard without the whip-lash inducing anti-spin kicking in, while abusing the brakes, safe in the knowledge they're not about to lock up – despite their power.

So, overall the bike remains as good as ever. We covered about 600 miles on the launch, and no one moaned because there was nothing to moan about – which I suppose is the beauty of developing a model over so many years. Gearbox problems were fixed decades ago; fuelling issues too. The bikes always handled surprisingly well but they go better now you can change things easily. And, of course, the extra power this year was always going to help.

So, taking all that into account (and a two per cent price rise – not bad considering other manufacturers), chances are the R1200GS and R1200GS Adventure will continue to bore us all with their dominance of the sales charts. If you already own last year's model, I'd keep it for now, as the changes for 2010, although good, don't make a huge difference. **53**

plant revs a little harder (500rpm), produces a little more torque (2.2lb-ft) and makes slightly more noise (although your ears won't bleed). The rpm and torque increases can both be traced back to the new cylinder head configuration, featuring double-overhead cams and a new combustion chamber shape inspired by the HP2 Sport. It isn't exactly the same as the HP2's cylinder head, though, as the HP2 Sport has one spark plug per cylinder, versus two on the GS and Adventure.

The key is more valve area – allowing the engine to breathe more easily at all revs, producing more torque and power. With the old 36/31mm inlet and exhaust valves being replaced by 39/33mm jobbies, there's a 17 per cent increase in intake valve area and a 13 per cent increase for the exhausts. Both valves have increased lift too, rising 10.54mm off their seats to narrowly miss the new aluminium pistons. That alone wouldn't be enough, so the 2010 GS and Adventure also get larger throttle bodies and inlet tracts as well as a new air-filter to keep them well supplied.

The only thing that doesn't seem to make sense

with this arrangement is the claim that it provides *"...a significantly more homogeneous flow of power and torque throughout the entire speed range."* BMW were kind enough to show us dyno overlays showing the increased output. While this is true, and not unwelcome, the new engine's delivery is as 'unsmooth' as the previous model's – there's just more of it. Perhaps the misuse of the word 'homogenous' here is cleverer than it appears.

The new engine's power delivery was actually one of the things people noticed on the launch. Not because there was more of it (you'd be hard pressed to notice unless you rode the new and old bikes back-to-back), but because of the fluctuations. We did plenty of riding on the launch, on both motorway and twisties. On motorway sections where we were simply sustaining a set speed, I noticed the power delivery seemed disproportionate to what I did with the throttle or how the engine was affected by gradients. In other words, the bike slowed down more than I expected up hills and compensating took more throttle than I would have thought. This is perhaps explained by the

“The Telelever system doesn't dive like conventional forks, and the bike didn't get as flustered as me.”

large fluctuation in torque between 4,250 and 5,250rpm (around 80-90mph on the road in top), which would be something I'd try to fix fairly soon if I bought this bike.

On twisty roads and off-road (I'm told), there's no problem with the new engine. Because it's not screaming away and doesn't make S1000RR amounts of power, you can get a bit blasé with how and when you crack the throttle without breaking into a cold sweat. Sure, the engine runs out of revs sooner than a sportsbike, but it's still going quick enough to get you in both on anything but a race track.

Luckily the chassis, which remains unchanged, is as capable as ever.

BMW R 1200GS WHAT MAKES IT TICK?

SPECIFICATION

Costs: £9,925, [Adventure £10,745]
NU Ins group: 13

Engine

Type: oil-cooled DOHC 8v opposed twin
Capacity: 1,170cc
Bore x Stroke: 101 x 73mm
Compression ratio: 12:1
Fuelling: (FI) 50mm throttle plate
Gearbox: 6-speed shaft drive, Pri 1.737, 1st 2.375 [2.6 option], 2nd 1.696, 3rd 1.296, 4th 1.065, 5th 0.939, 6th 0.848, final 2.91
Max power: 110bhp @ 7,750rpm
Max torque: 88lb-ft @ 6,000rpm

Cycleparts

Chassis: tubular steel
Wheels/tyres: (F) cast 2.5 x 19 [spoke], 110/80-19 (R) cast 4.0 x 17 [spoke], 150/70-17
Suspension: (F) Telelever, (R) Paralever (optional ESA Enduro)
Brakes: (F) 2 x 305mm discs four pot calipers, (R) 1 x 265mm disc two pot sliding caliper
Seat height: 850/870mm [910mm/890mm]
Wheelbase: 1,507mm [1,510mm]
Rake/trail: 25.7°/101mm [24.8°/88.7mm]
Kerb weight: 229kg [256kg]
Fuel capacity: 20 litres [33 litres]
Contact: BMW 0800 777155

Electronics

ESA Enduro adjustable suspension (£610) is fantastic, as is the ABS (£945), which can be disabled. ASC Automatic Stability Control is a pain, as the motor is strong enough to trigger it often (best disabled or not ordered [£275]). Heated grips are nice (£210) as are the fog lights on the Adventure (£255).

Tank Range

Even the standard GS with a "smaller" tank of 25 litres will go nearly twice as far as most sportsbikes we're used to. With the Adventure's big tank you only need to fill the bike up before you sell it. And perhaps surprisingly, carrying all that fuel doesn't adversely affect the handling.

Engine

Inspired by the HP2 Sport, the new engine gets DOHC, 500 extra RPM over the old model and more performance. An exhaust valve is supposed to make the bike sound better - but we didn't notice much difference; it's certainly no Ducati.

Brakes

Considering the mass of the chassis, the brakes are really good, hauling you up as quickly as any supersport 600. The ABS didn't false release, although pot-holes on the test route were minimal and feedback through the levers was sound.

Seat Height

The standard seat height can be adjusted through two positions but BMW also does a lower seat option as well as a shorter suspension option that drops the whole bike chassis a further 30mm, giving an overall seat height of 790mm. The suspension lowering option costs £150.



► **FIRST RIDE** BMW R1200 RT

BURDEN-LOVING BEAST



See that very, very far away place over there? If you want to get there in comfort and with a smile on your face, you need a distance tool. Cue BMW's new and improved R1200RT. With enough luggage capacity for two loungers, plenty of beach towels and a stereo to listen to 'Greatest Marching Hits of the 1940s', it appears to have it all. Bob rode all around Spain to find out

Words: Bob Gray Pics: Jason Critchell/Paul Bryant

I have fond, if slightly scary, memories of BMW's RT series. As a spotty 19-year-old, back in 1995, I was lucky enough to ride an R1100RT from the wilderness of Peterborough to Strasbourg for the UK launch. It was a big deal back then. Apart from my Yamaha TZR125 and having rented a few sportsbikes

from a mate in a local bike shop, it was the first 'big' bike I got to mess around on. It was also the first time I'd been abroad alone, ridden on the wrong side of the road or ridden anything that tried to flick me off when I blipped its throttle. So to ride this new R1200RT model on its UK launch felt especially nostalgic.

But there are many parallels between my memories of the old bike and BMW's latest offering. Despite the changes that have occurred, the new 1200 is still instantly recognisable as an RT, both in looks as well as feel. Which is remarkable when you consider how much bikes like Honda's Fireblade and

Yamaha's R1 have changed. The first thing you notice when you jump on the RT is how light it seems. It's not, of course, hitting the scales at 259kg, but, as with some other big bikes, the weight is carried in such a way that people of all body-types, including Alan, can move the bike easily. It's also important to note

that people of all heights can get on, as well as get on with the bike. BMW did explain how many different combinations of seat height and suspension length you can choose from, but it was a bit boring and can easily be summed up in one sentence: 'This bike can be made to fit you'.

For me, the RT was fine



The RT, like Bob, is still torn between opposing desires: packing pies and picking apexes



Handling defies the overall weight and limited ground clearance



BMW R 1200 RT WHAT MAKES IT TICK?

SPECIFICATION

Costs: £11,775 (SE model with extras* £12,880)
NU Ins Group: TBC

Engine

Type: oil-cooled DOHC 8v opposed twin
Capacity: 1,170cc
Bore x Stroke: 101 x 73mm
Compression ratio: 12:1
Fuelling: (FI) 50mm throttle plate
Gearbox: 6-speed shaft drive, Pri 1.737, 1st 2.375, 2nd 1.696, 3rd 1.296, 4th 1.065, 5th 0.939, 6th 0.848, final 2.62
Max power: 110bhp @ 7,750rpm
Max torque: 88lb-ft @ 6,000rpm

Cycleparts

Chassis: tubular steel
Wheels/tyres: (F) cast 3.5 x 17 120/70-17 (R) cast 5.0 x 17 180/55-17
Suspension: (F) Telelever, (R) Paralever (optional ESA II)
Brakes: (F) 2 x 320mm discs four pot calipers, (R) 1 x 265mm disc two pot sliding caliper
Seat height: 750 - 840mm (std. 820/840mm)
Wheelbase: 1,484.6mm
Rake/trail: 26.6°/109.9mm
Kerb weight: 259kg
Fuel capacity: 25 litres
***R1200SE includes:** ESA, heated grips, heated seats, on-board computer, cruise control, additional power socket chromed exhaust
Contact: BMW 0800 777155

○ Suspension

ESA II means you can tweak the suspension for passengers, luggage, or none of the above, at the touch of a button, and really does make a difference. It beats getting your hands dirty doing it manually and is perhaps the one option above all others you should consider.

○ Protection

The mirrors are superb and the new fairing works well, so you don't necessarily have to dress in full waterproof gear. The electrically adjustable screen is optically very good and works for people up to 183cm tall, although the top of your lid will be just in the wind.

○ Music

A must-have for any decent touring machine. The RT's system installs in the glove-box and can interface with USB or an iPod, and costs £1,230 (about 10 per cent of the bike's basic price), which seems a little steep when you get one in cars for free. It also takes up 80 per cent of the glove-box space. The controller is really easy to use, though.



○ Luggage

Panniers are included in the standard price of the RT, which is only right. They're pretty good too. Each one can swallow a lid and the on/off mechanism is easy enough to use. Some clever use of fluorescent sticks means you can see when they're not fitted properly in the mirrors. The weird tank-bag rail means you'll probably have to buy BMW's tank bag, but, as the tank is covered by plastic, a magnetic bag wouldn't work anyway.

○ Seat Height

The standard seat is adjustable front and rear, through two positions. You can also choose to fit a lower seat (EFOC) which drops the height to 780 or 800mm. If that's not low enough, you can also get the suspension lowered (£150) to bring it down to 750mm, which would be useful in traffic, as you could ride under cars rather than filtering between them (joke).

in standard trim and, after several hours riding, my legs felt as good as new, although my bum ached a bit under the weight of such big moobs. The rider and pillion seats were much appreciated, as were the heated grips; Ryanair's under-generous baggage allowance meant I'd packed only leathers, and got a little cold on long sections.

The screen, which is height-adjustable at the press of a button, did a good job of deflecting 95 per cent of the wind around and over me, and was easy to look through. Some bikes with big screens like this seem to distort vision a lot, but the RT's screen is very good. In fact, BMW has redesigned it for that very reason and also improved its aero acoustics - although I couldn't hear what the fuss was about!

Glaring error

The only thing I didn't like about the whole cockpit area (which has been redesigned), was the reflection on the instruments. I know the clock surrounds have a new anti-glare finish, but their covers obscured the values underneath by reflecting the chest of my leathers. That said, most people riding RTs won't be in full mating plumage race-leathers.

On the opposite end of

"You can almost keep up with the GS and Adventure, if you can lean it over far enough."

the scale, I loved the new control for the stereo. On the end of the left grip (inbetween the bit you hold and the switchgear) is the multi-controller. This sculpted piece of plastic can be spun forwards and backwards (like a throttle) using your thumb, as well as from side to side (like an indicator switch). Rolling it forwards and back turns the volume up and down. Moving it from side to side changes the radio stations up or down, tunes up and down or skips tracks if you've got an iPod or USB memory stick plugged in. Genius.

Of course, while music is an important tool in breaking the monotony of touring, ABS and traction are important on tourers too. So, like the GS and Adventure, the RT comes fitted with ABS, ASC and ESA II suspension. ABS

stops you locking the wheels when you panic that you're going to miss a turn for your hotel; ASC stops the wheel spinning up because you're in a bad mood at missing your turning and are giving it the berries; and ESA II allows you to adjust the suspension settings. All of them work well enough that you can almost keep up with the GS and Adventure on twisty roads, provided the bike will lean enough.

The upshot is, the new engine makes as little difference to the new bike as it does on the GS and Adventure. It's a welcome addition, of course, but the RT was good at what it did before, and is still good at what it does now. It's just a little more powerful. The kind of person who hands over money for this bike is going to be more concerned about things like luggage, looks and how it feels, rather than the engine, and in that sense they won't be disappointed. There is the obligatory BMW options list, which is so extensive that if it were all printed out, it wouldn't fit in the massive panniers. So, if you happen to be in the market for a slightly quirky distance-eating machine but don't want to go for a super-fast four-cylinder machine, the new R1200RT is still very much your No.1 option. **SB**

ABS, ACS, ESA... It's easy as A,B,C... Almost



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► **FIRST RIDE** KAWASAKI VERSYS

FORM VERSYS FUNCTION



Kawasaki's improved the form of its Versys mini-adventure bike. But has the function got better too? Al went to Sardinia to find out

Words: Alan Dowds Pics: James Wright/Doulered

In the bike world, form often follows function. Because all the vital bits are usually little more than a plastic cover away from you, the bare essentials of a motorcycle are generally easy to spot. It often seems to be the case that when something looks good, it works well too. Think of the best bikes ever made: Honda's 1992 FireBlade, 1998 Yamaha R1, Suzuki's RGV250, Ducati's 916, Honda RC30. The bare bones of these bikes conveyed a purposeful,

committed air, which gave the entire machine a special, functional beauty. Not all good bikes are pretty (Suzuki Hayabusa, BMW S1000RR), but it's hard to think of a beautiful bike that isn't, in turn, pretty good.

The old Kawasaki Versys was, for many people, in the former category: a not-pretty bike that was pretty good. The good parts about it were easy to spot, because the bike was, essentially, an ER-6 with long-travel suspension and different 'trail-styled'

bodywork. And the ER-6 is an excellent little bike: a spunky parallel-twin engine putting out 60-odd bhp with ample torque, bolted into a trendy steel tube frame with side-mount rear monoshock, light weight and budget-but-decent brakes and suspension.

Sadly, something was lost in the translation to the Versys, styling-wise at least. A curiously curved set of bodywork wended its way up to a headlight which looked like a baddie's helmet from Star Wars

(Carrie Fisher's Ubese disguise at the beginning of Return of the Jedi to be precise...). The pretty frame, swingarm and monoshock of the ER-6 was still there, but like Honda's rival Transalp, there was something about the top fairing design that just jarred when you looked at it.

Once you got on the bike, though, things quickly improved: the dynamic qualities of the Versys pleased from the off, and as a lightweight tourer, commuter or cheap all-

rounder, it worked well.

So, Kawasaki seemed to have done the right thing when it announced a 2010 update for the Versys. Because it hasn't fiddled with the basics of the bike; rather, it's spent time updating the cosmetics and expanding the accessory range. Details? The engine gets some extra rubber mounting at the back in a bid to reduce vibration passed to the frame, and the rider footpegs have thicker, hollow rubber pads on top to further reduce the vibes >



FIRST RIDE KAWASAKI VERSYS

It squirt-brake-turns faster than Dowds can refill his unfit lungs



Matching truck not included

which then pass on into your feet. And that's it for non-cosmetic changes.

The styling tweaks are pretty comprehensive, and include a new headlight with the position 'sidelight' mounted above the stacked main lights (the old one had two sidelights either side), swoopier bodywork, an adjustable windscreen, LED tail-light, diamond-shaped mirrors, new indicators and new engine covers. The redesign works – the new bike is definitely less ugly than the old 'un. But it's still no looker.

Budget brilliance

Is it still a go-er, though? Well, we had a day and a half of riding around Sardinia to find out, on all sorts of roads, from the little bits of Autostrada the island boasts, down to poorly cobbled village squares, swooping 'A'-type roads and corkscrew-twisty mountain back roads.

The wee Kawasaki

performed well above its pay grade throughout. It's one of the effects of continual product development in the bike industry that even basic, budget machinery now works incredibly well in terms of bald performance. Tyres designed for high-mileage wear now provide the grip of a supersports tyre from a decade ago; even commuter frames no longer flex; and soggy, uncontrolled suspension now seems confined to those deathtrap Chinese scooters sold on eBay.

So while the Versys has a budget-spec engine and chassis, I genuinely found myself wondering how any other bike could do much better on certain parts of the route. In particular, the mega-twisty mountain roads we tackled on day two, where the Versys's lightweight, easy steering and tractable engine catapulted us from bend to bend like



Grunty parallel-twin motor almost compels naughty behaviour like this





Offset monoshock looks odd but works well



Decent grab-handles ensure passenger-friendliness



Large tacho and digital speedo are all you need

a bright yellow superball bouncing down a skyscraper stairwell. Mile after mile of terrifying bendage had my arms pumping up and wrist aching from the sheer strain of braking hard and holding on. Accelerate, brake, turn, accelerate, brake, turn... till fade.

Me, that is, not the bike; it's up for more despite my unfit carcass wheezing and calling time. And while a 'proper' supermoto machine would probably dispatch the road in a quicker time, I'm not sure I'd have had much more fun along the way than on the Versys.

Thrash happy

It's the same on more open roads. As long as you're happy with an imposed speed limit of 110mph-ish (flat out is 120mph but it takes a while to get there), the Versys is perfectly at home on bigger sweepers. Tuck in, hammer the throttle hard and enjoy the sensation

of getting the absolute maximum potential out of a bike – rather than just scraping the surface like on a litre sportsbike. Motorways are never fun on any bike really, but the Versys pootles along just fine, bearing in mind that lack of margin in terms of power and speed. For my 5'8" frame, the small fairing and standard screen position was protection enough from the breeze, although the balmy weather we experienced (14°C) meant it wasn't tested too harshly.

When we hit Sardinia's 'capital', Cagliari, the Versys impressed too. The traffic is like anywhere else in Italy, which is to say busy and insane. But with the Versys, I had the perfect foil to the Latin lunacy. It's narrow, light and controllable enough to dodge even the most homicidal Fiat 500, while the brakes and suspension are sound enough to get

“In town, it's light and controllable enough to dodge even the most homicidal Fiat 500.”

you out of trouble as fast as you get into it. In town is, perhaps, where most of the Versys models sold in the UK will find themselves, most of the time, and as an urban tool, it's got lots to offer. The riding position is commanding yet comfy, giving you plenty of vision for what's coming, and for the daily slog I suspect the Versys will earn its corn perfectly. Indeed, for my own seven-mile urban commute

(with an option on a 13-mile long-way-round in summer), the Versys would be a very tempting option, and one I'm currently turning over in my mind. I'd planned to ask for a Ducati Multistrada 1200 to borrow this year, but if that doesn't come off, then the Versys would seem to tick many of my day-to-day boxes at half the price...

So, after a day and a half on the little Kawasaki, it's fair to say that I'm impressed by its function. If I was to have one myself, then I'd make changes, of course: the Dunlop rubber isn't exciting enough to match the bike's abilities, and a set of more sporting tyres would instantly light up the Versys's chassis abilities. Similarly, the brakes provide only-just-sufficient performance, and I'd like to see them upgraded. Pads and hoses may do it, but I'd be trying to source a set of four-piston calipers and master cylinder.

After that? Sort out

a louder, lighter end-can, raid the Kawasaki accessory catalogue for hot grips, crash bungs and handguards, then bolt on a GPS and some luggage. That may sound like a lot of effort to make a different bike but the result would be a genuinely useful, fun, mini-adventure bike.

Sadly though the form would still be a little disappointing. No matter how good the Versys rides, it's still a bit too plain. But, much more seriously, it's suffered from the same cost increases that have hit all the Japanese manufacturers. The 'budget' Versys costs £6,000 dead (£6,400 with ABS), almost the same as BMW's entry-level adventure bike, the faster, higher-tech F650 GS (£6,350). And for many people, that price hurdle may be an even more serious flaw for the Versys than its quirky looks.

KAWASAKI VERSYS WHAT MAKES IT TICK?

SPECIFICATION

Costs: £6,000
NU Ins group: 10

Engine

Engine: 1/c 8v DOHC parallel twin,
Capacity: 649cc
Bore x Stroke: 83 x 60mm
Compression ratio: 10.6:1
Fuel injection: dual 38mm Keihin
throttle bodies
Transmission: 6-speed

Cycleparts

Frame: diamond steel tube
Wheels/tyres: Cast aluminium/Dunlop D221
120/70 17 (F), 160/60 17 (R)
Rake/trail: 25°/108mm
Front suspension: 41mm USD fork, adjustable
rebound/preload
Rear suspension: offset monoshock,
adjustable rebound/preload
Brakes: Dual 300mm petal discs, dual-piston
calipers (F), 220mm petal disc,
single-piston caliper (R)
Fuel capacity: 19litres
Wheelbase: 1,415mm
Seat height: 845mm
Kerb mass: 206kg (209kg ABS)
Claimed max power: 64bhp@8,000rpm
Claimed max torque: 45ft-lb@6,800rpm

Frame

Again, the same as that on the ER-6. Neat semi-trellis cradle frame has cool 'fake' casting plates at the swingarm pivot, and an offset monoshock which operates a pretty beefy-looking triangulated swingarm.



Engine

Nothing fancy here, but then it doesn't need to be fancy to be good, does it? A compact lump, with four-valve heads, dual overhead cams, a 180° crank and balance shaft, it puts out a claimed 64bhp. 38mm Keihin throttle bodies provide the fuelling, and it's identical to the ER-6 motor.

Accessories

A big, old range of bolt-on goodies, including hard panniers or topbox (you can't fit both), hot grips, GPS bracket, lower and higher seat options and taller windscreens. Crash bungs and handguards round off the options list.

Suspension

USD front forks with rebound damping in one leg, and preload/rebound adjustable in the other offset the preload and rebound adjustable monoshock out back.

Brakes

Dual-piston sliding calipers operate on twin petal discs at the front, with a single disc at the rear. ABS is a £400 option.

READERS' LETTERS

CONTACTPATCH

LETTER OF THE MONTH

The Letter of the month wins an HJC FG-15 "Draco" lid worth £169.99



▶ SUPERSLEDGE

What with the freezing weather and tons of snow down here in the south-west, my Aprilia Tuono R has been languishing in the garage for too long. Spurred on by the latest issue of SuperBike and the credit crunch, I built this SuperBike sledge, more attuned to the snow than the Tuono, from an old pallet I found behind the garage plus your free sticker pack.

I like what you've done there. But where's the go-fast racing stripes?
- Kenny.



Tony Levitt,
Winterslow

Write: Readers' Letters, SuperBike Magazine, IPC Media, Leon House, 233 High Street, Croydon, Surrey CR9 1HZ
E-mail: superbike_letters@ipcmedia.com



▶ TRULY CRAZY ABOUT KIYO

I've just read Gary's story about his gorgeous Stobart Honda CBR600RR (Recession Respray, February), an awesome-looking bike. So I decided to write in and tell you about mine.

I'm a very big Ryuichi Kiyonari fan. My dad took me to Silverstone BSB in 2005 (I rode my CBR125R). I saw the HM Plant bikes and fell in love with them. I also saw Kiyoi, and was amazed at the racing. My dream bike was the 600RR3/4, and I eventually got one after three years' waiting. Since then, it's been a project to 'HM Plant' my RR4. First off, I got it painted by Dream Machine. Next, I got some HM Plant Scott Leathers and three, yes three,

Kiyonari Shoei X-Spirit lids (red, blue and black). I even changed my middle name to Kiyoi! After seeing SuperBike's 2005 fork set-up DVD, I bought a complete front-end from an '06 CBR600RR. Next job: powder-coating the swingarm.

Jason Kiyoi Hallam

A tidy paint job indeed but three Shoei X-Spirits?! That's immoderate even by bike-journo standards - Kenny



▶ BROWN PANTS WEATHER

I thought I'd send a picture of my winter hack to see if you would stick it in your mag. Funnily enough, this is also my summer hack and my pride and joy. As anyone who isn't a cave-dwelling, Xbox-playing 16-year-old knows, the snowfall lately has been on the heavy side, meaning a lot of people have sent their bikes into hibernation. Unfortunately for me, I've not got the luxury of a car and have thus been riding this beast throughout the worst of it. Apart from the inevitable poo-your-pants moments, I came out of it relatively unscathed. It just goes to show that it can be done. Just make sure you stock up on spare underwear.

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leoncamier

Met the president of piaggio last night in montecarlo, then max and his gf took me to this trick club to meet the boss.. Quite a cool night
29th Jan

GinoRea

After training in Spain I'm really not liking this cold weather and roads that feel like your cycling on a motocross track!
29th Jan

67Shakey

Had a really good test here in Valencia, I was only on standard tyres but was fastest for a long time, ended up 2 10ths off the pace :-))!!
28th Jan

BradleySmith38

Heading to Axo factory this evening, going for meeting with the guys tomorrow. New measurements and New personal sponsors to sort out.
28th Jan

SuperBikemag

What? Riding to Superbike office I passed a car with 2 home-made For Sale signs totally obscuring both the driver's side views. Beyond dumb.
28th Jan

chazdavies

More mouse evidence 2day under my sink. He's eaten my vits&protein drink! If any1 sees a buff/healthy looking rodent u know where he's been!
27th Jan

GinoRea

Signed today in Prague- WORLD SUPERSPORT 2010- Intermoto Honda! Finally official. Can't wait for Phillip Island!! News report and pics soon!
26th Jan

Si_andrews

I ACHE! And got 2 sessions today... can't wait to race bikes and give up trying to get fit! I feel worse :-)
25th Jan

WWW.TWITTER.COM/SUPERBIKEMAG

OFF TO FAMILY PLANNING...

While driving around Kabul, Afghanistan, we came across the attached sight. We hope you can use it and show others the joys of 'family biking'.

Graham Forrest, Kabul, Afghanistan



Room for one more, surely?

WHITE WEDDING

This is a photo of my ZX-9R on the morning after a wedding I'd attended in Scotland, in December. I had to borrow the hotel shovel to dig it out. I think most people, including me, thought that I was mental for riding in the snow. I love sportsbikes but they really aren't great in snow and ice. Over the course of a week, riding to Scotland, then to Wales, then back to Berkshire, I learnt a lot about the way my bike behaves when sliding and skidding. I think I can safely say it was grimmest ride I have done. I was forced to ditch in the snow on the motorway between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Thankfully the snow was deep enough at the side of the road that it did no damage to the bike or me. But I cursed my friend more than once for getting married in December in Scotland.

Ian Simon



Xmas lights optional

READER'S EDITOR

Reader David Crawford (and several others) spotted, in last month's 'Stuff' section, that we printed the wrong price under the Garmin Zumo 660. Apologies to anyone who momentarily thought they could bag a top-notch sat-nav for less than £300. The actual price is £529.99, and the website is www.garmin.com

BRING THE BANGERS BACK!

As regards Hill Billy's letter ('Losing It?' February), I think you are really missing the point when it comes to ladies in the magazine. I am a married, sexually active man who has full access to soft and hardcore porn over the internet and through other mediums.

The point is not porn. The point is that, to most readers, going through a bike magazine without ladies is simply a less-satisfying experience. Don't believe the data you got from your marketing department; most men will say they don't care about porn if asked point blank.

Beautiful ladies are definitely an integral part of biking. Damn political correctness.

Michel Massoud

The decision to get rid of the centrefold was neither politically nor morally motivated. It was a practical step; we decided the magazine would be better [i.e. would please more readers more of the time] without it - Ed team



SUPER

Have you ever seen a pair of rubbish-looking Brembos calipers?



BREMBO HPK RADIAL CALIPERS

Road-bike brakes don't come much more 'bling' and high-spec than these gorgeous disc-grabbers from Brembo. 'HPK' stands for High Performance Kit, and there's no arguing with that description. They are two-piece, machined-billet units with four pistons apiece. The stunning finish is nickel plating, very deliberately redolent of MotoGP and WSB-spec brakes. Supplied with sintered pads, HPK calipers are available in both Japanese and European radial-mount sizes. Stopping nirvana comes at a high cost, naturally; if you need to ask about the price, you probably can't afford them.

£1,100 (PAIR)

CONTACT: 01327 855999 www.modeperformance.co.uk



COLD KILLERS SPORT TOP

The idea of a thin but cleverly-designed 'thermal' top to be worn underneath a wind and waterproof outer layer is a good one. There are plenty of examples in outdoor and climbing shops. The demands of a biking version means that front-facing wind proofing is more important though and the Cold Killers design addresses this.

As well as being wind proof the 'Softshell' fabric is a three ply laminate with a very tough and tightly woven stretch fabric on the outside and a cosy 3D fleece liner. The Sport Top is available in men and women's sizes and probably won't look quite as good as this on you (no offence).

£54.99 CONTACT: 01900 825825
www.planet-knox.com



KRYPTONITE NEW YORK LEGEND LOCK & CHAIN

This is Kryptonite's biggest, toughest lock-and-chain combination. The chain is made from 15mm-diameter hardened steel, durably protected by a nylon sleeve. Ensuring that there is no weak link, the lock boasts a 16mm-diameter steel shackle, with a hardened steel body. Kryptonite claims the disc-type cylinder facilitates more than a million key variations, with what the company describes as an "anti-drill/pull cylinder protection system". All of which should put off all but the most committed of thieving scoundrels.

£144.00 CONTACT: www.mandp.co.uk

Beck Rule, the cure for common colds?

DRAGGIN JEANS NEXT GENERATION JEANS

OK, so they look like a regular pair of jeans, but these new denim trews from Draggin Jeans are actually ground-breaking, in their own small way. They are the first Kevlar-lined biking jeans with a seamless construction. In other words, there are no visible panels where the Kevlar lining is, which doesn't just look smart but is a safety bonus because seams are inherently vulnerable. The New Gens (as the yooof are calling them) are designed and tailored with biking in mind – extra rugged, abrasion-resistant, and long/wide enough to wear over your boots. What more can you ask from a pair of jeans, eh?

£159.99 CONTACT: 01732 868200
www.dragginjeans.net

Our classified sales man Tom is also semenless, sorry, seamless



All this for just over 200 quid, bargain

MACHINE MART TOOLS AND CHEST

Part of the joy of owning a bike is being able to while away hours in the garage fiddling with it [the bike, that is]. But in order not to be foxed by the first odd-shaped fixture, you need a decent set of tools. It's all very well hankering after top-notch, big-brand kit, but a full outfit will cost you thousands. On the other hand, this massive, nine-drawer outfit full of instruments, from Machine Mart, costs under £230. Naturally, the quality of the tools isn't exactly dripping with quality, but you can't scoff at value for money. The inventory includes sockets, screwdrivers, pliers, wrenches and more – all conveniently to hand on rollout shelves. Happy tinkering.

£228.00 CONTACT: 0871 410 1250
www.machinemart.co.uk



SMALL STUFF



DP BRAKES PADS

DP specialises in sintered pads, which in all probability is the type sitting in your bike right now. The UK company prides itself on covering almost all modern bikes with a compound to suit your intended use (Standard, Sport HH and Racing). These new X-Race Titanium pads are designed for all track uses and boast superb warm-up, consistent all-weather performance and ceramic heat shield to reduce heat transfer through to the caliper.

£25.00 (per pair)
www.racebrakes.co.uk



Get a grip on those love handles

OXFORD PRODUCTS RIDER GRIPS

If your pillion complains that you ride too fast, don't slow down; just buy them this, Oxford's Rider Grips. It is a simple bit of kit – a belt with two handles, one on either side. Pillions can hang on securely under acceleration and brace themselves under braking, building rippling arm muscles and a love of speed in the process. Then again, with no more terrified screaming, how will you know they're still there?!

£24.99
01993 862 300
www.oxprod.com



KRYPTONITE NEW YORK DISC LOCK

A disc lock is a worthwhile theft-deterrent, provided it's resilient enough to attack. This compact little device from Kryptonite does the job nicely with a 14mm hardened-steel pin, which locks in place by means of a four-point retention system. The cylinder has a sliding cover to protect from dust and damp. It comes with a handy carry-pouch, too.

