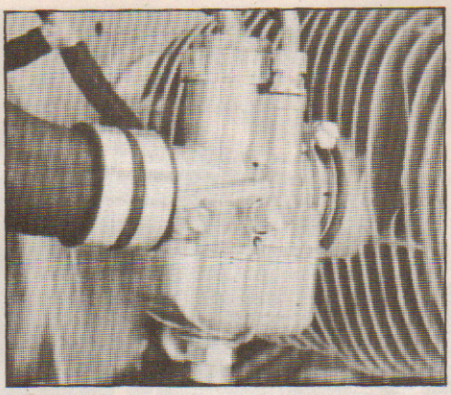
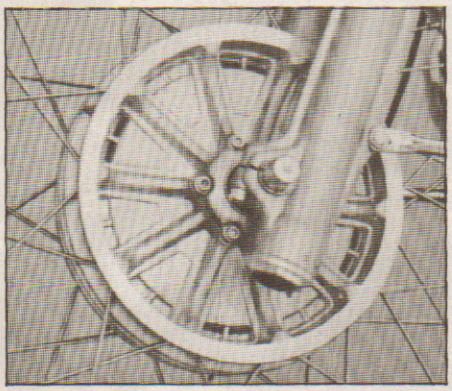
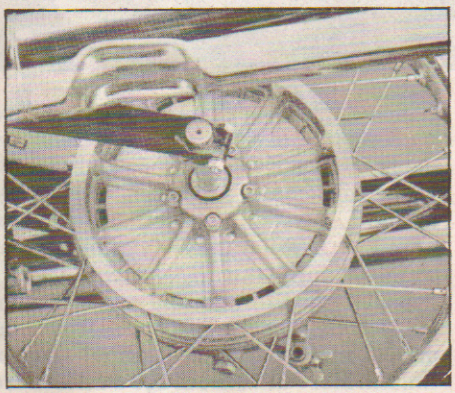
'Astounding performance for a 750....'



BY DAVE MINTON







I CANNOT but help think that BMW's policy of concentrating promotional and marketing efforts around the "non-motorcyclist" has cost them dearly. For however admirable the principles behind the scheme, and however beneficial to motorcycling in general the rewards of spreading the good word might have been, I have a gnawing suspicion — entirely without factual identity incidentally — that a good many motorcyclists have turned away from the prestigous twins because of the overpowering charisma of opulence and luxury surrounding their contrived image.

That they are better built than the majority of their competitors is not in doubt. A quick check through the sound of the running engine, control operation, casting quality, enamel and chrome finishes, is pretty conclusive evidence of BMW's high aims at real quality. You only have to sit on one to realise that the bike range is one of the few ergonomically designed available, and for me that counts for more than all the cylinders and bulging pipes in the world.

In other words, BMW, definitely subscribe to most enthusiasts' ideals of the most practical form of motorcycle owning there could be. Time was when their price put them away out of reach of most riders, but now, at £1,400 for the R60/6, the subject of this appraisal, any number of alternative big bikes, all selling like hot cakes, exceed it by tens of pounds a go.

Instead of getting into the newest lump of chrome around we thought it might prove interesting to size up a well established part of the scene in a new light. Because of the rich young exec's fun machine image BMW have quite deliberately chosen for themselves, we wondered how the smallest BM would stand up to scrutiny as a bike buff's sporting/utility all rounder. The answer is short and simple — very well indeed. It's an extremely practical motorcycle.

