

Tips, Tweaks, Fixes and Facts, plus Buyer's Guide and Expert Q&A from the Industry's Best

MC Garage

A Complete Guide to Living With Your Motorcycle...

DOIN' TIME STAFFERS' RIDES



PHOTOS: Jim Moy

HONDA
CBR1000RR



“Factory suspension settings are lowest-common-denominator compromises. It’s essential to tune the suspension to suit your weight and riding style.”

RINGLEADER: Aaron Frank
MSRP (2008): \$11,599
MILES: 4239–4749
AVERAGE FUEL MILEAGE: 45 mpg
ACCESSORIES & MODIFICATIONS: RG3 Suspension re-valving

In this era of big-piston forks and four-way adjustable shocks, OEM suspension is more sophisticated than ever before. But improved quality and functionality can't guarantee your spanking-new sportbike works right for you. Factory suspension settings are, by necessity, lowest-common-denominator compromises. Spring rates and valve ratios need to accommodate riders of every size, with experience levels ranging from no-mile newbies to expert-licensed track rats. To get the best from your suspension,

it's essential to tune it to suit your weight and riding style.

Weighing a few stone less than the average American, I found my CBR's factory suspension less than agreeable. Too stiff at both ends, the bike seemed overactive on rough pavement and unstable at lean—especially in bumpy corners. I was dreaming of drop-in fork cartridges and a shiny new shock when Heath McCormick of Southern California's RG3 Suspension (www.rg3suspension.com) convinced me otherwise. He insisted that simply re-valving the CBR's well-built Showa suspension would provide essentially the same performance as aftermarket components at a fraction of the cost.

Led by New Zealand-born Rob Hendrickson,

RG3 is new to the streetbike market but is one of the biggest names in off-road suspension tuning. The process begins with a technician noting your height, weight, riding experience and intended usage. Any complaints about the current suspension setup are logged, as are goals for the desired outcome. Guided by this data, RG3 uses a proprietary hydrodynamic equation to arrive at a setup tailored to your intended use. This is no cookie-cutter operation: Each setting is arrived at individually, based only on the information you provide.

The stock CBR spring rates were deemed sufficient for me, but valving was optimized to suit my needs. When the operation was complete, the fork and shock were re-assem-



The same techs that service the factory Suzuki off-road racers work on your stuff at RG3.



Subtle decals are the only external indication that the CBR's Showa suspenders have been optimized.

bled and filled with the same custom blend of Maxima fluid that RG3 uses on Suzuki's factory off-road and motocross bikes. The RG3 crew tests fluids extensively on their in-house shock dyno, and typically uses a lighter fluid than stock so they can be more progressive with their valving.

My suspension was returned complete with a setup sheet detailing baseline settings for spring preload, damping, sag and fork height. Each setup sheet is tagged with a reference number, and RG3 keeps them on file for future reference; phone support is offered at no extra charge.

There was, however, no need for me to pick up the phone: My setup was spot-on right out of the box. Small-bump compliance is dramatically improved, increasing comfort as well as stability at lean. I've only ridden on the street so far, but am anxious to return to the racetrack. McCormick says the more progressive valving should hold the bike higher in the stroke, so it won't blow through the travel as quickly during high-G acceleration and braking.

RG3 offers suspension service for any late-model Japanese sportbike, and plans to expand to European and naked bikes this summer. Considering that replacement fork cartridges can cost as much as \$2K, and aftermarket shocks sell for nearly that much, the \$479.90 RG3 charges for a suspension re-valve can't be beat.