

R90S

John Robinson samples the loneliness of the long-distance commuter

At the top of BMW's line the R90S is the most powerful, most luxurious and most expensive model. The only annoying thing about the 90 is that BMW could have made it several years ago. As to the cost, a garage man summed that up while he was filling the tank with about four pounds worth of petrol.

"Isn't that the £1900 one? And these are the ones you mustn't fall off, aren't they? God's teeth, £1900 for a motor bike."

And he was near enough right, at least for a few more pounds you could buy the cheapest BMW car, not that anybody's ever accused them of being cheap and nasty. I still can't figure out why a two-wheeler should cost as much as a fairly luxurious car; even using a lot of pressed steel, bigger quantities and more mass production all round. Henry Ford did it around 1920 and promptly shut down four-fifths of the American motorcycle industry. Would BMW do that to themselves?

Probably not. You only buy a motorcycle like the R90 precisely because you do not want a car. So do they make a vast profit? Are the import tariffs that high? What do you get for your money? What exactly that no-one else supplies? About the only items that aren't to be found elsewhere are a clock, a volt-meter, disc brakes with holes



in them and a prop-stand that shuts itself.

You also get the more intangible qualities which would need to be measured in units of personal effort per mile per year, if that were possible. And the reliability, longevity plus a high trade-in price make it a sort of investment which is just the point BMW use to sell their machines to police forces. After 50,000 miles, after 100,000 miles, you've still got a BMW.

In the last two or three years BMW have changed all of the points which we, and

other magazines, had criticised and there isn't a lot left to complain about. They've got their flat twin to the point where any significant improvement would be accompanied by equally significant disadvantages, if only in terms of cost. The engine doesn't need any more power, you hardly ever have to use all the power available as it is and any extra would cost more in fuel consumption and probably in reliability too. The handling, considering the level of comfort, is better than you get anywhere else. I know that BM's some-

times suffer instability, particularly when they are carrying a tail load, and this is something which should have been sorted out a long time ago. But to make a machine which is measurably better all-round, BMW will have to make a completely new motorcycle. There would be a lot to be said for a machine which provides good weather protection, for example, and I suspect that there's more to this than just slapping a fairing on an existing motorcycle. And nobody could claim that an engine which only produces 30 per cent of the potential power is anywhere near perfect.

Even so, 45-50 mpg with 90 mph cruising and bursts over 100 mph is as good as you can get anywhere else. Lots of bikes will go equally rapidly but none so easily and comfortably that you can ride for several hours and still look forward to the next stint. Actually there's not much point in running a BMW unless you can get this much out of it. It's a waste of everything to merely travel ten miles to work every day; like having a mansion and only living in the east wing.

The performance of the R90S is being able to run down to under 1000 rpm in all the gears; is being able to reach 100 mph in a quarter of a mile and being able to stop in less than half that distance; is cruising at seventy and still averaging sixty; and

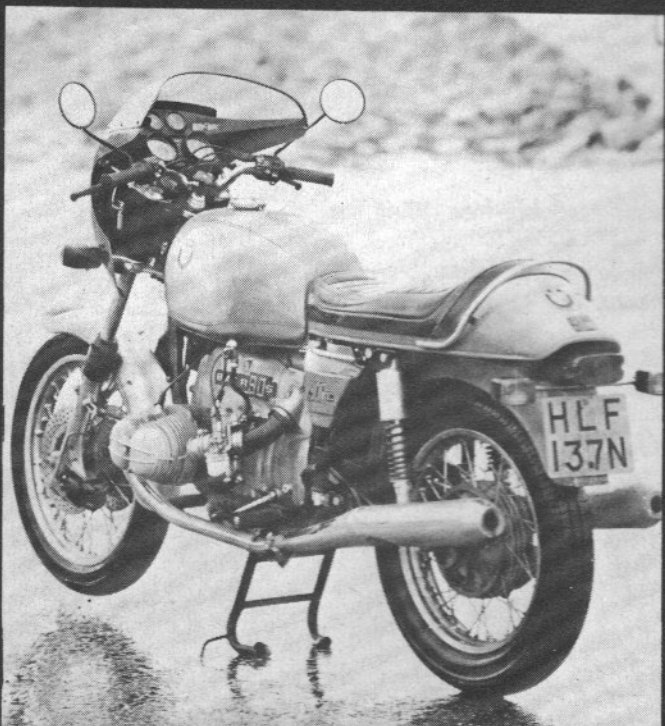
it is travelling over 200 miles before stopping for petrol.

There are bad points too. A gearbox which clunks when you change gear below about 3000 rpm; a remarkably smooth ride which still suffers from blurred images in the mirrors; and having to take the tank off to check the brake fluid level.

The R90S has different carburettors to the 90/6, they still cause vibration when they get slightly out of synch but these types seem to allow a little more power at the top end and to let the engine rev a little more freely. When I picked the demonstrator up it had only a couple of hundred miles on the clock and I kept the revs down to 4500 in the gears and about 6000 in top. As this corresponds to a road speed of 70 mph this arrangement was pretty satisfactory anyway. The gear selector was not bedded in and showing signs of stiffness, making clunkless gearchanges almost impossible. After the BM had its 600 mile service I gradually used a little more throttle and started to let the motor spin up to 5000, which helped the gearchange quite a lot — or perhaps it doesn't make any difference to the selector, it could be that it's easier to judge the drop in revs and to synchronise the change at higher engine speeds.

As the motor worked its way up past the 1000-mile mark it became noticeably easier. Rolling the throttle about half open when accelerating would cause it to spin up to about 6000, when earlier it had flattened off at 5000. The gear shift became smoother too, eventually producing clunks only when changing gear at ridiculously low engine speeds. At this point it was easier to change gear without using the clutch as this way the cogs would mesh quickly and silently going up or down through the box.

The clutch itself was smooth and took up the drive perfectly, with the old BMW habit of raising the rear suspension if the clutch was fed in quickly. It did have a lot of travel between starting to take up the drive and being fully home, which proved disconcerting when we tried some standing quarter runs.

