

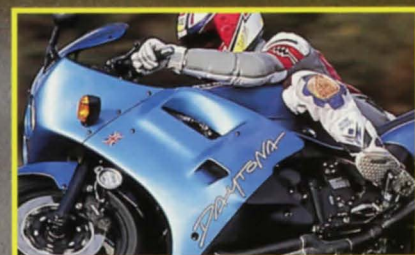
GILERA 125 v MITO v TZR v WOLF v EXTREMA v RG SUZY • BIMOTA FURANO  
DAYTONA v CBR1000 v ZZR1100 v BMW R1100RS v GSX1100F v FJ1200 v  
TROPHY v GTS1000

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# Fast Bikes

the spirit of motorcycling



## PRECIOUS METAL

*Bimotas diamond  
handling Furano*



+ PRECOCIOUS METAL - GILERA 125 v MITO v TZR v  
WOLF v EXTREMA v RG SUZY

+ PRE-PACKED METAL - OFF THE SHELF SPORTS  
TOURERS - DAYTONA v CBR1000 v ZZR1100 v BMW  
R1100RS v GSX1100F v FJ1200 v TROPHY v GTS1000





**T**he well known 11/6637/XX7 version of the all-intergalactic encyclopedia compiled by the Prestfix scholars of the planet Zokwz-2 lists the species 'Human being' as being utterly despicable, base, vile, self centred, contemptible, despotic, dictatorial, domineering,

imperious... It actually carries on in this vein for over two hundred volumes, covers eight thousand chapters and six million pages, and to be honest they've got a point. No matter how much we like to think otherwise we're driven by a web of greed, ego, status and power, and it's a generic condition that's as much a part of human nature as Freud's

key motivational elements, sex and death.

Karl Marx attempted to create a model for social evolution, but it was based on the premise that we would be content with a world in which everyone was socially and economically equal, without competition, and without social strata. But history has proved that



# HELL RAZOR

**Bimota's Furano is as sharp as a diamond. It ought to be, gramme for gramme it's almost more expensive.**

there'll always be people eager to lead, just as there'll always be people willing to follow, and if anything it's a stigma that's perpetrated, indeed cultivated as much by the so-called down-trodden as the treading. Take the microcosm of motorcycling (*well why not, Dan, you've written 300 words and you haven't mentioned it yet, prat*). Riding so many dif-

ferent bikes, journalists tend to notice the prejudices and preconceptions more clearly. Riding a Harley one day may illicit a wave of respect (that most crass of social reinforcements) from a 'fellow' Harley owner, yet a Fireblade jock wouldn't bother to put his front wheel down to come over to help you if you were getting the shit kicked out of you

by some *real* bikers'... although ferk knows what the definition of a real biker is supposed to be. The same happens with big bikes versus small bikes, British bikes versus Japanese bikes, and Bimotas versus everything else. The difference with the Bimota scenario is that seldom is the disrespect levelled at the bikes, rather it's directed at the owners,





which is where money, status and power rears its ugly head once again.

The typical criticisms that you hear about Bimota owners are that they're slow riders on fast bikes, they're arrogant and conceited and they've got more money than sense. While there's a small element of truth in this, there's also some truth in the fact that there're shiploads of self-centred, pussy, GSX-R1100 and Fireblade riders as well as surprisingly fast owners of exotica, like Furano owner Chris Knight. If we were all truthful, there's nothing any of us would like more than to be able to ride whatever bike we desired, let alone to be able to afford (literally) the luxury of smashing it up as well. Sadly at Fast Bikes we don't have an unlimited crash budget, which is probably why we've got by far the lowest attrition record in the business, so when I got to ride Chris's Furano I knew that if I rammed it into a ditch there'd be a queue starting with Chris and ending with Colin waiting to ram things up my ditch which, as you can imagine, tempered my enthusiasm somewhat.

Bimota's in general aren't like normal bikes. You can't compare their build quality with other machines because they're quite simply, in terms of engineering excellence, in a class of their own. Moreover their Japanese influenced styling and paintwork, whether it appeals or not, is equally unique in terms of design. They're conceived, built and finished to the very highest standards which is why, although the Furano's ostensibly powered by a lowly Yamaha FZR1000 engine, it still manages to attract a price-tag of twenty-three big ones, which incidentally also buys you three years parts, labour, hotel accommodation, services of the local Rimini call-girls and recovery cover. As we've seen with Honda's NR750 though, engineering excellence, or the art of making a square piston fit a spam shaped hole doesn't matter a jot if there's no purpose to, or benefit to be derived from it, and the only way that any motorcycle can be judged is on its claimed performance criteria which, as if you hadn't guessed, is where the Bimota begins to consign the oval pistoned one to the second division.

