

BMW

R nineT **SCRAMBLER**



BMW's R nineT Scrambler is an interesting departure from the high-end demographic, as the German manufacturer targets younger, less affluent and first-time buyers.

Targeting a younger market segment looking for a wild, less-civilized ride, on and off road.

> By **Moshe K. Levy**

BMW scramblers trace their lineage all the way back to the R 68 model the company displayed at the 1951 International Bicycle and Motorcycle Fair IFMA in Frankfurt, Germany. That classic's high-mounted 2-into-1 exhaust was a factory option that mimicked the lines of racer Georg "Schorsch" Meier's machine. By contrast, the new Scrambler is based on the existing R nineT production model, but with several notable changes that differentiate it from its more expensive sibling.

The modified bridge-type tubular steel main frame features a separate rear-seat subframe, which can be quickly detached via 8 screws for a "chopped" minimalist solo-seat look. The wiring harness is divided between vehicle functions and engine functions to further streamline modifications. Significantly, the Scrambler's wheelbase has been lengthened to 60.1 inches from the R nineT's 58.2 inches; rake has been bumped from 25.5 degrees to 28.5 degrees; trail has been extended by almost half an inch to 4.4 inches total; and overall weight, compared to the R nineT, was shaved by 4.5 pounds.

The ergonomics of the Scrambler are also more upright, in keeping with its mission, with higher handlebars for a shorter reach forward, enduro-style footrests, and an elevated seat height of 32.3 inches

versus 30.9 inches for the R nineT. In the more obvious nods to cost-cutting, the Scrambler swaps the R nineT's upside-down 46mm telescoping front suspension for standard 43mm telescoping forks (replete with gaiters, for that period-correct look) and makes due with non-radially mounted brakes. The R nineT's cross-spoked wheels are supplanted with black cast aluminum hoops, and the front wheel size expands from the R nineT's 17 inches to 19 for the Scrambler. The R nineT's comprehensive multi-function display instrument cluster is replaced with a simple speedometer, and the Scrambler's 4.5-gallon gas tank is made of steel instead of the R nineT's aluminum. These changes result in an MSRP of \$13,000 for the Scrambler, versus \$15,095 for the R nineT.

The heart of both motorcycles is the same 1170cc air/oil-cooled DOHC "camhead" flat-twin, which pumps out 110 horsepower at 7,750 rpm and 86 lb.-ft. of torque at 6,000 rpm. The twist is transmitted via hydraulically actuated dry clutch and through a 6-speed transmission with a final drive ratio of 2.9:1. Both models utilize BMW's Paralever single-sided cast aluminum swingarm and shaft drive, suspended by a single rear shock that is adjustable for rebound damping and preload. Two-channel ABS with available ASC is included, and can be disabled for off-road use.

The optional Metzeler Karoo 3 tires on our test bike have a mildly aggressive off-road pattern and howl relentlessly on the tarmac starting at 40 mph. The Scrambler itself is quite versatile, and was equally adept on the shallow gravel trails we traversed as it was dodging potholes in Metropolis. The front suspension on our early production tester was rather harsh over surface imperfections—even though total front suspension travel is up 0.2 inches to 4.9 inches on the Scrambler.

The Scrambler is only the first of BMW's efforts to leverage the R nineT's configurable architecture in an all-out assault to target every conceivable niche in the sport—especially those that appeal to younger, less affluent buyers. BMW has announced two more variations: The stripped down R nineT "Pure" and the café-inspired R nineT "Racer." Details and a thorough road test in a future issue. **MCN**