

Suzuki

The 1989-model GSX-R1100 is both sharper and more civilised than its predecessor. Ken Wootton sampled life in the fast lane. (Pics by Peter Fritz.)

But officer, I'm sure I wasn't going that fast. How accurate are those things anyway?"
"Oh, that accurate."

Mmm. It was an expensive lesson, but one that underlines how deceptively fast these new generation sports bikes can be if you don't keep your mind on the job. And that's the crux of the matter. It wasn't the bike's fault — I didn't have the senses on full alert, and paid the consequences. (Before the anti-big-Jap-megabike lobby starts jumping up and down, the same thing would have happened if I'd been in a Beemer V12!)

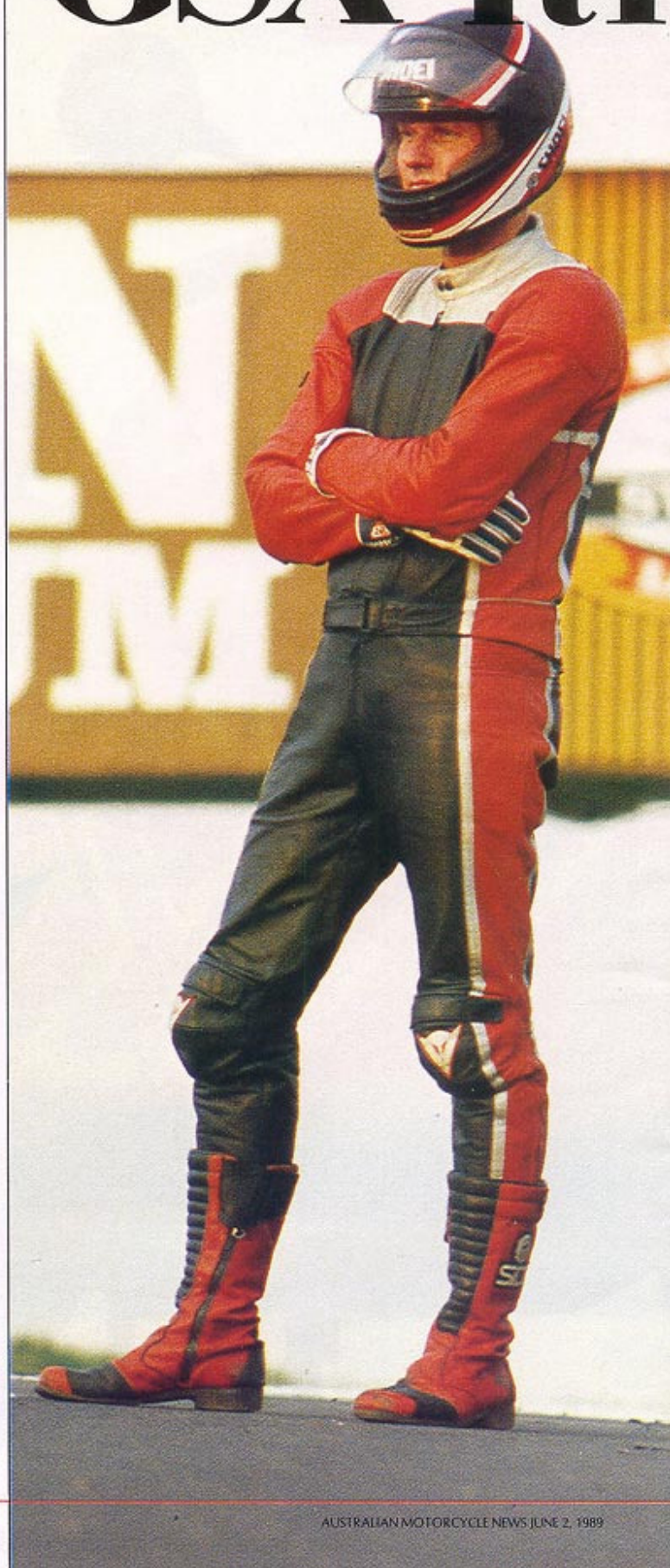
The bike in question is Suzuki's new GSX-R1100K, a machine I've been straining at the bit to throw a leg over since it was released back in early February. My earlier chance had been thwarted by an errant rider at Suzuki's dealer release day, and I was forced to wait my turn on the sole remaining demo bike.

