

1976

BMW R75/6

The open road favorite likes the city life, too

Denis Rouse

There's something downright depressing about riding a BMW.

You get the distinct feeling that there's nowhere to go from here but down.

A lot of BMW riders feel they own what is absolutely the best motorcycle in the world. After my first extended ride on a new BMW R75/6, I can honestly say I would be hard put to argue. There has been a feeling around for years that the Bavarian product has been the best *tourer* you can buy, but the touring qualification is not required anymore: the machine is at once such a pleasure to ride in all conditions that any inference it is a special or limited-purpose motorcycle is absurd.

There is, of course, a reason the BMW earned its initial reputation as the tourers' favorite. It has always been a clean, reliable, shaft-driven, meticulously assembled motorcycle that you feel wouldn't break down if you ran it out of oil. You could take extended trips with the peace of mind that your machine was tenacious as your heart was adventurous. Let all those other guys take their oily rags, extra parts and mechanic's tools along. All the BeeEm rider ever needed was a little time off work and very few bucks for the gasoline.

But what bothered some riders about the older BMW's was the generally agreed-upon fact that they weren't exactly barnstorming performers. Sure they were wonderfully built, exceptionally finished and ran quietly forever, but they were heavy and accelerated like cows. Guys got off their Triumph Bonneville's and Nortons and Honda Super Hawks and Harleys and said har de har, they're great for those stodgy old touring cats but who wants to die of boredom.

No more, my man, no more. I haven't ridden the R60/6, but trust that the new R75/6, and both R90s, reported on in these pages before (see *Rider, Summer '74 and Fall '75*), set your heart afire with the kind of performance that matches their overall quality. And that, believe me, is saying plenty.

Riding two-up with my gal on our recent trip to San Francisco, on an immacu-

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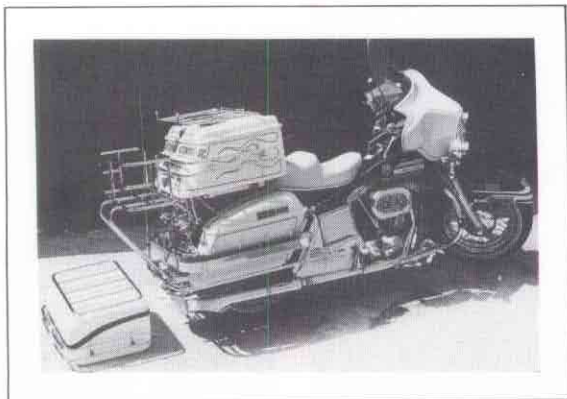


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This is the way Fun is going to be....

BMW TEST from page 36

late new monza blue R75/6 equipped with a perfectly color-matched Spirit of America frame fairing and Krauser saddlebags, luggage rack and safety bars (all official Butler & Smith stuff for BMW), we marveled practically every mile about the way Herr Daimler's invention does its thing. Above all, it is a motorcycle that is so well designed and conceived, suddenly you begin to realize that annoyances you just used to accept as part of riding simply aren't there anymore. This realization is comprised of subtle discoveries, but one gets the message rapidly.

First, noise. Forget it. The R75/6 kind of whooshes along and you can damn near converse quietly with your passenger. Second, vibration. It's over. You can look in the rear view mirrors at 70 mph and actually see a highway patrolman's haircut a quarter-mile behind. Let me say while on this unfortunate subject that we did get a speeding ticket just south of the little farm town of Greenville. Part of the reason must be attributed to over-anxiousness for a dynamite lunch of superb Mexican food, but most of the blame lies in the fact that you swear there's speedometer error in the BMW. No way you can be going that fast so smoothly and noiselessly. Forty bucks "bail" says you are.

In the hills south of San Jose, the 463-pound touring bike — the same one that feels locomotive steady through the long, shimmering straights of the Salinas River Valley — suddenly becomes an agile, nimble cornering animal. Bob is making like Kenny Roberts ahead of me on the lightweight Kawasaki 500, and I'm following him easily and I can see he's shaking his head a little.

That's another part of the BMW magic. It boasts a frame and suspension that make it so comfortable it's renowned as the world's premier touring bike, yet that same frame and suspension have the



meat and the stuff to afford control in the turns that inspires total confidence. It's a marriage of abilities that has been achieved very few times in the history of the motor vehicle, but it is significant to note that the BMW *automobile* is reputed to have it, too.

Maybe a guy with an expensive car doesn't give two hoots about gas mileage, but it's of utmost importance to any rider, if only because good touring range enhances the freedom of biking, and gas stops become an inconvenience to be reckoned with if they come too close together. Throughout our trip, I was often shocked to look over at Bill or Bob

wise it was instant-start city every time.

