

REVIEW: '08 HONDA CBR1000RR

REVIEW BY HEIN JONKER

If I had to use only three words for this review it would be: "about time" and "amazing", but seeing I'm getting paid for it, I'll have to say a whole lot more.

At the heart of the CBR is an all-new engine, 6.5% more powerful than its predecessor. New forged pistons with a special low-friction coating retain the same weight as before and now reside in an innovative separate, sleeveless cylinder block, which allowed engineers to increase cylinder bore without increasing engine width. Although last year's CBR had a tremendous mid-range punch, its top-end performance was a bit limited. The solution: A significantly revised valve train specifically designed for improved high-rpm performance. New, larger titanium intake valves, exhaust valves have been slimmed which in turn allows the use of a shorter cylinder head.



Spent gasses are now passed via a unique stainless-steel 4-2-1 MotoGP-style exhaust that sits beneath the bike just like Nicky Hayden's RC212V. The low-slung system is positioned as close as possible to the centre of the motorcycle in order to aid handling and to allow maximum cornering clearance. Inside the lightweight three-chamber muffler, both electronic and pressure exhaust valves are used to reduce noise and enhance power output at any rpm setting.

Cradling the engine is an entirely new chassis with a more compact four-piece twin-spar aluminium frame that utilizes Honda's Hollow Fine Die-Cast manufacturing process-allowing frame wall thickness to be as narrow as 2.5mm. In the suspension department, a fully-adjustable inverted Showa fork returns, but the distance between the fork tubes has been reduced by 10mm in order to help slim the front profile. Offset has also been increased in order to sharpen steering response. Further aiding smooth braking transitions is perhaps the best slipper clutch I've yet sampled. A clutch that limits back-torque during high-rpm downshifts while braking is nothing new, but this one works seamlessly and has an ingenious design.

There are two problems with most slipper clutches: they are heavy and they require stiff clutch springs, the latter resulting in a heavy lever pull. This new patented design uses cams that apply a tighter squeeze on the clutch plates while under acceleration, thereby allowing moderate rates for the clutch springs. Creating a lighter lever pull allowed for a cable-actuated design instead of a hydraulic unit that is heavier. Ignition Interrupt Control is brand-new technology unique to the CBR1000RR, it's an electronic way to reduce drivetrain lash felt when reapplying throttle. It's a clever system, though it works only up to 6000 rpm and only at small throttle openings.

Let's summarize the riding experience of the new CBR by taking a ride with me; dialling up the power, the CBR responds without abruptness and with intense thrust. There's enough accessible power to tractor out of a corner in second gear, but it's more exciting to get on the throttle in first gear with the bike still leaned over slightly and float the front tyre off the ground through first gear and into second, snagging a well-timed upshift thanks to a programmable shift light on the highly legible gauges.

In case I haven't yet made it perfectly clear, this 2008 CBR1000RR is the best pocket-rocket Honda ever, and that's really saying something. It's as fast as hell and very agile, but its most notable feature is how manageable a blazing Superbike like this can be.

PRICE
R119 000.00 Incl. VAT

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