

TREAD LIGHTLY

BST wheels, Jardine exhaust, PC3 — we took AMCN's long term CBR600RR to the racetrack to see how it all worked

I finally got the chance to try out (on a race track) the new and improved long term Honda CBR600RR we've been playing with this year — and I have to say, it's pretty bloody weird.

It's not the engine. Sydney Dyno's mapping work on the Dynojet Power Commander has left the bike with a sweet, full (for a 600) power delivery, and reasonable mid-range grunt pulling through to an undeniably impressive 112ps top end.

Compared with the standard CBR600RR I rode at Winton Raceway back-to-back with AMCN's bike, it simply walks away once the throttle is open and the revs are above 11,000. It's still easy to ride but it pulls harder when the gauntlet is thrown down.

But it doesn't sound weird, the note from the Jardine slip-on can is pure 'race', even though we heard some reports from the assembled throng that there were wisps of smoke puffing out on the gear change.

We must look into that...

The weird bit is how it handles — 5.25kg doesn't look too impressive a number, but when that weight is hanging off the suspension in the form of the BST carbon-fibre wheels given to us by Geelong Composites to play with, it makes a big difference.

The moment any forward momentum occurs, whether you're pushing it or riding it, it feels lighter, with less effort needed to get the Pirelli Super Corsas

spinning. It accelerates harder, in other words — though there's nothing weird in that — then you turn a corner.

I nearly hooked left and out the Winton gate to Benalla at the first corner because so much less steering effort was required. Less spinning mass is the reason, and at first, it is quite unnerving.

It behaves differently over the bumps too. The suspension is standard, aside from me setting the static spring sag to suit my weight, and the forks and shock have less to deal with thanks to the lighter weight.

With less mass beneath the rider there is also a very different feel from the tyres, and it took two sessions before I was used to the feedback I was getting.

The tyres feel like they're floating over the bumps more than rolling over them, but some suspension work — the next item on the hot-up list — will fix that.

Braking isn't weird, it's just improved, and I was able to leave hitting the brakes until substantially after the standard bike's braking marker — although the stickier Pirelli tyres would also have helped that.

The bottom line is, the BST carbon-fibre wheels have a far greater effect on the bike's performance than I expected, and with some suspension mods customised to suit the lighter rims, the difference should be even greater. And they still look very cool.

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Things are feeling pretty different at this stage...

