

Is the EBR a proper superbike that can live with a fiery Ducati? Let's find out...

# EBR 1190RX v

Words Johnny Mac / Photography Double Red

with

**JOHN McAVOY**  
ROAD TESTER

42, 6ft 4in, 44-time TT winner (on a PS3)

Johnny gave up the chance of a factory HRC contract to drive vans around for PB. "I wanted to do more work for charity so I had a choice: help out a magazine owned by a massive publishing company or shovel shit for Unicef. I chose PB"

**2014 EBR 1190RX**

185bhp, 206kg, £13,998

Definitely not a Buell, the EBR 1190RX carries a number of the hallmarks found on a Buell – such as the frame spars that double up as the fuel tank and the massive 386mm, rim-mounted single front disc. The engine is built in America but can trace its roots back to the Buell unit design by Rotax



# DUCATI 1199 S

*Michael Rutter*

**2014 DUCATI  
PANIGALE 1199 S**

195bhp, 196kg, £20,250

Ducati's flagship superbike clearly leads the V-twin superbike game. It may not have cam belts anymore, but with a claimed 195bhp and more electronic gizmos than a BSB bike, the Panigale is staggering. Don't let its relative lack of WSB success fool you – this bike is a track weapon

**MICHAEL RUTTER  
TRACK TESTER**

42, 5ft 10in, four-time TT winner

After a career earning a pittance being a GP, BSB and TT rider, Michael has had to supplement his income with illegal street fighting, becoming East Midlands Bareknuckle champion in 2006. "I wanted to train while still earning money – this fitted the bill. But I always carry a knife in case I'm losing. They don't call me The Blade for nothing"



**D**ESPITE THE PANIGALE'S superstar status, it's the EBR that draws the biggest crowd in the paddock at the weekly Mallory Park ACU test day. Curiosity in the relatively plain looking but all-new – and hence largely unknown – bike is beating the celebrity lookalike Ducati.

Born from the heartbreak of Buell's Harley Davidson-enforced closure in 2009, the EBR 1190RX is the superbike that radical-thinking Erik Buell wanted to build all along. His final bike and his only real superbike, the 1125R, was compromised – mainly because of the tight-rein of his hawg-loving paymasters.

The 1190RX is certainly different from any other bike on the market and carries on many Buell traditions. The fuel is carried in the hollows of the frame spars, there's a 386mm rim-mounted disc and an engine with heritage back to the Rotax-engined 1125R. It's made in the US now though, and kicks out a claimed 185bhp.

It's prettier than the 1125R too, but this is far more than a re-bodied version of a bike that failed six years ago. It's been properly engineered after years of racing in AMA Superbikes and features Showa's excellent BPF

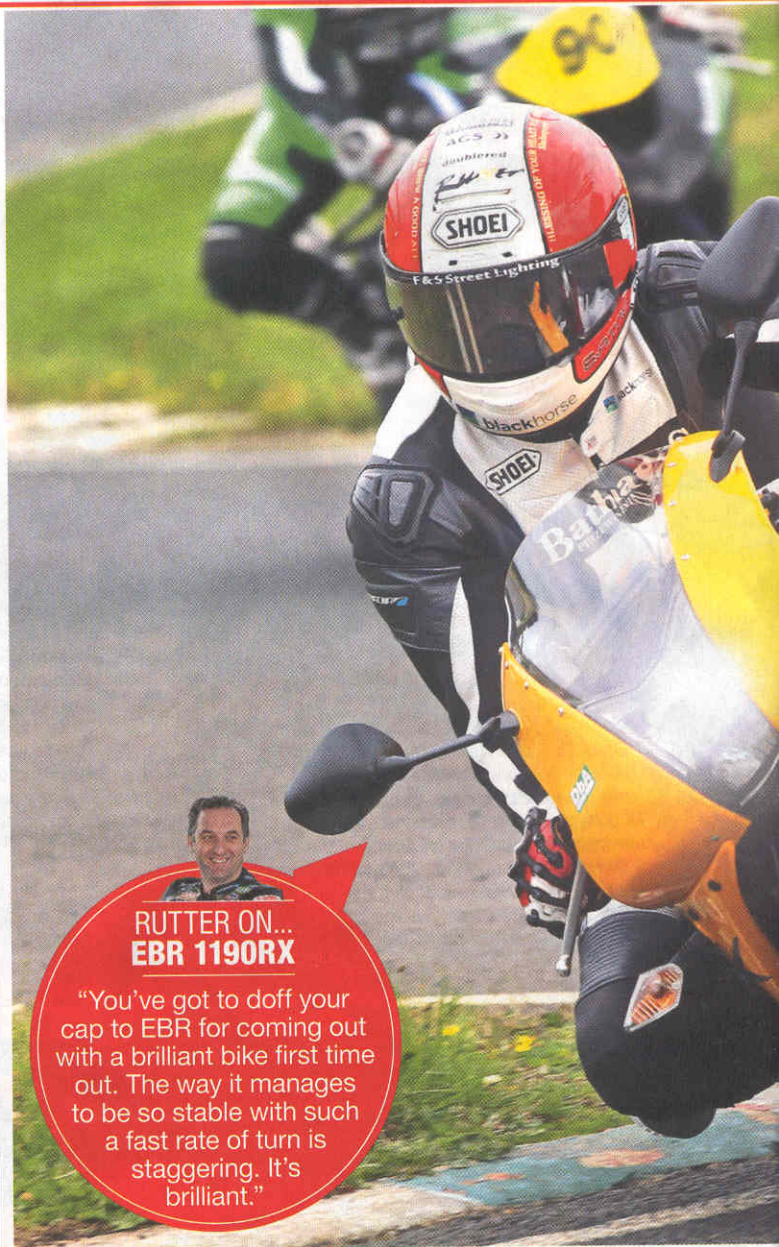
forks and a 21-stage traction control system.

