

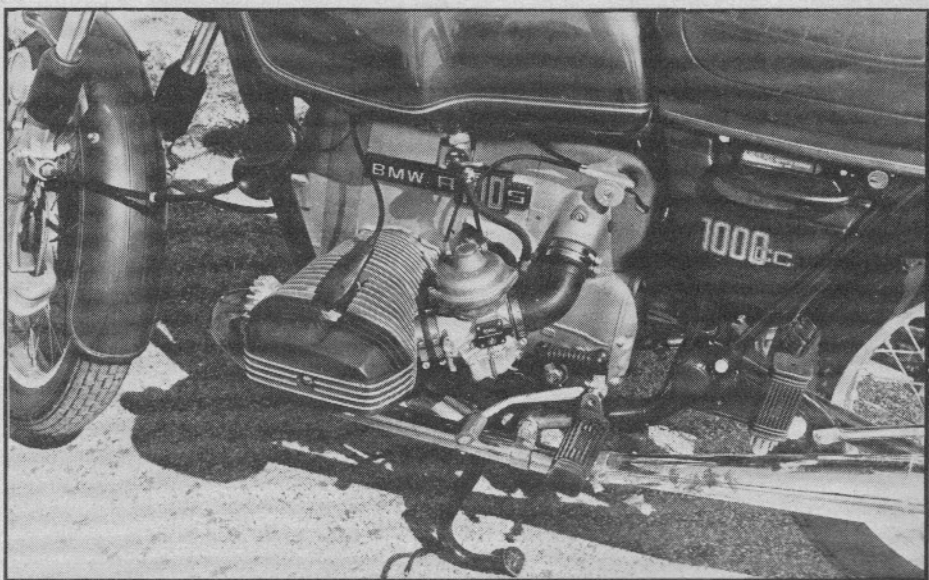
BMW R100S

MY FIRST impression on collecting the bike from BMWs at Chiswick was that it looked big and heavy. The engine filled all the available space under the large fuel tank and the handlebar fairing added to the general impression of bulk.

However, having been told how pleasant it was to ride on the open road, I was really looking forward to a round trip of some 2,000 miles down to the Bol d'Or and back. Getting out of the BMW car park to join the traffic on the Chiswick High Road, the first thing that struck me was that the seating position put a lot of weight on to my wrists. Having suffered from pain and swelling in this part of my anatomy after a 24 hour test at Snetterton, this made me a bit wary of going through the same thing again. The big BM is fitted with straight bars which, for my size or riding position are either too low or too far forward. I tried to compensate for this by moving further forward on the seat, but this simply brought my legs much too close to the pots. In addition to this, I found the front brake lever, which is cranked, to be slightly too far away for it to be easily under my hand when I wanted it. I had to make a conscious effort to push my hand forward to reach the brake. If I didn't do this, the only part of the lever that I could reach was at the angle near the pivot, furthest from the end and giving the least mechanical advantage. The clutch, although it had the same cranked lever, was not a problem as two fingers hooked over the lever were quite sufficient to work it. In fairness, the front brake also worked well with just two fingers hooked over the lever, the problem was more that the lever position made me wonder whether I would find it in a hurry or, having found it, whether my fingers would just slide off it again.

Once on the move the bike was easy and manageable in traffic even at quite low speeds, providing you remembered, as I sometimes didn't, that it had a large protrusion at either side of the engine. One thing that I never managed to accomplish was a smooth gear change, except from 4-5-4. I tried going through the gears very slowly, quickly, pausing, and rushing it through but I never got it right. Nearly all my gear changes were accompanied by a loud CLUNK, often loud enough to be heard by riders following some 15 yards behind. At one stage I tried clutchless changes but soon gave that up as the BM thought I wasn't being fair and tried to pitch me off. The only real trouble I had with the box, having accepted the fact that changing gear made a noise, was sometimes finding neutral in traffic.

The bike was at its best on long, fast stretches with sweeping curves when it just seemed to eat up mile after mile with hardly any effort from either the bike or the rider. A handful of throttle made it take a big gulp of mixture into each lung and go off down the road with huge strides, giving off a



BMW's chunky 980 — happiest on the open road.

pleasant, flat exhaust note. Under these conditions, the footrests felt as if they were in the wrong place, the rider's feet falling more naturally on to the pillion rests than the driver's. Following other bikes up and down through hairpins in the foothills of the Alps wasn't as pleasant an experience as open road riding. The lack of ground clearance on left hand bends had something to do with this as it meant easing up quite a bit or disappearing for ever off the edge of the road into the lakes a few hundred feet below. I was never completely confident about cornering on the BM, but this could well have been me and not the bike. Perhaps the thought of dropping an expensive machine, wiping off a cylinder head, or having a lift for a thousand miles with a member of the editorial staff was really the limiting factor on cornering. It must have been, at least in part, something to do with the bike though, because over the same stretches of twisting mountain road on a CX500 I was quite happy, relaxed, confident and thoroughly enjoying myself.

The bike appeared to be very sensitive to changes in road surface and would twitch and weave after going over ridges in the road. Dave Walker, following closely behind, said the effect of this was to make me wriggle on the seat like a belly dancer as I compensated for the bike's snaking. The effect seemed to come from the front wheel and my feeling was that it would have been completely cured by fitting a steering damper. The worst part of the twitching and weaving was over the *rainurage* on the *peripherique* around Paris where the bike felt as if both tyres had gone completely flat. I had already been told that BMs tended to dislike this grooved concrete, but I wasn't really prepared for the severity of the reaction. Despite slowing down considerably each time the Autoroute signs gave warning of the impending hazard, I still had the feeling that at any moment the bike was going to pitch me off. I tried varying my speed over it, but this seemed to make very little difference, the reaction, if anything, getting worse at higher speeds. The only other time that the bike caused me any concern was when I stupidly managed to get a wheel either side of a ridge in a hairpin through the Alps. The bike came through the corner weaving closer and closer to the edge of a precipitous drop, much to the amusement of the deputy editor who was following. Generally the bike handled quite well although it felt as if there was no damping in the front forks. The front brake was very good once one got used to the rather strange lever position and would drag the bike down to a standstill quite rapidly from high speeds. Sometimes under heavy braking there was a judder from the front as if the stanchions were sticking, which was probably due to a lack of oil in the front forks. The back brake was reasonably powerful and controllable.

