Press Release

September 2012

BMW Motorcycles: Sheer driving pleasure on two wheels.

The end of the First World War ushered in a new era for BMW. At the time, aero-engines were the fledgling company’s only product – and the Germans were banned from manufacturing them by the victorious powers. Chief designer Max Friz took just five weeks to design the first BMW motorcycle on his drawing board. The BMW R 32 was presented in 1923 and proved to be a great success. The Boxer engine with transversely mounted cylinders and a cardan drive have defined the fundamental design of BMW motorcycles to the present day. BMW has always made production quality a top priority and this was so right from the start. The world’s first lightweight alloy cylinder head in motorcycle manufacture was designed for the BMW R 37, the sports version of the BMW R 32. The history of BMW motorcycles was marked by a string of speed records during the late 1920s and 1930s. Racing rider Ernst Henne set up a speed record with an aerodynamically fully-faired racing machine on 28 November 1937: the record of 279.5 km/h remained unbroken for the next 14 years. In the subsequent year Schorsch Meier also left the competition standing with designed-in lightweight construction and superior engine technology. He was the first foreign rider to win the British “Senior Tourist Trophy”. Aside from manufacturing aero-engines, motorcycle production for a long time remained the second mainstay of the company. In 1939 alone, more than 20,000 BMW motorcycles were sold.

**Full speed ahead to buck the crisis.**

During the Second World War, motorcycle production was restricted to the BMW R 75 military motorcycle, in order to free up production capacities for aero-engine construction, which was essential for the war effort. Three years after the war came to an end, the first post-war BMW motorcycle came out of the Munich factory with the blessing of the Military Authority. The BMW R 24 was based on the prewar BMW R 23 model with a revised single-cylinder engine and a new four-speed gearbox. The first models in the post-war period recorded bumper sales and provided the foundation for the fast re-emergence of BMW – motorcycle production provided the backbone of the company. As early as 1950, the BMW R 51/3 put a 2-cylinder machine back into the product range. Commercial success continued and annual production increased to 30,000 motorcycles by 1954. However, the German motorcycle market was confronted with declining registration figures for motorcycles in the mid-1950s. The motorcycle was losing ground to the automobile in terms of image and prestige, and BMW was not immune to this development. The 1960s essentially saw concepts from the 1950s being refined . Business in the automotive market was booming and this success was also reflected in the allocation of production capacities. On 13 May 1969, the last motorcycle rolled off the production line in Munich. In future, all BMW motorcycles would hail from Berlin.

**Rejuvenation: new models from the Berlin-Spandau manufacturing facility.**

BMW presented a completely new development with the \5 Series in 1969. The new motorcycles with displacement of 500 (R 50\5), 600 (R 60\5) and 750 cc (R75\5) were consistently designed as sports touring motorcycles. The completely new model generation focused on improved comfort for the riders and more safety at all speeds. This was to give motorcycle riding some trend-setting stimuli. When the motorcycle started to make a comeback at the beginning of the 1970s as a sports and leisure vehicle, BMW was in an ideal position with the new models. The top model BMW R 75\5 sold 37,000 units and returned to the position of best-selling motorcycle in the product range for the first time since the war came to an end. This finally heralded the end of the motorcycle crisis. At the International Bicycle and Motorcycle Exhibition (IFMA) in 1976, BMW presented the BMW R 100 RS as its first motorcycle with a displacement volume of one litre. This motorcycle created a sensation at the exhibition. It was the first motorcycle in the world to feature a full fairing fixed to the frame. It also defined benchmarks in aerodynamics, protection against the weather, and handling. On 1 January 1976, BMW grouped its motorcycle activities in BMW Motorrad GmbH. From 1979, the wholly-owned BMW subsidiary launched a new market segment with large-volume Enduros, which marked the company’s return to motor sport - with a start in off-road sport. French rider Hubert Auriol lined up the Enduro model BMW R 80 G/S at the start of the legendary Paris – Dakar Rally in 1981. He subsequently succeeded in winning the motorcycle placings in the world’s toughest rally. BMW motorcycles went on to repeat this success with a hat trick of wins (1983, 1984 and 1985).

