

BMW Motorrad presents the R 18 Dragster.

Acclaimed designer Roland Sands reveals his interpretation of a custom bike based on the brand new BMW R 18.



Long Beach, 5 August 2020. The renowned custom bike designer Roland Sands stripped down the BMW R 18 to create a straight line dragster featuring the iconic and massive boxer powerplant. The result: the R 18 Dragster. He and his team have created a unique masterpiece built around the impressive 2-cylinder Big Boxer, giving their creativity free reign in the process.

Roland Sands' personal story served as a source of inspiration for his work on this bike. "With an engine that's so visibly the center piece, I immediately thought of muscle cars. My family has always been into going fast and my dad was a drag racer, so I thought it made sense to strip the bike down to the essentials and shape it to go fast on a straight track," the designer explains.

The new BMW R 18: a cruiser rooted in history.

With the new R 18, BMW Motorrad presented the brand's first series production bike for the cruiser segment in April 2020. Like no other BMW motorcycle before it, this model stands entirely in the tradition of



Presse-Information

Date 5 August 2020

Subject **BMW Motorrad presents the R 18 Dragster.**

Page 2

historical BMW motorcycles – both technically and with regard to its design. It is based on illustrious models such as the BMW R 5 and shifts the focus back to the motorcycle essentials: purist, no-frills technology and the boxer engine as the center of riding pleasure, combined with "good vibrations". The "Big Boxer" continues the line of traditional air-cooled boxer engines that have offered inspiring riding since BMW Motorrad first began production in 1923.

The technical design process used by Roland Sands.

Roland Sands always starts by sketching his ideas. This allows him to figure out the basics of the shape and what the stance and the geometry of the bike could look like. "In the end, the real magic happens when we bring the sketch to life", Roland explains.

More than any other motorcycle, the new R 18 offers a highly customizable design. It features an easily removable rear frame and a simple-to-dismantle painted parts set. This gives the customer a high degree of freedom for easily converting the rear end of the new R 18 to suit personal preferences. In addition you can also change the paint finish to suit your personal taste. "The electronics were definitely the most difficult task we had to deal with as we put in nitrous oxide, stripped out the stock exhaust and changed the intake drastically. It was a bit of an experiment, but we dialed it in! The final product is impressive and characterised by a high level of craftsmanship, as can be expected from BMW Motorrad. Right from the beginning, I couldn't wait to get customizing!" Roland points out.

For the the R 18 Dragster, the team around Roland Sands retained the stock neck geometry of the R 18, removed the bike's rear end and turned it into a drag racer. Moreover, they chose to maintain the bodywork of the original R 18, but modified the front and rear fender to fit the modified frame. The whole customizing process took about three and a half months. The bike then headed to the workshop for final assembly and a day at a drag strip.

"Every bike needs different sources depending on the build, special materials or parts. Every new bike concept is a bit of a learning process even after having built over 200 bikes. We always want to understand the genre of the bike we are building in, it's the key to keeping it authentic and functional," explains Roland Sands.



Presse-Information

Date 5 August 2020

Subject **BMW Motorrad presents the R 18 Dragster.**

Page 3

Aside from the R 18 Dragster custom bike, Roland Sands also created two different design collections of milled aluminium parts for the launch of the R 18 Cruiser: "Machined" and "2-Tone-Black". The "Machined" and "2-Tone-Black" ranges include front and rear wheels available in different dimensions than the standard sizes. In addition, the range of these exclusive milled parts includes speedometer housings, handlebar clamps, risers, handlebar grips, hand levers and mirrors as well as engine housing trim elements, filler caps, intake silencer covers and much more.

For the R 18 Dragster, Roland Sands used the milled parts design collection "2-Tone-Black" to customize levers, wheels, valve covers, breast plate, headlight and gauges. The front end was taken from the BMW R nineT. The seat as well as the exhaust were created from scratch.

The R 18 Dragster custom bike in detail

1. The frame has been modified completely removing the rear suspension for drag racing.
2. Front and rear fenders have been slightly modified utilizing the stock sheet metal parts in order to keep the classic R 18 silhouette.
3. The headlight has been taken from the original R 18 and is highlighted with the headlight bezel from the design collection of milled aluminium parts.
4. The standard exhaust has been replaced with a hand fabricated Stainless Steel twin megaphone system utilizing the exhaust tips from the milled aluminium parts.
5. The hydraulic front brake and clutch master cylinders are from Roland Sands Design.
6. The tank has been taken over from the original R 18.
7. The paint finish is a two tone metallic blue with classic white BMW pin-stripes by Roland's long time painter Chris Wood.
8. The fork has been taken from the BMW R nineT.
9. The front braking system has been taken from the S 1000 RR superbike.
10. The seat has been built from scratch and is a RSD custom seat by Saddlemen.



Presse-Information

Date 5 August 2020

Subject **BMW Motorrad presents the R 18 Dragster.**

Page 4

Roland Sands: The man behind the designs

By his own account, Roland Sands basically grew up on a motorcycle and motorcycling is in his blood. His dad was a drag racer who built custom bikes and parts. As a result, Roland was brought up surrounded by cool bikes. It wasn't long before he, too, was riding dirt bikes, taking them apart and rebuilding them. He had a racing career of his own that spanned ten years.

Today Roland is a world famous designer of custom bikes and motorcycle apparel with customers in all corners of the world.

The designer is best known for combining styles and creating new genres in the process. "Combining a racing aesthetic and function with a custom style – this is what we are probably best known for. We like to make stock machines perform better," says Roland.

For Roland Sands, motorcycling is not simply a job. "It's really hard to describe in a few sentences. Riding a motorcycle to me is like becoming one with the machine. My motorcycle is my life, it's everything, it's what I do."

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Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit

Presse-Information

Date 5 August 2020

Subject **BMW Motorrad presents the R 18 Dragster.**

Page 5

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 and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises 31 production and assembly facilities in 15 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2019, the BMW Group sold over 2.5 million passenger vehicles and more than 175,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2019 was € 7.118 billion on revenues amounting to € 104.210 billion. As of 31 December 2019, the BMW Group had a workforce of 126,016 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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