The K has a hard act to follow, with the previous R1100 (from the G model in '86 to the subsequent H and K models) getting rave reviews from all and sundry. How do you improve on something generally acknowledged as the best big-bore sports road bike around?

Motorcycle News tested the original GSX-R1100G back in May '86 (Vol 35,

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GSX-R1



100K



Suzuki GSX-R1100K

No 22) and then came back for a second dose in our Big Bore Compare in the September 11 issue, 1987. Each time the earlier R impressed with its rock steady stability at any speed, and that superb grunty engine. Mind you, that's not to say it was perfect, and couldn't be improved upon.

Suzuki's new K was in our clutches for around two weeks, and in that time I was able to put it through a variety of uses that even the most hardened Suzuki development engineer would wince at. In that time it chalked up just under 4000km. This included a trip from Sydney to Melbourne via Canberra, Cooma, then over the mountains to Cann River, and along that magic stretch to Lakes Entrance. It was commuted and joy-ridden, it was unleashed at Phillip Island's grand prix circuit, and it was taken through axle-deep mud and flood crossings to Mount Hope in central New South Wales. I doubt if anyone has subjected a GSX-R1100 to the conditions this last trip inflicted on the blue and white blaster, and it came through with flying colours. But more of that later.

COSMETICS

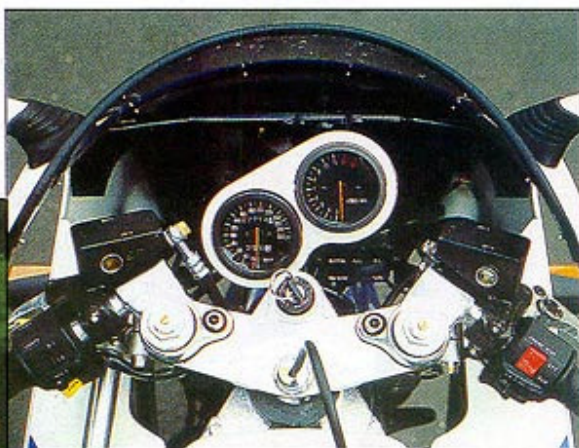
The most obvious change with the K model is in the looks department. Gone is the slab-sided top-heavy look of last year's offering and in its place is the low, sleek and purposeful look of the current GSX-R750. Styling is very much a subjective thing, but all who I spoke to preferred the current offering.

Unfortunately looks can be deceptive, and what is a 'stunner' and svelte beauty to look at can often be a bitch to live with. This Suzi is no bitch, but it does have a darker side – attaching luggage. Now I accept that the person who buys a GSX-R1100 is unlikely to use it for long-distance hauling across the continent, but even attaching a day-pack to the pillion seat is a major drama if you want to keep your injection-moulded plastic unrubbed and



Mix a lobotomy with a GSX-R1100 and Phillip Island, and this is the result.

Racing-style cockpit with 300kmh-calibrated speedo. Goodbye licence.



Everyone spoken-to preferred the sleeker lines of the 1989 bike to last year's model. The twin headlights are brilliant.

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in pristine nick. And then there's the actual question of where to hook your ockies. Gone are the useful ocky hooks on the ends of the pillion footpegs that the previous model sported, so it's a matter of utilising the muffler brackets and using plenty of protective duct tape. Not good enough, Suzuki, in these days of flick out hooks.

The quality of finish is high, with deep lustrous paint work, and polished alloy that has been lacquered to preserve its good looks. Unfortunately a couple of rusty allen bolts spoil the whole plot where the allen key had damaged the chroming – a small bitch I know, but when you're forking out near on eleven and a half grand you can afford to be choosy. The sidestand is a pain to use, with the protruding tang too close to the pivot bolt to get proper leverage –

hell, I even stuck the bloody thing through the sole of my Sidi.

