KRAUSER MKM 1000

Query: Do You See Your Banker, Baby, Standing in the Shadows?

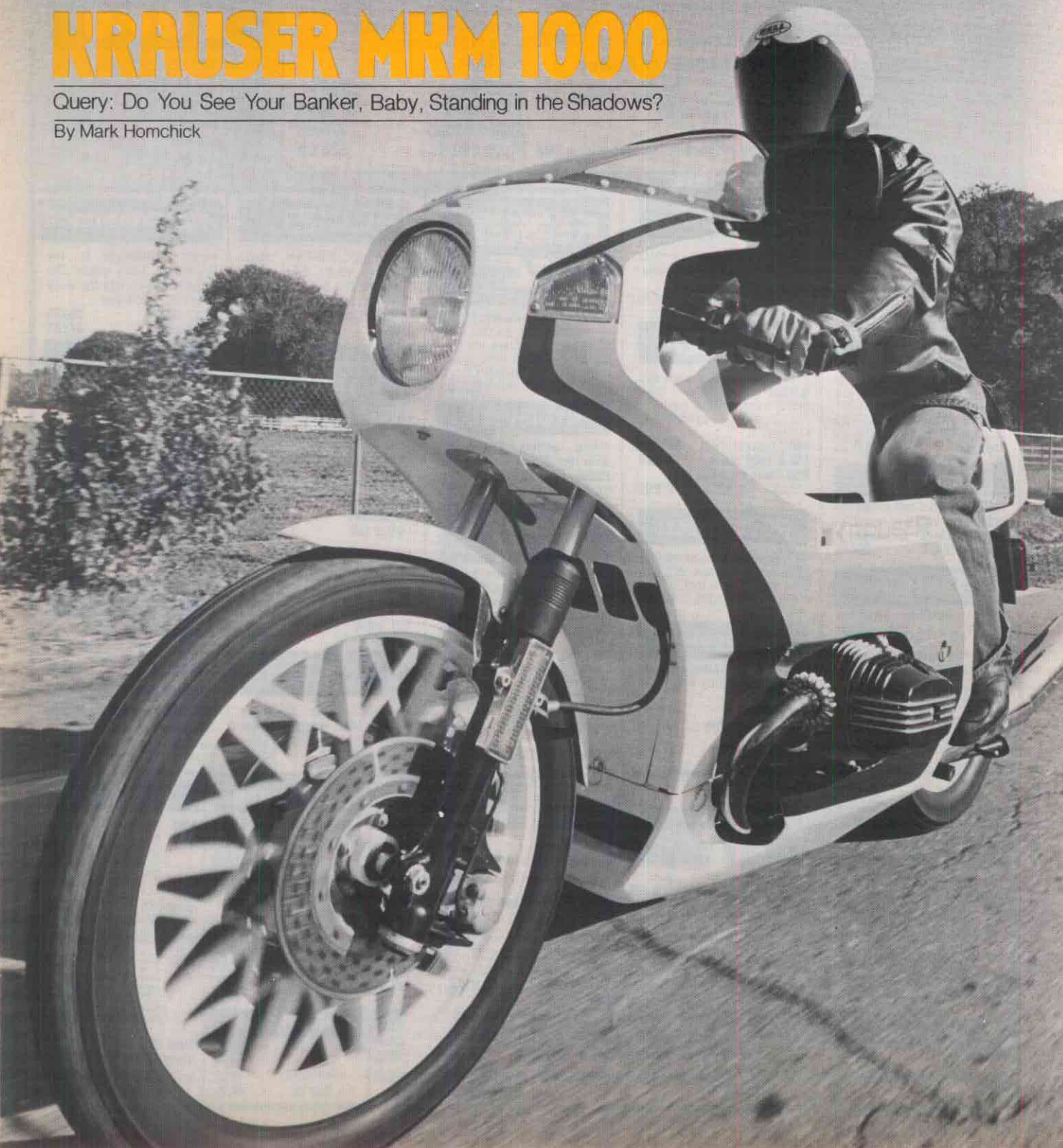
By Mark Homchick

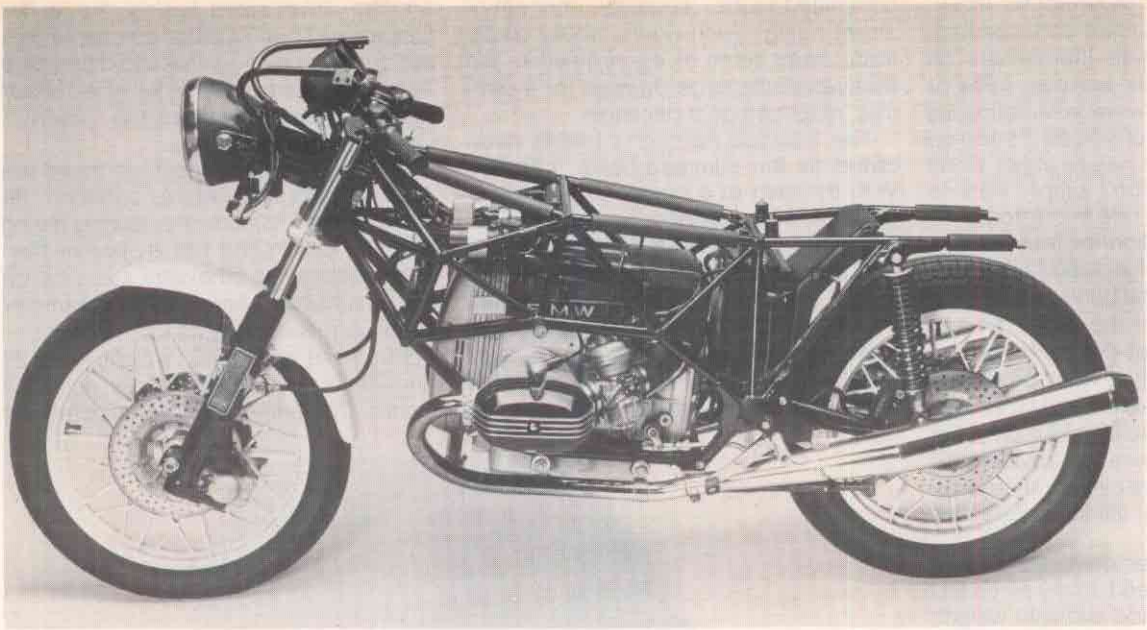
● WHEN WE TESTED THE *GOLD DUST TWINS* in the October 1980 issue of *Cycle,* we wondered who would spend $10,000 for a street-going motorcycle. We recently recovered from the shock of the Editor calling the staff into the shop to see the $20,000 collection of motorcycles that had just arrived. Imagine our surprise when we opened the door expecting to see five or six fine production machines or at worst three or four prime examples of exotica and found instead two custom fiberglass-covered road burners.

Those machines, folks, were just middling-expensive toys for guys on a salary. Here it is five months later, and there's a new price king for anyone with serious chump change in his pocket. If money is no object, and the only word association "prime" calls to mind is steak, then coming up with the 15 grand it takes to own a Krauser MKM 1000 should cause no consternation.

Mike Krauser, known in America for his high-quality saddlebags, wanted to build a bike to make a lasting impression on the motorcycle scene. Krauser fielded a BMW 24 Hour endurance racer four years ago. The bike fared well in many races, but when the Japanese made their high-horsepower four-cylinder racers reliable enough to endure for 24 hours, Krauser figured the boomers were about to become a chapter in racing history.

But what was to become history in racing needn't become history altogether. Krauser reasoned that if he had the knowledge to build competitive 24 Hour racers, he could surely build bikes worthy of rushing through Alps mountain passes and down the autobahns and autostradas. Indeed, truly sports-oriented





road bikes need more in common with race machinery than with highway cruisers—and for reasons which have much more to do with handling than with engine performance.

Unlike America's straight and true interstates, the throughways of Europe have corners, some of them worthy of the Nurburgring. No limp-framed motorcycle is going to stay upright at over 100 miles per hour on a seriously tough part of the autobahn.

The frame of the MKM is taken directly from the endurance racer design table. Because straight tubes are the stiffest tubes, Krauser built the MKM's chassis out of a carefully assembled collection of short, small-diameter pieces with nary a bend in them. And what a collection! Peer under the fairing and you'll see a jungle gym of piping.