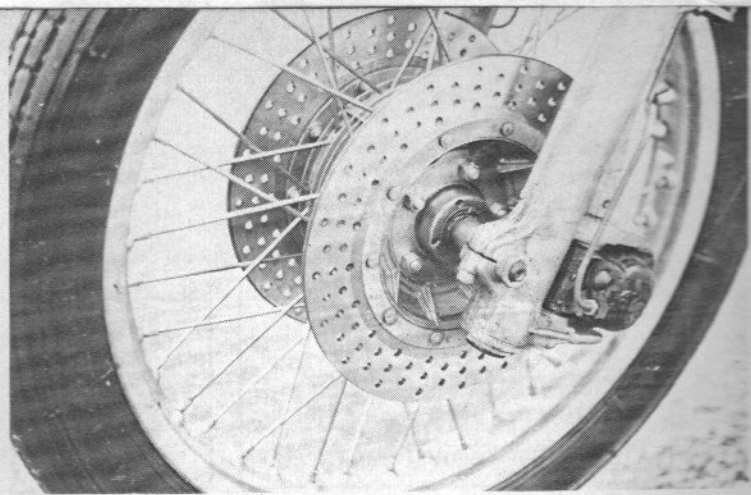
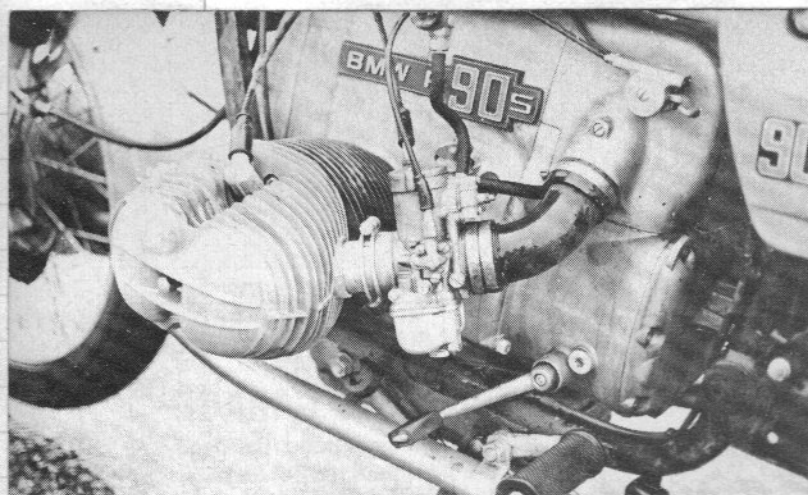


Feeding the clutch in quickly gave good results but once it had started to bite it was tempting to assume it was home and drop it the rest of the way, which produced a most un-BMW-like wheelie. From our results it looks as if getting off the line was the most difficult part. The R90 ran consistently just over the 13 second mark with a relatively high terminal of nearly 100 mph — there was obviously enough go at the quick end of the strip and any improvements would have to be made on the start line.

While the riding position is superb, holding high speeds for any length of time restricts the machine to something in the 90s. I had thought that the little flyscreen would take more of the wind off the rider, which it seems to up to 70 or 80 mph, but above 90 mph you have to start hanging on. In fact after a few minutes at close to 100 mph, slowing down to 70 seems ridiculously slow, the riding position balances the wind pressure, the motor hardly seems to be working and there appears to be no noise at all.

The rocking light switch controls are very positive and easy to use, although if they were twisted round to be slightly more underneath the handlebar you would hardly have to move your thumb at all. The lights are good, but for motorway type use the dip beam cuts off too sharply not lighting enough road to be able to stop in from more than 55 to 60 mph. The clock proved to be a fascinating addition, especially on motorways where you can relieve the boredom by watching the signposts and working out when you should arrive at the next place. Listen closely and you'll probably hear passing BMW riders muttering "ten past nine, that must be Biggleswade" or words to that effect!

I spent most of the time on the BMW commuting from deepest Surrey up to the new MCM offices in the wastes of Peterborough, a journey which is at best boring, at worst painfully so. In fact the glorious month of February managed to produce freezing rain for every trip except the last and as the



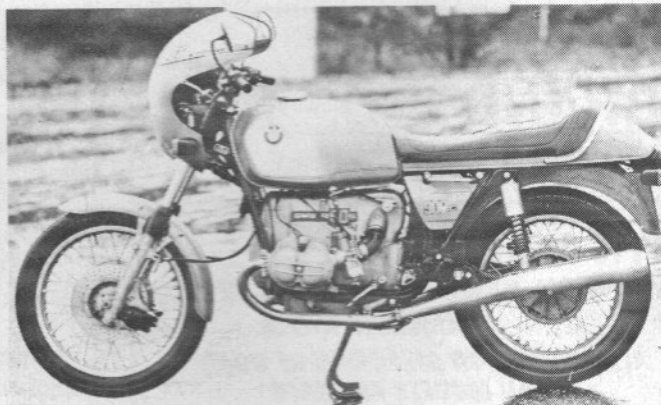
The classic lines of the R90S engine. Basic design goes back 50 years but its smoothness is still hard to better.

BM had to be returned I left early in the afternoon and actually spent two hours riding in a dilute sort of sunshine.

It was all very pleasant. I eased the R90 away from the offices, past a couple of cars who were trying to form a traffic jam and within a few minutes was rolling out on to the A1. All was peaceful, the only thing to watch was the odd east midlands driver — they all insist on getting into the right lane a good four miles before making a turn, unlike the more familiar metropolitan who never dreams of turning right unless he is in the left lane and vice versa.

But the BM can cope with a lot heavier traffic than that. Let it slip past a couple of cars, tuck in behind a truck, watch the road straighten out round the next curve and away, not even bothering to change down. Up to the Norman Cross roundabout, nothing coming, down two gears and heel over to the left in one long curve, the suspension mocking the cambered turns which go left, right and left again through the roundabout. Up to five and a half in the gears, past some lorries and the odd car . . . goodness, is that five and a half in top? It didn't feel like it. What colour do they paint police cars in Huntingdonshire?

