

The Riviera . . . Champs Elysee in Paris . . . Lido in Venice . . . Nob Hill in San Francisco . . . Park Avenue in The Big Apple . . . and Beverly Hills, Calif. . . . these are the stomping grounds of the rich and famous people — VIPs. Can a motorcycle really fit in or will it always seem somewhat incongruous, brutish?

If any motorcycle can fit in, it's the elegant BMW R100RS. It exudes prestige. Its four-wheel counterpart would be a Mercedes Benz sports car, Ferrari GT or Jaguar XJ-12. It forces people to take a second glance. It turns heads, widens eyes. It looks rich, and costs it.

Remember the time when BMWs were massive looking, quiet, 600ccs of slightly underpowered understated machinery, roundish shapes, deep black with contrasting white pinstriping, and called the Rolls Royce of Motorcycles? The 1978 supersonic silver, fairinged, mag-type cast wheeled, 1000cc R100RS will seem like one of the good guy's spaceships in *Star Wars* compared to most of its predecessors.

The RS is also loaded with a dilemma — it's betwixt and between being a genuine touring bike, which is exactly what BMWs are renowned for. This is because it has more than a touch of popular cafe racer flair. It has what amounts to road racing clip-on position handlebars, only these are flat with no rise, angled back and clamped to the top of the steering triple clamp. The exciting aerodynamic fairing is very trim, and has a windscreen height that leaves the head completely exposed to the wind blast.

It's all very European and also uncomfortable for more than an hour to two hours at a stretch. The hands bear the task of holding you up against the hard Magura grips. The head must be held up and back to look straight down the road; knees tend to bow out unless the rider deliberately grasps the fuel tank in a hug. The seat, as is BMW tradition, is a marvel of comfort even with the reduced padding in the R90S/R100S dual version, so it does not put constraints on long-distance runs. It's purely the handlebar/controls layout — something not easily remedied — which would prohibit long-distance touring.

Most buy the RS knowing and willing to live with its design. If they do and can, they are in for a joy because this BMW is the closest thing yet to bridging the gap between precise, exhilarating handling and superior long-range comfort over most road surfaces. And the power is there in spades. The broad torque range is marvelous in traffic. Passing ability in fifth gear is utterly amazing, let alone when shifting down! The engine will pull down too, and feel comfortable in the 1500 rpm range, and turn right around and rush up to its 120-mph-plus top speed with no fuss. It's quite smooth — only minor shuddering and shaking at lower rpms — and so ridiculously willing.



Tour - Testing BMW R100RS

This elegant motorcycle has a niche of its own . . . somewhere between the cafe racer and the tourer

Alan Tratner



It is a motorcycle that seemingly never runs out of steam.

It's not raucous or revvy like similar displacement multis. It simply pulls and pulls and enhances the handling around corners as well as threading through busy freeway commutes. In fact, the RS is such a responsive entity, it makes it all too easy to constantly exceed the posted limits. We finally figured why — it's the stability. It is perhaps the most secure, stable motorcycle we've ever been on. It felt like we were going 50 mph at 80-90 mph. It is as confidence inspiring as a single-track vehicle could be . . . as good as some road racers we've had the privilege to experience.

Three items contribute to this superior stability. The 57-inch wheelbase coupled with the steering geometry is as near ideal for overall handling as one could imagine. The intricately designed cast aluminum wheels are more rigid than the wire-spoked version and equipped with a 325-19 ribbed Continental front. The 400-18 continental rear provides good cornering adhesion, straight-line tracking and is all but undisturbed by rain-grooved roadways.

But probably the most important handling aspect is the frame and suspension design. The new /7 frames are extremely rigid with no play in the swing arm pivot or steering head (BMW's tapered roller bearings are used in both locations) and when mated to the long travel suspension, make for an ideal chassis capable of both extraordinary comfort and handling agility. Most experts agree that BMWs possess the finest wheel suspensions in all motorcycling.

The RS has had some reworking done to slightly stiffen the normally soft, plush-ride quality of the other models. The middle range or stroke of the fork is compliant and soft, but at either extreme of extension or compression it is more progressively firm. This tends to reduce nose dive a little in braking and makes the bike feel more secure in fast cornering where the G forces compress the forks and shocks with great vigor.

