

FIRST TEST

★ TRIUMPH DAYTONA 600 93%

One last chance to get it right

Triumph's TT600 aimed to rival the Japanese. It failed. They can't afford to get it wrong again. Everything is riding on our world first test of the Daytona 600

THERE'S an air of nervous expectancy around the pitlane as Triumph's new Daytona 600 is wheeled out for its official world launch test. But then the guys from Hinckley have every right to be a little nervous about their new supersport 600 contender.

How can we put this... This bike just has to be right. No ifs, buts or maybes. It has to be right.

Why? Because the British company put its reputation on the line three years ago with the launch of the TT600. That was the first four-cylinder supersport 600 in the world to take on the Japanese directly and challenge the notion that the Big Four were so far ahead technically, no other manufacturer could hope to equal them. It failed. Glitchy low-speed power delivery from the first injection system ever fitted to a 600 four ensured also-ran status for the TT. Its bland and bulbous styling didn't help - particularly at a time when the Japanese

were hotting up the appearance of their own machines.

So with Triumph's engineering credibility on hold, the Daytona is the Hinckley factory's second chance, and realistically its last chance, to prove it can cut it with the big boys in the most hotly contested and technically advanced sector in motorcycling.

So hot in fact, there are three new machines for 2003 the Daytona has to face up to: Honda's new benchmark CBR600RR with its stunning performance and MotoGP-inspired styling, the thoroughly revised Yamaha R6 and the bike spearheading Kawasaki's renaissance, the latest ZX-6R. Even Suzuki's two-year-old GSX-R600 is still right up there with the rest. Triumph has a formidable task.

There can be no excuses, no apologies, no allowances made for some quirk or deficiency just because it's British. Riders don't care about that in this class. They simply won't buy if it's not good enough.

It's with these thoughts running through my head that I plant my backside in the

accommodating seat of the first Daytona ever to be ridden by someone not working for Triumph. I have no connection with the company, but as someone with little patience for those who seem to enjoy knocking our own country, I'd love to see Triumph succeed at this stratospheric level.

The first sign isn't good - I press the starter button and, even though I have the clutch lever pulled in as required, nothing happens. It turns out this is a deliberate pause as the all-new engine management spends a couple of seconds checking itself for faults. There are none and the motor bursts into life with a crackling blast of sound through an aftermarket carbon can fitted for our session around the demanding Cartagena circuit in Spain.

We're told it makes no significant difference to the power output, but it sounds a lot better in the track environment, and, as the pit garage doors bounce the aggressive bark back at me, I have to agree. It also feels like a normal, high performance motorcycle engine, which

might seem an odd thing to say, but the old TT600 didn't. That used to splutter and hesitate until it was spinning hard and under load, but the Daytona's motor simply spins up (fast and hard) as you blip the throttle - exactly as it should.

Into gear, release the lighter and more progressive clutch and the Daytona leaps forward eagerly, howling its way smoothly and strongly up its rev range. This is fast already, and, crucially, the power delivery is predictable, crisp and consistent.

I was expecting a significant hike in power at around 8000rpm, roughly where all the Japanese bikes hit some sort of power band, but the Daytona must have a torque curve flatter than a Dutch landscape as there are no steps or kicks, just more power with more revs in perfect proportion. By 12,750rpm that means 110bhp of power, a figure Triumph says is more realistic than some of the "theoretical" numbers quoted by its rivals. And at the top end the Daytona certainly feels as if it's playing on the same pitch as the CBR-RR, R6 and the rest. Is it AS quick? Only back-to-back tests will reveal for certain - I've ridden all the rivals, but on different race tracks in different conditions. My gut feeling is that the Triumph has the top end horsepower but it's lacking the mid-range of the ZX-6R or the CBR. But it's going to be reasonably close, and close enough for rider skill to be the most important factor.

The Daytona does lose out at the extreme end of its rev range. Where the Japanese bikes will spin to 15,500rpm and beyond the Triumph's ceiling is at a lower 14,250rpm. In most circumstances this makes no difference as the power of all its rivals is falling away fast by then. But on those occasions where hanging on to a gear between corners on a track - such as Cartagena - can cut a few tenths from a lap time, so the Daytona rider might find he's run out of revs while an R6 rider has 1500rpm left.

