

● Photography by Colin Schiller K100RT by kind loan of Coombes of Guildford. MQP 'stretch' pants by kind loan of Motorsport, Guildford.



A full-page photograph of a rider in a red jacket and silver helmet on a BMW K100RT motorcycle. The rider is positioned on the left side of the frame, leaning slightly forward. The motorcycle is dark-colored with red accents on the footpegs and engine covers. The BMW logo is visible on the side of the fuel tank. The background is dark and out of focus.

smooth OPERATOR

BMW is quietly pinning its hopes for the future on its full-dress tourer, the K100RT. Colin Schiller rides it.

You know, whereas I never doubted the fundamental correctness of the old Boxer's handling, I could never find one that didn't twitch on cat's eyes or was capable, encumbered by eighty litres of Chateau Charterhouse, of outmanoeuvring Dresda CBXs... like some chaps I know. Such a man was never Colin Schiller. Ditto the K100RS; it may have steered impeccably and handled with a daintiness altogether startling for a shaft-driven, fuel-injected 1,000cc four, but it sure as hell weren't no Ninja. But

judging the self-professed *tourer* K100RT thus? Not even some journalists' post-Corsican enlargements in which FJ100s were overtaken round the outside of French colonial hairpins could tempt me into such unkindness. No, I resolved the only fair and objective way of assessing a touring bike's credentials was by a touring rider's priorities.

Not being one myself (I confess to having ridden to Cornwall once — though never Peterborough) a good degree of unsponsored research was necessary in

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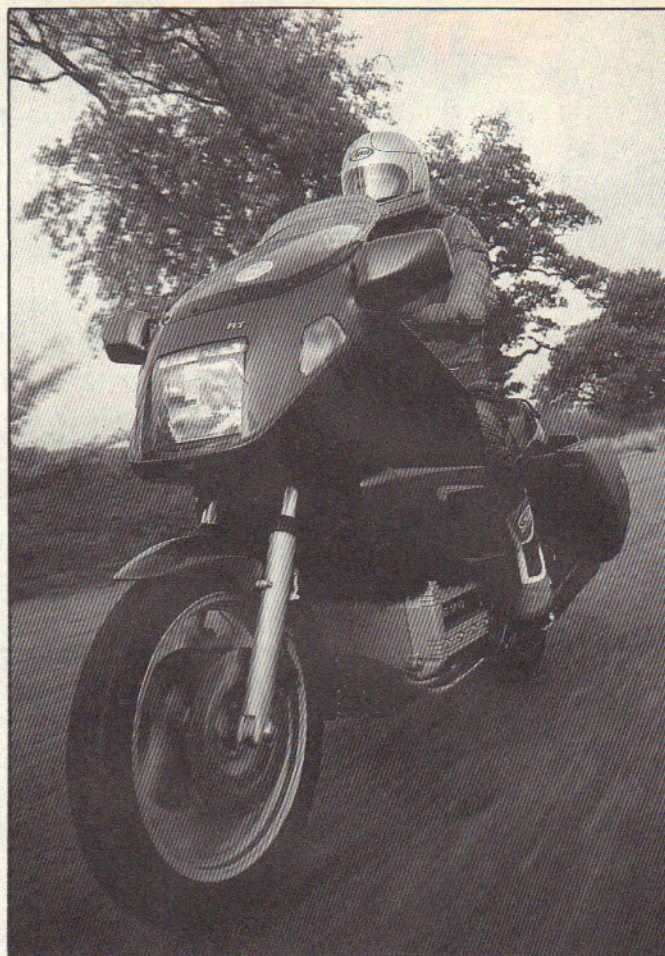
◀ which touring riders were asked to expound, 'twixt swigs of amber nectar, stories of 'my old K1' and geographical explanations of diverse, metal lapel-ware, just what the most important, nay essential attributes of a real touring bike are. I publish the list, and its order, unexpurgated. Against each section the K100RT is scored.

