

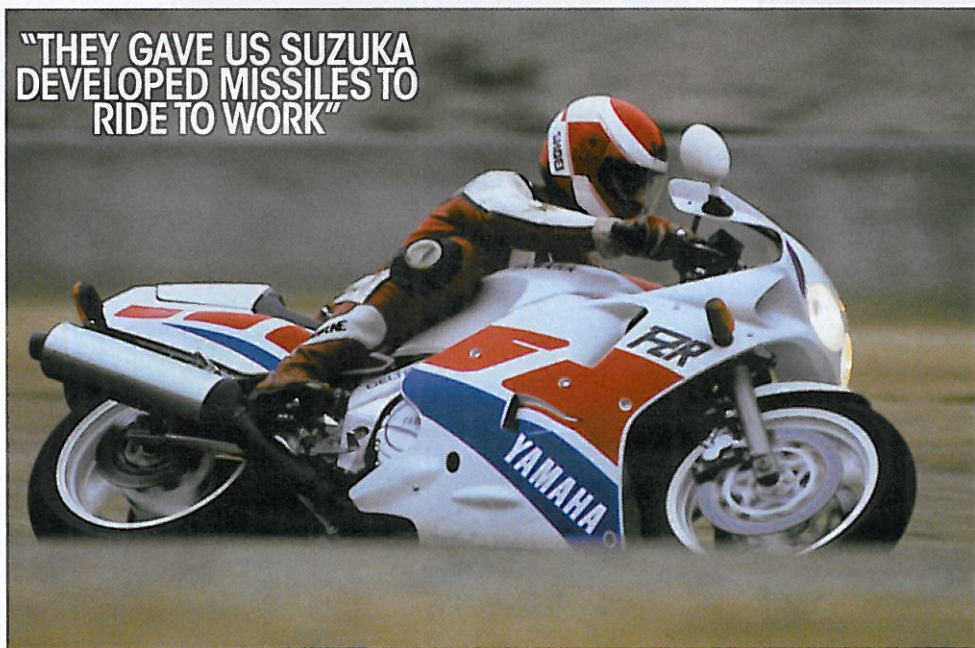
# HAIRY MONSTERS

Get down on your knees and play

Ok, so most of us couldn't even get close to what these things can do. But that's not the point. In the late 1980s the superbike went crazy. Race tech leaped and bounded and cash-rich Japanese factories were happy to give us Suzuki 8-Hour-developed missiles to ride to work. Motorcycling as a leisure sport was a good five years down the road. It

didn't matter that they had way too much power and that tyre technology needed 10 more years to catch up. The fact was that you couldn't ride a CBR600 without an overwhelming curiosity that... 'If this thing goes so bloody fast it makes my whole body water, just how quick must that FZR1000R be?' £1000 down and £135 a month was all it took to find out.

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## YAMAHA FZR1000

171mph, 130bhp, 209kg, £800-£2500

The first and last of an era, Yamaha's big FZR was a blueprint for the modern sports bike. Alloy beam frame, 17in wheels, engine canted forward, EXUP exhaust valve, rudimentary ram air system and a riding position that owed more to a real racer than a comic-book, backyard caff-racer (ever ridden an early GSX-R? you'll know what I mean).

In 1989 the FZR was untouchable. So much faster than anything else, so much more nimble and composed in the corners too. The engine had grunt and top end thanks to careful tuning and the amazing dancing EXUP valve.

It was also the easiest bike to derestrict to full power. But the big FZR was also the last of the

line of heavyweight super bikes. At 209kg, it was light for 1989, but three years later Honda's FireBlade showed saving weight was more important than power and, overnight, the FZR felt like a barge.

But the FZ was still the better road bike for a year or two before tyre technology caught up with the flighty FireBlade. But the future was written... the FZR was finished. And prices fell fast. FZR's have been bargain basement for years now, bumping along the bottom, neglected or streetfightered. That so many are still running is a testament to their strength. Rescue one now and surprise yourself how good they still are.