In straight-line cruising/touring over practically any textured surface, the BMW glides along without transmitting most bumps into machine attitude changes known to lesser motorcycles. It's a little eerie, but great. The only drawback is the BMW fork is not as responsive to small, sharp bumps as those of the new Teflon-smoothed Yamaha. These encounters are felt in the handlebars and in small shudders in the fairing and windscreen, whereas the Yamaha fork swallows them up. Otherwise, the RS has a compromise reached in spring rates and dampening that is perfectly suited to aggressive or passive riding styles.

The new cast wheels come with dual disc brakes with perforated rotors which help cooling and aid wet weather braking

BMW R100RS

Retail Price • \$5225 (West Coast)

Warranty • 1 year,
unlimited mileage

Engine Type

Design • 4-stroke, horizontally
opposed

Displacement • 980cc

Cylinders • 2

Valve Train Type • Overhead

Carburetion • 32mm Bing
constant velocity

Cooling • Air

Horsepower • N/A

Torque • N/A

Lubrication • Wet sump,

Oil Capacity • 4.7 pints (2.25 liters)

Electrical System

Ignition • Battery/points

Starting • Electric

Headlight • 7-inch Halogen,
60/55 watt

Charging Output • 12-volt, 280-watt,
3 phase alternator
battery

Transmission And Final Drive

Type • Manual

Gears • 5

Final Drive • Shaft

Chassis

Frame • Tubular steel

Front Suspension • Telescopic fork,
8-inch travel

Rear Suspension • Swing arm,
5-inch travel

Wheelbase • 57.7 inches

Brakes • Dual disc front,
single disc rear

Tires • 3.25-19 8R front,
4.00-18 HR rear

Dry Weight • 462.9 lbs.

Wet Weight • 507 lbs.

GVWR • 881 lbs.

GAWR • 396 lbs. front,
619 lbs. rear

Fuel Tank • 6.3 gallons

Fuel • Premium

Touring Performance

Estimated Top
Speed • 120 mph

RPM in top gear at

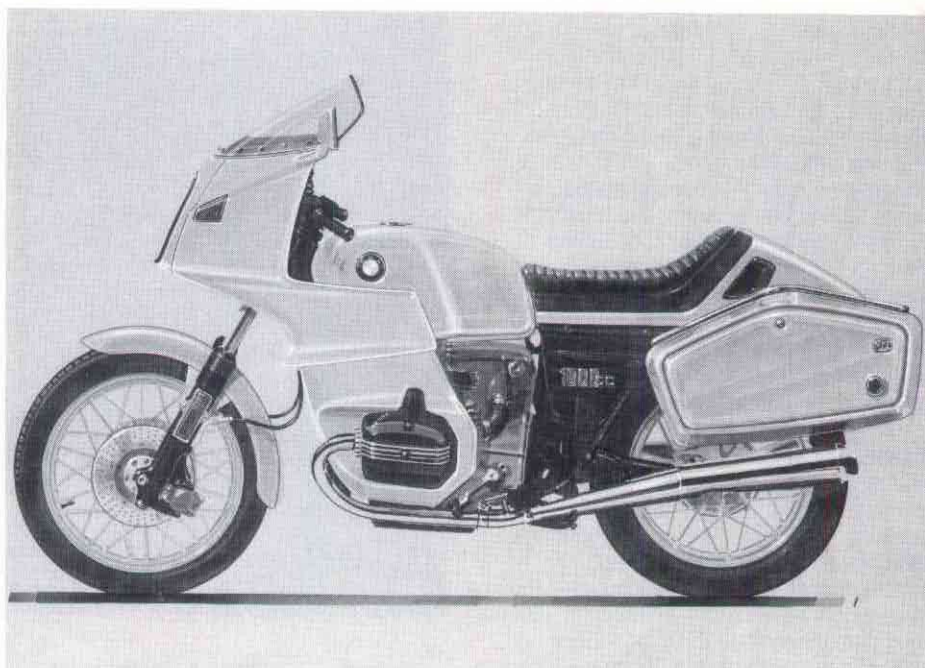
55 mph • 3200 rpm

65 mph • 3800 rpm

Average Fuel

Consumption • 45 mpg

Fuel Tank Range • 270 miles



GENERATION II TRAVEL SYSTEM — New saddlebags and mounts for the BMW, designed by Wixom Brothers for their parent company, Arthur Fulmer, recently received the "Best Design in Transportation for 1978" award from the Industrial Designers Society of America. Wixom is conducting survey to determine feasibility of production for BMW and invites comments from *Rider* readers. Bags are vacuum formed ABS with 1½ cubic feet capacity. Locking side-opening doors have special seal against water. Bags are detachable. Weight of bags and steel-tube fully chromed rack is 36 pounds. Travel trunk also available. Wixom Bros., 1637 E. Burnett Ave., Long Beach, Calif. 90806.

real push on the brake pedal to obtain stopping power — but at least these aren't overly sensitive to lock up as many other rear disc motorcycles.

