

Long-Term Wrap-Up

APRILIA SL1000 Falco

DARWINISM ON WHEELS

WHICH CAME FIRST, THE FALCO or the egg? Impossible to say, but over the past 18 months we watched our long-term Aprilia SL1000 evolve from a standardish sportbike to a sporty sport-tourer and, ultimately, to a track-day weapon rivaling the Mille R.

We'd been asking Aprilia for a long-term testbike ever since the company entered the U.S. market circa 1999. When we finally scored our 2000-model Falco in June of '01, it already had a few thousand miles on the odometer. So we can't account for its performance during those early days.

One of the benefits of acquiring our Falco used was that it had already been de-restricted—that is, the airbox inlet dam had been removed and the mysterious blue wire exiting the CPU had been clipped, activating the alternate “for rac-

ing use only” fuel/ignition map. That little home remedy takes the 60-degree Rotax V-Twin from a paltry 84 rear-wheel horsepower and 59 foot-pounds of torque right on up to 106 bhp and 67 ft.-lbs. And it's free!

But our testbike also arrived with a set of Aprilia SL Carbon slip-on mufflers and the corresponding EPROM chip (\$949 total), so power had crept up to 108 bhp and 67 ft.-lbs. Nice, even if the exhaust note was too loud for friendly-neighbor status.

Near the end of our test, we sampled an airbox kit (\$190 from Evoluzione Cycle-sports, www.evoluzione.net).

This consists of a gorgeous, machined-from-billet aluminum spacer that raises the airbox lid

a half-inch, plus a billet venturi that allows fitment of a larger air filter. Together, these parts boosted output even further, to 110 bhp and 69 ft.-lbs. (Yes, we realize that the first 22 horsepower cost nothing and the next 4 bhp over \$1100—who said performance was free? Wait, we just did... Uh, never mind.) What the dyno can't begin to show is how much more free-revving the engine was with the bigger box.

On Evoluzione's recommendation, we also tried slightly lower gearing, going from the stock steel 41-tooth rear sprocket to an aluminum, Mille-spec 42 (\$47). This aided acceleration while reducing unsprung weight.

With those mods done, and a recall to replace an oil line addressed, our Falco needed precious little mechanical work.

Quotes from the logbook

Mark Cernicky— I spent the majority of my time on the Falco with a passenger, and the bike didn't mind a bit. The new shock and steering damper did a great job of soaking up pavement imperfections.

Mark Hoyer— I figured with all the effort put into making the Falco track-ready, I wouldn't like riding it on the street. I was wrong—it's awesome! Is it a Mille? No, but it's Mille enough for me, while being a much better streetbike.

Brian Catterson— Rode the Falco 660 miles with Club Desmo at Buttonwillow Raceway this weekend and couldn't have asked for a more willing accomplice. Even with the rear tire completely shagged, it still hooked up and wheeled off corners!

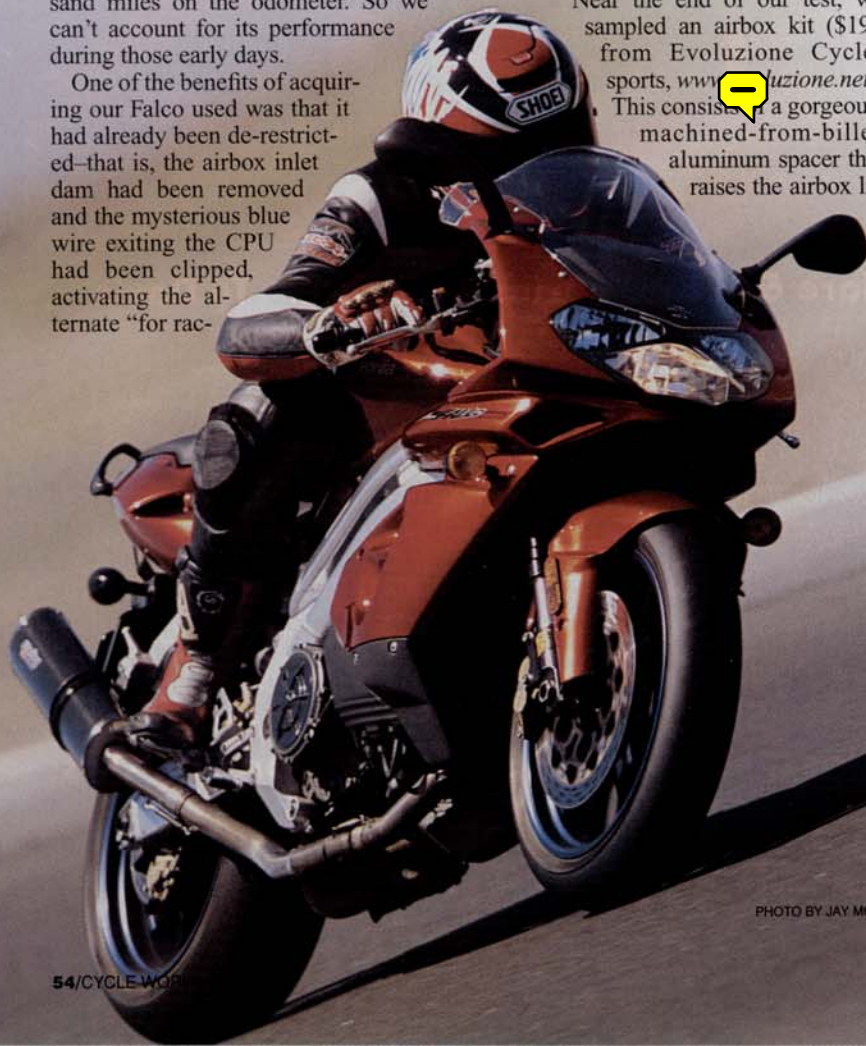


PHOTO BY JAY McNALLY