Left to its own devices the R90 would be quite happy at that, churning effortlessly along, shrugging off side-winds, nonchalantly packing 95 miles into each hour. Easing out to pass something, a cat's-eye makes one of the wheels skip and I try to remember when I last



checked the tyre pressures. The clock is running twenty minutes slow, at first I put that down to a cunning trick by BMW to make me think I was getting places faster than I really was, but it's lost five minutes in the last week. Five minutes a week, that's twelve weeks to lose an hour, so it'll be right again in thirty-six months . . . the calculations are upset by a rapidly approaching roundabout, quick flip back through the memory banks to discover whether this is the one that's usually covered in rubber and diesel oil but slow down more than necessary anyway. The front brake buzzes as the pads try to play a tune on the holes in the disc, the nose of the BM goes down, the back twitches as I hit second gear a little too hard, steady it on the back brake and gently around the island where the surface turns out to be bone dry with enough grip to qualify for a drag strip.

Just as the R90 never lets you feel the rough edge of all the power it's putting down, so it is with the brakes. Even on smooth roads, heavy braking uses up all eight inches of front fork movement — you can see the marks on the stanchions, or at night it's

almost equivalent to dipping the lights, but you never feel as if you're being tipped up on to the handlebars. The springs go down, the damping takes over and the R90 just stops, with perhaps a little squeal from the tyres.

The new disc brakes are certainly an improvement over the first type. They are better in the wet and although ours did manage a slight squeal occasionally there was nothing of the raucous noise which did unpleasant things to teeth, spines and old ladies and was symptomatic of the early BMW discs. On a long run, or in the rain, when the brakes are cold they take a little longer to come on, and after I'd hosed the BMW down it needed about a hundred yard ride with both brakes on to get normal braking back again.

But such is the nature of the R90S that you don't mind slowing down, its character takes all the urgency out of even high speed runs, you do things leisurely — and allow yourself plenty of time. Coming away from the roundabout the R90 accelerated briskly up behind a Triumph car. The driver was sitting quite contentedly in the fast

The twin disc front brakes are drilled to improve cooling and prevent water building up on the discs.

lane with no other vehicle in sight. I could have flashed the lights, I suppose, but eventually he got round to looking in his mirror and pulled over. He probably wouldn't have noticed the lights anyway, after all there's only sixty or seventy watts up front. As for using the horn, I always reckon that when people show such a lack of other faculties there's no reason to suppose they're not deaf as well. But there are many occasions like this when one can and often does get annoyed, and when you get annoyed, *you* can do silly things too.

Runs down the A1 tended to alternate between a sort of elation, sweeping through the few fast curves, to a guilty conscience as I settled down on the straight bits and took time to read the instruments, followed by frustration as I tried to distinguish the blurred images in the mirror. This in turn was followed by a draught freezing down the back of my neck as I gave up and swung round to look behind.

Off the motorways, where the legal 70 mph is about as slow as the BMW wants to go, being restricted to 50 mph makes nonsense of the R90. It takes a lot of concentration to keep from creeping up way over the limit. Fuel consumption doesn't improve enough to show any real saving and the machine is generally wasted. The R90S is one of the most desirable and safe machines I have ridden but there's little point in owning one unless you intend to make full use of it.

BMW R90S

TEST CONDITIONS

Misty, damp patches on track. Ambient temperature 42 deg F. No wind.

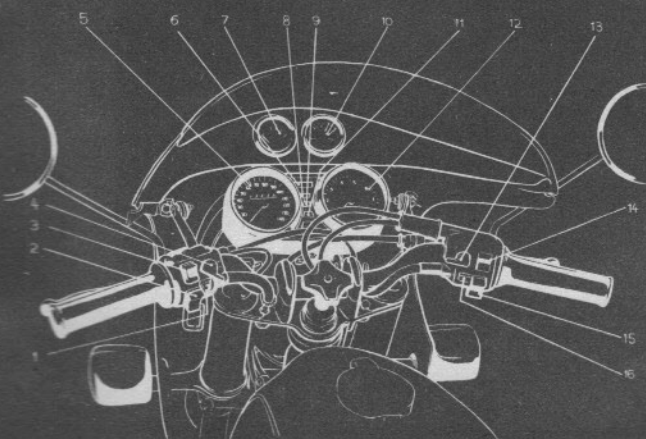
PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed	112 mph
Standing start quarter mile	13.6 sec; terminal 96 mph
Braking from 30 mph	26 ft
Fuel consumption:	
average	45 mpg
hard riding	43 mpg
gentle riding	48 mpg
Minimum speeds in gears:	
first	3 mph
second	6 mph
third	9 mph
fourth	14 mph
fifth	16 mph

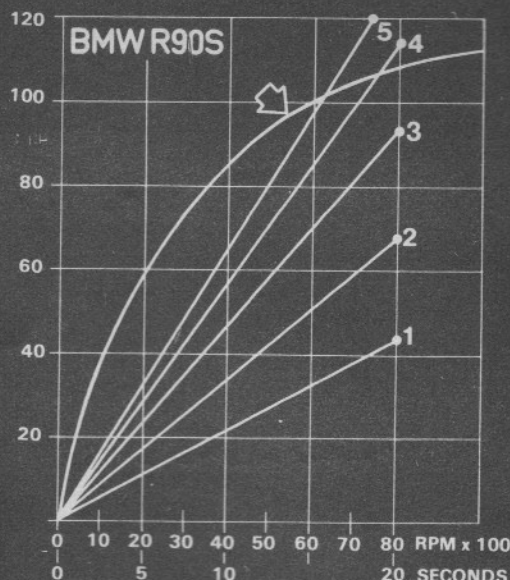
Speedo error; 2 mph fast at true 70 mph/1000 rpm in top: 16.2

HOW IT COMPARES

Model	VAT Price	Max Speed	Average mpg	SS 1/4 mile	Dry Weight
BMW R90S	£ 1,899	112	45	13.6	446
KAWASAKI Z1 900	1,249	135	48	12.3	506
DUCATI 860 GT	1,299	110	42	13.2	452
HONDA 750-4	979	112	49	13.0	480
NORTON COMMANDO MK.IIA 830cc	928	110	50	12.5	410



(1) ignition switch — side of headmap; (2) main-dip flasher; (3) horn; (4) lighting switch; (5) speedometer; (6) brake failure light; (7) voltmeter; (8) neutral indicator light; (9) generator/ignition warning light; (10) clock; (11) oil pressure warning light (turn tail-tale light below); (12) tachometer; (13) ignition kill switch; (14) starter; (15) turn indicator; (16) twistgrip drum.



