

CLASSIC DRIVER

Five questions to Ola Stenegard, BMW motorcycle designer



BMW has never followed fashion in creating new models. Whether it was Telelever forks, ABS brakes, or electronically adjustable suspension, the marque has always come up with unconventional solutions and was the first to apply new technological developments.

The air-cooled boxer engine was its only concession to tradition and with the competition producing more and more horsepower and with pressure from ever-stricter emissions regulations, it was inevitable that the new R 1200 GS that has just been launched would have water cooling.

So, in the middle of last year, it looked as though BMW had said goodbye to its heritage, but then rumours and spy-shots started circulating about a naked bike with an old-school look and an air-cooled boxer engine that was secretly being developed.

In November 2012 all doubts disappeared when BMW announced that to celebrate the 90th anniversary of its first motorcycle, the R32 which appeared in 1923, they were going to launch a special model. It would have spoked wheels and an air-cooled boxer engine. BMW released a sketch (see below) showing a bike with clear, simple proportions: a tank, a motor and a neat little seat with a sporty, café-racer-like hump.

Since then, trying to get information from BMW has been like trying to get blood from a stone, so we cornered Ola Stenegard – one of the young design team leaders – with a background in Swedish/US choppers, in the restaurant of the futuristic BMW World in Munich and tried to tickle some information out of him. We got off to a slow start.

**2013. 90 Years of
BMW Motorrad**

**Birth of a thrilling BMW
bearing the genes from
9 decades.**



What's the bike going to be like Ola? What's it called and when is it coming?

That's still a secret. You'll just have to be patient and wait and see.

BMW is famous for advanced technology. Why would you want to build a low-tech bike?

At BMW we have a really cool heritage that we can look back at and be inspired by. A lot of bikes are getting really high-tech, super-sophisticated, and some riders feel overwhelmed by so much technology. Especially if you don't ride very often, you go to the garage, you sit on the bike and you almost need an instruction manual – what are all these buttons for? They want a simple, easy-going bike. Something you can just get on and ride. You don't have to go fast – it's cool however you ride.

Will it be a retro bike?

Retro has such a negative ring. It makes you think of something fake: it's copying the past, trying to make old things again. We are not doing that with the new bike. It's got to connect to our heritage, but it's got to have modern features like reliability, good ABS brakes, good handling – our customers expect that. As far as performance goes, a lot of people aren't interested in horsepower; as long as it feels right, the performance data doesn't really matter.



Is BMW going to stop building high-tech bikes?

No! The HP4 is amazing. There is a great group of customers who want the best and fastest bike you can buy. The HP4 is such a blast out on the track! You're going so fast and you have to brake in places where on a 600 you're wide open. With the traction control helping you, you're power-sliding everywhere – it's so much fun and it's so safe. Low-tech bikes and high-tech bikes, they both have their customers and both of them are great.

Will this bike attract younger riders?

Yes, I think so. There is a whole trend of young guys getting into biking and they like old-style bikes. It's super cool. For a long time the whole industry has been really scared that motorcycling is a dying thing, that the market for bikes is disappearing. They were saying, "Touring riders are getting older, the sports bike riders are getting older," and now suddenly young guys are getting into bikes – it's quite peculiar and interesting that they like old bikes. The industry has been trying to interest them for ages with new technology, like Harley with the V-Rod, but only the old guys buy those bikes and suddenly the young guys are coming in from another direction. They like the style, they find bikes with classic lines cool. I'm sure they'll like the bike we're building.

Interview: [Tim Davies](#)

Photos: BMW

Gallery

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