Although not really 'cosmetic', the twin headlights do far more than just give the bike an endurance racer stance. They are by far the best headlights I have ever experienced on a motorcycle, bar none. Talk about turning night into day. Pity the poor wallaby munching on some greenery by the roadside – the critter will be medium rare by the time the bike's within five metres. Not bad for toasting marshmallows either!

ENGINE

However, there are far more changes to the new Suzuki than the mere cosmetics mentioned above. At the end of '87 the GSX-R1100 engine was updated to power the GSX1100FJ tourer, and this engine now finds itself in the latest R. It has received a bore and stroke job that takes it to 78.0mm x 59.0mm, compared to the previous 76.0mm x 58.0mm. Capacity is now 1127cc, with compression ratio up to 10.0:1. What this means of course is more horses, and the figures are impressive. Maximum power is still developed at 9500rpm, but there is now 138ps on tap rather than 130, and torque too has been increased by 0.4kgm to 11.4kgm at 7250rpm, down from 8500rpm.

If you think that's impressive, then bear a thought for the non-ADR model available in other lands that pumps out 143ps, the one we ran a ride impression of in the January 27 issue earlier this year. It's worth commenting here that the manufacturers seem to be coming to grips with the requirements of removing the noise without removing too many 'neddies' as well. The two main routes to follow seem to be restriction of the intake (ie carbs) or strangled exhaust, and Suzuki has done a commendable job of meeting the Aussie restrictions at the expense of only 5ps. So impressed was I with the grunt of this engine I thought that perhaps a pre-production non-ADR model had slipped on to the test fleet by 'mistake', but a perusal of the carbide slides showed all to be in order.

It's well known in racing circles that enlarging the air bleed hole in the carburettor slide will unleash the missing poke (eg Suzuki's GSX-R750J), yet this bike had the minuscule holes typical of an ADR bike.

Back to the K's engine, and the carbs themselves are different, being 36mm

Second Opinion

With the changes to the GSX-R750 last year, the 1100 version was eagerly awaited.

I must say that I have never felt so disappointed.

Firstly, the GSX-Rs are all top heavy, with a tall frame and large capacity fuel tank perched up on top of the frame rails. Secondly, the engine is a relatively tall package and is also mounted fairly high up in the frame. Thirdly, the frame is also fairly short, which seems to make it feel more noticeable.

The old (original) GSX-R1100 had a longer wheelbase of 1460mm with more rake and trail, 26.5°/117mm as against the new frame with 1420mm, 24.8°/99mm. To my mind Suzuki has mucked up what was an excellent compromise for sporting street work. The GSX-R1100 is not a production racer, it is a road bike. Giving it 'faster' handling does not really make it a better road bike. It makes it more of a chore unless circumstances are in its favour.

With the change from K700 series Dunlops to 59X series Michelins, another handling quirk has come about. The front 120/70 x 17 A59X tyre has a very pronounced triangular, or pointed, profile. This is done so that as you lean over, the contact patch size increases and moves inboard. This helps pull the front wheel in to the direction of lean. Now, if you exert force to the tyre in a reasonably quick corner, this balances out beautifully. In a slow corner, the GSX-R falls in and tends to feel as though the steering is going to turn in sharply and let the front wheel wash away: a classic symptom of too little fork rake, too short a trail and the back of the bike higher than it should be. Compound that with a wet road and you have a machine that only likes to be ridden quickly in the dry and not at all in the wet.

I tried dropping the rear spring preload down and it helped a trifle. (I think Suzuki should supply a spanner to do this dirty chore with.)

At the front I tried all manner of adjustments to the fork. I ended up at about mid-range on spring preload and soft on compression and rebound damping. With only 117mm of fork movement, it tended to bottom far too easily on softer settings. It then had 35mm sag with me aboard. This leaves only 82mm of bump absorption. Not enough for a large and fast road bike. The rear had 139mm total travel and with the preload backed off had 53mm sag. This leaves only 86mm of bump absorption. Both these settings partly explain why such stiff springs have to be used. The other reason is, of course, pitch control when braking and accelerating. Considering the relatively short travel, the sag figures are about what I would have expected. Damping at the rear was best with position three of the four available. Still, GSX-Rs have never been noted for well executed rear suspension.