ENGINE

type
displacement
bore x stroke
compression ratio
claimed output

OHV, horizontally opposed twin
898 ccm
90 x 70.6 mm
9.5:1
67 hp DIN at 7000 rpm
75 hp SAE at 7200 rpm
55 lb ft at 5500 rpm
wet sump, Eaton pump
two Dell'Orto 38 mm
twin contact breaker and coil
238W Bosch alternator via solid state regulator to 12V, 25 a-h battery

lubrication
carburettor
ignition system
lighting/charging

TRANSMISSION

clutch
gear ratios
primary drive
secondary drive

single plate, diaphragm spring
4.4; 2.86; 2.07; 1.67 and 1.50:1
direct
Cardan shaft, palloid pattern
crownwheel and pinion
3.0:1 reduction
2.91:1

CHASSIS

front tyre
rear tyre
front suspension

3.25H19 Metzeler
4.00H18 Metzeler
two-way damped telescopic fork
full movement 8.2 inches
swinging arm, 3-position dampers
full movement 4.9 inch
not available
3.5 inches
58 inches, laden
twin 260 mm disc, hydraulic operation

REAR SUSPENSION

castor
trail
wheelbase
front brake

200mm s/s drum
29.1 in
47.6 inches
32.3 inches
85.8 inches
6.5 inches, laden
446 lb
474 lb
5.3 gallon, including
.44 gallon reserve
4 pints

rear brake
overall width
overall height
seat height
overall length
ground clearance
dry weight
test weight
tank capacity

OIL TANK CAPACITY

PARTS PRICES (inc. VAT)

front mudguard	£50.13
handlebars	£11.04
speedo cable	£3.89
exhaust pipe (each)	£27.83
set of points	£3.83
set of pistons (complete)	£25.49
list price	£1899 + £10 delivery

WARRANTY

Concessionaire: BMW UK Ltd, 994 Great West Road, Brentford, Middlesex.



MAKING TIME: BMW R90 S Road Test

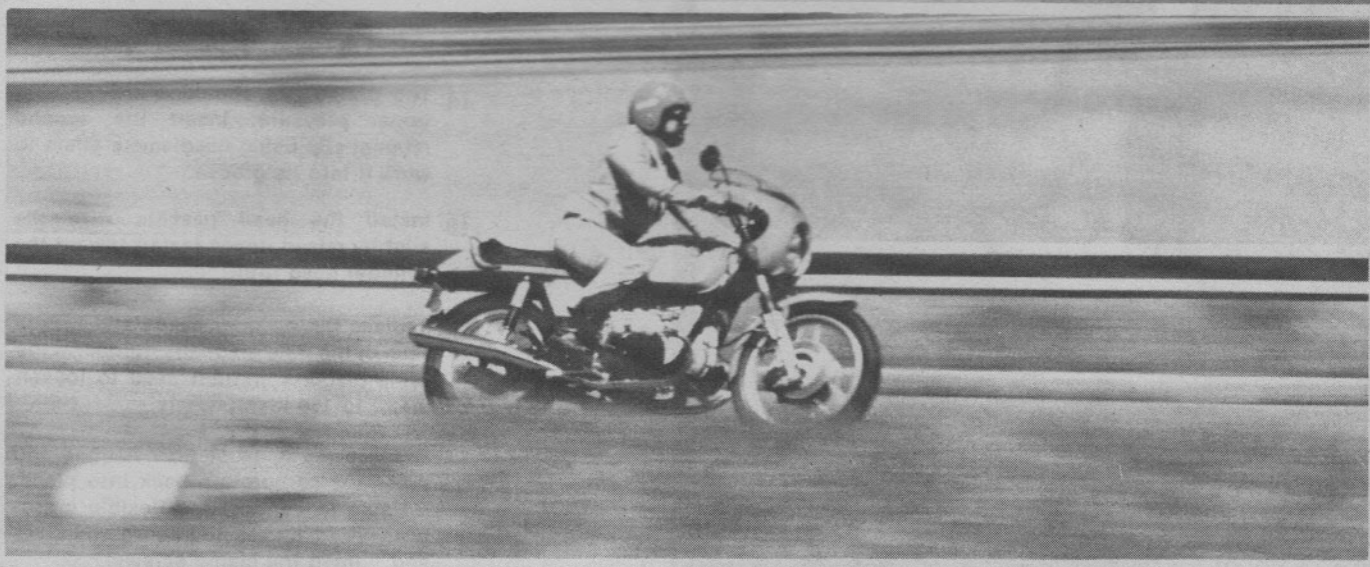
■ Complete objectivity is the primary consideration in evaluating any product, be it a motorcycle, an automobile, a washing machine or an accessory like a tool that takes the hassle out of fixing flat tires. Twenty years from now it may be possible to take the latest ultrasafetytized, zero polluting motorcycle and wheel it onto a machine that vaguely resembles a present day dynamometer. But the machine will be much more than that.

Numerous conductors and sensors will attach to the motorcycle and send bits and pieces of information to a bank of computers. The machine, once cali-

brated, will be able to evaluate handling, cornering, braking and acceleration parameters of the bike without leaving the air conditioned environs of the laboratory. The results of a battery of tests ranging from effects of crosswinds and hauling a passenger of varying proportions to the coefficient of friction of the tires will be spit out of the machine on a piece of magnetic film. The film will then be fed, automatically, into an advanced generation printer and out will pop an edited, proofread copy of a comprehensive, totally objective road test, ready for inclusion in your favorite motorcycle magazine.

