
BMW M3 CSL scheduled for August delivery in UK

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A lighter, more powerful version of the legendary BMW M3 is ready to set pulses racing in the UK. First unveiled at this year's Geneva Motor Show in March, the new M3 CSL is even quicker and more responsive than its thoroughbred cousin, promising driving purists the most authentic motor sport experience in a production car.

A limited run will be built in Munich between June and December this year. Five hundred are destined for the UK and dealer order books are already full. First deliveries of the car, which is priced at £58,455 on-the-road, will begin in August.

In creating the M3 CSL, which stands for Coupe, Sport and Lightweight, engineers at BMW's M division succeeded in stripping 110 kg from the M3. The result is a car that benefits from an impressive power to weight ratio of just 3.85 kg/bhp and accelerates from 0-62 in 4.9 seconds. Top speed is electronically limited to 155 mph, but can be de-limited for holders of a racing licence.

But the M3 CSL, which is based on a concept first shown at Frankfurt in 2001, is not just about lighter materials. Designers were tasked with creating a car true to BMW's motor sport heritage, right down to the last component. And by engineering a range of power and handling improvements, BMW has created a vehicle capable of breaking the eight minute lap time at the famous Nurburgring, North Circuit in Germany.

So how did BMW create the M3 CSL?

Intelligent lightweight technology

For optimum weight reduction, BMW M engineers turned to 'intelligent' lightweight technology. This meant matching the most appropriate materials to the component or assembly requirements and resulted in widespread use of carbon fibre reinforced plastics, lightweight aluminium and glass fibre plastics. Much of this technology has been transferred from Formula 1.

Award winning engine - made better

BMW's M3 engine has just received its third accolade in a row at the 2003 International Engine of the Year Awards. Now an enhanced version of this 3.2-litre straight-six power house has been developed for the M3 CSL. Power output has been boosted from 343 to 360 bhp at 7,900 rpm, while torque is up from 365 to 370 Nm at 4,900 rpm.

M3 CSL gearbox

BMW M's most sporting and dynamic transmission features on the M3 CSL - the paddle shift SMG gearbox with Drivelogic and new software. Based on F1 technology, it allows ultra-fast shifting through all six gears, using the gear stick or paddles, with changes taking just 0.08 seconds. Drivers can choose between sequential and automated mode.

Handling dynamics

Precision handling comes courtesy of a wider front track and modified suspension geometry, including bespoke springs and dampers. A more direct ratio for the rack-and-pinion steering (14.5:1, compared to 15.4:1 for the M3) offers greater steering response in all conditions; while substantially modified brakes slow the M3 CSL to a standstill from 62 mph in less than 34 metres - just seven and a half car lengths.

Driver aids

M Track Mode is a unique function of Dynamic Stability Control (DSC), activated via a steering wheel mounted switch. This allows skilled track drivers to push the car to the absolute limit of transverse and longitudinal acceleration, with DSC operating only where these limits are exceeded.

The optional 19" wheels and tyres for the BMW M3 are fitted as standard but Michelin Pilot Sport Cup tyres, with asymmetric treads developed especially for the M3 CSL mounted on unique alloy wheels, can be specified as a no cost option. The tyres, which are suitable for both road and track, measure 235/35 ZR 19 at the front and 265/30 ZR 19 at the rear. Complementing the performance of the car, they offer outstanding lateral grip, up to 1.6g, improving the M3 CSL's already remarkable handling qualities and cornering capability.

To ensure M3 CSL owners are comfortable with the handling of these specially designed optional tyres, dealers will explain the need for caution while they warm up and during very poor weather. Buyers will also be required to confirm that they are aware of and understand the unique performance characteristics.

Free driver training for all M3 CSL customers is also included in the price. Worth £850, this offers drivers a day at the Pro-Drive Live circuit, driving under the guidance of experienced racing drivers, learning how to get the most out of the car.

Interior

In the cockpit, the M3 CSL follows the principles of a genuine sports car. Options are kept to a minimum, with a focus on the functional, like contoured, glass fibre bucket seats, offering optimum side support in fast bends.

Standard equipment - interior

- Cloth Laser/Amaretta 'Reflex Pur' Anthracite
- Anthracite Headlining
- Individual high gloss satin chrome
- Titanium Shadow Interior Trim
- Chrome gear lever knob

- 4 Seats
- M Steering Wheel with switch for M Track Mode

Standard equipment - exterior

- M3 CSL specific suspension settings
- M Mobility System to inflate tyres
- Tailgate with low loading sill and integrated rear spoiler
- Front apron without fog lights, with extra air intake
- Model designation M3 CSL
- Choice of Black Sapphire or Silver Grey metallic paint
- 19" double spoke alloy wheels style 67M

The original 'CSL' - this one is the Frank Stella 'Art Car' from Le Mans in 1975

Text/Photos: BMW Press

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