To answer the questions raised by the often hesitant TT600, the way the Daytona delivers its power is more important than the quantity of bhp or torque it ultimately churns. Thankfully the answers are good ones. With the aftermarket can fitted there was still a little hesitation and stutter below 6000rpm. But Triumph says the injection mapping is still being worked on at lower revs to suit this particular race can. Riding on the roads with the stock silencer proves everything is already completely sorted for

BY KEVIN ASH
PICTURES PHIL MASTERS
AND CHRIS JONES

TRIUMPH reckons the yellow version will be its biggest seller



the standard bike. There's a slight suddenness when the throttle is opened at low revs from the overrun, but no more than on many other injected bikes, and at higher revs you can pay the Daytona the highest complement of any injected machine - it feels as if it's fitted with carburetors.

The power comes in smoothly, immediately and yet not too harshly, so on the track you can feed in the power at the apex of a turn knowing it's not going to kick out the back tyre or upset the chassis.

You can find some buzziness at various points as the tach needle sweeps around its small dial, but only if you're looking for it. There was no indication that vibes might become intrusive at motorway speeds.

One of the few TT600 features carried over unchanged is the gearbox. And this could have done with a bit of work as it can be slightly sticky. On my particular example the bike would very occasionally miss the second to third upchange unless I was positive about it. It's no worse than the original R6 box, for example, but there's still a bit of room for improvement here. It could do with being slightly less heavy, a little

THE new Daytona's chassis is so responsive it reacts to every twitch of your fingertips



more slick, to make it ideal.

The engine and transmission then are proving to be as good as they need to be, which means the biggest hurdle has been overcome. After all, the TT600 was acclaimed as arguably the best handling of all the 600s three years ago, making its injection deficiencies all the more tragic, so its chassis should make a fine starting point for the Daytona. Which is exactly how it's working out, only half a lap into Cartagena's complicated collection of curves.

In fact, the new chassis is proving so electrifyingly responsive I'm having to make a conscious effort to relax my grip on the bars to minimise spurious inputs, as the bike chases every twitch of my fingertips. It really does drop down into turns with breathtaking agility then hold its line precisely and tightly before flicking up and over to heel around the other way with what feels like at least as much speed as any of its rivals. Yet stability powering out of corners is exemplary. Hit a crest with the twistgrip nailed wide open and the bike still clawing its way upright and the bars will shimmy once, maybe twice, before

Continues over

DAYTONA TO RACE AT THE TT

TRIUMPH is preparing to make a comeback at the Isle of Man TT in June with its Daytona 600.

According to Jack Valentine, the boss of Triumph's works-supported British supersport race team: "It's almost certain now that we'll be competing at the TT!"

His British championship squad, which made its race debut at Silverstone two weeks ago, includes multiple TT winner Jim Moodie.

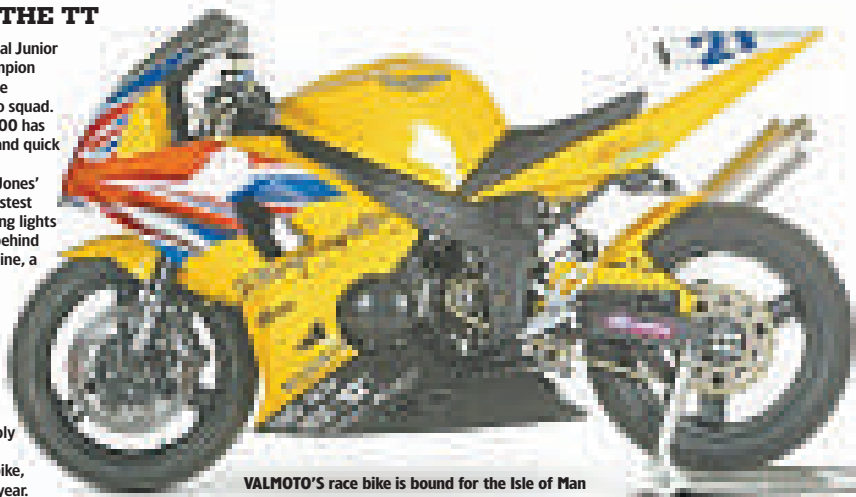
The Scottish rider has won the British supersport title twice and has claimed eight TT victories. He rides

alongside national Junior Superstock champion Craig Jones in the Triumph Valmoto squad.

