



SOMETHING VERY CLOSE TO TRUTH

Have you ever thought, not only about the aeroplane but about whatever man builds, that all man's industrial efforts, all his computations and calculations, all the nights spent over working draughts and blue-prints, invariably culminate in the production of a thing whose sole and guiding principle is the ultimate principle of simplicity?

From Wind Sand and Stars by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, chapter The Tool.

A Ducati is pretty well faultless, offering cornering capability beyond most riders' power to exploit. You can't get much better than that, can you? Well, yes, you can. Now a Krauser . . .

THE ROAD was familiar to me. I knew its nature. It was very wide and wound rhythmically around the foot of the hills. In a 12-mile run only three other minor roads connected with it and those I knew, and could see clearly.

I made the Krauser work hard, felt it leaping eagerly forward and sensed its wheels gripping the road, resisting the side-slips that waited with infinite patience to conclude errors of judgement. Long, shallow undulations set the motorcycle floating on its suspensions. My head felt heavy in the dips and over their crests I lifted slightly. The effect was negligible for I was jammed into a riding position that held me secure against the minor irregularities of speed.

The camber of a side road projected far into my traffic lane at the apex of a sweeping right-hand curve. I should have decelerated a little, shifted to the extreme left of my traffic lane, changed direction in an acute flick down, picked up fast and accelerated gently over the low hump in the nearest thing to a straight line I could engineer. But a few days and a few hundred miles on the Krauser had tempted me to search a little further than would normally be wise. So I held true to line and speed, confident the machine held no hidden devil but wishing at the last moment that I had, after all, approached the curve more circumspectly. A single violent lurch took place, beyond which the ride continued as

Well, yes, quite frankly, you can! A Krauser's handling is light right through the speed range, without that low-speed Ducati ponderousness that so often suggests, if not reveals itself as, a tendency to roll. And, moreover, a Krauser is as comfortable over bumpy roads as only a simple BMW or a complicated Japanese machine ever is. Perhaps it might seem to be an unfair comparison, because the Ducati is a full-scale production model while the Krauser is a special.

Except that it isn't. Not by any stretch of the most tortuous reasoning can the MKM 1000 be included with Bimota and Harris. A Krauser MKM is a commercially produced motorcycle from a German manufacturer who has decided that, apart from building his own engines and all the expensive problems such a decision involves, a BMW power unit suits his purposes best.

To prove a point: the Krauser MKM 1000 is registered with the German TÜV (DoT) as a bona fide motorcycle manufacturer. This itself is an extraordinary feat of commercial enterprise, persistence and integrity, because if there is one thing the TÜV aims to do in this world, it's flattening the ambitions of over-ambitious upstarts. They take the machine, whether car, bike or truck, away for two weeks and put it through its paces. If so much as a switch tumbler, let alone the basic vehicle performance, does not comply with any one of a thousand regulations concerning form and function, then it's given the old heave-ho, a £2,000 deposit is lost, and you start all over again.

In fact German law is now so restrictive it is probably impossible for an individual with limited capital to begin vehicle production. Mike Krauser, however, is a wily fellow. He rode works machines in the 1950s, ran his own team of Rennsport chairs during the 1960s and took over the BMW works sidecar racing teams during their

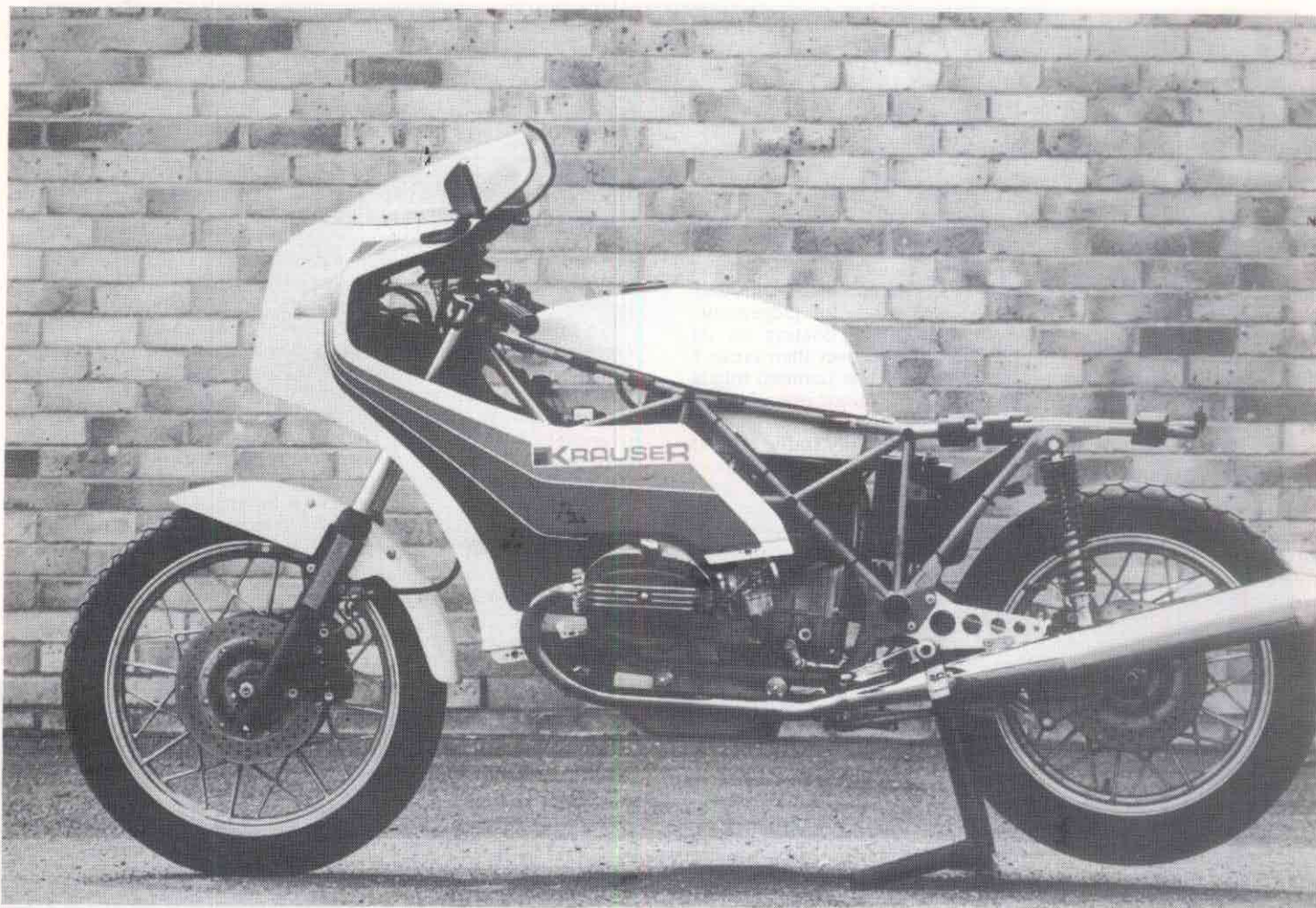


before. There was no head shake, no rear-end shimmy, no graunching underside, no series of weakening "echoes".