£48.49 www.mandp.co.uk

SUPERBIKE



LEO VINCE SBK FACTORY SLIP-ONS FOR RSV4

This is Leo Vince's latest SBK Factory silencer for the Aprilia's RSV4. You get two options: full carbon or titanium sleeve with a carbon end-cap. If you only ever fly solo, you can opt to mount the silencer slightly higher, using the supplied carbon bracket – for that hardcore 'factory' look (if you carry pillions fitment is via the pillion footrest mounts as usual). Leo Vince claims the combined header pipe/silencer weighs nearly 8kg less than the OE exhaust – which is roughly equivalent to lopping off a leg (only less painful). Better still, Leo Vince says in-house testing has revealed these end-cans boost the RSV4's power by a healthy 5.5bhp.

£471.00

CONTACT: 0845 0941934
www.moto.gb.com



SHOEI X-SPIRIT II

This is ad 'man Neil Handley's lid of choice for the next year or so and, for once, we can't question his taste. What you're looking at here is the pinnacle of Shoei head protection – the latest incarnation of the range-topping X-Spirit, the X-Spirit II. There's not much difference between this and the old version, which is no bad thing because it was already a truly great lid. The multi-composite shell is made in four different sizes, meaning you should find a snug size-fitment for your head. Beneath this shell lies a dual-density EPS liner, responsible for shock-absorbing duties. The shell shape and outer spoiler are designed to give good high-speed stability – something Shoei prides itself on. This particular colour-scheme is the Streamline TC-4; if you don't like it, no worries – there are nine others to choose from.

£580.00

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- 848/1098 Tank Shield
- Fireblade 08/09 Hugger
- 08 R6 Engine Armour

RS TAICHI DRYMASTER GLOVES

RS Taichi's smartly crafted Drymaster gloves are designed to protect against winter conditions. They're currently on test, cosseting the editor Kenny's hands, on his daily commute to and from the office. He assures us they've stood up well during the recent spell of wet and cold weather. Protection includes carbon knuckle and scaphoid guards, incorporated into the leather-and-textile outer shell, which is lined by a Drymaster membrane - RS Taichi's patented breathable/waterproof fabric. There is anti-slip rubber detailing on the fingers, a visor wipe on the thumb, and drawstring closure at the cuff to help ensure a watertight fit. The Drymaster is available by order only from Crescent Motorcycles.

£89.99 CONTACT: 01202 820 170
www.crescent-motorcycles.com



Very handy, very
handy indeed



REV'IT VICTORY 1PC SUIT

This suit is hot off the stitching machines at REV'IT, and heads up the firm's 2010 collection - available from February. It's made from cowhide, double-layered in the seat area, with Kevlar stretch panels and foam padding at the back and hips. The shoulders and elbows are, of course, protected by CE-approved armour. Designed for sport use, the Victory has a speed hump, ventilation panels and comes with 'dual-comp' knee sliders. It's meant to hug the figure with aerodynamic levels of snugness, but our model, Dave, found it a bit generous around the middle... He is a skinny runt (sic), mind.

£799.99 CONTACT: www.revit.eu

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PEARLS OF WISDOM

We all think we know a bit when it comes to bikes and we've all read or received some great advice. We spoke to some biking high fliers and asked: what's the best piece of advice you were ever given?

Words: Rob Hoyles Pics: Graeme Brown, 2/Snap, Jonty Edmunds



Can you guess what Higgs and McElnea are staring at?



1 Stuart Higgs

British Superbike championship race director

Listen to what your mum says! Seriously, when I was a kid, my father was involved in race organisation with the Triumph Club who held their own race meetings as well as providing a marshal service to the British GP – in those days each corner would be run by a different club.

I wanted to be the next Barry Sheene, but my mum suggested I ran the events rather than raced in them. Because of my dad's involvement, from a very early age I was quite analytical of how meetings were run and in those days, it has to be said, most were run fairly badly. Even as a ten-year-old I used to wonder how it could run late or why certain things such as straw bales were in the wrong place and why marshals often seemed a bit clueless.

It sounds really sad, but as a kid I used to imagine my own race meetings, planning timetables and thinking up ways to improve things.

Now it's become my full-time job and I'm just really happy that I'm getting paid to do what I really enjoy. Mum was absolutely right and I daresay I'm enjoying being the organiser as much as I would have done racing.

2 Dave Thorpe

Three times World 500cc MX Champion

The best piece of advice I was ever given was to treat every championship as a series and to not be blinded by individual races. My Dad (Keith) drummed it into me at a very early age that to win a championship you need to be consistent as well as fast and to win when you can and score strong points when you can't.

I learned pretty quickly. Especially when my stupid mistakes starting costing me money! Prize money and bonuses were my bread and butter as a professional motocross racer and it was only too easy to let the red mist get the better of me when I could have settled for a safe second or third and a hatful of points.

The bottom line is that twenty years down the line people remember that Dave Thorpe was World Champion in '85, '86, and '89. They don't remember that I led both the '87 and '88 championships but then threw them away when I shouldn't have. At the end of the day, people remember the hard facts and the champions – not the excuses and the could-have-beens.

3 Lez Pearson

Crescent Worx Suzuki BSB crew chief

I've had so much advice over the years that it's really hard to single out just one, really. Colin Wright was always pretty much on the ball and one of his favourites was to "keep it simple," which is about the best bit of advice anyone involved in racing can take on board.

Keeping it simple to my mind is a case of concentrating on what you need to win. You're never going to have a perfect bike but if you can keep it simple by focussing on the biggest issue, then you're in with a chance. When Shakey (Byrne) rode the GSX-R at Mallory he struggled

"keep it simple," is about the best bit of advice anyone involved in racing can take on board."

for grip so we made small changes and he won next time out at Knockhill. All we did was move the engine 5mm higher in the chassis.

At Rockingham in 2003 John (Reynolds) had the best engine we'd built that year poking out around 203bhp. I'd been to Rockingham before though and knew that huge horsepower would only cause problems – so I built Yukio Kagayama's engine a little differently, much softer and tuned to just 185bhp. He won both races from twelfth on the grid having never seen the place. By contrast John was spinning up everywhere and struggling.

4 Dave Coates

Stunt rider and world record holder

Way back in the 1980s when I started out I was told to use the back brake to get more control over wheelies. Of course, it's common practice now but back then no-one was really doing it or understood it.

I started to learn how it worked and once I'd got the hang of it, I was able to master the trick of smashing rear lights and breaking number >

5 Darren Wnukoski

Former British supersport racer, now runs MCT Suspension

I was on one of Keith Code's Superbike Schools about ten years ago at Cadwell Park when he asked me about my preparations for a race.

I told him that I always walked the track. When he asked me why, I said that I was checking for any lumps and bumps or surface changes to avoid. He then asked me why again, which I thought was a bit odd, as I thought it was pretty obvious.

He then explained that you shouldn't look for problems rather you should let them find you. In other words, that piece of dodgy Tarmac or gouge in the track probably won't be a problem and that sacrificing the fastest line to miss it just in case it unsettles the bike is pointless. I took it on board and after 23 years in the trade it's still the best advice I've ever had. It works on the road too – countless times I've seen riders panic and take risks to avoid manhole covers and repair patches when they'd never have been a problem.

"Countless times I've seen riders panic and take risks to avoid manhole covers and repair patches when they'd never have been a problem."



There were a couple of problems that found you with the 2008 ZX-10R

plates – at the time there was hardly anyone doing it so it gave me an edge at some of the big competitions.

Now it's all moved on massively with riders like Christian Pfeiffer and AC Farias but that simple piece of advice back then probably made me look closer at what the others are doing – not just the tricks but how they're controlling the bike to do them in the first place.

I guess the bottom line is to always be open to advice – whatever discipline of motorcycling you're involved in, you can always learn something.

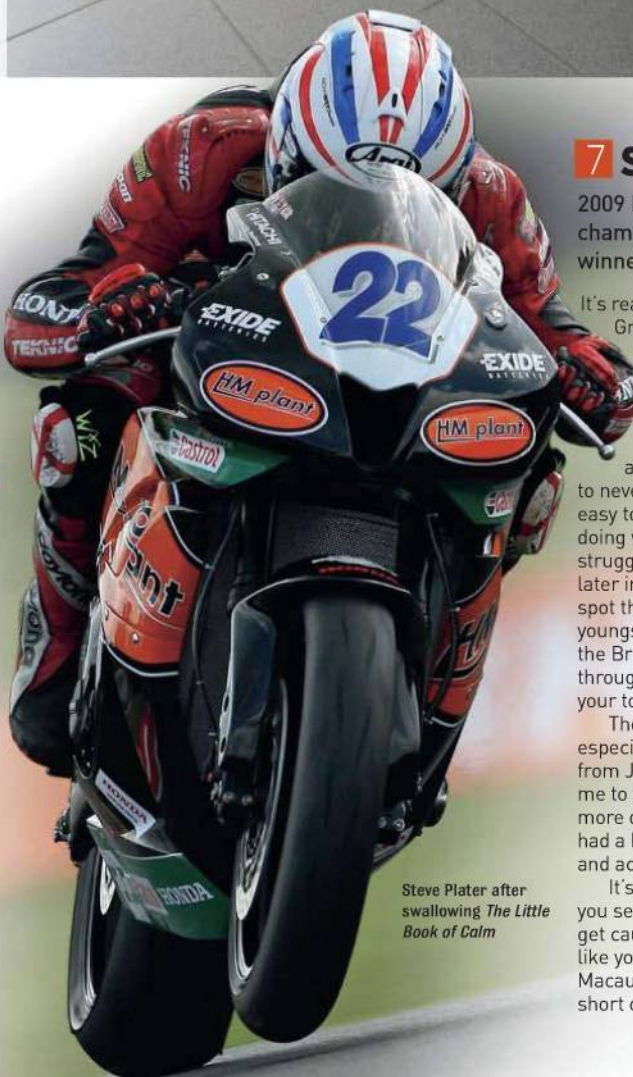
6 Russ Clay

Sales Manager at giant bike dealership, DK Motorcycles

I was always told never to buy a bike until I'd ridden it and a test ride is something that I've made sure we can offer our customers when they're looking to part with their cash.

Over the years I've seen so many people lose money unnecessarily because they've bought a bike that doesn't suit them and are back in the shop within a week wanting to trade it in. Whether it's an experienced rider disappointed with let's say a ZX-10R and wishing he'd bought a GSX-R1000 or a born again rider buying a 1,000cc sports bike just because he had a GS1100 back in 1984 and thinks that anything less than 1,000cc will be useless, in either case a test ride could have saved them a lot of money and hassle.

In a nutshell, if you're buying a bike and the seller won't let you try it first, just walk away and find someone else who will – it's a buyer's market so you might as well exploit it.



Steve Plater after swallowing *The Little Book of Calm*

7 Steve Plater

2009 British Supersport champion. NW200 and Senior TT winner

It's really hard to pick just one – Mick Grant has been my mentor since I started racing and has given me so much advice over the years that choosing one in particular isn't easy.

I guess the bit of advice I always keep in mind though is to never underestimate anybody. It's easy to get fixated on one person that's doing well, write-off someone that's struggling but could prove strong later in the season or simply fail to spot the threat from an up and coming youngster – there's a depth of talent in the British championships all the way through the field so it keeps you on your toes.

The other thing that's helped, especially with the road racing, came from John McGuinness who advised me to try and be calmer and to relax more on the bike. When McGuinness had a big lead last year he rolled off and actually put in his fastest ever lap!

It's easier to do that at the TT where you set off at intervals as you don't get caught up in a one-on-one scrap like you would at the North West or in Macau, but to a degree, even with the short circuits it rings very true. >



8 Dave Knight

Multiple British and twice world enduro champion

It's hard to say, but it would have to be my father pushing me to take the plunge and go professional. It sounds like a no-brainer, but I was pretty happy working away as a car mechanic, earning a couple of hundred quid a week and going riding at the weekends.

It took a while for me to have the faith in myself that I could make a living as a professional rider – I knew a few people that had made the jump and rather than earning money they ended up in debt. I didn't want that to happen, so was a bit nervous about it. I'm pretty glad I did now though and my dad was dead right – there are more opportunities to go and work in a garage than there are to make a living as a professional rider.

The only other thing that sticks out is what Hizzy (the late Steve Hislop) said to me in the pub one night about the world of racing being full of bullshitters and that there are plenty of folk that want to take your money off you – he was dead right about that too!

“Steve Hislop said to me in the pub one night that the world of racing was full of bullshitters. He was dead right.”

9 Frank Wrathall

Engine tuner and boss at Dynojet UK

Two pieces of advice have really stuck with me over the years. The first came from an engine tuner called Roger Keen. He was a bit of a legend when it came to tuning and building engines, particularly two-strokes and just about everyone that could afford to use him did, including the likes of (Steve) Parrish and (Barry) Sheene with their Suzukis.

He used to tune my bikes until I started to do them myself and when I went into business as a tuner, I always remembered him saying that regardless of how small a job is or who it's for, do it to the very best of your ability and you really can't go too far wrong.

The other bit of advice also came about when I started up in business and came from my bank manager. I'd just packed up racing and had sold everything so had a few quid to set myself up. When I went to him his advice was straightforward and brilliant in its simplicity.

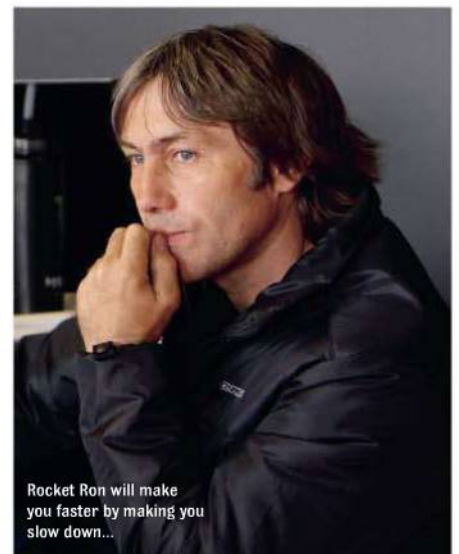
“Unless you want to be a shopkeeper, stick to what you know.” I listened to him and to this day I'm very glad that I did.

10 Ron Haslam

Legendary former GP racer and race school guru

No question to my mind, the best piece of advice I ever got was at the Race of the Year at Mallory Park in 1975. Barry Sheene came up to me after first practice and said that I looked to be going well but reckoned if I slowed down a bit I'd go much faster. At the time I thought I knew better and that he was only saying it because I was the young up and coming rider at the meeting and he was just rattled because he was getting pushed for once.

As it turned out, he was dead right and even if he was rattled – which I don't think he was as he won the race anyway – he was still sporting enough to hand out some of the best racing advice you'll ever hear to one of his newest



Rocket Ron will make you faster by making you slow down...



11 Lester Harris

The older (and wiser?) half of Harris Performance

'Never make an assumption' is something I learned fairly early on in my career as an engineer. I'll probably sound like an old fart now, but when I was at college it was drilled into us to double-check everything and never assume anything is right. The old teachers used to love it when we were a thousandth of an inch out as it meant they could grin at us, tell us it was useless and that we'd better try again.

I try to instill a bit of that in my staff and make them realise that it's better to take a bit longer to produce something that's spot-on rather than near enough – the modern work ethic seems to be quantity over quality and I try my best to keep the scales tipped a little more towards quality.

Business-wise, something I learned from an article on John Lewis' stores often springs to mind. They're renowned for their no quibble attitude to customer service based on the statistic that out of 100 complaints, 15 will be genuine. So, even if you think the customer might be trying it on, there's little point in arguing the toss. I think we've lasted so well through sticking to these two very basic things – making sure we do the job as well as we can in the first place and providing good customer service on the odd occasion we get things wrong.



Kevin Schwantz loved the Harris Customer Care line, because they play 'Greensleeves' while you wait

rivals. It took me a while, but I took what he said on board and at the next few meetings I was slower in the early sessions but always built up to a decent pace, started riding much more in control and with that, I went much, much faster.

When I'm teaching on our track school it's something that's now so obvious to me watching other riders make the same mistakes that I did, but it's not always the easiest thing to instill in a young rider – I mean, what racer wants to be told to slow down?

“Barry Sheene came up to me after first practice and said that I looked to be going well but reckoned if I slowed down a bit I'd go much faster.”

12 Cal Crutchlow

2006 British and 2009 World Supersport Champion

My never say die attitude to my racing has been mentioned in the press a fair bit lately and I'd have to say that definitely comes from my days playing football.

I almost turned professional; first with Coventry City and then with Aston Villa before choosing motorbikes, but it was one of my old Sunday League managers that gave me my best advice. I can't remember his name now but he was a proper 'Ron Manager' type. He was always telling me that a centre forward should never give up even if he thinks it's a lost cause and to keep running for the ball as that's the way you nick goals and grind out results.

I've taken that attitude with me to bike racing and it's paying dividends.

At Assen I fluffed the start, almost ran over Andrew Pitt, fired myself out of the seat and got run down the escape road by my team-mate

Fabien Foret. But I kept plugging away and made back four seconds in the last six laps to only lose out to Eugene (Laverty) by half a bike's length. Donington was similar. I just didn't give up after beating myself up in practice and went on to take the win.

I guess it's the same for anyone at the top of their game; it's all about determination and perseverance.

13 Colin Wright

The most successful manager in the history of BSB

My old man (Alec) has given me lots of great advice over the years. They're not necessarily to do with racing or motorbikes really, just advice on life that's stood me in pretty good stead as the manager of a race team.

The first piece of advice that I've always lived by is that it's often not what's said that causes problems, rather the things that aren't.

People often think I'm confrontational and a



PEARLS OF WISDOM



14 Dougie Lampkin

12 times World Trials Champion

I think when I was younger I probably thought I knew it all like most teenagers. But there was one piece of advice that really sticks out and that was that you only get out what you put in and if you give one hundred percent then you get one hundred percent out.

The main point my dad (Martin, a former world champion), hammered home was that even when you think you're giving 100 per cent you can always give a bit more. I'd never beaten Graham (Jarvis) all the way through the youth ranks and then when I went to the adult ranks, I pushed harder and realised what I had to do to achieve what I wanted to. I'd played golf all through school and could have maybe had a career there, but decided to put all my efforts into the trials riding.

My dad sent me out to work on the roads for six months on three pounds per hour to learn the value of money and what real work is. I didn't like that very much so I put in more effort and practiced more. It was only then, when I realised that it was possible to try even harder than I thought I already was, that I started winning British and World championships.

"My dad sent me out to work on the roads for six months on three pounds an hour to learn the value of money and what real work is."

bit of an argumentative shit, but what I've found is that it's better to be direct and say something that might cause bad feeling or embarrassment in the short term but resolve problems in the longer term.

In the past there have been minor situations in the team that could have festered and turned into bigger problems but nipping them in the bud by being pretty blunt and to the point has always worked for me and is probably one of the reasons why we've always had good working relationships within the team.

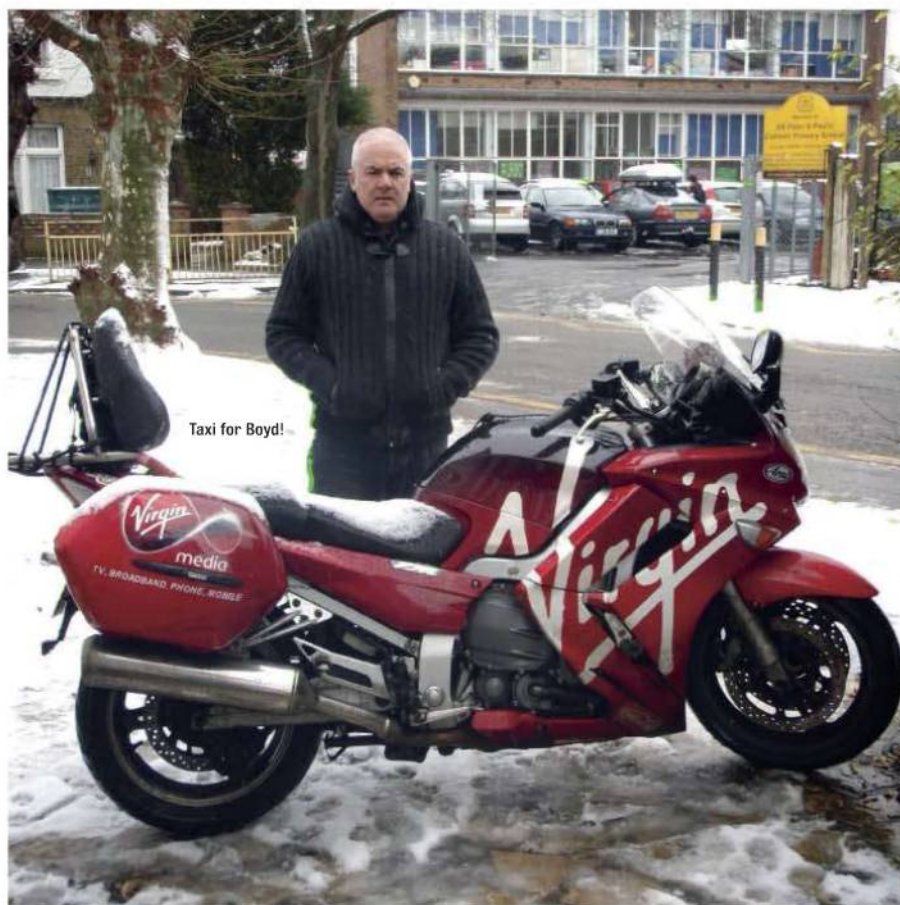
The only other thing I try to live my life by is to be honest. If you're going to be a liar you need to have a very good memory, so it's far easier to be honest. Of course, not everyone wants to hear the truth but in my experience it's the easiest way to get the job done.

15 Rhys Boyd

Former dispatcher turned racer and Virgin Limobike rider

I'd have say the piece of advice that I tend to bear in mind on a day-to-day basis is 'save it for the racetrack'. I'm riding around London all day, quite often with celebrity passengers on the back so I have to be disciplined and ride well within myself. There's always some nobby that wants to take chances but on the roads you just can't do it. Boys will be boys and when some scrote on a commuter bike comes tearing past, bouncing off wing mirrors and carving everyone up, I often have to stop myself from responding.

My other favourite piece of advice is that if you want your dreams to come true, first you've got to wake up. Never a truer word spoken! **58**



Taxi for Boyd!



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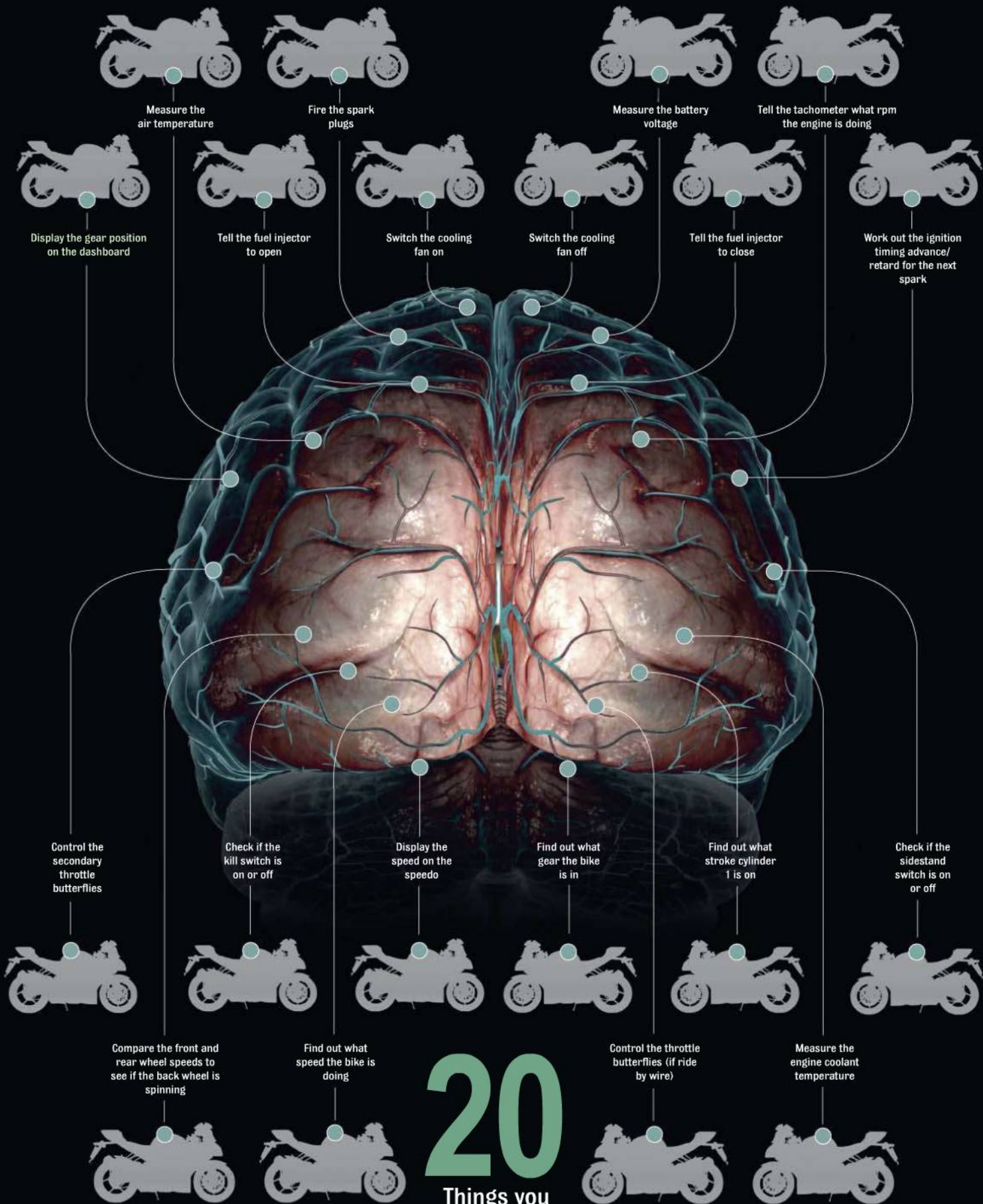
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20

Things you can expect an ECU to do for your bike

DISENGAGE BRAIN?

As bikes continue to get smarter and smarter, our ability to fit things like Power Commanders reduces. So, as we'll see with BSB's EVO series this year, it actually becomes easier to replace it completely. Bob takes a look at what you need to know when replacing an ECU

Words: Bob Gray

A couple of months ago I replaced the ECU on my long-term Kawasaki ZX-10R. I didn't 'need' to of course, but when has 'need' every played a part in the things we change on our bikes? A few years ago, replacing a bike's ECU would have been a very extreme thing to do - certainly something left to the likes of Alan and his supercharged B-King. For the rest of us a Power Commander and gear position indicator, or at a push a new dashboard following a crash, were the extent of our electronic subterfuge. But that's beginning to change.

As we begin to see smart bikes being released in showrooms more frequently, our ability to meddle with the bike we own diminishes. In the past, buying a bike, fitting an exhaust pipe and Power Commander was part of the owning process. It made the bike feel unique to us. But try anything more than replacing the end-can on a bike built in the last two years and the amount of flashing lights it triggers on your dashboard is likely to leave you with permanent retinal scarring. Trying to fool the ECU with any form of after-market gizmo therefore is virtual suicide.

That's why we find ourselves in the odd position of considering fitting a whole ECU - and why there's a trickle of increasingly smart and cheap

after-market ECUs being fitted to bikes. So, because they're out there - and to help you avoid having your hat nailed on due to not knowing any better, we thought we'd have a peep at some of the ins and outs of replacing your bike's ECU.

Making the change

In its most basic form on a carburetted bike (probably only off-roaders now) a modern ECU will do two things; control the ignition timing and provide the dashboard

with the information it needs to display. But on most road-going bikes we can add controlling the fuel injection and operating things like exhaust valves, cooling fans and variable length inlet tracts to the mix too. It all sounds pretty daunting at first glance - but because the ECU is already wired to everything by the standard loom, controlling these functions is frequently no more hard than telling an ECU when you want something to happen, rather than how.

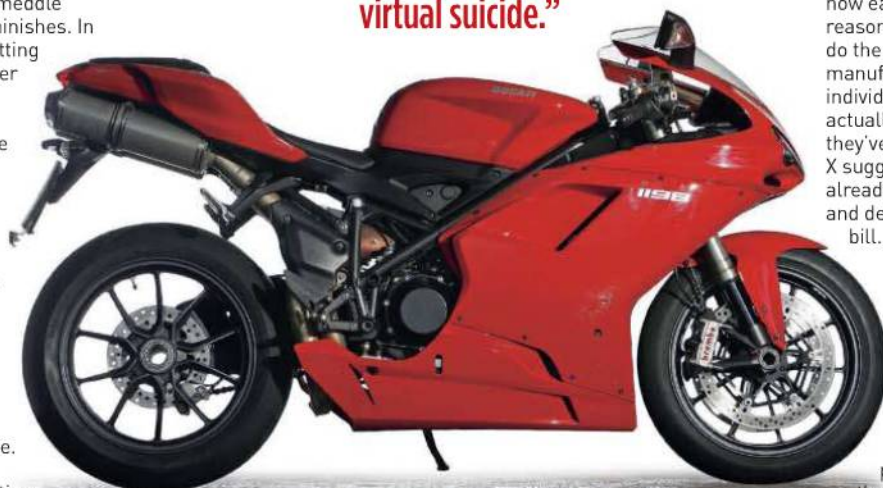
Perhaps the best example of how this can be done will be in BSB's EVO class this year. Getting a grid of 20 bikes running aftermarket ECUs well enough to race suggests the problem isn't insurmountable. In fact the toughest thing for that series will be ensuring the ECU is capable of physically interfacing to all the original features of the bike. As a quick aside this means being able to drive fly-by wire systems and have enough spare connections to operate all the flaps and valves required.

So, if you do ever find yourself considering changing the ECU on your bike (and you'd be surprised how easy it is to come up with reasons to do so), it's important to do the same thing. Luckily, most manufacturers supply ECUs to fit individual bikes, even if they're actually the same unit. The fact they've said it will work with X suggests someone else has already looked at what you need and decided if this model fits the bill. But that's the easy bit.

Fitting

Fitting a new ECU is either very easy or very hard, with little in-between. At the easy end of the scale we find KIT ECUs like I fitted to my ZX-10R. These units are made by the same people who made the bike in the first place (although they're not really meant to find their way onto our road bikes of course), which means they generally >

“Trying to fool the ECU with any form of after-market gizmo is virtual suicide.”



Ducati's 1198. A bike so clever it's been asked to appear on *QI*. It didn't bother though: it thinks Stephen Fry is overrated

FEATURE ECU REPLACEMENT

use the same connectors as the original ECU and can control all the standard functions of the bike, but without flashing a million warning lights at you when things change.

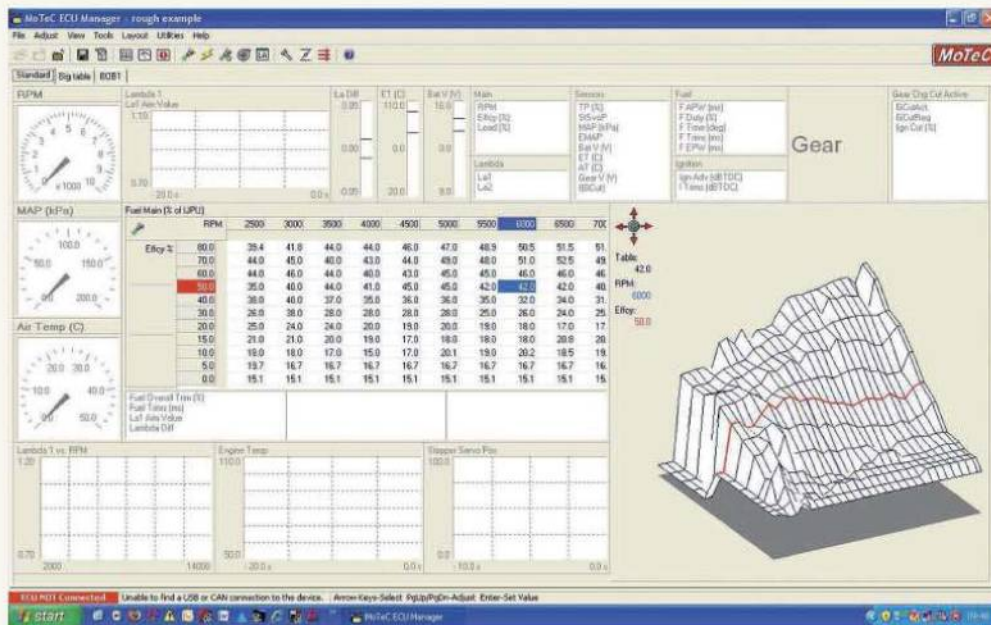
At the opposite end are true after-market replacement ECUs. These generally won't plug straight into a bike's existing loom, and even if the connectors are the same size and shape (which does happen), you should never just plug them in. The reason being that although the plugs are the same shape, the wires going into the connectors almost certainly won't be in the same order and next thing you know you've frazzled the ECU and the bike still won't run.

