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Beringer – Total Braking



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Beringer seeks to offer a total braking experience: completely controlled and with more stopping power than OEM or other aftermarket equivalents. IDN finds out where this innovative French company is going next...

GILBERT Beringer and his wife Véronique set up their company in 1985 at Chatelneuf near Saint-Etienne in Central France, an area with a proud tradition of engineering innovation, initially making wheels and forks for side-cars and importing a range of Dutch side-cars onto the French market.

By 1989 Beringer was making its own line of side cars, demonstrating their technical superiority by winning two French bike and side-car rally championships in 1990 and 1991, the latter with Gilbert on the bike and Véronique in the side-car!

In 1990, seeing an opportunity to challenge Brembo's monopoly in aftermarket braking products for road and race use, the company started manufacturing cast iron braking discs with assistance from the CETIM mechanical engineering institute in Saint-Etienne.

Three years later they expanded aftermarket brake activities to offer a complete range of calipers, pads and related products, and sold off the side car business to concentrate exclusively on motorcycle brakes. In 1997, the company expanded into systems for scooters, high performance and racing cars.

The new millennium saw many developments, with the company gaining ISO 9001 certification in 2001 and TÜV certification in 2005. More recently, it has been awarded European aerospace engineering accreditation and environmental and ethical certification for its business practices.

Turnover is divided between motorcycles (75 percent), aircraft (20 percent) and automotive (5 percent).

Today, the company has moved to a new state-of-the-art facility in Chatelneuf which houses offices, design studios, assembly workshops and warehouse. All manufacturing is outsourced, with only



assembly and quality control taking place on site.

Beringer has been working with most of its external manufacturing partners for many years.

"We insist on the fact that they are not simple suppliers but real partners," says Véronique. "For example, our cooperation with the CNC company we use starts when we design the part. And most of our suppliers, are located within 70km of Chatelneuf."

Around 90 percent of its suppliers are ISO certified, and the remainder are in the process of gaining certification.

In 2002 Beringer brought out its first braking systems for light aircraft, comprising wheels, brakes and master cylinders, applying its race technology to the aviation world. This business is based at a separate plant at Gap in the French Alps. Tooling up for this, including the installation of a dynamic brake test bench and a structural wheel test bench, was a major investment, but the benefits have filtered through to all the company's activities.

New product ideas often come from Gilbert himself, or might be identified by dealers and

Beringer headquarters is in a purpose-built facility at Chatelneuf near Saint-Etienne (above), and its aircraft activities are based next to the airport at Gap in the Alps (below)



customers, as well as race teams. On top of this, to keep ahead, the company has to update applications constantly as new bike models hit the market.

"Our main purpose is to offer not only an upgraded braking system to customers but also an improved, more controlled feel throughout the whole braking process," says Gilbert. "Most of our patents work in this direction – the rider must be able to perfectly control the brakes. Most OEM brakes are either on or off and you cannot fully control the braking process. The calipers and discs do not answer directly and proportionally to the effort on the master cylinder. This is called the 'hysteresis' of a system, when there is a delay or a bad response to a command within a system. By reducing the friction in the whole system, we improve how the parts work and the feel and control of the braking system."

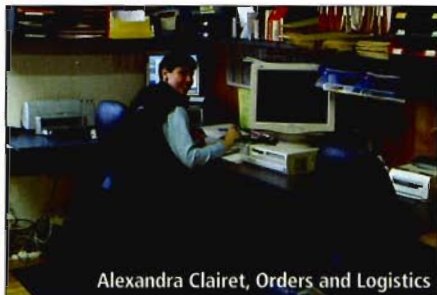
He adds: "The improvement can start with the installation of one of our brake master cylinders with OEM calipers and discs. When you first use it you notice the difference straight away. That is why we offer brake master cylinders even for classic and old bikes."

>>>

Véronique and Gilbert in their successful French bike and side-car rally championship bid in 1991



Sales executive Laetitia Matray (left), Véronique and Gilbert Beringer on the company stand at the EICMA exhibition in Milan, Italy, in November 2008, where they launched the revolutionary Inboard Braking system for Supermoto, adapted from Beringer's system for twin-engined light aircraft



Alexandra Clairet, Orders and Logistics



The Chatelneuf HQ was purpose-built for the company two years ago and houses all design, sales, support, final assembly and warehouse functions.



