

The original BMW Neue Klasse: The Birth of the BMW Sports Sedan in the 1960s also marked the beginning of a new era for the company.

- The Neue Klasse moniker, which today also identifies the new family of battery electric models, was also used in the 1960s.
- With the first Neue Klasse, the foundations the modern success of the BMW Group current success were built.

Neue Klasse is in the news today, the name us used to identify a new family of battery electric models. The current Neue Klasse is paramount for the company: BMW is committed to achieving full climate neutrality across the entire value chain no later than 2050, as explained by Oliver Zipse, Chairman of the Board of Management of BMW AG—something that is also linked to the new and symbolic Neue Klasse. There was indeed a previous Neue Klasse that represented a visionary restructuring within BMW.

The original BMW Neue Klasse was a revolutionary car that defined a new segment—the medium sports sedan—in the industry. This vehicle, which began production in 1962, changed was a game changer for the company and for the intermediate sedan segment. But what made the predecessor of the current BMW 3 Series and BMW 5 Series so successful?

You may be wondering, "Neue Klasse? Why?" The answer is quite simple: in the early 1960s, BMW's model range started with microcars like the BMW Isetta, BMW 600, and BMW 700, and was crowned by large sedans and coupes, such as the BMW 501, 502, and 503. Between them lay a gap in the range of the Bayerische Motoren Werke (Bavarian Motor Works, BMW): a space that was filled by the Neue Klasse.

In fact, initially, Neue Klasse was not the official name of this model series, although—after the introduction of the BMW 1800 in 1963—BMW began using the term in its advertising from 1964. And with absolute self-confidence. After all, the company was convinced that with this mid size sedan, they had created "a new class that was unique and unmatched," as explained by Marc Thiesbürger, spokesperson for BMW Group Classic.

This Neue Klasse could and, in fact, had to (that was clear before its launch) become a success. The reason was the company's tense financial situation. Therefore, following Herbert Quandt's commitment to BMW in 1959, development efforts focused on the new model series, which had already been worked on internally. At the presentation at the Frankfurt Motor Show in 1961, it became evident that the Munich team had hit the mark with the development of this entirely new medium sedan. The vehicle excited both the public and the specialized media, and the order books filled up quickly.

A Risk worth taking

BMW actively set to work preparing for production, investing large sums in building and expanding modern production facilities for the Neue Klasse. A new production hall was constructed for the

Munich factory, and around 3,000 new skilled workers were hired. BMW quickly countered production difficulties with a multi-level quality control system that was applied even during the manufacturing process.

The risk of embarking on something new was rewarded, as the significant economic success of the newly launched models triggered rapid growth for BMW in the 1960s and pioneering business decisions. Thus, with the Neue Klasse, the collaborative relationship between the development and sales teams was strengthened, allowing for better planning of equipment and vehicle features.

But above all, the Neue Klasse contributed to BMW's clear positioning as a manufacturer of sports cars for everyday use. This was also reflected in sales figures: in the ten years between 1960 and 1970, BMW tripled its car sales. During the same period, the revenue generated from vehicles increased more than sevenfold. In total, between February 1962 and January 1972, a remarkable 339,814 sedans from the O2 family, or Neue Klasse vehicles, were built.

For the four-door body, a deliberately functional and understated design was chosen, very different from the conservative and baroque style of the BMW 501/502/503 series. Thus, without stylistic peculiarities and with an aerodynamic shape, a vehicle emerged that conveyed sportiness and elegance. With it, BMW managed to capture the taste of the time. To design the Neue Klasse, Wilhelm Hofmeister, the young chief designer of BMW, received assistance from the famous Italian designer Giovanni Michelotti.

Old Values Resurrected

Even before the slogan "Sheer driving pleasure" was coined, its essence was already inextricably linked to BMW. According to Thiesbürger, a great connoisseur of BMW, the Neue Klasse represented the "rediscovery of the medium sports sedan category" as it managed to transfer the basic qualities of the BMW 326, BMW 327/28, and BMW 328 to the 1960s (remember that these models gave an unmistakable image to the BMW brand in the 1930s). With it, BMW not only filled a gap in its own model range but also created its own segment: sportiness combined with exclusivity—essentially, a new class.

Today, the Neue Klasse is considered the father of the BMW 3 Series and 5 Series, the quintessential medium/high category sports sedans. With it, BMW structured its model range clearly and unequivocally, leaving it as we know it today—except for the X model lines and 1 Series, which were introduced much later. Specifically, by the late 1970s, the range consisted of the BMW 3 Series, the BMW 5 Series, and BMW 7 Series.