But the Panigale is just as unconventional – the only kind of 'frame' it has is the cast alloy airbox that links the engine and forks, and there is the hugely over-square engine with camchains instead of belts. With ABS, traction control, engine braking control, multiple engine modes and a quickshifter, it has enough computing power to contain the three-dimensional madness that the claimed 195bhp Superquadro motor gives. The price of innovative chassis technology with clever electronics, savage power output and drop-dead gorgeous looks is £20,250 – a whopping £6252 more than the EBR.

So how do these two bikes from different worlds stack up? Is more processing power than a NASA space shuttle really any use, or is EBR's 'less is more' approach the way to go? Time to break out the PB datalogger, some gaffer tape and our very own Michael Rutter.

Michael jumps on the EBR first and, with all eyes on him, he fires up the 1190RX and heads to the pit exit. I tuck in behind to get a front row seat.

Rutter is renowned for his tidy and economical riding style, and following him is a masterclass in how to reduce a motorcycle to a smouldering, molten-tyred shadow of its former self while



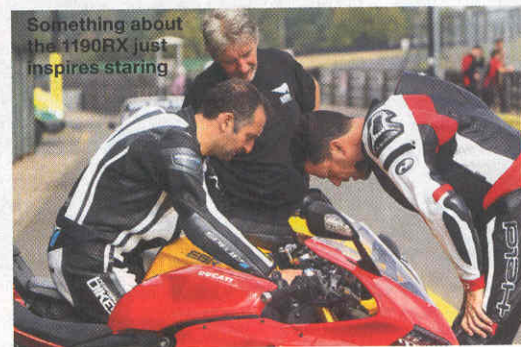
**RUTTER ON...  
EBR 1190RX**

"You've got to doff your cap to EBR for coming out with a brilliant bike first time out. The way it manages to be so stable with such a fast rate of turn is staggering. It's brilliant."

Incredible bike, but the Panigale's riding position is an acquired taste



The EBR couldn't quite live with the Ducati's brutal power



Something about the 1190RX just inspires staring



The EBR's handling takes a little bit of getting used to

not even looking like you're trying. It seems effortless for him on the EBR, with the only indication that anything remotely exciting is happening being the rear of the bike weaving ever so slightly as he powers through the Devil's Elbow. The Ducati is the polar opposite – all noise, shakes and electronically controlled power wheelies out of the fourth-gear Gerard's, followed by second-gear crossed-up wheelies and slides out of Edwina's chicane.

Then Michael disappears into the distance, as though someone has hit a fast-forward button. He's gone. I don't see him again until we're back in the pits to swap bikes mid-session. He doesn't even lift his visor and his only communication as we pass each other is a quick point at the EBR and a thumbs-up. For him, that's quite animated...

