Testride BMW MR 1300 GS

Almost exactly 10 years ago I had the admittedly rather rare opportunity to test drive a BMW K 1600 GT before it was released on the market.

The result:
Ordered the device immediately and now, at 70 years of age, the "best motorbike in the world" was just too heavy for me to maneuver -
with 165,000 km I gave it up with a heavy heart - to a nice guy who took good care of it - that was important to me!

And, believe it or not, this "test drive story" has now happened again with a prototype of the BMW MR 1300 GS that has come a long way!

Maybe that has something to do with my “BMW past life”:
After the new rubber cows R75/5, R90/6 and R 100S felt 100 years ago, I treated myself to a BMW break with a Yamaha XS 1100:
...was also necessary:

R75/5: Dangerous drum brakes

R 90/6: constantly broken spokes

R 100 S: Engine knocking - massive oil consumption

As the successor to the Yamaha (135,000 km), a white and blue part was due again:

After a BMW K1 day trip in Essen with a subsequent assessment (like I learned from Porsche), I and my (then) wife were able to drive the then brand-new K 100 RS with the BMW “Tour 90” on a one-week trip to the south of France Get to know - with subsequent immediate purchase!

On this occasion I met some fine BMW girls and guys, one or the other of whom I have met again and again over the years...

And then there is correspondence over 5 (!) decades.
I confess: I complained more than praised:

For the R 100 S, I rebuilt the crankcase ventilation so that the oil consumption was massively reduced and told the whole BMW, where they told me that it couldn't work...

2 years before the longitudinally adjustable passenger bench of the GS appeared, I sent this idea to BMW - "They had had this construction in the drawer for a long time", was the answer when the GS came onto the market with it.

Or to reduce the 1st gear engagement impact, the reduction of the idling speed for the brief moment of the first gear engagement, triggered by the clutch actuation and can be realized solely by software changes in the control unit...

Of course, people in Munich also noticed that I took part in a week-long comparison test between the K 1600 GTL and the Honda Gold Wing with the magazine "MOTORRAD" in Spain...

Well, and a few more things...

Of course, I don't know what the corresponding BMW people in Munich, who have changed constantly over the last 50 years, think of me - but it almost looks as if they are estimating the almost one million moto kilometers that I have something under my belt, or the 35 years of Porsche transmission development, but maybe also my attempt to put together an honest mixture of recognition and criticism of the BMW motorcycle manufacturer.

Long story short:
I was invited to Munich in July 2021 along a lot of intricate and opaque paths, almost mystical and somehow unrealistic and unreal.
In a large round of talks with nothing but important people, as if I were the sole motorcycle specialist in the northern hemisphere (or are we the southern?), I was offered, no, rather I was asked to buy the BMW MR 1300 GS, which was not yet on the market test and judge - I think that's what you call a dream!

I didn't have to think long - the next day, after signing a non-disclosure agreement, I took over the particle early in the morning in a huge hall in which a few other really interesting prototypes were on display and took a look at it at my leisure:

At the time, I didn't understand why I got a completely uncamouflaged motorcycle that at least looked like it was standard, in a very interesting color scheme -

somehow I didn't care - I was caught far too much by the fascination that this somehow delicate, almost small motorcycle ran out:

Compact, futuristic design, no more asymmetries (thank god!), great integrated luggage solution for everyday use, beautiful carbon fiber wheels, adjustable footrests for driver and passenger - you can feel your heart rate increase!

Someone calls from somewhere:
direct injection! Second balance shaft! Long seventh course! Engage speed reduction in 1st gear! 215kg!

Boy, boy - actually all this is too good to be true:
Tubular frame - once upon a time.
On the optically flowing cast aluminum frame, I can see small "doors" for stowing everything that has previously filled the tank bag in the previously unused volumes.
What is striking about the beautiful elliptical cast aluminum handlebar is that nothing is noticeable: All the cables, wires and hoses are routed internally and its design incorporates a panel which by the looks of it also maps the navigation - thank goodness no more that awkward Garmin sat nav I guess...
I'm just about to look at the cardan drive on the other side when one of the BMW guys calls out to me that my test bike is "down the hall"...

When I got there, I couldn't breathe when I was opened:
As in a press presentation, there stood a galactic high-flyer on a small pedestal:

Attention hold on:

Frame, swingarm, handlebars, wheels - carbon fiber as far as the eye can see!
And you can see it straight away: direct injection - injection valve centrally above the combustion chamber.
Silencer? Under the engine - Symmetrical exit at the bottom right and left just behind the footpegs.
luggage system? Standard! Sensationally integrated into the entire vehicle line according to the motto "form follows function" - unobtrusively flowing, underlining the overall design in an extremely positive way.
In the cockpit, the beautiful design instruments "grow" out of the elliptical carbon fiber handlebar - it is also the carrier for the aero disc - the future says hello...