So much for what I didn't like. On the plus side, that engine has to be one of the strongest around. The way it pulls from about 3000rpm is stunning. It doesn't appear to have a powerband at all. The higher the revs climb, the faster they climb. The tach simply rockets around to redline. I thought that the old 1100 was a strong performer, but this one is something else again.

The riding position is also slightly less cramped with the clip-ons mounted above the top yoke. This makes it feel less like a pregnant hippo. Those headlights are second only to the bitumen bugglers on the new CBR1000 Honda.

Finally, the finish. Suzuki has worked very hard to achieve a better quality finish and it shows. The paintwork is concourse quality. The stainless exhaust should look new for years and, better yet, should last from one crash to the next.

Now, if only they could 'slow down' the handling characteristics, the GSX-R1100 would be the type of bike that I could live with. As it is, it's not. I'd rather the '88 bike. It was a classic.

Bob Rosenthal

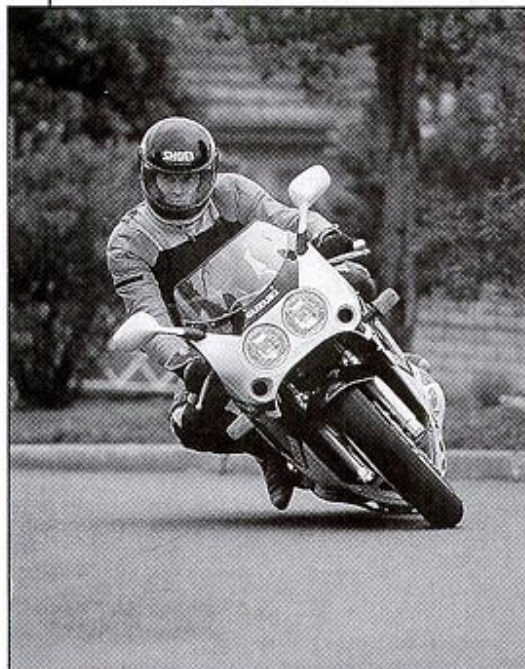
Mikuni 'Slingshots' as opposed to the 'plain jane' 34s of the GSX-R1100G. The new carbs have aluminium and plastic piston valves that are some 43 percent lighter than the old model, which in day to day use transforms to quicker throttle response.

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Suzuki GSX-R1100K

The newly incorporated 'nostrils' in the nose serve a purpose in addition to adding to the aggressive styling. The right-hand intake feeds into the right-hand frame rail, and from there to the still-air box. This ensures a regular supply of cool air, as opposed to the warmer air normally resident behind a hot engine. Pity any stray insect that coincides with the 'hole' at full-noise in fifth! The left-hand snorkel merely empties its contents on to the top of the cylinder head, and has nothing to do with the induction system.

Although the gearbox remains as a five-speed unit, a change in the primary reduction ratio has meant that only



third and fourth gears retain the same ratios as the previous model. Fifth gear is actually a trifle lower (0.931 compared to 0.913 – the lower the number, the higher the gear ratio), but the final drive ratio has been raised from 3.357 to 3.200. To be truthful, it's pretty academic really, because with the amount of poke on tap it would be quite feasible to get by with only three speeds. A further 'complication' is that the latest version runs a 17 inch rear wheel as opposed to an 18, so the smaller outside diameter lowers the overall gearing relative to the previous R.

Whichever way you want to juggle the figures the fact remains that at the

legal limit (generally speaking) of 100kmh in top gear the engine is ticking over at a smidgin' over 4000rpm, and 130kmh comes up at 5500, which equates to 260kmh at 11,000. And that's not even redline!

Despite all the facts and figures one point is indisputable, and that is that this big Suzuki hauls arse all the way to redline (11,500rpm) and beyond in any gear. Lurking in the upper reaches is a rev limiter, but it's no use trying to find it as by then your eyeballs are stuck to the inside of your visor and you can't read where it cuts in anyway.

