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[BMW M3 Evo II: Bavarian 'bahnstormer in battle](#)

Lead

Today, the BMW-Mercedes rivalry is as bitter as it ever has been – but without doubt, one of the most memorable showdowns between the pair came in the mid-80s. It all began when BMW wanted to upset Mercedes' assault on Group A Touring Cars...

Cooked to a similar recipe as the Mercedes 190E 2.3-16, the E30 M3 arrived on the scene at the 1985 Frankfurt Motor Show. While the early versions of the Mercedes homologation special appeared rather staid, their opposite number from Bavaria visually signalled its intent right from the off: the two-door shape was enhanced with – alongside numerous mechanical changes over the standard 3 Series – box-flared arches, a prominent rear wing, and motorsport wheels. On track, it was put to use not only by the Works team, but also by private teams such as Prodrive and AC Schnitzer. On the road, it was used by those seeking the balance and performance for which the E30 is still revered to this day.

Because of its competition origins, the E30 M3 was continually developed throughout its lifecycle, with a trio of 'Evolution' models homologating engine and aerodynamic updates. The rarest of these (with 501 built over a 2-month period) was the Evolution II, which saw significant changes to the 4-cylinder engine bringing about a 220bhp output. A deeper front airdam and new bootlip spoiler rounded off the visual alterations, with brake cooling ducts now deemed more important to the front bumper than the preceding foglights. The E30 remained more aggressive in appearance than its fierce rival, which by this time had become the 2.5-16.



It wasn't until the early 90s that the two manufacturers ceased fire in the 'Battle of the Evos', the culmination of which saw the M3 Sport Evo pitched against the 190 E 2.5-16 Evo II – the latter more than compensating for its predecessors' lack of purposeful aesthetics. Despite its short production window and rarity in comparison to the 17,000 or so E30 M3s produced in total, the Evo II is still fondly remembered for its service in this memorable civil war.

Photos: 4Star Classics

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