With the Neue Klasse, BMW Leaps into the Global Market.

The relevance of the BMW Neue Klasse was such that it allowed BMW to transition from being a company focused on Germany with some export markets to a company with a global presence.

Journalists worldwide praised the Neue Klasse, as customers would later. The words of journalist David E. Davis, in the April 1968 edition of Car and Driver magazine in the United States, left no doubt about the importance of this revolutionary BMW model:

" As I sit here, fresh from the elegant embrace of BMW's new 2002, it occurs to me that something between nine and ten million Americans are going to make a terrible mistake this year. Like dutiful little robots they will march out of their identical split-level boxes and buy the wrong kind of car. Fools, fools! Terrible, terrible, I say. Why are you blowing your money on this year's too-new-to-be-true facelift of the Continental / Countess Mara / Sprite / Sprint Status Symbol / Sting Ray / Sex Substitute / Mainliner / Belair / Newport / Overkill / Electra / Eldorado / Javelin / Toad / GTO / GTA / GTB / GTS / GTX / Reality Blaster / Variant / Park Lane / Park Ward / Ward-Heeler / XK-E / Dino / Dud car when you should be buying a BMW 2002, I ask."

The success of the Neue Klasse opened the doors for BMW to establish sales subsidiaries in the most important export markets, such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, marking the beginning of an intense growth phase for the company.

The Importance of BMW's Roots for the Future of Individual Mobility.

In 2026, the first models of the modern Neue Klasse—the new proposal for electromobility from BMW Group—will roll off the production line. The original Neue Klasse was a pioneering product and represented the first step towards a future range of models that would accommodate all segments. In short: it gave the entire company a long-term boost that remains relevant today. And thus, it bridges to the current Neue Klasse. It will be 4 wheeled embodiment of BMW Group's sustainable reorientation, with a comprehensive approach to the use of secondary materials and the principles of circular economy. A complete revolution, just like in 1961.

The BMW Group

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, **the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial services.** The BMW Group production network comprises over 30 production sites worldwide; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2024, the BMW Group sold over 2.45 million passenger vehicles and more than 210,000 motorcycles **worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2024 was € 11.0 billion on revenues amounting to € 142.4 billion.** As of 31 December 2024, the BMW Group had a workforce of 159,104 employees.

The economic success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible **action. Sustainability is a key element of the BMW Group's corporate strategy and covers all products** from the supply chain and production to the end of their useful life.

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BMW Group Latin America

BMW Group is a leader in premium individual mobility technology products and services in Latin America, where it markets its three brands: BMW, MINI, and BMW Motorrad. BMW is the top-selling premium automotive brand in Latin America, with more than one in three vehicles sold in the region. In 2024, the brand has sold 42,886 units. MINI has sold 6,383 units in the same period. BMW Motorrad has sold 27,742 motorcycles in the region, setting a sales record. BMW is the best-selling premium brand in Brazil, Mexico, and Importer Markets. BMW Motorrad has achieved record sales and now has three of its 15 main global markets in Latin America: Brazil, Mexico, and Importer Markets. BMW Group's Open Technology Approach enables a gradual transition to electromobility, offering customers the choice between battery-electric, plug-in hybrid, or combustion powertrains. More than 20% of BMW Group's sales in Latin America consist of electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles. BMW Group has delivered approximately 80,000 personal or corporate charging units across the region.

The Group has 5,000 employees in the Latin American region. Its sales offices are located in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico (where the regional office is based). BMW Group's production plants in the region are located in Brazil and Mexico. Brazil operates two plants: one in Araquari, Santa Catarina, focused on automobile production, where BMW X5 PHEV production began in 2024. The other plant in Manaus, Amazonas, is the first facility to manufacture motorcycles outside of Germany. In Mexico, a one-billion-dollar investment was announced in July 2014 for the construction and operation of a BMW Group plant in San Luis Potosí. This production site began operations in 2019 with the production of the BMW 3 Series; in 2021, an expansion was announced to include the manufacturing of the BMW 2 Series Coupé, and in 2022, the BMW M2, both exported worldwide. Starting in 2027, the San Luis Potosí Plant will incorporate electric vehicle and battery production with an \$800 million investment.

As additional information, Brazil has an engineering team to support global developments, regional challenges, and customer support organization, providing consumer assistance.