Bimota aren't totally innocent of pretension themselves, for like the NR750, their original hub-centre-



# HELL RAZOR



**Comparatively slow steering never exactly held 888s up, and it isn't doing much harm to the Furano either. Forks are the best in the business though Brembos have been overtaken by recent Japanese six-piston developments**

steered Tesi was an engineering showpiece of the future that sadly failed to perform as well as the past it was supposed to overshadow and Bimota, it has to be said, are renowned for making grandiose claims about speed, power etc., etc., which they've so far failed to substantiate with one single empirical indicator. Many times they've claimed the Furano was 'The World's fastest production motorcycle' and many times they've declined to actually prove it.

Whatever, climbing on board the YB8EI at a cold, wet, and overcast Goodwood for the first time in almost two years sparked off a wash of memories. The last time I'd had control of arguably the most evocative of Bimotas, was in Italy during an uncommonly pleasant heatwave (it usually pisses down during our Italy trips). I remember hoisting the front wheel up a leafy incline and setting it down only yards from a well disguised San Marino border post, which promptly resulted in me being nicked the right royal sum of a tenner for speeding. I remembered that the accommodation on the bike was tight and concessions to comfort meagre, and perched on the machine ready to go out onto the track I reflected that almost nothing in this respect had changed. In fact the bike was so similar to the factory demonstrator that it could easily have been the same bike, although tucking it into the first long sweeper at Goodwood it occurred to me that while they may have been identical, there was a world of difference between the circumstances sur-

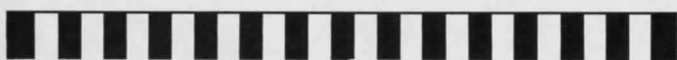
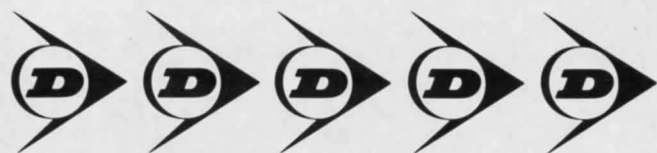
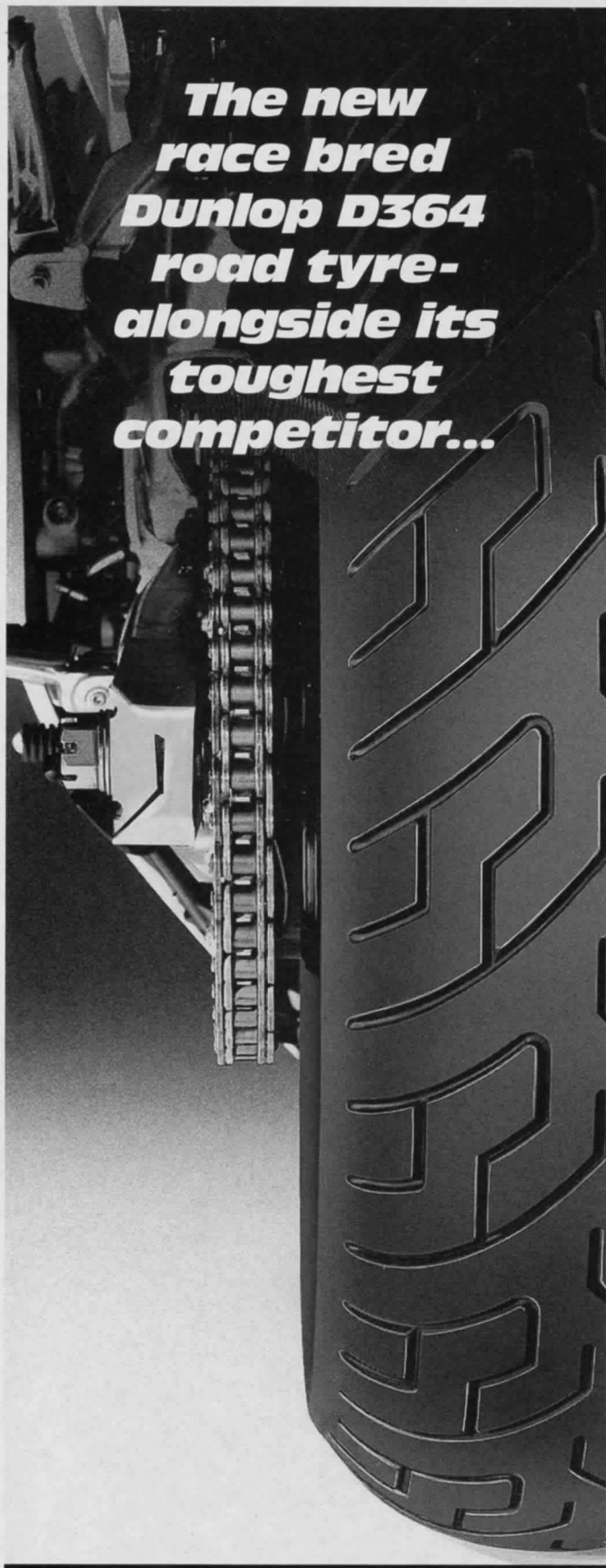
rounding the two tests. Rather than having the 'free hand' I enjoyed at the Rimini headquarters I was being nervously, albeit understandably, chaperoned, and to be honest it wasn't until the lunch break arrived that I was able to get out of the circuit on my own, do some knee dragging and some mono-wheeling, and generally relax with the bike. After that, the Furano's competence just came flooding back, particularly the sheer lack of rider input that's required to ride it so damn (Bimota owner type adjective) fast. The bike can be stood on its rear wheel as low down as 20mph on the power alone, and the front can be carried vast distances absolutely controllably on the throttle (as long as you don't come to a border...) such is the uncanny smoothness of the delivery. If this is what Weber Marelli fuel injection can do for a twenty-valve liquid-cooled FZR1000 engine, it's incredible that Yamaha have been able to make their home grown injected FZR mill (fitted to the GTS) so sluggish. Bimota actually claim to do nothing to the standard Genesis motor whatsoever, other than constructing their own exhaust for it (which, surprisingly, retains the EXUP valve) and bolting on the fuel injection to give the claimed 164bhp at 10,500 at the crankshaft - Hmmm The power really does come in low and hard, however, and just keeps pulling all the way to the red-line, although in all honesty I can't say that the delivery is that pure under all circumstances. Coming onto the throttle

