





It looks a million bucks,
but it didn't cost that to
get it this good. Meet
Stuart Johnstone's
sweetly modified
GSX-R1000 K5

Words Kar Lee / Photography Jason Critchell

ON THE MONEY

THE K5. WE'VE heard it all before. Arguably not only the best incarnation of Suzuki's 1000cc ever built since it first appeared in 2001, but potentially the best GSX-R whatever the capacity. A bold claim, but it's difficult to dispute the impact it had on the modern litre sportsbike market.

Blessed with the midrange grunt and fiery top end to trump R1s, it also had a flightiness that had wheelie-junkies frothing at the mouth. The new tech appealed to engineering geeks, with titanium valves, titanium exhaust and a mechanical slipper clutch.

That was a decade ago. Today, the K5 is still up there, charging around UK roads, standing on the back wheel at every crest and making a nuisance of itself on trackdays. As a standard bike it's still got it. With the right mods though, the Gixxer is right up there with the modern stuff. Which brings me to the south coast...

I'm here on my own modded GSX-R to check out another modded GSX-R. It's owned by 46-year-old Stuart Johnstone, a smart cookie who has bought the majority of the extra parts by scouring eBay. In fact, between him and his mate, they've accumulated so many bits that he's got enough to build another complete bike.

Stuart rode his first bike, a 2002 Telephonica limited edition GSX-R600, for six months before sticking it under a lorry. Seeing pictures of the crash, his non-riding mates thought he was mad to even think about carrying on with biking, but the bug had bitten. Before the ink had dried on the insurance paperwork, he'd bought a K4 600.

"I had it a year and racked up 18,000 miles just riding around for pleasure. I learned how to wheelie on it and then decided to trade up to a 750. My mate Lorne told me that as I was a big lump I'd barely notice the difference – he convinced me to go for a litre bike instead." A K7 1000 appeared in the garage soon afterwards and stayed with him for a year. It was good, but it wasn't K5 good.

"I had a go on a K5 and knew it was better," recalls Stuart. "It had more midrange and I knew I wanted one, so I sold the K7 to make way for a near-standard K5 with 8000 miles on the clock." Besides a red Yoshimura paint job, a Braking rear disc, Power Commander and Yoshi end can it was stock, but bore the hallmarks of a previously-

tweaked bike. It was the perfect starting point for Stuart's modifying fix, and before the GSX-R had even turned a wheel under his ownership, a pair of carbon fibre BSTs came up on eBay. At £1200 they were less than half the price of new, and Stuart was quick to get them bought.

"The wheels are my favourite mod on the bike," he states.

"Critics don't get the idea of fitting wheels to a bike that are worth almost half the value of the entire thing, but they're usually people who've never tried them." He's right, but then I would say that, having splashed out a chunk of money to fit them to mine. The old cliché is true: they transform the bike and make it go, stop and turn faster. That makes the bike less demanding to ride, meaning you can push harder for the same effort.

The suspension and brakes were areas Stuart wanted to focus on, and he is honest about why. "It makes more than enough power for a mere mortal like myself – 160bhp!"



"Yeah, look – it's even got a numberplate"

Originally, a set of R1 monoblocks were sourced to replace the stock Tokicos. "They're a popular, cheap mod and increase feel as well as power. You used to be able to pick up a set for £90 but now everyone's cottoned on and they go for £160," he reckons. Bigger Brembo HPK 320mm discs (oe is 310mm) went on to compliment the M4 calipers he'd fitted, but these were eventually replaced by a set of fancier T-Drive discs. An RCS master cylinder and some braided lines went on and Stuart begrudgingly splashed out full price for a new Brembo reservoir and bracket.

The Öhlins Road and Track forks were sourced from the Gixerjunksies forum and set

'I have a big grin after every ride. That's why we do it, isn't it?'