I have never ridden a Bimota or a Harris, both of which are generally considered to represent pinnacles of the current chassis designer's craft, so I cannot state categorically that the Krauser is the finest handling motorcycle produced today. If those others are better than the Krauser, however, I would be surprised. For all the efforts of the Japanese, which nowadays are considerable and admirable, I would still vote a Ducati as top contender in the stability stakes, or at least, I did until I rode the Krauser. A Ducati is faultless and offers a potential cornering capability that is generally beyond the skills of most riders to fully exploit, and you cannot get better than that, can you?

In view of the comparatively orthodox fairing shape, the MKM 1000's imperturbability in cross winds at high speed is remarkable. Exactly where the down-pressure — which is the most frequent means of achieving aerodynamic stability — is created is not known. It cannot occur beneath the screen because the fairing incorporates no wind-sealing tele-fork stanchion gaiters — merely holes. Note how well the fairing and "body" shapes complement each other

last years in the early 1970s when the special fuel injection, belt-driven, dohc, four-valve-head Rennsports were developed to an extraordinary 75 bhp by Willy Roth. Paradoxically, it was not the superior power of the Yamaha strokers that eventually put the last Rennsports out to grass, but their lower sound volume. The Rennsport's rose above the 110 FIM decibel limit hand-in-hand with adequate power improvements.



Frame design used to be an art: the best frames were built by engineers who knew intuitively what was required to discipline the various stresses

By this time Krauser had developed the range of injection-moulded plastic high quality motorcycle luggage equipment that did more to hurt the Craven range of glass-fibre panniers than anything else. At least three other major accessory manufacturers copied Krauser but the old glass-fibre boxes — however much more robust — were left alone with a dwindling market. Naturally Krauser identified strongly with BMW, although the product range grew to encompass most of the world's popular roadsters. Eventually he employed a total of 70 people working flat out to satisfy a demand he could barely cope with. It was a profitable business, but one which dissatisfied Mike Krauser, who at heart was still very much a motorcyclist's motorcyclist. He missed involvement with motorcycles and, like most of us, was convinced he could design and build a better bike than anyone else. Unlike most of us, however, he had the means to do it — of which money played the smallest part, incidentally: he knew motorcycles, had production facilities, was an astute business man and enjoyed a unique relationship with one of the world's leading motorcycle manufacturers, who were close neighbours, to boot.

He also knew a lot about four-valve cylinder head design. . . . Frame design used to be an art, the best frames were built by engineers who knew intuitively what was required to discipline the various stresses. Well, perhaps not quite intuitively, but the computer was their brain and had been programmed by years of experience. Empirical design ruled. This rarely holds true these days, although a few rule-of-thumb designers can, even now, match the performance of their more scientific contemporaries. Mike Krauser had the good sense to appreciate that he would be unwise to rely wholly on his experience, great though it was, because he was not a trained design engineer.

Weather protection is excellent and affords better rain shelter than its appearance suggests. Slightly wetted hands and a very wetted head are the only result of a rainy ride. The headlamp is actually secured to the fairing frame, which is rubber mounted, and then sealed with a grommet against weather penetration and which takes up beam adjustment movement. It is just possible to check oil level at the dipstick and top up without removing the bottom section of the fairing provided that the arm is not swathed in heavy riding gear and oil is poured in through a longish funnel

He had learned, the hard way, of the frequently unsatisfactory results of employing experienced old engineers to give material form to his concepts. As often as not by doing so had resulted in something closer to the engineer's ideals than Krauser's. After a long search he engaged two young and relatively inexperienced engineers to put metal around his dream. They were Michael Neher and Alfred Halbfeld, the latter also being a talented endurance machine competitor.

Development costs amounted to approximately £60,000. On top of that was a further £11,000 demanded by the TUV for production licensing. Tooling and material investment and other associated cash outlays probably absorbed another £100,000, although this might have been camouflaged — or subsidized — by utilizing existing production facilities at the Krauser luggage factory. The result is a total investment of something around £171,000 which, by today's standards, and especially those existing in Big Business Germany, is extraordinary low.