The Daytona 600 has proved reliable and quick in race trim.

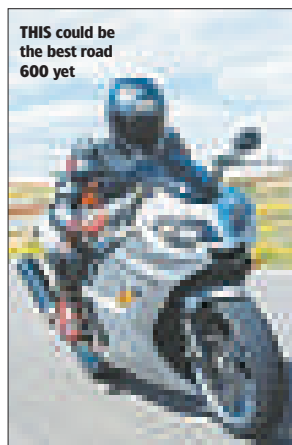
At Silverstone Jones' bike was third fastest through the timing lights – only 2.5mph behind the fastest machine, a Honda CBR600.

The distinctive Union Jack paintscheme of the race bikes is likely to be used on showroom machines, possibly as some kind of limited-edition bike, during the next year.



VALMOTO'S race bike is bound for the Isle of Man

FIRST TEST



THIS could be the best road 600 yet

From previous page

the normal straight and true tracking service is resumed. The feel is most like the new R6 but with better feedback from the front end – and this with the bike set up only slightly more firmly than its standard road settings. Front compression and rebound damping were increased by two clicks, rear compression by two clicks and rear rebound by one click for track use. It worked fine aside from a hint of wallow churning out of one or two turns. Another two rebound clicks front and rear and a single scribe mark of fork spring pre-load will suit you if you're a bit heavier.

What is satisfying is that relatively small suspension changes make a significant difference. The suspension's high quality is showing through. But it doesn't prepare me for how good it is on the roads.

The route away from Cartagena circuit takes us along sinuous roads with surfaces ranging from billiard table to badly patched and dangerously rough. The Daytona soaks up the lot as well as any bike I've ever ridden.

Where an R6, for example, would be kicking and bucking and the rider backing off, the Daytona would feel serene – if it wasn't so damn quick. The indications are that as a fast road bike the Daytona may be the best supersport 600 yet. Its suspension is sublime on real world surfaces, well ahead of the harsh Kawasaki ZX-6R and superior even to the Honda CBR600RR. Its stability on poor surfaces is unmatched, despite that rapid flickability.

The brakes, too, feel as if they've been designed for the real world. This is another area in which the TT600 excelled, and the Daytona's are better again. They lack the fierce initial bite of the Kawasaki's stoppers, which at first on the track deceives you into thinking they're not as strong. But just as with the power delivery, the key is linearity – squeeze them gently and you stop gently, squeeze them hard and the Daytona pins its nose to the deck and howls down to a halt with tyre shredding, eye-popping force.