Comfort & weather protection

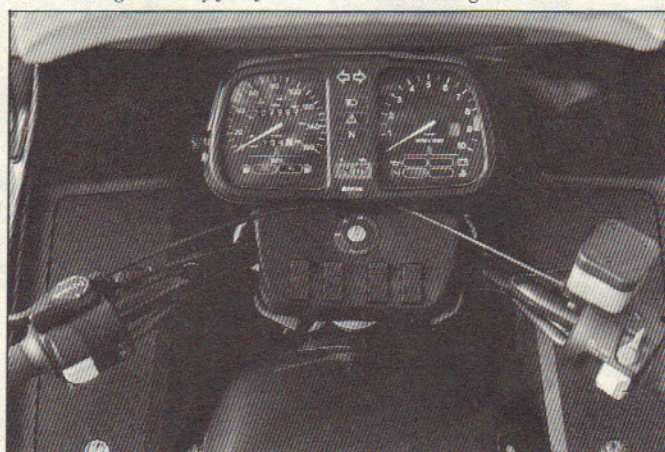
In the days when Honda 750s dominated the annual trip to Newquay, and fairings were things that gave you sixpence for your first teeth, rider comfort boiled down to a good seat and pillion foot-rests that weren't bolted direct to the swing-arm. Then, in 1975, along came Honda's Goldwing and only months later, BMW's astonishing R100RS to shatter all previous illusions of luxury and confound the theory that all you needed was a 'reliable old motor'.

The RT passes the modern test of ergonomics with flying colours, and, whereas the KRS's level of appointment may have been a little meagre, the RT's could not be more comprehensive. Unlike the former, the RT's extensive fibre reaches right down below the engine block giving vital extra thermal protection all the way down to the ankles. This also has the considerable extra benefit of despatching a beautifully warm eddie of air (à la Maggotte) all the way upward toward the rider's gusset area — thus explaining Revell's disenchantment with the moulding in Corsica (where the temperature never dropped below 80) but conversely my delight with it in brass-monkey blightey. Apparently this so oppressed ol' Pink Sox that he took 'em off along with his Armani jacket, trouser and shirt and took to riding round in his pink damarts.

Unlike the Boxer RT, however, the K tourer does leave the actual tootsies exposed in a big way, though there is little I can see BMW could have done about this save having a pair of rigid gollashes moulded onto the base of the fairing — too far even for them. At the other end, I personally found the tupperware equally admirable, though two six-footers who have subsequently ridden the thing still complain of wind, rain and, damn it all, *fresh air* on the old boater. At a hamster's pinky below five ten, I must say I was unaware of even being out of doors, though it can't be denied that at low speed the wet runs straight off the side of the KRT's fairing and onto the pilot's parts



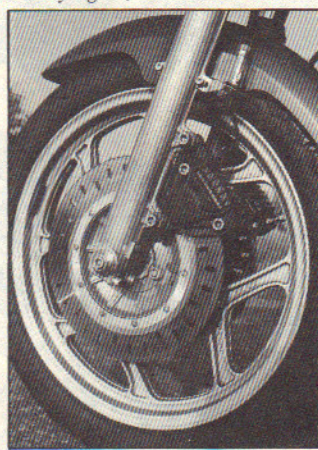
RT is distinguished by full-frontal and side-loading suitcases.



Blank switches itch expectantly for auxiliary lights, rocket launchers...

— ne'er as on the old R100RS where you were so enveloped by the fibre that it didn't have a chance. The only other complaint I have is that the level of the non-adjustable (if it is it's harder to find than the FJ1100's reserve petrol tap) F1-car inspired screen spoiler makes it damn near impossible for a chap to ride with his visor up — the wind simply slaps the bleeder shut. And one more thing: whilst I experienced no great inner turmoil about riding with a great big perspex labia poking me in the face, everyone I spoke to who'd tried an RT was a little concerned at the prospect of the incredibly butch screen whipping your face straight off in the event of an accident...

Good news however is that, vis-a-vis the handlebars, the mirrors on the RT seemed to



Strong but grabby, the brakes give you dip before grip.

offer much more protection than those fitted to the K100RS and a pair of unused wax flippers in the fairing's convenient (if hideous-

ly clumsy) glove compartments are testimony to this efficacy. Ditto the lower leg protection and though initially I found it nigh on impossible to ride with the stumps behind the fairing (after a lifetime riding right up on the tank and hanging the knee out everywhere) I soon learnt to relax, recline a little and keep the shins well tucked in.