When I bend over the display, the entire set of instruments switches on - I hadn't thought about the fact that the "motorcycle key" had previously been loaded onto my Applewatch - brilliant...
My companion showed me how to use the navigation system within a minute, just for fun - this is how I always wanted it:
No matter what I tried intuitively, it worked!

It's fascinating when all of a sudden you see only winding roads, only scenic roads, or only motorways on maps, when you can configure your navigation system according to your own ideas and when you do what you always wanted, simply by tapping on roads your route can put together...

But further on in the text, as important as the navigation system is - no, wait, the following still has to be clarified:

This "factory photo" of an R 1300 GS has nothing to do with my test drive engine apart from the delicate appearance:
Front, back, top, bottom:
Everything covered, "covered up", disguised, just a prototype that is sometimes allowed "out into the open".

At least on the outside, mine left an absolutely series-ready and finished impression!
And logical:
take pictures - death penalty!

I am enlightened that:

- both the handlebars and the two separate seats and the footrests can be adjusted in almost all directions at the front and rear.
- if desired, all data for the new data helmet can be freely configured on the visor.
- a central locking system closes all the locks on the motorcycle
- it can be lowered when stationary to make it easier to get on and off

And that the whole machine still weighs only 215 kg I'm slowly getting "tingly" - I'd like to get started quite urgently now - but I have to keep a bit of courtesy and decency...

That's exactly what my attentive supervisor, no, companion noticed and he lets the Über-GS from the electrically (?) actuated main stand - two "design tubes" move up - slide down - the side stand extends at exactly the right time and the GS winks at me and says:

"Well, Grandpa, how about the two of us - I can be good too, if I have to!"
I don't think it has to be, but good to know!
After 52 years of motorcycling, it has long since become clear to me:
95% of the time we "normal people" drive "walk" with maybe 20% of the offered performance.

What we need and want is not endless power, but torque, drivability, smooth running, low vibration and noise levels, everything that makes “reasonable driving”...

This is exactly how a combustion engine in a motorcycle can survive for another 10 or 15 years.
Certainly not with the exhaust flap rioters and the devices that deliver acceptable torque and power beyond 8000 rpm!
And don't forget - the motorcycle is only "refined" by the driver:
It's not the gun, it's the man behind the gun!

In the meantime I'm sitting up like a tailor-made, no, in this motorbike and the shivers of happiness run down my spine all the time - and the engine isn't even running!

I can now start with the Applewatch or, as usual, with the starter button - the GS has already switched the ignition via the watch...
So I press the starter and experience several "big surprises“:

After what feels like one revolution of the crankshaft, the engine starts - at 1000 rpm and not at the painful 1700 rpm as it is today - it seems that a few things have changed in terms of lubrication (?)...
After a few seconds, the two-cylinder is actually running at 800 rpm and runs as smoothly as a four-cylinder!
My BMW friend noticed my astonishment and smiles at me:
"She got a second balancer shaft..."
He then talks about orders of the first, second and third degree, which inevitably come about as a result of the rotational non-uniformity of Otto engines and which are thus largely eliminated.

And something else is very noticeable:
I once had a Yamaha FJ 1300 with a mechanically extremely quiet engine and drive train:
Even with the helmet off and your ears very close to the cylinder head - phenomenal mechanical smoothness - just like now on this GS!
A 2-cylinder without the rattling and rattling that is common with the GSs today - that I can still experience that!
By the way: The really ingenious 6-cylinder of the K 1600 GT is by no means quieter than the current GS in terms of drive train:

With both (and all others too) the entire drive train is excited to rattling, rattling, rattling due to the non-uniformity of every petrol engine due to the transmission drive shaft also rotating when idling, which is possible due to the necessary play and tolerances of all rotating parts.
Idle rattling is what the four-wheelers call it. And as with these, there are also pull and push rattles on the motorcycles, which causes many motorcyclists to worry about engine damage again and again...

Short and good:
The MR 1300 GS is as quiet as my Yamaha was back then - I'm very impressed!