And that's the main reason why fitting is easy or hard. You either have to change nothing or get a complete or partial wiring loom made - and once you've had a bespoke bit of loom made (which will cost between £500 - £5,000), you've still got to remove the old loom and fit the new one.

Reasons to fit a new ECU, and reasons not to

Why would you want to fit a new ECU? As we said at the beginning meddling with your bike is a way of making it your own. At a basic level this might be something as simple as fitting an end-can for a fruitier sound, but what about the fuelling? If goes too far out of sync the ECU will need remapping to make the bike feel good, and as ECUs get smarter it gets harder to fool them into doing things without them noticing. This is only going to get worse in the next five years.

So the first reason someone might consider fitting a new ECU is to get around the restrictions imposed by the OEM one. But in doing so you're also getting rid of the good bits. All the time and effort spent by teams of engineers getting the bike to run properly in different weather conditions will be lost. As will any traction or anti-wheelie settings the bike may have had. So you're going to have to reconfigure all that yourself (or get



IT'S A SET-UP

Setup is the most common stumbling block for most people and the hardest one to avoid

I've met several people who have bought ex-racer bikes and converted them back to road use (side stepping the need to find and fit a bespoke loom and ECU themselves), who didn't know where to start setting up the ECU. The lucky ones bought from racers or teams who had enough of a conscience to help them by giving them a good workable base map. Others, were given some very basic map that let the bike run but not much else.

Of course with KIT ECUs, all the hard work has been done because you're essentially buying a re-programmable version of the ECU you already use. But other ECUs rarely come with any settings inside because there's no point (they might be fitted to a FireBlade, a touring car or any number of

engines). Instead, you have to tell the ECU how to read the engine it's connected to - something that's easier said than done.

Just recently I had a look at an R1 someone was running. They'd bought the bike and simply wondered if some of the functions were running. As it was, they weren't. But what puzzled me as I looked through the map was how the bike ran at all. At maximum revs and throttle the ignition map had 0° advance in it where you'd expect to see a value of around 40°. At tick over the bike was running -25° advance - which is just ridiculous.

“Telling the ECU how to read the engine it's connected to is easier said than done.”

Of course those weren't the real values. For whatever reason, whoever configured the ECU hadn't set it up properly in the first

place. So the settings that told the ECU where the crankshaft was in its cycle were wrong. It's the equivalent of someone asking you the time, knowing the clock you're looking at is an hour slow. You've read the clock correctly, but the clock's basic set-up was wrong, causing you to say the wrong time.

Essentially, the problem was in reading the trigger on the end of the crank. Take off the cover on your bike and you'll find a multi-toothed wheel (with a couple of teeth missing). Normally



someone else to if you can't pinch the settings from somewhere). While this is interesting to do, it can be costly, which is perhaps the most compelling reason not to change.

Buying a bike that's already been configured to use an aftermarket ECU is one solution, but is fraught with danger. There are many cases of people buying things (often ex-race bikes) that should have worked well on

British Superbike racing bosses are hoping that with the new 'Evo' class, they can cut costs by making teams use a single control ECU. The jury's still out on that one however

paper, but which then turned out to be too complicated for them to get working at all. And, of course, proving that's the case is difficult. A simple rule of thumb in that instance is not to bite off more than you can chew and go for the simplest option. If you're looking to buy a bike which used to have a full-time BSB-level technician looking after it, will you be able to do what's needed to keep it running day to day? Make sure the bike is at least supplied with a base map too.

So it looks like a simple choice at the moment. Either do nothing to your new clever bike because it'll get upset and sulk, or pay over-blown prices and stick to manufacturer approved products

the missing teeth are used to find top dead centre (TDC) of the number 1 cylinder. The point where the piston is at the top of its stroke. If you know where this is you can work out ignition timing (which is relative to TDC) as well as working out where the other cylinders are in their strokes (because you know the firing order and intervals). The ECU knows the tooth after the big gap identifies TDC #1. So all it needs to know as well as that is whether the piston is about to go down on the induction or power strokes, which is why bikes also have a cam position sensor.

Once this has been configured correctly, the engine knows how to run. All you need to do then is give it some basic information about the types of injector and ignition system used and then fill in the gaps for the rest of the maps like those below.

► Main fuel table

This table is normally plotted over throttle position (load) and RPM and controls the basic amount time the fuel injector will open. For example, increasing the number found at [10,000,100] will increase the amount of time (and therefore quantity) of fuel injected at full throttle and 10,000rpm. If the bike was already too rich at this point (checked with a lambda sensor) you reduce the number slightly.

► Main Ignition table

Works in the same way as the fuel table. The ECU uses this table of numbers to look up how much ignition advance (or retard if you enter a negative number), to use depending on throttle position and engine RPM

► Air Temperature

The hotter the air gets the less fuel an engine needs to run correctly (because the air is less dense) and the less advance is required before detonation occurs. For that reason there is normally a fuel and ignition lookup table used to correct for air temperature. A common problem on race bikes is heat soak into the air temperature sensor. As the bike sits idling, heat from

the engine rises and warms up the air temp sensor. The ECU sees the air temp rising and leans out the engine and retards the ignition. On the dyno this is even worse and it's not unusual to occasionally see air temperatures of 50°C+.

► Engine Temperature

To start carburetted bikes from cold you use the choke, which puts extra fuel into the engine helping it to start, continue to run and warm up. On fuel injected bikes (which don't have a choke), the ECU puts in extra fuel based on engine temperature. As the temperature rises it gradually reduces the fuel until a normal amount is going in. It's not unusual to start putting in extra fuel if the temperature goes above normal as this helps in some small way to cool the engine.

► Battery voltage

When battery voltage drops things happen more slowly. Think of the Duracell bunny advert: when the cheap batteries run down, the bunnies slow down. The same is true on your bike, so, because the ECU generally does things for a certain amount of time (opening injectors and charging the coils), there will be an offset table for battery

voltage too. Generally the lower the voltage the longer the ECU does things for.

► Throttle position

Fuel injected bikes have one or two sensors on the end of the throttle bodies connected to the primary and secondary (where fitted) plates. These are used to work out how open or closed each plate is, but all the sensor can actually do is give a voltage. So it gives a small voltage when the throttle is shut and a large one when open. By telling the ECU 'this voltage' means this and 'that voltage' means that, it can work out what you want to do.

► Gear position

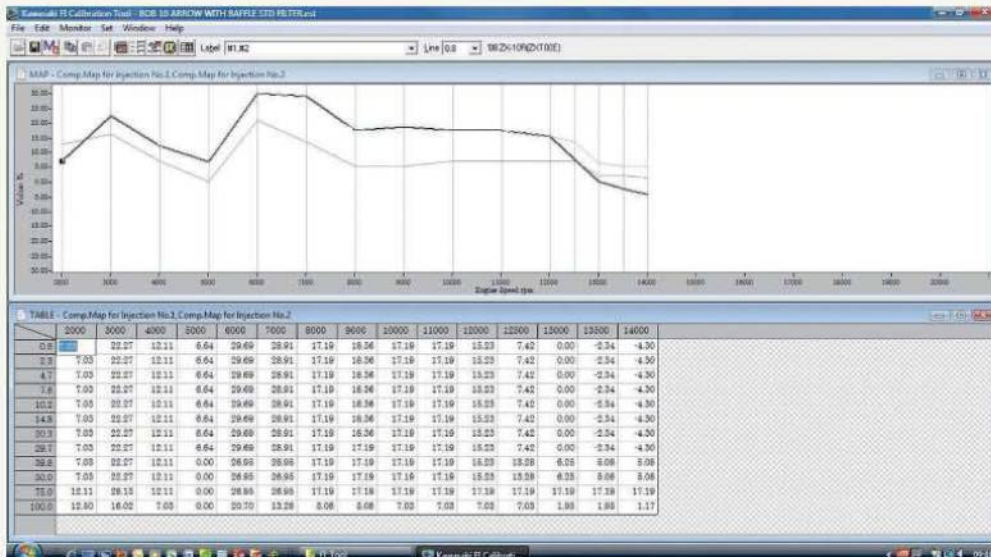
Like the throttle, a sensor on the end of the gear selector barrel gives a certain voltage depending on what gear the bike is in. Tell the ECU what voltage equals what gear and the ECU can then choose to use different look-up maps depending on what gear you're in. Modern road bikes do this now and even change the rev-limiter based on gear.

► Wheel circumferences

Not essential to run the engine, but essential for traction purposes and speedo calibration. Because there is normally a sensor looking at the bolts on the front or rear wheel we need to tell it how many bolts there are per wheel revolution and how far the bike will have moved in one revolution. That way the bike can work out how fast each wheel is turning and therefore calculate speed. When you press a pit-lane speed limiter button, the ECU just limits the engine until the speeds drops below a certain threshold. If you change something on the bike (like the number of bolts in the wheel or the tyre) you have to tell the ECU and correct the settings otherwise its calculations will be off.

► Slip tables

Used for basic traction functionality. There will generally be a table of numbers allowing you to set a slip threshold based on bike speed and throttle position. If the ECU sees more that the slip threshold you enter it starts to limit the amount of power going to the rear wheel. Because of the fact tyres travel a different distance per revolution based on load (and this is how the ECU calculates speed), you'll often see slip values of up to seven per cent even when there is no actual spin. As such, slip values of around 10 percent and above are normal.



The screen grabs above and on the opposite page show the difference between KIT ECU software (above) and aftermarket stuff (opposite). With KIT software you're generally making changes to what the ECU already knows (like a Power Commander). The MoTeC software opposite shows rough fuel map that has been made from scratch. When the bike is running with a laptop attached, some values become live and change in real time. Although they look complicated, each table controls only one or two things. So you just have to work through them.



that will have been engineered to work but don't make for an individualistic bike.

There is light at the end of the tunnel. In the same way that Power Commanders didn't exist before there was need there are certainly people out there now working on smarter ways to hoodwink clever ECUs. Although that will almost certainly be more of a warranty breaker than before,

and chances are the ECU will collect evidence to use against you too, it does mean the whole after-market industry might survive. As it is, anything we can do as riders now to increase our understanding of how these systems work is going to see us right in the future. After all, you need to know what the rules are before you can bend them effectively. **57**

Soft where?

If you've got a Windows PC and want to have a look around some ECU software, Motec's site is pretty good and you can download the full version of their software for free, which includes a blank start file. Go to the downloads section (<http://www.motec.com.au/software/latestreleases/>) and get the ECU Manager.

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WHICH KIT TO CRASH IN

Crashing, alas, will never be like landing on feathers. Good protective kit can make a big difference though. Irish race doctor John Hinds has attended plenty of bike crashes over the years, so we asked his advice on what he reckoned worked best. And what didn't.

Words: Dr. John Hinds Pics: Graeme Brown, 2Snap, Mick O'Neil, Derek Clegg, Stephen Davison

Statistically, the chance of a UK rider, doing an average number of miles throughout his motorcycling lifetime, is 100 per cent likely to be killed or seriously injured. A recent unscientific pub-poll reveals that no-one I know has not crashed, although my group of mates is – to be fair – a bit top heavy on road racers and general reprobates. I'd be willing to bet a fair proportion of *SuperBike's* readership has nursed a broken bone or two in their time.

In fact, to add extra credibility to this piece, I'm typing it with my leg propped up on the desk following an unfortunate cartwheeling incident on a GSX-R1000, and yet another trip

to the wrong side of my own operating theatre. My personal plates-and-screws count now stands at three and seventeen respectively.

On a professional basis, I've seen my fair share of motorcycle trauma – working with the Motorcycle Union of Ireland (MCUI) medical team we've been involved in Irish Superbikes, Irish clubman's racing, British Superbikes, national supermoto racing, and national and international motocross events. My day job in anaesthetics and intensive care means I work in the regional trauma centre and neurocritical care unit, so the most severe incidents come my way. Pre-hospital work with the British Association of Immediate Care also sees me

roadside assisting with the ambulance service on occasion.

But the environment in which I see safety equipment tested to the extreme is in the arena of road racing. Speeds are on par with any short circuit in the world, over 200 mph in places, on roads tight enough to have riders brushing hedgerows and walls rather than clipping apexes. Despite huge advances in safety over the years, run-off in the event of incidents is still, on occasion, zero.

SuperBike asked me to provide some personal insight into what does – and doesn't – work in what I've seen over the years. That's exactly what is presented here. >



WHAT KIT TO CRASH IN

Doc John Hinds

Hinds' job is working as an anaesthetist and specialist in intensive care in the regional intensive care and trauma unit in Northern Ireland, but his weekend work is with the Motorcycle Union of Ireland (MCUI) Medical Team

This takes me to all aspects of two-wheeled motorsports – Irish superbikes, clubmans racing, supermoto, motocross and even British Superbikes when they come to visit. The most fun is to be had at road racing events though – here I get to work as a Travelling doctor.

The role of Travelling doctor is unique in Ireland, where the longer closed road circuits are too long to be covered by ground crews, chase cars are too slow and obstructive, but still too short for a helicopter to be useful. The role of Travelling doctor has evolved over the years – we are currently a three-man band of rapid response riders, carrying enough equipment to resuscitate and begin treatment on a critically injured rider. Help is always a radio call away in the form of our many back-up cars, all staffed by expert doctors and paramedics. We can chase the warm-up, opening and final laps of each race, ready and close behind should the worst happen – if things go well, it's the best seat in the house!

I've always been a fan of the racing. With the progression from fan to medical student to qualified doctor I found myself in the position to give something back to the sport I love. I approached the team as a young student, and once I qualified, spent a probational year learning the ropes – as you can imagine, things are quite different and raw in a rainy hedgerow compared to the operating room or emergency department.

We have to be fairly competent motorcyclists as well as doctors, so we regularly get tuition from race schools with the like of ex-international road race champion Woolsey Coulter, and on-road training with the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I also teach a bit too, with the MCUI race instructors at the New License Holders days held at the start of each season.

This year I have retired my trusty (long suffering) 2007 CBR1000RR and plan to run a GSXR1000 K9 – we buy and run our own bikes at the races. As you can imagine, it's a pretty hard life for them.

Also lurking in the back of the garage is my KTM520 Supermoto race bike, and a SX125 motocrosser for a bit of winter fun.



Hinds (left) and the team at work



Examining a helmet for damage to help to pick out the 'mechanism of injury'. The helmet should stay with the rider until they arrive in hospital



HELMETS

"If you have a £5 head, buy a £5 helmet", as the old saying goes. It's a cliché, but for the most part, its true. There are no 'bad' expensive brands on the market at the minute, something which wasn't always the case

Head injuries suffered by motorcyclists are a leading cause of death and disability, and are proportionately more severe than those sustained from other road traffic or sporting accidents. The specific types of brain injuries following motorcycle accidents tend to have prolonged consequences and often incomplete recoveries. Your helmet is important.

Helmets do more to protect us than any other piece of kit – they reduce the incidence of death and head injury, reduce hospitalisation, and reduce the chance of Intensive care admission. The overall head injury reduction risk is about 72 per cent; well worth a few hundred quid invested in a good lid. It's worth noting though that you have to invest to get the benefit, or you might as well not bother. If you study outcomes in countries without 'type approval' laws (BS 6658:1985 and ECE 22.05), riders with non-type approved helmets actually sustain head injuries more frequently, and of greater severity, than those riders who crash with no helmet on at all!

Cheap and heavy helmets are a bad investment – not only are they less effective at dissipating the force of an impact, the extra weight of a heavier lid on your head has to pivot somewhere, and this puts additional strain on the cervical spine, increasing the likelihood of a neck injury.

Good helmets look awful after a decent crash. But then, that is the point. A helmet is essentially a big crumple-zone with an inner safety cell, much like modern cars. If it has had a good impact, it should look like a mess, as the forces have been dissipated over a wide area of the helmet's shell. The top of the range Arai, Shoei and Shark race lids in particular look appalling after they have done their job correctly. Conversely, I have seen several 'budget' lids belonging to severely head injured riders with scratches that would buff out.

We always transport a rider's helmet into hospital with them – it serves as a useful guide to where the impact occurred; but they are a poor indicator to how severe the head injury



Years back, it was occasionally the case that the lining could come loose in a big impact – and a helmet is only useful if it's still on your head



BACK PROTECTORS

A good quality back protector is a must

Your chance of suffering a thoracic spine (upper back) injury is around six per cent in an accident on the open road – our rates on the road racing scene are much, much lower than this. A big part of this reduction is due to the fact that every road racer wears a good quality back protector.

If you are buying, the strap-on versions are the better options as we find they move less in a crash than those which are fitted into the lining of race suits, so they are much more effective.

Chest protectors are a relatively new concept along a similar vein – they seem like a good idea, but we haven't really seen them in action enough to make an educated judgment on whether they are useful or not.

One final note on back protectors – there have been internet scare stories about the possibility of them causing neck injuries. This is a load of rubbish. In the last 25 years no-one on our team has ever seen this happen, nor has any expert in motorcycle trauma I have ever spoken to. We have, however, seen back protectors save countless riders from severe spinal injuries.

Buy one today if you haven't already. And if you have got one, make sure you wear it. >

“We’ve seen back protectors save countless riders from severe spinal injuries.”

If you want to know how good a modern, well fitting helmet is – try slamming into a stone wall with your head. In fact, don't. Supersport road racer James McCann has already done it for you. Notice the rider up on his feet in the last shot. Photo sequence 1-5: Mick O'Neill, Monpics. Photo 6: Derek Clegg, irishbikercing.com

is – a smashed and dented helmet is often a good thing.

One note on chinbars – in my experience a disproportionate number of incidents involving disruption of the helmet chinbar results in the rider being critically injured, since we find the rider almost invariably has a compromised airway as a result. This fact alone means I do not recommend the SHARP ratings as a guide to riders choosing a helmet for going racing. [SHARP has given high ratings to open face lids with no chinbar – Ed.]

“If it has had a good impact, it should look like a mess, as the forces have been dissipated nicely over a wide area of the helmet’s shell.”

Another crucial aspect of a good helmet is its ability to stay on your head. Sounds stupid, but in the bad old days we'd occasionally see a helmet come off completely when the lining was torn out in a big impact. The danger still exists if you are riding in a helmet too big, or with worn lining, or a 'seat-belt' fastener. Although they are convenient there is a real risk that a tap in the wrong place on a seatbelt fastener can unlock it and see you sliding up the road with your hair blowing in the breeze. Not good.

in the wrong place on a seatbelt fastener can unlock it and see you sliding up the road with your hair blowing in the breeze. Not good.



Take it off or leave it on?

Any good first aid course will teach you how to take a helmet off – it is a safe thing to do in experienced hands, and potentially lifesaving in the unconscious rider. We as a group safely remove about 200 helmets a year – a total of over 5000 helmets removed over the years, many in unconscious riders and plenty with spinal injuries. In the unconscious rider with an unprotected airway, it must be done. Every rider should learn this skill.



WHAT KIT
TO CRASH IN

LEATHERS

Despite the astronomical advances in synthetic materials, the best option for protection is still to wrap ourselves in a generous amount of dead animal hide. Leather is still the best.

Having said that, not all leathers are equal. The kangaroo versus cow debate continues. Although kangaroo is lighter and has potentially better abrasion resistance, I can't honestly say I've seen any definite benefit on the road racing scene.

In fact, one of the best performing leathers about until a few years back were made by Celtic. Simple, unembellished, and so heavy you had to be careful what kind of hanger you stored them on. No kangaroo, no titanium, no speed hump or ray-skin; but consistently excellent. In recent years, the mantle for 'racers favourite' seems to have been taken up by Scott – another British company still using thick, old-fashioned cow for their suits.

The difficulty with elaborate embellishments is that although they perform well in the predictable environment of the race track, once you take them on the roads this isn't always the case. Circuit suits tend to cater for predictable crashing – the same impact areas tend to be involved, and once the initial impact is over; the rest of the accident tends to consist of a lot of sliding!

The predictable areas of impact can be catered for – shoulder tips and elbows, forearms and knees; pretty much anything that 'sticks out.' Armour has come on leaps and bounds; my preference is for 'fully soft' armour, since some of the older 'hard armour' was a bit too hard for my liking, and tended to transmit a fair amount of force. Modern hard armour performs well though

and no longer has this disadvantage, but old habits die hard and most road racers seem to like the softer stuff. Soft armour has the advantage of still working well even if it is pulled slightly out of line, which can happen in a big accident, particularly if the suit is slightly too large – we have seen incidents of hard armour rotating with a long slide, or a rider clipping a kerb; and subsequently acting as a 'force transmitter.' This is typically seen in shoulder armour – a long slide with the arm by the riders side, or a high-side onto the shoulder tip, is sometimes enough to displace the hard armour so that it is no longer in an useful protective position. The hard edge then does damage if it takes a second hit in the same incident. An unusual incident on a short circuit, but one we see not infrequently on the road racing scene where speeds are higher and there is more roadside furniture to hit even, after the initial impact is over.

Similarly, embellishments have been creeping onto modern racing suits, like titanium elbow and shoulder sliders, ray-skin patches and other devices designed to allow predictable sliding and avoid vulnerable sticky-out bits like arms and legs (technical medical

term there) from catching and gripping on the road surface. These are very effective when there is room to slide; but on the roads we haven't seen any big advantage to them as yet – but certainly no disadvantages.

“Some of the older ‘hard armour’ was a bit too hard for my liking, and tended to transmit a fair amount of force.”



Should you cut leathers off?

The answer is an emphatic **“No!”** at the side of the track. Leathers are good at preventing injuries, they are also excellent at containing them. A fractured pelvis can hold most of a rider's blood volume, and a fractured femur up to or over a litre of blood on either side; so either injury is potentially life threatening. Leathers – if they fit well – are excellent at preventing fracture displacement and hence minimise bleeding. Leaving leathers on when a rider has broken a pelvis or a multiple lower leg fracture is essential. We have seen a rider go from awake and talking to a full blown cardiac arrest after his leathers were cut off, unmasking and unsplinting his broken pelvis.

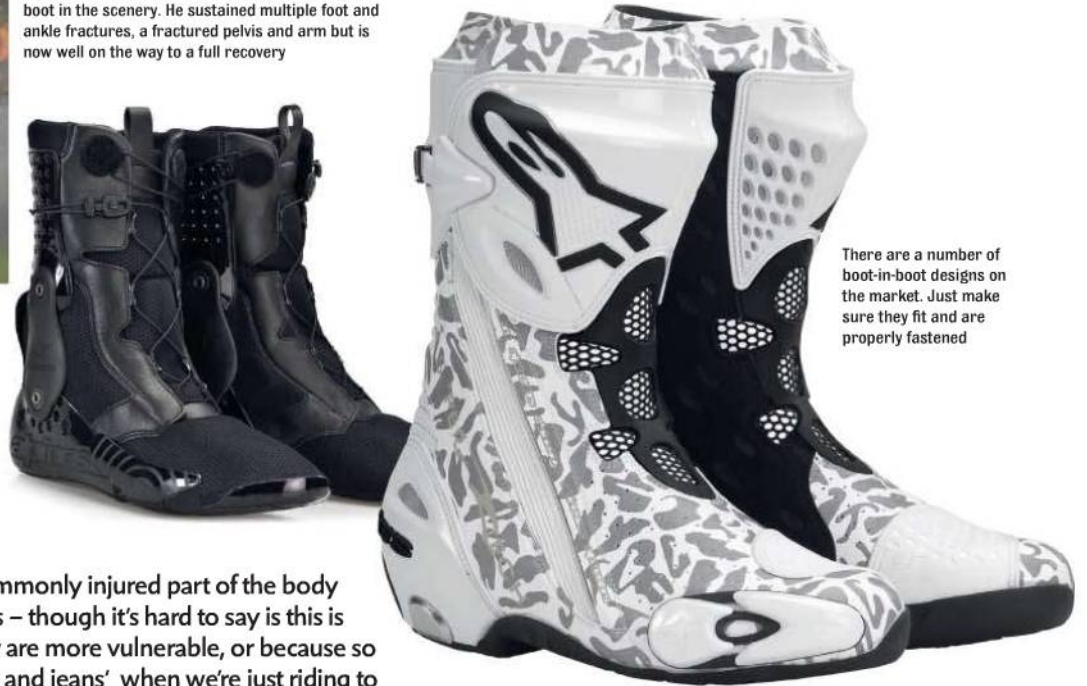


Titanium elbow sliders help a rider to slide along rather than 'catch' and cartwheel in a crash





Herbie Ronan has an off at Tandragee, loosing his boot in the scenery. He sustained multiple foot and ankle fractures, a fractured pelvis and arm but is now well on the way to a full recovery



There are a number of boot-in-boot designs on the market. Just make sure they fit and are properly fastened

BOOTS

The lower limbs are the most commonly injured part of the body in all types of motorcycle crashes – though it’s hard to say if this is cause or effect. Is it because they are more vulnerable, or because so many are happy to ride in ‘jacket and jeans’ when we’re just riding to the shops?

On the roads, we still see a lot of lower limb trauma despite full leathers, and without oncoming traffic – femurs and feet most commonly bear the brunt in crashes.

There’s a lot of fancy looking boots on the market, some gimmicky, some with real benefits to be had. One issue we have had in recent years is boots coming off in particularly big accidents – this has happened in road racing on four occasions in the last few years, but is virtually unheard of on short circuits.

The boots affected have had two things in common - all have been a ‘boot-in-boot’ design, and most have featured external strapping or fasteners. Now, I’m a fan of boot-in-boot designs, but it is essential that they fit well and are done up appropriately; as they do seem to have a tendency of the outer boot separating if the foot is caught up in roadside furniture

(generally a hedgerow) or if the rider puts a foot down at speed on losing control.

Outer fasteners are problematic for similar reasons – they work well on circuits, but run the

“Boots coming off in particularly big accidents has happened in road racing on four occasions in the last few years, but is virtually unheard of on short circuits.”

very real risk of the clasp or fitting being popped open if the foot is in contact with roadside furniture. Riding in Doc Martens and similar on the road is also quite a compromise – a lace will wear through instantly with road friction, and that’s all keeping the boot on your foot.

I’d suggest buying boots with a good, covered zipper as it’s primary fastener – it is less failure prone in an incident where the foot is caught up. You should also always look for a snug fitting boot-in-boot design as, for me, it allows maximum comfort and safety; but *always* make sure they fit perfectly and are always done up correctly.

Not unsurprisingly, those incidents where boots have come off have all resulted in serious, multiple fractures and – on one occasion – complete amputation. Money spent wisely on good boots is a must. >

WHAT KIT TO CRASH IN HUMPS

One big issue with race suit design is the proliferation of speed humps – these things have been causing race medical teams major headaches.

Firstly, to clear up a common misconception – these things do not, and have never, act as a piece of safety equipment. They are designed as an aerodynamic aid, and in recent years have occasionally housed telemetry, drinks and the like; but they are not a piece of armour. Quite the opposite in fact.

There are many within racing who believe humps add to injuries, and in fact there have been discussions within the higher echelons of the FIM of actually banning them altogether. The problem lies in the way they act on the spine – cervical (neck) and thoracic (upper back) in particular.


We have seen them possibly contribute to extension injuries, particularly at the lower portion of the neck and the middle of the back, where the end hump ends. This is especially true where the rider lands back first from a highside, or hits a piece of scenery back-on. Think of it a bit like crashing a car with the headrests removed – the neck hyperextends over the back of the seat in the same way as the neck hyperextends over the back of a hump, even with the added depth of a helmet on the head. We know that taking the head rest out of a car seat causes a 43 per cent increased risk of neck injury – could using a speed hump have a similar detrimental effect? The jury is still out.

Another complication we've seen is the hump clipping a kerb (kerbs again – a big problem in terms of injuries...) At a national road race last year, we had a rider slide into a kerb head first – his hump caught, and tore the entire back out of his suit in the process. The abrasive resistant properties of the underlying combination of back hair and Y-fronts was, sadly, sub-optimal...

Certainly speed humps are a major pain in the ass when it comes to stabilizing a rider with a neck injury – what do you do with the hump? Lie on your back with your humped leathers and see how your head hangs, and then ask yourself if that would be a good thing if your neck was broken – you'll see what I mean.

Some stretchers are available with a portion removed, to allow a rider to lie with the hump sticking through – but this leaves that portion of the spine unsupported, which is far from ideal. Regular ambulances don't carry these anyway.

We take a more pragmatic approach – everyone with a suspected neck injury on the road racing scene gets a scalpel run around the hump, and off it comes. I actually have a pile of the bloody things lying in the corner of my office!

Hopefully manufacturers will address this in the future – on our advice, some racers are having zippers fitted to the outer leather over the hump to allow us to pop them out without having to cut them, or velcroing the hump on like a giant knee slider. Water or air filled humps which would allow medical teams to deflate them with a stab would also be a good option in the future. One for Dragons Den perhaps... 

“Lie on your back in your humped leathers and see how your head hangs, then ask yourself if that would be a good thing if your neck was broken.”



Cameron Donald goes down on the superbike at Faugheen; but the bikes decided it wanted another go at him. Look at the forces in play at the bottom of the hump, and the subsequent fracture he sustained.

Pics: Stephen Davison, Pacemaker



Dealing with a hump in a potential neck injury. The safest thing is to remove it completely

Summary

There's a lot of protective equipment on the market and you can spend a fortune on it if your pockets are deep enough. Here are things to think about

- A good quality, full face helmet with a D-ring fastener. Make sure it fits.
- A good quality set of leather gloves. Make sure they fit too.
- Cow hide leathers are probably the best option for the road – you don't need all the gimmicks if you can't afford them. Guess what? Make sure they fit well! Baggy is not good.
- Speed humps are potentially a cause of injury, and they make you much more difficult for emergency services to deal with if you do crash. Don't bother.
- Buy a good set of boots – make sure they fit! External fasteners may be a compromise in some accidents. Boot-in-boot designs are excellent, but they perform very badly if they don't fit well or are not done up correctly
- To be extra safe – stay at home, or go buy a nice safe car with airbags and a roll cage

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EVOLUTION NOT REVOLUTION

Some parts of life have changed almost beyond recognition in the past 40 years. But, as *SuperBike* reveals, bikes have undergone remarkably few fundamental leaps in design or technology. So why do today's machines perform so much better?

Words: Alan Dowds

It's generally the case with human achievement that progress happens gradually. Things evolve slowly over a period of time, rather than making a massive step-change overnight. Take cars for example. If the proverbial Martian landed from the fourth dimension and looked at a post-war Austin Seven parked

next to a 2010 Toyota Yaris or other suchlike supermini, he'd likely struggle to spot much fundamental difference. Four wheels, an engine that burned petrol and turned the wheels, another wheel inside to steer it; seats, windows, doors, etc.

There are some genuine revolutions in human activity,

though. Compare how your parents (or grandparents) listened to music. If you showed our Martian a wind-up HMV gramophone and some 78rpm shellac discs, next to a 32GB iPod

Touch, he'd be much less likely to infer that they did the same job in mostly the same way.

But what about bikes? Are they like the car or the iPod? Has there been any really revolutionary change in the 40-odd years since the first superbike, Honda's CB750, appeared on the scene? Or is it simply a case of many small, incremental changes in technology, design and application? >





These late-Nineties Bridgestone tyres were among the first to have multi-compound treads, with softer shoulders and a harder centre line

Tyres

At this point, we tend to speak of 'radial tyres' as the big step forward. But in fact, radial tyres are now about 20 years old, and if you tried to go round a corner on a pair of the first radials (Michelin's A59), you'd likely end up on your ear.

So, while radial construction did make a massive difference to tyre performance, it's fair to say there's been a lot more development since. They can be broadly broken down into a few categories, and the first is undoubtedly computer-aided design. Back in the Seventies, the only way to try out a new idea in tyre design was to physically make the tyre, then put it on a bike. Wondering how a slightly more flexible sidewall will affect the contact-patch shape? Well make up a batch downstairs in the factory, and get out and ride around on them. High-speed cameras and the like allowed some scientific testing, but it was a long, drawn-out process.

Now, however, the massive processing power available in modern computers allows designers to model different tyre constructions mathematically. So before the tyre is even made in prototype form, it's been tested inside the computer first.

