

CLASSIC DRIVER

BMW's 1960s R50/2 - More 'Munich' than 'Monterey'?

Lead

With its classic lines, piano black paintwork and traditional layout, you'd be forgiven for thinking this 490cc BMW motorcycle is from the 1930s, not the acid-tripping late-60s...

Yet the beautifully restored example that Classic Driver dealer Movendi is offering came out of BMW's Munich factory in 1969. That does not make it any less 'modern' compared to its contemporaries, though, as the Bavarian company's products were usually pretty advanced – just 'different' from the others.

The bike features the famous BMW flat-twin 'boxer' engine and shaft-drive – features to be found on its bikes today. At the time, a BMW motorcycle was considered the 'thinking man's bike', providing reliable, low-maintenance transport for the connoisseur, or a tough workhorse for sidecar duty. But performance from a machine like the R50/2 wasn't bad: 145km/h flat out from 26HP wasn't a lot different from a Bonnie or Besa of the day.

And high-performance fiends could always order a R50S. With a higher compression ratio, the 'S' model raised the R50 series' maximum speed by another 10km/h. You will notice the front wheel's characteristic 'Earles fork', an engineering solution to the problem of conventional telescopic forks plunging the front of the bike sharply under braking, thereby shortening the bike's wheelbase and creating inherent problems with its handling.

Today, classic BMW motorcycles are prized not only for their engineering quality but also for their style. In fact, an older BMW, with bouncy big rubber seat and stark black paintwork, is about as hip as you can get. Movendi's example can be described as 'near concours', perfect for [a ride in the Peak District with similarly groovy friends](#).

Photos: Movendi

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