Aircraft systems designer Rémi Beringer



Beringer's Aerotec caliper with RoadLok reduces the braking distance and protects the bike with its permanently-mounted, patented wheel locking system



The patented 4D caliper has four 230mm diameter discs instead of the more usual two 320mm discs and two three-pad calipers, which cuts weight and improves power by 20 percent



The Aerotec 6P Endurance caliper is used with an Aeronal disc by over half the field in World Endurance Championships

<<< The company has been less affected by the influx of low price aftermarket parts from the Far East than many other manufacturing companies because of its position at the high performance end of the braking market. The small size and rapid reactivity of the company means it can develop and distribute relatively small series of product lines (from 20 to 1,000 items), improving them year on year.

The main competition comes from far larger outfits such as Brembo High Performance, Nissin Racing, Alcon and AP, and although these have deeper pockets and more resources, they are less nimble in finding niche markets and rely on large production runs in mainstream areas to justify investment and distribution.

Beringer has been collaborating with some of the top racing teams for 20 years and feedback from these has helped to give its braking products an unrivalled reputation for performance and reliability. Gilbert insists the company does not differentiate between parts for street riders and those for its sponsored racers – all of its systems are designed to stand up to the stresses of competition.

"Each part is tested after assembly", he says. "There are no compromises with quality because we are making what is essentially safety equipment for the bike, and the rider needs to have total trust in our products. Racers might be pulling on our brake levers at 300 km/h and they have to work 100 percent effectively 100 percent of the time."

The company's many world championship victories run from several World Endurance titles (2000, 2002 and 2003) to many European Supermoto and National Championships, and World Quadcross Championships. Most recently, in January 2009, Betty Kraft of Team Polaris won the Dakar Rally women's first place.

"We have built up strong relationships with race teams over many years," says Gilbert. "They love the fact that we give them innovative products that give them an edge, and we love the fact that they keep winning!"

The company's best-selling products are its brake and clutch radial master cylinders, which are available in 800 separate applications, including

three piston sizes, seven colours and four types of lever. Fully machined from billet aluminium, using a three-ball bearing system and covered by Aerotec world-wide patents, it has gained a solid reputation for performance and reliability.

Gilbert says the most innovative product is probably the **4D Aerotec system**, also patented, which has four 230mm diameter discs instead of the more usual two 320mm discs, and two three-pad calipers, which cuts the gyroscopic effect and the weight while improving power by 20 percent.

The most recently introduced product is the **Inboard Braking system for Supermoto**, adapted from Beringer's system for twin-engined light aircraft, claimed to give a weight saving of 500g, three times less gyroscopic inertia and braking power improved by 20 percent.

Also new is the **Aerotec brake caliper with RoadLok anti-theft system**, which won the Innovation prize at the JPMS dealer show in Lyon in February (see elsewhere in this issue), as well as a special jury award.

Other new products include intelligent integral braking systems, mostly used on quads and racing cars, pressure limiters and similar systems.

The full product list includes brake and clutch radial master cylinders, 2, 4 and 6-piston calipers machined from billet, floating cast iron discs, Supermoto and hypersport racing kits, rear master cylinders, proportioning valves, sintered metal pads and much else.

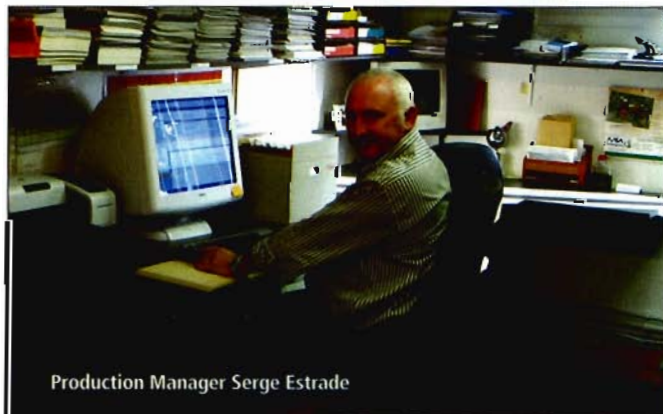
Fitments are available for a wide range of Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki, Kawasaki, Harley-Davidson and Triumph models, with a more restricted applications list for other European OEM models.

The company is also expanding its presence on the ATV and quad market and offers kits and parts for the most popular models.