Other leaps forward have been made in materials – using silica and other synthetic compounds to improve warm-up and wet-weather grip. In addition, several of the big tyre firms have introduced robotic manufacturing processes which improve consistency and increase production speeds. And that in turn increases our speed.

Pistons are still generally slugs of cast aluminium. But a more clever shape, and innovations like Teflon-coated skirts on this CBR600 piston, reduce friction and allow higher revs. You can't see the better piston rings, but they too are important to performance



Electronic Ignition

It seems barely credible now but, little more than 25 years ago, there were plenty of bikes that used mechanical contact-breaker ignition systems. They had a physical switch on the end of the crankshaft, turned on and off by a cam. When the cam opened the switch, the ignition coil sent a high-voltage spark down the HT cable to the spark plug. It looked like something from the 19th century and needed regular maintenance, although it was an effective setup.

Various refinements on the basic contact-breaker 'points' system evolved. Spark advance to deal with higher engine speeds was catered for by sprung bobweights, which moved in and out due to centripetal force as the crank speed varied. The bobweights were attached to a linkage that advanced and retarded the points cam, giving some control over how far ahead of TDC the spark fired.

None of it was very satisfactory, though, especially at the higher engine speeds bikes were beginning to reach. Multi-cylinder bikes often had more than one set of points (Kawasaki two-stroke triples had three), and fitting all these into the stator on the end of the crankshaft was a manufacturing nightmare only matched by the almighty faff of adjusting the buggers properly.

The saviour came in the Seventies in the form of CDI (capacitor discharge ignition) systems. These used basic



A smaller starter motor isn't going to impress the lads down the pub. But improved magnets and better design allows a heap of changes that make the whole bike smaller and lighter. This is the CBR600F starter motor from 1997, with the 30 per cent smaller '98 one behind.

solid state electronics together with a primitive magnetic sensor system on the crank rotor to work out where the crank was in its cycle, and send a stronger charge to the ignition coils at the right moment. Over the

years, these systems expanded into the fully-integrated engine management units we have today – although modern units are no longer CDI-based but instead reverted to an inductive based set-up.

The difference today is coil in cap technology. Under your tank there are no HT leads because the coils (that generate the high voltage) are built into the spark plug cap. This means no HT leads to service as well as an extremely short (and therefore efficient) path for the voltage to get to the sparkplug.

The processors controlling electronic ECUs have also got faster and can handle bigger numbers with more accuracy, meaning they can do more in a shorter time. Modern ECUs calculate the position and speed of the crankshaft very accurately, and store various 'maps' of

FORK DEVELOPMENTS

From the outside, the forks on even a 1979 Honda CB750 don't look so different from those on a 2010 bike

OK, the new bike has upside-down forks, but the concept of a pair of sliding telescopic tubes inside sliders, with a spring inside each, mounted on pivoting yokes and a wheel bolted between them, is broadly the same.

What has changed is the nature of the hydraulic damping circuits inside. The old forks are truly basic inside, with no more technology than you'd find inside a fire door closing mechanism. They're half-filled with oil, inside which a simple piston slides up and down as the forks move. Holes in the piston provided a cursory damping function, absorbing energy from the moving wheel. No clickers, no shims, just holes the oil was forced through – meaning they didn't handle different speeds of movement well at all. If you set them to give the proper support during braking, they would be unfeasibly hard when you hit a bump.

Bizarre

With such a basic mechanism, it's no wonder the Eighties saw a host of bizarre setups which aimed to produce 'anti-dive' or 'variable damping' effects. Suzuki and Kawasaki both fitted systems that used a solenoid to close off part of the compression damping circuits when the brake light operated. The aim was to improve handling on the brakes, but the effect was to lock up the already rotten suspension, reducing what performance there was to virtually nothing.

By the Nineties, though, manufacturers were beginning to use cartridge-type forks (although they'd been used from the mid-Eighties in competition). The best versions of these had two separate, adjustable damping circuits for compression and rebound, and used sprung shim stacks inside a removable cartridge to control the damping oil flow. Careful development has allowed them to provide superb wheel control, with a wide range of adjustability, without resorting to gimmicks like the anti-dive systems of the Eighties.

Big Piston Forks

The latest technology in mainstream fork design is the so-called 'Big Piston Fork' (BPF) seen on the 2009 GSX-R1000 and Kawasaki ZX-6R. In some ways, this is similar to the old-school Seventies design, since it goes back to a close-fitting piston inside the inner fork tube, moving up and down through the damping oil. But this 'big piston' has a much more complex, shim-based damping system that aims to give the benefits of 'normal' cartridge forks, but with finer control, since larger volumes of oil are moved for smaller fork movements.

The bleeding edge of current road bike front fork technology. Showa's BPF Big Piston Fork seen through an airport X-ray scanner



ignition timing that alter the spark timing to allow for throttle position and gear. Even different maps for different cylinders are possible on some setups.

Stainless exhausts

Back in the Eighties, fitting a new exhaust to your bike wasn't the fashion-led, power-increasing vanity exercise it sometimes seems like today. Rather, fitting a new exhaust to your CB900, GPz550 or GS1000 was essential, since the original one had rusted like an Austin Princess left parked next to the sea. Whether it was to cut costs or because the designers all lived in warm countries (with no winter salt), all the Japanese manufacturers supplied bikes with mild steel exhaust systems. Sure, they were chrome-plated, or painted black. But a micron-thick layer of chrome, or some high-temperature paint was no match for the corrosive powers of British council road salt, and one hard winter was usually enough to have stock pipes blowing at their connector boxes and dripping rusty brown water from their silencers. Even the first Yamaha Fazer 600 of 1998 came with self-rotting pipes, but by the end of the century, even budget bikes came with stainless steel pipes that didn't rust.

Waterproof connectors

It's a dull, mundane piece of technology. But before manufacturers started putting proper gaskets and seals inside electrical connectors, any bike more than a few years old that was used through winter in the UK was an electrical fault waiting to happen.



The shape of a modern con-rod is more economical, with fastening studs screwed into the top part, rather than a headed bolt. Better materials, CAD design and improved toughening reduces stresses and improves strength. From this comes higher revs and better reliability

Much of the opprobrium heaped on British and Italian machinery of the Sixties and Seventies was down to their unreliability, caused by what electrical charge they possessed leaking out of the corroding, waterlogged connectors.

OK, there were no complex engine management units, sensors or fuel injectors to connect up (which was just as well). But bikes all need power to fire their ignition circuits, and this caused the vast majority of breakdowns and non-starting bikes. Low-quality, unsealed connector blocks filled up with water (and salt in winter), and the brass contacts and copper wires rotted away until the ignition coils stopped sparking.

Properly sealed connectors, together with plug-top coils and solid-state electronic ignition systems are probably one of the primary reasons for the massive improvements in bike reliability – even for the Japanese. Although not all bikes have entirely waterproof wiring looms: it's worth checking your bike and protecting any old-style non-sealed connector blocks with a suitable grease or Vaseline...

Neodymium magnets

Up until the Eighties, starter motors and alternators in bikes used old-school ferromagnetic permanent magnets to generate electricity and turn the engine over. But in 1982, American, Chinese and Japanese researchers discovered a new type of magnet using an alloy of the rare-earth metal neodymium, iron and boron. This new material was much more

SO HOW MUCH HAS CHANGED?

Although there's been massive improvement in the performance, reliability and quality of all aspects of motorcycle design, you could argue there's been hardly any real change in the fundamentals.



Honda's CB750 of 1969 burned petrol and air in a compressed combustion chamber with spark ignition. It had four cylinders doing so, arranged in a row mounted across the metal frame. It had two rubber tyres, filled with pressurised air, held in a swingarm at the back and a pair of telescopic forks at the front. The rear wheel is turned by a roller chain, the rider sits behind and above the engine, and it goes round corners by leaning over. Stopping is by clamping pads of friction material against discs mounted on the wheel, and it has a headlight, handlebars, footbrake and gearlever. It was mostly made of steel and aluminium.

If you showed our Martian these words, with a photograph of a 2009 Fireblade, he'd have no way of knowing that the 'Blade embodies 40 years' worth of technological improvements...

ALUMINIUM CASTING TECHNIQUES

Casting metal into shapes is a complex science, but it's also fairly dull. Even on manufacturer's bike launches, they tend to skirt over stuff like this, as the journalists' eyes glaze over as they mentally head for the bar

The fact remains that all the current supersport bikes use complex cast components in their chassis – components it just wasn't possible to produce economically in the past.

Seventies bikes all used easily-fabricated steel tube frames. Bend some tubes into shape, weld them together where they touched, bolt the engine in and you're away. But by the early Eighties, chassis science began flirting with aluminium. Its physical characteristics – one-third the strength of steel but also one-third the weight – meant you could use more material for the same mass in a component. More material meant stiffer shapes, so instead of a small-diameter round steel tube, you could have a much wider aluminium beam. This would have the same strength and weight, but much more stiffness.

Early aluminium frames aped the steel frames, with simple extruded tube cradles welded onto cast swingarm pivot plates and steering heads. But as the designs evolved, manufacturers began to use more and more shaped, cast components. Two things were at work – computer aided design, which directed the designers where to add metal and take it away to give optimal stiffness and weight, and advanced die-casting techniques. Using vacuum techniques to 'suck' the molten alloy into the casting moulds reduced bubbles and flaws in the components, and other methods like pressurised gravity filling allowed much thinner walled cast components to be produced reliably (and cheaply).

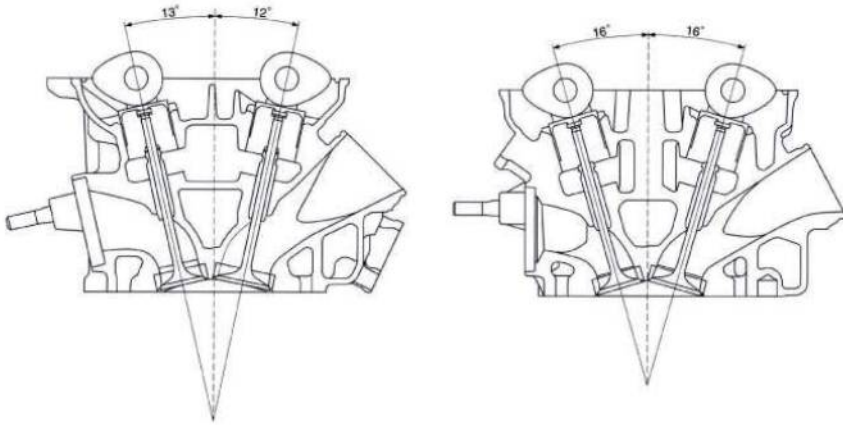


The complex, organic shapes of a CBR1000RR frame come straight from a computer design programme, and could only be made economically by advanced aluminium casting methods unavailable 40 years ago

expensive than other magnet materials, but was massively more magnetic. As a result, alternator rotors and starter motors could be made much smaller and lighter for the same performance. That meant smaller engines, less inertia and smaller batteries, cutting weight and improving performance all round.

Engine design

One obvious change from the earliest superbikes of the Seventies is the almost universal adoption of water cooling. This has a multitude of benefits: more-even cooling of the cylinder walls means your piston/bore clearances can be tighter. Water cooling also allows higher specific power outputs to be attained from a given design – put simply, you can work the engine much harder before



Moving the banks of valves closer together (left) allows a more compact combustion chamber design, which can be more efficient, improving torque, emissions and economy. It also provides a straighter path for the inlet and exhaust ports, further enhancing peak power in particular. It produces headaches for the cam drive designer, but it does also pay dividends in terms of a smaller cylinder head package

bits of it start to melt. On a more mundane level, water-cooled engines warm up quicker, reducing emissions and improving economy, and are quieter too.

Another change has been in combustion chamber design, and this has totally revamped the entire layout of a bike. On Seventies machinery, the carbs sat behind the engine, with the airbox behind them, and the fuel tank right above the engine, under the rider's nose. The inlet path for air into the engine was long and tortuous: it

generally was dragged in under the seat, into a small intake right under the rider's bum, then through a filter and forward, through the carburettors, then straight ahead before suddenly being turned down through nearly 90° and dumped into the combustion chamber through a single inlet valve.

On a modern sportsbike, it's all swapped round. The fuel tank is virtually under the rider's butt, while the airbox lives on top of the engine. Air is fed directly into the airbox via intakes on the front of the bike (allowing some ram-air benefits), then through a filter, and then it's shot almost straight down through fuel injector bodies and into the combustion chamber through two inlet valves.

The difference this makes is fundamental. First of all, the angle of the inlet and exhaust valves (as seen from the side) has been made narrower. Imagine a 'V' formed by the inlet and exhaust valves. On the old engine, the 'V' is very wide and shallow. What this means is a big combustion chamber, since the valve heads are forming a sloping 'roof shape' above the piston. On our modern bike, the 'V' is much narrower and upright. So the heads of the valves are almost parallel with the top of the piston – and that allows a smaller combustion chamber, higher compression ratio, and much more control

of the combustion chamber shape for the designer to extract the maximum power from it at high rpm.

As a by-product, this cylinder head design change (which water cooling helped make possible) improves handling, since the heavy fuel tank is now located nearer to the bike's centre of gravity. It has made magnetic tank bags harder to use on most supersport bikes though, so it's not all good....

Finally, there's been a multitude of other refinements to the basic four-cylinder engine design. More valves means better high-rpm performance, so each cylinder gets four (two inlets and two exhausts) instead of two (one of each). Yamaha meddled with five

for a while, but has now moved back to four-valve heads. At the bottom end of the engine, the story is more of improved materials that reduce weight and increase reliability and strength. Cylinders are now ceramic-coated aluminium rather than cast iron, which reduces friction and improves cooling. Pistons are still mostly cast aluminium, but radical design and better sealing ring material means they have tiny skirts, reducing weight and friction. Con-rods and cranks have become carburised and hardened more effectively, and slipper clutches have become a common sight – although the modern ones are meant to slip, unlike those of the Seventies...

Everything changes?

So – it's pretty clear that our Martian chum wouldn't be fooled by the CB750 and a BMW S1000RR. It'd be obvious to him that they're essentially the same thing.

But it would be easy to show him just how much difference 40 years of gradual evolution can make. Stick the poor buggar on the back and go for a blast on the Honda, then the BMW...



Anyone who spent the 1980s watching the fireworks display created at night by leaking HT leads on their bikes loves these things. Plug-top coils: a genuinely useful advance in reliability and performance. Gawd bless 'em!

▶ WELCOME TO THE FUTURE?

IDEAS THAT NEVER TOOK OFF

If you were reading a bike magazine feature about 'THE FUTURE!!!' back in the Seventies, there were various 'big' ideas floating around – none of which ever left the drawing board

So-called 'feet-forward' designs were a favourite of the beardy-weirdies writing in the Seventies. Enclosed, faired-in designs would improve aerodynamics, giving 200mph and 200mpg with 50bhp, together with weather protection and luggage capacity. Odd cult-machines like the Swiss Ecomobile aside, it hasn't happened.

Neither has the various exotic engine designs often-mooted by excitable hacks. The small-capacity, turbocharged concept was regularly wheeled out – 250cc turbo bikes that made 150bhp were banded about as if Honda had already started building them. Hasn't happened.

Funny front ends obsessed the hacks of the past too. We sort of see their point: if all you had was a set of 32mm damper rod forks, you'd be looking

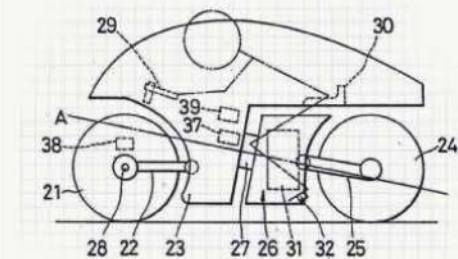
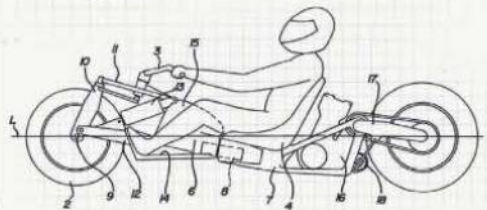
for something else too. Sadly, fork development took off in the late-Eighties, and by the mid-Nineties, their performance was such as to render most alternatives moot. BMW's Telelever and Duolever aside, bikes use forks, and we're pretty glad about that

Finally, exotic materials were the last bastion of the Michael Moorcock fans

"Exotic materials were the last bastion of the Michael Moorcock fans who seemed to write all the bike mags in the 1970s."

who seemed to write all the bike mags in the Seventies. It would be all carbon-fibre fairings, with ceramic pistons, magnesium frames and beryllium brake calipers. Sadly, again, the accountants' spreadsheet means we're stuck, mostly, with aluminium,

steel, plastic and rubber. But the clever way these basic materials are used has given bikes performance that'd be truly exotic to our poorly-coiffed Seventies journo friends...



Patent drawings show that even Honda has toyed with the idea of various enclosed, feet-forward bike designs. But you won't see anything like this on offer at your local dealership any time soon

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▶ APRILIA RSV4 SUPERBIKE

THE SPECIAL ONE

It's one thing to be the sauciest road bike around, but what about in the World Superbike paddock? That's a whole different ball game. We ride Aprilia's RSV4 race bike and wonder if life gets any better

Words: Jon Pearson Pics: Jason Critchell



It's a great chicken-and-egg story. What came first, the race bike or the road bike? Has any production-based race bike ever been as definitely built to be a race bike as the Aprilia RSV4? Or is it just a case of an expensive R&D department showing off?

Aprilia is an enigma – perpetually on the verge of kicking the bucket (type 'Aprilia bankrupt' into Google and see how many results, stretching back to the start of the millennium, you get), yet owned by the massive Piaggio Group. Who can fathom Italian business? One thing is for sure: they can certainly make



a brilliant motorcycle.

No stranger to selling a few scooters, plus an increasing number of decent road bikes, Aprilia knows the sportsbike market can be a lucrative one. Racing sells motorcycles and, from our side of the fence, at least it makes a lot more sense to be designing and building a race-winning superbike rather than a GP250 machine only 50 people in the world will ride. Ask Ducati how many bikes they'd sell if it weren't for their considerable

superbike racing success.

The answer is straightforward in the end: far fewer. According to Aprilia Racing sport manager Daniele Tosatti, the Aprilia RSV4 was a road bike designed and developed with superbike competition in mind, "You can see from the chassis design and specification that this is the case. It has all the adjustments normally found on racing machines - a variable-geometry frame so you can change parameters like the steering angle (thanks to

interchangeable steering bushings), and also the swingarm and engine position." That's not the same answer I got from BMW about its new S1000RR WSB race bike.

Although not directly related, the Aprilia chassis is a "descendant of all the bikes we have made - the 250GP bike, the MotoGP bike and the former RSV sport bike," claims Tosatti, adding very definitely that "this bike is new, though. We start fresh."

Infinitely more adjustable than your Suzuki GSX-R or

Honda Fireblade, it may be, but "really we do not change very much," according to Aprilia WSB rider Leon Camier's crew chief (formerly Shinya Nakano's) Lele Martinelli, "Earlier in the first tests, we change many things to understand how it can work but the engine position stays the same always, and maybe once or twice during the year we try a different swingarm setting but we go back always. The best setting is the base setting."

There's not a lot of difference >

THE SPECIAL ONE

▶ HOW LEON CAMIER COPEd

WHAT WAS YOUR PROBLEM, BOY?

We caught up with 2009 British champion after the last race of the 2009 WSB season (his second on the RSV4) at Portimao

You couldn't get two more dimensionally different riders in one race team than Max Biaggi and Leon Camier. Aprilia racing's 2010 press conferences with the two should be hilarious (odds on Leon always sitting down?).

"My problem has been mid-corner. I'm used (after the 2009 BSB Airwaves Yamaha R1) to getting a bike in the corner, turning, standing it up and squirting it out. The Aprilia is more refined than that and I need to be cleverer. It's a million miles different to the Yamaha."

The finer lines and margins for error matter when you step up to

world level too, "It's so close in this championship, a tenth of a second could make the difference between first and fifth," says Leon, but also admits, "It's as much to do with getting the best out of the tyres as anything."

"The Aprilia is more refined, and I need to be cleverer. It's a million miles different to the Yamaha..."

LEON CAMIER

With his signing confirmed for 2010, Camier will certainly get the time to develop the bike and his understanding of it. It's a complex bike compared to his relatively simple Yamaha R1 of 2009: "The bike has so many more possibilities and so much potential but we went the wrong way at first with set-up and had to come back and start again."



but monstrous RS3 Cube MotoGP project which lasted three years from 2002 to 2004 (to more or less effect by Colin Edwards, Nori Haga, Shane Byrne and Jeremy McWilliams, to name four who struggled with the beast). Its downfall, or one of them, at that stage was operating from a car-designed electronics package from Marelli. Bikes need more finesse, and the early systems were brutal. This time around, things are smoother, much smoother.

To have and have not

In fact, what is most amazing about riding this race bike is how well all that complicated electricrickerky worked underneath me. My connection with the back wheel felt effortless. It's like you have no engine braking, except you have. It's like you have no traction control, except you definitely have. The throttle response and drive from the rear wheel is precisely set up and feels seamless.

Aprilia claims the engine design allows for a short frame and a

relatively long swingarm. When I jumped off the bike and answered the question, "What did you think?" with "Grip is incredible!" Martinelli just shrugged a knowing, matter-of-fact and not altogether untypical Italian kind of shrug, which said, "Yes, we know".

In actual fact, opening the throttle in a corner on this bike felt like nothing else I can think of. Open the throttle mid-corner and you feel nothing but grip and drive, and it just goes. Open it hard enough and the biggest job you have on your hands is keeping the front wheel from launching upwards, as the force is amazing.

It feels very special; more so, I'd say, than any of the other bikes in the 2009 WSB grid. Why? It's to do with my instant affinity with the way the RSV4 feels. But also, naturally, there was something extra special about this race bike, which set it apart from the crowd. Hand-made? No more so than any on the grid. "Hand-crafted" might be a better description of what makes this machine so special.



▶ between Aprilia WSB riders', Max Biaggi's and Camier's, set-ups either, according to Martinelli, "The handlebar and footrest position are different but the chassis set-up is basically the same. Max has a little more fork off-set and Leon has a slightly harder rear spring but, other than that, it's the same for both."

It's a truth I didn't expect to hear, given the differences in rider size and riding style. What it proves is that the 'trick' to being faster than everyone else is making the bike work as effectively as possible

on the Pirelli tyres. They are the constant that every team has to work with, no matter what engine configuration and chassis they're running.

Like the road bike, the Aprilia superbike engine uses multi-mapping and ride-by-wire technology to get the best drive and wear from those tyres. It's a solution you might be familiar with from Aprilia's road bikes or your car possibly. This electronic wizardry was tried and tested on a race bike by the spectacular



BMW S1000RR

Capacity: 999cc
Bore & stroke: 80 x 49.7mm



Ducati 1198

Capacity: 1198.4cc
Bore & stroke: 106 x 67.9mm

HOW IT WORKS AS A RACE BIKE THE PROS AND CONS

There are pros and cons to every engine layout. Certainly, Ducati would argue a V-twin is best, and BMW, with Aprilia, the other new boy in the 2009 paddock, clearly feels its in-line four cylinder motor has more possibilities for racing with the S1000RR. The 65° V-4 layout of the Aprilia does mean something of a compromise between the other two designs. In essence, though, it's a narrow, compact engine that centralises mass

which, as all good bike designers will tell you, helps a chassis do its job better by keeping weight balanced and low.

The clever but complicated engine design also has variable length intake trumpets too. Each bank of cylinders has a servo operating its two throttle bodies. The aperture of the four butterfly valves, and therefore the volume of air being sucked in, can be

controlled independently to maximise efficiency. This gives the engineers the ability to manage power in all gears at every throttle opening and every wheel speed. 'Clever' isn't a strong enough word.

Clever it may be, but that also makes it expensive, one of the reasons why BMW, for instance, settled on the in-line four design for the S1000RR. There are benefits, though. The

V-four configuration allows a longer stroke to be used, in comparison to an in-line four (though nowhere near as long as the Ducati twin cylinder – see box). A longer stroke allows the engine to suck in more air, which in turn allows the engine to make more power without needing a bigger crankcase.

Race proven

The Ducati naturally does this best but is taller and therefore inhibited by a lack of room for an airbox. The Aprilia, although very complex in design, can rev more than the Ducati while still making use of a longer stroke. Any criticism of the design falls a little flat when Max Biaggi clocks up a mighty 202.1 mph (326 km/h) in race two at Monza, making this the fastest bike in WSB history.

The small engine does

mean a narrow frame and small nose on the RSV4. Where most other manufacturers are doing their best to reduce the width of the bike, Aprilia had to "accommodate" the rider aerodynamically which is something it is used to with 125 and 250GP riders.

For me, riding the Aprilia was a special thing, perhaps more special than any on the WSB grid. Riding the factory Ducati or world championship-winning Yamaha is an extreme privilege, of course, but the Aprilia exudes hand-crafted specialness more than the rest. Agile, direct, fast as hell, precisely designed for the job of going fast round a track – it's a bike designed for the purpose of going round a track, much more so than any Yamaha, Honda or even Ducati. The 'Special One?' Very special. *sg*

“Max Biaggi clocked up a mighty 202.1 mph at Monza, making this the fastest bike in WSB history.”

Aprilia RSV4

Capacity: 999.6cc
Bore & stroke: 78 x 52.3mm





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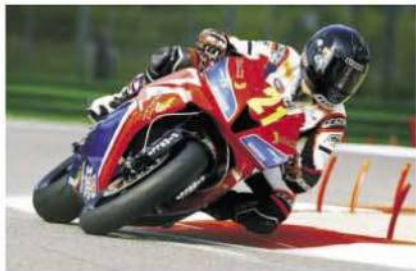


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ASSEN, SEPTEMBER 7, 2003. ROUND 10, WORLD SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP

HODGSON TAKES WSB TITLE

Neil Hodgson won the World superbike championship on a Fila Ducati 999F03. Next stop, MotoGP..

■ **Photographer:** Graeme Brown 2Snap **Words:** Kenny Pryde



Hodgson lays down the rubber ahead of Lavilla on the Suzuki and a young James Toseland

▶ WHAT'S THE STORY?

For most observers, the pinnacle of Neil Hodgson's racing career was the year he won the World superbike championship in 2003 on a Fila Ducati.

Hodgson had won the British superbike championship in 2000 on a GSE Racing Ducati, pipping Chris Walker on a Crescent Suzuki GSX-R750 in a traumatic final race at Donington Park. The following season, 2001, Hodgson and James Toseland took off for the World superbike championship with GSE HM Plant Ducati. Hodgson's results on a Dunlop-equipped customer Ducati in 2001 and 2002 ultimately saw him replace Troy Bayliss at the Factory Ducati team in 2003 where Hodgson was partnered by young Spaniard Ruben Xaus.

Hodgson and his Michelin-

“Hodgson took the lead in the championship at the opening Spanish round and was never headed, clinching the title with two rounds to go.”

shod Fila Ducati 999F03 totally dominated the 2003 championship, with an opening double win at Valencia setting the tone for the rest of the season. Hodgson took the lead in the championship at that opening Spanish round and was never headed, clinching the title with two rounds to go at Assen in front of thousands of British fans who had made the trip to the Dutch circuit.

Out of reach

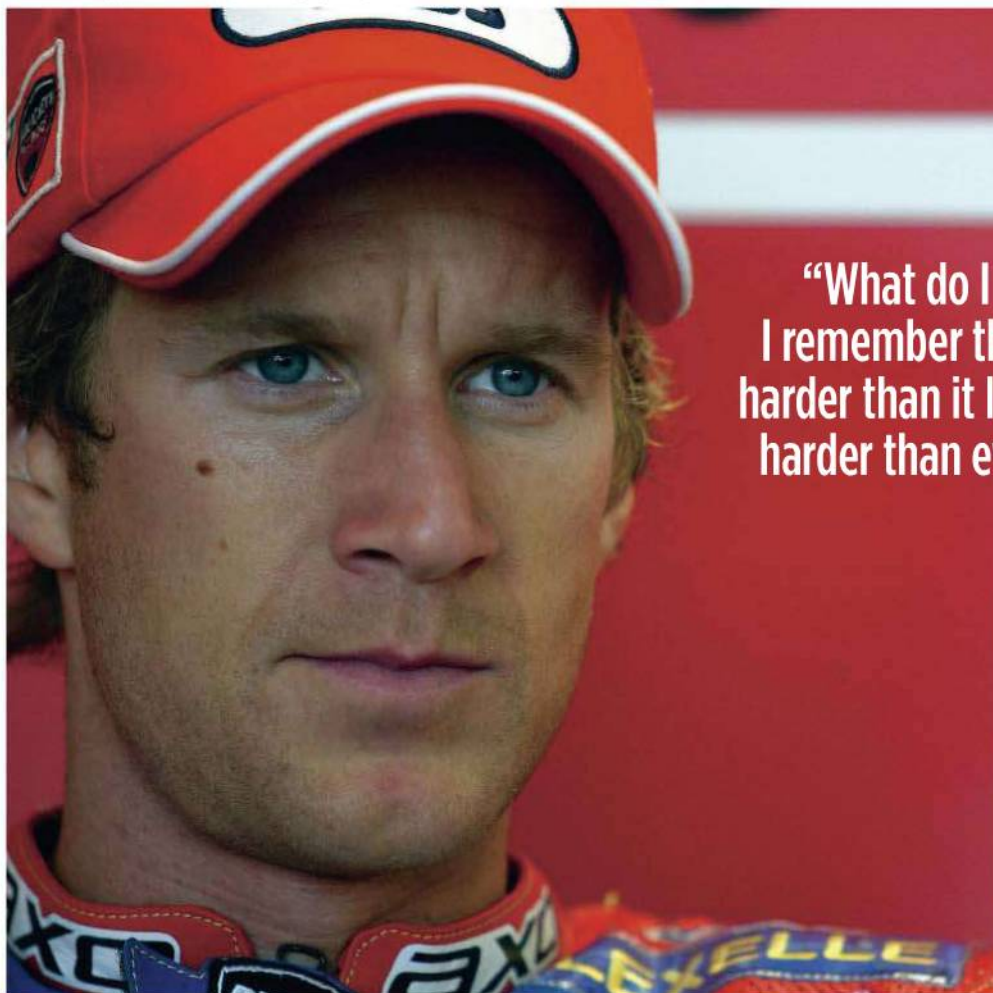
Hodgson was already well ahead in the championship but still needed to score points to make it impossible for him to lose. So, in race one, finishing second behind Xaus and Ducati rider Frankie Chili was enough to put the title beyond everyone's reach.

In race two, Hodgson's pit crew retained his season-long race number 100, but modified the size of the numbers to make it clear who the champion was. Race two was a repeat of race one, in that Hodgson, Xaus and Alstare Suzuki's Gregorio Lavilla cleared off, finishing in that order, a full 14 seconds ahead of the chasers led home by Regis Laconi on another kit Ducati.

The final race of the season, at Magny-Cours, would see Hodgson sign off like a true champion, with a win and a bin, but that race signalled the end of his WSB career. Hodgson's next stop would be the Luis D'Antin run satellite Ducati team in MotoGP where his Ducati was, let's say, not quite as competitive as his Fila 999F03 had been in the 2003 WSB season. >







“What do I remember? I remember that it was a lot harder than it looked and a lot harder than everyone said.”

Neil Hodgson



NEIL HODGSON

“ I know it might have looked easy when I won the first nine races and they thought I had the best bike but it's never like that. I was pleased that people assumed I was on the fastest bike in the paddock – because it wasn't! OK, sometimes it was, but not everywhere and it felt like when I passed someone, they'd sort of give up a little. But then when I got beaten, I started to get beaten a lot! (laughs) It was like everyone had woken up and realised that the bike wasn't as good as they thought.

But things went well at the start of the year. I remember doing the double at round three at Sugo, in Japan. It was the first time that Michelin had won a race there, because it was basically a Dunlop test track, so when I did the double, it was good for morale. The thing was that I was so

paranoid about not winning the title, so paranoid about thinking I was going to blow this massive lead I had that I put a lot of pressure on myself. I began to race 'tight' and after a crash at Misano (round seven), I started to ride rubbish and I thought I was going to throw it away. I feel a lot of people look at me and think I've blown so many chances you know, that I've felt like a failure and it was a big thing to me to prove to everyone that I wasn't. Like I say, it was more about personal pressure.