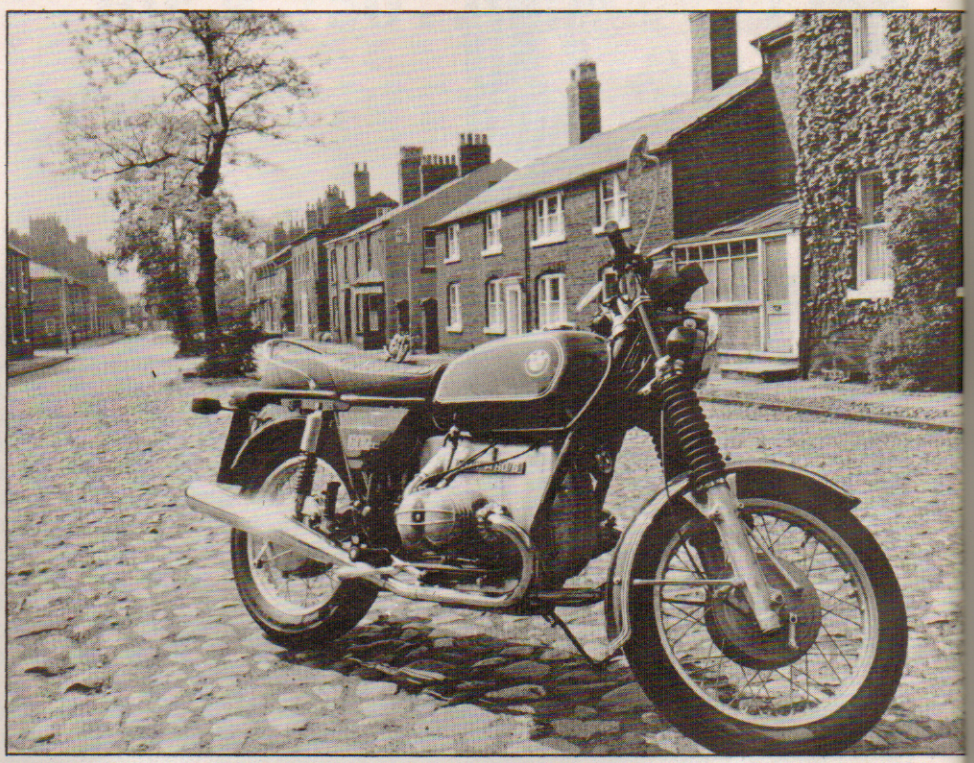
Obviously, for less money any number of alternative 750s abound, but as owners of these bikes will know to their cost, that unless they have shaft drive, in which case their price is very high, or full rear chain enclosure — very, very rare indeed, if they are driven at the speeds for which the machine was intended and the price of a new chain every 3,000 miles or so (around £10 a go) works out very expensive. At that rate, if you cover only 10,000 miles annually, you are faced with a £33 bill come birthday time again. And by the time you've bought the spare links and chain repair kit and a spot of special lubricant you could reckon on £40. Spread that over three years with the addition of a new set of sprockets plus numerous other transmission requirements connected to chain maintenance and you'll be lucky to get off with a total of £140.

I cover between 30,000 and 40,000 miles each year, and have done for the past 15 years. Keeping to my calculations would result in a cost of 1,750 pounds on chain alone! It matters little how you look at it or how many machines are involved, one or a dozen, it comes out exactly the same each time. Shaft drive has distinct advantages considered along those lines.

Anyway, 750 or 600, it's unlikely that many riders are going to need more speed than the R60 puts out.

One of the disadvantages of riding little but press machines is the difficulty in obtaining fully run-in motorcycles, consequently the kind of performance that long term private owners can anticipate from their own bike often escapes the press. Also because of the familiarity of handling a lot of exotica we, and I speak I am sure for my fellow testers as well, have to make a concious effort not to fall into the trap of becoming blase about anything not absolutely staggering. Put those two together and maybe you will accept the truth of my careless reception of the R60. "A 600", I thought. "So what's in a 600 these days?"

Firstly I saw by the big mileage knocked up on the R60 that it was a well used one. Slack it was with that clickety whirring common to all well-used push-rod engines. Not noisy mind, but loose jointed and so obviously familiar with speed, as the blue and brown sections of exhaust pipe close to the barrels showed. As a matter of interest I was ticked off



by a young Honda owner for "riding the poor thing too hard" as he noticed the discolouration. It's a falacy, and one that is unfortunately gaining ground because of Honda. All air cooled engines will discolour their pipes if ridden as the makers intended them to be. The only ones that will not are Hondas because Honda avoid the tell tale mark by using two pipes, one within the other. The inner one takes the brunt of the flame's heat and leaves the outer one sparkling clean.