Does this cretinous creepiness never end? No. I can say without fear of exposé that the riding position on the RT is as near perfection for this sort of cycle as I've ever experienced, though of course how many Bosch test riders are now confined to stick as a result of this quest for ergonomic perfection, BMW aren't saying. The RT's pegs are a little higher and more rearwards than you might expect of a tourer and the overall positioning more inclined t'ward the front. But it's precisely this which makes it work and is the difference between real long-distance comfort and the dreaded onset of curved-spine syndrome which develops as a result of riding nasty, cheap old Saliva Wings and their ephemeral predecessors. No, this motorcycle was *properly* researched by big blond Arian bombshells over a time-span of a dozen such similar models from Japan. The pillion, I'm told however, is not so lucky and at speeds over eighty the buffeting from the tidal winds coming over the rider's head and shoulders and the lack of support from the too-high-too-far-forward grab rails can cause backache. But in a sense this is little different from passengering on the old Boxers.

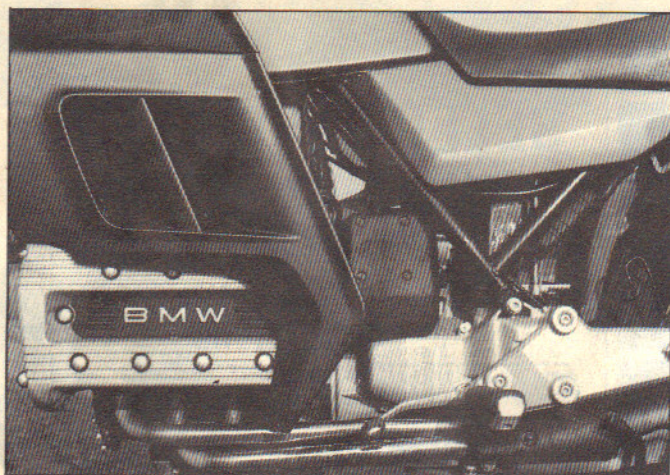
Marks out of ten? For comfort and protection it's gotta be nine.

Engine character

The K100RT makes 132mph, 12 sec quarters and, if the ads are to be believed, fools outta Ferrari owners from 0-60 with a couple of seconds to spare. 110bhp would have been the characteristic Japanese interpretation of 'powerful'; claiming 110bhp would have been typically Italian; but to the Germans, obsessed by balance, logic and that honourable notion of 'optimum', anything above 90bhp is extravagant nonsense. Certainly no more power is necessary for a touring motorcycle and though the RT never gets 'urgent' it's still a bloody fast way to go about lighting cigarettes on the motorway.

Just for the record, the RT is equipped with exactly the same fuel-injected longitudinally mounted 1,000cc's that propels the KRS.

Once again, the ads are not bashful of the RT's torque characteristics — 80% being delivered at 3,400rpm. Perhaps it doesn't feel quite as primevally grunty as the R100RT, but power rolls off the throttle much more cleanly and responsively than the old



Air ducts and copper pipes emphasise the RT's central heating qualities.

bike and in fact will pull from far lower down (about 1,000rpm) than the old Boxer ever *cleanly* could. It's at 3,500 that real power is in evidence and from there on in it's more of a cumulative build-up than a rush of stallions, though if there is any sudden lunge, six thou is the mark. But all that's academic really 'cos I never once felt inclined to use the K100RT's throttle so, nor will the vast majority of its prospective owners. To be truthful, even the R100RT at seventy ponies never suffered from the sensation of impotence.

Now for the bad news; the engine vibrates. Not like a Combat Commando, I hasten to add, nor even like an XS250, but like a GSX1150EFE, and at cunningly similar revs. I 'spose, like most other journalists, I should be keen to dismiss this as being of no great significance or consequence, and whilst, like sleeping near traffic, it's something you can get used to, it's not the sort of thing you expect to have to endure for a high-class residential price. Like the big Suzook, stimulation is worse at around 5½ grand and clears markedly thereafter. But that's unfortunately right in the continental cruising speed band. The RT's seemingly low gearing only aggravates this sensation and when I wasn't riding with my heels on the pegs to ameliorate the vibes, I was stabbing the gear-shift for that elusive sixth cog. In fact the gearing is quite correct but, like some big Kawasakis, the RT gives you the overall impression of 'buzziness'. I think I need say no more than that good tourers are equipped with engines you can't feel, not engines that make you not feel. Six out of ten.