I admit, however, that I didn't really notice it anymore:
I played around with the throttle a bit and immediately remembered the running behavior of my penultimate Porsche project:

Thanks to the low flywheel masses, the V10 of the Carrera GT revs up and down just as quickly as a racing engine and when you switch it off, it suddenly “doesn’t make a single crankshaft revolution anymore”, like the “bread and butter engines” with large flywheel masses do...
Here, by the way, is our still slightly disguised transmission test Carrera GT shortly before the start of series production…

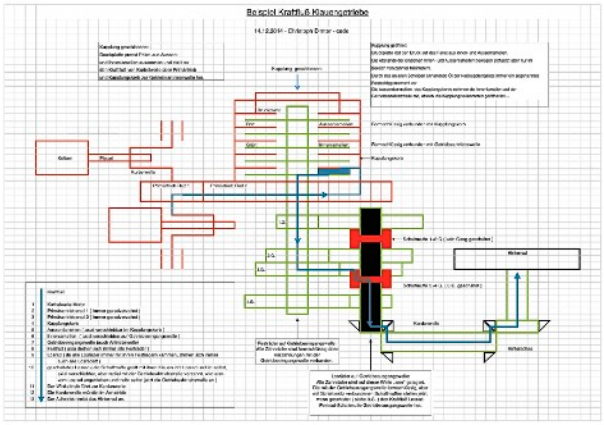
Back to the GS:
Without having driven a meter, you have the feeling:
You can't make a 2-cylinder engine any better!
To name a few adjectives that characterize apparent opposites:

Gentle and greedy, comfortable and aggressive, quiet and engaging, road&racing, no, the latter are not adjectives...

OK, can I now?

Schorsch, that's what I'll call him now, we're in Bavaria, understands me: "But don't leave the test site!" - Logical, I signed it - besides, whole cohorts of BMW guys would immediately catch me again.

Pulling the clutch: It's as easy as it is with the current GS today!



But to my great delight, my patent for the noise-reduced engagement of first gear has now been implemented:
Pulling the clutch reduces the engine's idling speed from 800 rpm to 600 rpm for around 2 seconds, during which you can comfortably and almost noiselessly engage first gear.

The input shaft of the gearbox, which should actually stand still and is still turning because of the drag torque of the oil bath clutch, no longer has to be braked from 1100 rpm to standstill as it is today, but only from 600 rpm to standstill to engage first gear will!
The speed reduction works perfectly and reliably and the engine seems to "stand" even less than 600 rpm - almost certainly a merit of the new direct injection and a probably improved oil pump performance in the low speed range...

With a completely new GS feeling, I roll out of the hall and “glide” straight ahead for about a kilometer at a speed limited to 30 km/h in the direction of the handling course.
“My test” starts here:
30 km/h in all gears - wooooowhh - it doesn't matter in which gear, it stays in control, doesn't even have a tendency to jerk, not even in sixth gear and it doesn't twitch a bit when opening the throttle valves.

To the handling course, I climb a small incline on the left and when I get to the top, I take a closer look at the small racetrack that lies in front of me.

I would like to have something like that on my doorstep!
From gorgeous, tight Mickey Mouse corners in close succession to long, really fast 180° corners with short straights in between, everything is super clear!

What else did Schorsch, uh Georg, give me:
Two hours - maximum!
So let's get started!

I roll very calmly and cautiously towards the first corners - and I'm surprised that I'm all alone..
But good thing, it reduces the stress of having to show what a great moto pike you are…

Next surprise:
I was always of the opinion that my new R 1250 GS drives itself - it doesn't!
This one drives itself!
After three or four tight corners I feel like I've been married to this bike for years!

On the one hand, the engine is velvety smooth, on the other hand, it is really powerful and I keep asking myself how you can teach a 2-cylinder to run so smoothly at the same time with this unbelievable pressure, and completely independent of the engine speed.

Then it occurs to me:
Now the exhaust valves are also variable, which means that depending on the load and engine speed, the valves open earlier or later and close earlier or later and/or the valve lift changes.
The result of direct injection and variable valve timing/stroke is as brutal as it is impressive:
This not only improves performance and torque at lower speeds, but also consumption, exhaust gas and much more - I am deeply impressed!

The test track here has no end of grip and I ride lean angles effortlessly like never before in my 950,000km motorcycle life. It keeps going down, the swinging back and forth is endlessly funny, I notice how the half of the brain that stands for reason is trying to slow me down and how I feel this flow after a very short time:

You notice that you're in a really good mood right now, that you actually wanted to do a few quiet surfing laps and are now doing some racing by your standards.
Where my current GS sends a not-so-pleasant jolt through the drive train when quickshifting with the throttle valve open, the MR 1300 GS seems to change gear seamlessly to the next level!
In general, gearbox:
Super short distances, significantly reduced shifting forces and, I can't believe it - hooray - a seventh cruising gear!
It reduces consumption, wear, speed, makes the part unaffordable: 100 km/h at 3000 rpm!