The well worn in engine was new to me. Never previously have I had the chance to wrap a fist around anything but new BMWs, but this one responded to the throttle with an eagerness that surprised me, running over the top rev limits so easily I had to watch the rev counter carefully, and within an hour of collecting the machine I had forgotten all my good resolves about sensible riding to obtain maximum economy, and forgot too my disdain of "little" engines.

The smoothness of the engine exceeded that of its bigger brothers considerably. Whereas the R75, for instance, collywobbles to around 2,500/3,000 rpm very positively, this one's movement was lighter, fading out sooner, which suggested a more flexible machine. BMW's generally overemphasised lateral rock, caused by the secondary rocking effect of the otherwise naturally well balanced opposed piston layout, hints often at inflexibility. I found the engine rock gentle enough to overlook at any but imprudently wide throttle openings at irrationally low revs. Used intelligently, the engine provided ample torque in top gear from around 1,800rpm (28mph) to return a relaxing ride. Lower engine speeds, right down to 1,200 revs (19mph) in top still provided a useful performance but the discipline involved required more concentration than the use of a lower gear ratio.

A side effect of wafting along on such dimunitive throttle opening in top gear was to frighten careless pedestrians out of their wits who quite apparently assumed the lack of noise meant a lack of approaching vehicle. Four wheelers are accompanied by so much more noise from the broad and loaded tyres involved, so the silent bike did little to improve mototrcyclist/pedestrian relationships as those involved generally deplored the silence as dangerous!

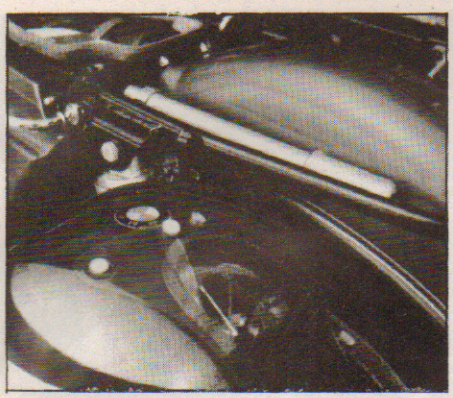
I generally changed up through the gears at around 3,000rpm if I was not hurrying, and through city traffic kept pretty much to this in the intermediates simply to make the best use of the bike's super traffic agility. At this engine speed, acceleration was snappy enough to keep ahead of developing "situations" long before they arose. Road speeds of 17, 24, 34, 42, and 47mph resulted, and off the motorways and dual carriageways; providing I was willing to hold speed down to the legal limit and so provide every other roaduser with an unnecessary hazard as he overtook, the fuel consumption of the R60 dropped to an incredible 90mpg. Useful, commendable even, one might say, predictable with a correctly engineered four stroke of this type, but what a crashing bore!

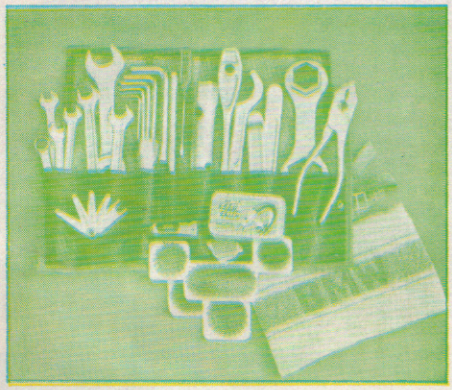
More real speeds, incorporating the illegal, but normal traffic pace, along dual carriageways and motorway going provided a much more realistic petrol consumption. Using what I term progressive acceleration — being the type whereby the twistgrip is never allowed to advance beyond engine speed requirements any more than is absolutely necessary for brisk, but not hard acceleration — up to 5,000 revs, including cruising speeds at that in top gear (close on 80mph) provided a highly commendable 66mpg. Even harder riding never really caused any great concern of fuel use, the worst I achieved being a supremely exhilerating 49mpg cross country run, during which time I changed up through the gears on instinct rather than any instrumental orders. 6,500rpm seemed about the optimum. More did encourage a mite more power but I prefered not to abuse what was an altogether smashing engine.

