

## GIANT TEST

KRAUSER  
MKM 1000

I'VE NEVER REALLY MANAGED TO COME TO terms with BMWs. It's not that I dislike them, they're not uncomfortable or difficult to cover distance on, in fact once you've got a BeeEm in top gear only the tightest of bends is going to make you change down. No, the trouble is that I've never been allowed to keep a BMW long enough to be able to cope with all that softly sprung long travel suspension doing funny things under the influence of a clumsy down change coming into a fast corner; or more correctly I've never managed to alter my riding style to take account of BMWs' idiosyncrasies.

Yet given the right treatment BMWs can be made to scratch with the best of them, and remember that it's an extremely clapped RS or RT100 that can't crack 120mph. In American Battle of the Twins racing three BMW teams regularly give the ultra-fast Ducatis a hard time. So even though I may not be best qualified to talk about BMWs, neither do I subscribe to the theory, most often found in American mags, that development of the Boxer engine stopped 30 years ago.

What is not changed is the basic concept: an overhead valve, flat twin with perfect primary and secondary balance. In other words a big twin without the major drawback — vibration. This is where Mike Krauser comes in.

His original aim was to produce a small batch of frame kits to enable a select bunch of friends to convert standard BMWs into street racers. From that small project using an endurance frame designed by a student as a project came the MKM1000. What he has done is to retain the best part of a BMW — its engine — wrap it in an ultra-stiff chassis and clad it in some of the best quality glass fibre I've come across. Riding an MKM is just like riding a BMW in some ways and totally different in others. There's still the effortless pow-



er delivery of the flat twin. From anywhere in the rev range no matter what gear you're in it'll pull away smoothly just gathering speed and then cruise happily at whatever velocity the rider dials in. If you've grown used to wringing ten grand out of a four try a BeeEm sometime, they may not be the quickest way from pub to pub but for putting in a lot of miles in a day then getting up and doing the same thing again they're hard to beat.

But BeeEm's have their own ways, they don't like being pushed into a corner hard with the anchors on and the motor churning from a last minute change down followed by the throttle being wrenched fully open to redline the thing away down the next straight. Anything near that sort of behaviour plays havoc with the bike's weight distribution as the rear crown wheel tries to climb over or under the shaft drive's pinion confusing the suspension as it goes. Also BMWs have always been ultra sensitive to the tyres they run on and their state of health.

Krauser's aim was to make all the easy going

power from the motor available for the rider to have fun with. What he did was what BMW did when designing the engine; go back to first principles. A chassis should keep the front and rear wheels in line even when a loony's twisting the throttle, keep the CoG low for ease of bend swinging and let the biggest possible tyre put as much rubber as possible on the road. Krauser's frame fulfils the first objective. A Messerschmidt factory makes 150 welds to hold together 50 short straight lengths of small diameter thin walled steel tubing. Each length of tube forms one side or at least one triangle. Straight tube is strongest so Krauser doesn't bend 'em. Triangulation means strength so Krauser triangulates. The two bent tubes running low either side of the motor are the sides of the detachable cradle that supports the motor, they are the only bent tubes in the frame. The second objective — low CoG — is easy with a BeeEm motor and the third requirement is met by welding an extra 30mm into the middle of a BMW swinging arm so an enormous 5.10 x 18 M48 Michelin can be fitted on the rear wheel.

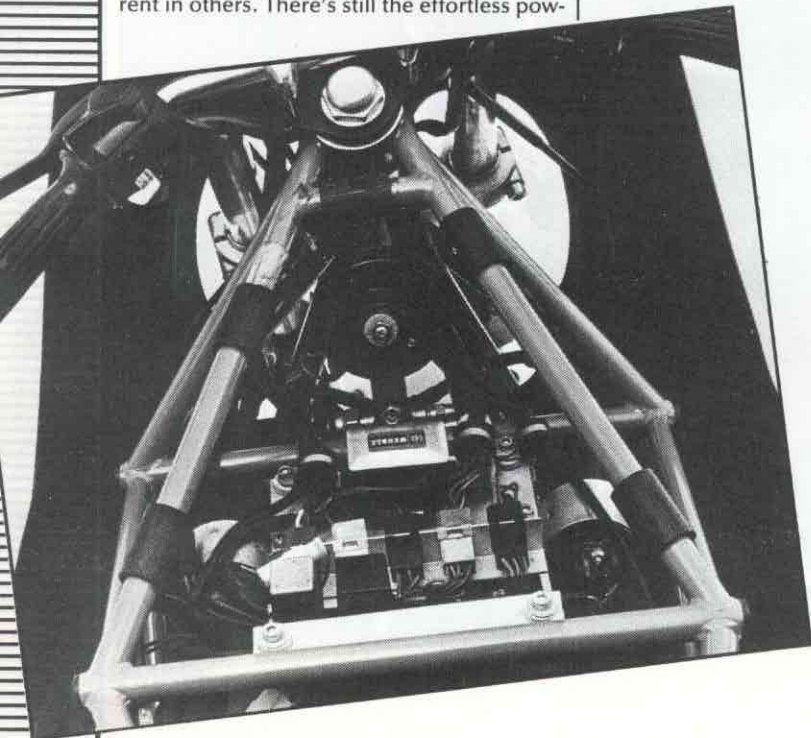
That horrible habit standard BeeEm's have of using up most of their suspension travel when you sit on them has also been dealt with. The MKM uses a lengthened steering stem, revised front fork damper rods and spacers under the springs to pre-load them. They more than anything else tell you that you are not sitting on a standard BMW. Even though the MKM retains BMW bars, switch-gear and instrumentation the instant you engage the clutch and *don't* feel the back end of the bike start to rise you know something different's going on. Even if the throttle is opened and closed rapidly the bike only tenses itself as if it wants to start see-sawing, then the revised front fork springing calls a halt to such unruly behaviour.