What makes WSB so good is that there are so many points on offer over a weekend. You can literally have a 50 point lead over someone and then, in the space of a race weekend, its back to zero again – look what happened with Spies and Haga last year. By the time I came to the

Assen round and the first race I remember crossing the line in second, behind Ruben (Xaus) and thinking 'Dammit, I'm world champion, but I can't enjoy it because I've just lost.' I remember not enjoying a single second of that first race because I was so tight and nervous. It was – officially – the biggest anti-climax of my life. I was world champion but I just couldn't enjoy the moment.

Then in the second race, I just totally relaxed, I won it and it felt great. I had a whole load of friends and sponsors who had backed me for the previous ten years over in Assen and that night we went out and got leathered. We had such a good night, the sort of night that you would expect to have if you had just won the world championship! (laughs). **”**

JULIAN THOMAS

Fila Ducati press officer in 2003

“ The WSB championship struggled a little bit that year because there had been a bit of a rider exodus in the winter, but Neil was nothing other than professional. Neil knew he had a job of work to do and he buckled down and did it, on the new 999 which was basically a tweaked 998 with new aerodynamics. Obviously he'd had two seasons in the championship on a GSE Ducati, so he knew his way around and he started the season as a clear favourite. I remember he won the first nine races of the season, which set the tone – there were a few glum faces in the paddock.

The only rider Neil really had to keep an eye on was Ruben (Xaus) who had ended the 2002 season really strongly. Gregorio Lavilla rode well at times on the air-restricted Alstare Suzuki too. But Ruben struggled to get the Michelin tyres to work for him till halfway through the season, by which point the championship was as good as over. I know its impossible to say that a championship is ever a foregone conclusion, but with Neil on that bike, backed by the team he had a good rapport with – Davide Tardozzi and Ernesto Marinelli and the rest – it's as close as you can get. **”**

HODGSON'S 2003 WSB SEASON

24
races

6
poles

13
wins

20
podiums

7
third places

First overall with 489 points ahead of second placed Xaus on 386. The rider who would replace Hodgson at Ducati in 2004, his former GSE HM Plant Ducati team mate Toseland, finished third overall.



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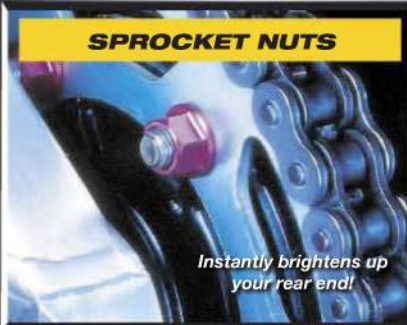
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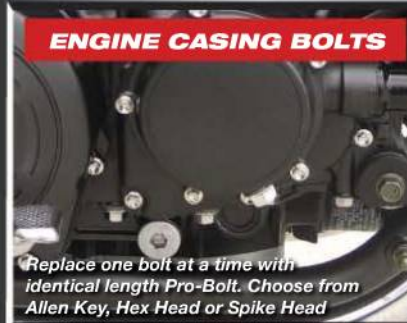


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THE MAKING OF SPIES

How the new WSB champ's bitter feud with teammate Mat Mladin in the AMA championship made Ben Spies the best superbike rider on the planet

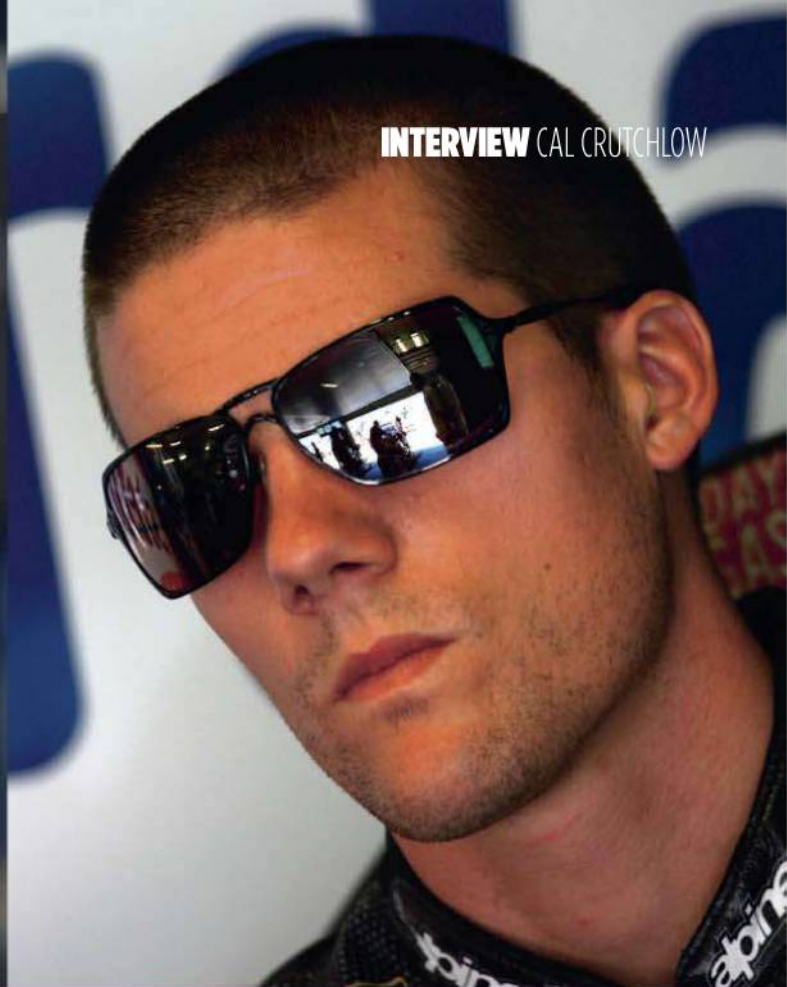
Words: Stuart Barker Pics: Graeme Brown, 2/Snap, Gold & Goose



THE MAKING OF SPIES



Easy life? Ben Spies found WSB much more relaxing after the psychological warfare with his AMA team-mate



“He still has his mom hanging around wiping his bum, and I haven’t had that luxury since I’ve been a professional racer.”

Mat Mladin

Ben Spies faced off the toughest Superbike riders in the world in 2009 to lift the WSB title at his first attempt. He broke countless records along the way including setting the most poles ever in a WSB season, and had a win rate of 50%, better even than Troy Bayliss. Spies then jumped on a MotoGP bike he’d never seen before and finished in seventh place at Valencia to top off one of the most impressive debut seasons on the world stage that anyone has ever witnessed.

But while we may marvel at the Texan’s achievements, the man himself is marvelling at how much of a ‘cake-walk’ it has all been compared to the war he waged in America in the preceding three years with his Suzuki team-mate Mat Mladin. A mental war that almost became physical on numerous occasions as the pair came close to exchanging blows in the paddock.

As a younger team-mate to the six-time AMA champion, Spies had to endure three tortuous years of mind games on Mladin’s part, with the Australian trying every trick in the racer’s psychological warfare book to try and break the laid-

back Texan, even going so far as launching verbal attacks on Spies’ mother Mary. The constant tension in the garage along with the verbal and mental abuse reached such extreme levels that Mladin almost succeeded in bringing out the hulk in the normally ultra-placid Spies. *‘You cannot know how horrible it was’* Mary Spies said recently. *‘It got to a point where they [Mladin and his camp] finally got Ben angry. Do you know how hard it is to make Ben mad?’*

Spies’ relationship with his mother is one of the keys to his astonishing success. She not only acts as his manager, but also his confidant, friend and general stabiliser, making sure he has everything he needs when he needs it so he can concentrate 100% on riding the bike. And yet, if the doctors were to be believed, Mary Spies should never have been able to give birth to the new World Superbike champion. She was declared infertile in 1980 so she and her husband Henry started a family by adopting a little girl called Lisa. When Lisa was three years old, she asked Mary for a baby brother. Mary explained that could never happen but Lisa insisted that *‘God loves me, and if I want a*

“What’s talking trash have to do with riding a motorcycle? All it’s going to do is make me push that much harder.”

Ben Spies

baby brother, I’m gonna get a baby brother.’ Within a few weeks Mary Spies was pregnant. It’s fair to say that Ben Spies was somewhat miraculously conceived.

In 1989 when Ben was five years old, his parents separated after 16 years of marriage. Mary started dating a man called Keith Cherry who proved to be a hugely positive influence on Spies’ early career, helping out with sponsorship and encouraging the youngster all the way.

Young Gun

And that career started early. When he was three, Spies asked a shopping mall Santa Claus for a motorcycle. Sadly, Santa failed to deliver but by the age of eight, Spies had started racing and by 1995 had won a 125GP championship in the States. He moved onto 600s at age 14 and signed for Suzuki in 2000 when he was still just 15. Several seasons in various classes including AMA 600 Supersport, AMA 750 Supersport, AMA 750 Superstock and Formula Xtreme followed with Spies eventually taking the Xtreme title in 2003. In 2005 he made his debut in AMA Superbikes, taking a win and 13 further podiums to

finish second behind Mat Mladin in the title chase. He was then signed as Mladin’s team-mate on the Yoshimura Suzuki for the following year and that’s when the real fireworks started.

In every respect the lines were drawn for a classic confrontation. Spies was the clean-cut, softly-spoken all-American boy, Mladin was a foreigner – a politically-incorrect, brash Australian who had, nevertheless, made the American championship his own with an unprecedented six consecutive titles. There was a considerable age gap too, going into their first season as team-mates, Mladin was 34 while Spies was only 21. Spies had his whole career ahead of him – most likely on the world stage – while Mladin was certain to see his racing days out in the domestic championship he had made his own since failing to impress in 500cc Grands Prix in the early 1990s. The scene was set for a classic confrontation and it would prove to be the making of Ben Spies.

After Mladin had had everything his own way for six consecutive seasons in AMA, it must have come as a bit of a shock when Spies won six of the opening rounds of the >

THE MAKING OF SPIES



➤ 2006 season, and ten races in total. It was clear that Spies had got over the awe he originally felt when racing against Mladin in his rookie season in 2005. 'In '05, when I saw Mat on the racetrack in front of me I was like, "Oh, that's Mat Mladin" and I'd get a little nervous and give him room' he said. 'But if you want to win, you've got to have that respect, but you can't be scared.'

If Mladin helped to up Spies' game, the same could be said in reverse. Mladin told Australian Motorcycle News that 'After many years of winning and sometimes winning quite handily, the motivation had gone away a little bit. But then Ben came along and certainly helped re-motivate me. It motivated me to get back and be strong and do the best that I can do. Ben has helped bring out the best in Mat Mladin.'

War of words

When it became clear that motivation alone wasn't enough to beat the new kid on the block, Mladin dredged his armoury for other weapons and started a psychological war on his young team-mate and, most famously, had a dig at Spies' mother's constant presence in his pit. He told the Dallas Morning News 'He's 22 years old, I'm 34. He still has his mom hanging around wiping his bum, and I haven't had that luxury since I've been a professional racer.'

Spies took the slight to his mother personally but admitted that, ultimately, it only made him try harder to beat his rival. He told Motorcycle Racer that 'What's talking trash have to do with riding a motorcycle? It means absolutely nothing. All it's going to do is make me push that much harder in anything I do; training, racing, passing. It's going to bring it out. If trash talking is used in the wrong way - if it's directed towards me - it only fuels me and makes me want to win more.'

He added 'There are honestly some things I don't like about Mat and there are some things Mat doesn't like about me. He obviously

Above: You'd think they'd be happier with a one-two finish

Right: Mladin had to hand it to Spies in the end



Spies had an astonishingly good rookie season in WSB

doesn't care for my mom too much and he doesn't like the way that I do some things, but I really don't care.'

Suzuki's 1993 500cc world champion Kevin Schwantz had long seen promise in Spies and was also quick to spot a rivalry that

matched his own legendary run-ins with Wayne Rainey. He told a US journalist, 'There's no doubt that Rainey and I motivated each other. I wouldn't have been as good as I was without a rival like Rainey. I started out my career absolutely hating

the guy's guts. Now we do dinner together and talk pretty regularly. I know there's not much love lost between Ben and Mat. That's a good thing from the team's perspective, in that it keeps both guys fired up when they get beat. There's nothing worse



Mat Mladin Spies' Toughest Rival

placed Miguel Duhamel's previous record of 27) and the most amount of pole positions with 50. He has also won more races in a season (11) than any other rider and set more poles in a single season (10) than anyone else.

Mladin won the Australian Superbike championship in 1992 before having an ill-fated season in 500cc Grands Prix in 1993 on an uncompetitive Cagiva. He has also taken victory in the Daytona 200 race

on three occasions and when he entered the 2003 World Superbike round at Laguna Seca he set pole position, just to prove he could be competitive on the world stage despite his age.

Now 37, Mladin has decided to retire, disillusioned with the new structure of the American championships. He intends to move back to Australia and concentrate on his bike accessory business Mat Mladin Imports.



Mladin – too good for AMA?



Mrs Spies... mum not wife

than getting beaten by a team-mate. You can accept getting beaten by someone else, but the guy that has access to the same equipment as you.....'

That hatred of losing led to some furious battles between 2006 and 2008 with neither Spies nor Mladin prepared to give any quarter out on track. Mladin didn't only try to bully Spies in the paddock, he was also prepared to be heavy-handed during a race. 'He knows I'm not going to give him an inch, and I wouldn't expect anything other from him' Mladin said of his tactics. 'If we ever got into a good dog fight

and there was a bit of pushing and shoving, and I didn't get push and shove back, after the race I would probably say something to him, expecting it to be a little tougher than it was. That's what I expect from him and he knows he's going to get that from me.'

Walking the walk

Ultimately, despite the two almost coming to blows in the paddock on several occasions, Spies did all his talking on the track, winning the AMA title for three consecutive years between 2006 and 2008 and, in doing so, becoming the first guy

to win the title over Mladin since Nicky Hayden in 2002. He and Mladin were so superior to the rest of the field that, between them, they broke every lap and race record at every circuit on the AMA calendar.

He may have lost the three-year war on-track but even when Spies was set to turn his back on the AMA series at the end of 2008, Mladin was still fighting a mental battle. At the post-race press conference at Laguna Seca on September 28, Spies admitted that he would not be going to MotoGP in 2009, modestly saying 'I guess I'm not fast enough. I don't know.' To which, after a brief silence, Mladin chipped in, 'I'm fast enough.'

Spies didn't get the Suzuki ride he was chasing in MotoGP but instead accepted a Yamaha ride in World Superbikes. His utter dominance of the 2009 WSB season is well documented (first man to win the title on a Yamaha, record number of pole positions in one season, first man to win

“Ultimately, despite the two almost coming to blows in the paddock on several occasions, Spies did all his talking on the track.”

the title in his rookie year etc), but it's interesting to note how easy he found racing on the world stage after surviving the war with Mladin. Speaking halfway through his rookie WSB season he said, 'It made me mentally stronger as a rider, the stuff Mat did, and that's fine. So now this [WSB] is easy. And it made me realise what kind of person I want to

be too. I don't need to hate someone to race against them. I don't need to hate Nori (Haga) or Michel (Fabrizio) or anyone just because they are capable of racing against me. The speed here is the hardest thing, not the mental stuff.'

Even now, as he prepares to do battle with the fastest riders and meanest motorcycles on earth in MotoGP in 2010, Spies feels things can't be any tougher than they were for those three years back in the States. 'There's no getting around the fact that me and Mat had our differences. He's the hardest guy I have ever raced, and I don't think it can ever get any harder, **SB**

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REAL WORLD READERS' HELP

Insurance, wheelspins and seized brakes. In dealing with these issues, the 'Real World' section couldn't get any more appropriate for the time of year.

Insurance is a crucial part of bike ownership, and one reader this month has had enough of the frustrating process of making the call to get a quote. It's fair to say most of us have had enough of the price increases to premiums too.

We know that most people aren't doing very much riding at this time of year but some of you are, and if the couple of dozen people I saw out on the road last Sunday are anything to go by, plenty of us are itching for spring to arrive.




THIS MONTH...

74 Q&A

If a job's worth doing, etc. Not all of us are experts at everything, though. Which is where Q&A comes in. Send us your query and we'll ask the experts.

80 HOW TO RIDE BETTER

Controlling wheelspin isn't a worry just for winter riders, not when you live and ride in Britain, at any rate. We hope this guide will improve your riding.

82 THE HONEST TRUTH

The second installment in our new 'everything you need to know about...' feature, and it doesn't get much more iconic than the Honda CBR600RR.

90 USED KIT REVIEWED

Our own kit worn, fitted to our bikes, used, abused, fiddled with and, most of all, tested honestly. It's us telling it like it is without the boring stuff.

92 STAFF BIKES

Some things have changed on our long-term test fleet, while others have stayed the same, as we plough on through the depths of winter.

Q&A

YOUR PROBLEMS SORTED

Every month, we answer your biking problems. From riding tips to mechanical maladies, we're here to help. Email us your problems and we'll get the right expert advice to find the best solution

WRITE TO: SuperBike Help, SuperBike Magazine, Leon House, 233 High Street, Croydon, Surrey CR9 1HZ. E-mail: superbike_letters@ipcmedia.com

No to hold

Q 'Press three for another recorded message' ... and spend ages on hold. I'm sick of it all. I've always rung round a few insurance companies and, more recently, used comparison sites to get the best price, then gone with that. But I've had enough of the terrible service I get when I want to actually speak to my insurance company. Can you recommend a broker where I speak to a person who knows what they're talking about, avoiding answer machines and clueless call centre staff? I don't mind if it costs a few quid more, I just want decent service. Also, if brokers are cutting their costs and my circumstances haven't changed, why does my insurance keep going up every year?

John McDonald, South Shields

A Three Counties Insurance claim: "Above all, our service is personal - no call waiting, music playing, number-keying access; you will always deal with an interested knowledgeable person". Every time we've called them, that's been the case too, so give them a try (0800 731 7829/www.3co.co.uk).

Why are insurance prices rising at the moment? One insider we spoke to said general insurers in the UK are obliged to offer bike (and car) insurance and, at the moment, premium prices have been driven so low by comparison websites that they're making a

loss. They're fighting to maintain enough market share so they can make a profit when prices do rise - which they look set to. It's almost impossible to say why your premium has been increasing without knowing all your details. One other factor to remember is that not all comparison websites

include quotes from all insurers. Like for any other business, the comparison sites need to make money out of the deal, so if the insurer doesn't want to opt in, you won't be getting a full spectrum of insurance quotes, only those the comparison site has deals with.

"I've had enough of the terrible service I get when I want to actually speak to my insurance company."



Phones. There's rarely someone on the other end of them when it comes to insurance matters

How to service brake calipers

TIP-TOP STOPPERS

Q I used my bike a couple of times during winter and, although I coated most of it with WD40 to prevent corrosion, I worry the brake calipers will seize like they did on the 125 I owned before. How easy is it to clean them?

John King, by e-mail

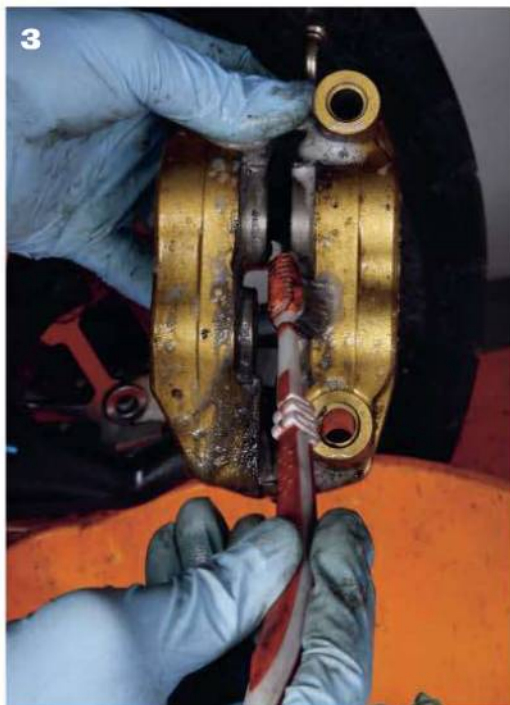
A This is a job we've covered before in the Workshop section. It's a timely job now, if you're out riding at this time of year. Even if your bike is still wrapped-up in the shed, getting your brake pads, pistons and calipers in tip-top condition doesn't appear on all service schedules, so don't assume a dealer's done it unless they say they have. It's good maintenance and a good psychological way of getting ready for spring too.



■ **(1)** Most pads are retained by a pin which, in turn, is held secure. This varies between manufacturers. Some have a split pin, others are threaded, some have circlips and so on. Begin by loosening the pins before removing the caliper, which is likely to be held on by two bolts. Sliding the caliper off the disc may be tight, so be careful not to damage the pads or clobber the rim with the caliper. You may need to waggle it from side to side to help

it come free. It's good practice to not leave the calipers hanging on their hoses; use a bungee for support if necessary.

■ Remove the retaining pin(s), any clips or shims and the pads themselves **(2)**, noting where everything fits, including which pad came from where (pads wear to match the disc, so putting it back in the same place can help performance). Take a couple of digital photos as you go if you're not



sure. If the caliper only has pistons on one side, it's a sliding setup and the sliding mount will need to be removed and cleaned/lubricated too.

■ Pump the brake lever a little, only using the normal travel, to expose about 1cm of each brake piston (the round bits which push the pads) from within the caliper. Clean all moving surfaces with a toothbrush **(3)**, warm and very soapy water. You could use brake cleaner but there's a school of thought which says the solvent can reduce the life of the rubber seals in the caliper. Scotchbrite (green plastic kitchen scrubber) can help too or some light steel wool **(4)** when you're cleaning the crud off the pads. Any heavy corrosion on the pistons normally means replacement is

"It's good maintenance and a good psychological way of getting ready for spring too."

necessary but emery cloth may remove light corrosion. When clean and dry, lightly – and I mean very lightly – grease the pins, backs of pads and their contact point with the caliper with a dedicated brake grease. Personally I use copper grease but anything with a high



boiling threshold ensures you don't get oil running onto your pads.

■ Push the pistons back into the caliper slowly with your hands **(5)** making sure it is not forcing the others (in the other caliper) out. It can be a game of cat and mouse with all the pistons, so a piece of wood in the other caliper might help. I wouldn't advise using any tool as it can damage the pistons, but if they are very tight, you can get special piston push-back tools, which use a threaded rod to push the pistons back into the caliper. Re-assemble the pads, pins and any other parts making sure you don't get grease on the pad surfaces.

■ Re-fit the caliper. Use a torque wrench and tighten the caliper bolts to the manufacturer recommendations. In theory, you should also use brand new bolts but I don't know of anyone who actually does this, even race teams. Pump the brake lever, again just using the normal range of operation, not right back to the bar, until it goes firm. Double-check everything's tight and in place before riding.





ASK AN EXPERT

Each month, we get an expert to answer your questions. This month, it's AA rescue patrol man Simon Fisher

→ **THE EXPERT** Simon is the lead patrol for the AA's specialist motorbike repair and recovery team. No-one knows more about getting sick bikes going and back on the road.

Looming trouble

Q I rode my last bike (an old XTZ660) every winter, and eventually the entire wiring loom went bad. If you stripped almost any wire back, there was a strange black corrosion on the copper strands. I've always thought this was caused by either water or salt getting into the wiring. I'd like to stop this happening to my current bike which is a Yamaha Thundercat. Is there anything I can apply to the terminal connectors or elsewhere which would do the job?

James Little, Manchester

A Blackening of the wiring can be caused by a number of things: water ingress, heat build-up or corrosion from battery acid. This type of corrosion works its way up a wiring loom, sometimes needing to be cut out or replaced. Manufacturers take care in placing connectors so that ingress does not happen. However, some good old petroleum jelly (Vaseline or similar) acts as an effective insulator, so packing some into connectors should help prevent problems.



A Bandit, in sunny season. In cold weather, a regular run is a good idea.

Let it lie

Q I've got a Suzuki 650 Bandit which is my first big bike. I'm not using it over winter. Someone said it's best to start it up and let it warm up to temperature every couple of weeks, even if I'm not riding it. But I've also been told, by someone else, that that's bad for it. What would you advise?

Darren Thurston, Bury St Edmunds

A Firstly I would make sure that, if you are laying up your bike for the winter, you have had a service beforehand. Try putting an old bit of carpet under the bike and maybe raise her on paddock stands. I would recommend this if you only have a side-stand so that the oil does not accumulate on one side of the engine. It's important to check that the coolant and oil levels are correct. If you store it in a garage with power, use a suitable battery conditioner. Taking the battery out will not harm the bike but remember that your alarm, if one is fitted, may not work. Provided you don't leave the bike running so that it overheats, there shouldn't be a problem with starting it up every couple of weeks, but try to avoid firing it up and turning it off straightaway, as that can foul the plugs.

→ COMING SOON ASK A PAINT AND REPAIR EXPERT

Stefan Window is MD of Dash of Colour. This well-regarded south-Lincolnshire firm can tackle any paint or bodywork job, from a small plastic repair to a full front-to-back re-style. If you've got a question to ask him, write to the address at the beginning of the article or email superbike_letters@ipc.com

superbike_letters@ipcmedia.com

Eazy does it

Q I've been considering buying an 'Eazyrizer' bike lift for use on my GSX-R1000. It's often advertised in *SuperBike*. The only thing stopping me is the fact the bike will be supported by the foot pegs and the exhaust/header pipes. The manufacturer insists that using the header pipes is an accepted 'industry standard' approach. I'm not so sure and would hate to damage my pride and joy.

Tom Zales, Halifax

A Unfortunately, we've not seen one of these in use but the principle is sound. Lifting a bike by the exhaust headers plus some other point is an established and safe method. These pipes are typically strong and solidly mounted. Foot pegs are also a common place to support a bike, we've used car-type axle stands but they only really work on fixed footrests and not spring/return type. The short answer is we're sure the Eazyrizer will be fine and, as long as you use sturdy, solid mounting points you're going to be OK lifting any point on a bike.



Eazy, when you know how

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A Morini is in very real financial trouble which is not unusual for Italian bike manufacturers - and remember these are hard times for everyone at the moment anyway. They're still in the game but they need investment to move forward. The firm went into voluntary liquidation in September 2009. This does not have the same implications as under UK law and a Morini spokesman told us it is a technical step necessary for any Italian company to block legal action against it from unpaid suppliers. It enables Morini to continue normal activity and allow the possibility for new investors to come into a 'going concern'.

“Moto Morini remain a very realistic business proposition and they are optimistic.”

All daily activity at Morini is as normal, so supply of bikes and after sales service are unaffected. Spares are available and if anyone wanted to order a new bike the factory can supply ex-stock or build one for you. The firm only needs to manufacture about 2,500 bikes per year to break-even, so remain a very realistic business proposition and they are optimistic about investment. We've got our fingers crossed the Italian government or someone else comes up with a cash injection to save Morini as it'd be a shame for this recently re-born manufacturer of some stonking bikes to disappear again.

Money woes at Morini

Q I bought a Moto Morini Granpasso about six months ago and I've heard (and read) all sorts of things about the company having difficulties or even going bust? The shop I bought the bike from says it's all lies and that they're still trading, which I'm inclined to believe. But I'm slightly nervous in case I should sell the bike pronto, i.e. if the brand's going to disappear, which could cause issues for parts availability, dealer back-up and used values.

Jeremy Davies, Gwent

Plastic fantastic

Q The screen on my Suzuki 600 had a big crack, so I've replaced it with a nice new black one. I took the old one off and removed some of the mountings which were little nuts in rubber retainers shaped like little top hats. These are quite hard and a little perished in some places and I can't get all of them to fit back into place. Is there anything I can do? The screen is held on with about half of them at the moment, which seems OK, but I don't want it coming off when I'm riding.

Sean O'Grady, Lambeth

A Often, putting these sorts of rubbers in a mug of hot (not boiling) water makes them pliable enough to be eased back into place. A longer-term solution is to use a specific product to keep existing parts in good condition and restore those that have suffered over the years. Holts Rubber and Nylon Lubricant (£5.79, 0845 2500050) is an excellent

product. A little goes a long way and it's well worth giving parts like the screen fasteners you mention and the rubbers that fairing panel lugs mount in a little squirt now and then to keep them supple. Several companies do replacement rubber "little top hats", which are called well nuts. Try Skidmarx (www.skidmarx.co.uk).



HOW TO LOCK UP YOUR BIKE

Whether you've got a £300 CG125 or a £4,000 R6, you're probably worried about it getting nicked. So spend an hour finding the best type of lock and the safest possible place to use it.

1 The first thing to consider is where you park it. If it's regularly in the same spot, in plain view, pro thieves will remember it's there. A garage or shed is ideal for keeping it out of sight; a cover will help, at least. Away from home, try and vary where you leave it and be wary of dark corners where thieves can work discretely.

2 The main principle is to use a good-quality lock, and lock it to something solid. That may mean installing a ground anchor at home. Some need drilling and bolting into hard standing, some need a hole digging and cementing in. An anchor that fits flush with the ground when not in use is a good choice (508 Retractable Ground Anchor, £59.99, 01443 830507). Away from home, try and lock your bike to something sturdy to stop your bike being lifted into a van.

3 Chains, cable locks and D- or U-locks vary in security depending how they're used. Avoid round-key locking mechanisms, as some are easily defeated. Try not to leave much room in D-locks because a jack or similar device can be inserted and used to pop a lock open.



4 The best security is a quality padlock and chain. Be wary of anything too big, which will be a pain to carry. Also, make sure before you buy that the chain will fit round a main component of your bike like the swingarm. The Oxford Hardcore XL (£47.99, 01656 768983) is sturdier than most and good value. Don't let chains rest on the ground where it's vulnerable to attack.

5 Disc locks are less secure but they still help. Cheap cast ones are easier to defeat than forged steel ones. Keep any lock mechanism well oiled with something like 3-in-1 to keep it smooth but also to minimise the chance of a successful superglue attack.

FROM THE FORUM



Got a technical problem? Need quick answer? There's plenty of clued-up petrolheads online at our forum (www.superbike.co.uk) you can discuss it with. Check out this recent thread:

? WAX OR LUBE

What is the difference between chain wax and chain lube, and what are the benefits or drawbacks? **Lynx84**

XRider

Chain wax is a lube, but it's much stickier than standard chain oils. The benefits are that it 'flings' less, so stays on the chain longer, and leaves your back wheel, number plate and undertray cleaner. The drawbacks are that, because it's stickier, road grime will stick to it more, creating a gritty, abrasive mixture that'll wear your chain out. I can't see that it penetrates as well as a lighter, oil-type lube, either. Most guys I know who use wax apply a lighter lube first, and then wax on top to hold the lube and prevent the fling. Does this work? I don't know - I use a Scottolier myself!

Tapoutduke

What has been suggested in the past is to use a normal lube first, to penetrate the chain and links, and then apply the wax. The wax doesn't fling off like normal lube and keeps the chain cleaner for longer.

Biggles

Yep. Use both if you want to be extra zealous. Wax does *not* prevent rust. Regular lube does. This time of year, you definitely want to prevent salt from rusting links. So lube for me is the priority. Lube and let it penetrate. In dry months (if you find any), wax is all you need. As I have both, I use both in winter, but *not* at the same time. Two lubes, then one wax, then two lubes, seems about the right ratio to keep rust at bay and not get too much fling. Frankly, this is a bit OTT, but does keep everything bright and shiny. I believe you would be wasting time and money lubing and then putting wax on top straight after, as it simply slides off the lube.

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CONTROLLING WHEELSPIN

Dealing with a loss of rear-wheel traction is a skill for all seasons, not just winter. Wheelspins can happen any time. Stay calm to stay in control

Words: Jon Pearson Pics: Mike Weston (main image)/Ray Archer

Wheelspin is something many of us will or already have had to deal with at one time or another. But do you take it in your stride or do you crap your pants when it happens? Depending on your experience, it's more likely to catch you unawares (or bother your underwear) if it happens when you're not anticipating it. When's it likely? Pulling away from a junction with a bit too much throttle, filtering through traffic and catching the gravel at the road edge, on a wet road, manhole cover, over-banding or possibly on a dry road (or track) when you're hard on the gas out of a corner - it's a long list.

There are two things to try and teach

yourself when it comes to controlling wheelspin: learning to instinctively deal with it and learning to see it coming in the first place.