Brakes, front and rear, are strong, but require moderate activation pressures to get things slowed fast.

The RS has the plastic panel which covers the handlebar center and brackets and locates the 3-position hydraulic steering damper handle that has now been discontinued on other new BMWs. It's handy in strong crosswinds and badly potted roads.

Neutral position on the handle is marked D, moderate force 1 and heavy dampening 2. As far as controls go, the RS and all new BMWs have a lights-on-always safety feature which means the left-hand headlight switch is no longer installed. The turn signal system is new for 1978 in that it has an indicator light moved to the top of the monitor panel for better visibility and recognition, and a clever beeper that ceases to be annoying when in neutral or with the clutch lever in. It isn't quite as innovative as the Yamaha automatic canceling unit, but far better than the Honda style buzzer.

Speaking of lights, the RS has a parking light — a horizontal lens above the headlight in the fairing — that operates in numbers 1 and 2 ignition positions. It is on while the engine runs or may be used in emergencies in conjunction with the rear parking light.

An electric tachometer is standard, and a resettable trip odometer/speedometer is

included. The horns are unbelievable. Dual RS electric Fiams located within the lower front of the fairing will blow the unfamiliar rider out of the saddle with their intensity. While the horns add a good degree of security in traffic situations, BMW has not forgotten the machine's security when parked. A key fork-lock is standard and, new for this year, a cable lock comes housed within the hollow of the main frame top tube, accessible by the removal of the tool tray under the locking flip seat.

BMW's with shaft drive, a big flywheel and hefty gears, have always had a detectable clunk when shifting. The last few years have seen improvements in this area, and the '78s have a shifter-linkage arrangement that provides easier foot throw of the selector and even quieter operation, although some audible noises remain in first and second gears. The torque reaction also remains — and quite pronounced from the one liter engine when in neutral — but pay no attention to this phenomenon just as the shaft drive's rear end rising action under acceleration and lowering with throttle shutoff.

A large part of what the RS is, is its fairing. A milestone for motorcyclists, it is the first OEM full frame-mounted fairing on a mass-produced bike that comes as a standard part of the package.

Its handlebars and gauges are designed to work in harmony with the fairing. The ignition switch volt meter and electric clock are built into the dash edge of the inside fairing surface. Amber front

see page 84

by allowing a path for the escape of water that would normally form a thin film between the pucks and rotor, and a single perforated rotor rear disc brake that replaces the time honored and effective drum unit.

Lever ratios are worked out to require a

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Shown:
Tourer and Open Road
Not shown:
MXer and Cardigan



you have (outside of cold-weather and rain gear, which should never be left behind). If you take something and never use it on two trips, it should be left behind.

As you get interested in the field, you'll be more willing to spend money for the neat stuff like parkas, bags, clothes, fairings, etc. And, eventually, there you are: Super-Tourer! □

BMW from page 44

turn signals are integrated into the left and right side fairing exterior. The framing that supports the fairing is solid, with the headlight and top forward fairing bracket welded permanently to the steering head. The six piece plastic fairing adds approximately 21 pounds (net) to the bare bike and is produced in sections for disassembly and access to servicing the ignition and other components.

The superbly brilliant Bosch Q-Hallogen headlamp is encased in a clear glass windscreen cover within the fairing. Little non-functional decorative orange horizontal lines are included on this screen. The short clear Pyralin shatterproof Lexan plastic windshield top has plastic trim along its exposed edge. Its adjustable mirrors are unique — unlike conventional handlebar mirrors — black, rectangular Porsche-like and placed on either corner of the uppermost fairing surface at the rear windscreen edges. They vibrate a bit at different speed ranges but are very useful and afford a broad image.

The fairing is mounted in such a way to preclude almost any bouncing or shudder. It is as if it were solid metal. It does receive minor engine vibration, but it's rarely detectable unless your legs contact it. The shape and width is such that riders must really deliberately tuck in to be completely sheltered. The protection level is about at the level of the Avon full fairing, without the tall windshield present on the Avon. Engine cooling appears to remain normal, and in cold weather the fairing seems to draw a welcome stream of the engine's radiated heat to legs and feet, although it's almost unnoticeable in warm weather.

