



Honda has seen the edge, and used it to style its latest sporting machines. CBR954RR's more aggressive look complements increased power and decreased dry weight. Same snaking Ti exhaust plumbing is used, but the exotic metal is now used for the silencer, as well. It's still fitted with power-broadening three-stage "HTEV" exhaust valve. HRC-inspired swingarm is lighter, while the shock mounting system now allows for rear ride-height adjustment.



mostly due to the strengthened rear subframe that now has to support the dual under-seat silencers and optional luggage. Add about 10 more pounds for the ABS model.

A larger, 5.8-gallon fuel tank is well-integrated into the crisp new lines of the VFR, with Honda's trademark red returning as the only available color. From certain front angles there are hints of the new four-stroke Grand Prix bike, the RC211V, and the abbreviated tailsection bears a certain resemblance to the old oval-piston NR750's. Coming or going, the angular look is cool. Honda expects the bike in showrooms by January, priced at \$9999. Add \$1000 for the anti-lock brakes. Makes us wonder if 2002 will be the beginning of another decade run for the VFR as a Ten Bester.

Maybe, but with the optional saddlebags it might run up against its totally redone V-Four stablemate, the new-for-'03 ST1300 sport-tourer.



Where to start on a bike that's had everything changed? The aluminum frame and swingarm, the more compact, more powerful, longitudinally mounted motor, the "not-quite X-Wing" styling?

Let's go straight to that new 1261cc engine. The dual-counterbalanced powerplant features a 20mm lower crankshaft (for a lower overall center of gravity and improved handling) while the engine has been shortened front-to-rear by some 2 inches, thanks in part to a new chain drive (formerly belt) for the dual overhead cams, while a shorter, lower-geared five-speed transmission is also fitted. Both bore and stroke were bumped, the new dimensions 78 x 66mm.

Honda tossed the old CV carbs for an auto-choke PGM-FI engine-management system with 12-hole injectors. Claimed power is now 116 bhp and 85 foot-pounds of torque.

The more compact powerplant has allowed the engine to