

750 COMPARO

riders will miss the centrestand, but it can be ordered as an option. In Europe it comes standard. The FZ pays for the convenience of its stand with additional weight on the spec sheet, but it's an item we like to see.

In a number of ways the VFR bridges the design gap between the FZ and GSX-R. For many riders, the Suzuki's racing crouch is too radical for street use and its fairing too efficient for an engine that pumps out volcanic heat; on the other hand, the FZ's seat isn't much more comfortable than a block of wood, despite a comfortable riding position.

As an all-round street bike, the Honda excels. The engine is just as flexible and civil on the street as a cruiser, while the riding position is moderately sporting with an acceptably comfortable seat. Our fuel economy figures, which include race track testing, show the V4 is considerably more efficient than the other two, with an average consumption of 6.6 L/100 km (43 mpg), compared with 7.6 L/100 km (37 mpg) for the FZ and 8.1 L/100 km (35 mpg) for the GSX-R.

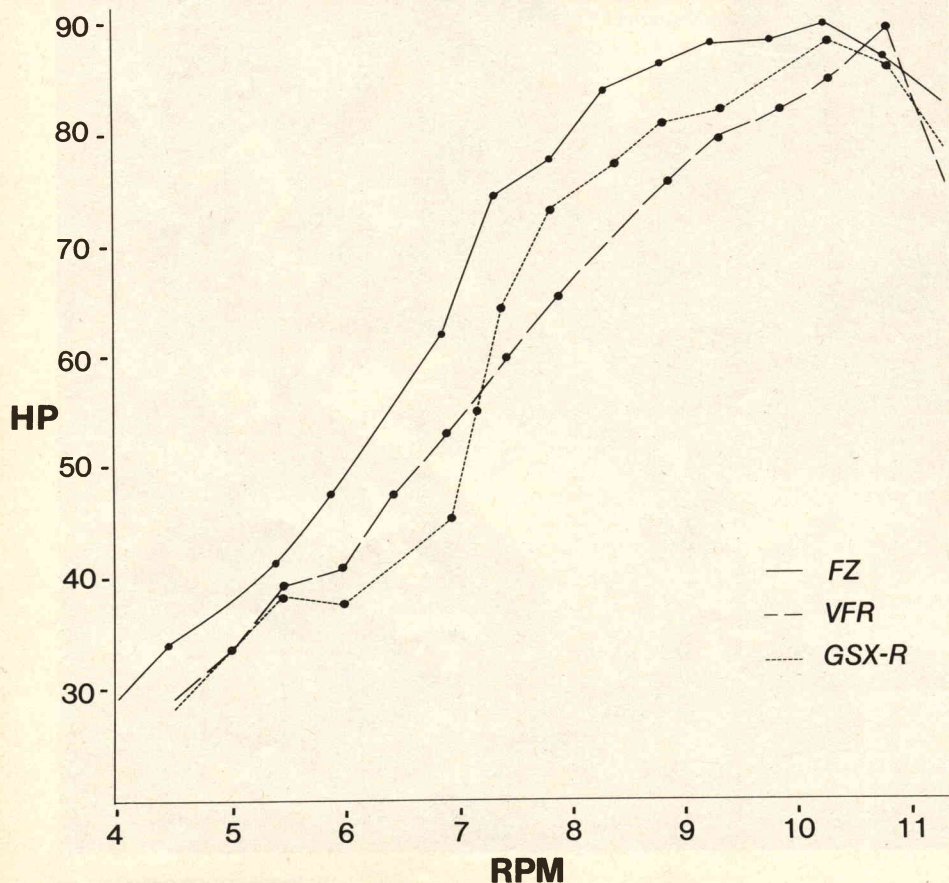
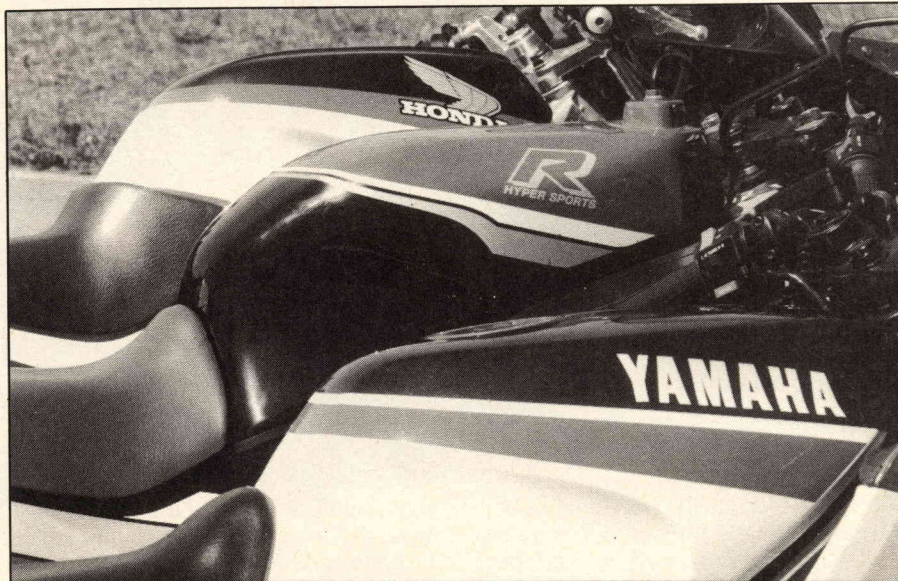
Honda's late entry into the super-sporting 750 class with the VFR750 has given the company a tactical advantage in design. The performance level needed to build a winner was no secret, and the engineers knew exactly what was re-

quired. Yet, we're still impressed with how successful Honda's execution of the VFR750 is. After the original Interceptor's spectacular introduction the machine developed a dismal reliability record, and some believed the V4 concept was more of a dead end than the way of the future, especially given the VF1000's disappearance. Honda's thorough overhaul of the V4's internal design, however, appears to have re-established its lead in tractability and performance. The VFR is a machine capable of beating the competition on the race track while at the same time serving as a more comfortable and useful street bike. It's a remarkable accomplishment.

There is a price, however—\$6,799 to

be exact. The soaring value of the yen makes that figure even more shocking than it should, but the fact remains that the GSX-R and FZ750 cost \$400 less. In terms of pure, adrenaline-charged sporting capacity, there's really no substitute for GSX-R ownership. The VFR hasn't taken that status away from the Suzuki. And for solid, streetable midrange engine performance in a proven mechanical package, the FZ is still the pick. The VFR surpasses its competition by the smallest of margins, but the superiority is there.

Is it worth the extra money? Now we're getting into a problem GSX-R, FZ and VFR riders can argue about forever. But for what it's worth, we say yes. □



Dynamometer readings show the FZ's five-valve engine holds an edge in power and torque right up to peak figures. The VFR's power curve is similarly broad and peaks at the same level, but lacks the FZ's strength at lower revs. GSX-R shows only a slight disadvantage in peak power, but below 7,000 rpm the Suzuki's output can't match the torquier VFR and FZ.