gently between the beginning of the apex and the exit of the corner regularly caused minor surging which had a tendency to upset the bike. It was as though the computer couldn't quite decide what the mixture should be, and so swapped between two alternatives, and perhaps, most critically it happens just at the point where poise and balance are most essential. It's a trait that can be ridden around by staying off the throttle longer then powering out harder and later, which is why Chris would doubtless tell you it doesn't happen when he's riding it. Moreover, if you wind the power on in too low a gear rather than just 'bogging' like a conventionally inducted engine, the Bimota tends to snap on and off the power hard, probably because the mixture that's being delivered to the cylinders is far too rich for the lowly rpm, although again provided that you keep the power on and wait for the revs to pick up, or indeed simply drive out in a lower gear, it ain't a problem. While it's not a major minus it's a fault nonetheless, and presumably it's a glitch that could be mapped out which makes it all the more frustrating. Otherwise the engine breathes remarkably well for an FZR, and pulls *almost* as hard as a ZZR1100 out of the corners before picking up at the top end. This may raise a few eyebrows in light of the bike's claim to its aforementioned World title, but frankly if the Furano we tested is putting out anything like 160bhp then I'm a giraffe's left buttock (*ah, so that's what the spots are, Dan*). In my experience (and I freely admit that horsepower guesstimates are more dangerous than farting in Africa) I'd hazard that the Bimota was producing in the region of 135 to 140 lively thoroughbreds which is still well impressive, albeit only equal to that of a derestricted GSX-R1100.

**This is the sort of class gear that accounts for the extra wedge on a Bimota - beautiful jointing, exquisite turning and milling - seems a shame to rest a dirty old Frank Thomas boot on it..**



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# HELL

The other thing that surprised me was how heavy the throttle was. In this day and age, particularly with the flexibility that fuel injection has to offer it's high time that frictionless 'fly by wire' throttles were introduced - as they say 'we have the technology' so why not employ it.

Perhaps the one technological arena that's seen massive progress over the past five years with respect to motorcycling is braking. The six piston Japanese systems, particularly the one fitted to Yamaha's YZF is truly stunning in its

ability to wipe off speed fast and with a level of feedback that you simply wouldn't have thought possible only two years ago. Indeed, as I remember only two years ago, I really rated the Furano's brakes, and out on the track and around the environs of West Sussex they substantiated my confidence. But time has moved on, and while in isolation you'd be hard pushed to criticise the four piston Brembos, when you compare them against the YZF industry benchmark they're relatively wooden and lacking in sheer stopping power.