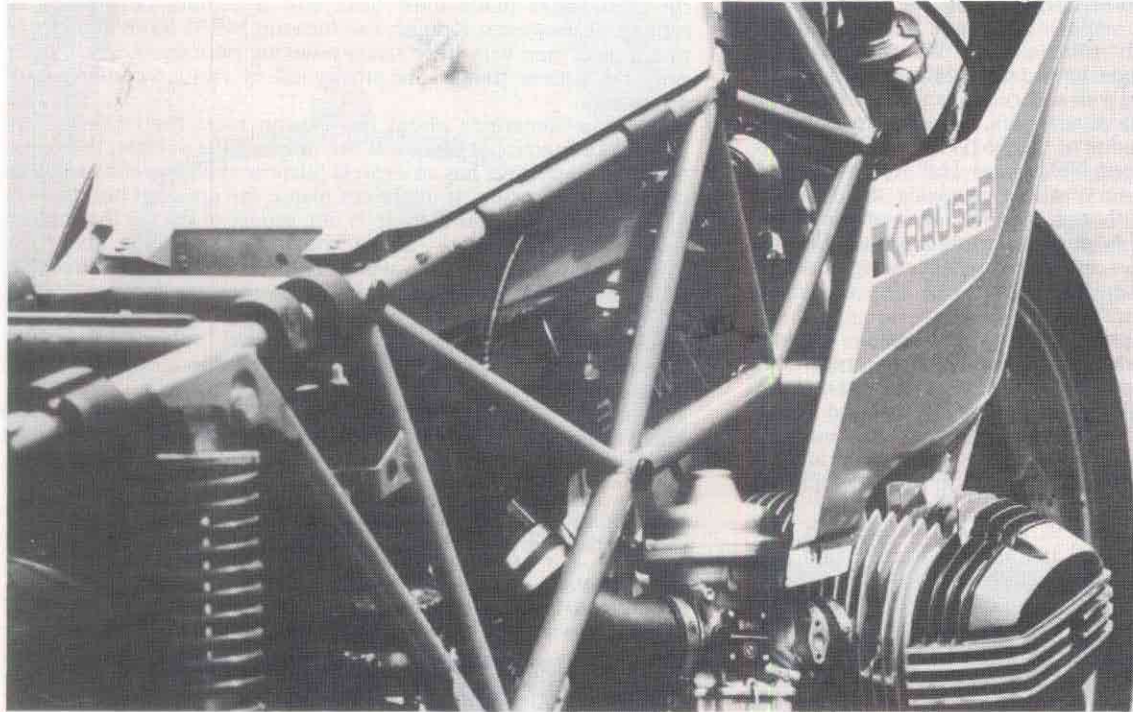
Krauser originally planned for a 200-unit production run. On such small figures profit margins have to be high and that would seem to be one reason for the high price of any low-volume product. At almost £6,000 a MKM 1000 it seems safe to assume that Krauser must be pulling approximately one-sixth of the retail price of the MKM 1000, to make the project viable. This is not intended as a criticism, but merely as an example of why high prices *have* to be asked for anything that is not mass-produced these days. The fact is that ownership of quality and individualism amounts to a privilege that has to be paid for.

In fact Krauser have manufactured their target aim of 200 MKM 1000s, although it is unlikely that, as yet, they are close to turning

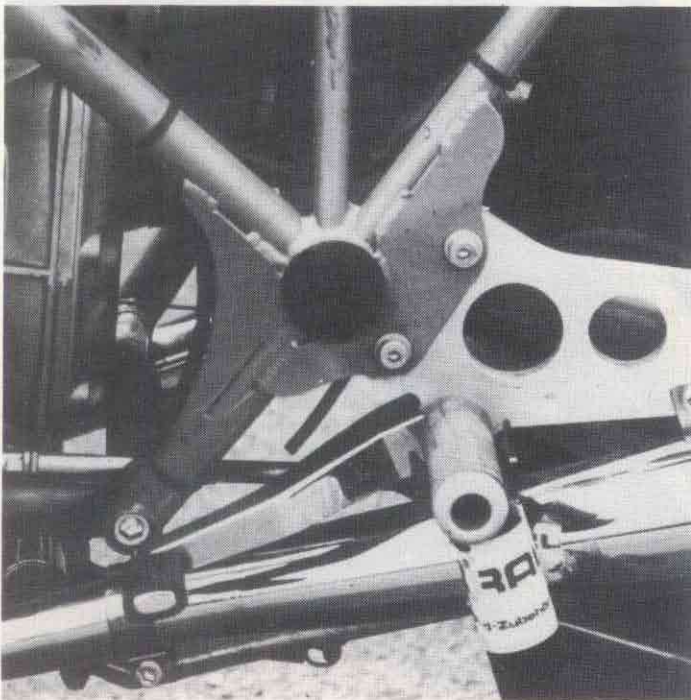
them out at a nett profit, simply because production overheads still have to be paid for. Nevertheless, it seems sensible to assume that now the original production plan has run its course, the company's motorcycle division is in a comparatively healthy state. The close co-operation of BMW has undoubtedly eased the birth of what would otherwise probably have been an impossible commercial venture.

A team of five men manufacture and assemble the machines, so far at a rate of approximately two a week but facilities exist for a maximum output of one a day. Whether or not this will ever be regularly achieved remains to be seen but it has been done in short runs when an overseas concessionaire demanded urgent shipment.

As many BMW components as possible have been utilized in the MKM 1000, to facilitate production and service. The entire engine and transmission assembly, wheels and brakes, suspension, lighting, controls, instruments and windscreen are BMW. The pivoted fork is received in its component parts by Krauser and widened to take the enormous width of the Metzeler 130/80 C88A rear tyre, which is too much for the normal fork.



Left: The main frame tubes are 23mm (0.9in) in diameter and the secondary bracing tubes are 16mm (0.6in) in diameter. The steering head stem revolves within sealed taper roller bearings. Pivoted fork bearings are unsealed BMW taper roller



Below: No centre stand is fixed to the motorcycle, although this handy roll-on servicing stand is supplied with every model. Until the simple knack of simultaneously lifting up and swinging out the prop stand is mastered, parking tends to be tricky. The stand has to conform to TUV auto knock-back, of course. If it touches the ground during cornering — a somewhat hazardous business in view of the required angles of lean — its springy toe-peg and double action make a lot of noise but "give" generously before any digging-in occurs

those parts.

And at this juncture we hit thin ice — which I shall now try desperately to leave intact!

Some American and Continental associates of mine are aware of an embarrassing atmosphere that appears to have arisen over this apparently excellent inter-company relationship. It seems that BMW in Germany are on the best of terms with Krauser. BMW has put its stamp of approval on the MKM 1000 in the most positive manner by placing its own badge on the fuel tank, and BMW handles Krauser sales through its own dealer network. Very sensible, too, for such a special motorcycle can do nothing but enhance BMW's own already prestigious image. The trouble seems to spring from some of BMW's overseas operations, which are largely manned by people who know nothing about Krauser other than that it is a luggage maker which has just lost its contract to BMW in favour of BMW's own brand. And in any case, as machine sales are falling off fast it is difficult justifying the inclusion of an additional brand to further dilute them.

Thus the very same marketing agreement that was originally the MKM 1000's foundation of success is proving to be, in some areas, that which is currently depressing sales.

There is, as far as I know, no problem in Britain. The test model was borrowed from Krauser Imports UK Ltd at Basingstoke, which will be pleased to assist anyone seriously interested in the MKM 1000. And there are at least three major BMW retailers, including Hughendon Motors of Bucks, which also help.