This month's technique definitely isn't about learning to rear-wheel steer or any of those terms you'll perhaps hear top racers taking about. It's much more to do with being in control and teaching your brain and throttle hand to work in tandem and react instinctively to what is an important skill to master. Developing your skill in controlling slides is an extremely useful tool to have in your armoury, not least for the time(s) when it happens unexpectedly. Instinctively 'knowing' what to do could be vital.

5 Techniques to practise

1 Reading the road in the first place is a preventative measure. It's less of a technique to learn, more something you likely already know. You should be spotting the hazards, like gravel in the road and manhole covers, but more importantly you should know when you're in a situation in which you might lose traction (exiting corners, pulling out of junctions quickly, etc). Reading when it will happen is half the game.

2 Practising accelerating hard in a straight line sounds a bit basic but it helps to understand more about how much grip you have and what happens when the tyre breaks loose. This is different to controlling a slide while you're leant over (so when the back tyre breaks away while you're turning) but this will help you to get to know the feeling of a slide with less chance of feeling out of control. If nothing else, it will teach you how hard you can actually open the throttle before you lose grip.

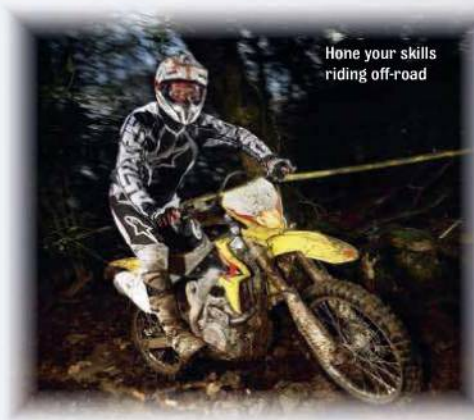
3 When you accelerate hard, it's unlikely you'll keep the back wheel in-line, effectively. It will 'step out' one way or the other. Try to teach yourself to react in a measured way, not reacting with a panic slamming shut of the throttle but knocking-off the throttle slightly. Slamming it shut is a more violent reaction which does stop the wheel spinning quicker but makes

your back wheel get back in line suddenly, and potentially violently, depending on how far it has skewed. Rolling the throttle off a touch instead helps the tyre recover grip gently and means you don't lose momentum.

4 The second perhaps more obvious technique is the same as in your car or any vehicle and that is to steer into the slide. If it slides to

the right, steer to the right to compensate. A speedway rider taking a corner is the most graphic example of steering into a slide but the principle is the same even for the smallest slides.

5 It's a well-trodden path for the world's best racers to use off-road riding to hone their skills, practise their sharpness at controlling the bike and in particular work on the 'feeling' of a bike moving around under them. It's more than that, though. The point to spending time off-road and gaining experience is that it teaches you that a bike moving around is nothing to get over-excited about, maybe more than that, in fact, it is something to be enjoyed. If going faster is your goal, a sliding rear wheel is something you can work with, control, be comfortable with and learn to exploit. For the majority of riders, who don't care about going faster and never will, off-road riding encourages your instinct to control slides in a much safer environment.



Hone your skills riding off-road



Tyre choice

Modern tyres help us a lot with grip and feedback, and trusting them more is something most of us can learn. Unless grip is compromised with a poor road surface or rain, you usually have more grip than you think you have.

Are your tyres right for the conditions? Are you on a track tyre in the rain or a sports-touring tyre on the track? Learning when you can and can't trust your tyres is important, as is keeping them in good, correctly inflated and well-maintained condition.

Roll off

Teach yourself to roll off the throttle to recover grip smoothly. Slamming it shut can have a dramatic effect, as the wheels snap back into line, throwing you out the seat (at worst).

Gears for grip

In any situation where you're worried about grip and you want to prevent wheelspin, gear choice is very important. Open the throttle hard in first and you'll obviously have a very different reaction from your bike than in third or fifth gears. Changing up to a higher gear means less power going through your back wheel and less chance of losing grip.

2003 - 2009



HONDA CBR600RR

A true legend in its own lifetime, the Honda CBR600RR rewrote the 600cc sportsbike rule book. All you need to know about buying in to that legend is right here

Words: Jon Pearson

Pics: John noble, Jason Critchell, Graeme Brown/2Snap





Honda CBR600RR

The Honda CBR600RR needs very little introduction. The phrase 'all things to all men' is truly justified here. It's a bike equally as brilliant for a novice taking their first sportsbike steps as it is for a racer gunning for victory. It doesn't matter what you're doing, where you're going or how quickly you want to do it. The CBR600RR feels good, accommodating, right, ready, precise, balanced – the list goes on. It is the essence of the modern sportsbike: concentrated perfection, and quite capable of being installed in a design museum.

That is a lot of very high praise spewed-up on your plate but it's as well to make things clear from the start; few manufacturers have ever hit the nail so squarely on the head as Honda did when it created its first CBR600RR. It is arguably Honda's best ever bike.

Bold move

In fact, the first RR model – which came along in 2003 – was a very bold move. It steered away from the established path of sports 600s, particularly the Honda CBR600F, first introduced in 1992 (and still in production in 2003). Up until then, the famous CBR middleweight had become one of the best all-rounders on the market. For 15 years it had been all things to all men and there wasn't much it couldn't do well. But in 2003 Honda decided to make a very

different sort of CBR.

Having flirted with a slightly more aggressive 'Sport' version of the bike in 2001 (to run alongside its versatile F model), in an effort to boost its chances in supersport racing, Honda went the whole-hog two years later and the CBR600RR was born.

The new RR version spearheaded the new, sharper supersport class with more-angular looks, quicker handling, and rapidly established itself as a benchmark by which all other sports 600s should be judged. Other manufacturers have produced models which in one way or another have challenged the CBR, but

“Honda achieved its aim perfectly, with total domination of road bike sales charts and unrivalled track success.”

until 2009 nothing else was quite as complete a package.

The CBR600RR's secrets come from within the depths of Honda and its racing arm, the Honda Racing Corporation (HRC). Much was made of the claim that inspiration



came from the RC211V MotoGP bike, with 'mass centralisation' and 'MotoGP DNA' buzz-phrases shouted loud and clear. The chassis truly did mimic the geometry and rigidity of the GP bike in terms of feedback to the rider. Here

was a bike which truly felt and looked like a race bike, yet somehow had the civility to take you to the shops – a user-friendliness some say is true of the RC211V GP race bike too. The evidence would suggest Honda achieved

its aim perfectly, with total domination of the road bike sales charts and unrivalled track success (see separate box).

Sit on one, take it for a ride and it's easy to see why so many people found it irresistible enough to >



You've come a long way baby, or have you? How the CBR600RR looked in 2003 (left) and how it looks in 2010 (right)



HONDA CBR600RR

What to look for...

The CBR is a popular bike that has sold really well since it was launched

There are so many CBR-RRs to choose from that you can afford to be fussy and ignore anything you don't like the look of. It's popular with riders and popular in the dealers, so there are plenty around, both private and trade.

1 Tail-pieces can crack easily if they are removed ham-fistedly. Replacements are expensive at over £250. Standard chain and sprockets will wear quickly if the bike is used hard. Replacement parts should be bought together.



8 Rearsets are a good idea if you're even thinking of fitting sticky tyres and going on trackdays – the ground clearance isn't exactly criminal but the achievable lean angle most definitely is.

9 Extras worth looking for include the usual Power Commander and aftermarket end-can. The obvious benefits being an improvement to the overly rich low-down fuelling, the less obvious being the handling gains once rid of the weighty catalyst dangling right over the rear spindle. There's always a chance to get as much as possible out of the otherwise weak midrange too.

10 Without a Power Commander and dyno run, the ECU will sort itself out but it'll take time and miles to reprogramme itself to give the ultimate fuelling. It must go through all the heat and throttle opening cycles before it resets itself to suit the new can.

2 Earlier models were recalled for a seized rear brake linkage rose joint, which could cause the rear brake to drag and wear pads and disc prematurely. Side-stand bolts can work loose and need lubing to keep the action smooth.

3 The suspension can generally be dialled in to suit most riders, though spirited riding will soon have you shopping around for a steering damper.

4 Earlier 2003 machines are a bargain, but the radially-mounted brakes and inverted forks of the 2005 machine are worth the extra cash.

5 If you're thinking of buying a cheap one just for trackdays, be wary of ex-race bikes – for every well-sorted CBR there are plenty of badly tuned ones on the market and without the right (read expensive) kit parts, the motor's reliability can suffer.



6 The 599cc motor is as reliable as they come. As far as buying second-hand is concerned, it's one less thing to worry about. So long as the bike has been regularly serviced, there's more chance of a date with Kylie than there is of a blown motor.

7 The short front mudguard lets road dirt cover the exhaust headers and front of the engine. Extenders aren't long enough to solve the problem. Either clean the bike often or don't ride in bad weather.



SPECIFICATION (2010 MODEL)

Costs: £7,528
 NU Ins group: 16

Engine

Type: LC, 16v DOHC in-line four
 Capacity: 599cc
 Bore x stroke: 67 x 42.5mm
 Compression ratio: 12.2:1
 Carburation: 4 x 40mm FI throttle bodies
 Carburation: Six speed
 Max power: 106.8bhp@13,745rpm
 Max torque: 45lb-ft@11,136rpm

Cycleparts

Chassis: Twin-spar cast aluminium
 Suspension: (F) 41mm USD Showa forks, fully adjustable
 (R) Showa monoshock, fully adjustable
 Brakes: (F) twin 310mm discs, four-piston radial calipers, optional ABS
 (R) single 220mm disc, single-piston caliper, optional ABS
 Rake/trail: 23° 55' / 98mm
 Wheelbase: 1,375mm
 Seat height: 820mm
 Fuel tank: 18litres (3.95gals)
 Weight: 197kg (measured, fully wet)
 Contact: www.honda.co.uk
 01753 590510



sign whatever finance deal they could get. The RR has a 'special' feel that few other bikes from the Honda camp – indeed any camp – have ever managed to achieve. This sorted feel is reminiscent of Honda's more enigmatic bikes, the RC30 possibly, but with so much less weight and so much more smoothness of application.

All-rounder

This CBR6 is just so hard to fault. A 600cc sportsbike should have certain qualities: smallness, lightness, agility, sharp steering, buzzing engine, strong brakes and a bullet-proof chassis. If you can find a category that Honda hasn't satisfied perfectly with the RR, then you're a sterner critic than me. In fact, you can easily argue a 600cc sportsbike should have those qualities simply because the CBR has them and therefore, by default, that's what everyone aims to be like. A serial group test winner here on this magazine, the 'good at everything' mantra rings true from the first test report in

"The RR has a 'special' feel that few other bikes from the Honda camp – indeed any camp – have ever managed to achieve."

2003 to the last in 2009.

There's a caveat, of course, because this is, after all, a 600cc sportsbike. It is therefore not very accomplished when it comes to trekking off to the mountains on a touring holiday – the flip-side of being more specialised as a sportsbike. Besides, Honda will argue that it makes plenty of other, more suitable models to choose from if touring's your bag.

It's not blessed with earth-shattering measurements of torque, either, and critics still

argue that the CBR's motor lacks mid-range. Most of those critics hark back to a time pre-RR when engines had a broader remit, a lot less power and pulled better through the gears. The sad fact for those critics is, like most manufacturers, Honda eventually realised that more power was the way forward to increasing sales. More power was also critical for those trying to win supersport races, where top-end output (from a 600cc in-line four) is always near the top of an engine-tuner's list of wants. Post-RR model, the race for more power in the supersport class pushed the rev-ceiling upwards and onwards – leaving a receding mid-range in its wake and the first 2003-04 model sadly reflected that. With every subsequent model update, more power was introduced, even when the top-end figure barely crept upwards. The mid-range took boosts of 5bhp here and 7bhp there to become the (more) useful tool it is in 2010.

In the CBR engine's favour, it has always had a beautifully

▶ SERVICING COSTS

Minor every 4,000miles/12months: **£150**
Major every 8,000miles/24months: **£385**

New or used, the CBR600RR is a strong-selling bike and, by all accounts, a typical, bullet-proof Honda. Used prices reflect the matter-of-fact way they come and go from the showrooms, so don't expect much discount unless a bike is shoddy. A comparatively low, new RRP reflects the used price of all models, but prices should always be reasonable.

▶ TYPICAL VALUES*

Year	Reg	Price
2003	03	£3100-4925
2003	53	£3225-5095
2004	04	£3350-5325
2004	54	£3475-5450
2004	54	£3600-5575
2005	54	£3700-5700
2005	05	£3850-4775
2005	55	£3950-4900
2006	55	£4075-5025
2006	06	£4200-5175
2006	56	£4350-5325
2007	56	£4475-5450
2007	07	£4650-5625
2007	57	£4800-5775
2008	57	£4900-5875
2008	08	£5050-6025
2008	58	£5175-6150
2009	58	£5300-6375
2009	09	£5450-6525
2009	59	£5575-6650

▶ GENUINE SPARES PRICES

Front brake lever	£44.57
Complete mirror	£47.04
Footrest (peg only)	£46.04
Middle fairing panel	£205.32
Front brake disc	£126.27

CBR600RR History

Those model changes at a glance

2003 Launched with a fanfare

It was a ground-up new model (rather than a re-design of the old CBR600F). It featured a new aluminium chassis and swingarm, conventional forks and brakes but with a race-mimicking underseat exhaust and sharp new styling.

■ 169kg (claimed) ■ 104bhp@13,046rpm



2005 Model revamp

To answer the critics and give it more mid-range power, a sturdier front end with upside-down forks, radial-mounted front brakes and a bodywork tweak.

■ 193kg ■ 107bhp@13,500rpm



2007 Tweaked all-round, more power

Including better suspension and weight loss (2kg in the engine alone. 186kg measured wet made it lightest in class by some distance) matched with a new look, most noticeable at the front-end air-intake. This is the best model to date, in our books.

■ 186kg ■ 107bhp@13,745rpm



2009 Bloated

The 2009 model gained weight and a hefty combined-ABS system. Yet another claimed increase in mid-range power couldn't alter the fact that extra weight had clearly slowed it down. The bodywork also changed a little, the engine hardly at all, but it was a deeply underwhelming revision.

■ 197kg ■ 110bhp@13,093rpm



*SuperBike power and (wet) weight figures, measured by us unless otherwise stated.

“I’ve got one of those...”

CBR rider Caroline Woolhouse is full of excited praise for the ‘RR’



I never get tired of it, I never stopped saying ‘Wow! That’s mine,’ every time I pulled the cover off it. And I really appreciated it being a solo enjoyment; it was my bike and I rode it [myself]. I only ever took my friend Stephanie on the back. She is exactly the same size as me, so could borrow all of my spare gear. I also felt like everything on it was completely adequate. It had an engine, a speedo and an amazing feel. What else do you need? I’m not

all that impressed with the new ones, from what I’ve seen.

“I haven’t delved into the comparative specs yet; but the new ones look heavier. I don’t like that. I liked the refined, short but almost gazelle-like structure of mine. I’m not saying it was slender or feminine, just it was technically and aesthetically perfect. A near unachievable match made in heaven. Hell, the swingarm was a work of art on its own!”

“I got pulled over twice on the bike and got away both times, as the bike stole the show (and I was really polite and honest. I just remarked that it was possible I was having too much fun and that the acceleration takes some getting used to).”

“I didn’t intend to buy from Honda necessarily; but for me they (Dobles Honda) were the best dealer. I suffered the least amount of crudeness, jokes, sexism and peacockery. Also, knowing I wasn’t going to get torn to shreds for phoning and saying ‘Something’s wrong. I don’t know what, but it doesn’t feel right,’ was a real bonus. I didn’t get that vibe [or price!] from other manufacturers’ dealers.”



What the dealer says:

Mick Bone from Pidcock Motorcycles, in Long Eaton, Nottingham (0115 946 95 55), knows all the CBR600RR models inside-out

“The CBR600RR has always been a great-selling bike since the first model in 2003. Both new and used models have always been strong sellers. It took over the mantle of the old CBR600F.”

“I’d say they’re a ‘do-what-it-says-on-the-tin’ kind of bike, which is to say it’s no nonsense, at a good price, and the customers know exactly what they’re getting. They’re bullet-proof and always have been, with no reliability issues or warranty claims - it’s a very well-built bike.”

“The best thing about the CBR600RR, whether you’re a trackday hooligan or a complete novice, is that you can get on it and ride it easily. It’s an everyday bike, a really good track bike and everything in between.”

linear power delivery and is flexible, if your left gear-changing foot is too. The way to get the earlier models (and most 600s, to be fair) flying is to keep them singing and in the right gear.

The original 2003 model was criticised for a lack of midrange poke (there was very little else for us journalists to moan about) and while Honda did what they could to address things for the 2005 revamp, compared to the ground-up revision for 2008, it still feels fairly flat at anything much below 9,000rpm.

The Honda chassis has always been the sweet-spot, however, and it's here where most people, no matter what their ability, will find it hard to fault. Earlier models, those with the right-way-up forks and more conventionally mounted front brake calipers, were a tad on the soft side. But, with age and years, Honda tweaked the Showa settings to give more range and better damping. The Unit Pro-link rear suspension is unique and certainly one of the more visible ways you can point at where the MotoGP bike was an influence.

The final chapter in the CBR600RR saga is a slightly sad one. Don't worry, it hasn't died. It's just that our advice is to go for a pre-2009 model. The latest model is perfectly competent in all the same ways it always has been but it suffered two heavy blows: the opposition got stronger and Honda's new 'combined-anti-lock braking system' (C-ABS) made it heavier and feel slower.

Strong opposition

The opposition, particularly the Triumph's Daytona 675 and Kawasaki's ZX-6R, waded in to 2009 as stonking new models that were better all-round bikes than the Honda and which had a decent chunk more power. Thanks to the additional 11kg of weight of the C-ABS system on the Honda, every bike in class now has a more meaningful mid-range again (just as in 2003), even the ultra rev-happy Yamaha R6 felt torquey alongside it. In this class, power and weight matter.

With everything stripped off, these details will matter little to racers... but on the road? Honda's outlook on life has changed, and the CBR600RR has slipped from setting the trend to lagging behind. A victim of its own success? Maybe. **SB**

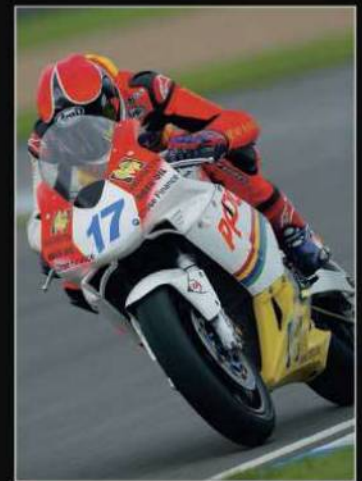
RACE PEDIGREE

Iconic status isn't born, it is earned. This bike deserves its status as a legendary supersport contestant. Sales figures alone don't maketh the man (or bike) either; the man (or bike) has to earn his stripes on the battle field. No race battlefields are fiercer than those of supersport championships. From club races to British championships to world championships, the CBR600RR has been totally dominant. It has been, consistently, the bike to have, whatever your level... until very recently.



British Supersport

Other manufacturers fared slightly better in Britain, with Suzuki and Triumph taking titles in 2007 and 2008 respectively. Apart from that, it's been Honda all the way, with the HM Plant team bagging three of those five titles since 2003. Karl Harris (left) took two in 2003/04, Leon Camier (right) brought Padgett's Honda the title in 2005 and Cal Crutchlow won for Northpoint Honda in 2006, before Steve Plater stopped the two-year rot for Honda by winning again in 2009.



World Supersport

In WSB it's not only a one-horse race but also a one-team race. Since 2003, a Ten Kate-tuned Honda CBR600RR has won every year, until Cal Crutchlow took it convincingly for Yamaha in 2009 - it still went down to the last race, though. Chris Vermeulen took the title in 2003, followed by his team-mate Karl Muggenridge in 2004. Frenchman Sebastien Charpentier (pictured right) did the double in 2005/06, followed by Kenan Sofuoglu in 2007 and Andrew Pitt in 2008.



REAL WORLD TEST OF TIME

USED STUFF

Yes, it's all manner of kit we've used and ridden in. Reviewed and rated, based on value, desirability, quality and performance

ALAN DOWDS' GARMIN ZUMO 660 SAT NAV

ON TEST FOR: 5 months
COSTS: £470.00
CONTACT: www.garmin.com

There's a school of thought that says GPS firms are in trouble, because once folk buy one, they don't need another. But the truth is, like phones, computers and tellys, newer models come out with enhanced capabilities. So, while, on the surface, this 660 model Zumo does the same job as the older 550, it's got a heap of new features that make it 'better' than before.

First of all, it works much

quicker and seems to have better satellite reception than the older models, which is a boon in town. Even when there are tall buildings about, the 660 rarely gets lost, and can keep up with even spirited urban riding. The mapping is clearer, and you get a 3D image of a junction as you come up to it, so you can tell if, for instance, you need to be in the third lane from the left in a five-lane motorway merge. It has 3D landmarks too, so as you pass the London Eye, say, it appears on the screen,

aiding routefinding nicely.

The screen functions are now customisable too, so you can choose which info to display on the main screen. This sounds unimportant, but is a big improvement over the 550 – as is the built-in waterproof speaker. You can hear instructions without a headset: handy for short trips in town. The screen is wider and clearer; the battery lasts longer; and the unit is slimmer and lighter. Bracketry is easy to fit, and the supplied car mount is easy to use and works well.

Criticisms? None really. The old one could be locked on to your bike, and this one can't, so you need to take it with you at petrol stations etc. Garmin says its research showed owners didn't use the locking feature, so it got dumped. I'd have preferred it to stay, but it's by no means a big complaint.

SUPERBIKE RATING:
9/10

ALAN DOWDS' BMW STREETGUARD 3 SUIT

ON TEST FOR: 8 months
COSTS: £555 Jacket/£430 Trousers
CONTACT: www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk

BMW has a long history of producing excellent clothing with high-spec materials and cunning design, and that continues here. The outer shell on the Streetguard 3 suit looks much like any other black Cordura-type stuff, but is much cleverer. It incorporates nano-scale technology which increases its breathability when conditions are warm and reduces it when it's cold outside. It's a 'special' black too, which absorbs less sunlight heat, making it cooler on hot summer days. On all the impact areas, it's covered in super-tough Dynatec to resist abrasion.

So it has all the tech – but does it work? Well yes, basically. I used it most of last summer with linings out, and put them in when it got colder. I've never had any rain ingress, except on one summer trip when it hosed it down mercilessly for 200 miles, and the rain came in over the top of the jacket zip. But that was because I'd removed the zip-off storm cuff at

"I have a variety of excellent winter kit, but the BMW suit is my number-one practical riding outfit"

the collar, giving the rain an easy path in under my chin. With the extra storm section properly in place, the suit seems utterly impermeable.

It's warm too, although I'm still happier wearing an electric vest on really cold days. Worn with a T-shirt and a Chill-Out thermal shirt, this jacket is good for temperatures down to about zero degrees C.

Practicalities are good, and the protection it provides is comprehensive, with a massive back-protector plate and the usual joint protectors. But when you pick the jacket up when it's cold, the plates feel solid and unyielding. Once it's on, you don't really notice the rigidity, though.

The final test, of course, is how often I wear it. I have a variety of excellent winter kit from Hein Gericke, Dainese and Spidi. What's telling is that the BMW suit has been my number-one practical riding outfit pretty much ever since I got it. I almost knocked a mark off for the high price, but if you use it as comprehensively as I have, and it stands up to all the abuse, then it probably represents good value compared with cheaper options.

SUPERBIKE RATING:
9/10

Dowds then proceeded to pub and Fell Over

REAL WORLD **STAFF BIKES**

JON PEARSON'S **KTM ADVENTURE**



■ **TOTAL MILES DONE:** 3,898 ■ **MODS:** Tyre pressures dropped



“The Adventure is a reassuring bike in these conditions. There aren't many other road bikes I'd rather be on”

Riding a bike at this time of year can have its pleasures but they are few, very few. The wintry landscape might look nice from high up in the seat of a KTM Adventure, but down there under the tyres the roads are tricky at best, dangerous and miserable at worst.

This picture (right) shows a stretch of road a couple of miles from my house, after the first of the heavy snow storms. There was no going anywhere while the snow was around, and the situation didn't improve very swiftly for the KTM and me.

While conditions remained cold, the ice didn't thaw; rather, it just kept spreading, as the stream running down the road was splashed up by all the passing vehicles (the Council isn't too hot on road maintenance round my way).

Still, if you're confident with the Adventure, it is a reassuring bike in these conditions. There aren't many other road bikes I'd rather be on, with the exception, possibly, of the Yamaha XTZ660 Tenere or BMW F800GS, both of which are lighter than the Adventure. I've boosted my own confidence by dropping the tyre pressures a tad, down to 27psi front/25psi rear while the temperatures remain mostly below

freezing. It's lower than recommended but I wanted to get some squish into them, feel the road surface, help the tyre bend and warm better and most of all give me more warning when it slides. It's definitely working.

Not so hot

It's not been all plain sailing on the KTM, mind you. The dodgy temperature gauge has

been a notable flaw in the weather conditions we've had. It's started reading much too high. Today, for instance, the thermometer in my garden read -5°C, while the bike thought it was a balmy 16°C. It's not the end of the world, but when the temperature is plummeting below freezing while I'm riding, I want to know about it. Other niggles are a

smidge of condensation in the tachometer face that smears the numbers around the 8,000rpm-mark and the few rust spots which have begun to appear on the spokes. There's nothing exceptional about the KTM's having these faults; any bike I've owned or had as a long-termer has had 'niggles', and they all get on your nerves. It's a hard life being a commuter bike in this weather. **SB**



BRING ON SPRING

BACK ON THE TRIUMPH AGAIN

Fortunately for the Adventure, it's the end of its short time here. By the time you read this, I'll be back on the Street Triple again.

I have to admit I'm not sure how it's going to seem after the tall, rangy, half-faired and semi-knobby/trail-type tyres of the KTM. I had the little Triumph by this time last year but the weather was never quite as bad for as long as it has been this year. The tyres are the one urgent job that needs sorting, as the Michelin Power One tyres are far too summer-oriented in their tread pattern for my liking.



CONTACTS

■ **KTM UK**
01280 709500
www.ktm.co.uk
■ **TRIUMPH UK**
www.triumph.co.uk

REGULAR UPDATES <http://www.superbike.co.uk/bikes>



KENNY PRYDE'S HONDA XR250

■ TOTAL MILES DONE: 1,067 ■ MODS: Exhaust modification, baffle drilling



My Suzuki GSX-R1000 K9 is, to all intents and purposes, an ex-bike: in my mind, it has ceased to be. Which is to say Suzuki GB sent me an email asking if it could have its lovely bike back please. I went into denial, hid it in my garage, covered it in a dust sheet, contemplated buying it... and then Britain was annexed by Greenland and everything ground to a halt, covered in a freezing white blanket. The GSX-R wasn't going anywhere in a hurry, but I was only putting off the evil hour. Bye bye Suzuki, it was a real pleasure.

Meanwhile, with the roads still a treacherous lottery, something cheap, light and liberally coated in Scottolier's FS365 fluid comes into its own – like a Honda XR250, for example. And, as luck would have it, I've got one in the garage, a fine eight-year-old model I bought, er, eight years ago.

I confess I bought it with an eye on going green-laning, but that never happened. I took it out once and finally realised that what I needed to do was turn it into a road

hack. It's got a kick-start and no indicators, allied to wonky bash-guards and the weakest headlights allowed by law, but it's mine, it does the job and I really like it.

Plus, being an ancient-design, single-cylinder engine, it's about as uncomplicated as a bike motor gets. In fact, I ended up attacking the exhaust header pipes with a Dremel which, as far as I'm concerned, makes me an engine tuner. (Kidding, kidding). As you can see from the photo (below), the pipework needed a bit of tidying up.

Slip sliding away

Allied to a little bit of research on that new-fangled internet, I also drilled some extra holes in the baffle in the end-can. I'd like to think that I've now got a bit more, ahem, top end. Needless to say, there are no 'before-and-after' dyno charts to justify my claims for the 'tuning' work, but I'm happy. There's something truly satisfying about wielding a noisy tool, applying it to a bike and watching pieces of metal being ground into swarf.

However, if I was to truly turn the bike into the road hack it was destined to be, I needed to get rid of the OE knobbly tyres which, to be fair, weren't designed for the road. I've fitted a pair of Dunlop Trailmax tyres which, so far I have no complaints about at all. They seem stable enough on the front brake and haven't properly let go at the rear yet.

On that subject, Chris Northover, a young British supersport racer, has suggested I should be trying harder to lose the rear on the exit of greasy roundabouts and suchlike slippery places – so that I get a feel for it, or something. It sounds great in theory, sitting here, safe and warm at my desk, but the reality? Ach, what's the worst that can happen?

And, now that I've dug the bike out from hibernation, I think that the brake fluid is a weird colour and that the brake lines could possibly be improved. So too, in fact, could the entire braking 'experience' – my god, have I just stumbled upon a 'project'?

“A young British racer suggested I should be trying harder to lose the rear on greasy roundabouts. What's the worst that can happen?”



The snow has been helping Kenny get a feel for losing the back-end – without having to pull away

Engine tuners, look away; the editor's revving up his Dremel

CONTACTS

- Dunlop www.dunlopmotorcycle.co.uk
- Scottolier FS365 www.scottoiler.com

REAL WORLD STAFF BIKES



ALAN DOWDS' SUZUKI BANDIT 1250

■ **TOTAL MILES DONE:** 932 ■ **MODS:** Yoshimura Oval Cone stainless slip-on can, Oxford Hot Grips, Acumen DG8 digital gear indicator, Garmin Zumo 660 GPS satnav



Well, this is a turn up for the books. Last month, I was bereft, left alone in a sea of tears, having had both my BMW F800R and Suzuki B-King taken away from me. I was looking down the barrel of a winter's commuting on my doughty-but-aged Peugeot Elystar 150 scooter. Not the end of the world, but a bit of a come-down after the 300bhp supercharged B-King and the superfly high-tech fun roadster that is the F800R.

But then, like a series of Nostradamus' planetary alignments, things all moved in my direction. JP had sorted out a Bandit 1250 as a medium-term loan bike from Suzuki GB to tide him over the winter (he lives ten times as far from work as me, so a scooter wouldn't really cut it). However, he earned a three-month reprieve from having to return his 2009 long-term Triumph Street Triple R. This all coincided with the arrival of a KTM Adventure 990 into the office for a three-month assessment...

Without further ado, and before anyone worked out exactly what was happening, I snatched the keys to the van, drove to Suzuki GB and collected the Bandit. Possession is, after all, nine-tenths of the law, is it not? (if anyone knows what that means, do let me know). So there I was, before the F800R had actually physically gone back, with a spunky new 59-plate Bandit 1250 in my grubby mitts for the foreseeable future. Tidy.

I had the bike home and in

my garage before I'd even really checked out exactly what I had. As it turned out, I'd been loaned the 'streetfighter' spec Bandit, which is to say one without the burden of a half-fairing or an ABS system. Much of my riding will be within the M25, so the lack of fairing is mostly moot. But the tremendously inclement weather of last December did have me yearning a bit for even the largely symbolic protection of a half-fairing. And when the mercury plummeted way below zero, I was beginning to seriously miss the safety net of ABS which I'd enjoyed all year on the BMW.

In fact, there were a series of things I missed from the BMW F800R. In order of importance, they were: heated grips, ABS, air temperature display, fuel mileage remaining display and sat-nav. The Bandit is very much a budget machine (it's cheaper now than when it was launched 14 years ago), so it's much shorter on bells and indeed whistles than the comparatively pricey BMW. The Bandit costs just £5,995 vs £6,460 for a basic F800R. BMW charges £600 for ABS, £200 for grips and £135 for the computer though, so I was really comparing a £6k bike with a £7.5k bike... £8k if you add the GPS.

