

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE



Bike 1983-2008

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Images: BMW Motorrad USA archive and Shahram Shiva

It was 25 years ago in 1983 when BMW introduced the groundbreaking new line of water-cooled 4-cylinder motorcycles called simply the “K.” There is much history around the K bikes as they became known as the new flagship BMW motorcycle range with powerful engines mated to modern styling. The K bikes soon became the new host machines for BMW’s most cutting-edge technology.

The ABS (Antilock Braking System) was first introduced on a K100RS in 1988 model year (MY). The ESA (Electronic Suspension Adjustment) was introduced on the K1200S in 2005 MY. BMW introduced their first 100 hp power plant with the wind-tunnel refined K1 and continuing with this tradition they used the K line to launch their very first 130hp engine on the truly unique K1200RS in 1997 for 1998 MY. BMW’s current most powerful motorcycle engine runs another K bike, the 167 hp, inline-4, K1200S. Also added to this list of firsts, the first electronic cruise control for motorcycles appeared on the K1200LT along with factory heated seats.

The K series of motorcycles began in

1983 as a single model, a naked K100. This bike had no other designation attached to it, such as “RS,” or “LT.” They came later. This new radical BMW looked ultra modern for its time (the K100 still looks contemporary) and it was powered by a new engine concept, a 987cc, flat-4, longitudinal, laid out on its left side with the cylinder heads on the left and the crankshaft on the right. It was nicknamed the “Flying Brick,” because of the look of the engine. This engine, in its most updated form as an 1170cc is still in use as it powers the current K1200LT motorcycles.

I remember the first time I saw a K100;

I was in my early twenties. As a rider and a young design student I gravitated almost immediately toward this new line of bikes from BMW. The highly modern, clean and linear lines of this new K machine were a complete departure from almost every other motorcycle on the road at that time. Although for many purists the early K bikes didn’t exactly rate as perfect riding machines, esthetically certain models in the BMW K range have always been among my most favorite motorcycles.

In the past nine years, I have put about 80,000 miles on K bikes alone. These high-spirited miles have been put

◀1▶ This is the very first Luxury Tourer from BMW, a K 100 LT. This bike started the “LT” craze more than 20 years ago. ▶2▶ The K 75 S. Powered by a 3 cylinder K bike engine, has remained popular, even though the last of the K75’s left BMW factory in 1995. ▶3▶ BMW K 1. ▶4▶ The 1983 K 100, the very first K bike. It still looks modern today. ▶5▶ The half-faired K 1200 R Sport, pays homage to the original K 100 RS of the 1980s. It’s based on the 163hp K1200R naked bike. ▶6▶ The K 1100 RS with 100hp, 16-valve, 4-cylinder engine is one of the most elegant bikes ever designed. ▶7▶ The Author’s highly customized 1999 BMW K1200RS, “Nandi.” This unique machine has over 140 horsepower, putting out about 122hp at the rear wheel. All non-essential touring bits have been taken off to save weight. ▶8▶ The BMW K1200RS. Built between 1998 and 2004 MY is considered to be the last of the old-school German motorcycle design discipline. With a 130hp and suspended power plant, it’s glass-smooth and very fast.