To put my gut feeling to the test I ran upwards through the five gears with no more than 3000rpm appearing on the tacho – in fact the needle hardly flickered off its stop. Yes sir, this is one tractor-like donk. To further emphasise the docility of this latest R-series engine I was able to potter along at 60kmh in top gear without the tacho registering at all – it has the stop set at 2500rpm.

For a full-on sports bike I found the power delivery surprisingly progressive. Sure there's some increasing urgency up above the 7000rpm zone, but there's no kick in the tail or shake of the bars as the power comes on tap. Just turn the throttle and go. Give it its head, though, and you'll have more adrenalin pumping through your veins than a pervert in a nudist colony. Front tyre wear can certainly be minimised by the heavy handed approach, especially with the change from first to second! However, if you're like me, you'll prefer both wheels on the tarmac.

I'm not going to give a top speed figure, because the relativities between bikes vary depending on conditions. Suffice it to say that the current production bike record is held by the ZX-10 at 270kmh, set at Bonneville's speed week, where a two-way average is required. Let's just say that this year's meeting will be very interesting.

If you do feel inclined to use the gearbox, then it has to be one of the best around. Of course, even if there were any gaps between the ratios, that marvellously grunty engine would hide

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Third Opinion

I found the original GSX-R1100 of 1986 a most pleasant sporting motorcycle, with good steering, handling, braking and heaps of that good old grunt that one expects from a large capacity engine. So when I came to ride the latest K version, I was expecting some of the 'softness' to have been forsaken for even more performance.

Without doubt, the '89 model has a harder edge, with higher levels of performance, but without losing too much of its predecessor's charm. The engine still hauls from the basement, without any steps in its rush to the redline, still with fuss-free tractability around town. Power is everywhere, with the speedo needle apparently connected directly to the twistgrip.

Suspension travel seemed to be a little on the short side, but coped admirably with everything thrown at it. I even took it along a badly corrugated dirt road and was amazed at its compliance – at both ends.

Pulling up at the lights hard on the brakes does not lead to the expected front end dive, or more surprisingly, a springing back of the compressed forks – they just seem to stay there, the bike maintaining a stable attitude whether accelerating or braking.

Despite the wear on the massive rear Michelin, the GSX-R retained its high speed manners, with just a hint of movement around medium speed sweepers. Back in the early '80s, any rear tyre wear caused big bike stability to go out the window.

Although light for a big bike, the Suzuki, of course, feels larger and bulkier than the 750s, but responds deftly to rider input, no matter what the speed. Likewise the transmission – just no slop when throttling on and off, and operating with wonderful precision up or down the gears.

With this smooth-shifting transmission, compliant suspension, strong yet progressive brakes (the rear is a bit dead) and silky smooth power delivery, the big Suzi prefers to be ridden in a similar manner – smoothly but firmly and positively.

A fantastic bike to blow the cobwebs out of the system, but it really has little scope to be able to be let off the leash these days. Oh, and I love those spring-loaded mirrors – really handy in heavy traffic!

Martin Hone

Suzuki GSX-R1100K

the fact. Suzuki gearboxes at present are in my opinion the slickest around — short travel and positive engagement, with a light and smooth operation, like a knife through butter. Not all bouquets though, as sometimes neutral on this R was difficult to select, but my colleagues maintain it's the co-ordination of my size ten plates of meat causing the problem. Clutch action is predictably light with the hydraulic operation, but still offers predictable take-up which not all the hydraulic items do.

Other changed items worth mentioning include a new curved alloy radiator that has an increased core area (up from 602.0 sq cm to 654.5 sq cm) and that beautiful stainless steel exhaust system (which will cost you \$1545.98 through your local Suzuki dealer). Let's hope other manufacturers follow Suzuki's lead and rid us of the rusting muffler syndrome.

