

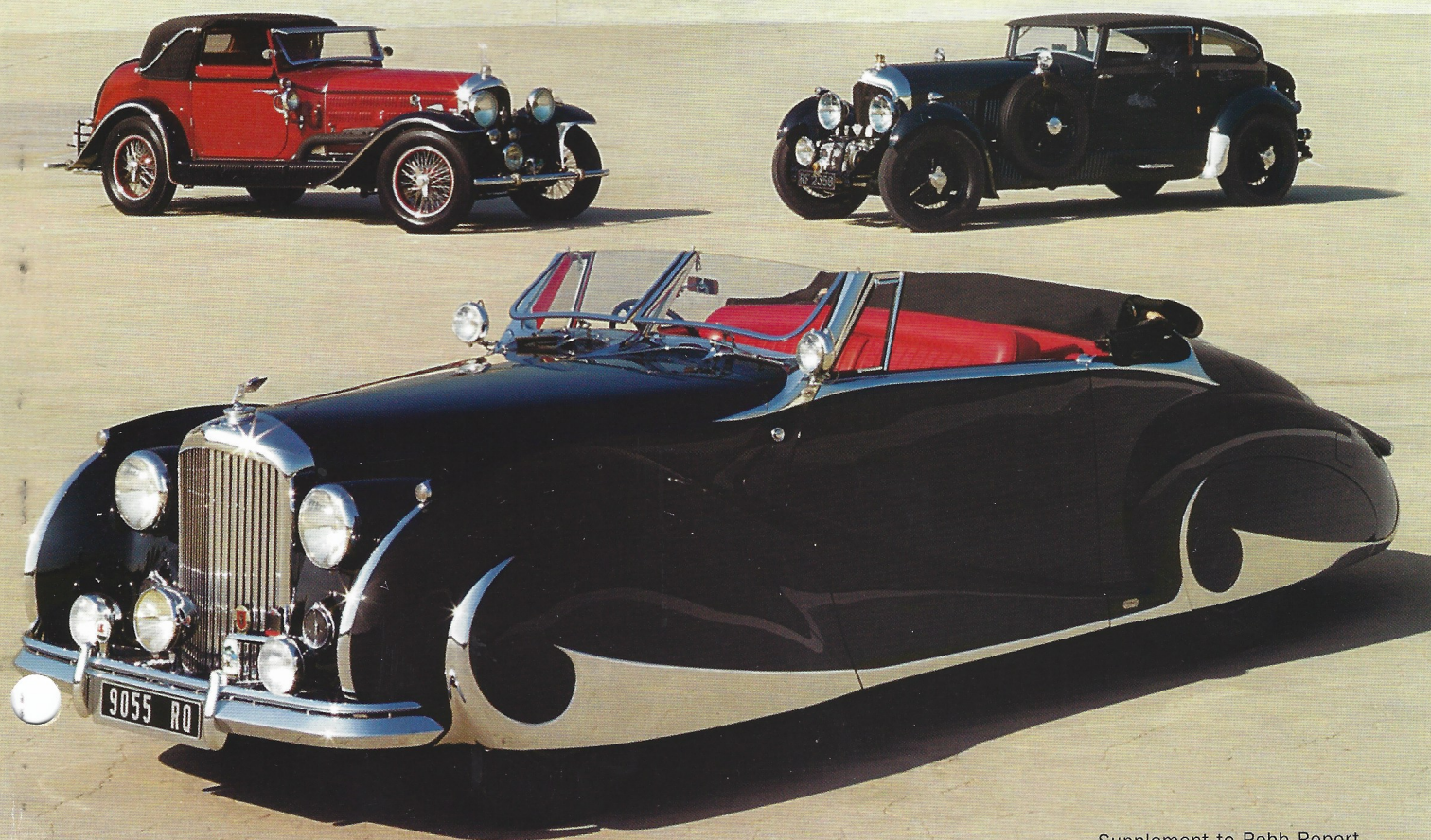
MODERN MUSCLE FROM RUF, LEXUS, PANOZ AND MUSTANG

The Robb Report COLLECTIONTM

Sports, Luxury and Classic Cars

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A Tale of Three Bentleys Vintage Visions, Old and New