Fuel consumption ranged from 39 to 58 mpg, with an overall average of 50.7mpg. Combined with the large 5 gallon tank, this allowed a useful range of some 200-220 miles.

At night the lights from the BM were superb. On the straight N roads, high beam produced a tunnel of almost daylight through which to drive. Coming upon bends was a little less enjoyable as the powerful front brakes and the soft suspension joined forces to dip the front end and

light up a patch of road only a few feet in front of the front wheel. Altogether night riding was no hassle and the pots tended to keep the rider's feet reasonably warm although not as warm as on the CX500 which I rode at night for a short spell.

Part of BMW's fame is for day-long riding comfort. But the R100S differs from earlier models by having a flatter, harder seat — particularly up front where a first aid kit has been squeezed in. on the long trek south, the seat, which had been quite comfortable around town, started to get harder and harder and I found that I was having to wriggle around quite a lot in order to relieve my aching rear end. Together with the weight on my wrists, which turned out to be not as bad as I anticipated, it made the journey less comfortable than it could have been though by no means unbearable.

The small handlebar fairing kept off a lot of the wind at fairly high cruising speeds and certainly contributed to comfort. One thing that I was really grateful for under these conditions, especially at night, was the clock. I've always thought of this as a rather silly fitting on a motorcycle but since this trip I've completely changed my mind. It was very nice to be able to watch the minutes as well as the miles pass by, know-

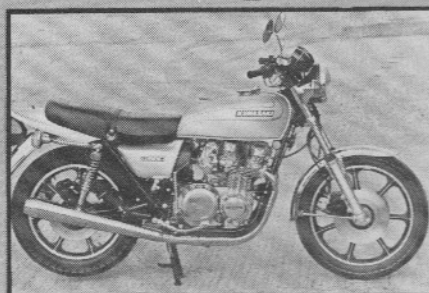
ing that each one was getting you closer to the next coffee stop.

After riding the bike for a couple of thousand miles, lots of the things that I was critical of when I first got on it were forgiven. The riding position was less uncomfortable than I anticipated and if the bike had been mine, some minor alterations to things like bars and seat would have made a great deal of difference. One thing that I found ideal for me was the position of the switches on the handlebars which were very easy to find and use even with two pairs of gloves and some overmitts on in the cold. The prop stand was more of a liability than an asset. It holds the bike balanced precariously so that any wobble will take weight off the spring-loaded stand, allowing it to fold up.

As I've said, the bike was at its best when it got into its stride, and the ride back from Aix to Senlis was really very enjoyable. The thing that struck me most was, that, for its price, the BM was never really outstanding in anything. It was quite good in several departments but all in all was without any real character and doesn't seem to do any one thing better than half a dozen other bikes.

Peter Hughes

Specifications



ENGINE: DOHC four, ignition by contact breaker and coil, four Mikuni 24mm carburettors, wet sump lubrication, 12V alternator.

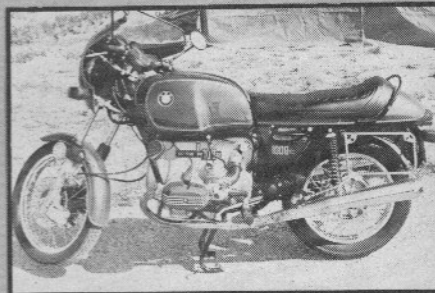
displacement 652 ccm
bore x stroke 62 x 54 mm
compression ratio 9.5:1

TRANSMISSION: HyVo primary drive to five-speed gearbox, final drive by chain.
primary reduction 2.55
final reduction 2.63
gearbox ratios: 2.33; 1.63; 1.27; 1.04 and 0.89

CHASSIS: telescopic front forks with twin disc brakes, rear swing arm with 5 pre-load position dampers and single disc brake.

front tyre 3.25H 19
rear tyre 400H 18
wheelbase 55.9 in
castor 63 deg
trail 4.25 in
overall length 87.4 in
overall width 30.9 in
dry weight 483 lb
fuel tank capacity 3.7 gal

LIST PRICE inc VAT and delivery £1514
warranty: 6 months/6000 miles
importer: Kawasaki UK Ltd.,
Deal Avenue, Slough, Bucks.



ENGINE: OHV flat twin, ignition by contact breaker and coil, wet sump lubrication, two Bing 40 mm carburettors, 12V alternator.

displacement 980 ccm
bore x stroke 94 x 70.6 mm
compression ratio 9.5:1

TRANSMISSION: single plate clutch, five speed gearbox, final drive by shaft and bevel gears.

gearbox ratios: 4.40; 2.86; 2.09; 1.67 and 1.50
final reduction 2.91

CHASSIS: telescopic fork with twin disc brakes, rear swing arm with three pre-load position dampers and drum brake.

front tyre 3.25H 19
rear tyre 4.00H 18
wheelbase 58 in
castor n/a
trail n/a
overall length 84 in
overall width 29 in
dry weight 463 lb
fuel tank capacity 5.3 gal

LIST PRICE inc VAT £2699
warranty: 12 months, unlimited mileage
importer: BMW Concessionaires (GB)Ltd.,
361, Chiswick High Road, London W4.