Reassuringly familiar

Anyway, the riding impressions of the Bandit were pretty close to what I thought on the launch of the bike a couple of years back. It's a big



Grips, control panel, stripped-down bike. Getting the Bandit exposed like this is a four minute job. Read it and weep, sportsbike fans

old beastie, with a relaxed, grunty motor, and a chassis that works better than its spec suggests. At this time of year (winter) I put more of a premium on communication between myself and the tyres than on maximum performance all round. And while the Bandit does OK, the extra poundage she carries

CONTACTS

- **Oxford Products**
www.oxprod.com
- **Klan heated clothing**
www.giali.com
- **Yoshimura**
www.phoenixnw.co.uk
- **Garmin**
www.garmin.com
- **Suzuki**
01483 207000
www.suzuki-gb.co.uk
- **BMW**
www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk
- **Big CC**
www.bigccracing.com

REGULAR UPDATES <http://www.superbike.co.uk/bikes>



Al, proving he's a 'man of the people', by fitting a 'no-frills' Yoshi can

(222kg dry), and the slightly soggy suspension does blur those lines of communication a little. The engine is tractable and silky smooth, fuel injection as perfect as any other modern machine, and the gearbox, while a bit laboured between first and second, is snickety-boo elsewhere.

More importantly, I've already set about bringing the Bandit up to scratch equipment-wise. Step one was to plumb in the wiring for my incredibly good Klan heated vest. I've had this for three winters now and it's not an exaggeration to call it my favourite bit of winter kit. It keeps your core body toasty and, best of all, the collar has heated elements built in. A hot neck on a frozen morning is like a dose of liquid MDMA injected straight into your frontal lobes. Yummy.

Handy heaters

Next up were some heated grips. The good people at Oxford Products regularly besiege our office with boxes of their new products, so I had a set of the firm's Hot Grips sitting under my desk for just such an eventuality (not because you're a hoarder then? - Ed). Necessity is the mother of invention, they say, and frozen-solid fingers are the mother of sorting-out-your-heated-grips. With the forecasters predicting minus-ten-Celsius for



Garmin Zumo sat-nav fits easily on the Bandit's bars

the next day, I esconced myself in the garage and wasn't allowed out until the grips were in place.

It took about 90 minutes all-in. The Bandit is very easy to work on: two bolts and some hose and wire connectors have the tank off, another four Allen fasteners have the wee plastic covers at the headstock off, and that's you all ready to get working. The wiring is easy enough if you take the easy route and wire it straight onto the battery terminals. This works, but does mean the grips still operate with the ignition switched off. So if you forget to turn them off and park the bike up at work all day, you return to a flat battery. Guess which hero managed to do this on the second day he used the grips?

Anyway, two wires from one little control unit go to the battery, then a connector runs to the control panel with its on/off/level buttons. Another two connectors lead to the grips themselves. So the wiring is super-simple, and the only real job is to tidy the wires with cable ties, and keep the connectors as sheltered from the elements as possible. I also sprayed silicon grease on the connectors to keep moisture out.

The physical install is a bit more involved. There's a little bracket to mount the control panel which bolts onto the brake master cylinder - simple enough. But to get the grips fitted, you have to get the old ones off first. Unbolt the bar-end weights, then slide a slim screwdriver or similar between the grip and the handlebar. Work it round the bar until the grip is free, then slide it off. The throttle-side grip is a bit trickier, but there are no insurmountable problems.

Fitting the heated grips is easy on the clutch side - just slide her on, making sure the grip's wiring doesn't get in the way of any of the controls. A squirt of contact adhesive should hold everything in place. Again, the throttle side is harder because of the twist grip. On the Bandit there's a flange

on each end of the twistgrip as well as a series of ridges. I had to trim the outer flange off to get the grip over, and the inner flange stops the grip going fully home. I trimmed the end of the grip by a couple of millimetres, but it still interfered with the bar-end weight when I bolted it back on. I squirted some silicone grease onto the rubber to stop the grip sticking on the weight, which was an interim fix. The full fix appeared next day when the bar-end fell off somewhere between Worcester Park and Croydon...

I didn't care, though, because I had hands as warm as toast next day. It was minus-two degrees Celsius outside, so I assumed I'd need the Hot Grips on the '100 per cent' setting. But, halfway to work, my hands were too hot! As it turned out '40 per cent' was ample, and the Oxford Hot Grips are much hotter at full tilt than even the BMW items on my F800.

So I had a heated vest, heated grips, and with the addition of an Oxford Products 'Micro-Clock', I also had an air temperature

display. The Micro Clock is, as the name suggests, a clock, but it also has a temperature display. Sticky Velcro mounts it on the top yoke, so it couldn't be simpler.

Power to the people

Next up was an attempt to lose a bit of weight and add some style and sounds. 'Yoshimura' and 'Suzuki' go together like 'the Tories' and 'helping the rich at the expense of the poor', so it was a no-brainer to try and borrow a Yoshi pipe for El Bandito. Nothing too fancy - we're men of the people in many ways here at SB - so the lovely Wendy H at Phoenix NW provided a stainless steel slip-on Oval Cone end can. It's made in Japan, is welded beautifully, and has a removable dB killer in the end. Best of all, it's just under 3kg lighter than the stock can. Fitting is a breeze: literally two bolts has the stocker off, and those same two bolts plus two springs has the new 'un on there. The only faff is locating the mounting strap rubber under the mounting strap - I hate that job. 



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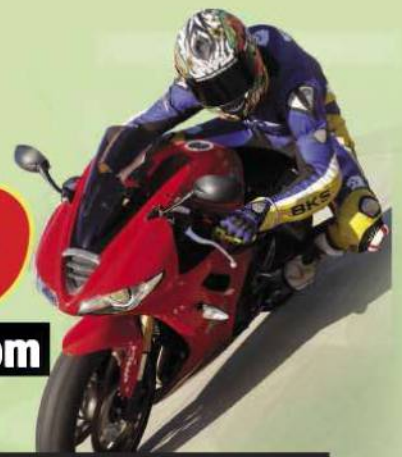
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HODGSON'S BACK

Ex-BSB and WSB champion Neil Hodgson has swapped Venice Beach, California, for Douglas prom, Isle of Man, and the US championship for the British one

"I was ready to come home from the US," admitted Hodgson, "but I have to say that the only thing I really miss is the winter weather in California; when you want to be out training in England in winter, it's not the same!"

Hodgson will be riding a Motorpoint Yamaha with Rob McElnea Racing, and was complimentary about the Yamaha R1. *"It's not often that a bike can surprise you, especially when you've been racing and riding as long as me, but that Yamaha has the best on-off throttle response of any bike I've ever ridden. The AMA Honda Fireblade I had last year was like a turbo switch; as soon as you tapped on the throttle it either wanted to spin out or wheelie. The Yamaha is so much more tractable. And, it's weird, it always sounds as though it's in too low a gear."*

Hodgson's first impressions of the bike were gained at

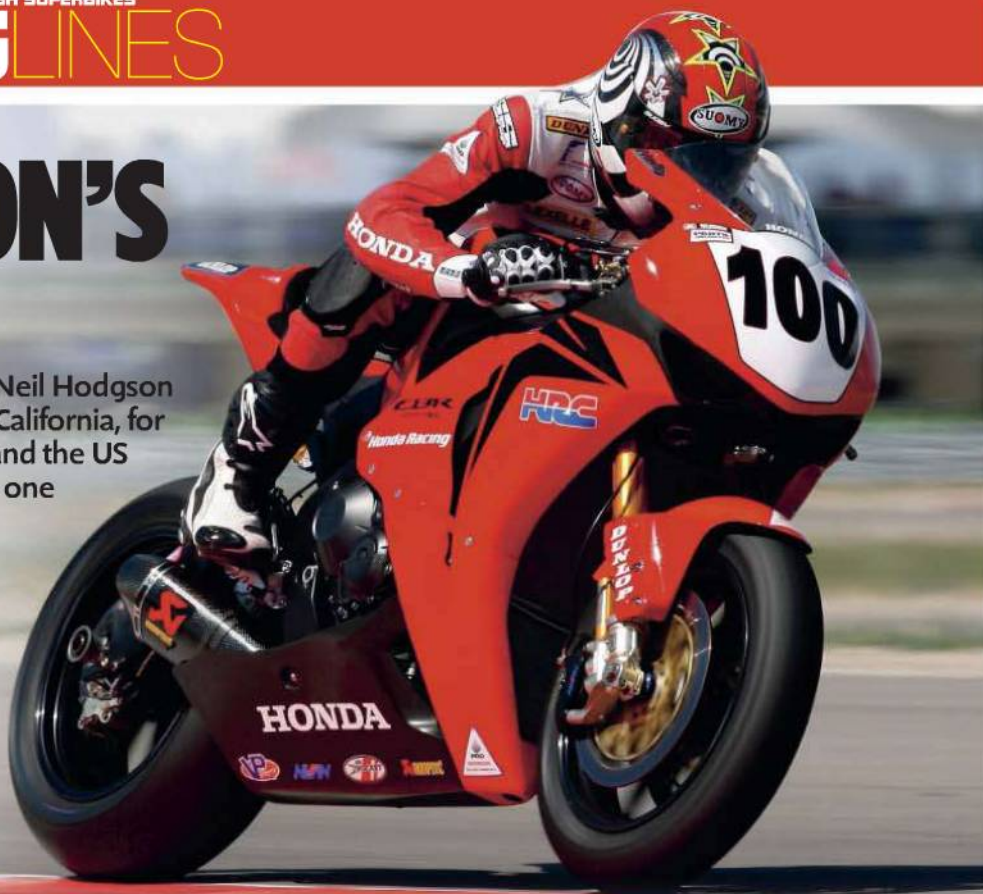
Almeria, Spain, on an open trackday. *"There are some good, tidy trackday riders out there, but the laptime differential can still be 10 or 15 seconds, and I was riding round not wanting to ruin anyone's bike – or weekend. Plus there were a couple of Desmosediccis as well, and I couldn't stand the repair bill*

if I had sent one of them into the gravel! [laughs]"

For his part, team boss Rob McElnea has been impressed by his new rider. *"He's like a proper breath of fresh air in the team, he's really keen and enthusiastic – and that's important."*

As far as the R1 goes,

McElnea reckoned the team had got more help and information from GSE racing which should help with chassis development. *"I really don't feel like we are too far away, certainly not in the engine department and we've got another couple of pre-season tests lined up at Cartagena and Guadix."*



► **WORLD SUPERBIKES**



TARDOZZI TO BMW

Davide Tardozi, after 18 years in Ducati WSB teams, has moved to take over the team manager's role at the factory-backed BMW WSB team

Not many people could have predicted Davide Tardozi's move from Ducati to BMW. The previous incumbent of the BMW role, Rainer Baumel, is to concentrate on the technical developments of the S1000RR.

The

BMW team is about to start its second season in WSB, with the bikes ridden by Troy Corser (right) and Ruben Xaus.

And, while Tardozi might seem like a strange addition to the Teutonic team, bear in mind that he has managed both Corser and Xaus before and he knows how to run a team's logistics, something it's not clear the 2009 BMW team had sorted. If the staffing levels on a team can be used as a measure of the team's intent or seriousness, then BMW is the most serious team in the



paddock by a margin. There were 42 BMW personnel at the Portimao winter test. In comparison, Ducati and

Kawasaki teams each comprised 20-25. So perhaps it's no wonder Tardozi was drafted in to install some order.

QUOTES OF THE MONTH



**Valentino as a team-mate?
 The problems would be all his.**

Casey Stoner marks his Ducati territory.



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Toseland's back

James Toseland has already won the World superbike championship twice. And, after two years in MotoGP, he's back. Can he do it again? Is he the same rider, just as hungry? Find out next month.



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▶ WORLD SUPERBIKES

TEAM GREEN ON THE UP

Even from a neutral perspective, it's been too long since Kawasaki was at the head of affairs in the World Superbike championship. Is that about to change?

Now that Kawasaki has pulled out of the MotoGP money pit, it is putting a lot more of its racing budget in the WSB team.

New rider Tom Sykes arrived at the Portimao, Portugal, pre-season test still not fully recovered from a shoulder injury sustained at Magny-Cours last season, but still made good progress.

The Kawasaki WSB effort has been cranked up in the past two years and this year sees the addition

of dedicated Magneti Marelli data and Showa suspension technicians. Newcomer Chris Vermeulen (pictured) had never been to the Portuguese circuit and was testing new Showa suspension, both front and back. According to Kawasaki team stalwart Stuart Bland, "We had a lot of new stuff from Japan and chassis parts to test. Chris has fitted into the team really well, he's got a great attitude and I think things will be better this season



and especially in 2011."

Sure enough, the Australian was as laid-back as the national stereotype suggests, but there's no doubt he has a real appetite for the job in hand. "I know I'm not on the most competitive bike out there at the moment, but I was confident when

I signed – for two years – that the team has the people and structure in place to move ahead." An important person among those people is Ichiro Yoda, the man who designed the first Yamaha M1 and was subsequently poached by Kawasaki. While the ZX-10R might

have progress to make, Vermeulen posted the third-best time at the Portimao wet test session, which suggests that inroads are already being made, well in advance of the 2011 season during which the team expects to be winning again.



RELENTLESS LAVERTY

Ian Lowry, rookie of the year on a superbike last season, hasn't managed to find himself a superbike ride for 2010. His place at the Relentless Suzuki team superbike will be taken by Michael Laverty, who won the 2007 British Supersport title with the TAS Relentless team. Laverty, one of three racing brothers (John and Eugene being the others), had a number of wildcard rides in the World Supersport championship last year, but says he's happy to be back on a superbike.

QUOTES OF THE MONTH



What team manager doesn't dream of having the two best players on his team? Rossi and Stoner with Ducati would be amazing – the interesting part would be getting them to work together.

Claudio Domenicali, Ducati boss, explores the parameters of 'interesting'



YAMAHA ON A DIET

The 2009 World Superbike Championship-winning Yamaha Italia R1 has been on a bit of a diet over the winter...

The Yamaha Italia R1 was not the lightest bike on WSB grids last year and, since the bike is unchanged, the Italian team has been working to lose weight, although team boss Massimo Meregalli was rather coy about how much: "We haven't checked it yet but it should be around two kilos [lighter] after we fit the new seat unit."

The bike was designed to fit the lanky Texan Ben Spies and his place has been taken by James Toseland and Cal Crutchlow, with Crutchlow in particular a much more compact shape than Spies. "Cal wasn't comfortable with the reach from the seat to the bars so we have dropped the seat by 15mm



and made some adjustments to the tank to help the bike 'fit' him better. Plus we have made adjustments to the footpegs and bars too," added Meregalli.

Even so, like every other team in the WSB and World Supersport paddock, the budget is very tight. "Last year, when the R1 was a new bike with a new rider, we had to get the bike to work and we weren't really focused on making it as light as possible. Now we are looking at that area, but we can't afford to change every single bolt to titanium, we just don't have the

money. If we had an unlimited budget, we could change more and make the bike lighter still, but it's not possible." Nevertheless, there were strong rumours that a new carbon fuel tank had been designed and would be used on the 2010 version of the bike. Meregalli was circumspect. "We have a completely new seat unit which we brought here to Portimao (the seat unit also houses the petrol tank – Ed.) and each rider has two bikes, one bike is a 2009-spec and the other is a '2010' bike with various development parts on it."

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THE CLASS OF 2010

Make no mistake, this season will see all the usual suspects favourite to wrest the MotoGP crown from Valentino Rossi's head. But what of the new boys, the four riders moving up to MotoGP from the 250cc world championship next season? Will we see any of them nipping at The Doctor's heels in 2010?

Words: Ian Wheeler **Pics:** Graeme Brown, 2Snap, Gold & Goose

Make no mistake, Valentino Rossi isn't going to find winning his tenth world championship in 2010 quite as easy as he found the first nine. The Doctor's Fiat Yamaha teammate, Jorge Lorenzo, finished this season on a high and will start next year confident of showing Rossi the way home on more than a few occasions.

Then there's arch-rival Casey Stoner, the last man to deny Vale the championship title. Stoner is firing on all four cylinders again after his enforced three-race lay-off and it's the Australian and his Ducati that Rossi cites as his main rival for the 2010 world championship.

Meanwhile, in the orange and blue camp, HRC has spent the second half of the season poaching technical staff from Yamaha and are now burning the midnight oil back in Japan, to ensure that diminutive Dani Pedrosa has the tackle he needs in 2010 to give Yamaha and Ducati a run for their money at the front of the field. So can any of the new breed really challenge the old order? *SuperBike* examines their credentials.

Marco Simoncelli
3rd 250GP 2009

Hector Barbera
2nd 250GP 2009

Alvaro Bautista
4th 250GP 2009

Hiroshi Aoyama
1st 250GP 2009

HIROSHI AOYAMA

The Kamikaze

Aoyama is the last ever 250cc World Champion. Last but not least, as his celebration T-shirts declared in Valencia. He was also something of a surprise winner, as nothing in his previous four seasons in the 250cc class had marked him out as a title contender. And he was on a Honda, when everyone knows that Aprilia decide who wins the quarter -litre class every year, don't they?



WHY 'THE KAMIKAZE'?

Just watch lap nine of the final 250cc round at Valencia for the answer!

Aoyama first competed as a wild card rider in the 250cc class in 2000, he was back for more in 2001 and 2002, but it was his final two wild card appearances in 2003 that guaranteed a full-time move to the world championship. At Suzuka, Aoyama finished an impressive second then backed that up with fifth place at Motegi. It was enough to land him a ride alongside Dani Pedrosa in the Repsol Honda team for the 2004 season.

Aoyama took his first race win for Honda in 2005, before jumping ship at the end of the season to join the Red Bull KTM team. After his first year with the orange team, during which he took two race wins and seven podium finishes in total, Aoyama was offered the chance to move up to MotoGP with the factory Kawasaki team. After weeks of discussions the Japanese rider opted to remain with KTM for the 2007 season, during which he picked up another two wins for the Austrian marque.

Aoyama ended the 2008 season without a win and without a ride, as KTM shelved its 250cc project to focus completely on the single-cylinder class. Given such a difficult season, it was a surprise when Scot Honda announced they'd signed the Japanese rider for 2009.

Well, a surprise it may have been, but Hiro-san tore up the form sheet in 2009 and took the title after an epic battle

"The inherent Japanese politeness goes out of the window and Aoyama is more than prepared to mix it up with the best of them."

Aoyama – suitable pleased with another home win.



THE CLASS OF
2010

with Marco Simoncelli and Alvaro Bautista; two riders who will be joining him in the MotoGP ranks in 2010.

But he didn't make it easy for himself, that's for sure. Having virtually secured the championship at the penultimate round in Malaysia, all Hiro had to do was finish 11th or better in the final round at Valencia to lift the championship trophy. No problem, surely?

Well, yes, it was a bit. Having decided that he must win the race for some obscure reason, Aoyama got into an early battle with Hector Barbera and Marco Simoncelli at the front of the race, before out braking himself in a major way at turn one just nine laps in. The Japanese rider overshot the turn, ran straight through the gravel and was lucky not to end his race there and then. After a bit of dirt tracking he regained the circuit and rejoined in - yes, you've guessed it - 11th place! He eventually hustled his Honda to seventh place at the flag, but it was immaterial, as his closest rival, Simoncelli, had already crashed out of the race.

It was a good insight to Aoyama's personality. If you meet him in the paddock then he comes across as a typical Japanese rider. He's very polite, very well spoken and happy to make time to chat to people. But don't be fooled, when it comes to the business of racing, the inherent Japanese politeness goes out of the window and Aoyama is more than prepared to mix it up with the best of them.

Take Portugal for instance. Aoyama finished just off the podium in fourth, but the fact that Alvaro Bautista had crashed out of the race meant that the Japanese rider had doubled his lead in the championship. Was he happy? No he wasn't, and he let everyone in the team know by launching half his kit across the pit box on his return. How many times have you seen a Japanese rider do that? Okay, Shinya Nakano did it once back in 2006, but it's certainly not something you'll see a Japanese rider do as often as, say, an Italian.



HECTOR BARBERA

The Elephant Man

You don't earn the nickname Hectic Hector by riding conservatively and Barbera has had quite a few 'hectic' moments in a Grand Prix career that started in the 125cc class back in 2002



WHY 'THE ELEPHANT MAN?'

Why 'Elephant Man'? Well, Barbera races with a cartoon elephant on his helmet. When asked about it he says simply that it's "my favourite animal". People who claim to be in the know, on the other hand, tell a different story: "You know, his thing? Whoa! It's like an elephant's trunk!"

The Spaniard is well known in the paddock for his belief that if you can fit a wafer thin slice of Spanish *jamón* into a gap then it's more than wide enough to do the same with a quarter-litre Grand Prix machine. Unfortunately for Hector, adhering religiously to this belief has led to more than his fair share of spectacular crashes. It's also led to some equally spectacular fallouts with his rivals over the years.

The Spaniard was just 15-years-old when he made his GP debut for the Aspar Aprilia team, and barely 16 when he showed his potential by winning the British Grand Prix at Donington Park the following season.

After 12 podiums and six wins in the single-cylinder class in 2005 the Spaniard stepped up to the 250cc class with the factory Fortuna team. Three podiums, including a race win, in 2006 were the highlight of the Spaniard's two years with the factory squad, which he left at the end of that season to join the Hungarian *équipe*, Team Toth. Five podium finishes aboard a customer-spec Aprilia in 2007 was enough to earn Barbera a factory-spec RSA for the following season.

Barbera started 2008 as one of the clear favourites for the title, but a big crash at Motegi, in which he sustained two fractured vertebrae, cut his season short and left him down in sixth place in the championship standings at the end of the year.

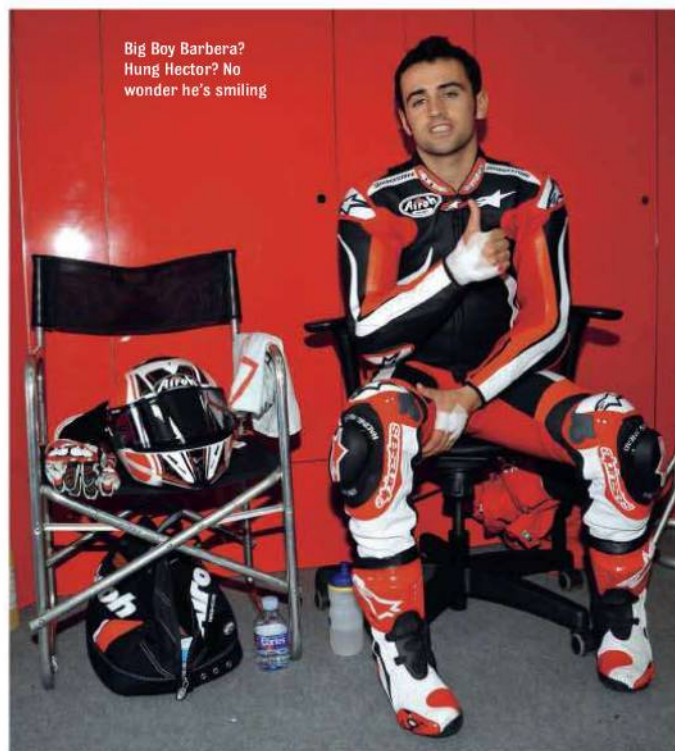
For the 2009 season Barbera joined the *Pepeworld.com* team under the direction of former double world champion, Sito Pons. >



WHAT ARE HIS CHANCES?

Unlike his fellow graduates, Hiroshi Aoyama will ride for a brand new MotoGP team in 2010

Run by Daniel Epp, the man behind the Emmi Café Latte team. Aoyama has the Honda RC212V that Scot Honda relinquished at the end of 2009 and has built a team that looks pretty good on paper. The key to Aoyama adapting quickly to the demands of a MotoGP machine will be his Crew Chief and, in Tom Jovic, the Japanese rider has one of the best in the paddock. Expect Aoyama to be finishing top ten by the mid point of the season.



➤ When he announced the signing, Pons declared that he would be looking to calm Barbera down, and hopefully help him lose the 'Hectic' tag that had followed him throughout his career. Good job Sito, because Barbera turned in a consistent performance in 2009 to take second place in the championship behind Hiroshi Aoyama and, more importantly for the Spaniard, just in front of fellow MotoGP new boy, Marco Simoncelli.

Why more importantly? Well, let's just say that Barbera and Simoncelli don't have the best working relationship in the 250cc paddock. There's no doubt that the Spaniard would have taken a perverse pleasure stealing second in the championship standings this year after his arch-rival crashed out while leading the final Grand Prix of the season!

The two riders were fined after having a bit of a 'handbag' moment in pit lane at the German Grand Prix on 2007, but it was the following year when all-out war was declared between the two. Having disputed the lead for the whole of the 2008 Italian Grand Prix at Mugello, it was Simoncelli who led Barbera around the penultimate lap. As they came out of the final corner to start their last lap, Barbera came out of the Italian's slipstream and went for the pass, only for Simoncelli to swerve across the track, hit Barbera's brake lever and send the hapless Spaniard sliding down the start finish straight at 160mph. "He could have killed me," declared Barbera after the race.



WHAT ARE HIS CHANCES?

Barbera will return to the Aspar team with which he made his MotoGP debut in 2010

The Ducati Desmosedici has, so far, only really been a race winner in the hands of Casey Stoner. The Spaniard was fastest of all the newcomers during the end of season Valencia test. However, there are still questions as to whether Barbera's static riding style, where he barely moves on the machine, will suit a MotoGP bike, on which bodyweight must be used to counteract the loss of grip as the tyres go off towards the end of a race. Expect him to struggle to break into the top ten in his debut season.



Barbera 'dresses to the right'. So he's better at right-hand bends. Maybe



THE CLASS OF
2010



“Barbera and Simoncelli were both fined after having a bit of a ‘handbag’ moment in pit lane at the German Grand Prix in 2007.”



125 world champ. Factory MotoGP ride in the bag. And you're surprised he's always grinning?

ALVARO BAUTISTA

Cheeky Chappy

Álvaro Bautista is one of those riders who doesn't seem to let anything bother him, including a run of disappointing results towards the end of the 2009 season, which cost him any chance of challenging Hiroshi Aoyama for the world championship title

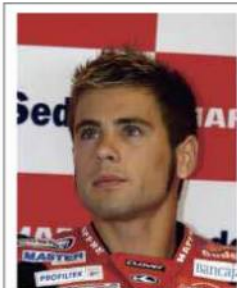
This attitude may serve him well in 2010, as he steps up to the MotoGP world championship with Suzuki. And let's be honest, he may be the only debutante making his first appearance in the premier class aboard a factory bike, but the Suzuki hasn't actually furthered the career of anyone who's ridden it so far, has it? Next year will certainly test Bautista's character and it will be interesting to see if he'll still be as chirpy at the end of the season as he was at the start of it.

Bautista made his Grand Prix debut back in 2002, but it wasn't until 2006 that he had a major impact on the world stage. Mind you, it was quite an impact, as he took the 125cc world championship title and an impressive eight wins along the way.

In 2007 he switched his attentions to the 250cc class, where he won the rookie of the year award with two race wins and five further podiums. All this meant that the following year Bautista started the season as the outright favourite to add the 250cc world title to the 125cc trophy he'd already won. But it wasn't to be. A run of bad luck, and the outstanding form of Marco Simoncelli, meant that Bautista was forced to settle for the runner-up spot in the championship standings come year-end.

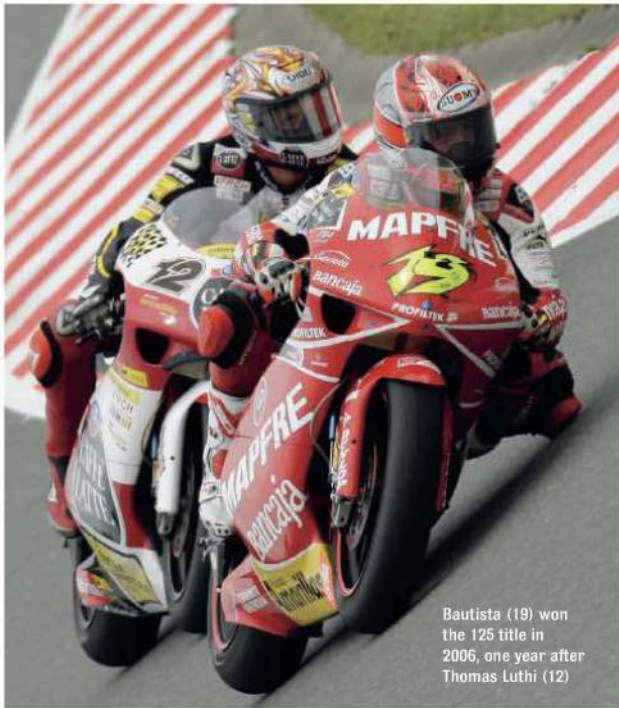
In 2009 the Spaniard was touted as the man most likely to deny Simoncelli his second consecutive world title. In fact, judging by the comments from most paddock pundits at the beginning of the year, you'd have been forgiven for thinking that Bautista and Simoncelli were the only riders capable of winning the championship.

The season started pretty well for Bautista, despite the fact that he appeared to have forgotten how to qualify on the front row, and how to get his Aprilia off the line before being passed by everyone on the fourth row. At Brno he even found time to keep the crowd amused while they were waiting for the MotoGP race, by celebrating his third place finish with a massive wheelie for the fans. Unfortunately, it all went a bit Pete Tong and he ended up flat on his back watching his factory Aprilia disintegrate in front of him >



WHY 'CHEEKY CHAPPY'

Because Bautista usually has a huge shit-eating grin on his face, regardless of what's happening around him. Meeting the fans? Big grin. Won a race? Cheeky grin. Smashed the crap out of your €250,000 factory bike by looping it in a post race celebration? Smile for the camera Alvaro! Oh, and he ends every sentence in English with the word 'no?', in a question-type rising inflection, which even makes him sound cheeky.



Bautista (19) won the 125 title in 2006, one year after Thomas Luthi (12)

after looping it. True to form, he didn't look that bothered when he eventually returned to pit lane, although the same can't be said for his team boss, Jorge 'Aspar' Martinez!

The turning point in Bautista's season came in Portugal when he crashed out of the race and from that point on, if we're being completely honest, it looked like he'd lost interest in the championship battle. Could that be because he had already agreed his deal with Suzuki and was simply marking time until the end of the season? Maybe not, but that didn't stop the same paddock pundits who'd tipped him for the title speculating on the possibility.

Tenth in Australia was followed by another crash in Malaysia before he bounced back to secure fourth in the championship standings with a second place at the final round at Valencia.

“Let's be honest, the Suzuki hasn't actually furthered the career of anyone who's ridden it so far, has it?”



WHAT ARE HIS CHANCES?

Unfortunately, given the circumstances, the answer has to be a resounding 'not great'.

Of all the four graduates to the MotoGP class, Bautista has drawn the short straw when it comes to the bike, regardless of what he or Paul Denning may say in the Rizla Suzuki press releases. Success for Bautista in his debut year on the blue bike has to be measured in top 12 finishes really, unless Suzuki really does pull something out of the bag between now and the first race in Qatar.

MARCO SIMONCELLI

Sideshow Bob

With an afro modelled on Sideshow Bob and a voice that sounds like it's been honed by smoking 40 fags a day, Marco Simoncelli is certainly something of a character in the MotoGP paddock. But don't let the cartoon character looks fool you, when there's even a sniff of a race win, or even a podium finish, Supersic isn't a man to be messed with – just ask Hector Barbera or Hiroshi Aoyama

After three fairly mediocre seasons in the 125cc class, Simoncelli made the move to the quarter litre championship with the Metis Gilera squad for the 2006 season, where he finished tenth in the championship standings. He was tenth again in 2007, but 2008 was his turnaround season.

The Italian, who claims to be best mates with Valentino Rossi, dominated proceedings during the 2008 season, winning six races and only finishing off the podium on four occasions, to wrap up the championship title at the penultimate round. What is even more impressive is that he didn't receive factory equipment until the final races of the season, which meant his title was effectively won on a customer specification Aprilia (the Gilera bikes are rebranded Aprilias, as both manufacturers are part of the Piaggio Group). His win was a proper kick in the teeth for those 250cc riders who bemoaned the stranglehold that Aprilia supposedly had on the championship at that time.

But it hasn't all been plain sailing for the Italian in the 250cc class. He had a set-to with Hector Barbera in 2007, and the feud was fuelled further when the Spaniard accused Simoncelli of dubious tactics after he knocked him off during the Italian Grand Prix at Mugello in 2008. With both riders having something of a 'Latin temperament' expect this feud to be continued next season, but at even greater speeds than previously.

At the end of the 2008 season everyone expected Simoncelli and his afro to make the step up to MotoGP, as the offers were definitely there, but the Italian opted to stay with the twin-cylinder bikes and defend his title in 2009.

Unfortunately, things didn't quite go according to plan. Simoncelli fractured his scaphoid in his right wrist in a motocross accident the weekend before the opening race of the season in Qatar, and was forced to withdraw after trying to ride with the injury during free practice.