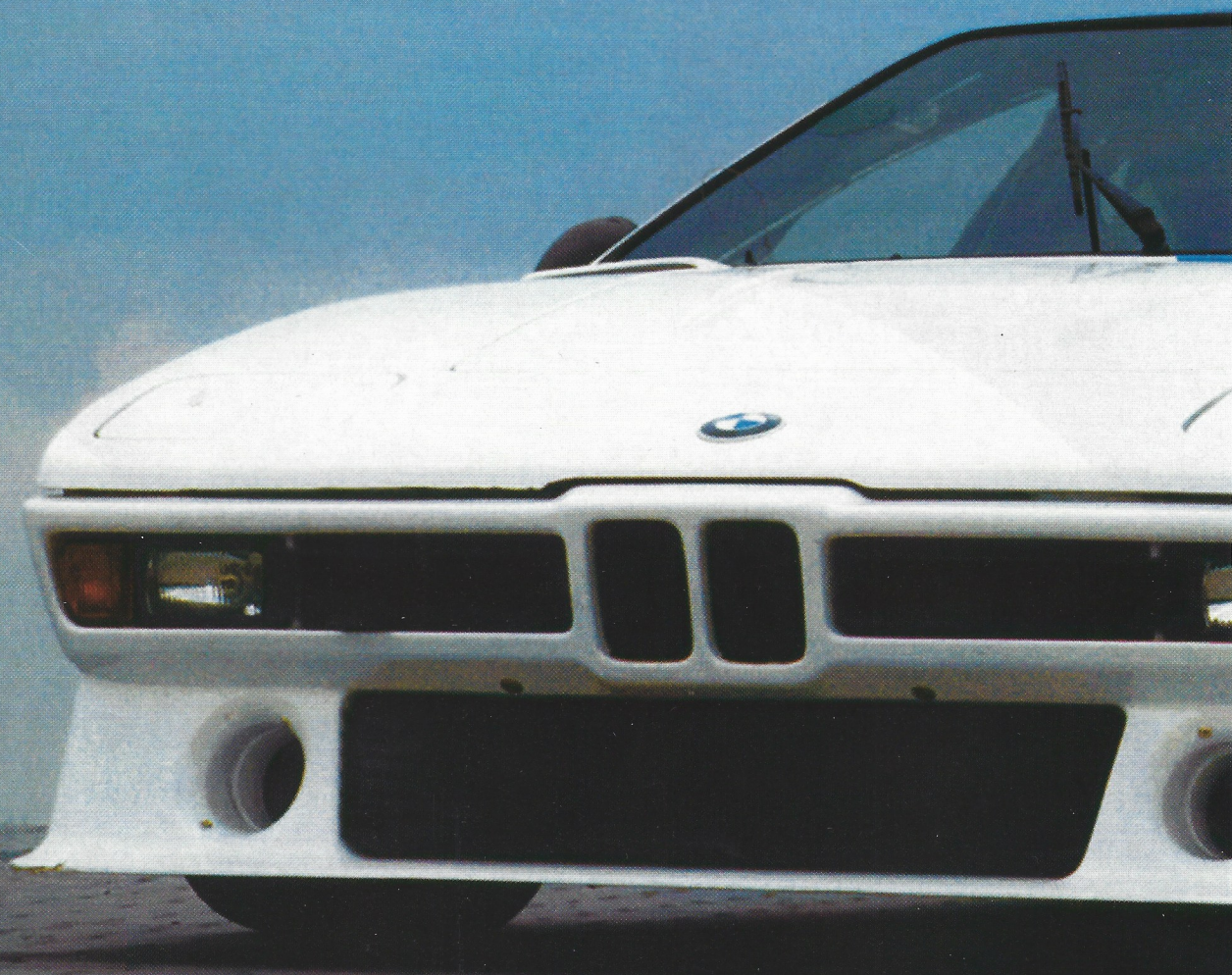
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BMW M

The ultimate, ultimate driving machine.

BY GARY WITZENBURG



THIRTY-THREE YEARS AGO, with its 1800ti and 2000ti winning races and championships in the hands of tuners and privateers, BMW decided to enhance its burgeoning motorsports position by creating its own in-house racing group. Thus was BMW Motorsport GmbH created in 1972 by then-BMW AG board member Robert A. Lutz—yes, the same Bob Lutz who is now vice chairman and product guru at General Motors.

