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CARBON TAX

Reduced to a blithering mess just looking at it, Glen almost needed sedating he was so excited after taking Andrew Forward's 'like sex on wheels' Ducati around Manfeild.



Life's just not fair sometimes - some folks get all the toys to play with and some don't. Case in point is Hawkes Bay based businessman Andrew Forward and one of his more recent projects - a virtual full factory spec Ducati 1098R, which has a list of official race accessories fitted to it that's longer than your arm.

I actually bagged a test ride on this very bike back when it was more or less a stock Bayliss Replica 1098R with a few extra goodies fitted (see BRM Oct '09). Since then it's had a further \$50K spent on it that has transformed it into a 160kg motorcycle with 186bhp on hand at the rear wheel. There is so much carbon on this bike that the Green party should consider it for a special tax. Luckily for me I was still in Andrew's good books and managed to score a follow-up test ride on this, his most special of toys.

The ultimate big bang

Bikes with big-bang engines are all the rage nowadays - but the reality is Ducati have been building this style of power delivery with their trademark 'L-Twin' format for quite a few years now - and it's still as effective as ever. Andrew warned me before he hit the starter button on this bad boy that it may sound "little bit gruff" at idle due to the recently fitted Ducati Corse race camshafts - he wasn't wrong. The bike fired-up the instant we hit the starter and the people standing near to us in our pit lane garage all took one step backwards. The raucous 'boom' from the full race spec drainpipe sized exhaust system with twin 'shorty' carbon mufflers and the general clatter coming from the bike was gloriously invasive. Earplugs are

a must and even with these fitted in your lugholes the deep base tones of this super-tricked out 1198cc engine had little problem sending its sound waves instantly through your helmet, earplugs and all your internal organs... I was drooling already and I hadn't even sat on the thing yet.

So I threw a leg over the seat of this \$130,000-plus motorcycle, pointed the front wheel toward pit

lane and engaged the classically noisy Ducati dry clutch.

I have ridden most of the belt drive series Ducatis in the past and owned some as well, however the ones with the 1198 donk fitted have always been a memorable experience. I now firmly believe that the desmo-valved engine in this capacity is one of the most psychologically fulfilling engines





ever put into production use and the 'R' series bikes of this family stand out as the brutes of the pack. It surpasses my previous favourite the 998R engine with the 1198cc version being the veritable 'big-dog' of the range. The extra parts that have been thrown at this particular bike make this one by far the best Ducati powerplant that I have ever had the pleasure to enjoy.

It's hard to place this experience into words but there is just something just so very right about this engine's use in a sports motorcycle. It's an engine that caresses your desires at a guttural level and it does this by the sound of its factory spec 70mm intake throttle-body roar and its full race exhaust. It's also the vibes that it produces when it's hard on the throttle and the crackle of its exhaust when decelerating. This engine is motorcycling's equivalent of a stonking V8 sports car in that it is muscular yet at the same time somehow gentle. These things all contribute to the experience as a whole and in short it makes you smile (even at slow speeds) and it makes you laugh like a schoolboy at high speeds. It has the ability to brighten your day just by starting it - are you getting the idea that I really like this engine!

Power is nothing without control

The above Pirelli tyre slogan is so true in the world of sky-high powered superbikes where a combination of factors all need to be just right to maximise the engine's capabilities.

The riders 'control' over a superbike can be assisted or limited in a number of ways including, in main, the machine's geometry and frame design, its weight and the distribution of it, its power and the style of its suspension and tyres. With any of these things working right you may get a bike that is fairly fast but requires some effort to ride - but when you get all of these things close to right, you get a bike that is extremely easy to ride very fast.

For starters this particular machine is fitted with a hand built 'one-off' Öhlins TTX36 rear shock, assembled by Wellington's Dukic Suspension. This special shock had to be remachined so that it would fit into the new space that is demanded by the aftermarket RAM single sided magnesium alloy swingarm (which is 15mm longer than the standard and stiffer as well), don't ask what it costs. This longer swingarm allows

more weight to be placed onto the front end which is a good thing for the Ducati design in general as the front cylinder that sticks out close to the front wheel tends to upset things in respect to weight bias on the Italian machines. The rear shock unit works in unison with a Kyle racing rear linkage (this linkage being the same as is used on the F09 factory Superbikes). This combined with the Kyle racing offset triple clamps and the Öhlins 25mm front fork cartridge internals all contribute to give a handling package that can indeed provide the 'control' you need for the power that this bike has.

Mr Dunlop's finest N-Tec series slicks are fitted front and rear - so

there's no shortage of grip. And the bike additionally benefits from having an overall weight so low that it would be illegal to run it in the World Superbike Series.

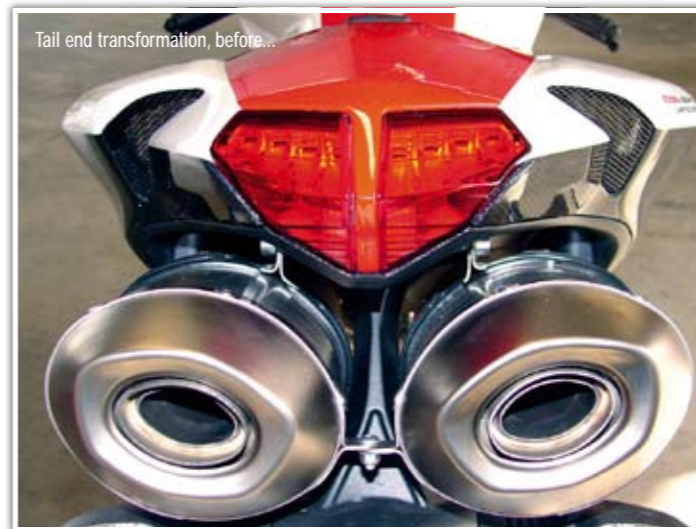
Weather conditions at Manfeild were as good as could be expected



The bike's owner, Andrew Forward



Glen on his first test a year earlier



Tail end transformation, before...



...after!

for a test ride in the middle of winter and the only instructions from Andrew were simply to get the engine up to temperature (above 60° C) before revving it to the max. These instructions were dutifully followed and within two laps we were ready to pull the pin.

Must try harder

As stated earlier I had the chance to test this bike when it was near new

and back then with less than 100km on the clock it had some niggly failings in that it had slightly lazy steering and balance going into turns and a very new and quite stiff gearbox. These things have most definitely been improved. To be blunt and to get straight to the point - a bike with this much mumbo shouldn't be this easy to ride - but it is! It delivers power in spades at literally any revs, it now drops into the corners on a

whim yet contradictorily is as stable as rock under brakes. It lays on its side and holds a line with ease mid-corner and proceeds to 'rail' around them with virtually no bar pressure to keep it on line. When you hit the gas upon exit the bike does not 'lift up' or make any attempt to run wide it simply accelerates in the direction that you happen to be pointing and should you choose to do so you can adjust that line at your leisure. When

opening the throttle you can feel the rear tyre squirming under power and adjust your throttle application accordingly, the relationship between the throttle and the rear wheel is sublime - or of course you might want to simply let the traction control system do this for you (but that's not nearly as much fun).

The lean angles you can achieve are astounding - and leaning this very expensive bike over and get-

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