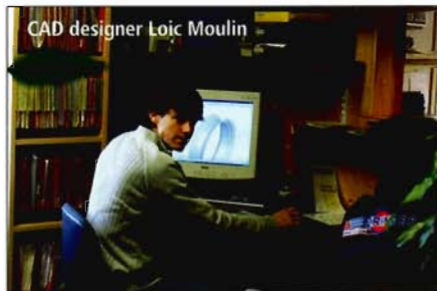
In its home market in France, Beringer distributes dealer direct to around 800 bike and quad shops, of which 35 supply the company's products exclusively. It also has a large French distributor for ATV and quad parts. An important factor is fast turnaround of stock, and the company delivers 97 percent of dealer orders within three days.



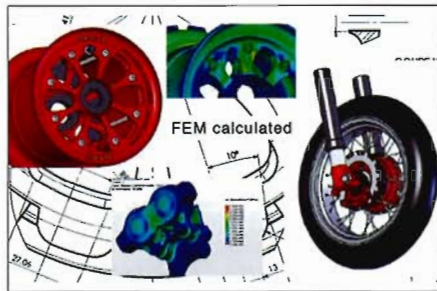
Assembly workshops



Production Manager Serge Estrade



CAD designer Loic Moulin



Beringer uses advanced 3D CAD programmes (above) to develop its products and sends the finished design to manufacturing partners nearby



The website gives full details of all product lines, company, distributor and dealer information, racing news, photo galleries and much else

In export markets, where the company makes 75 percent of its total turnover, it has a network of 35 national distributors, except in Germany and Austria where representation is via a sales agent and deliveries go direct to dealers and stores.

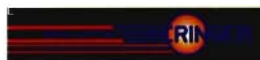
The principal export market used to be Japan but distribution problems there have resulted in a temporary fall in sales, and most recently the best export markets have been Belgium, Spain and Italy.

The internet site is designed primarily as an information and contact tool, with full technical back-up from company engineers available by email and phone, a feature much appreciated by customers.

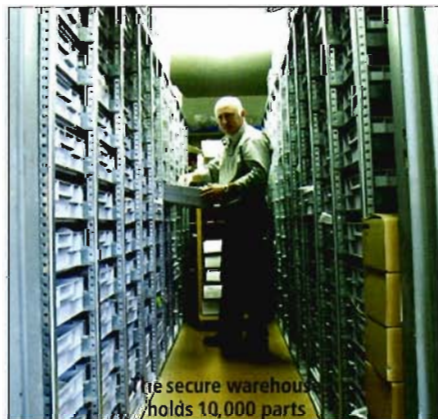
Beringer now has a complete range of braking parts, so Gilbert says the main future focus will be to increase sales and penetrate new markets. "We will adapt what we have to new models every year, but we will also complete testing of the Inboard Braking system – we expect a lot from this product in enduro as well as road and custom use."

Finally, when asked what qualities his company has to keep it ahead of the pack, Gilbert is unequivocal – his staff. "Beringer can react very quickly because of our small number of very highly motivated employees who love what they are doing. We have reinvested around 10 percent of turnover in R&D every year, gaining ten patents and technological knowhow in braking systems that is second to none. Quite simply, our people are the best in the business."

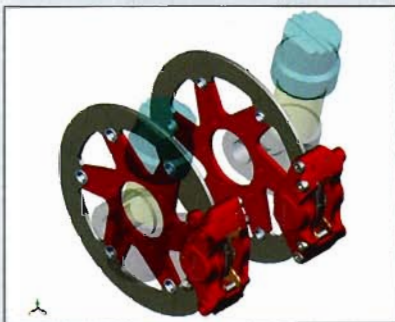
And Véronique adds: "Our products are innovative. Riders can feel that they are different, and an added bonus is that we are often less expensive than they might originally think. We provide superbly reliable and responsive braking systems at a very reasonable price."



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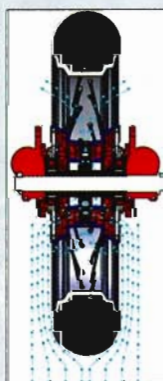
The secure warehouse holds 10,000 parts



Supermotard twin disc system (above) with two 2-piston Aerotec calipers, two Aeronal floating discs, an Aerotec BRO-10 master cylinder, racing hose and Aerotec pads



Aerotec BRO12 master cylinder (above) and unbreakable levers for master cylinders (below) available in seven colours with mirror holder versions available if required



Beringer says its aircraft-derived Inboard Braking system (above) offers a weight saving of 500g, three times less gyroscopic inertia and a power increase of 20 percent. The airflow along the wheel sucks air into the hub which improves brake cooling (left). It is available with twin calipers and discs for Supermoto and custom, and single for Enduro and MX



These BR-CC Gold master cylinders are for naked, classic and V-twin bikes and can be used with OEM calipers and discs