“A company is like a human being,” Lutz said at the time. “As long as it goes in for sports, it is fit, well-trained, full of enthusiasm and performance.” The managing

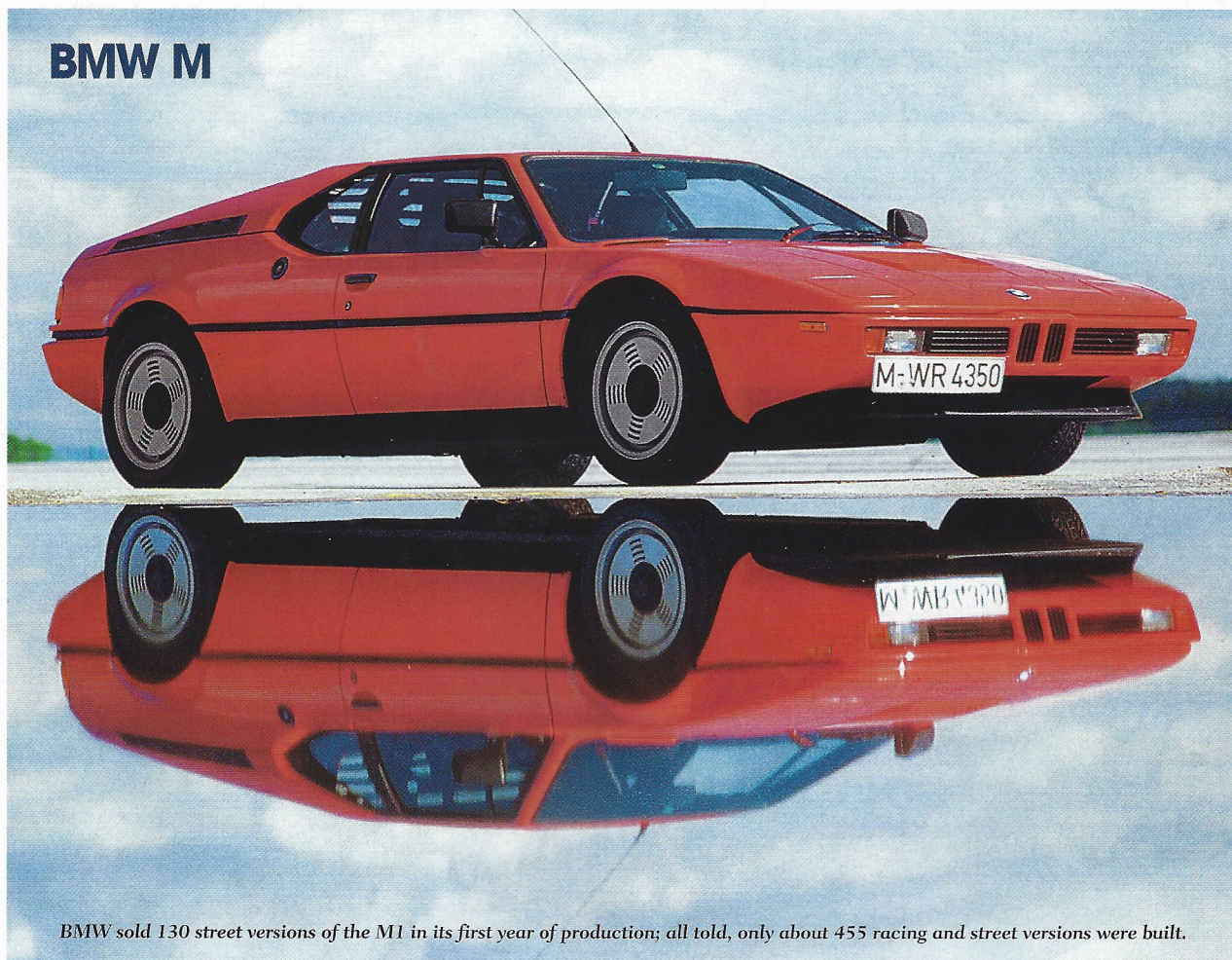


director was former Porsche factory driver and Ford of Europe racing manager Jochen Neerpasch, who attracted drivers of the caliber of Chris Amon, Hans-Joachim Stuck, and Dieter Quester, and developed a lightweight 240 hp 2002 for rally racing and a 3.0 CSL road-racing coupe.