What does help the Furano decelerate effectively, though, is the superb marriage of suspension and chassis. Outside Bimota's own Tesi, the frame on the Furano is categorically the most intricately formed mass-produced twin-spar aluminium unit available. Much of it's been milled from solid billets by computer numeric controlled machines to provide not only strength but decoration. The bottom of the spars, for example, that join onto the rear of the engine and would normally just be a bare expanse of plain aluminium have shaped

grooves carved into them which serve little other purpose than to provide texture. The headstock area is heavily braced, the yokes are milled from solid, and the curved spars themselves are about ten percent bigger than anything else currently avail-



**More gravitational pull than Madonna's knickers, but keep it on the throttle, though...**

able, which accounts for the chassis's tremendous rigidity. It's this level of quality and attention to detail that costs the money because let's face it there's nothing radically innovative about the Furano, it's just a simple, if effective, amalgam of the best of proven technology, although unlike say the Norton F1 that technology has been integrated to form a complete package rather than being left as a disjointed mass. Finally the Suspension is fully adjustable Öhlins all round, the forks being of course of the latest trendy inverted variety. You'd expect that with all the solid billets and oversize components fitted, the Furano would be a little on the obese side, but Bimota claim an impressive 180kg dry weight, equal to that of Honda's Fireblade which is really pretty amazing considering that the Furano was on sale some twelve months before the Honda launch. But it has to be said that it's particularly surprising because the Furano doesn't carry its weight anywhere near as well as the Fireblade.

On the fast open sweepers of Goodwood the bike is as sure

# RAZOR

footed and as solidly planted as an oak tree, and the bumps of the Sussex circuit failed miserably to upset the Bimota's uncanny precision. The trade-off for this kind of confident immovability (one that's achieved without so much as a steering damper) is a geometry that necessarily produces relatively slow steering; not as slow as say, the GSX-R1100 for example, but roughly on a par with the likes of Yamaha's EXUP as opposed to Honda's Fireblade or even Yamaha's YZF. We would tell you what the rake and trail are but the factory curiously don't release these specifications, perhaps because they think that the sort of people who buy their motor-bikes don't do their own gardening.... Whatever, for a road bike Bimota have found a good compromise and let's face it Ducati's factory 888s haven't found comparAtively slow steering to be that much of a limiting factor on the track, and for the road, the Furano turns plenty fast enough.



...otherwise the front-end'll cave in like Dolly Parton's chest in Concorde...

Whatever the true stable of the Furano is, it can be wound on and on through the Michelin Hi sports at impressive angles of attack which, combined with the instantaneous delivery of the FZR engine generates good exit speed. Out on the road I expected the Bimota to struggle on the tighter corners like

roundabouts because on the track the solidity made the bike feel as though it had a long wheelbase, but at 1420 mm it negotiates small circumferences equally comfortably. Wind it around a concrete circles a few times and you can generate some serious 'g'. But what's really impressive is the bike's ability to change direction and brake while cranked over, manoeuvres occasioned by the "I didn't see you 'cos I can't see and haven't had an eye test since I got gassed by the Hun" or, let's face it, just going too nobbin' fast and watching the roadside furniture rapidly approach. The Furano is one of those bikes that likes to be ridden on the power rather than off it. Attempt the latter at your peril because you load the front end too hard and risk the dreaded 'wash out'. On the power, and the bike drives hard and true, movement originating from the rear predictably and smoothly, which to be honest is the first time I can say that about a bike shod with Hi

Sports and as such must be a testimony to the sensitivity of the Öhlins suspension.

Whether it's the fastest bike in the world is a question that's bound to attract a certain amount of conjecture, and certainly the tuned and injected engine, while far more lively than a standard FZR1000, doesn't produce the enormous

thrust of say a tuned normally-inducted GSX-R1100 power-plant. On the other hand the bike as a whole, the chassis the handling the suspension and the overall combination of superbly blended elements make it without doubt the best bike I've ridden this year, and probably the best I'm likely to. It

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# HELL RAZOR



Well this is the world's only picture of allegedly the "world's fastest bike" on a dynamometer. 164bhp? Err, I don't think so, boys. We seem to have lost something in the translation...

has a completeness and an integration, as well as an unmatched level of quality that very nearly justifies its twenty three