**Advanced engineering for the next century.**

Although BMW produced some stunning performances with innovative motorcycles during the 1970s, the Boxer engine had come up against the limits of technical feasibility. Significant performance enhancements were no longer possible with the limits projected for exhaust and noise emissions without relinquishing the reliability so typical of BMW. 1983 therefore saw BMW launching a 4-cylinder model with the BMW K 100 for the first time since the start of motorcycle manufacture. The K Series had a very special feature. This time the engineers had not mounted the engine transversely but had selected a flat longitudinal configuration for the engine. 4-valve technology was installed in a BMW series motorcycle for the first time when the BMW K 1 was presented in 1988. The consistent design of the BMW K 1 highlights its claim as an innovation platform on two wheels. Later that year, BMW was the first manufacturer in the world to market a motorcycle with ABS and followed up a little later with the first three-way catalytic converter. When a new 4-valve Boxer engine was presented alongside an advanced frame in the BMW R 1100 RS during the spring of 1993, BMW proved it had successfully upgraded the Boxer engine to meet the latest requirements. BMW was also a world leader on safety and environmental protection with the Boxer engine thanks to ABS and the catalytic converter. A third model series was added to the traditional 2-cylinder Boxer series and the K Series at the end of 1993. With the F Series (Funduro) BMW revived its single-cylinder tradition and supplemented its product range with a rookie model. Today, BMW Motorrad markets numerous models and model versions for virtually any application. Any rider will find the right model in the five categories “Enduro”, “Tour”, “Roadster”, “Sport” and “Urban Mobility”.

**Husqvarna Motorcycles: the off-road experience.**

As a leading provider of mainly off-road motorcycles, Husquvarna has been enriching the product portfolio of the BMW Group with lightweight, all-terrain motorcycles since 2007. The model range is presented in the categories “Offroad” “Supermoto” and “Street”. The new Nuda introduced a thoroughbred road motorcycle into the range for the first time, bringing the total number of models up to 25.

In 2006, BMW sold more than 100,000 motorcycles in one year for the first time. This demonstrates that BMW Motorrad is continuing to chart a trajectory in the fast lane to success.

For more information please contact:

**BMW Group Corporate and Governmental Affairs**

**Technology Communications**

Manfred Grunert

Spokesman Heritage and Driving Experience

Phone: +49-89-382-27797

mailto: [Manfred.Grunert@bmw.de](mailto:manfred.grunert@bmw.de)

Internet: [www.press.bmw.de](http://www.press.bmw.de)

**BMW Group Classic**BMW Group Classic is responsible for all activities within the BMW Group associated with the history of the company and its three brands BMW, MINI and Rolls-Royce. This ranges from the Group Archives, which are available to anyone as a centre of expertise for all the facts and figures surrounding the history of the company, the brands and the products, through the BMW Museum, which receives more than 400,000 visitors each year, to the BMW Classic Centre where all the facilities are provided that drivers require to satisfy their passion for classic BMW vehicles from spare parts to full restoration. Another aspect is planning and implementation of participation in all the classic events attended, and administration and expansion of the vehicle collection with more than 1,000 exhibits.

**The BMW Group**

With its three brands – BMW, MINI, Husqvarna Motorcycles and Rolls-Royce – the BMW Group is one of the world’s most successful premium manufacturers of cars and motorcycles. It operates internationally with 25 production and assembly plants in 14 countries and a global sales network with representation in more than 140 countries.

During the financial year 2011, the BMW Group sold approximately 1.67 million cars and more than 113,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax for 2011 was € 7.38 billion on revenues amounting to € 68.82 billion. At 31 December 2011, the BMW Group had a workforce of approximately 100,000 employees.

Long-term thinking and responsible action have long been the foundation of the BMW Group’s success. Striving for ecological and social sustainability along the entire value-added chain, taking full responsibility for our products and giving an unequivocal commitment to preserving resources are prime objectives firmly embedded in our corporate strategies. For these reasons, the BMW Group has been sector leader in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices for the last seven years.

[www.bmwgroup.com](http://www.bmwgroup.com)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/BMWGroup>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/BMWGroup>

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/BMWGroupview>