The latter, a 360 hp, 2,400-pound rocket with aluminum doors, hood, and deck and a magnesium transmission housing (“L” stood for “light”), proved virtually unbeatable in European touring car competition. It won six championships between 1973 and 1979 and dominated international touring car competition for nearly a decade.



BMW M



BMW sold 130 street versions of the M1 in its first year of production; all told, only about 455 racing and street versions were built.

Also highly successful in U.S. competition beginning in 1975, the 3.0 CSL was known for advanced technology (BMW's first 4-valve 6-cylinder engine and early antilock braking) and for its glorious blue/violet/red-on-white paint scheme, a BMW racing trademark to this day. Between 1973 and 1982, BMW 4-cylinder engines also dominated Formula Two single-seater racing, the training ground for international Formula One Grand Prix competition.

An important sideline began in 1976 when the Board assigned the Motorsport team to establish a BMW driver's school. Neerpasch had taken his cadre of top pro drivers to the Swiss ski resort of St. Moritz in 1973 for "fine-tuning" by a sports instructor and a sports psychologist. This then-novel approach apparently worked, and discussion began about offering similar courses for non-pros. "As the company responsible throughout BMW for all motorsport activities," stated the original driver's school literature, "BMW Motorsport GmbH wishes to promote the driver in his performance as part of the man/machine system."

The target was 800 participants a year, 300 at BMW's proving grounds

and another 500 on racetracks. One of the primary attractions was that BMW provided the cars—125 hp specially tuned 320i's—so participants did not have to worry about wear and damage to their own cars. (Since 1997, these schools have been known as BMW Driver Training.)

The next undertaking was the design, engineering, and development of extra-hot street BMWs. The first batch of these—a limited run of enhanced 5 Series cars—totalled 895 between 1974 and 1980. Then, in 1978, came perhaps the most memorable BMW of all time—and the first to wear the famous "M" label—the race-bred mid-engine M1 sports car. The car was intended originally for European Group 5 competition, but that plan was later replaced by an innovative alternative: BMW's own series of Procar

support races for European Formula One events. When enthusiasts first had a gape at these 470 hp, 190 mph turbocharged racers, some decided they had to have one. At a breathtaking price of about \$60,000, 130 street versions of the 277 hp, 164 mph car were sold the first year. The total production of around 455 included both race cars and street versions.



BMW M



The 3.0 CSL dominated international touring car competition in the 1970s; in Europe it racked up six wins between 1973 and 1979.

BMW power stepped up to racing's top rung in 1980, giving Motorsport's engineers the opportunity to develop a world-beating F/1 engine. They did so, boosting an electronically controlled, turbocharged, 16-valve, 1.5-liter (F/1's displacement limit at the time) production-block 4-cylinder to a staggering 800 hp. It ran its first race in 1982 and the next year powered Nelson Piquet to the F/1 Grand Prix World Championship.

In 1983, Motorsport grew to 380 employees and took on additional responsibilities as a full-fledged development company. With individual facilities for engine and suspension technology, it set out to expand its businesses in BMW speed accessories, and custom-built and individually equipped cars.

The following year, Bimmerphiles were thrilled to see the M1's high-revving 4-valve six reappear in a pair of hot new performance models, an M5 sedan and an M 635 CSi coupe. Barely distinguishable from its production counterpart, the handbuilt 286 hp, 152 mph M5 developed its own legend as a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing "executive express."

Once its F/1 involvement was done, Motorsport turned its full

attention to touring car racing, which in 1986 gave birth to the first (195 hp) M3 compact coupe. With a single-year run of 5,000 road-going units required for competition homologation, this was the first M car developed in parallel with its standard-spec counterpart. It was a huge success on street and track, with sales topping 17,100 (including 600 2.5-liter Sport Evolution models and 800 handbuilt convertibles). It won a World Touring Car Championship in 1987 and more than a few significant European and German titles over the next several years.