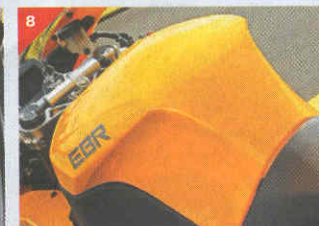
"It's amazing," says Michael later. "It's fast with a really smooth power delivery, but then you get a nice bit of extra at the top. I'm surprised at how strong that front brake is – I've heard people complain about the one that was fitted to a Buell, but Mallory is a good test for braking and it performs well. The initial bite is as good as anything, and when you go for the second bite in the second phase it's only then that you can feel it fade a touch."

Yet the real surprise is just how much Michael rates the handling. "The front end is so planted yet so manoeuvrable – I love it. In fact the whole bike is properly stable, and is just what you need to gain as much confidence as possible. The only thing I'd like from the chassis is more ground clearance."

Time to see what he means. Straight back out to catch the

## IN DETAIL EBR 1190RX

- 1** Nice details and finishing, with adjustable toe levers
- 2** Twin cooling fans help keep 2.5 litres of coolant bubbling under 110°C
- 3** Ex-Tom Tom TFT clocks with 21 levels of TC (because 20 ain't enough)
- 4** Fully adjustable Showa (not a grower); Showa BPFs up front
- 5** With big vibes, make sure there's some Loctite on the pegs!
- 6** Plastic cooling vents look cool from a distance but a bit flimsy close-up
- 7** Sculpted, hollowed-out, hubless-design wheels are fabulously light
- 8** Not content with a 17-litre tank, the EBR has 17.1 litres



## IN DETAIL DUCATI PANIGALE 1199 S

**1** Top drawer components all over the place: carbon, Ohlins NIX30 forks and Brembo M50 calipers

**2** Not the prettiest view...

**3** What prestige clocks should look like: TFT and loaded with easy-to-use info

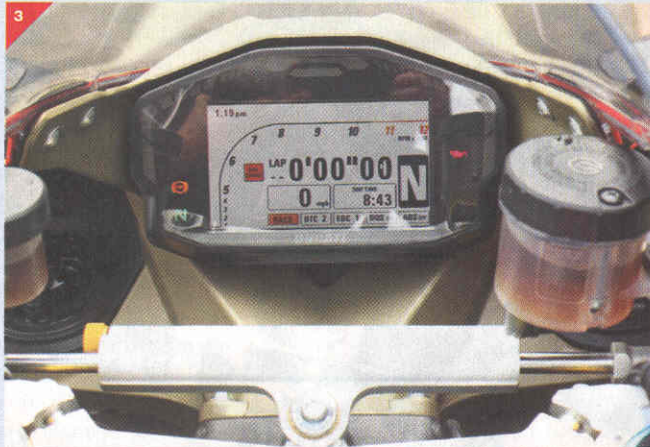
**4** Crow's-foot Marchesinis are very light and easy to clean

**5** High level of fit and finish – it's factory tackle and looks it

**6** Ohlins TTX36 is every-which-way adjustable, using a button on the bars...

**7** ... as are the Ohlins forks, with Ducati's DES electronic screwdrivers

**8** Now that is a swingarm, stiffer than the Forth Road Bridge



end of the session, and with the tyres already warm I nail the EBR out of the pitlane at full-chat and straight into Gerard's – immediately running really wide. I work out pretty quickly that once into the corner, the EBR needs a constant input through its handlebars to keep it on its side for sustained periods (unlike the Panigale).

The EBR's initial turn-in is faster than the Panigale's, which is saying something, but I can't relax my grip mid-corner on the EBR like I can on the Ducati. It feels either a little bit low at the rear or a bit soft. A few more corners down and something else has attracted my attention – a whining noise the EBR makes on a shut throttle. I discover later that it has an idler sprocket to stop the chain flapping about under heavy deceleration. I'm not sure what performance benefit it gives, but the noise it makes when flat-out is cool.

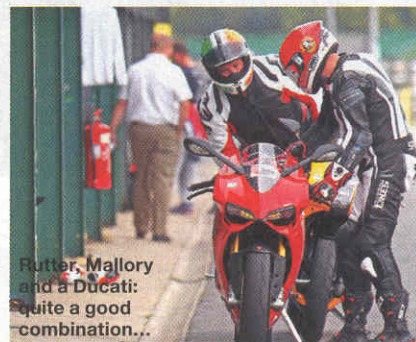
This is a bike that can be enjoyed on track, rather than fought against. In that way it's very similar to KTM's RC8R – and that's high praise indeed.