Suzuki has fitted the top of the line RK 532GSV chain to its flagship, and reports indicate a life of around 40-60,000km. O-ring chains have come a long way in recent years, with chain manufacturers actually designing chains for specific bikes. Mind you, they'd want to last, with a replacement cost in



It's not so easy attaching luggage: Wootton was nearly reduced to tying-down with fishing nets.

the \$290 vicinity. Oiling the item is no easy task though, as the GSX-R has no centrestand, and requires pivoting on to an angle by another party while you have a quick squirt under the swingarm.

CHASSIS

Okay, obviously I'm impressed with that marvellous engine, but what holds it all in place? It's here that the major transformation in the new Suzi over the old has taken place.

Without getting too hung up on specs and stats it would be fair to say that the new GSX-R1100 now utilises the GSX-R750K's frame, albeit beefed up a little around the steering head and swingarm. This latter item is some 15mm longer than the 750's, although 35mm shorter than the old 1100. Suzuki claims that the new frame has a twisting rigidity some 25 percent stronger than the '88 bike.

The bottom line is that the wheelbase is reduced, trail is reduced, and so too is the rake. Couple this with the new 17 inch rims at both ends of the bike (3.50 front and 4.50 rear) and the result is a bike that steers more quickly and accurately than the older model. The tyres are Michelin radials — possibly the best in the business at present. The front is a 120/70 and the rear a 160/60.

Horses for courses is no truer than in this case. Comparing the 'handling' of the old and the new is like chalk and cheese. If you liked the rock steady, immovable-object-feel of the old, then you mightn't take too kindly to the new. As for me, I preferred the FZR1000 in our '87 comparo to the GSX-R because the Yamaha was more responsive. Now the wheel has turned. I believe the latest Suzi now behaves the way a sports bike should — it's super responsive to any rider input whatsoever, and no longer needs the muscling around that the old model required.

Of course you can't have your cake and eat it to, and moving your body weight, or hitting imperfections in the road, will cause the Suzuki to 'react'. I don't see that as a problem — this bike is a precision instrument and is



The new model is superb on the race track, with razor-sharp steering compared to the '88 model.

The latest Suzi now behaves like a sports bike should — it's super responsive to any rider input whatsoever

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Suzuki GSX-R1100K

ENGINE

Engine type.....Four-stroke, four-cylinder,
DOHC, 16-valve, air/oil cooled
Bore x stroke.....78 x 59mm
Displacement.....1127cc
Compression ratio.....10.0:1
Ignition.....Transistorised
Carburation.....4 x Mikuni BST36SS
Starting system.....Electric only
Lubrication system.....Wet sump

TRANSMISSION

Type.....Five-speed
Primary drive.....Spur gear
Clutch.....Wet, multi-plate, hydraulically
operated, diaphragm spring
Final drive.....RK532GSV O-ring chain

CHASSIS AND RUNNING GEAR

Frame type.....Aluminium perimeter,
double cradle
Rake.....24.9 degrees
Trail.....99mm
Wheelbase.....1425mm
Front suspension.....Kayaba inner
cartridge telescopic fork, 43mm diam
stanchion, 120mm travel, eight-way
adjustable rebound damping, 10-way
adjustable compression damping,
fully-adjustable spring preload
Rear suspension.....Kayaba link-type
Full-floater, four-way adjustable
rebound damping, fully adjustable
spring pre-load, 140mm travel
Front/rear wheels.....Cast alloy, 3-spoke,
3.50 x 17 front, 4.50 x 17 rear
Front/rear tyres.....Michelin A59X 120/70
ZR17 front, M59X 160/60 rear
Front brakes.....Hydraulic twin floating
discs, 310mm diam, Nissin four-piston
callipers
Rear brake.....Hydraulic disc, 240mm
diam, twin-piston caliper

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Dry weight (claimed).....210kg
Seat height (claimed).....795mm
Oil capacity.....4.2lt
Fuel capacity.....21lt

PLUS AND MINUS

+ + Powerful and torquey engine
+ + Steering and handling precision
+ + Tyres
+ + Brakes
+ + Cornering clearance
+ Comfort for a sports bike
- Gear carrying ability
- Sidestand operation
+ + / - Narrow design philosophy!

