

BIMMER

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Building the Perfect Four-Door Sedan

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I drove my brand new 1973 BMW 3.0s today for the first time since its restoration began just over a year ago. Warm glows of satisfaction are now settling in, having taken the car for its first test "toot". This car is all I had hoped for and in time I suspect it will be more.

Looking for "the perfect four-door sedan" began with some soul searching to determine what exactly I wanted from a four door sedan. Having been a previous owner of a 1972 Bavaria, I was already biased towards this model and I have not enjoyed a car as much since. The decision to restore and customize a Bavaria led to its slightly more elegant and sophisticated twin the 3.0s, a Bavaria with power windows, leather, and extra trim. A 1973 3.0s was chosen for its small bumpers which were replaced with picnic benches in 1974.

Now the hunt was on for the car. I was surprised to discover how rare this model was — it took six months to find a good car to restore. A little used car dealer in Quincy had a car with all the necessary criteria for my particular restoration: not too much rust, dead or dying automatic transmission, very clean interior and an overall solid feel. The car was purchased for \$3500, and had 88,000 miles on the odometer.

Next I had to decide on the logistics of a "remote control" restoration, since I was living on Cape Cod. Beaconwood Motors was the obvious choice, though I hesitated once the estimate was given for a total mechanical restoration. In hindsight, the choice was correct. Their work was meticulous and thoroughly professional.

I was not as lucky with the body shops. Dick's Auto Body was again the obvious choice, but he was all tied up for the next three to four months. So, I opted for a body shop on the Cape which I had used before. This turned out to be a mini-disaster. Not only was he slow, but I discovered that his work was sloppy and careless. After harrasing him for months, I finally decided to yank the completely disassembled body out of his shop, and try someone else. Fortunately, there happened to be a body shop previously unknown to me right in my back yard, called Classic Coachworks in Hyannis. They saved the restoration not a day too soon, the other body shop having painted only the engine compartment.

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Photo: Pat King

Classic Coach did a splendid job. Three coats of Alpine White plus a clear coat over an absolutely bare bone undercoated body has given the 3.0s a better than factory finish. They are very expensive, and insist on giving each car the full treatment — no quickies to make a buck. As a result the shop is littered with Ferraris, Rollses, antique and classic cars, all of which deserve nothing short of perfection.

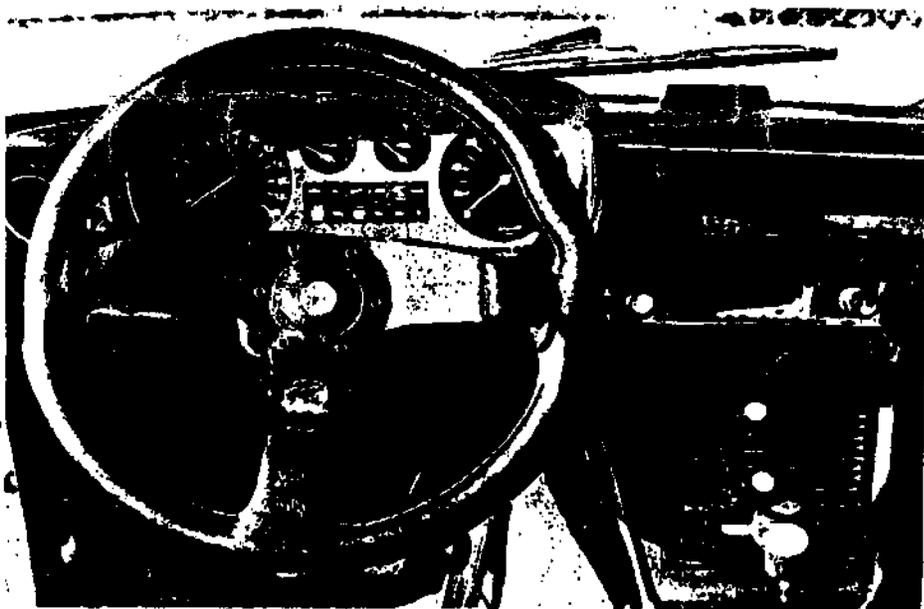
after market as BMW? What other sedan has more sportiness, more practicality, more interior and trunk space, a 5 speed transmission, symphonic engine sounds, sun roof, and is more fun to drive than this hopped up 3.0s? The only car which may be as good as the new 533i. Unfortunately, it is no where near as roomy as the 3.0s, and a few ticks slower, but still a terrific sedan. The 733i is roomy enough but

Photo: Mark Birmingham

This was not a classic car restoration. It was, I believe a successful attempt to restore and improve a car which surpasses most 1983 model sedans in many respects. Of course my personal requirements will certainly not be everyone's, and a ten year old car can not be expected to exhibit the high-tech advancements of the current Bimmers. Yet, to be the 3.0s is the only logical choice, for many reasons. Namely, what other marque has as advanced an

well, naaah. It's heavy, slow, spongy, and the ugliest BMW in recent memory. No hate mail please.