Next Michael heads out on the Ducati. It's always good to see The Blade on a Ducati at Mallory – he famously won here in 2008 in BSB on a 1098R. He's going well today too, making all kinds of shapes as he exits the Devil's Elbow. It's time for the stopwatch and as the times tumble, it's obvious how special the Ducati is. By the end of the session Michael has done a 55.2s lap – the second-fastest we've seen during our year of testing and 1.4s faster than the EBR.

"Just rolling down the pitlane on the Ducati makes you feel awesome," he says. "When you get going, it just gets better and better. The engine is so sweet-revving and smooth, but the top-end takes your breath away – it feels nearly as fast as the Factory BSB Ducati 1098R I raced only a few years ago. The only difference is that this one has 6000-mile service intervals.

"The electronics are very impressive too. It's very stable under braking, and you can feel all the engine electronics doing their thing to keep it under control. This is engine braking control that actually works. The traction control doesn't hold you back either, allowing enough slip on acceleration but keeping you out of trouble if you get greedy – and it intervenes with subtlety so you don't lose drive.

"But the riding position takes getting used to. On previous Ducatis, the riding position put you 'in' the bike. With this one, it sits you on top of it with high and wide handlebars. It's OK once you get your head round it, but I did notice that after a lot of heavy braking my arms were killing me because of the riding



Rutter, Mallory and a Ducati: quite a good combination...



Seconds after this shot was taken, Rutter disappeared from view

Maniacal grin just out of shot



**RUTTER ON...  
DUCATI 1199 S**

“What a bike! Despite the strange riding position, it’s a real weapon. It would be easy to highlight the engine or the electronics, but the way it behaves under heavy braking is amazing.”

position. I suppose that after years of riding bikes with pretty much the same riding position, my body has been conditioned to deal with the forces that they bring – the muscles needed to cope with heavy braking on one of these just aren’t as developed.”

I head out on the Ducati next. The bike is pure theatre and has sweeter, more neutral steering than the EBR – everything happens a little bit faster and focuses the mind. The engine is stunningly fast... no wonder it suffers from instability issues.

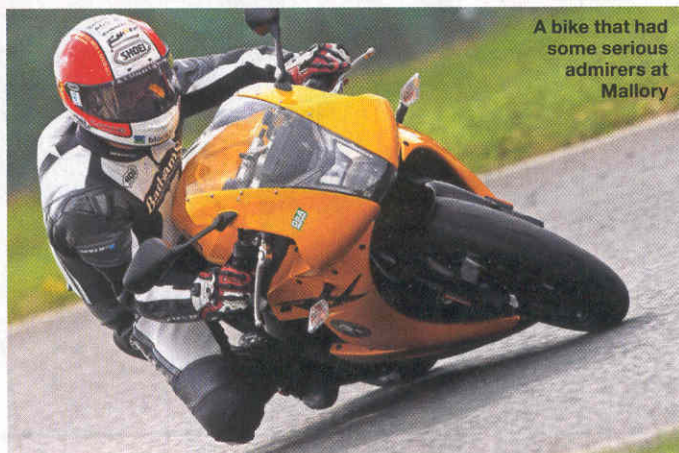
“The thing about the Ducati at full-chat is that it manages to blend a raw, mechanical experience and savage power delivery with utterly brilliant electronics,” says Michael. “Somehow it feels very wild and untamed, yet at the same time refined and deeply sophisticated. I can’t think of a single bike that

**“The Panigale feels very wild and untamed, yet at the same time refined and deeply sophisticated”**

I’ve ever ridden that manages to serve up such a ‘best-of-both-worlds’ experience. It’s a bit unstable on the straight, though.”

I know the moment he means: a feet-off, 140mph tankslapper that even makes me shudder when seeing it from the pitlane. But that, it seems, is the price you pay for such sweet steering – the Ducati is a lively bike. There is a genuine feeling of fear when you ride a Panigale fast. It demands full engagement and effort – only then are you rewarded with one of the most devastating performance bikes that money can buy.

“Conversely, the EBR has a much softer, smoother, friendlier power delivery,” adds Michael, “and its handling characteristics take some getting used to. In many ways these bikes have a lot in common. They both feel like nothing else out there, because



A bike that had some serious admirers at Mallory

quite frankly, they really are like nothing else out there.”