PERFORMANCE

Maximum power (claimed).....138ps at
9500rpm (Australian market)
Maximum torque (claimed).....11.4kg-m at
7250rpm
Maximum speed.....adequate
Fuel consumption.....13.54km/l average
(38.25mpg)

MISCELLANEOUS

Test bike supplied by.....Suzuki Australia
Recommended retail price.....\$11,399
+ ORC
Warranty.....12 months/unlimited km
Colour options.....Blue and white, red and black

SERVICE AND CRASH GUIDE

(Recommended retail prices)

Oil filter.....\$22.31
Air filter.....\$29.43
Front/rear sprocket.....\$67.16/\$82.67
Fairing screen.....\$178.26
Upper fairing.....\$458.35
Fuel tank.....\$685.44
Handlebar.....\$138.58
Indicator (complete).....\$66.98 front/
\$39.72 rear
Front mudguard.....\$131.96
Mirror.....\$88.92
Side cover.....\$207.59
Brake/clutch levers.....\$50.03/\$19.93
Footpeg (complete).....\$70.29
Exhaust system.....Header section \$475.50,
mufflers \$535.24 each
Headlight.....\$190.65 complete

with the fronts being four-spotters operating on floating discs of 310mm diameter. 'Floating' they may be in name, but you need fingers like Superman to get them to budge. No complaints about these excellent items, although the rather long lever travel takes some getting used to, even with the four-way adjustable lever set at maximum.

A twin-piston caliper takes care of the rear, with the 1100 now gaining the 750's 240mm disc. It's nice and predictable, although not overly powerful - not such a bad thing with the weight transference that takes place once the top-notch front anchors start doing their thing.

The suspension should keep tinkers happy for hours, with a myriad of adjustments to suit even the fussiest. The front forks are Kayaba cartridge types with 43mm stanchions, and offer eight rebound damping adjustments, 10 compression damping adjustments, and spring preload adjustment over a 15mm range. All adjustments can be carried out externally with the basic tool kit. The rear is a Kayaba also, with the spring preload multi-adjustable via a threaded collar, and four-way adjustable rebound damping.

Every one has their own preference when it comes to suspensions, and for a good compromise I settled on 'middle' damping settings up front, with the preload set reasonably firm. Some overseas mags have criticised the R1100K for having too strong rebound damping, but as I prefer the front end firm, winding up the preload helped negate this criticism. One thing can't be disputed is that the Suzi did not give me one anxious moment throughout the duration of the test period, and it was given every opportunity to display some bad manners.

designed to have razor sharp reflexes. The GSX-R is designed as a race-replica and now it behaves like one. It's a purpose built machine.

Okay, down off the soap box. I like the way the new frame transforms the bike. What about the other components? Brakes come from Nissin,

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MICK HONE MOTORCYCLES

Some people like to ride a bike for the feeling of wind rushing through their hair. Others for the sheer enjoyment of doing it. People want to ride the new GSX-R1100K Suzuki because it's exciting. It's exciting because it leaves the others for dust!

707 Whitehorse Rd, Box Hill (03) 890 0304

Suzuki GSX-R1100K



For a bike with such a specific role in life, the GSX-R turned out to be surprisingly versatile. Water-cooling is non-standard!

Perhaps the large non-adjustable steering damper hanging off the left side can take some of the credit for this, because the infamous Lithgow concrete horror stretch did its best to devour the front wheel at one stage. Barely a twitch of the rubber-mounted clip-ons was felt.

THE VERDICT

By now you've got the feeling that I'm impressed with Suzuki's latest 1100. If I'd only put it to the test within its design parameters, then I would have viewed the update favourably. However, this bike was put through roles so foreign to its concept that it should have spat the dummy in the dirt (and there was plenty of that!) and refused to go on.

After I collected the Suzuki in Sydney around lunch time I headed south to

Lakes Entrance via Canberra, taking a little over seven hours to complete the 726km. This involved a dirt section near Cann River (through the dark, what's more), a lengthy chat with a man dressed in blue, and a number of coffee stops. It's not the average speed that impressed, but the fact that I arrived feeling quite fresh and relaxed – certainly a much different state from my last prolonged occupation of a sports bike saddle. (And Wayne Gardner thought he was sore!) It was great to get off the bike and not drag

my knuckles on the ground for the next two hours while I slowly recovered from 'racer crouch'.