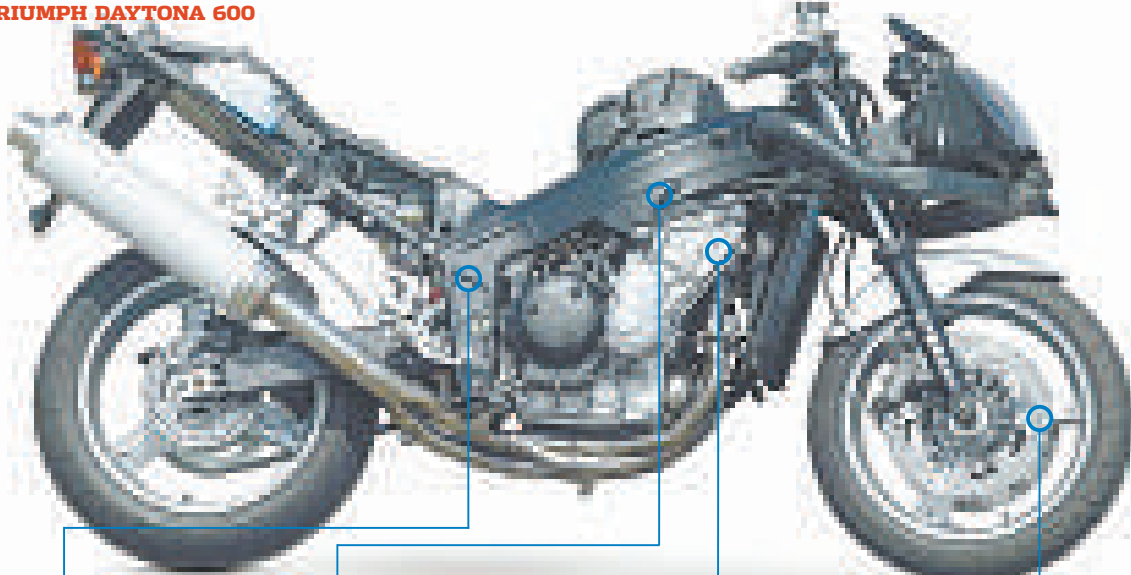
Out on the roads, this translates into a much smaller chance of inadvertently locking up the front wheel, especially in wet and slippery conditions.

The riding position won't break your back, either. The fuel tank feels wide between your legs when you first get astride the Daytona, but it's comfortable and you feel as if you fit into the bike. The bars are a little lower and further forward than the TT600's while the footrests are marginally higher, but it's still spacious (especially when compared with the ultra-compact CBR) with natural ergonomics that suit track and road riding. In hard cornering the flats on the fuel tank (where the 'Triumph' badge resides) prove to be ideal rests for your forearms, and they really help in making minor adjustments to your line with a gentle shift of bodyweight pressuring the centre of the bike rather than the handlebars.

The screen is very low, too low to be useful

Key differences between TT600

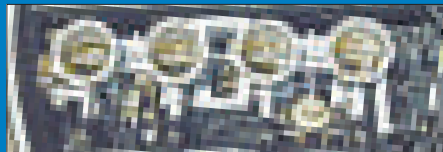
TRIUMPH DAYTONA 600



CHASSIS

THIS was one of the strong suits of the TT600. No one ever accused it of being a poor-handling bike. However improvements have still been made. New three-cell extrusions for the main frame spars mean increased rigidity and reduced weight compared with the TT600's four-cell extruded spars. The rear subframe has engineered-in flex to help damp out small rider movements caused by turbulence, which can have an unsettling effect on a bike. All-aluminium fork internals instead of steel mean a 1kg (2.2lb) weight saving here alone. Overall TT600 geometry is retained.

FUEL INJECTION



DUAL butterfly injectors improve throttle response

THIS was the Achilles heel of the TT600. At high revs and big throttle openings, it worked fine. But when at lower revs the limitations of the Sagem system (it had originally been developed for cars) showed through. On small throttle openings and low revs it was impossible to operate the throttle with accuracy or finesse. The power delivery was stuttery and unpredictable. Later tweaks improved matters but never entirely sorted the problem. The troublesome Sagem system is now replaced with a state-of-the-art Keihin set-up, featuring twin butterflies per cylinder. The first butterfly is controlled by the twistgrip, the second, further from the engine, by the electronic engine management. This means smooth and predictable power delivery with better emissions and economy. A powerful 32 bit computer processor is used.