This all makes for less of the heart stopping antics a BeeEm can get involved in if you don't get all your braking, gear changing and decelerating done before you get involved with a bend. On the MKM you ride the bends like you ride them on a conventional bike — only generally you'll be going faster than usual even though you might not realise it at the time.

Because Krauser doesn't like becoming too involved in the financial tie-ups of buying

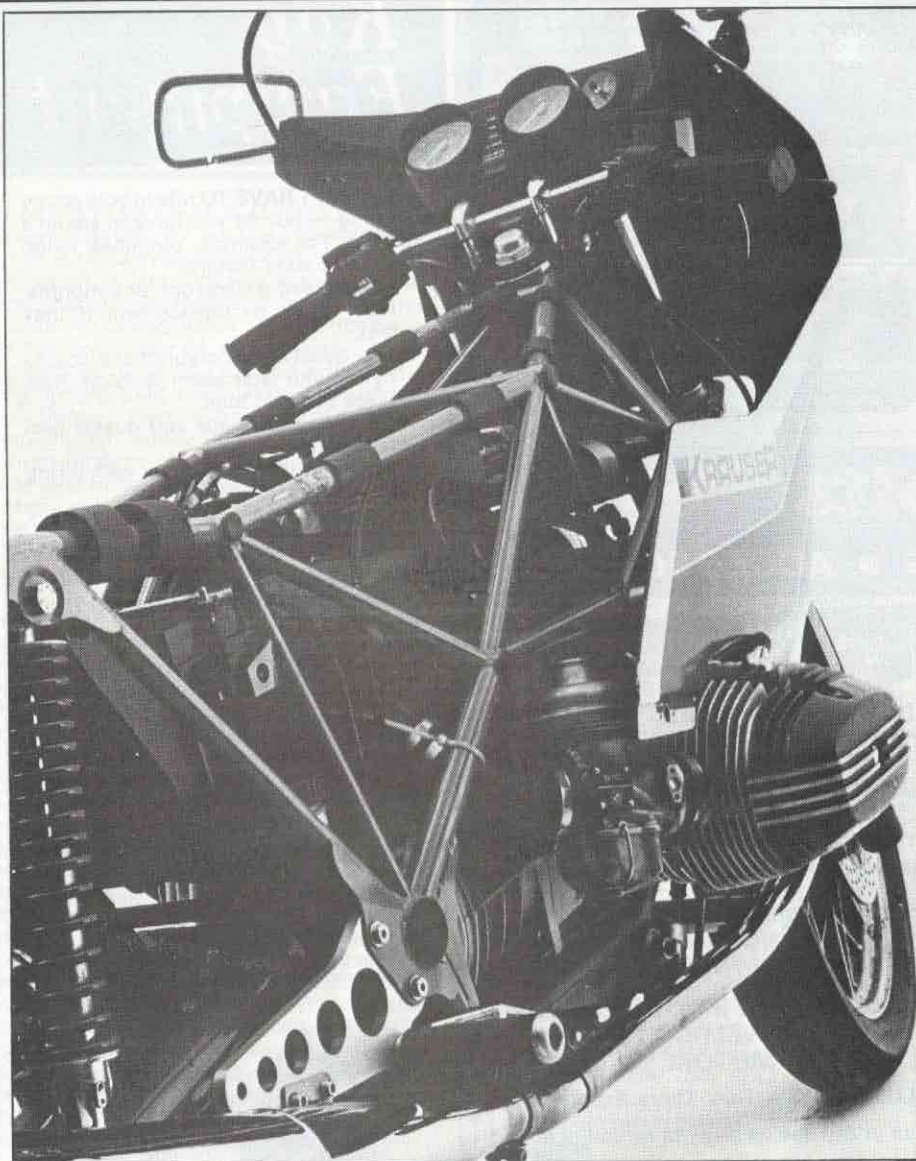
*Once the tank's off you can appreciate the detail design work that makes the MKM a pleasure to look at as well as ride. Note the quality of the welds and the way each short run of tubing is straight and how the steering head is massively braced by all that triangulation. Then check out how the ends of the two cross members are closed off with grommets.*