1988 saw the debut of a second-generation M5 powered by a 315 hp, 3.6-liter six. With a new-generation 3 Series for 1990 came a new 286 hp 3.0-liter 6-cylinder M3. While the first M3 wore striking spoilers and wildly

flared wheel arches, this one (like the first M5) was much more subtle, and its stunning performance won "Car of the Year" honors from magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. For the first time, an M3 convertible and a slightly softer sedan were part of the plan, a small-volume 295 hp M3 GT model upped the performance ante, and an 85-car run of GTR racers



BMW M



Racing versions of the M1 boasted an output of 470 hp and a top speed of 190 mph, well above the street version's 277 hp and 164 mph.

boosted the M3's reputation on European and North American racing circuits. This first 6-cylinder M3 boasted the first application of BMW's patented torque-boosting VANOS infinitely adjustable intake timing, and like other BMWs, it could be tailored to personal taste through Motorsport's BMW Individual program established in 1991.

In the summer of 1993, reflecting its expanding responsibilities, BMW Motorsport changed its name to BMW M GmbH. And after a new BMW Motorsport Ltd. group was established in Great Britain to take over all BMW racing activities in 1995, BMW M could focus all its energy on M cars, BMW Individual, and Driver Training. The street M3 got a boost to 321 hp (slightly more than 100 hp per liter from its 3.2-liter six) for 1995, and for '96 boasted another M development, the world's first electrohydraulically clutched sequential

manual gearbox (SMG), which enabled clutchless shifting one ratio at a time.

A 321 hp Z3-based M roadster debuted in 1997, followed by an M coupe version. The next year saw the third-generation M5 with a new 394 hp (U.S.) V-8, 5-second zero-to-60 capability, and a 155 mph top speed. For 2000 came a Gen III M3 with 333 hp and similar performance.

Ulrich Bruhnke, president of BMW M since December 1, 2003—when he was hired away from the same position at rival Mercedes-AMG GmbH—assures us that future M cars will continue to offer trademark high-revving engines, SMG transmissions, and mind-blowing performance. An engineer by education, he reports to board member Burkhard Goschel, who oversees all BMW product and technology development. The M subsidiary employs some 500 people (about half of them engineers) and operates



BMW M



BMW introduced the first M-version of the 3 Series coupe in 1986. The M3 did well in competition, and was popular in street trim.

out of three locations—two (engine development and vehicle development) in BMW's hometown of Munich, and the third, a test center at the legendary Nürburgring racetrack in the Eifel mountains.

"One point of our philosophy," says M communications manager Friedbert Holz, "is that an M car must do a minimum of 10,000 kilometers on the Nürburgring to receive permission to be an M car. This is a very demanding track and one of our most important test labs."

About two-thirds of the organization's efforts are concentrated on M cars, which are designed and developed by M engineers just like their standard counterparts and built on the same assembly lines in the same plants but with some operations on separate side-lines. Ever wonder why the current 5 Series has a fatter front end? It was designed from the beginning to accommodate not only its standard 4.5-liter V-8 but also the M5's 5.0-liter V-10.

At press time, the fourth-generation M5 had debuted in Europe and was due in the United States by late 2005,

with an 8,250 rpm, 500 hp, 5.0-liter V-10 and mid-4-second zero-to-60 performance. That will be followed, probably for 2007, by a new 400-plus hp V-8-powered M3.

Will M follow the example of DaimlerChrysler's AMG by developing an M version of virtually every model? Not on Bruhnke's watch. "AMG has the philosophy to build the most powerful Mercedes," he explains, "always the top-of-the-line of each Mercedes range. BMW M is the ultimate BMW. The philosophy is to have a high-revving engine and an available SMG gearbox, and this

doesn't fit every BMW—for example, the X3 and X5. It's not to grow the volume at any price but to sharpen the profile of BMW."

He assures us also that BMW M cars will remain relatively subtle in appearance. Enthusiasts will know them in profile by their bigger tires on specific wheels, in their mirrors by more aggressive faces with jet-fighter air intakes for brake cooling, and from the rear by trademark quad exhausts as they disappear over the horizon. ☐