Handling

There's nothing worse than a two-up tourer going out of control. And the last thing you want with the pillion and luggage finally lashed into submission is to have the thing doing kayak impersonations. There is no danger of this with the RT. Like all BMWs the fundamental geometry is so correct that steering (though)

SPECIFICATIONS

Model	BMW K100RT
Price inc taxes	£4595
Warranty	12 months/ unlimited
Customer Contact	BMW GB, Ellesfield Ave, Bracknell, Berks

ENGINE

Type	Longitudinally- mounted w/cooled horizontal in-line four
Capacity	987cc
Bore/Stroke	67x70mm
Lubrication	Wet sump
Comp ratio	10.2 : 1
Carburation	Bosch jetronic fuel injection
Ignition	Bosch electronic digital
Power (bhp)	90 @ 8,000rpm
Torque (lb-ft)	63 @ 6000rpm

TRANSMISSION

Primary drive	Gear
Clutch	Single-plate dry
Gearbox	5 speed
Final drive	Shaft
Overall ratios	13.8, 9.1, 7.0, 5.7, 5.1 : 1

ELECTRICS

Power source	460W generator
Battery	12V/20Ah
Headlamp	55/60W

CHASSIS

Frame	Tubular space-frame with engine as stressed member
Front susp	Telescopic fork, (185mm travel)
Rear susp	Monolever fork with single shock adjustable for 3-pos preload
Front brake	2x285mm discs
Rear brake	285mm discs
Tyre type	Pirelli Phantoms or Michelines
Tyre sizes	100/90 V18; 130/90 V17

CAPACITIES

Fuel tank	22 litres (4.8 gal)
Oil	3.75 litres

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	1,516mm (59.6in)
Seat height	810mm (31.9in)
H'bar width	730mm (28.7in)
Grnd clrcnce	175mm (6.9in)
Rake/trail	63 degrees (4.13in)
Dry weight	229kg quoted

PERFORMANCE

Top speeds (mean)	n.a.
Best one-way St ¼-mile (mean)	132mph 12.78secs
Test weight	623lbs (full tank)
Fuel cons	45mpg (av)
Range	210 miles

EQUIPMENT

Fairing, tach, speedo, fuel warning lights, gear indicator, steering lock, self-cancel indicators, puncture kit, toolkit, first aid kit, grab handles, hazard lights, clock, fairing pockets, panniers, seat lock.

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◀(slow) remains acceptably neutral throughout the entire speed range. Although, having said that, the road test bike, fitted with Michelins, showed a pronounced tendency to tuck in suddenly at low speeds. This was alleviated totally when a later model we rode on for the picture session came equipped with Phantoms.

Footrests are the limiting factor to the RT's scratchin' aspirations, though it has to be said that clearance is quite reasonable for a bike of this size. Flat roads, smooth tarmac and long sweepers prove no problem, nor does the odd rapid change of direction — simply line it up, brake early and power it through. You can feel the bike is, for its engine size and role, comparatively light. But like the K100RS and standard, the terrain the RT can't cope with is the stuff of which rural routes are made. Despite what the ads reckon, intuitively the K100's centre of mass seems much higher than the Boxer's and all of it begins to wriggle and writhe through the (unnecessarily) soft suspension when you really crack it on. And if you've really decided to end it all, just shut off the throttle mid-way through...

But the K100RT possesses a motorway stability that frankly the R100RT could only dream of, and at no speed, on no road, did the K100RT ever feel remotely dodgy. Ally this to the basic surety of the steering and the overall greater rigidity of the structure and you have a better handling bike than the R100RT could ever dream of being.

For a touring cycle, it's gotta be eight out of ten.

Braking

Strong the braking is, progressive, in my opinion, it ain't. My idea of a progressive stopper is that fitted to the Suzuki 250 Gamma and nothing dissuades me from the opinion that the BMW K100RT's brakes are exceptionally grabby. There is a good half inch of lever travel before anything happens and when it does it seems to compress the suspension before it arrests the wheel. Whenever possible, I rode with my right boot hovering above the back... Four for strong, two for progressive makes six out of ten for braking.

