

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## BMW M5 hits the UK



**After nearly three years of waiting since the previous M5 ceased production the good news is that deliveries of the all new £61,760 BMW M5 started to UK dealers on 19 May. The bad news is that all are sold or spoken for the next two years.**

The initial profiteers this weekend were offering M5s for sale in the small ads of the various motoring magazines and quality Sunday papers so it will be possible to buy a new M5 - at a price.

580 of the eagerly awaited M5s will be available to the UK market this year and BMW GB expect demand to even out to between 450 and 500 units a year. These figures are not written in stone and Lee Connolly, product manager 5/6 series for BMW GB, expects to be able to negotiate with BMW 's M Division to increase their allocation. He said it would take around 18 months before they will know the full sales potential of the M5 and the soon to be launched M6.

He added, "40 of the new M5s ordered so far by UK customers have been requested with the bullet proof glass £1,135 option". Heads of industry and football club owners (not players) are the rumoured customers.

Connolly said, "As advance orders for the M5 suggests they are all sold until mid 2007, the challenge we have is to keep the customers interested. Part of this process will be the Rockingham Driving experience where customers and potential buyers will undergo driver-training programmes and these are being organised directly with the clients by BMW's UK dealers. We have been training our dealers to handle customer expectations knowing that demand has outstripped supply. Our dealers are also filtering out speculative customers. I would like to think this is non-existent but to some people dealing in rare cars is a business"

He added, "We might also find some initial customers who have placed orders for the M5 might change their minds and opt for the new equally sophisticated and fast M6 Coupe which goes on sale in the UK in September but it is £18,000 more expensive at £79,995. This model has the same engine, transmission but with a lightweight bodyshell, which includes a Kevlar roof, it's more sports car than sports saloon and it looks more aggressive than the M5. With the M6 we are starting to see more interest from female buyers."

The UK is the third largest BMW M product market in the world behind the US and Germany. Connolly said, "Customers for the M5 are made up of existing owners of the previous model who have kept their cars longer waiting for the new model, some have bought the 5-Series Sport models and are now changing up and there are a fair number of conquest customers from Mercedes, Audi, Porsche and Jaguar. Predominately these customers are male aged between 40 and 55 years of age, run two to three cars in the family and predominately it is company money buying the car. Forty-five per cent of customers to date are specifying the full interior leather option for the car, it's the first time we've offered a leather dashboard on any 5-Series. Because the new M5 is so fully equipped there is not much customers can add to the specification so over and above the leather facia upgrade customers are ordering heated rear seats, rear headphones for passengers and not forgetting the bullet proof glass".

With 507bhp of power, 520Nm of torque, a top speed limited to 155mph and a 0-62mph time of 4.7 seconds, much of the media talk has been about the option to de-restrict the top speed of the M5. BMW say their top management in Germany has taken the responsible 'high ground' and stuck to the general industry

agreement that 155mph should be the top speed available. However other manufacturers have broken away from this agreement and BMW say they have no power over any customer wishing to have their car de-restricted to achieve the 204mph of which it is capable. BMW confirmed that by de-restricting the car it would not invalidate the car's warranty. Lee Connolly said, "In reality having a de-restricted car is all about customer talk, fashion and a 'mine's de-restricted' attitude - it is an emotional thing to have it. If the car is being used for track days or motorsport that is a different issue but outside Germany where can you use a car at that speed"

The new BMW M5 is the first volume production car to offer a high revving V10 engine and a seven speed sequential gearbox

The 5.0-litre, aluminium engine produces its maximum power at 7,750rpm but it is redlined at 8,250rpm. Power output is 25 per cent more than its predecessor. Although the new engine shares the same V10 configuration with the BMW F1 engine it is not directly related. The F1 engine is of 3.0-litres, not 5.0-litre and only has to last for two races. However BMW say the inspiration for the electronics and engine design was drawn from their F1 experience. The engine management system derived from F1 can perform more than 200 million individual calculations per second. Continuing with the F1 heritage the lightweight block and cylinder heads are cast at the same BMW foundry as the F1 engine.

The new engine delivers two levels of power output. Each time it is started it is in 400bhp mode. This is to suit normal urban traffic conditions where 507bhp is of no use and not required. By operating the MDrive button on the steering wheel the power is increased to 507bhp. Eleven bespoke gearchange programmes, throttle response times and suspension settings are all features included in the MDrive Manager programme. A head-up display with information, including the navigation system, is shown in the lower edge of the windscreen.

*Story/Photos: BMW - **Strictly Copyright***

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