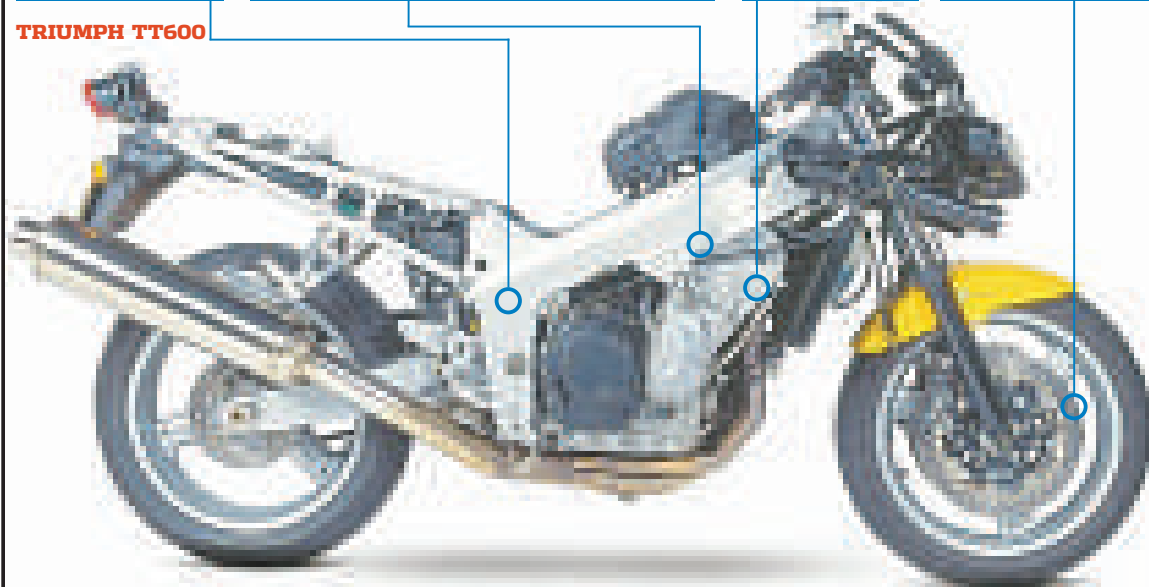
ENGINE

BOTH intake and exhaust ports have been revised with a resulting improvement in gas flow of 2 per cent and 11 per cent respectively. The Daytona crank is 700g lighter than the TT600's to sharpen engine response. Intake ducts are repositioned in a higher pressure zone at the front of fairing, improving flow by 15 per cent. The exhaust system is redesigned for more power and to meet the latest noise and emissions regulations.

BRAKES

THERE were few problems with the four-pot double disc set-up of the TT600 so the brakes are largely unchanged on the new Daytona. They have undergone subtle revisions, though. The front disc diameter is reduced by 2mm to 308mm. This offers a small weight saving over the old discs of 170g. It might not sound a lot, but it is in a crucial area as far as handling is concerned. Shaving a few grams means the unsprung mass is cut and that in turn reduces the forces that make a front wheel resist turning when it is spinning. Steering response should be (and is) a little faster as a result. The Daytona certainly dropped into turns sharply during the launch at Cartagena – a circuit which finds faults fast.

TRIUMPH TT600



and the new Daytona

ANY new supersport bike is aiming to be both lighter and more powerful than the model it supersedes. That's also the case with the Daytona, which takes over from the beloved TT600.

For the record, Triumph has shaved 5kg (11lb) off the weight of the Daytona, which tips the scales at 165kg (363lb) compared to the TT600's 170kg (474lb).

But in this instance, the new bike also had one extra mission: To work flawlessly in one particular area in which the TT had failed.

Triumph took the brave decision to launch the first ever fuel-injected 600 with the TT. We call decisions like this

brave, because they carry no certainty of success. The TT600's fuel injection was certainly not a success.

So there have been no half measures here. The entire injection system has been replaced. At the same time, cylinder head revisions have improved gas flow.

The TT600 chassis needed less attention, but although its geometry is unchanged and the frame looks the same, almost everything has been revised or replaced to keep up in the fast moving 600 supersport class.

As for the looks, Triumph has started from scratch, shedding the TT600's dumpy dullness and adding style, character and a dash of individuality.

STYLING THE DAYTONA 600



THIS is an early styling model of the Daytona based on a stock TT600 chassis, completed with painted headlights. Side panel graphics show 'TT600R' badges

THESE exclusive pictures show how Triumph worked to revamp the styling of the original TT600.