But we were at “just starting racing”:
As a typical road and travel driver with just two visiting a race track, I'm not very familiar with high lean angles beyond 140 km/h - I've just come out of one of the endlessly long 180° curves and at the exit I saw 170 km/h out of the corner of my eye on the display in all seriousness...

Kleine Episode am Rande:

Years ago I was with my Suzuki GSX 1400 in Anneau du Rhin, a fine racetrack in Alsace, very close to Colmar.
After a great day with an instructor, there was free driving in the afternoon...
My head said: Let it be, you're flat!

My moto heart said exploit!

Long story short:
After two or three laps I took off pretty badly - exhausted, no more tension, no more concentration...

I just remembered this:

In July I was congratulated on my 70th birthday and there's no shame in not making full use of the 2 hours - especially since I actually only "pulled the cable pretty wildly".
But of course: It doesn't happen that often that you can ride such a high-flyer motorcycle on a small race track.
So I switch to the tourism course, which is also equipped with bad roads, water crossings and extreme hills.
The most interesting part was the rough road:

What a motorcycle, with which you have just massively pushed your own limits on the race track, can bounce and dampen immediately afterwards on a “Holterdipolter” pothole track is simply unbelievable for me!

Even with my current GS, I'm always fascinated by the forks that work incessantly, even when the road seems to be slippery - what this GS adds to that is awesome: Ironing away is exactly the right expression!
What you see below you and what you perceive on the bike doesn't seem to match at all:
The road seems dead flat and the fork works non-stop!
It doesn't matter what you're on the go - the particle beds you extremely comfortably!

We don't need to talk about a phenomenal braking system that makes you realize how much an energy destroyer contributes to the feel-good factor on a moto - the GS already has that today.
Ober about a seating position that does not tire even after hours of driving.
Or about the consumption, which with the direct injection with even higher torque (super!) and higher power (I don't really need it!) at a lower speed (I want that!) has fallen again by almost half a liter per hundred kilometers!
Or over, or over, or over...

When I then hand the MR 1300 GS back to Schorsch, it becomes increasingly clear to me what I've been riding with in the last two hours:
With the world's best motorcycle, which will almost certainly not be overtaken by any other manufacturer for the remaining time of the combustion engines!

With the woolly milk sow, whose laid eggs are more ingenious than ever!

With an epoch-making motorcycle that, like the Porsche 911, stands alone on a pedestal that the others look up to with envy!

Well, and then the chimney sweep rang - he apologized for coming so early in the morning and hopefully he didn't wake my wife and me...
But he has!
Because this absolutely unbelievable motorcycle, of which I would like to have one for the living room to look at, one for the garage to "tinker with", one for cruising, and one for racing, of course there is no such thing!

Can't even exist:
To do this, the balance of power in the development departments would have to be changed "somewhat":
Bean counter: -60% / Designer: -10% / Powertrain: +50% / Quality: +40% etc., etc...
And the device would arrive at around €50,000...
Without the BMW-typical surcharge list, of course!

And that the MR 1300 GS, which will come at some point, can do everything a little bit better than the GS can do today - the most interesting thing will be the weight...

Unfortunately, it is also relatively certain that BMW-Motorrad will bring a new motorcycle onto the market according to old tradition, which will be finished over the following years while we customers are riding it.

But as long as we crazy moto guys, sorry and gals, buying BMW boxes like there's no tomorrow, as long as we accept all sorts of "BMW slip-ups", as long as they sell us embarrassing €800 Garmin sat navs, and as long as we spend 20,000 € and more for a 2-cylinder, as long as they will make "Hugoles" with us customers...

And as long as none of the other manufacturers can play in this league, they will too!
That's just market economy:
Whoever has the best product also has the power.

I wish the BMW Motorrad people a successful year of development until the 1300 GS comes onto the market in 2023.
And I'm pretty happy that I have a state-of-the-art, pretty ingenious GS, which I don't think has any real opponents on the market at the moment.
After incredibly great ten K 1600GT years with 160,000km I found a worthy successor with 75kg less weight, which is important for me, and I fell in love with the particle in no time!

Of course I forgave the chimney sweep for waking me up from my GS 1300 dream:
My brilliant test drive was over at this point...

Weissach, October 17, 2021, Christoph Dimter