Luggage capacity

Little room for argument here either. The K100RT's panniers accept a full-face helmet with no nonsense and being of the malleable, placky variety can be forced

to accept loads that they really shouldn't. Conversely, this has the advantage that sloths like me insist on cramming even more in and soon discover that they've broken 'em — it doesn't seem to take very much. The locks worked well and were well disguised, which is more than can be said for the security on the fairing's glove compartments which I really couldn't get to operate at all. On the plus side, the petrol tank is flat enough to accept virtually any size tank bag and the dinky little rack behind the pillion suffices as the base for a tote-bag.

What else can we give it but nine outta ten?

Economy and tank range

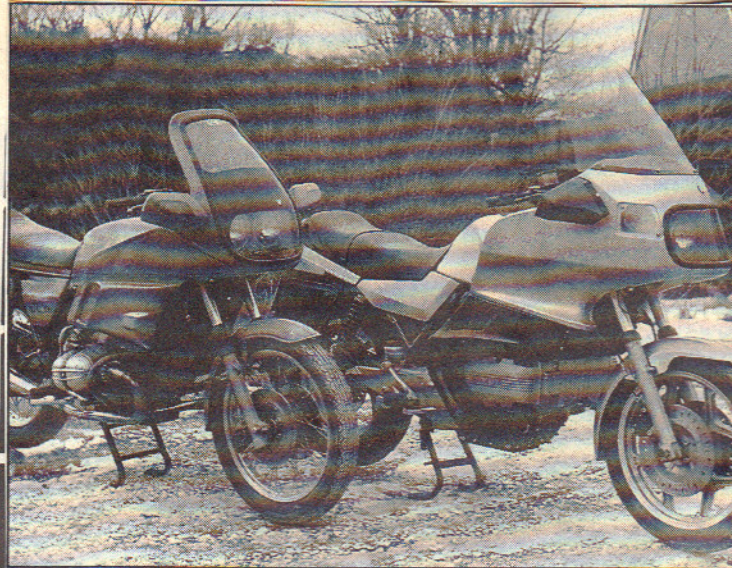
No-one's complaining about the average 45mpg we obtained from the bike nor the container's voluminous 4.8 gallon proportions. But when warning light one comes on at about 120 miles and warning light two at 140, it does nothing for your confidence. Generally, I filled up at around 175 miles, but according to our retrospective calculations I could or should have gone 'til about 210. Still, I never fancied the walk...

Eight out of ten I think for excellent economy and a good tank range despite the porkies.

The details are once again a mixed bag. Finish is excellent, starting superb, the mirrors in the right place but often at the wrong frequency. The Square headlamp gives a disappointing penetration and I still haven't got used to the switchgear. Having separated left and right to activate the indicators I tried to apply the same logic to cancel them — only to find every pedestrian shinning up the nearest policeman. Still, the horn is superb, even if the warning lights need dark glasses. And you definitely get molecules of water in the tank when you lift the filler after a downpour.

These are incidental gripes, however, to a marque and a model which has, over the years, created its own market. That market has blossomed this year because at £4,500 and with the cultivated idiosyncracies legendary to BM, their buyers do not come from the traditionally lower income groups. Conversely, this group of 'affluent enthusiasts' changes its motorcycles once every three or four years, not every 12 months, so next year and '86 will be the real test. Already the 'K' series has actually expanded the total market through those who were waiting to purchase a more 'modern' BMW. The RT deserves to continue this trend. It is a far better tourer than the RS is a sports bike. Perhaps the best all-round touring motorcycle yet manufactured.

WB?

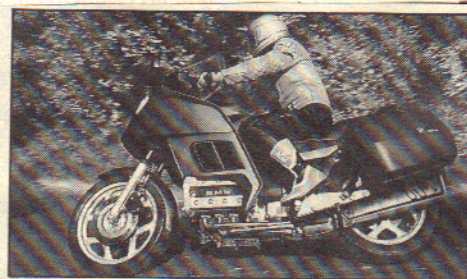


Sprint Engineering fairings look good and they're a third of the OE price.

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Smooth Operator.

The purpose built tourer of the new K-series BMWs — the K100RT — gets the once over.



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