What did this little project cost you ask? A hell of a lot more than I expected. Initially, I had hoped that twenty thousand balloons would be more than sufficient to produce the car I had in mind. But given the quality of workmanship involved, I feel the extra money is justified. This car is going to be used for transportation, not



car shows, although I would probably do quite well in shows. So, perhaps there is an element of overkill which may have been avoided. Nevertheless, the "pay me now or pay me later" axiom does apply in this case, and I expect to get eighty to one-hundred thousand low cost miles out of this Bimmer.

Here's how the expenses break down.

Beaconwood Motors, Inc. \$16,800

Includes: Factory rebuilt 3.3 litre with dual side-draft Weber carbs, new 733i 5-speed transmission and conversion from automatic, limited slip, alpina suspension package, new radiator, alternator, brake system, and many other miscellaneous items such as bushings, hoses, etc. were checked and/or replaced.

"Other" body shop \$ 3,000

Includes: Body parts (\$2500) 1 rear quarter, 2 fenders bumpers, front and rear valances, all mouldings trim and gaskets, plus miscellaneous items and labor.

Classic Coachworks, Inc. \$ 5,900

Includes: Preparation and painting, some welding, more trim parts, stereo and its installation (\$900) and reassembly of body.

Purchase price of car \$ 3,500

Wheels (BBS) & Comp T/A radial tires \$ 1,850

TOTAL = \$31,050

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Driving Impressions

The only word for how this car feels is fabulous. The new gear box is smooth and precise. The new engine is very strong and throttle response is immediate. The suspension is a perfect blend of sportiness and suppleness, with the limited slip making cornering more fun than it probably should be.

As of this writing, the winter tires are still on the car. The previous owner pur-

chased a set of Uniroyal "Pudding" Radials that feel dreadful. As a result the steering is a bit vague and both understeer and oversteer are apparent in nearly all cornering situations. I am confident, however, that the 16 inch BBS wheels with Goodrich Comp T/A's will remedy this problem.

All in all, I must say that despite the rather exorbitant cost, this car is a complete success, and well worth the wait.

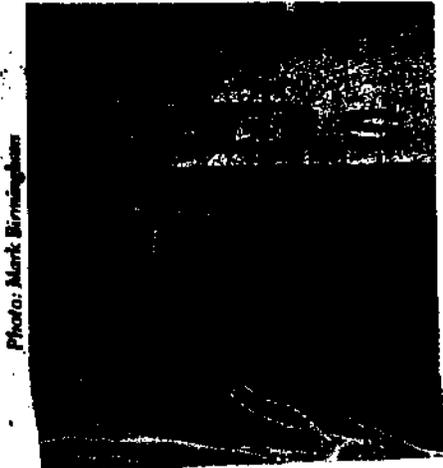


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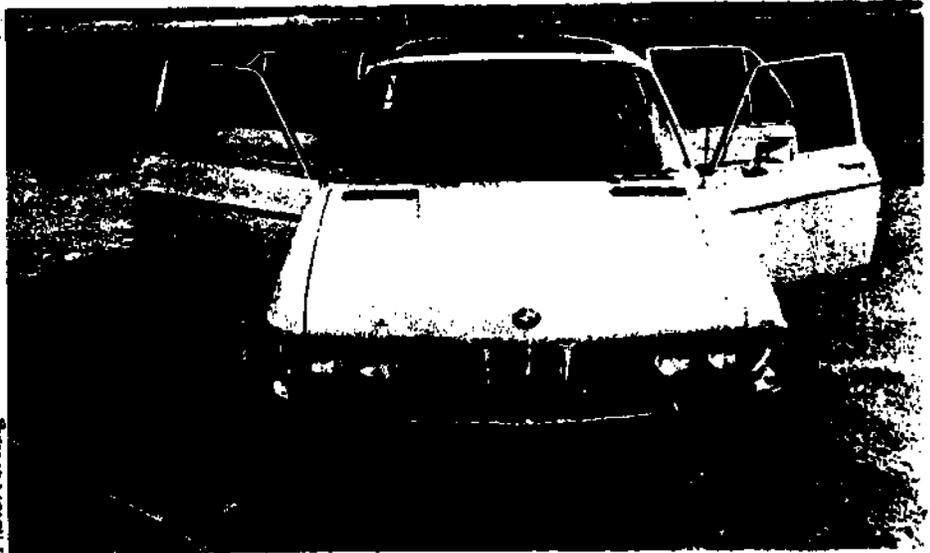


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