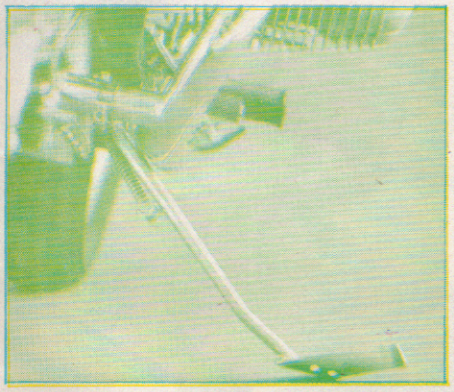
As is BMW's mormal style, acceleration was considerably quicker than the information radiated by the bike due principally to the rock sure method of delivering it.

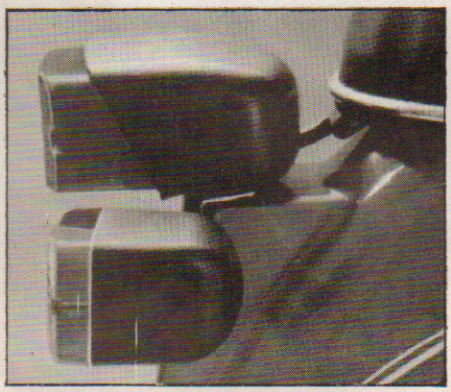
Far and away beyond mere acceleration ability was the R60's appetite for high average speeds. Why some motorcycles have it and some don't is one of those personality traits that provides lie swapping bikers with as much meat as Hailwood ever did. But whatever, the "little" Bee Emm had it right down the line.

As much as anything else I feel sure that the riding position had much to do with it, coupled with the sheer simplicity of riding fast. A lack of diturbing vibration, a wide power spread so reducing gear changing to a minimum, light clutch, supremely comfortable suspension, and vastly improved stability — about which we discuss shortly.









The point is that the makers suggest 6,400rpm to be the optimum engine speed, at which period in top gear the bike is loping along at 100mph. The rev counter and speedometer more-or-less confirmed this, but whatever cruising speed I required, right up to top speed suited the 600 exactly. By this I do not mean that like, for instance, a Trident, or an H2 Kawasaki, or an MV Agusta four, it will hold its top speed for a long time and therefore prove ultimately faster than the 600 BMW. Faster those three might be, as examples of many others like them, but the genuine top speed cruisers are rare birds. Bikes that will pound along tirelessly at full chat for a whole day and finish fly spattered, blue piped, and idling gently without a ping or a tick to the heat warped engine as you switch off.

I was impressed. For a 600cc engine this non-sportster, usually regarded as more of a "lesser" '75 or '90 than a bike in its own right, was undoubtedly faster over a big mileage than a good many of the "faster" and more powerful 750s around. Yet it managed it without losing a fraction of comfort, tractability, silence and sheer undemanding riding simplicity.

This in turn leads into the stability factor. R75/5s have given me grey hairs on occasions because of their unpredictable habits at speed. R75/6s are much better, but something has puzzled me about them. Why did the R90/S I rode behave so much better than the R90/6, although I actually preferred the /6 model, stability apart?

Both had the long wheelbase and were apparently identical, yet one was positively a better machine than the other. If you read through the last BMW test we carried (see MCI January 1975) you will see some of my comments regarding its high speed instability. It's a fact that BMW have been carrying out some intensive research and development into high speed stability, hence the various steering geometry changes, and wheelbase lengthening exercises. The latest improvement has been to strengthen the spine of the machine by force-fitting an internal tube along the inside length of the present one. Large diameter wheel spindles are also part of the scheme to improve rigidity further still. I have no doubt that the lighter turning mass of the 600 engine, compared to the 900cc one, assisted the lessening of frame stress, but for all that the improvement I felt in the R60 proved conclusively that BMW are making very real improvements to their machines' safety at speed. The way I was able to fling that bike around in complete safety was nobody's business but mine. The only interruption of bend-swinging rhythm and flow was when negative power was under way — neither roll on nor off but just enough to see the bend through safely — you know the situation I'm sure. Then with everything heeled well over, something, such as a feathering of throttle of brake or a dip in the tarmac would set the back end alone yip-yip-yipping. Not much and it never deteriorated and was always disciplined by the rest of the bike, but I still feel that until those unbraced pivoted fork bearing points are properly braced things will never improve. That silly bolted on sub-frame does nothing at all.