BMW designed this fairing in a wind tunnel for the best compromise in aerodynamic penetration, stability and comfort. They claim it lowers wind resistance by 5.4%, when compared to the R100s mini handlebar fairing, and front wheel lift by 17.4%. Also, side wind response is lowered by 60%. That statement is partially validated by our high speed excursion. It is by no means insensitive to side winds or truck blasts, but it is quite stable.

Special rubber boots attach to the fairing at the openings for the fork tube to preclude updraft and associated dirt from entering at this location. Unfortunately,

The Unattractive Lubricant

The unattractive lubricant dries in minutes so it doesn't attract dust and dirt like those slick, greasy lubricants that are always hanging around the corner bike shop.

The unattractive lubricant doesn't attract harmful moisture and corrosive elements like those dirty old lubricants you've been using.

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our test bike's boots kept falling off their retaining ledge, especially at full lock fork positions. They probably could be silicone adhered into place by the owner.

The matte-silver (available in gold, also) color matched to the fenders and tank with blue pinstriping is striking, and the square shapes and air flow regulator surfaces make for a fairing typical of what we see on the road today.

The new RS is remarkable in many ways. It is a machine of the highest quality — clean, quiet, attractive. But also it is a swift road sportster with handling that must be tried to be fully appreciated. The overall suspension and seat comfort is there, perhaps only a smidgen is

sacrificed when compared to the standard plush R1000.

The power stability and handling are truly inspiring. The already simple and extended maintenance schedule is further reduced by the one piece cast wheels and externally serviceable disc brakes. The quality is probably still the best overall available in motorcycles. If the stratospheric price (and insurance) of the 1978 R100RS can be afforded, those lucky riders will be treated to one heck of a piece of motive technology. □

RAG from page 45

survival situation far from the helping hands of civilization — injured. All appears lost, and you begin to envision the coyotes and buzzards picking through your skeleton like a turkey two days past Thanksgiving. Alas! What to do?

No sweat. Lay back, play it cool and then wait for the inevitable airborne search vehicles to drone on overhead. When you hear one you grope into your filler tube and — presto! — your petrol-stained rag becomes an accessible and handy smoke signal with the touch of a match.

Or suppose you find yourself incapacitated in some secluded corner of humanity, when the weather suddenly takes a rather arctic turn for the worse. As your body temperature plummets towards the freezing line, you begin to envision the somber face of your family funeral director. What to do again?

Yep! You screw your benumbed fingers into your filler tube once again, and *voila*, instant kindling for starting that life-saving fire.

Fellow motorcyclists, I propose that our National Highway Traffic Safety Administration abandon its meddlesome investigation of gas tank filler caps and start

conducting surveys to determine the practicality of designating a rag as the sole legal means of corking up motorcycle fuel tanks. I mean, this is a dead serious matter requiring the utmost cooperation of Babel-on-the-Potomac. Sure, I can hear the reader grumbling in opposition to my proposal — that such means will prove unsafe, impractical, unstylish and downright preposterous — but further reflection and an attentive eye to this thesis will bear me out.

A Rag Is Safe

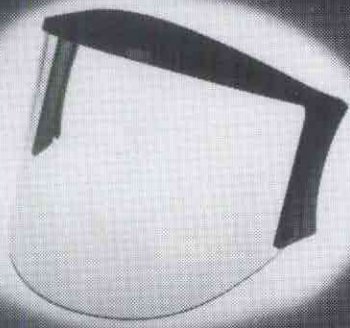
A rag stuffed into the filler tube is soft, flexible and therefore safe. A biker who plows into the stern of a low-lying Corvette that suddenly clamps on the binders can sail clear over the Vette's roof without fear of neutering himself on a gas cap as he catapults forward astraddle his fuel tank. Even if the biker were to run head-on into a cement truck, the rag would simply obey the immutable laws of physics and be crushed and forged snugly into whatever contortions the filler neck might assume. There is no danger that it will fly off on impact and strike an innocent pedestrian between the eyes, or skitter across a parking lot and wallop some hippie across a vulnerable bunion sticking out through his open-toed sandals, either.

A rag won't glare, it won't spring open and cause the biker to be immolated in high octane when he bounces into a bone-jarring pothole, and it won't pinch his tender finger-tips when he closes it nor rive his fingernails when he attempts to open it. And with a wire mesh screen located at the bottom of the filler neck, there is little danger of the rag entering the tank and plugging up the fuel system.

A Rag Is Practical

I've already exemplified several practi-

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