Stalwart motorcycle testers will have long disappeared from unemployment insurance lines and in their new vocations as computer repair technicians, will talk about the "good old days" when road testing hazards included gravel rash rather than electrocution.

Until that time, readers will have to be content with "human objectivity" which, as psychologists will tell you, is less than ideal. Take the case of our automotive counterparts. I defy any automotive roadtester to assume the same neutral objective set when turning the key in a Ford Pinto MPG as he would in a Ferrari Daytona. A chimpanzee



could do it perhaps, but not someone deeply involved and interested in a 4-wheel state-of-the-art.

The same thing holds true in the bike field. No matter how hard we try, we can't approach a BMW with the same vibes as swinging a leg over a Honda Dream.

The BM's always have commanded an extra measure of respect even before the bikes left their stands. Tradition and reputation for non-compromise no doubt influence our initial impression of the German machines but that just makes us scrutinize more closely to see if our initial reaction is justified. Past BMW's have always bowled us over with their quality of workmanship, but left us somewhat unsatisfied by their performance. Sure, they were extremely comfortable and reliable, but their heavy flywheeled engines, clunky transmissions and generally flat "git" made us eager to turn to the latest offering from the land of the rising sun. If the Europeans were content with an even-paced Point A to Point B, fine. But this is the US of A and one look at our soft

drink and beer commercials will tell you that no one, but no one, sits still for one minute. We're all either hang gliding or smashing tennis balls or doing crossed up jumps on our dirt bikes. No sir, but the staid old BMW wouldn't be at home here.

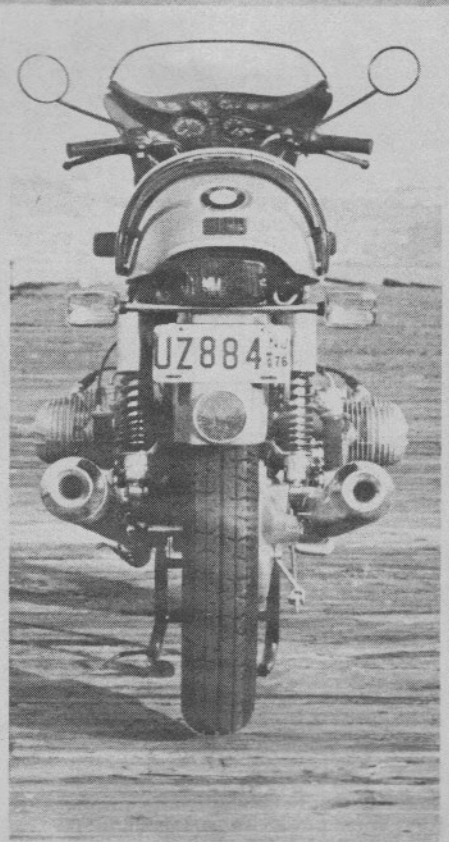
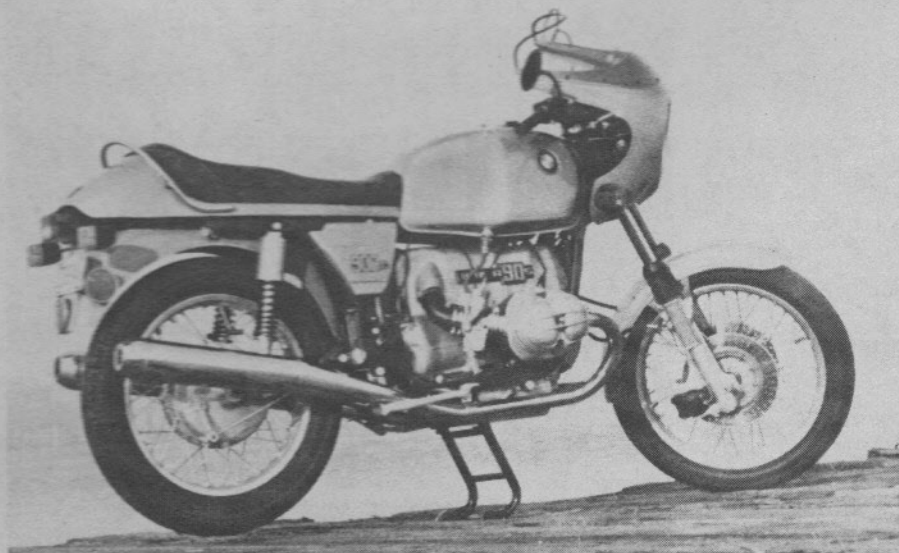
Apparently, BMW marketing people must have watched some of our Pepsi and Schlitz commercials because there suddenly appeared on our shores a new breed of BMW.

You could say that the R90 S is the BMW for people who hate BMW's. It is unmistakably BMW in appearance but "tradition" is not what is ringing up sales on this model. First of all there's the matter of styling. With trick paint that's the neatest this side of a custom, turn signals that actually enhance the bike's looks and cafe touches lent by the mini fairing, front dual discs and kickup seat, the R90 S has received more compliments than any other bike we've had in our possession. You have your choice of two colors with this model—the flashy orange treatment that we had or a more subdued, equally trick silver rendition.

We would beyond a doubt rate the R90 S as the most attractive motorcycle on the road today. If you really want to see something, take a peek at this bike equipped with BMW's optional mag wheels (at \$300 per). They're something else.

Changes in the '75 model include, most obviously, drilled discs. This certainly helps out the cause for unsprung weight, more important in BMW's case because it lessens the mass that 8.3 inches of fork travel has to maintain on road contours. Additional benefits are increased heat dissipation and better water dispersion.