Then again the Furano's only real competition in this super-luxo-sport category is

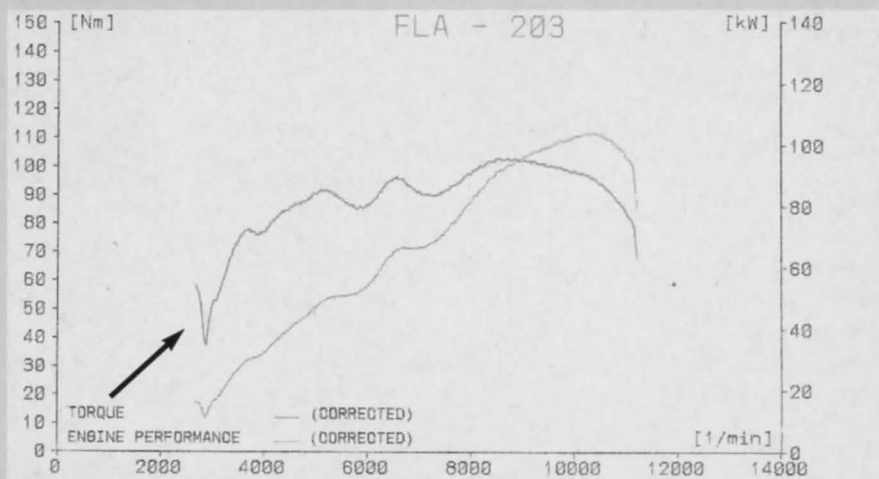


The Bim is a cinch of a bike for climbing around and hanging off of. Even renowned amputee, Dan Stumpy Harris manages to lay some Patella down

grand price tag. Quite simply the Furano lives up to the tremendous reputation of quality and adaptability (blipped only by the original Tesi's suspension faults) that Bimota have built for themselves. Perhaps if the measure isn't purely straight line speed, it's also justified in claiming for itself the accolade at least of 'joint fastest bike in the world' (with the 888) because around the twisties and on the brakes the much heavier ZZR1100, which'd thrash either in a straight line, doesn't have a hope. Yet as much as I hate to admit it, the seven thousand pound Fireblade *would* give it (as it did the Duke) a run for its money on the track and on the open road and even if, at the end of the day the Furano came out on top (which is by no means a foregone conclusion) for the Honda to get so close to the Bimota's performance parameters and cost sixteen grand more must be a worry for the engineers and marketing men in Rimini.

Honda's NR750 which sadly concentrated so much on the esoteric artie-fartie nobody's-ever-gonna-ride-this-'cos-it's-so-damn-expensive ethos, that they failed to take into account that time had moved on and a 500lb plus sports bike had become a contradiction in terms. Let's face it, the Italians build a bike and style naturally follows while the Japanese find it necessary to sacrifice both it and more original engineering

**The proof...** The torque curve (top) should be flatter and should lack the two dips while the power curve should be fuller and more concave. Either way the Furano is shy of the factory's claimed 160bhp at the crank and our seat-of-the-pants guesstimate of 135 to 140 was spot-on.



## SPECIFICATIONS

### BIMOTA FURANO

**PRICE:** £23,000

#### ENGINE

**Type** Fuel Injected Yamaha  
**Capacity** FZR1000 EXUP  
**Bore/stroke** 1002 cc  
**Carburation** 75.5 x 56 mm  
**Comp Ratio** Weber Marelli fuel injection  
**Power** 12:1  
**Power** 139 bhp @ 10,350 rpm

#### TRANSMISSION

**Clutch** Wet multilplate  
**Gearbox** 5 speed constant mesh  
**Final drive** Chain

#### CHASSIS

**Type** Twin spar aluminium  
**Front susp** Öhlins inverted fully adjustable  
**Rear susp** Öhlins fully adjustable monoshock  
**Front brake** Twin 320 mm discs, four piston callipers  
**Rear brake** 230 mm disc, two piston caliper  
**Front Tyre** Michelin Hi-Sport 120/70x17  
**Rear Tyre** Michelin Hi-Sport 180/55x17

#### DIMENSIONS

**Wheelbase** 1420 mm  
**Weight** 180 kg (claimed)

#### PERFORMANCE

**Top speed** 180 mph (claimed) 170 est

practices for performance. The bottom line is that it's immaterial whether or not you think the Furano's worth the money, because the performance is well and truly in the premier league, and it's going to be some time before progress relegates it to the second division...