Neither the EBR or the Ducati conform to the ‘normal’ formula that a sportsbike should follow in order to be ‘right’. In the quest for weight saving and chassis stiffness the Ducati doesn’t have a frame, while the EBR has unique brakes and carries its fuel in its frame in the name of mass centralisation.

But the good news is that both of these maverick bikes are fast – very fast. The Panigale is quicker than its great Italian

rival, the MV Agusta F4RR, and the EBR’s 56.68s lap is well clear of a KTM RC8R. The thing about the Ducati and EBR is that they aren’t just different for the sake of it – they’re different because for both of them, it works.

Yet as the day draws to a close it’s still the EBR 1190RX, not the Ducati Panigale, that has centre stage with a small crowd curious about its pace. Even the sceptical pundits among them can’t help but be impressed by the EBR’s performance. It isn’t faster than a Panigale, but it is the real deal.

# PANIGALE OUT-PUNCHES EBR

Seriously rapid Ducati gets within touching distance of the BMW HP4

**A**S ONE OF the spectators at Mallory's test day sizes up the Ducati and EBR, he smiles. "Must be nice riding one of those twins around here, rather than something like an HP4," he says. He seems to be under the misapprehension that something like Ducati's Panigale is actually easier to handle around this track, not realising that with 180bhp at the back wheel it is every bit as fast – and in some ways even more mental – than BMW's incredible, flagship superbike.

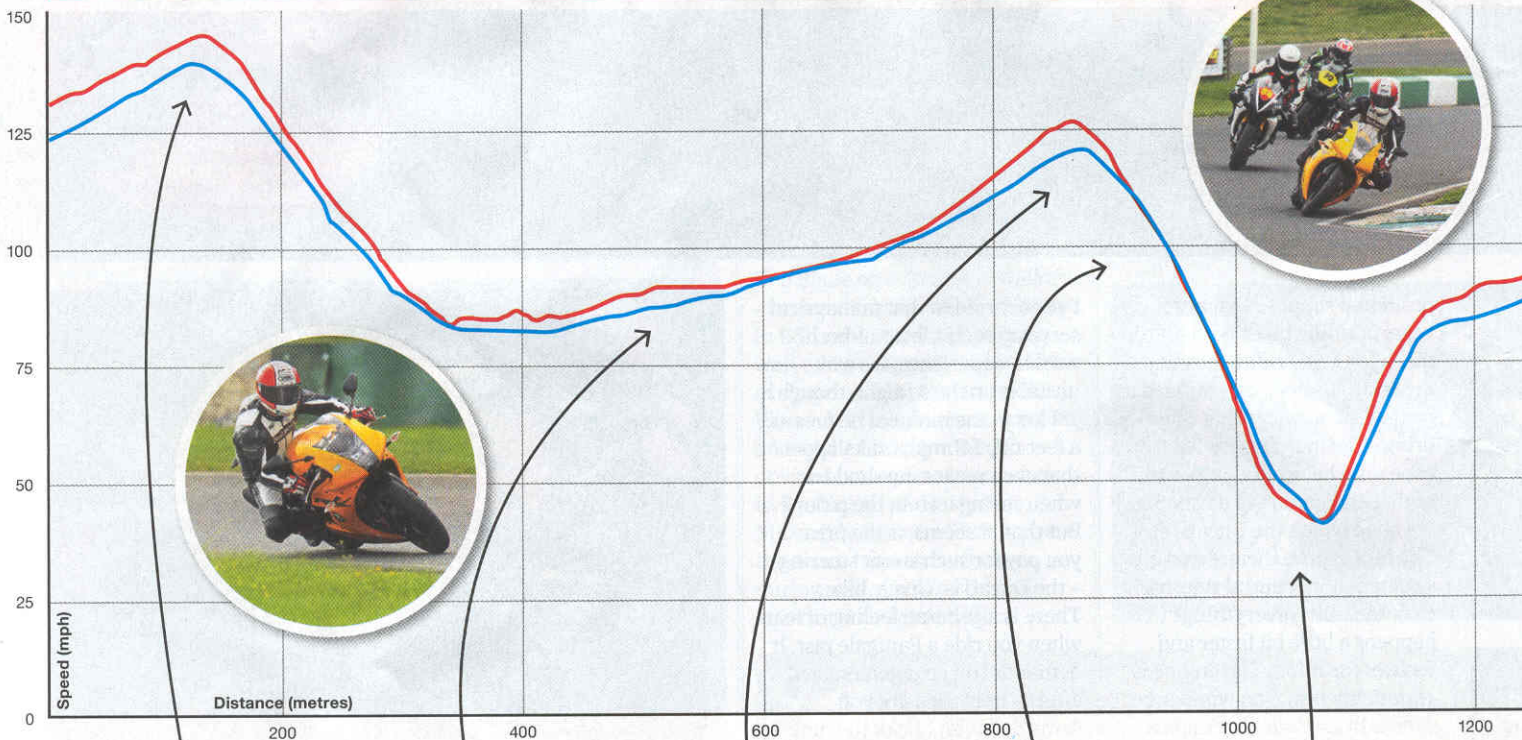
By hitting over 144mph on Mallory's short straight we're in proper HP4 territory here, but thanks to the step in the Ducati's torque curve it feels even faster. This is a wild ride in every way.