*The frame is internally rust proofed with wax after assembly. All major electrical components are relocated to the plate in the bottom centre of the picture*





FORGET THE RECESSION/  
**GIANT TEST**

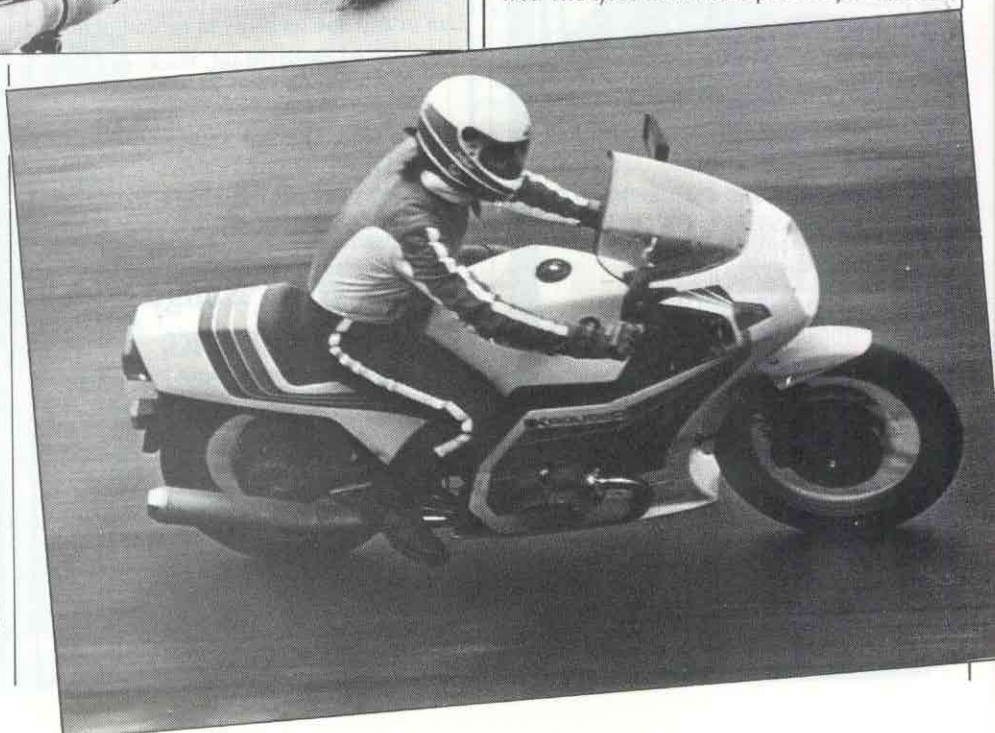


*This view of the frame shows the heavy triangulation of the design off really well. Note how the apexes of the 'stars' either side of the engine are used as mounting points for the fairing. The footrest hanger plates are machined from solid but the pedals themselves are chromed sheet metal fabrications. Apparently the Krauser GP team has had some unfortunate experiences with the normal cast alloy type so they now use steel fabrications as well. Motor is a standard RS unit running standard carbs and gearing. When the four-valve heads are fitted to the MKM 10-10 it may be necessary to go for some non-standard equipment, my vote is cast for better rear shocks. One thing more. Personally, I could do without the violent purple paintjob on the frame, customers can request other colours. The excellent weather protection is shown up (right) by the streaks on the glassfibre. Only the rider's hands got the full force. Perhaps a mark II fairing, if such a thing ever happens, could incorporate a little extra protection for the digits. Because the MKM retains standard silencers and pokes the noisy bits of the motor outside of the fairing there is no more noise than on a standard BMW*

plant, he contracts frame fabrication out, similarly he knows that a good design comes to nothing if the manufacturing process isn't properly carried out. The welding on the Krauser is superb, no production line could ever match it, and rumour has it that the tolerances he insists on are so small that only a firm used to dealing with the aerospace industry could cope without driving itself out of business due to high wastage.

All this perfectionism shows up when you ride it. No matter how good a mass produced bike is it can never feel as predictable or as safe as one that's been jigged up and checked then welded together by skilled craftsmen. The Krauser communicates that feeling to its rider. In a straight line it's stable, yet no effort is involved in moving it about on the road. For a 500 pound motorcycle it's agile to the point where it feels as if you're thinking it round corners, no physical effort appears to be involved.

