

## Model Comparison

**Our overall favorite, the ZZR600 has by far the best engine, transmission and clutch, comfortable ergos, good brakes that are only a touch behind the competition's for feel and suspension that splits the middle ground between the F4i's racy stiffness and the YZF600R's touring plushness. Plus, it's an excellent value priced at \$7299.**



↑ Above: The Kawasaki's front end still looks great to our eyes. A subtle detail are the dimples on either side of the lower "nose" bridge, looking like whiskers on a cat. Slightly wider at the gastank junction than the others, its ergonomics nonetheless felt very good to all the testers. The Kawasaki's carburetion is superb for exceptional control and rideability and its transmission is another marvel, very slick in operation and with gear ratio spreads that always seemed exactly right for the occasion.

Right: You can see that the ZZR's clocks → are hard to read. Besides their low-contrast markings, the lenses are domed so that they create highlights almost constantly. Although no fuel gauge is provided, you do have a clock as well as a low fuel warning light. Gas Mileage varied over a greater range aboard the ZZR.



← Left: The ZZR's seat is quite comfortable and better than the Honda's. Both the chassis and sub-frame are aluminum, keeping the weight down and the exhaust is attractive, a combination of brushed aluminum silencer and bright header section.

Right: The Kawasaki's jutting ram air scoop gives it an aggressive look and allows a certain amount of intake roar to mix with the subdued growl of the exhaust—we all enjoyed the sound. Silver painted wheels match the bodywork to provide an elegant impression. The Tokico 6-piston front calipers are very strong and controllable, but had a touch less feel than its competitors'.



## TESTERS' LOG

This bike had power everywhere and I never felt like I had to search for the right gear in any condition. At 5'9" I also liked the riding position the best of the three. The bars were perfectly spaced and I liked the forward lean. The seat itself was a little softer than the rock-hard Honda but not as comfy as the Yamaha. The front brakes were very good, the rear brakes, not. Unfortunately, the dashboard leaves a lot to be desired with a hard to read speedo and tach and turnsignals that are also dim and hard to see when they're blinking. However, the real letdown about this bike is its handling. I found myself having to work a lot harder to get this bike to dip into the turns. It just didn't feel quite as flickable from one side to the other in tight twisties. Still, when coming out of a turn you'd forget about the handling and fall back in love with the engine.

—Steven Marks

The ZZR would have to be my choice in this group of remarkably nice motorcycles. The Kawasaki's engine is flawless, with a much stronger mid-range than the others and a wonderful liquid delivery, always smoothly responsive, never fluffy or hesitant. The transmission is also the best of the lot, with a slick, positive engagement that's a delight to use, and a clutch with great feel to back it up. The brakes are very strong and effective, but have perhaps just a touch less feel than the others, but that's split-

ting hairs. Both headlights are lit even on low beam, too. The ride is a nice compromise between the racetrack stiff F4i and the almost sport-touring feel of the YZF600R. But attempting to stiffen it up for a track day would highlight the rear shock's lack of rebound damping—its only real flaw.

Elegant and understated in its silver paint, and with an MSRP \$1200 lower than the Honda F4i, it's a lot of machine at a very fair price.

—Dave Searle

It's amazing how much power you can get out of such a small engine. The Kawi to me is all about this engine: it carburets perfectly from idle, no matter how fast or slow you twist the grip (which makes the Honda's abruptness even more apparent). The top end rush is a great compliment to the midrange grunt and low-rev tractability. I wasn't crazy about how fat the tank felt between my thighs, or how widely splayed the low bars seemed to be, but maybe that's because I'm 5'8" and not 6'0". I was pretty disappointed by the suspension—no amount of adjusting could stop the rear from stepping out on me when gassing it off the apex of tight corners. Kawasaki engineers *know* how to make bikes handle, so I am guessing this is a budget thing. Cheap shocks helped bring the price in at \$7299, forcing good riders to have to dip into their wallets to pay for upgrades.

—Steve Natt