The injury was still bothering him in Japan next time out, but he bounced back with third place in Jerez and looked all set to give early championship leader, Hiroshi Aoyama, a run for his money. Wins at Donington, Brno and Indianapolis put him well and truly in the running for the championship. And then he went to Misano, where he crashed and handed a huge advantage to Aoyama with just four races to go.

With his title hopes all but dead in the water, Simoncelli decided on a bit of a busman's holiday and headed to Imola to race Aprilia's RSV4 in the World Superbike Championship. He crashed out of fifth place in the opening race, but then managed to finish third in race two, after duffing up his



WHY 'SIDESHOW BOB?'

Come on, do you really need to ask? Check out the 'fro man!

“With both Simoncelli and Barbera having something of a 'Latin Temperament' expect their feud to be continued next season, but at even greater speeds.”

THE CLASS OF 2010



Italian rider, helmet and bike in front of Japanese rider, helmet, and bike. Aoyama took the 2009 title though

temporary teammate, Max Biaggi. Fair play to Biaggi though, despite being known as the paddock's biggest whinger he had nothing but praise for Simoncelli and his rampaging Afro.

After Imola it was back to business in the 250cc championship where Simoncelli's plan was to "just win races and worry about the championship later." And win he did, taking victory in Portugal and Australia, before heading to Malaysia for the penultimate round.

Aoyama was on stunning form in Malaysia and dominated practice and qualifying while Simoncelli, on the other hand, couldn't match his pace on race tyres. No problem, after taking the race lead early doors, the Italian simply decided to show his Japanese rival what awaited him should he try to pass and sat the bike up out of the final hairpin, forcing Aoyama to shut off or hit the pit wall – although he denied it afterwards. It wasn't enough though and the fearless Aoyama went on to win the race in convincing fashion, leaving Simoncelli with a mountain to climb at Valencia if he wanted to retain the title.

The Valencia race wasn't without its drama and there were a few worried 250cc riders in the paddock on Saturday evening, including Hiroshi Aoyama, after Simoncelli declared: "I must attack in the race tomorrow." After his Malaysia shenanigans, Aoyama must have been wondering what form this attack would take.

In the end Simoncelli's title hopes died when he crashed out while leading the race, leaving Aoyama to enjoy the spoils as the last ever 250cc World Champion.



WHAT ARE HIS CHANCES?

Good question. Simoncelli doesn't have the same experience as his three fellow MotoGP debutantes, but he does have a vastly experienced team behind him with the Gresini Honda squad

He also has a teammate in Marco Melandri who is more than capable of perfecting the set up of the Honda RC212V, which is where most MotoGP new boys struggle. Will he be able to give the frontrunners a run for their money? Maybe not, but expect fireworks further down the order as Supersic brings his inimitable, roughhouse style to the premier class! Could be a regular top eight finisher if he gets on with the bike during winter testing.







► **INTERVIEW** LEON CAMIER

WELL PREPARED

Leon Camier is the latest British superbike champion to step up to the world stage. Has he got what it takes?

Words: Kenny Pryde Pics: Graeme Brown, Joe Dick 2/Snap

Let's be frank about this. The recent British superbike champions who've gone on to bigger championships haven't exactly covered themselves in glory, have they? 2001 and 2002 BSB champions Steve Hislop and John Reynolds stayed put, but what about the others who took the plunge?

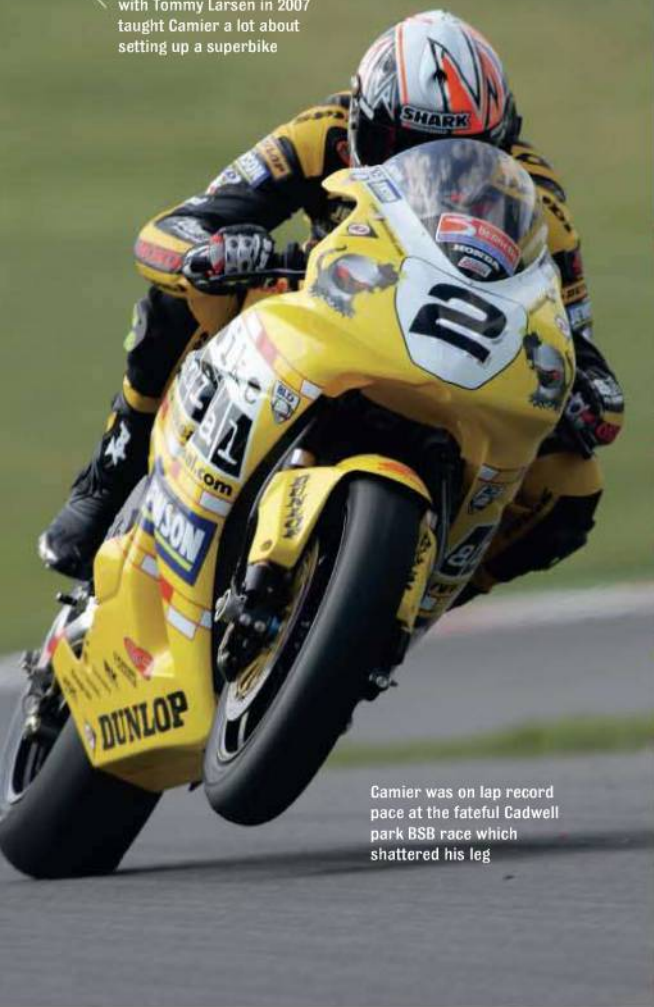
Neil Hodgson, Troy Bayliss, Gregorio Lavilla, Ryuichi Kiyonari and Shane Byrne. OK, it's unfair to say they've all bombed, since both Hodgson and Bayliss went on to win the WSB title (twice and a MotoGP race, in the case of Bayliss) but the others have, for various reasons, struggled to

establish themselves at higher levels than our beloved BSB series – the toughest and best domestic championship in the world (it says here).

And the next candidate in line for this potential reality check on the world stage is Leon Camier, the reigning BSB champion. >



Camier's rookie season with Tommy Larsen in 2007 taught Camier a lot about setting up a superbike



Camier was on lap record pace at the fateful Cadwell park BSB race which shattered his leg



Padgett's supersport Honda. Owner Clive Padgett and team mate Jay Vincent "taught me a hell of a lot in 2005."



2008. Camier getting to grips with his GSE Ducati



"Camier is starting his WSB career in a factory team and, even

Camier dominated the 2009 series so convincingly, his detractors have already written him off. They say that he had nobody to beat therefore his championship title was basically worthless and his chances in WSB are slim-to-none. Camier was part of the steam-rolling GSE Racing, which ran top-spec Yamaha R1 bikes in the well-organised and best-funded team in the BSB paddock. GSE Racing Yamahas finished one-two in the title race, with James Ellison backing up Camier as

championship runner-up. Camier's figures from the 2009 season – 19 race wins – speak volumes for his domination if not his talent. But, as has been said before, you can only beat the other guys lined up on the grid, everything else is pub bullshit and web forum 'clever' talk. So, Camier was a talented rider on the best bike in the best team in the paddock – no wonder he won with record-breaking results, right? Well, talent and machinery always help,

but Camier wasn't exactly the man from nowhere. The triumphant 2009 season was his third year in the British superbike class and it wasn't like he hadn't shown considerable promise in previous years, including his injury-blighted rookie season on a kit Honda Fireblade when he was on the podium in the first race of the 2007 season ahead of Kiyonari, Lavilla, Leon Haslam and the rest of the big hitters. Camier still finished eighth overall in spite of missing the final third of the season with a seriously broken leg. In 2008, a switch to the GSE team, owned and part-funded by Darrell Healey, a man who has helped his near-neighbour Camier since the start of his 125cc career, saw Camier finish fifth overall. This after his comeback from injury, as well as getting to grips

with the first Ducati he had raced. In fact, there are those statistic fiends who argue that Camier's results show he adapted to the Ducati faster than Bayliss, Hodgson or Toseland, all of whom have raced with GSE...

Pedigree

Camier, perhaps unsurprisingly, is the son of a good national level racer, which lends more weight to the argument that racing and talent is in the blood. But that's never going to be enough, since god knows there are plenty of young talented riders who never make the grade. Some go off the rails, some reckon they've 'made it' at the first whiff of podium champers, others settle for big fish in small pond status, while Camier appears to be still pushing. "Obviously there are a million and one things

that make the difference when it comes to racing and winning, but now I know what the things are that I need to do, the things that work for me," explains Camier, "I've always done what I thought I needed to do – even if now I know it wasn't right, because there were times when I maybe overdid the training and came to race weekends half asleep – but it's finding the balance that's important."

While he admits to having a healthy social life and sometimes struggles with the demands and discipline of diet and training, he managed to stay on the straight and narrow when he was British supersport champion at the age of 18. If he didn't lose the plot then, it's hard to see it going to his head now, at the grand old age of 23.

"I've learned so much

Camier on a GSE Racing Yamaha proved an unstoppable team in 2009



though the Aprilia RSV4 is almost as new to the WSB circuit as Camier, it's a good place to start."

since I've been racing, every year I raced in fact. If I sat down I could probably list the main things I learned in each different season," reflects Camier. "The first time I rode for a team, as opposed to racing on your own, you learn how teams work, even a bad season – like the one I had in Grand Prix 125s – I learned what not to do, that I shouldn't go to a team that wasn't capable of winning. The fun part is winning races, the competitive part of it. Coming 15th wouldn't be enjoyable, so what would be the point in doing it?"

And if 'learning' not to go to a sub-par team sounds like a trite lesson to have learned, well, Camier had the option to ride in a MotoGP team in 2010, but passed on it, simply because it didn't fulfill the criterion that, "the bike has to be capable of winning." But, given that the MotoGP

paddock is Promised Land for every serious road racer on the planet, wasn't he even tempted? "No. No." If you could hear the conviction in his instant response, you would understand more of what makes Camier the prospect he is.

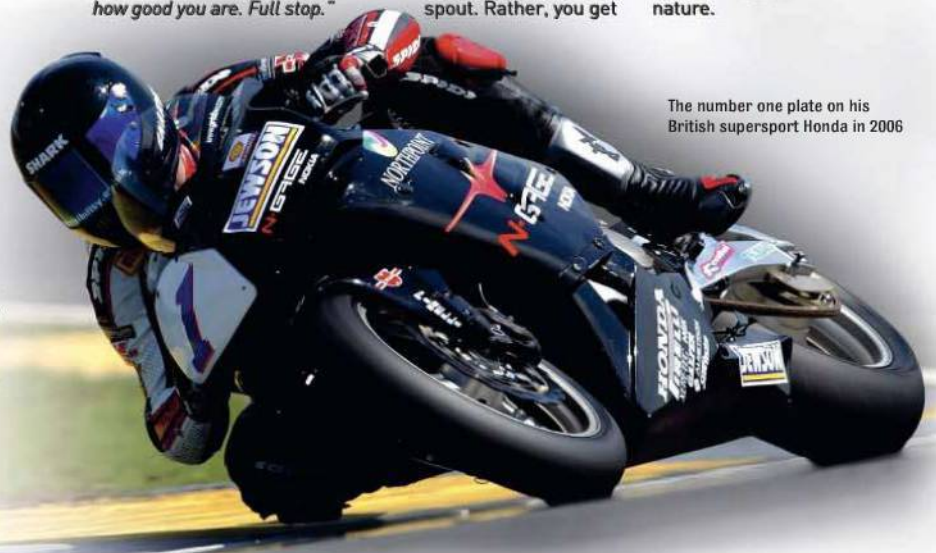
Aim high

Not that he would ever admit it, but Camier is aiming very high and the fact that he passed on a MotoGP ride suggests that he has a career path already mapped out – and it didn't include riding a second-rate bike in MotoGP. There are other British riders who have closed their eyes when they signed MotoGP contracts, believing that 'When MotoGP

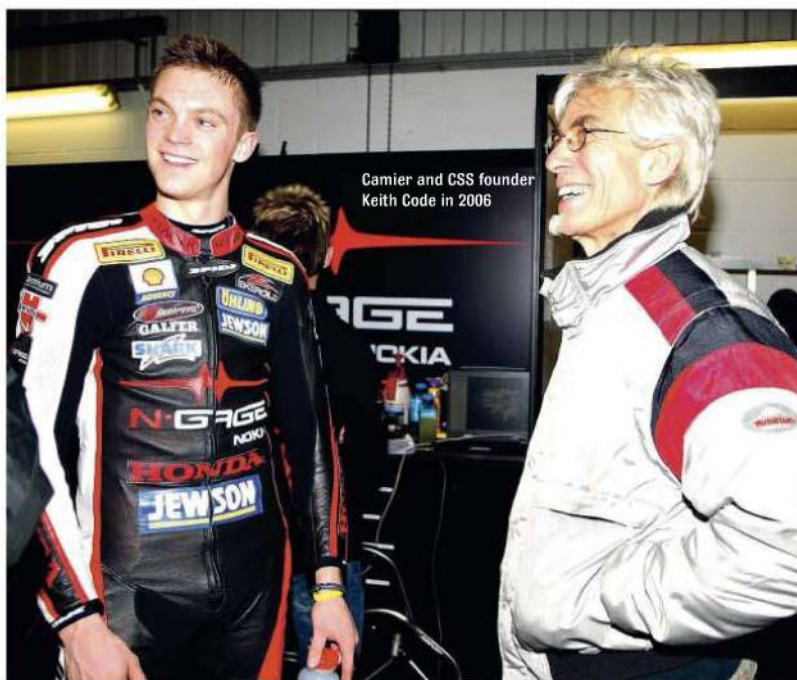
calls, you've got to accept the charges.' But Camier isn't one of them because, as he puts it, "you can't show the GP paddock what you can do on bad kit, no matter how good you are. Full stop."

There is a clear-headed confidence in Camier that never tips over into arrogance or that bullshit cock-sure nonsense that other riders sometimes spout. Rather, you get

the impression that Camier has thought this through, got on with the job and is now reaping the rewards for his single-mindedness and questioning, open-minded nature.



The number one plate on his British supersport Honda in 2006



Camier and CSS founder Keith Code in 2006

California Superbike School

Leon Camier has mentioned that he's been coached by the California Superbike School in the past, but how exactly he ended up at the School in the first place has been less well documented

"My manager at the time went on a normal CSS school in 2004 and he came back and said 'Oh you should have a go at that.' To be honest I was very open, I thought, that could be cool. I'm confident that I know how to ride a bike, so I thought I'd go along take what I wanted from it and see what it was like. As soon as we got down to it, they were asking questions and I thought, 'I don't know the answer to this and I should' (laughs). And we started working on a few aspects of my riding. I know it works for me, because I've gone out and tried stuff on track and I've come back in and I know that it works better and I had a lot of questions about riding a bike before I went along and I was basically making it up as I went along. I obviously had a bit of talent to have done what I had done at that point, but I didn't understand it that well and it gave me another understanding of what I'm doing on the bike and I know it works."

▶ Unlike those other BSB champions who never quite made it in WSB, Camier would appear to be well-equipped in terms of his past racing career. A national (grasstrack) champion at the age of six, a national champion in 125cc two stroke racing, 600cc four-stroke supersport and national champion in the superbike class, no other recent British champion has a CV to match that.

And what else do you need to make it in WSB? A factory bike or as near as you can get always helps. (Hodgson and Bayliss won their world titles on Bologna-backed factory Ducati teams). Camier is also starting his WSB career in a factory team and, even though the Aprilia RSV4 is almost as new to the WSB circuit as Camier, it's a good place to start. At six foot three Camier will struggle to fold his lean frame around one of the most compact-looking bikes on the WSB grid, but other than that, Max Biaggi has proved

the Aprilia set-up does have race-winning potential.

Not that hopping on a factory-backed bike is a direct route to racing Nirvana. It's not just the machinery that counts and it's clear that Camier will miss the relationship he had with his GSE crew chief of two years standing, Frankie Carchedi. "Yes, I'm disappointed not to be working with Frankie, he liked to take a risk sometimes but we had a good understanding which is really important. In my opinion one of the reasons that Ben Spies did so well in WSB last year is that he had his main man there with him (Spies' crew chief from AMA, Tom Houseworth), so he's gone to Yamaha in WSB, he knows exactly what he wants, what he's done and I genuinely believe a lot of Spies' 2009 success was down to that partnership, that understanding."

But, in keeping with Camier's open-minded philosophy and his realization that every team he has gone

to has taught him something, he's confident he can continue to progress with Aprilia because, as he puts it, "the racing basics are the same, even if the garage and the work the crew does is different."

Been there, done it

But of course Camier has already raced and tested his new Aprilia RSV4 race bike, with wild card rides at Magny-Cours and Portimao in 2009. Camier finished with two retirements and a sixth and seventh. Surely everyone was pleased with that? Being dropped into an ultra-competitive championship on a new bike and new circuits with a best result of sixth was good, wasn't it? "I hope the results looked good. For me, I was a bit...whatever. It's not bad considering but it's not what I want. It was a bit strange because Aprilia said that they weren't bothered by the two race results that I got (at Magny-Cours

and Portimao), but that the test after the final round at Portimao that was important. I had an idea of what they would want to see from me - they wouldn't want to see me throwing the bike down the road every three seconds, they want to see that we progress and don't go backwards and then in the test, when we make some big changes, they would want to see that things really improve. And they would also want to hear what I had to say about the bike, if I explain things clearly, if it looks like I know what I'm talking about, if, when they make changes to the bike, I can understand what's going on. It's a test, an interview sort of thing because they want to know if they can trust me with what I'm saying. Honda

did the same to me in 2006. They got me on Kiyonari's bike and did an afternoon at Cadwell. Anyway, the team changed something on the rear shock and when I came in they asked me, 'Well, what was the difference there then?' and I told them what I thought, what I had felt and he said, 'Yeah, that's it, that's what we thought as well.' I was like, 'Phew!'" (laughs).

It looks like Camier has got the track record (no pun intended) to move up. He's young, he seems to have his head screwed on and his feet fixed on planet earth. So what's the betting that he'll follow Hodgson and Bayliss as GSE Racing BSB champions who went on to win the WSB title? He's not saying, but we like the odds. **SB**



LEON CAMIER

The story so far

2009	British Superbike Championship (1st)
2008	British Superbike Championship (5th)
2007	British Superbike Championship (8th)
2006	British Supersport Championship (4th)
2005	British Supersport Champion
2004	British Supersport series (6th)
2003	125 World Championship
2002	British 125 Championship (3rd)
2001	British 125 Championship (1st)
2000	British 125 Championship (12th)
1999	British Aprilia Challenge (3rd)
1998	British Junior 80cc Road Racing Champion
1997	British Grasstrack Champion 100cc
1996	British Grasstrack Champion 100cc
1995	British Grasstrack Champion 100cc
1994	British Grasstrack Champion 60cc
1993	British Grasstrack Champion 60cc
1992	First grasstrack race win



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MORTAL WARFARE

The grim reaper came to visit me last night, but I fought him off with a vacuum cleaner. Talk about Dyson with death!

Martin Arthur

NASTY ACCIDENT

A hunter walked over to a tree and propped up his shotgun. Just then, a gust of wind blew and the gun fell over, discharging and shooting the hunter in the genitals. Several hours later, lying in a hospital bed, he was approached by his doctor.

"Well sir, I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that you are going to be OK. The damage was local to your groin; there was very little internal damage and we were able to remove all of the shotgun pellets."

"What's the bad news?" asked the hunter.

"The bad news is that there was some pretty extensive shotgun pellet damage done to your penis. I'm going to have to refer you to my sister."

"Well, I guess that isn't too bad," the hunter replied.

"Is your sister a plastic surgeon?"

"Not exactly," answered the doctor.

"She's a flute player in the Govan Flute Band. She's going to teach you where to put your fingers so you don't piss into your face."

Kevin Hunter, Scotland

ONE FOR THE LADIES!

Snow is like a willy: It's measured in inches, soft to the touch, comes when you least expect it, and is never as deep as you'd like!

Sally Scott

SIMPLE EXPLANATION

"I'd just parked my lorry when I noticed the leaves all over the lawn. So I went to the shed to get the leaf-blower to start tidying the garden. It was then when I noticed next-door's donkey had escaped. In shock, I lifted the leaf-blower and blasted all the bricks off the back of

the lorry onto the poor animal, killing it instantly.

"So, you see darting, when you heard me on the phone, telling Tom how I blew my load all over the neighbour's ass, that's what I meant."

Morty Vikar

SIMPLY UNTRUE

My wife just said to me that she is getting fat, which is absolutely ridiculous.

She's always been fat.

Frank Lee Vulgar

DESPERATE MEASURES

Early this week, my wife walked out on me. "It's over," she shouted, "You will never see me again."

Well, I must admit I didn't know what to do; by Friday night, I knew she wasn't coming back and I realised I was going to need help. I'm sure all the alcohol I was now drinking wasn't helping and, in desperation, I finally turned to the Samaritans, but it seems even they know fuck-all about how to turn on washing machines.

Neil E. Rhan

HOME RULES

They say you should never crap on your own doorstep. Personally, I think that depends on how drunk you are, how badly you want to go and how long it takes to get the key in the lock.

Dan D. Lyon

FUN FACTOR

What's more exciting and fun than having sex with your wife of 20 years? Anything.

Hans Bricks

PRICKLY OBSTACLE

A couple are driving along in a blizzard when the husband stops the car, gets out, walks to the front of the car, bends down, returns, and sits back in the car.

"What was that all about?" asks the



FAIR PLAY

Protesters at a 'men only' golf club. We're pretty sure the guy at the back is not 100 per cent behind the aims of the other placard holders.

wife. He hands her a small frozen ball. "This poor little hedgehog is frozen stiff. Stick him between your legs to warm him up till we get to the vet's."

"But it's disgusting! It's all wet and it fucking stinks!" the wife replies angrily.

"Well, just hold its nose, then!"

Mick Dundale

FRUITY FLAW

On an impulse, my girlfriend and I decided to experiment with food in the bedroom. After a while of getting down and filthy, she turned to me and said "I think one of the fruits is stuck up my arse." The passion was gone.

Jon E. B. Goode

SMALL FORTUNE

I went to a fortune teller last week. She studied my hand and said, "You have been masturbating."

I said, "Hey, you are good. Can you tell me anything about my future?"

She looked at my face and said, "You will be masturbating for a long time."

Mart Larkin

FUR ENOUGH?

I can only get really turned on when a girl has a big, furry Seventies-style bush. I suppose that makes me some kind of retrosexual.

Jon Barr

SICKLY & BLUE

Tony Blair has just revealed to the Chilcot Iraq War Inquiry that the invasion was "just for a laugh". Do you have a WMD side?

Randy Ram

FIERY FATE

Baroness Thatcher dies and goes to heaven. At the pearly gates, St Peter asks for her name.

"Margaret Thatcher" comes the reply.

"Get lost, you're not coming in here! You have to go to hell."

Thatcher goes downstairs, and three days later Peter gets an irate phone call from Lucifer: "What the hell's going on? Did you send her down here?"

"Yes," replies Peter, "There's no way she's coming into heaven."

"She's only been here three days and she's already closed four furnaces!"

Tom Trevisketh

WRONG SHOP

I went to WH Smith today and asked the sales assistant if I could buy some cheap Imodium.

"Are you some kind of idiot?" he sneered, "We sell stationery. Even a moron would know that you need a chemist."

"Cheeky little prick! It clearly said, 'Half-price ring binders' in the window."

Jan Mouldy

COCK-AND-BALLS STORY

A penis says to his balls, "Right lads, get ready and I'll take you to a party." The balls reply, "You bloody liar! You always go inside and leave us outside banging on the door."

Scott Chegg

BREAKING NEWS!

"Love rat" and England captain John Terry has admitted to having an affair with Tiger Woods.

Dwayne Ridge

SAY IT WITH CHOCOLATE

Footballer Wayne Bridge sent his ex-wife a replica of his cock moulded from Cadbury's chocolate. Heart-rendingly for Wayne, she sent it back, saying that she preferred Terry's.

Mike Lawson

PLAIN INTOLERANT

So MotoGP superstar Casey Stoner reckons that he's lactose intolerant? I reckon he's milking it.

Big Steve

TACTICAL ENTRY

Two mates, both married, are out drinking one night. One turns to the other and says, "You know, I don't know what else to do. Whenever I go home after we've been out drinking, I turn the headlights off before I get to the driveway. I shut off the engine and coast into the garage. I take my shoes off before I go into the house. I sneak up the stairs. I get undressed in the bathroom. I ease into bed and my wife still wakes up and yells at me for staying out so late!"

His pal looks at him and says, "Well, you're obviously taking the wrong approach. I screech into the driveway, slam the door, storm up the stairs, throw my shoes into the cupboard, jump into bed, rub my hands on my wife's arse and say, 'How about a blowjob? ... and she's always sound asleep.'"

Calvin Smith

STAR JOKE

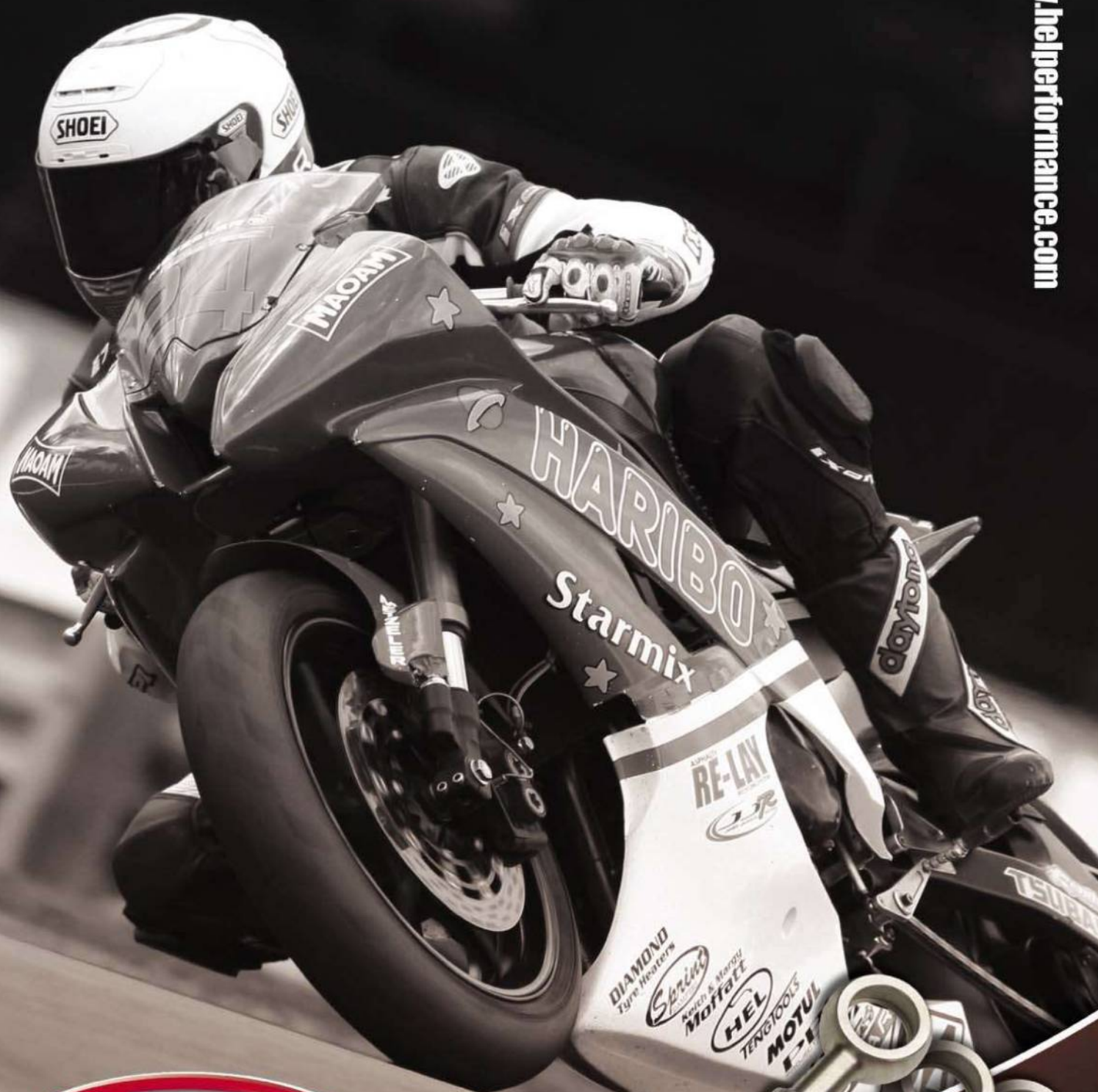


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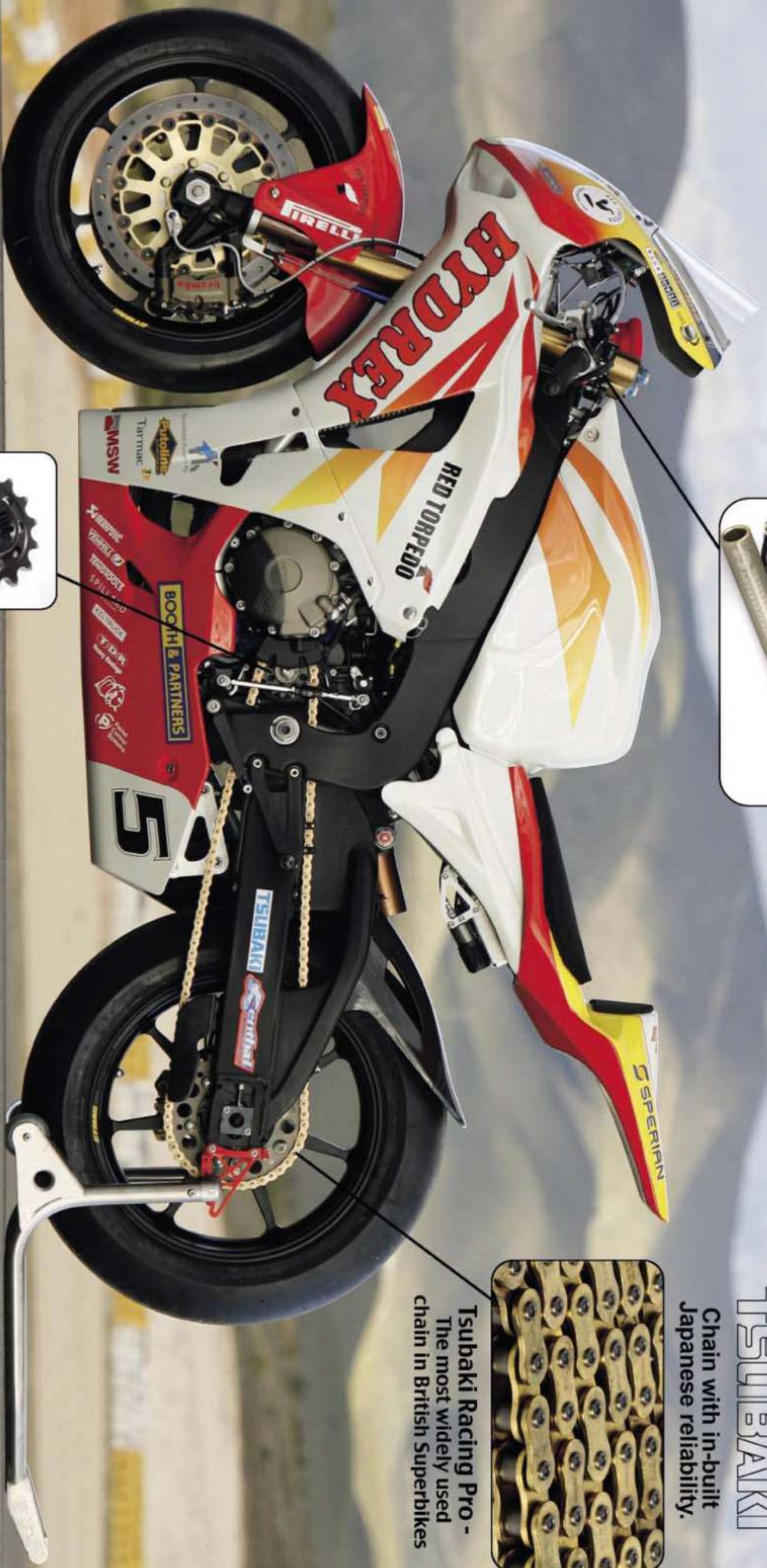


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