After 35,000 miles, Stuart's bike still looks brand new. Bastard

ENGINE/ PERFORMANCE

ECU remapped by Steve Jordan to correct air/fuel mix, remove manufacturer emissions restrictions and fine-tune throttle response. K&N air filter and +2 Talon rear sprocket complete the mods

EXHAUST

The full Yoshimura titanium system features a useful removable two-stage baffle in the silencer, perfect for trackdays

PAINTWORK

Stuart wanted his own twist on the Suzuka 8-hour theme so had it painted in blue by a pal at Dream Machine in exchange for a few beer tokens. It's all protected by £100 worth of Ventureshield

SUSPENSION

Öhlins Road and Track forks (used and serviced £800) and Öhlins SU503 shock (£700 new) cost half the price. The BST carbon five-spokers were a steal at just £1200

BRAKES

Brembo SC pads sit inside Brembo M4s. The Brembo T-Drive discs are an upgrade on the HPK items previously fitted, and together with braided lines all round and a Brembo RCS provide effective stopping power



him back just £800. If that wasn't bargain-tastic enough, they also came with a fresh servicing receipt to the tune of £200. The rear shock, though, was a new item from a dealer in the US. Despite having to pay import duty, the total cost was just £700 – almost £500 cheaper than a UK item. “My mate Lorne fitted it for me in about three minutes,” says Stuart. “I balanced the bike on its sidestand to take the weight off the rear wheel and he just dropped it out and slotted the Öhlins in place!” Steve Jordan performed the set-up and while it was in the workshop it was treated to an ECU flash to suit the BSB-spec Yoshimura full titanium system, plus a K&N air filter. With a healthy 168bhp, 82lb.ft of torque and perfect fuelling, Stuart has gone up two teeth on the rear sprocket to get the most from the power gains. “I get off the bike with a grin on my face after every ride,” he says. “That’s why we do it, isn’t it?”

The Suzuka 8-hour paintjob was something he'd seen online. “It was a mock-up someone had done in Photoshop



and I knew I had to do it. It already had a paintjob on it but this was different from the other Suzuka reps.”

Keen eyes will notice the sidepanels – usually, they're two bits of fiddly plastic that slot into place. Stuart's K5 panels are Tyga carbon fibre one-piece items and they're painted to match the new livery. Other touches, like the Yoshimura stem nut and quick-release filler cap, were just things he picked up while trawling eBay.

The proof of all these purchases, of course, is in the riding, and I'm also interested to compare it to my own bike, which has been well documented in the pages of PB. Like Stuart, my GSX-R focuses mainly on improving the handling but with a bias

towards track riding. Stuart's is more road-orientated and wears Supercorsa SPs, which may look like typical race Supercorsas but will last longer, warm up quicker and have a wider operating temperature. Pulling away it's obvious the throttle response is crisper than stock, and the bike surges through the gears with the familiarity of an old pair of slippers. On bumpy roads the suspension is too firm for my weight and it's clearly better suited to the taller and heavier Stuart but on the smoother asphalt, it's taut and precise. The brakes are predictably strong and the Pirellis get up to a decent heat much quicker than my Dunlop GP Pros.

The other big difference is the Renthal-gripped, narrower stock handlebars and a quickshifter. Again, a quickshifter isn't necessary for the road but I'm missing the leverage of the wider bars and Stuart's bike is a bit less keen to be chucked around. I glance down at the clocks – it's done 35,000 miles but looks and feels like a bike with a fraction

of that mileage. It's spotless next to my slightly scarred K6, but it's definitely no show pony: in four years he's clocked up 28,000 miles of road riding, with five trackdays a year and an annual jolly with the lads to Spa.

There are £14,000 worth of extras on the bike, though the reality is Stuart only paid half of that by buying smartly. I suggest that he should add a Bazzaz or HM quickshifter to the shopping list. He responds by saying I should keep an eye out for a full system and get a Pazzo brake lever to replace my gravel-rashed Brembo one. "My bike is pretty much a finished project," I lie. "It's never finished!" quips Stuart, knowingly. Busted.



Some sheep in the distance have just shat themselves

THE SPEC

BST carbon wheels, full BSB-spec Yoshimura titanium exhaust system, Öhlins R&T forks, Öhlins SU503 rear shock, Öhlins steering damper, Gilles adjustable rearsets, Brembo M4 calipers, Brembo RCS master cylinder, Brembo T-Drive 320mm discs, Brembo SC pads, Dream Machine 8-hour Suzuka paint job, ECU mapped by Steve Jordan Motorcycles to 168bhp @ the rear wheel, Yoshimura stem nut and chain adjusters, Crescent clutch and generator covers, Pazzo short levers, carbonfibre hugger and chain guard, K&N filter, Tyga carbon sidepanels, Talon rear sprocket (17-44 gearing, +2 on rear)



Stuart's bike is set up for the road, but still works on trackdays



'There are £14,000 of extras on the bike, but Stuart only paid half that through buying smartly'