

CLASSIC DRIVER

The new BMW M3



21 years after the original 4-cylinder was launched, BMW has officially announced the next M3. It will be powered by a 420hp, 3,999cc V8 that also has 400Nm of torque at 3,900rpm, and red-lines at 8,400rpm. To highlight the flexibility of the engine, 85 per cent of torque is available from 6,500rpm. Power is transferred to the road by BMW M's six-speed manual gearbox and variable M differential which conveys up to 100 per cent of available power to the wheel with most grip.

The new V8-powered BMW M3 easily breaks through the 100hp per litre barrier, offering 105hp per litre. This engine powers the car from zero to 62mph in 4.8 seconds and on to a limited top speed of 155mph. However, the car will still deliver 22.8mpg on the combined cycle, being an eight per cent improvement over the outgoing car.





BMW's EfficientDynamics programme is included in the new M3 - far from only influencing the smaller-engined cars in the range. Courtesy of Brake Energy Regeneration using an Intelligent Alternator Control and Absorbent Glass Mat battery to recognise when the engine is on over-run, the system activates the alternator to charge the battery with what would previously have been wasted energy.

The outgoing M3 CSL showed how carbon-fibre could be used by BMW in limited-volume production cars. The new M3 Coupé is the first full production car in its class to feature a carbon-fibre-reinforced plastic roof panel with exposed weave. In isolation, the carbon-fibre roof panel saves 5kgs over a conventional roof panel but it also lowers the centre of gravity.

Using an engine block manufactured alongside F1 engines at BMW's light-alloy foundry at Landshut, Germany, the new V8 powerplant weighs a mere 202kgs, 15kgs less than the six-cylinder engine it replaces. To further highlight the weight advantages, the crankshaft in the new engine is made from one complete forging and weighs only 20kgs. Additionally, the front axle components are constructed entirely from aluminium. Even the five-link rear axle, normally constructed from high-strength steel, has aluminium components to save weight. The control arms and dampers alone are 2.5kgs lighter than conventional parts.



The new M3 Coupé also features an MDrive button that brings together numerous personalised functions of the car. The settings for the optional Electronic Damper Control (Normal, Comfort and Sport), three DSC+ traction control settings and three specific engine control maps, plus the response rate of the Servotronic power steering can be controlled with one button on the steering wheel. Once the desired settings are created in the iDrive menu, part of the standard Professional navigation system, one push of the MDrive button transforms the M3 from a car to drive to the shops to a track day special.

The latest BMW M3 Coupé shares many design cues and components with the 'standard' 3 Series Coupé model, however only the doors, bootlid, windows and front / rear lamps are carried over. A number of subtle performance enhancements combine to deliver sporting outline; a powerdome and two air intakes in the aluminium bonnet cover the new V8-engine and help engine cooling, and three large air ducts in the front lower valance keep the engine breathing.

In profile, the it features 18-inch double-spoke light-alloy wheels as standard, with a 19-inch wheel available as an option. Another BMW M trait, a side gill in the front wing, also includes the side direction indicator and the M3 logo. Such is the performance of the new car, even the exterior door mirrors enhance the aerodynamic characteristics of the car and provide a degree of downforce.



From the rear, an aerodynamically-efficient diffuser incorporate twin double exhaust pipes protruding from beneath the valance. The bootlid also features a discreet lip spoiler.

The new BMW M3 Coupé goes on sale in September 2007 and prices will be announced nearer the launch date.







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