Centrepiece of the MKM 1000 is the frame, which conforms to a structural type known popularly as a space frame, although for reasons that elude me, unless the reference alludes to the fact that

There is something about the Teuton race that makes them masters of functional design. "Decoration", on the other hand, appears to baffle them

every available empty space is filled with a piece of frame! There is nothing magic about a space frame but it is true, without doubt, that a correctly designed one provides greater torsional rigidity for less weight than any other type of tube metal frame; but they are commercially unpopular because of their high manufacturing cost. The average roadster is twisted into a mass of compromises formed by the welded connection of approximately eight main tubes, of varying diameter and wall thickness to crudely resist stress. Performance is of secondary importance.

The MKM 1000 frame fulfils a much less ambiguous role. It is intended to be as light and as stiff as the shape of an orthodox motorcycle will allow it to be and is fabricated from 56 tubes welded together at 150 junctions. Apart from the lower frame cradle, which appears to play a comparatively minor stress-bearing role, none of the tubes is bent. Where a direction change is required, multi-dimensional triangulation takes place. The steering head is especially well secured by an absolute welter of eight tubes forming eight major triangles, plus as many optional ones as you care to plot. Adoption of the BMW flat-twin engine as the prime mover disadvantaged Neher and Halfeld compared with, say, the Bimota designers, whose products the Krauser frame otherwise resembles, although only as one member of the space frame family unavoidably must resemble another. Bimota caters for tall Japanese engines and anchors its steering heads to the power unit in a very sensible move, but this is denied BMW-based designs, of course.

Contrary to information published by even some national Krauser distributors, the frame material is steel. High-grade steel and doubtless an alloy of some sort — as most specialized metal is these days — but simple steel. Good steel, but steel, and it's all thin-wall stuff because all stresses are arranged longitudinally along each tube. A tube will neither compress nor stretch, at least if subjected to the loads applicable to motorcycle frames in normal use.

Weld quality is very high indeed, so good in fact that one experienced welder who inspected it was convinced that it was carefully applied brazing of some sort before he looked more closely, and whistled in admiration. That's how good the welding is.

I cannot report on the manufacturing processes because, while not a secret, only Krauser knows them. Personally, I am impressed beyond measure because of the incredible accuracy of the frame, which conforms to fractions of a millimetre as measured between the steering head and pivoted-fork spindle. The exact measurement was not known at the time of writing.

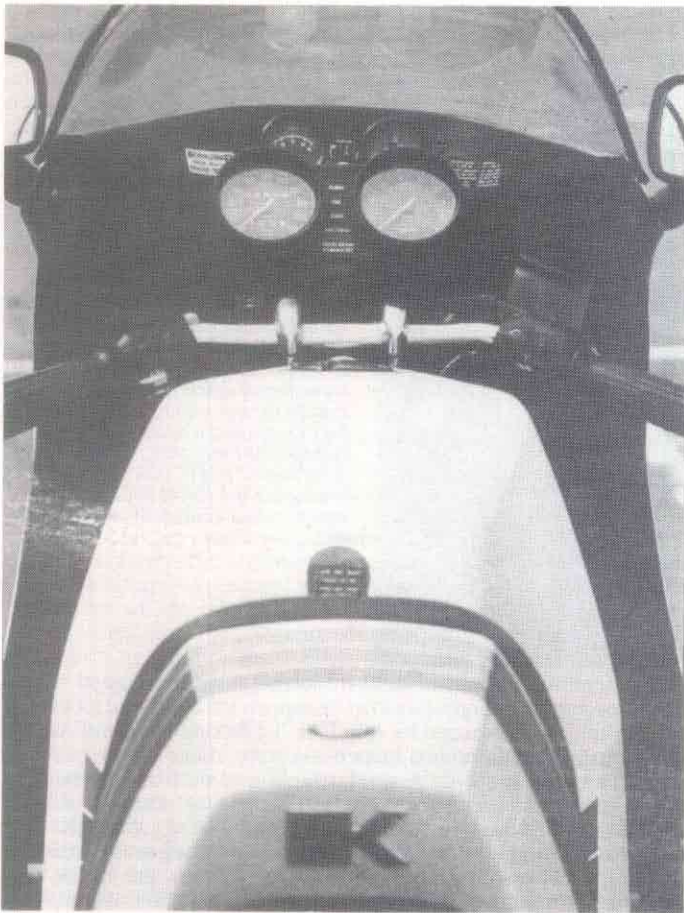
How this achievement is met is mystifying and doubtless accounts for the main part of the high price of the MKM 1000. Most production motorcycles are within their maker's tolerance if they are no more than $\frac{3}{8}$ inch outside the blueprint dimensions, as measured at the wheelbase! Correction is possible during construction but requires periods of "rest" while the stresses manifest themselves in the raw frame, and subsequent re-jigging under heat treatment until the frame no longer warps. It is only then stress-relieved. The freedom of bent tubes assists in maintaining Krauser accuracy, of course, but the sheer quantity of welded joints must create localised hot-spots and a warping potential not usually known. And the accuracy of those welds, considering total frame truth, defies imagination! The jig on which the frames are made must have cost a formidable amount of money. If, however, Krauser can turn out MKM 1000s at a rate of one a day, then very little stress-relieving periods, if any, can be possible, unless frames are stockpiled in various conditions of processing.

There is something about the Teuton races that makes them masters of functional design. If the shape of the vehicle, the vessel or office equipment has an express purpose then you can expect its shape to be pleasing. It might not please the ignorant but its users will appreciate it. But if there is one aspect of design that baffles them, it's decoration — art, if you like. Everything about the MKM 1000 is classic two-wheel craftsmanship, apart from its orange, pink and blue paintwork! I know they are Krauser's racing colours but, oh, how those colours clash and completely spoil the machine's essential elegance. Fortunately alternative colour schemes are available to the buyer and can be completed to his personal wishes.