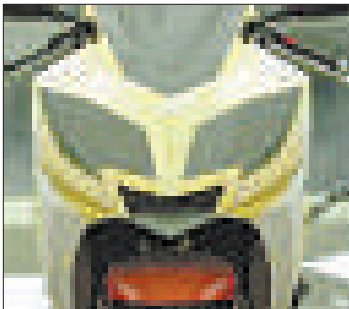
The new Daytona has aggressive 'new edge' design created by Leicester-based company Renrew.

It was their first major project for Triumph – and the resulting bike certainly looks sharper than the TT it replaces.

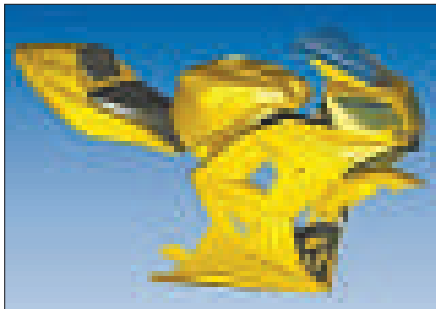
The pictures left and below show some of the stages the design went through.

As well as a visual makeover the changed look results in aerodynamic improvements and weight savings.

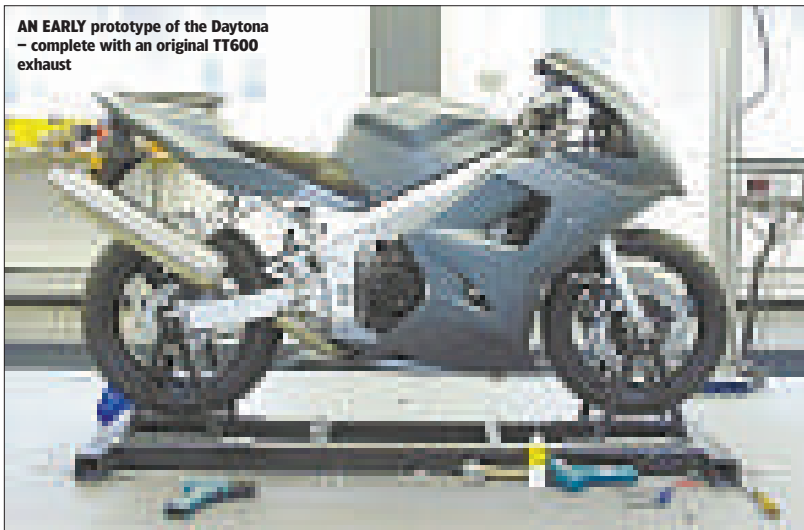
A whole kilo (2.2lb) is saved through the use of new, thinner body panels, injection moulded in-house at the Triumph plant.



CENTRAL ram air gave a focus to the frontal look



COMPUTERS were used to generate 3D styling models



AN EARLY prototype of the Daytona – complete with an original TT600 exhaust

TECHNOLOGY BY SHARK

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Wales - 08702 412040

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Wales - 01633 277970

Streetbike
West Mids - 0121 506 6800

Bikers World
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Cradley Heath Kawasaki
West Mids - 01384 633455

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Skellerns M/c
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THE PROTECTIVE INSTINCT

FIRST TEST



SCREEN is too low to tuck behind – just like its rivals

From page 26

for tucking behind at high speeds, which is typical of most road-going race reps, but a higher bubble screen which works better is available as an accessory from Triumph. Odd that road bikes have less wind protection than the race machines they're supposed to be imitating, but that's fashion.

The cockpit view is basic, with speed, mileage, time and so on being displayed digitally and revs on a dated-looking analogue tachometer with rpm written in 2000rpm intervals. The line of small but reasonably clear warning lights, including low fuel which leaves you 4.5 litres (1 gallon) to spare, is obscured for taller riders by the top edge of the screen. Otherwise everything is functional, if lacking the 'wow' factor. The surrounds are reasonably neat, although the big square inner fairing panels either side of the clocks look clumsy on first acquaintance. But they do cover the backs of two large headlights which both come on when either dip or main beam is selected. Many sports bike designers opt for an asymmetric set-up of single dipped light and separate main

beam, which means less electrical power is needed and the alternator can be smaller, saving space and weight. Triumph decided that night time visibility was more important, so some potential weight saving was passed by here. But the Daytona is still only 165kg despite that.