The EBR is a little easier for your brain to handle but still ferociously fast, lapping quicker than a KTM RC8R and only just slower than Rutter managed on the Kawasaki ZX-10R. It's an impressive performance for an all-new superbike. This is the first machine from inside Erik Buell's mind that can seriously run with the big boys.

## MALLORY PARK PB'S OFFICIAL TEST TRACK



## A LAP OF MALLORY 1.39 MILES OF TARMAC BEING SERIOUSLY BATTERED



### START/FINISH

**DUCATI: 143.68mph**  
**EBR: 137.86mph**

At the start/finish line, both bikes are in the same ballpark as the BMW HP4 and MV F4 RR last month. The Panigale is the faster of the two and well into its monster power delivery, stretching its speed advantage over the EBR from the 3.61mph at the start/finish line to 5.91mph at the braking point 200 metres later. This sets the tone for pretty much the whole of the lap.

### GERARD'S

**DUCATI: 90.20mph**  
**EBR: 88.69mph**

Before Rutter even brakes for Gerard's, he's already 0.1 seconds ahead on the Panigale thanks to its demolition of the start/finish straight. At the mid-point of Gerard's, 625m into the lap, the two here are separated by a good chunk of speed – but this doesn't tell the full story. It seems that Rutter carries a lot more entry speed on the Panigale but then takes time to get it settled.

### STEBBE STRAIGHT

**DUCATI: 125.00mph**  
**EBR: 119.29mph**

The Panigale achieves an HP4-matching top speed on the Stebbe straight and blows the EBR away. This is not a reflection of any shortcomings on the EBR – in fact the EBR is 5mph faster than a KTM RC8R at the same point. But Rutter adds another 0.2 seconds to the EBR's total deficit of 0.6 seconds. The Panigale has totally dominated the EBR during the fastest section of Mallory's lap.

### BRAKING 100-50mph

**DUCATI: 2.53s**  
**EBR: 2.91s**

The EBR just loses out to the Panigale in the very last bit of the braking phase between 100 and 50mph. But if you look at the whole of the braking phase, both bikes are virtually identical and sit on an average of 0.9G of deceleration for the whole of this four-second part of the track. Anything that can go from 100-50mph in under three seconds is mightily impressive.

### EDWINA'S CHICANE

**DUCATI: 40.13mph**  
**EBR: 39.53mph**

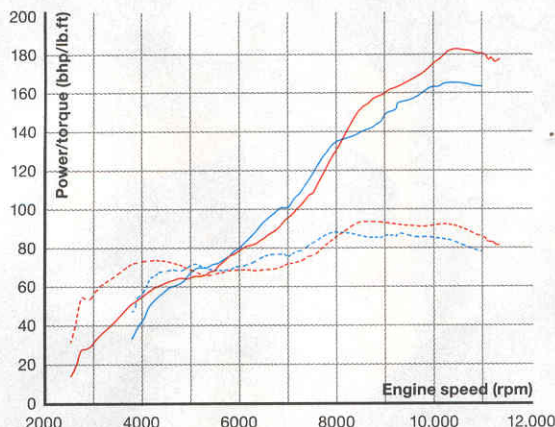
Very little difference in apex speed, but once again the approach to the apex on the EBR seems to be more controlled, with a more consistent rate of deceleration to the apex. But the two bikes meet in the middle and whatever the EBR lost to the Ducati during the last bit of its braking phase, it has made back up. Overall, the EBR has pegged back its total deficit to 0.5 seconds.

