



BMW Group

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Munich - BMW Group, producers of BMW and Mini cars and BMW motorcycles, announces today the production of the world's first joystick-controlled motorcycle. The 1200cc LE-J will go into production in early 2008.

"This is a technological breakthrough," says Norbert Reithofer, Chairman of the Board of Management of BMW AG, said today in Munich. "Using joystick technology along with microprocessor-controlled servo motors, ABS braking system and digital fuel injection, we combine all control aspects in a small control column."

He explained the central motor has control arms which act as push-pull mechanisms on the traditional front fork assembly. "Lateral movement of the joy stick activated the servo motors. Left movement causes the right side of the fork to move forward, effecting a left turn," he says. Unpressured, the joystick will return to a neutral alignment via a newly-patented gyroscopic mechanism.

Acceleration is affected by a forward motion of the joystick; likewise braking is achieved by pulling back on the joystick.

"The electrical controls usually associated with the now-obsolete handlebars are replaced by microswitches on the joystick," Reithofer explained.

The new LE-J model will be 15 per cent lighter than its predecessor because of the loss of handlebars and heavy electrical switches. Production is scheduled to begin in January 2008 as soon as a minor technical problem is resolved.

"Currently, if you experience a catastrophic electric failure at speed," Reithofer says, "you are screwed. We're working on that."

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