

JOY RIDE

The Nmoto Nostalgia reimagines BMW's mythical R7 for the modern world

Text by NICOLAS STECHER

In automotive parlance, a "unicorn" is a vehicle so rare that most people will never lay eyes on it — a Bugatti Type 57 SC Atlantic, Mercedes-Benz 300SL "Gullwing" or a McLaren F1, for example. Finding one in the wild is tantamount to trapping the mythical horned horse. The 1934 BMW R7 is as close to a unicorn as a motorcycle can get: a hypnotic, Art Deco wave of steel and rubber seemingly summoned from an alternate universe where mundane objects like Crocs

and microwavable corndogs could never exist. Conceived in 1933 during Germany's rebuilding interwar years, like the unicorn itself the R7 was also once thought to be mythical; for over half a century, the only evidence of its actual existence was a grainy black and white photo.

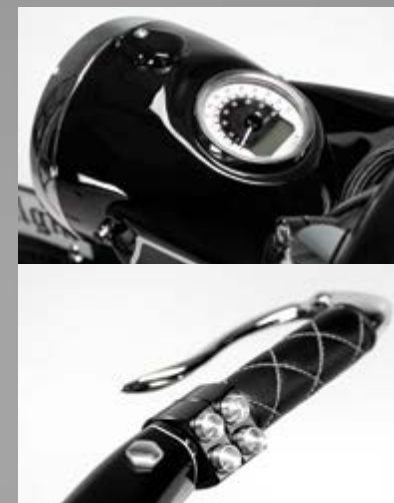
But then, in a dusty box stuffed deep in the bowels of a BMW factory, it was unearthed in 2005, like the Ark of the Covenant. Lying forgotten and in pieces, the decons-

tructed R7 was then painstakingly restored and reassembled over the course of a few years, from swoopy fender to steel engine cover. After touring European bike shows, the fully restored 1934 R7 made its West Coast debut at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

Unrepentant motorcycle enthusiast Alex Niznik remembers he was lucky enough to be present for that moment. "Being so close to a piece of history which never reached its full potential gave me direction," Niznik recalls of first laying eyes on the R7. "There and then I fell in love with it, and made a promise to myself that when I retire I will look into building a motorcycle like that." A promise he has now made good on with the new Nmoto Nostalgia.

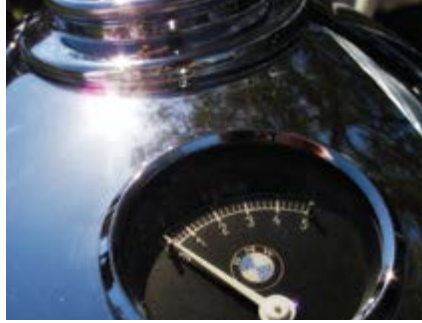
The Nostalgia is a modern day homage to the R7; don't call it a replica, and most definitely don't call it a kit. It's built on the bones of the modern BMW R nineT, stripped down and rebuilt with 96 handcrafted parts. "By using the heritage [inspired] BMW R nineT as a base," explains Niznik, "we were able to maintain the integrity of our inspiration while still making it our own." And the Nostalgia is exactly that: a rideable fantasy. But it is not a whimsical one-off custom built for a millionaire; as Niznik explains, "The Nostalgia is a production motorcycle for lovers of the R7 to own history."

Under the guidance of builder Stan Lee, who worked at famed hot rod outfit SO-CAL Speed Shop, the handbuilt bikes



The Nmoto Nostalgia isn't a replica or kit by any means. Using the BMW R nineT as a base it's a modern recreation of the legendary 1934 BMW R7, a blend of old-world artisanship and new-world technology

COURTESY OF JEFF RYLAND



are the result of old-world artisanship meeting new-world technology, with software like SolidWorks and Autodesk Fusion 360 plus CNC milling and laser works married to primitive tools like English wheels, power hammers and wooden frames; nothing is stamped. Currently, it takes about six months to complete a single Nostalgia, at a cost of \$49,500 complete (or \$39,500 if you provide the donor R nineT motorcycle).

And the bike is worth every cent. After visiting Nmoto's cavernous Miami workshop-showroom, we took one out for a spin in South Beach. While heavy and quite wide, riding the Nostalgia is a pure pleasure. Power from the 1,170 cc air/oil cooled 4-stroke flat twin engine is smooth and luxurious, its comfortable suspension and Brembo brakes modern and true. Amid the pastel Art Deco wonders of Collins Avenue, the Nmoto Nostalgia brightened to life even more; its swooping curlicues of metal, as much sculpture as machine, feel more

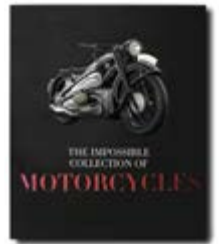
a flight of fancy than a crucible of piston and oil. Necks crane as you pass, both from its visual singularity and the rip of the 96.5 hp engine.

"The Nostalgia is much more than a motorcycle with vintage design — it's a perfect balance between art and function," Niznik avows. "No more oil leaks, scarce parts availability and many other issues that collector motorcycles come with. For the first time enthusiast collectors will have an opportunity to ride the bike on the street, not just hide it away in private collections."



The Impossible Collection of Motorcycles

Author and *Maxim* Contributing Features Editor Nicolas Stecher is such a fan of the original BMW R7 that he chose it to grace the cover of *The Impossible Collection of Motorcycles* — his coffee table book co-written with vaunted builder and Falcon Motorcycles co-founder Ian Barry. Highlighting the "100 Most Exceptional Motorcycles of the Twentieth Century", the hand-printed \$800 tome is a love letter to the greatest two-wheeled machines this world has ever seen. Yes it covers everything from the Curtiss V8 to the MV Agusta Magni 860 and the Honda NR750 — but of all the unicorns they paid tribute to, the R7 was selected to grace the cover.



The Nostalgia's swooping waves of steel, as much sculpture as machine, feel more a flight of fancy than a crucible of piston and oil



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