## ON THE DYNO

WITH A PAIR of tug-boat engines like these, you'd be forgiven for thinking the torque would rip the dyno off its moorings and tow it into the North Sea. Didn't happen, but something equally bonkers did.

The Ducati Panigale S is, with 181.8bhp, the most powerful road-legal V-twin PB has ever tested (seems like yesterday we were excited about Suzuki's TL1000S making almost 120bhp. It was actually 1996...). But although the S is a bowel-loosening monster, it's not in a face-pummelling, 1198 kind-of-way. Reigned in with electronics and a scooped midrange, it's easy to ride the S at any pace.

The EBR makes a pretty good showing too, proving



what Erik Buell can do when he's allowed to do it. The old 1125R Rotax made 125bhp; EBR's massively reworked version is good for 164bhp, with plenty of midrange thrust. The top-end looks like it has room for development, too.

### EBR 1190RX

164.26bhp @ 10,500rpm  
80.10lb.ft @ 8000rpm

### DUCATI 1199 S PANIGALE

181.83bhp @ 10,500rpm  
93.87lb.ft @ 8500rpm



## SPECIFICATIONS EBR 1190RX

<b>ENGINE</b>	
Type	Liquid-cooled, 1190cc, 72° V-twin
Bore x stroke	106mm x 67.5mm
Fuelling	Electronic fuel injection
Measure power	164.26bhp @ 10,500rpm
Measured torque	88.10lb.ft @ 8000rpm

## CHASSIS

Frame	Aluminum frame with integral fuel tank
Front susp	Showa BPF, 43mm, USD, fully adjustable
Rear susp	Showa monoshock, fully adjustable
Front brakes	386mm rim-mounted disc with 8-piston radial caliper
Rear brakes	208mm disc, 2-piston caliper
Rider aids	21-level traction control

## DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	1409mm
Rake/trail	24°/96.5mm
Wet weight	206kg (measured), 53%F, 47%R
Seat height	826mm
Fuel capacity	17.1 litres

## BUYING

Price	£13,998
Contact	www.erikbuellracing.com



## SPECIFICATIONS DUCATI 1199 S PANIGALE

<b>ENGINE</b>	
Type	Liquid-cooled, 1198cc, 90° V-twin
Bore x stroke	112mm x 60.8mm
Fuelling	Electronic fuel injection
Measure power	181.83bhp @ 10,500rpm
Measured torque	93.87lb.ft @ 8500rpm

## CHASSIS

Frame	Cast alloy airbox
Front susp	Öhlins NIX30 43mm forks, fully adjustable with electronic adjustment for compression and rebound damping
Rear susp	Öhlins TTX36 with with electronic adjustment for compression and rebound damping, adj. linkage
Front brakes	Brembo 4-piston M50 monoblock calipers, 330mm discs
Rear brakes	Brembo 2-piston caliper, 245mm disc
Rider aids	Riding and Power Modes, ABS, EBC, DTC, DQS, DDA+

## DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	1437mm
Rake/trail	24.5°/100mm
Wet weight	196kg (measured), 52%F, 48%R
Seat height	825mm
Fuel capacity	17 litres

## BUYING

Price	£20,250
Contact	www.ducatiuk.com



### RUN TO THE HAIRPIN

DUCATI: 119.46mph  
EBR: 114.22mph

Once again, the Panigale is knocking on the door of the HP4 for top speed on the run to the hairpin, less than 0.5mph down on the Beemer. The Ducati's extra power, traction control and anti-wheelie technology come in handy, and daft as it may sound, the quickshifter really makes a difference to maintaining stability and drive through a fast direction change that is bumpy and uphill.

### HAIRPIN

DUCATI: 19.95mph  
EBR: 19.03mph

The Ducati just about claims the hairpin, which considering that it weighs 196kg fully-fuelled and is 10kg lighter than the EBR, it really should. In fact the 1199 S is actually 1.5kg lighter than its smaller sibling, the 899. Rutter remarked that both bikes felt great round the hairpin, and said the EBR reminded him of the Kawasaki ZX-6R that he was literally throwing around.