Also new is the seat, which eliminates last year's slippery surface model. The seat is thinner than on the /6 touring models and at first glance it looked too thin to provide traditional BMW comfort. Our road test told us that when you have a suspension that can eat almost any bump in sight a fat seat isn't necessary. And as with most big displacement bikes, the R90 S favors the larger rider, so anything to reduce seat height is appreciated by the smaller set in their quest to put their feet on the ground.



BMW R90 S

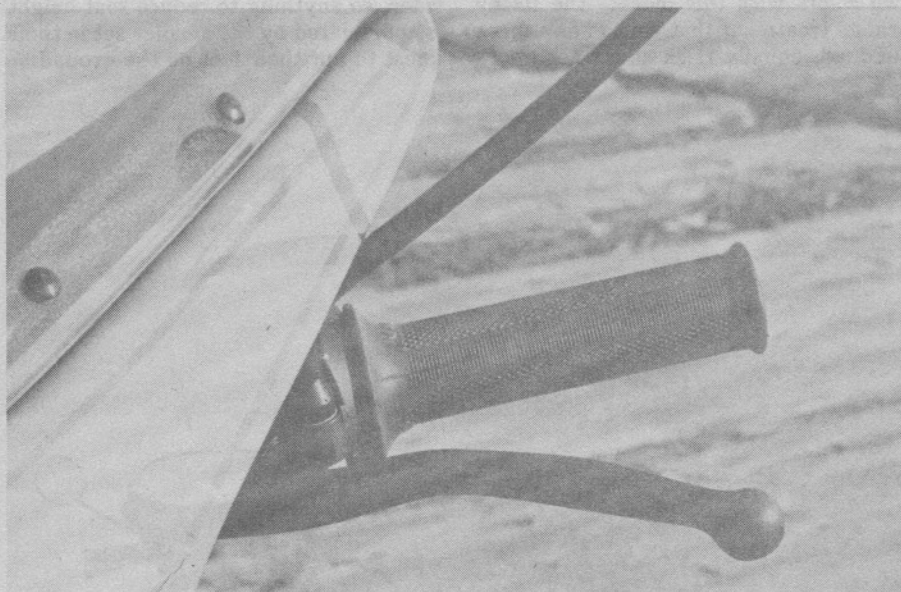
Left carb leaked fuel on shoes causing our tester great concern over staff practical joker's hotfoots.

The cockpit concept is impressive. Clustered behind the fairing are the usual tach and speedo plus the unusual voltmeter and electric clock which kept accurate time. There also is a "festival of lights" panel with brake failure, neutral, generator, oil pressure and directional signal warnings laid out in very readable fashion. The tach has a more distinct redline this year—a wise move in view of the engine's willingness to churn past the 7000 rpm limit.

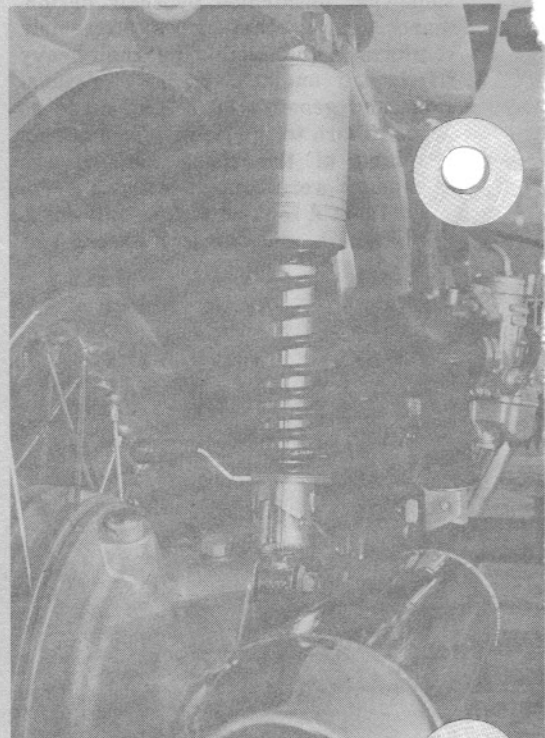
BMW touts "human engineering" in its switch designs. We liked the horn/high beam flasher rocker switch, as it's convenient to give a slow-moving auto a double blast (although we wouldn't consider the timid horn a "blast"). The headlight switch has three positions (the

second burns a running light) but the control (along with the like designed kill switch on the right handlebar) was made to be reached by long fingers. We felt a better set up would have been to swivel the switches 180 degrees. Directionals are up and down a la Triumph. BMW says this follows the natural movement of the thumb, but we constantly had to tell ourselves "we are making a LEFT turn, and left is up." We prefer the more conventional arrangement of not thinking of which direction we're turning but just dumbly moving our thumb in the direction we point the wheel. (You can always say that BMW is the thinking man's motorcycle).

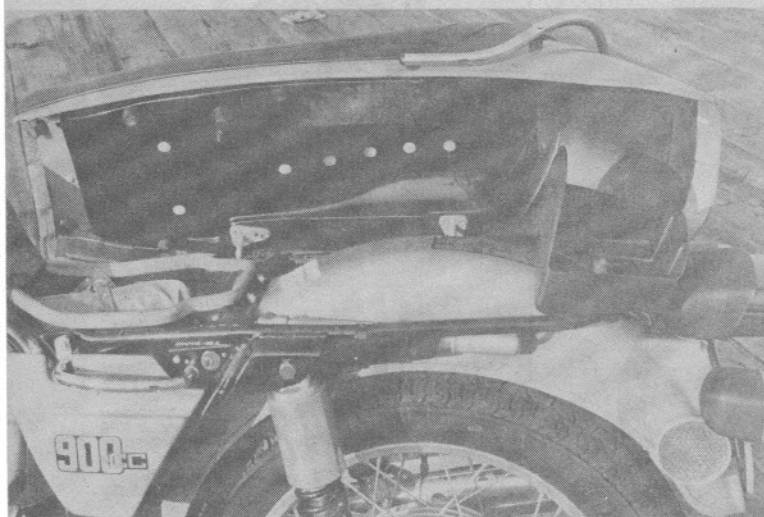
The kickstarter has gone the way of
(Continued on page 60)