In the tight, hilly, close, colorful, often traffic-choked confines of the city by the bay, another quality of the amazing BMW comes to light. Suddenly, a big touring motorcycle becomes a lightweight, maneuverable, easy-to-handle commuter machine. The brakes (disc in front) stop right now, the light, lean weight makes walking into curb parking in a narrow spot a cinch, the bike literally pops up (well, almost) on its center stand, and I can hardly believe that it feels as responsive and effortless to handle at snail-pace speeds. I'm riding at 2 miles per hour through the sensory wonders of Chinatown, all the auto maniacs are streaming and blowing, and there I am digging on the strange people, the ancient buildings, the kaleidoscope of color and motion and the incredible, moist, refrigerated sea air that blows in, courtesy of the Pacific Ocean. San Francisco is a captivating place, and you discover its heady 360-degree charm instantly from the seat of a motorcycle.

After a shower and clean clothes, there are some motorcycles that wouldn't look inviting for use on a night on the town. Can you see rubbing a clean pair of slacks on a greasy engine case or having a freshly lubed chain do a stripy number on your wife's evening coat? Presto, the BMW becomes yet even another vehicle: a shining classy two-wheel limo that's ideal for an out-to-dinner, nightlife escapade. Its pristine, flawless finish and the oil-tight integrity of its horizontally opposed engine are legendary and absolutely gospel. And, of course, the shaft drive is an outright luxury. You also discover that the fairing is a practical touch when you're trying to keep your clothes presentable, and the lockable, easily removable Krauser "suitcase" saddlebags are the last word in convenience.

Details, details, details. One could seemingly go on forever about the desirability of riding a BMW. A quartz halogen light that turns night into day, ultra-accessible switches and controls, finger adjustable rear shocks, the best tool kit in the industry, the best owner's manual I've ever seen on any product — and on and on. Even at \$3095, the R75/6 is worth every copper penny.

When one becomes lucky enough to be seriously considering the purchase of a BMW, up rears the inevitable question of which model? The R75/6 is a compelling choice for many. It costs approximately \$900 less than the R90S and about \$300 less than the R90/6. Its slightly smaller bore and the fact it develops its maximum torque at 500 rpm less than the R90s gives it a slight edge in smoothness, according to many BMW enthusiasts.

But one thing's for sure. If you buy a BMW, don't bother looking up. Nothing else is there. □

HONDA TEST from page 39

the dominant use of the machine is touring, there really isn't any contest. The GL-1000 wins without a struggle.

The 750F is a quiet bike and vibration does not become even noticeable until 5000 rpm (about 75 mph). Even then, it's not distracting. What little vibration there is can be felt in the handlebars and minimally in the seat . . . almost negligible at the pegs.

Speaking of bars, we thought they could have been shaped a bit differently. The rearward angle was not quite sufficient to be comfortable and the arm spread was a bit too wide. Most bars on bikes aimed solely at the sport-riding market are somewhat shorter. The Honda grips are serrated deeply and are uncomfortable to the hands if the rider is not wearing gloves.

Another complaint is that the center stand is practically useless. The leverage is wrong and/or it lifts the bike too high, which makes it a two-man job to get the machine up on the stand.

Aside from those complaints, the 750F does the job Honda assigned to it . . . and more, if the touring role indeed was intended to be de-emphasized. The bike does a good job straight-up over long distances with good stability on most

SPECIFICATIONS BMW R75/6

ENGINE

Displacement745cc
Type.....Horizontally opposed,
2-cylinder, 4-cycle
HP.....50 @ 6200 rpm
Torque.....43 lb.-ft. @ 5000 rpm
Bore & Stroke.....82mm x 70.6mm
Compression Ratio.....9 to 1
RPM Redline.....7200
Carburetion.....2 Bing

CHASSIS

Transmission Ratios.....4.4, 2.86, 2.07,
1.67, 1.50 to 1; plus final
drive 1 to 3.2

Starting.....Electric
Fuel Capacity.....4.8 gal, opt. 5.8 gal.
Average Fuel Consumption
@ 60 mph.....50 m.p.g.
Suspension.....Front telescoping fork,
rear swing arm
Brakes.....Disc front, drum rear

DIMENSIONS

Overall Length.....85.8"
Overall Width.....29.1"
Seat Height.....31.9"
Wheelbase.....57.7"
Weight (dry).....463 lbs.
List Price.....\$3095

and they'd be pointing at their gas tanks with the concerned expression of a man riding on reserve — and there I am on my R75/6 with a hundred miles left in the tank. My machine got an honest, outstanding 50 miles per gallon; with stock capacity of 4.8 gallons, that's a long time between gas pumps. I checked the oil a couple times, and only toward the end of our near 1000-mile trip did the top of the oil begin to stray slightly below the full mark on the dipstick.

To give you an idea about how easy a BMW starts, consider that a kick starter is an optional accessory "for use in extremely cold weather or very rarely." I would say that with BeeEm's electrics — a whopping 280-watt alternator, 25-amp/hour battery connected to a starter motor that boasts better than a half horsepower — the word "rarely" might deserve some extreme emphasis. On one cold, damp morning, the engine needed a little coaxing from the choke, but other-

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