For all the detail, the most welcome change over the TT600, given that the fuelling is sorted, is to the style. The Daytona is a vast improvement over the TT's organic formlessness. And although it lacks the eye-catching originality of the CBR and the leanness of the R6, it's both distinctive and appealing. The 'new edge' style is getting a little old hat these days, and it can go horribly wrong, as Aprilia's RST Futura has proved. But there's more subtlety to the Triumph, where apparently straight edges are actually complex, gentle curves, with an array of near-flat surfaces at varying angles to maintain visual interest. The bright yellow option is likely to be the best seller, Triumph reckons, but the silver alternative shows off the shape and reflects light the better.

All the bike lacks is a little 'X' factor. There's no single really special thing which a Daytona owner can point to in order to single out his bike. Some detail such as a funky LED tail light would make a disproportionate difference, or even a more imaginative cockpit layout or perhaps some radial front brake calipers despite their dubious real value. But if we've come to the point with this new supersport 600 where we're saying all it needs is a more interesting back light, then in fact it doesn't need anything at all. That's job done, isn't it?

If you're in the market for a supersport 600 and can't make your mind up because their performance is all very similar, then the Daytona is going to make your life even more difficult. Forget the fact it's British. It's just as deserving of cold, analytical consideration as the rest of them.

Flying the flag comes as a bonus.

OPTIONAL ACCESSORIES

Alarm-immobiliser, Thatcham MC1 approved (track use only)	£270
Carbon wrap silencer (track use only)	£275
Stainless steel silencer (track use only)	£200
Expandable sports throwover panniers	£130
Expandable sports tank bag	£100
Double bubble screen	£80
Gel front seat	£80
Gel rear seat	£60
Carbon tank pad	£25
33bhp restrictor kit	£30

DAYTONA 600: THE COMPETITION

HONDA CBR600RR

£7149 otr
Power and torque (measured): 103.1bhp @ 13,300rpm, 44ftlb @ 10,900rpm
Top speed (measured): 158mph

Specification
Engine: Liquid-cooled, 599cc (67 x 42.5mm), 16v, dohc, four-stroke, in-line four. Fuel injection. Six gears.
Chassis: Aluminium twin-spar.
Front suspension: 45mm forks, adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping.
Rear suspension: Single shock with rising rate linkage, adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping.
Weight: 169kg (372lb)

Tyres: 120/70 x 17 front, 180/55 x 17 rear
Brakes: 2 x 310mm front discs with 4-piston calipers, 220mm rear disc with 2-piston caliper.

- Pros**
- Great value for money
 - Winner of MCN's 600cc group test
 - Moto GP-inspired chassis
 - Balanced handling, superb feedback

- Cons**
- Will be too sports-focused for some
 - Won't be exclusive
 - Rider comfort not great over distance
 - Not in Rossi colour scheme (yet)



KAWASAKI ZX-6R

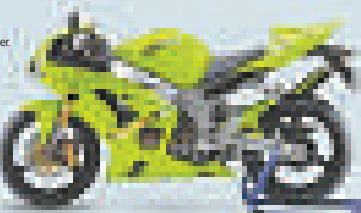
£7245 otr
Power and torque (measured): 101bhp @ 12,800rpm, 44.4ftlb @ 10,800rpm
Top speed (measured): 161mph

Specification
Engine: Liquid-cooled, 636cc (68 x 43.8mm), 16v, dohc, four-stroke, in-line four. Fuel injection. Six gears.
Chassis: Aluminium twin-spar.
Front suspension: 41mm upside-down forks, adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping.
Rear suspension: Single shock with rising rate linkage, adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping.
Weight: 163kg (359lb)

Weight: 161kg (354lb)
Tyres: 120/65 x 17 front, 180/55 x 17 rear
Brakes: 2 x 280mm front discs with 4-piston calipers, 220mm rear disc with 2-piston caliper.