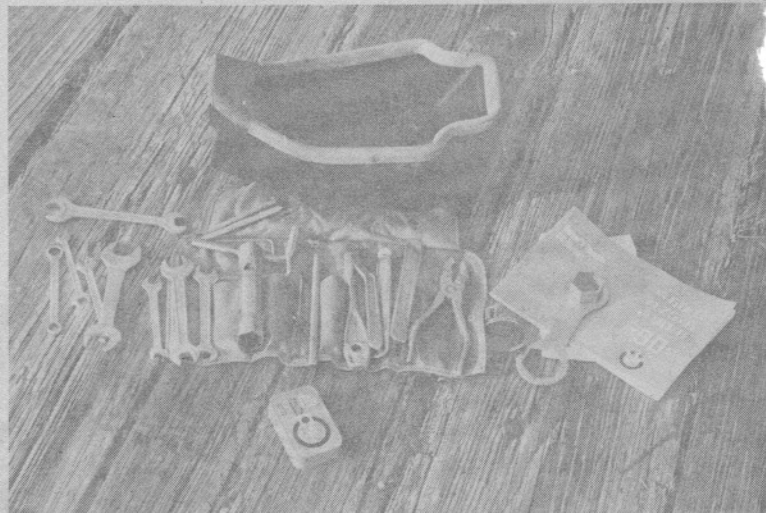
Doglegs levers provide increased leverage with reduced effort.



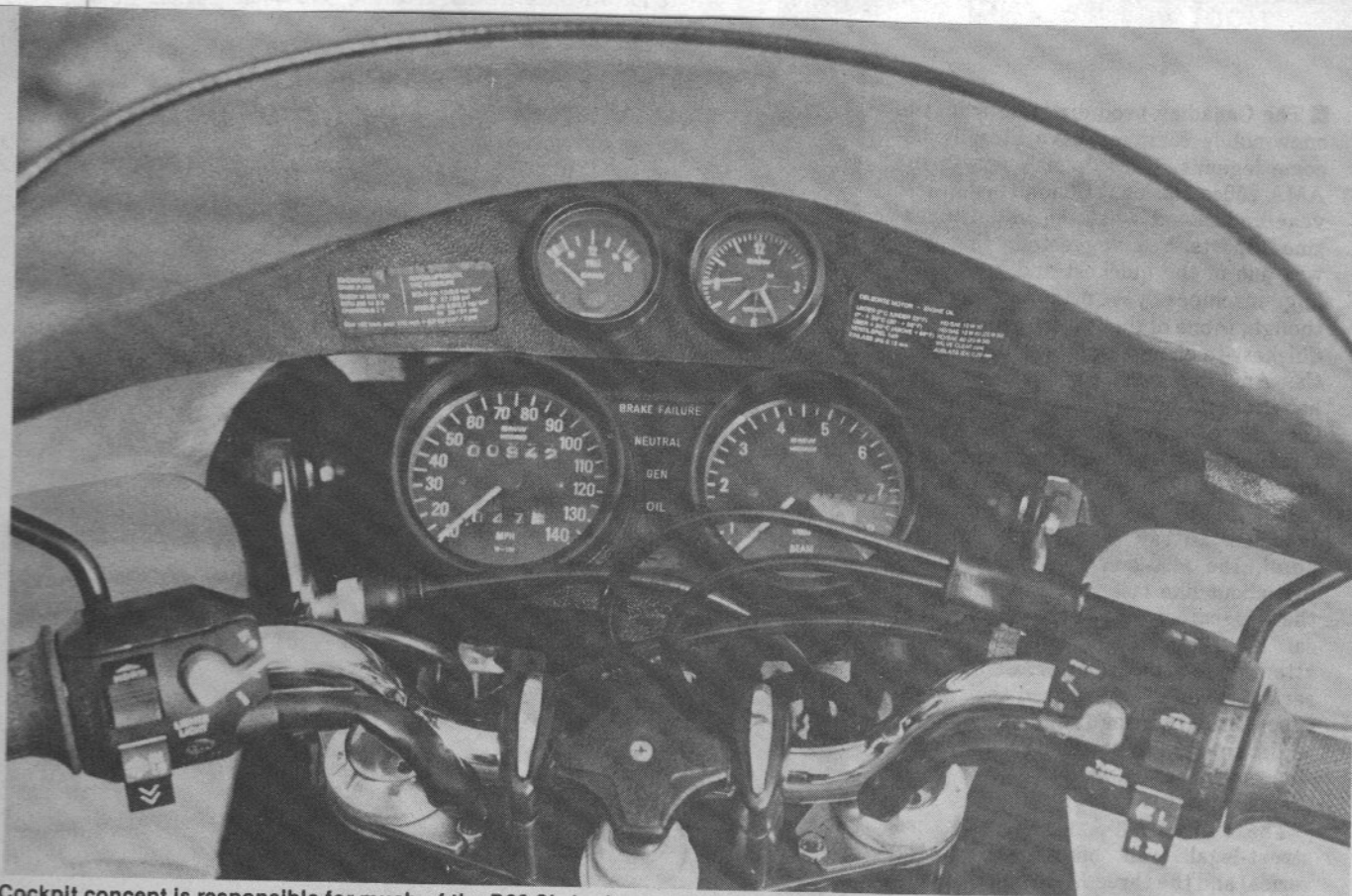
Rear shocks provide nearly 5 inches of wheel travel and have handle for easy preload adjustment.



Seat flips up to reveal removable tool tray, small parcel box and tire pump.



Tools are the best offered with any bike. Also included are tire repair kit and an owner's manual that carries routine maintenance to a 120,000-mile interval.



Cockpit concept is responsible for much of the R90 S' charisma. We found fault with some of the switch layouts.