### DEVIL'S ELBOW

DUCATI: 58.08mph  
EBR: 54.95mph

Both bikes exit the bus stop chicane at identical speeds of 37.3mph, but the Panigale is made for the nasty, off-camber, downhill Devil's Elbow – thanks again to the superior grip, power, trick electronics and quickshifter. This is one of the few areas on track that the EBR's traction control chimed in and Rutter reported that he thought it was a very sophisticated and smooth system.

DUCATI  
1199S  
BEST LAP  
55.24s

EBR  
1190RX  
BEST LAP  
56.68s





# RUTTER SAYS...

Hats off to a pair of brilliant bikes that break the norm

**T**HESE TWO BIKES are from different planets, conceived from the minds of brilliant engineers who aren't afraid to try something different. As such, the Ducati Panigale and EBR 1190RX both challenge conventional wisdom.

The EBR's performance is impressive – they've come up

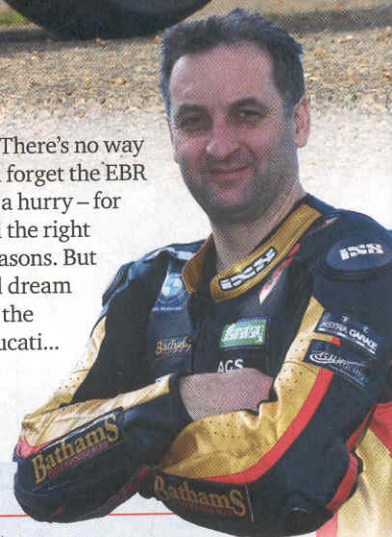
with a brilliant bike first time out. The way it manages to be so stable yet have such a fast rate of turn is staggering. While there was one EBR dealer appointed in the UK at the time of writing, this bike is very hard to ignore at just under £14,000.

On the other side of the same coin is the astonishing Panigale 1199 S. Everything about it just

feels extreme – this is a bike that refuses to do half measures. It demands that you engage with it fully, forget what you think you know and give it your all.

In terms of lap times there's no contest: the Ducati is the clear winner. But it's more than that – the way it goes about its business is so exciting. It's as dramatic as its lap times suggest.

There's no way I'll forget the EBR in a hurry – for all the right reasons. But I'll dream of the Ducati...



## THE RUTTER TEST MALLORY PARK LEAGUE TABLE

	TIME	TOP SPEED	GERARD'S	POWER	WEIGHT	COMMENTS
BMW HP4	54.34s	149.35mph	95.18mph	184.28bhp	201.5kg	Very nearly perfect
Ducati 1199 S Panigale	55.24s	143.68mph	90.20mph	181.83bhp	196kg	Terrifyingly brilliant
MV Agusta F4 RR	55.30s	143.24mph	91.88mph	180.5bhp	214kg	Lairy but hard work
Fireblade SP	55.72s	143.23mph	97.48mph	172.4bhp	212.5kg	Best suspension here
Aprilia RSV4 R ABS	56.07s	140.76mph	95.80mph	170.1bhp	213.5kg	Held back by ABS
Triumph Daytona 675R	56.59s	132.48mph	95.59mph	120.0bhp	192kg	Big lean, amazing noise
Kawasaki ZX-10R	56.67s	144.22mph	91.73mph	181.5bhp	201kg	Let down by stock shock
EBR 1190RX	55.24s	137.86mph	88.69mph	164.26bhp	206kg	Seriously decent bike
Kawasaki ZX-6R	56.75s	131.6mph	91.29mph	118.68bhp	192.5kg	Cement dust on track
Aprilia Tuono V4 R	57.30s	136.5mph	94.8mph	156.0bhp	215.5kg	Faster than an RC8R
KTM RC8R	57.56s	138.21mph	94.96mph	158.3bhp	203kg	The most torque
Ducati 899 Panigale	57.93s	133.67mph	91.88mph	138.2bhp	197.5kg	Not fastest, but fun
Honda CBR600RR	58.28s	128.46mph	89.1mph	109.14bhp	197.5kg	Same weight as an 899
Suzuki GSX-R1000	58.12s	139.1mph	89.3mph	165.6bhp	203kg	Limited by tyre grip
BMW S1000R Sport	58.44s	134.7mph	90.3mph	159.2bhp	206.5kg	Ground clearance probs
Suzuki RGV500	58.92s	136.5mph	86.4mph	175bhp (est)	150kg	Once-in-a-lifetime awe
KTM Super Duke	59.03s	131.0mph	88.3mph	160.0bhp	214.0kg	Better as a road bike