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First Impression: BMW K 1200S

The Luxo-Superbike we've been waiting for.

By Shahram Shiva

Hmmm, where's the power? This is almost too mellow. Opening the throttle some more and there it was, a hint of power fifty feet away from the dealership and twenty feet before the first stoplight. Steve Sergi at BMW of Manhattan instructed me on the controls. The bike started right off. I set the ESA (Electronic Suspension Adjustment) to *rider+luggage* for preload and *sport* for rebound in hope of the type of test riding I'd planned.

Dance; zipping in and out cars, splitting lanes, crossing the double-yellow, passing buses and taxis.

The bike feels just like my RS except lighter and more agile but with a slight vibration. I pulled in to fuel up. I'm stopped three times by guys who want to know what kind of bike this is, how much it costs and how powerful.

I head north on the West Side Highway. Fifteen minutes into the ride I'm puzzled by the absence of mind blowing power that I've been expecting. Have I gotten so jaded that a 170HP bike just doesn't get me excited any more.

I push the revs up past 8,000 RPM and get a hint of the power then it dawns on me; this is a gentlemen's Supersport and not a hooligan machine. Speed and luxury is more fun than just speed or luxury alone. There lies the secret to BMW's new Supersport platform.

Compared to the RS the K1200S is lighter, faster, corners better and



Our test rider and testee.

Compared to the K1200RS

the S is lighter, faster, corners better, more agile...

I slipped the transmission into first gear and off I went. I rode through a few streets looking for gas (fuel light was on) and felt totally comfortable. Not three minutes into the ride and I'm doing my Manhattan

more agile yet it is very similar in many other ways.

During my ride I play with the ESA settings. The preload can be adjusted when the bike is stopped like at the red lights however the rebound can be reset any time. I switch between *Comfort* and *Sport* and notice only a slight difference in stiffness. Switching to *Comfort* takes the edge off of the suspension. I do need more time on the seat before

giving you a valid comment on the ESA. Overall its an ingenious invention however as I write this paper I'm not totally sold on it. I prefer my suspension settings on near max stiffness; I am not a type who worries too much about plush rides.

The seat is simply marvelous for an OEM. But for my taste a Sargent Cycle World Sport Seat with its lower back support would be a must for this

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First Impressions: K1200S
con't from pg. 37

machine. One needs to be held in place when accelerating to avoid ending up on the rear seat.

The new K1200S is narrower than the RS and lighter by about 80 lbs. and its wheelbase is just short of inch longer. On a longer bike I should be even more comfortable but

here I feel cramped and a bit too close to the bars, not too annoying or uncomfortable but I would prefer more distance to the bars and a little wider set would also be nice.

Riding position on the K1200S is just slightly more aggressive than the RS and the slight vibration was a surprise but of no significant issue.

After shooting some photos and video I decided to take this test ride more aggressively, after all, I was supposed to be enjoying myself. The tires were finally scuffed in enough for a more spirited ride. Soon the sweetness of the engineering and overall feel of the bike grew on me. In a short thirty minutes the bike felt like an extension of my body.

One needs to be held in place when accelerating to avoid ending up on the rear seat.

The red line is at 10,500RPM and the limiter kicked in at 105MPH in second and at about 130 in third gear. I topped 135MPH in 4th gear before deciding to cool it. This bike is designed to handle the mid to upper triple-digits with ease and it certainly does. Its at home in any zone over 120MPH and that's when it comes alive. Riding at those speeds its simply "solid".

The brakes are sensational like throwing out an anchor or opening a parachute. 100% mind blowing.



Doug Keim

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Many times superior to BMW's non-EVO models.

I decided to visit a friend who rides a Suzuki GSXR-1000 for a back-to-back comparison. Compared to the K1200S the GSXR is a bat-outta-hell. There's immense power from the get go with no end in sight. So much power that I'm overwhelmed by the Beast.

It turns heads and causes people to stop in their tracks and walk up to you.

Was I expecting the GSXR experience when I first rode the K1200S? I think so, and that's why I was initially disappointed. Compared to the BMW the Suzuki is smaller, lighter, narrower and more compact. The GSXR is outstanding in terms of power delivery but it lacks the comfort and luxury of the BMW and of course the caché. The K1200S felt like a magic carpet ride. The Suzuki is exhilarating and makes an awesome track bike but for me the K1200S is nearly as fast, it corners very well, has superior brakes and retains the degree of comfort and luxury that I

crave. I understood the BMW K1200S even more after my ride on the Suzuki.

The Duolever handles bumps better than the Telelever on the RS. The short travel of the RS's front suspension is an issue on rough roads. The Duolever also provides better feedback. Heading back to BMW of Manhattan I managed to catch some air on a stretch of the West Side Highway and I can tell you from experience nothing can lift the RS from the ground there's your 80 pounds difference. I'll reserve judgment on serious cornering until I've had the pleasure of taking the bike on some twisty secondary roads.

The new transmission with its beveled gears shifts silky smooth. The hobby of searching for neutral is gone and as a longtime BMW rider that's a joy. It took my personal RS 30,000 miles of run-in to become that smooth.

This bike is so hot and so new it turns heads, causes people to stop in their tracks and walk up to you to inquire.

I'd like to add that the new K1200S doesn't end the rein of the K1200RS the way the latter terminated the spark of the K1100RS.

The K1200RS is still quite valid for the following reasons; its weight offers a planted solid feel that's totally luxurious and welcomed on our roadways. Also the RS runs silky smooth with zero vibration and for most of us its plenty fast with too much power.

The K1200S is a successful and ingenious incarnation of the K range and a superb offering in the global Supersport market segment. Its combination of outstanding luxury, speed, comfort, brakes, safety and technology places the K1200S in a league all its own.

Once again, BMW has managed to raise the bar.



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