That it was good was echoed by a bike dealer, who, innocent of my visit, commented about the "state of the bleedin' sidewalls on that flamin' BM's tires!" It might have looked crazy, Bruce, but it was *that* good. Believe me. As far as cylinder head scraping is concerned, forget it. I've said it before and I'll say it again because riders who should know better insist that clanging down the rocker boxes is all part of the fun, but it simply aint on. Once or twice at low speeds I have touched gently during a gentle direction flick change, but at speed I always find that because of suspension crushing, my feet and the footrests touch down first. Start putting the bike down far enough to touch the engine and trouble will be your way in less time than it takes to say it.

One of my greatest delights was to get back to a good drum brake. The experience was so good it hurt. Ah! The sweet bliss of a gentle anchor, biting deep but so delicately and with such feeling, into speed. No dead hydraulic pressure, void »

of sensitivity and helplessly impotent at the first douche of water or road dirt. a fine old fashioned, weatherproof drum brake with a balanced shoe control. Not as powerful as twin discs; maybe not as powerful ultimately as one disc, but so very, very predictable and trustworthy. Think you, of the last time you actually *needed* the immense power of your massive discs during an emergency halt. For me at least the possibility is as frightening as the result of such a happening. I doubt I could control a bike with crushed and bending front suspension under the terrific strain of braking like that. And could I actually feel the point just below wheel-locking in such a panic grab? i think not. I prefer to stake my life on brakes such as these. This one did all I wanted of it, plus a little extra in reserve. That's enough for me.

I liked the finish of the black R60. Thick, durable glossy paintwork, smooth, liquid finished chromework, with not a buffing graze in sight wherever used, and that sparingly. Top grade cast aluminium clean of laquer and varnish so you know how good it is. And — laugh if you like but think before you do — strong, well made plastic components. I'm a strong supporter of plastic on bikes because the material neither weathers, oxydises, rusts, peels or accepts permanent shallow blemishes. What's more it's less expensive that its metal counterpart would be, and probably no less strong either.

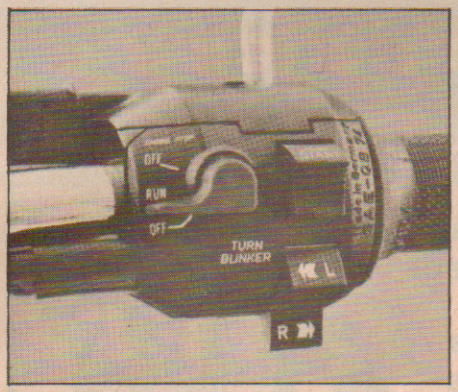
Yeah, I know the front mudguard costs over fifty quid, but that's just the single silly price that everyone ridicules. Would you really not buy a BM because of that? I'm pretty sure I could find a way round it if the problem was mine. It isn't, but I wish it was.

As stated previously, the switchgear was unbelievably thoughtlessly designed compared to last year's traditional perfection. The headlamp was just about all any rider could wish for, being a big and powerful quartz halogen powered broad white beam of such power you could see erring car drivers cower under its gaze.

To return to the openeing theme. is it a bike for the active, dedicated bike buff









who needs transport, who loves good riding but who has for all that a budget to live by? I think so, especially for the guy, or girl, who buys for keeps. Over a period of five years plus I can think of nothing more practical.

Smooth, economical, reliable and durable. What more could you want?