Fairing and "bodywork" moulding paintwork appears to be top quality, but the brittle finish of the frame paint suggests the use of cellulose, which is generally regarded these days as too vulnerable

Steering characteristics are quite different from a BMW's and undoubtedly account for a slice of the MKM 1000's devotion to unswerving direction changes. Standard BMW steering geometry is, steering angle: 61.5°, trail: 3.74in (95 mm). MKM 1000 steering angle: 62°, trail: 3.9in (100 mm). The MKM 1000's engine has been lifted by 1 inch (25 mm) and its wheelbase is 59.4in (1,510 mm) compared to the BMW's 57.7in (1,465 mm). Lengthened wheelbase is a stability aid, raised engine is cornering aid





The riding position is just perfect for the average-height rider. The backstop seat is the perfect counter to unwarranted body shift at high speed and improves ride relaxation enormously

to crazing and even chipping under impact, as compared with plasticized finishes.

A lock holds the seat base and padding in place, as well as the bodywork, which also relies on two screws at the front and two at the back, to remain firmly in place. Once removed, which is simplicity itself, the aluminium petrol tank, battery and other various ancillaries are revealed. It is unconnected to any of them.

Aircraft-type Dzuz, or Dzuz-type (manufacturers tend to be very touchy about their trade names) fasteners clip the two lower fairing sections into place. Original MKM 1000s were equipped with spring-wire finger clips but these have now been changed to flush-fitting fasteners with screwdriver slots. As the tool kit is locked away behind the seat, removal is a cinch, but careful owners would be well advised to place a protective cover over hard surfaces before dropping the fairing lower half, as it needs a little jiggling to free it from the machine and invariably strikes the ground.

A front section that provides access to the generator and ignition trigger unit is removed in similar fashion, but the top part of the fairing is firmly, although simply, bolted into place. Thoughtfully, the headlamp is completely rubber mounted to protect its expensive quartz halogen bulb.

Before moving on to machine performance — what about those four-valve heads? Ah, well, er, slight problem here, chaps. All down to warranty and marketing arrangements, don't y' know. The thing is, BMW feel just a little bit peeved about those heads. They did not make them so they cannot — as yet, anyway — condone their fitment to a new machine, if the owner wants to retain his warranty. And can Krauser afford to warranty BMW's engine so equipped? It's a tricky problem but one both BMW and Krauser are trying to sort out between them. Meantime, the heads (at the time of writing) were available in August for all BMW machines, as well as MKM 1000s.

There is no doubt they are going to give BMW owners the sort of extra power they have long needed, to put the flat twins among the fours. Whether they are strictly necessary, however much fun, is open to debate. Before we get involved in any objective

reporting perhaps I might fall back on an instance or two of wholly subjective accounts to illustrate my point. Two very good friends of mine — expert riders both — own Moto Guzzis. We discovered, without any competitive riding, that the MKM 1000 far outran both Le Mans and Spada. At a test track session the MKM 1000 came up against a Kawasaki Z1R, which might not be the latest thing in Japanese fours but its 90 bhp, 125/130 mph, 12/13 seconds s/s quarter-mile should be enough to keep it ahead of a 70 bhp, 120 mph, 13.5/14.5 seconds s/s quarter-mile BMW. In the event, the BMW engined MKM 1000 proved to be so much faster in every respect than the Z1R that there was quite simply no competition. I should point out that there was nothing wrong with the Z1R.

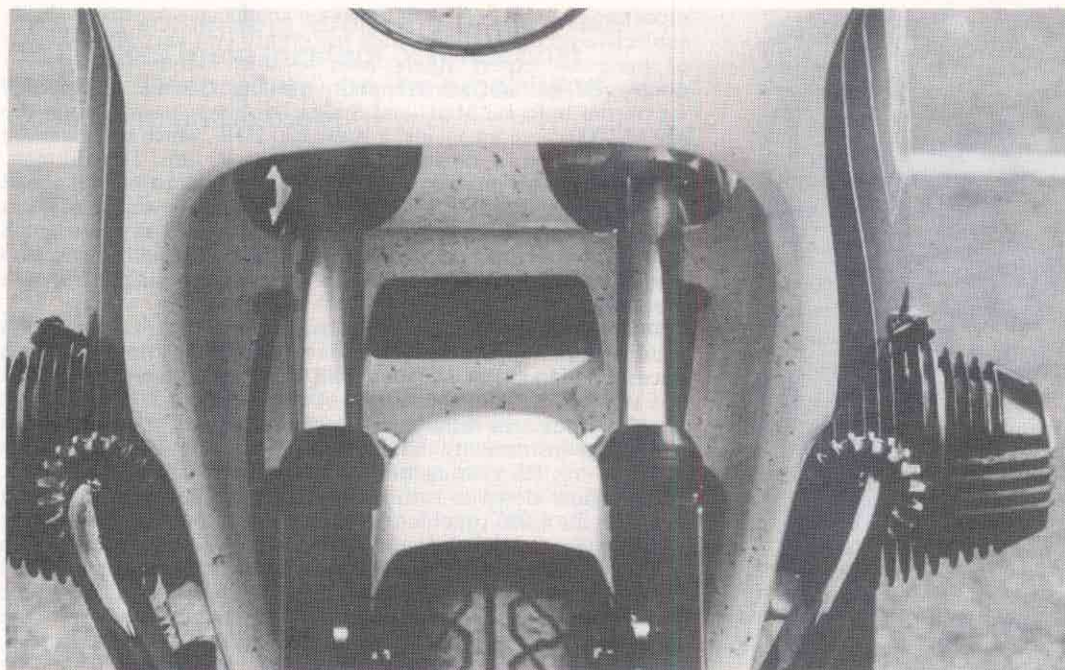
Whether the MKM 1000 tested was equipped with standard CS gearing (final-drive ratio 2.91:1) or RT/RS gearing (3.0:1) is uncertain. Doubtless someone will write to explain in words of one syllable the obvious method of discovering it at a glance, but the three per cent difference is neither enough to discern or to read from instruments. Simon Hill, of Krauser UK, is sure his machine has RS gearing while Krauser state that CS is correct. What it boils down to is this: The top speed limiter was nothing less than the 8,000 rpm blood-line on the rev-counter, and I wasn't going to be the one forced to explain the reasons for a broken engine! Pushrod engines are just not that forgiving. Four top-speed runs over a measured distance timed by an electronic stop-watch returned times of 130, 133, 134, 134 mph. I wore racing leathers, lay prone and enjoyed a flying two-mile approach.