- Pros**
- Hard-edged aggressive looks
 - Mad engine performance
 - Powerful radial brakes
 - Front end feedback is inspiring

- Cons**
- Harsh rear suspension
 - Questionable comfort over distance
 - Flat mid-range power delivery



SUZUKI GSX-R600

£6649 otr
Power and torque (measured): 100.3bhp @ 13,100rpm, 45.2ftlb @ 10,400rpm
Top speed (measured): 161mph

Specification
Engine: Liquid-cooled, 599cc (65.5 x 44.5mm), 16v, dohc, four-stroke, in-line four. Fuel injection. Six gears.
Chassis: Aluminium twin-spar.
Front suspension: 43mm forks, adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping.
Rear suspension: Single shock with rising rate linkage, adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping.
Weight: 163kg (359lb)

Tyres: 120/70 x 17 front, 180/55 x 17 rear
Brakes: 2 x 320mm front discs with 4-piston calipers, 220mm rear disc with 2-piston caliper.

- Pros**
- Cheapest of the class
 - Comfortable for mile after mile
 - Demon track tool when set-up
 - Sublime chassis

- Cons**
- Suspension action is crude
 - Lacks bottom and mid-range drive
 - Brakes lack feel and action



YAMAHA YZF R6

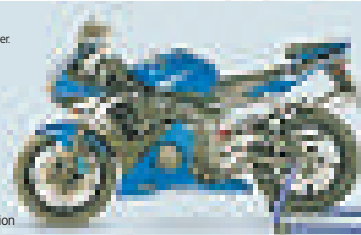
£7349 otr
Power and torque (measured): 99.5bhp @ 12,300rpm, 43ftlb @ 11,700rpm
Top speed (measured): 162mph

Specification
Engine: Liquid-cooled, 599cc (65.5 x 44.5mm), 16v, dohc, four-stroke, in-line four. Fuel injection. Six gears.
Chassis: Aluminium twin-spar.
Front suspension: 43mm forks, adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping.
Rear suspension: Single shock with rising rate linkage, adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping.
Weight: 162kg (357lb)

Tyres: 120/60 x 17 front, 180/55 x 17 rear
Brakes: 2 x 298mm front discs with 4-piston calipers, 220mm rear disc with 2-piston caliper.

- Pros**
- Agile, pin-point steering
 - Big bike comfort
 - Quality rear suspension adjustment
 - Stonking mid-range delivery

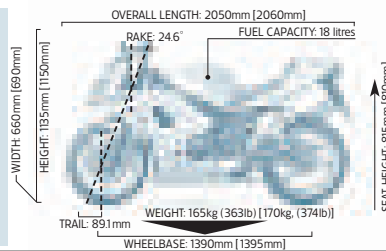
- Cons**
- Front end is nervous over bumps
 - Soft front forks need careful fettling
 - Heavy throttle action
 - The most expensive bike of the division



TRIUMPH DAYTONA 600 £6999 otr

Available: Now
Colours: Silver, yellow
Insurance group: 14 (tbc) of 17
TT600, 13
Info: Triumph: 01455-452176
Power and torque (claimed): 110bhp, 50.5ftlb
Top speed (est): 160mph

Notes: Specs in square brackets are for the TT600. Rate and trail remain the same. Daytona width measurement is bar-to-bar.



SPECIFICATION:
Engine: Liquid-cooled, 599cc (68mm x 41.3mm), 16v dohc four-stroke, in-line four. Fuel injection. Six gears.
Chassis: Aluminium twin-spar.
Front suspension: 43mm forks, adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping.
Rear suspension: Single shock with rising rate linkage, adjustable for pre-load, rebound and compression damping.
Tyres: 120/70 x 17 front, 180/55 x 17 rear
Brakes: 2 x 308mm front discs with 4-piston calipers, 220mm rear disc with single-piston caliper

PROS ● Great stability ● Razor-sharp steering ● Smooth power delivery ● Fresh looks ● Progressive brakes ● Superb suspension

CONS ● Slight lack of mid-range power ● Screen too low ● Clocks look dull ● Short of 'wow factor' features

93%^o

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