After a run back home along one of my favourite roads through the empty countryside of Worcester and Herefordshire I caught up with and passed a guy on a 750 Honda. He latched on behind and we unravelled the deep evening miles together on our murmuring bikes. I noticed in the BM's twin mirrors that he dropped back on the twisty bits, catching up slightly on the straight runs, but not enough for us to arrive simultaneously at the next town on. I pulled into a garage to tank up for the next day's riding and he followed.

That's when he came out with his congratulatory "My word that was good. Astounding performance, your 750." I broke the news about my "750" as gently as I could to him. I saw the gleam in his eye change to a glint as the message sunk home. «

SPECIFICATION BMW R60s6

ENGINE

Type: Horizontally opposed air cooled twin. All alloy with iron barrels. Car type construction with all plain bearings.
Valve operation: Pushrod from single camshaft beneath crankshaft.
Capacity: 599cc.
Bore and stroke: 73.5 x 70.6 mm.
Compression: 9.2:1.
Carburation: 2 x 26 mm mechanically operated Bing instruments breathing through paper filter.
Electrics: 12v 25 a/h battery charged by front crankshaft mounted 280w alternator. Coil and contact breaker ignition.
Claimed power: 40 bhp (DIN) at 6,400 rpm. 35.4 ft/lbs torque at 5,000 rpm.

TRANSMISSION

Clutch: Dry single plate diaphragm spring type.
Gear ratios: 1st 14.78:1; 9.60; 6.95; 5.61; top 5.04:1. Selection by left side one down and four up foot lever.
Final drive; Shaft via tunnel in right side pivoted fork leg and incorporating rubber vane shock absorber on gearbox end.

FRAME:

All welded steel tube full loop duplex cradle. Single large diameter spine tube reinforced along centre with second tube. Bolted on rear sub frame. Taper roller steering head and pivoted fork bearings.

SUSPENSION

Front: BMW telefork with two way damping and 7.87 in travel.
Rear: Pivoted fork with two way damped, load adjustable units and 4.9 in travel.

WHEELS

Front: 3.25 in Metzeler high speed ribbed tyre on WM3 alloy roadster rim. 7.87 in (200 mm) 21s drum brake with self centring shoe operation.
Rear: 4.00 in Metzeler studded high speed tyre on WM3 alloy roadster rim. 7.87 in sls drum brake.

INSTRUMENTATION

Matching illuminated speedometer and rev counter. Warning lights include oil pressure, charging circuit, turn signal, neutral, brake servicing, and main beam.

EQUIPMENT

Centre and prop stands. 3.96 gallon steel fuel tank including .5 gallon reserve. 4.84 gallon tank optional. 7 in 60w quartz halogen headlamp. Twin helmet locks under lockable hinged dual seat also containing tool kit and document compartment. Three position hydraulic steering damper. Passenger grab rail. Twin mirrors.

DIMENSIONS

Ground clearance: 6.25 in.
Wheelbase: 57.7 in.
Seat height: 31.9 in.
Kerb weight (as tested) 461 lbs.

PERFORMANCE DATA

Fuel consumption: Mild 50/70 mph cruising, 69.5 mpg. Fast riding, 50 mpg. Average around town 68 mpg.
Fuel quality required: 4 star used throughout test period.
Oil consumption: 1444 mpp.
Highest speed attained: 102 mph with 217 lb rider wearing touring leathers. Best practical upright speed, 93 mph.
Gear speeds: at 6,500rpm — 28:50:71:88:99mph
Speedometer accuracy: Accurate at 30 mph. 1 mph fast at 60 mph. 3 mph fast at 90 mph.

Warranty period: 6 months or 6000 miles.

PRICES

Retail price new machine:	£1,399
Piston and ring set	5.51
Valve spring set	96
Clutch fibre plate	10.87
Speedometer head	28.03
Contact breaker points	2.77
Fork staunchion	30.73
Exhaust pipe	20.14
Silencer	29.81
Throttle cable	1.47
Light unit	9.32
Fuel tank	76.90
Brake linings	4.35
Cylinder head gasket	47
Handlebar lever	4.15