When I weighbridged a BMW CS it resulted in just 1 lb over the factory's claim of 485 lb (an RS was 541 lb). The Krauser weighed 470 lb exactly, which is insufficient to help much at all. As the frame weighs a mere 25.3 lb, the glass-fibre work must make up the rest, and it must also be this that provides a higher top speed through improved penetration. When I sat upright in a stormsuit the top speed was lowered by an average of 7 mph.

Unfortunately I had no means of timing high-speed acceleration but it was unusually good and the machine's ability to achieve extraordinarily high average speeds are not reflected in the s/s quarter-mile sprint times.

All glass fibre-work is manufactured under the machine sprayed chopped fibre and resin mix method. The finish was at least as good as an RS's fairing, but to a much lighter standard, although the fairing was stiff and its mounting rigid





Of course the pipes are blued! BMW stick to their guns and refuse to double skin their pipes to inhibit discoloration. BMW engines do not run hotter than any other, and the blue is not proof of inconsiderate riding. A good many Japanese bike owners imagine that the characteristic mark is some sort of defect, unaware that exactly the same thing happens to their bike except that it takes place out of sight on the inner pipe. This makes them heavy. BMW's oil cooler is retained in the MKM 1000 and the sump is wind-cooled through a slot in its leading lower edge

If there is one thing the MKM 1000 does well, it's corner fast. Nothing grounds, no matter how far you (or I) dare to go down, and lane-switching can be carried out as quickly as thought

There are times when I think some of our American cousins are entirely lacking in perceptive experience. One of them, writing in one of the top three American bike mags, reports: "For all its autobahn-calibrated manners, the Krauser bike adapts to scratching in the corners fairly well. The steering in particular is incredibly precise. The narrow handlebar and high cg prevent you from pitching into corners with abandon but the MKM's steadiness under all circumstances proves to be a great go-fast asset." The same man apparently believes that: "Europeans unfortunately equate a rocky ride with high performance, thinking that the thumps signal a tautly strung bike . . ." A statement inspired by MKM 1000 discomfort. Such stuff is not the work of an expert and must confuse an awful lot of people. Unfortunately it's typical. If there is one thing the MKM 1000 does, it's corner fast. Nothing grounds, no matter how far you (or I) dare go down, and line changing can be carried out in perfect stability as fast as you can think about it. I don't know about "scratching fairly well". I was the limit, never the bike. And the beautifully narrow handlebars are one of the principal causes of that stability at high speed. They not only tuck the rider in nice and neat and low, so he's more at one with the machine, but they inhibit the unavoidable interruption of smooth front-wheel gyroscopic action so vital for good stability in steering that wide handlebars encourage.

Motorway cruising is, of course, entirely within the MKM 1000's range of operation, but quite frankly its real qualities are totally hidden by all that straight-line stuff. And, infuriatingly, the RS-type turbulence above the low 'screen becomes wearying after a few hours straightlining at speed.

As far as I was concerned, comfort of the machine was excellent, apart from a meanly padded little seat. The suspension was certainly firmer than a BMW's or a Japanese machine's would be, but it was by no means too firm and, considering the use for which the MKM 1000 is intended, suspension action was surprisingly resilient. Any more so and it would have lost the essential sharpness that, while unnecessary at much below 90 mph, is vital for riders who, literally, have to feel their way over a road surface of varying quality during high-speed direction changes. Personally, I preferred the rear suspension notched up to its hardest setting, although a lighter rider (I weigh 190 lb) would probably drop down one.

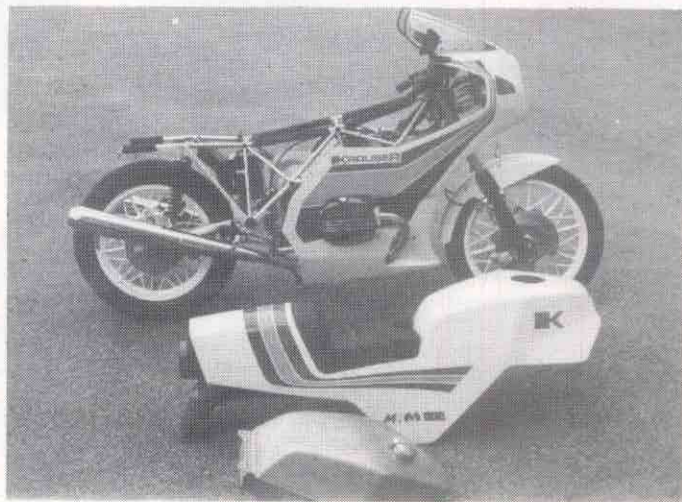
The only slight fault appeared to be due to inbuilt and unavoidable design features, rather than accidents. In the first

place a certain amount of mild front-end yawing occurred during hard braking from high speed on the approach to a bend. As far as I could tell, it was caused by tele-fork leg flexing and, until we rid ourselves of that diabolical suspension style, there is precious little anyone can do about it. A similar feeling came from the back of the bike during high-speed power changes or across a slightly undulating road surface. It was tempered by hard setting the rear units, which suggests that the stiffer spring setting was restricting the guilty suspension movement. This is, perhaps, one of the only slight flaws in the MKM 1000, which would probably benefit from a stiffer pivoted fork of non-BMW type.

These are tiny niggles which on any ordinary motorcycle would pass either unnoticed or as an accepted and unavoidable norm. They made no practical difference to the rare dynamic quality of the MKM 1000.

Obviously, a deal of careful anatomical engineering has gone into the model. This most subtle of sciences is, in fact, the most significant and influential of the motorcycle crafts yet is one least appreciated by the public, and consequently is made subservient to the more glamorous areas of engine and frame designing and

As a matter of interest, the MKM 1000 tested was the 147th manufactured. Each machine is supplied with the normal BMW tool kit, owner's manual, service guide, and first aid kit, plus an additional Krauser service and specification supplement and a complete log of that particular model's manufacturing and test procedure. A check through this revealed that very few people indeed are involved in the building of an MKM 1000, for as each step is completed so the craftsman responsible signs the log. The same applies to the test carried out. Thus, any complaints can be dealt with by reference to the individual responsible



machine styling, all of which should be influenced by their suitability for humankind but which all too rarely are. In consequence motorcyclists are required to perform stoical acts of endurance which are somehow twisted into all part and parcel of motorcycling's peculiar glory, revered by its adherents, but shunned by the bewildered world.