The search for light weight led Krauser to use a computer aid in frame design. The space-age chassis weighs only 25 pounds, but still offers excellent rigidity. Krauser has accomplished this without resorting to the use of aircraft steel; he credits the design with his success.

For a couple of reasons, Krauser took the majority of the MKM's running gear from BMW's R100S. His primary consideration was certification of the bike. It's much easier to meet registration requirements for production motorcycles here and in Germany if the builder uses production components. Also, when it inevitably comes time to repair or replace parts, it's easier to run down to the local Beemer dealer than to talk the local machinist into doing some custom work.

The MKM's designers reworked the fork and shocks to provide a steadier base for high-speed motoring. The fork has stiffer spring rates, and the shocks have heavier oil to complement their heavier coils.

Franz Wiedmann designed the MKM's fiberglass, and he adds that to a list of accomplishments which includes designing the R100RT's and R100RS's bodywork. Wiedmann spent a large amount of his time in the confines of the Pininfarina windtunnel, and his time was well spent. The MKM cruises at a steady 100 mph while laboring under a minuscule amount of throttle.

To illustrate the effectiveness of Mr. Wiedmann's work we'll fill in the details of one of our unscheduled test sessions. Krauser needed the MKM in Las Vegas for a trade show, so we launched one trusted OHO and DP (Official Hanger-On and Delivery Person) on it from Los Angeles. The OHO-DP isn't well-known for his abiding respect for speed limits. Even so we weren't prepared for the phone call we got four hours and 20 minutes later. Mr. Throttle averaged over 76 miles per hour and *over* 50 miles per gallon. His rate of land travel speaks well of the Krauser as a flat-out cruiser.

Okay, so we know the Krauser works well if you ride as if you were cruising through the Black Forest. But that doesn't tell us much about the bike's performance in the land of the patented radar detector.

Not too surprisingly, what works well at 100 mph has its share of niggling problems at US legal speeds. Because the handlebar and fairing combine to keep the rider's body low and out of the windstream, his wrists and shoulders will tire during lengthy rides. The wind hits an average-sized American's body just about mid-chest. If that description fits you, and you're riding at legal speeds, the wind blast just won't be strong enough to help you keep weight off your arms. However, at 75-plus the wind's your friend, and the seating position is fine. (Our LA-to-Sin-City chauffeur, for example, raved about the comfort.)

Considering its extra inch of wheelbase, you'd expect the Krauser to be less nimble than a standard BMW when you go charging through the mountains. It does steer somewhat heavier, but it benefits overall in the tradeoff: the designers have swapped a little agility for a lot of stability. The K-bike demands that you commit to a line when entering a turn. You *can* change your line, but it takes some planning. If you do things at a stern but not frantic pace, the Krauser will reward you with Rock of Gibraltar steadiness.

With a fifteen-thousand-dollar motorcycle, though, especially one with race machinery in its family tree, superb handling is a given: you expect it. So do you expect a sizable dose of full-liter horsepower. Those are the everyday—though exciting—qualities you can find in a wide variety of production bikes—bikes which cost at least 10 grand less than the MKM.

What you don't expect but rather hope for, what remains to be considered by magazine test riders and potential buyers alike, and what in the end is the only reason for buying the Krauser is the quality of the MKM's intangibles.

Perhaps you rode a BMW across the Alps once. You'll relive those memories every time you throw the MKM into a corner in California or Montana or Maine. Maybe the MKM is the epitome of a Flash Bike for you. Buy it: you'll feel better about yourself on Sunday mornings. Or possibly it's the Krauser's unique combination of traits. You appreciate the mechanical soundness of the BMW pieces, you like the style, and you genuinely enjoy fast winding roads.

How valuable are these intangibles? Are they worth 15 grand? Only you can answer those questions. We can evaluate the physical thing; we can only *consider* the questions which pertain to the spirit of a thing. If, however, you have an unsatisfactory spiritual relationship with a $15,000 bank account, and you're still teetering on the brink of indecision, let us remind you of one fact: the MKM sure hauls down a country road. ◉

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