Where the chassis really scores is in combining dead neutral steering with sensitivity to road conditions. In the dry the MKM's roadholding and handling are superb, no twitchiness or over sensitivity to rider input — it just goes where it's pointed and it'd be a brave man who touched anything down or rode off the edge of the Michelin on any tarmac this side of a race track. When the heavens opened and the Cosmic Foot stamped on our choc-ice — how'd you like to try and photograph 20 grands' worth of bikes during a monsoon — I was worried, actually I was scared shitless. The fact that I've never been a good wet weather rider and the thought of what Simon Hill of Krauser UK would do to me if I dropped the MKM combined to induce the feeling in me that troops in the trenches must have had before going over the top. Anyway, OTT I went up the A5 and the M1 down the A3 and M3, every time in some of the worst weather this septic isle has seen for quite a while. Once I'd got over the bike's strange low speed tendency to drop into corners and go very light on the steering I actually got to enjoy riding in the wet. The tyres were well up to the job and the





chassis transmitted warning signs well before things got out of hand. Even slippery roundabouts held no terrors, go in moderately fast and if the back end signalled the bars that it was going to declare independence feathering the throttle got things under control. Even shutting right off in a bend didn't upset the MKM too much.

Obviously the riding position contributes significantly to the bike's controlability. In a semi-crouch behind the RS screen with just the right amount of weight pushed forward onto the short, flat bars the rider really feels in control, if you need to take rapid avoiding action you aren't restricted by the uncompromising full-house racer crouch of the Harris or Martin. The thing is very controllable, like a Pantah the bikes gives the impression to the rider that he'd have to do something very silly indeed to fall off.

In every way the Krauser is a beautiful bike to ride. The effortless way it can cover mile after mile in comfort whatever the conditions puts it right up there with the Pantah as something special. Only the lack of hand protection made life uncomfortable in the gruesome conditions of mid-October. But what is an MKM? Its riding position and tasteful but subdued looks take it out of the cafe racer class, it's far too comfortable for that label anyway, and define it as a fast tourer for the man who is *serious* about his motorcycling. Anyone who can afford the £2,875 frame kit can afford a Krauser pannier kit for the MKM as well plus the dual-seat option that does nothing for the bike's looks but a lot for its practicality.

For one glorious moment of fantasy assume that you have a BMW R100RS and £2,875



***The Krauser's riding position is less radical than that of a true race-replica. Flattish bars lean you forward to give easy control and leave just the top bit of an average height rider's head in the wind***

burning a hole in your pocket, what do you get from Krauser? The answer to that is everything you need down to the last washer to turn your boring old BeeEm into an MKM. That's the frame, internally rustproofed and finished in purple, plus revised front fork components. Surprisingly the standard rear units are retained, there's nothing wrong with them on a standard bike but the MKM shows them up. The glass fibre ware includes the front 'guard, three piece fairing, seat-tank unit and the thinly padded detachable seat squab. All this stuff is absolute top quality both for finish and fit as are the footrest plates and new control pedals. A revised wiring harness is supplied and major electrical components are relocated to a plate under the nose of the tank. You even get revised brake

lines and the correct grade of fork oil.

Attention to detail is what it's all about. No way would the MKM frame kit with its parts book cum instruction manual have been produced by a Frenchman or an Italian, only a German. Not everyone will reckon that the best part of three grand is a reasonable price for a frame kit, never mind how complete it is. The option is to hand over £5,800 and ride away on a complete MKM1000. You get a signed certificate of authenticity and a numbered plate on the tank with complete bikes. Ring Simon Hill on Basingstoke (0256) 57371 to talk about frame kits or complete bikes. Still, what's money, this is the Forget the Recession Giant Test so let's dispose of another six hundred odd hypothetical pound notes on turning the MKM1000 into an MKM10-10. Re-enter Mike Krauser with a pair of his four-valve cylinder heads that should add enough extra poke to the Boxer to make that chassis work for its living. Krauser aimed to duplicate both power and torque characteristics of the BeeEm but to add more of the same right up the rev range. Krauser's own dyno charts look promising and his UK importer should be bringing in the first batch anytime now.

I'm afraid I still can't pigeon-hole the MKM accurately. If you ignore Mike Krauser's choice of colours (is he colour blind?) the MKM is a practical cafe racer retaining mirrors, indicators and a sensible riding position. I get the feeling that most people who build specials don't keep them that long after they've found them to be impractical for everyday riding. The MKM's different, anyone who puts one together will have a supremely reliable motorcycle that they'll keep for years.

Julian Ryder