By placing the rider in exactly the right spot for best weight distribution, by shaping him to comply with the requirements of speed and ignoring daffy appeal of showroom comfort, Krauser has achieved what all manufacturers of big bikes should give more thought to, and that's machine and rider compatibility. If I trundled the MKM 1000 around town for more than an hour then, yes, my wrists did begin to ache a little. On the other hand I was noticeably more comfortable at anything over 60 mph than on anything else, by which I do not claim I was surrounded by more luxury, but that my security of tenure seemed better guaranteed. Motorcycle comfort is much more to do with an attitude of mind that can only arise from correct on-board riding conditions than it is with soft springs and squaddy seats. I have no doubt whatsoever that the forward-inclined riding position played a major part in the stability stakes, and that is just the way it should be.

Fortunately Krauser has been single-minded enough to refuse the great bulk of opinion credibility. The MKM is designed for, and fits perfectly, the requirements of the high-speed motorcyclist. It can be adapted to accept the compromises of luggage-carrying equipment which, not unnaturally, is Krauser's very own special design, and by the fitment of a £180 alternative "body" incorporating a pillion seat. These things, though, are the impure results of necessary compromise to appease retailers scared witless of having to say "No" to some rich-looking window-gazer fresh from his over-dressed RS.

Faster motorcycles exist, in theory at least, but the problem with most of them lies in the unsuitability of their chassis as reliable partners to their stupendously powerful engines. Equally fast-cornering special frames exist, but the very fact of their adoption immediately invalidates the power units manufacturer's warranty. Engine power is frequently raised only at the expense of higher sound levels, special components rarely fit as intended, blueprinting is a confoundedly difficult process. Krauser is the

only manufacturer turning out a bona-fide production motorcycle with all the dynamic qualities of the very best specials, plus the security of a professionally finished product with that all too rare characteristic of passing unnoticed. The MKM 1000 turns heads by the dozen when parked or at traffic lights, which is one of those extras a likely owner pays for and expects, of course. But no one notices its passage and that, for me, proved to be one of the machine's greatest attractions.

The point is that the rider of a Krauser MKM 1000 quickly learns, if he doesn't appreciate it from the outset, that he has under him a motorcycle that will, in practice, carry him further, faster, more safely in greater comfort and economy than anything else made. However single-minded Krauser has been in MKM 1000 design and development the bike has held faith with the realities of practicability and, where compromise has been unavoidable, such as in the suspension, it does not detract from the original design intent. Whether or not the machine would perform as ably with a pillion passenger and luggage on board is highly questionable. It was manifestly aimed to please a single rider and in all popularity any other weight distribution would upset the fine balance.

This business of high-speed stability splits wide open BMW's claim of intentionally incorporated frame elasticity. Their theory is that the occasional and unavoidable individual wheel's lateral movement is absorbed by the frame rather than transmitted through it. It's a pat little theory but one that personal experience suggests to me is a load of eyewash. I do not claim that torsional rigidity could not be excessive — simply that, so far, experience with a lot of motorcycles of all types has convinced me that the more securely the wheels are held in alignment, the more stable the motorcycle. BMW's frame is, I think, one of the worst around and is probably responsible for the almost desperate need for the perfect tyre compatibility if serious instability is not to result. Conversation with a retired BMW senior employee taught me that the wide open frame with its spindly bolt-on rear sub frame is largely a response to fleet owner maintenance demands, and this I would agree with, in view of the company's strong fleet sales strategy.

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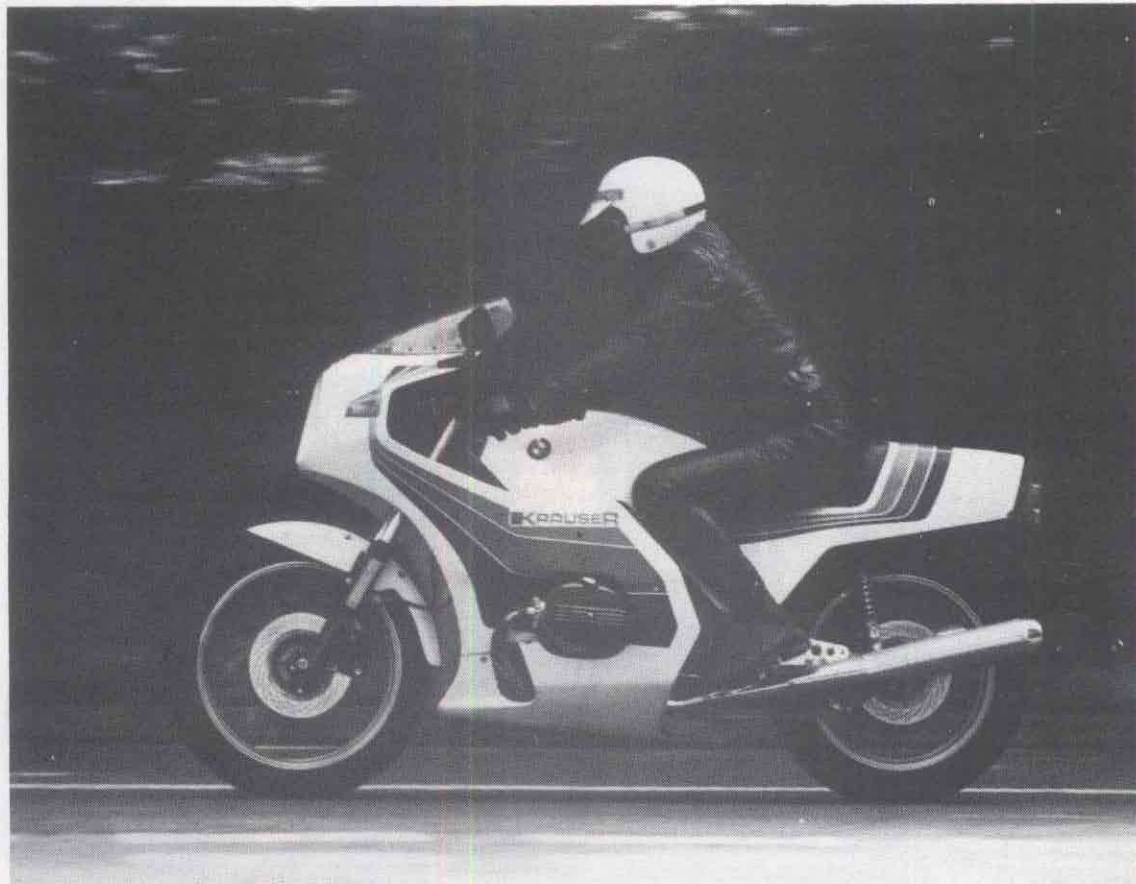