BMW R 90S SPECIFICATIONS

Price	\$3965.00
Warranty	6 months/6,000 miles
Distributor	Butler & Smith Inc. Norwood, New Jersey

ENGINE

Type	4-stroke OHV opposed twin
Displacement	898cc
Bore & Stroke	90mm x 70.6mm
BHP at rpm	74 7000
Advertised c.r.	9.5:1
Carburetion	(2) 38mm Dell'Orto
Overall Gear ratios	
First	13.21
Second	8.59
Third	6.21
Fourth	5.01
Fifth	4.50

RUNNING GEAR

Frame	double-cradle tube steel
Rake & Trail	NA
Suspension	telescopic forks (f) shocks/swinging arm (r)
Tires	
front	3.25 x 19-inch Metzler
rear	4.00 x 18-inch Metzler
Brakes	
front	(2) 10.25-inch discs
rear	7.87 x 1.18-inch drum
Electrics	12 V battery/280 W alternator, electric starter

GROSS MEASUREMENTS

Weight	474 lbs. (wet)
Wheelbase	57.7 inches
Seat height	32.3 inches
Ground clearance	8.25 inches
Handlebar width	24.8 inches
Fuel capacity	6.4 U.S. gallons

COMFORT RATING

1. Vibration	9
2. Suspension	9
3. Noise level	9
4. Seat	9
5. Handlebars	8
6. Start mech	10
7. Controls	9
8. Stand	9
9. Shift mech	8
10. Switches and instr.	8
Overall rating	88

PERFORMANCE

1/4 mile	13.2 sec at 101.3 mph
0 to 60 mph	4.1 sec.
braking dist. from 60 mph	NA

SUMMARY

A deceptively swift machine that takes some getting used to. It thrives on high speed work which it handles with quiet efficiency. The suspension will spoil you for any other motorcycle.

leather helmets and acetylene lighting. The starter motor has been beefed up so it cranks things over faster than it did before. If the 25 amp/hour battery goes dead, the owner's manual advises that you have it recharged. Push starting would seem a tedious task at best.

Brake and clutch levers feature a "dogleg" design for easier reach and better leverage. Absent from the right handlebars is the master cylinder and brake fluid reservoir found on most other bikes. This unit has been tucked out of harm's way under the fuel tank. Two hydraulic brake hoses hang in the breeze from the master cylinder to couplings mounted on the forks. The

Fourth. Approaching 100 mph, you're totally impressed with this machine's behavior. There are plenty of other motorcycles that will do the ton, but the sensation on most of them is that the bike is taking you for one hell of a ride. Better hold on tight. Not so with the R90 S. Hunched down over the fairing, the BMW seems completely unobtrusive between your legs. It is traveling at an incredible speed but the feeling is one of the bike being an extension of our own body. You are in total control of the situation. It's almost as if the bike is saying "Okay, what's next?"

Fifth. Twist the throttle at 100 and the

lines are not shielded and appear vulnerable to evil-minded vandals and possible road hazards.

The 898cc engine has the largest diameter pistons in the industry. They ride on die-forged I-beam rods and move out and back in unison. The flywheel is a hefty 8-pound unit and is responsible for rear wheel screeching downshifts if you neglect to bring up the revs before disengaging the clutch. The dry, single-plate clutch requires a moderate pull and engages during the last quarter of its travel.

Just sitting on this bike is an interesting experience. The low, narrow bars bend you forward towards the cockpit. There exists an intimacy between you and the instruments similar to the feeling you get in a sports car. With your feet on the pegs, the big Dell'Orto accelerator pump carbs nestle lightly against your shins. It's a very tucked in feeling, one that the sit-back-and-enjoy touring types will find uncomfortable at first.

The ignition key fits into the lock on the left side of the headlight nacelle. Flick taps the dual fuel taps to the "on" position, advance the choke lever mounted on the left side of the engine and punch the "start" button. The starting motor cranks a while before the big twin kicks to life. A healthy warmup period is required before the bike will idle smoothly. Blipping the throttle causes a marked torque reaction to the right. All kinds of shaking and shuddering occur in response to throttle application at under 3000 rpm.

Snick into first. The neutral light winks off instantly, but you're not in first. Feather the clutch some and try again. This time you're rewarded with a satisfying "click," a far cry from the old "clunk."

First gear is on the tall side, so you have to be generous with the throttle and slip the clutch. More power. The tach needle climbs to the red. Bang shift. The bike lifts up on its suspension like it was goosed. Bang third. The speedo is well into the 70's. It sure doesn't feel that fast. The engine elicits a sports feel, like a Porsche. There's a muted sympathy of pushrods, but little else.

bike moves off smartly. Crank the steering damper to the second of its three positions and a very subtle dampening force is activated. Twist the knob once again—a position recommended for high speed riding over rough roads—and a bit more control is added. We'd like even a little more, thank you.

Running out of road, we crunch on the brakes. The front discs have a good feel—not overly sensitive. A moderate tug on the lever produces a good progressive action. The rear drum would lock the wheel if desired, and showed adequate fade resistance. The rear brake features inspection windows allowing you to peek in and determine your lining's degree of wear. The linings are color coded. The inspection windows also permit lining dust to escape. But, as we learned after a thorough washing, those nifty windows also allow water in as our rear brake became totally useless until it dried out.

We experienced two other problems while the R90 S was under our observation. First, the left carb must have picked up some dirt as it leaked profusely. Since our foot was positioned under the carb most of the time, we contracted a good case of gas saturated shoes. The second difficulty was that the steering lock refused to lock. The "one key fits all" (ignition, steering and seat locks) would slide in and turn but the lock refused to be pushed home. Kind of scary when you're entrusted with \$4000 worth of motorcycle in Rip-off City. The BM didn't care much for the city. The tall first gear and low bars don't blend well with snail-paced traffic. Taking off at stoplights produced the rather unusual sensation of the front, rear or both ends of the suspension rising up like an elevator as the bike started to move.

The open road is a different story. The degree of control offered by the suspension and the strong engine torque made for some of the best Point A to Point B times of any large displacement motorcycle we've tested. Riding the R90 S is a sport unto itself. One that motivates you out of bed at ungodly hours to seek the excitement of long, empty, winding roads.