When I took delivery of the bike it had around 5500km on the clock, and the rear tyre was somewhat flat across the middle. Plenty of tread depth left, but the profile had suffered, which resulted in the tyre being much more sensitive to bump steer, and this naturally fed back through the bars as 'instability'. It was most pronounced around sweeping corners when the bike would ride the 'ridge' on the tyre, but I didn't find it disconcerting. A lot of other bikes would have reacted far more adversely to the situation, and it will always be a problem on bikes with 'fats' that do long straight runs.

One minor comfort hassle is the wind buffeting your helmet gets at legal speeds. The lower screen height of the K directs the air smack bang at your scone, although at higher velocities it's not so much of a problem.

While on the subject of higher velocities, a visit to Phillip Island was arranged, which gave the opportunity for some high-speed cornering and suspension fiddling. The rear tyre caused some interesting antics through turn one where the angle corresponded with the tyre 'edge', but elsewhere the bike was pure magic. No wonder the GSX-R1100 is the dominant race bike in New Zealand (no capacity limit like Australia).

It became apparent after a few ragged laps that the quickest way to punt the bike was to stop revving the nuts off the beast, and to let the

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engine do the torquing, with short-shifting the way to go. The big Suzi was very easy to ride smoothly — much more so than a worked-GSX-R Superbike that I tested a few weeks previously — a bike putting out the same power, but with hair-trigger delivery. There's no substitute for cubes.

Top speed down Phillip Island's front straight was an indicated 255kmh before my lack of fortitude told me to hit the picks for turn one. There was plenty of go left at that point.

Ground clearance is exceptional, and with the suspension set reasonably firm I was just able to get the fairing scraping on the right side, and the sidestand bracket and fairing on the left. At that point the tyre was rolling off the tread, so if you make a habit of it on public roads expect more than the fairing to scrape!

Final test for the bike was to return to Sydney via Mount Hope. No doubt you can read about the road conditions in and out of Mount Hope elsewhere in this issue, but the R came through with flying colours. Even the fat tyres caused minimal concern over the gravel and

rutted roads, with 120kmh seen at times. Mind you, my 'Aaron Slight' impersonations in the mud (albeit at a much slower velocity) were pretty interesting, to say the least. The tractable engine was a real boon, and the steering damper helped point the front wheel in the general direction of travel while the rear couldn't make up its mind. How many GSX-Rs do you know that have negotiated creek crossings and ploughed through axle deep mud? It certainly caused a few amazed looks when the R turned up in 'rally territory'.

Thankfully the mud slides had honed my reflexes to perfection, because the newly surfaced road out of West Wyalong played its hand in the plot by embedding a stone straight through the tread. The value of tubeless tyres was brought home — far better to have a

slow leak than a sudden blow-out. A total of three flats (same puncture), two cans of Finilec, and a variety of objects rammed in the hole, and destination was reached. A tubed tyre would have seen me in hospital.

Fuel consumption over the time I had the bike averaged 13.54 km/lt, and actually dropped to around 10 km/lt with the 'race face' on. A more reasonable touring figure is in the 17 zone. Tank capacity is a claimed 21 litres, and I was getting around 220 kms before reserve was needed, with around five litres left.

The Suzuki GSX-R1100K is a specialist bike aimed at particular market. At present it is the best (I have yet to ride the new FZR1000) and it will take a mighty good bike to displace it. That it competently undertook all the other tasks asked of it as well doesn't really count, although it's a good conversation topic with a couple of my colleagues who assumed horizontal positions in the mud. At \$11,399 it is only around \$80 dearer than its predecessor, and to me there is no comparison. If you want the best big-bore sports bike available, this is it.

Ken Wootton

BIKE TEST

GET CHEAP EASY FINANCE ON YOUR BIKE

GSX-R1100K



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