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MCS/2

SOMETHING VERY CLOSE TO TRUTH



BMW-specified, Brembo manufactured, brakes cannot be beaten under any conditions. They are immensely powerful and usefully sensitive, incorporating a patented Brembo, double-action lever pressure that just about equals the old drum brake's feed-back

● **Continued from page 551**

If such an elastic frame is vital for BMWs, then why is the stability of the Krauser superior in every respect, when its wheels are plainly more firmly aligned?

As with all machines equipped with wide, low-profile tyres, the white line tendency was prevalent in the MKM 1000. It was not disturbing after a moment or two and arose mildly only when obvious parallel ridges appeared running in the direction of travel. There seems to be no way around this problem as yet.

As might be imagined, adoption of BMW controls, instruments and switchgear has resulted in a useful little package, although one that tended to over-emphasise the BMW-ishness of the MKM 1000 every mile of every journey. I sympathize with Krauser and am not complaining, but a few detail changes, even new instrument faces, would help stamp the Krauser character all the better. I must confess that I disliked the switchgear, most of which seems to have been designed by piano-playing pigmies. If you can't dip a machine's lights at night with the first "blind" stab of a numb, wet, gauntleted thumb then the switchgear is sub-standard, and there's no more to be said. A friend recently pointed out that I had once described the old BMW/5 switchgear as the best of all and, by golly, I was right — two big butterfly tumblers on each bar, plus a horn and ignition button atop both. If I recollect correctly, that smashing equipment was made by Hella. I wish it was still used now. These modern soppy little plastic bits and bobs annoy me.

The only non-standard BMW controls on the MKM 1000 are Krauser's own foot units. Very nice they are, too. The footrest is turned from duralamin-type quality aluminium, and the plain bushed brake and gear pedal levers swivel around their root. Both are fully adjustable on threaded spindle linkages and all direction change linkages are plastic-lined rose joints with an overlap that wipes dirt from the joint knuckle before it gets inside. Krauser must have its own good reasons for choosing them, but the fabrication of chromium-plated L-section steel pedals rather than aluminium ones is a mystery that cannot be explained away in purely commercial terms and must be a reflection of Krauser's mistrust — possibly from bitter competition experience — of cast aluminium's fragility.

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Simon Hill and Ian Watson, of Krauser UK at Basingstoke, watch as a new delivery of Krauser equipment arrives from Germany. The enormous article appeared to be administered as a family affair by father, mother and teenage son. As soon as he saw the MKM 1000 he ran over, eyes gleaming. "Oh, yeah, yeah. What a very good machine. You are so lucky". Then he looked alarmed. "It is not broken, is it?" I explained that I had it apart to take some photographs. He sighed with relief, and relaxed once again. German engineering was not, after all, in question

Vibration was non-existent, although the twin-cylinder low-speed shudder that so characterizes BMWs was part of the MKM 1000 as well. Possibly it was lighter than I have known before, but as the 1982 range of BMWs is smoother at low revs, anyway, it is difficult to pinpoint the cause. It was all over by 2,750 rpm (48 mph in top gear) so was little more than a tickover characteristic. The mirror images remained clear, apart from the habit of one mirror of falling out of focus.

I must confess to being a fan of BMWs and, like many a motorcycling journalist, if I had to buy, run and maintain my own new machine then it would probably be a Beemer. Because I know the marque well, two faults that invariably encourage adverse comment from less enthusiastic writers concerning the transverse flywheel effect and the gear-change, are barely noticeable any more for me. Try as I might I could detect only the tiniest flywheel effect, and that at low speed. If I did make any unconscious imbalance redress I can only apologize and suggest that nothing so weak requires serious consideration.

As usual, the gear selection between the wide-spaced first and second ratios clunked a little, both up and down the box, but all the others slid in smooth and fast, with or without the clutch. The heavy rear end lift that once affected BMWs in the moment of clutch engagement following a fast gear-change was much lighter, although this, too, is a characteristic shared by all of the light-flywheeled 1982 BMWs.

All of us, I'm sure, are aware of the somewhat aristocratic

personality of most BMWs. Its effect invariably influences my riding style into something a few degrees more elegant than is natural. Not so with the Krauser motorcycle! It, poor thing, was subjected to the sort of stress that few BMWs ever suffer, at least in my hands. What it all boils down to is that I could not help riding the beast very, very hard. The temptation to claim that it needed more power is great, but issues more from personal desire at the time than wisdom. It was the rare chance of using a correctly balanced motorcycle, rather than one in which power exceeds to chassis capability, that prompted the thought, of course. I do not claim that the MKM 1000 could not make the best of a faster engine and would not be even more fun to ride so equipped. What I do say is that Krauser have got their priorities right: chassis performance should always exceed that of the engine.

When the four-valve heads are fitted, the problem of gearing up will arise. When that is achieved perhaps the suspension systems will need improving a little, if only for the extra load thrown on to it by the extra braking loads. At present Mike Krauser refuses to change it, pointing out that while the BMW suspension operation is extremely simple, as compared with units coming out of Japan and America, it does all that any sane road rider could possibly demand of it. I agree wholeheartedly.

"Is it worth it?" everyone asked me.

I can only reply: "Of course it is, if you can afford it".

Someone else wanted to know, for their own sake, whether it was better than a Hesketh. A difficult question, wrought by emotion, but the two machines are similar in many respects. I will say just this: if I were German I would have no hesitation in coming down hard in favour of the MKM 1000 at almost every point. As I am British, however, I am torn between an emotional response and an objective one.

Just ask yourself which one of the pair is closer to the fundamental truths of good motorcycling. If simplicity succeeds then embellishment can only be wasteful.

D.L.M.