



Media Information  
BMW M8 GTE  
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**Interview with BMW Motorsport designer Michael Scully on the new BMW M8 GTE: “It’s the most elemental, determined race car we have ever built.”**

- In an interview, Michael Scully, Head of Design BMW Motorsport, talks about the challenges of the design development process.
- Close cooperation with colleagues from series production.
- Scully: “The BMW M8 GTE is truly distilled down to its essence. It has a highly defined purpose, and a distinct, dynamic persona.”

**Munich. When the BMW M8 GTE broke cover last year, it was celebrated for its innovative design that embraced both the motorsport and road car heritage of BMW, while making a clear statement of modernity. Speaking in an interview, Michael Scully, Head of Design BMW Motorsport, and the man behind the aesthetics of the latest Le Mans challenger, explains how the BMW M8 GTE’s looks came to life.**

**Mr. Scully, the BMW M8 GTE has been built to compete in the toughest endurance races around the globe. Why do you think the look of the car is important?**

Michael Scully: “When a car like the BMW M8 GTE debuts publically before a flagship production car such as the BMW 8 Series, the continuity of performance and design character are of heightened importance because the race car plays such an active role in helping to shape and communicate the essence of the new BMW 8 Series.

Race cars are typically known to be functionally-driven objects, and I love when a vehicle is so focused: they have an innate, authentic expression of what they do. That visual communication is more subjective than a stopwatch however, and as a designer, I’m interested in both the absolute performance of the vehicle, and what character its shape and graphics communicate. Having synergies between those elements is sometimes highly challenging, but it’s also what I find most rewarding in design.”



### **As a designer, does this balance of function and emotion bring compromise or structure?**

Scully: "It's a two-way street. The criteria of functional requirements help structure the design process and give us something to respond to. Trying to find innovative, clever solutions in response to that framework is, for me, what being a designer is all about. Without those constraints, the creative process could be considered to be solely an artistic thing: essentially producing sculpture, for example. Uniting the essential BMW design DNA with the functional and regulatory requirements in the development process is for me, where the creative dynamic really begins."

### **In which way does design show the character of a car? And what is the character of the BMW M8 GTE?**

Scully: "I think we have created a focused, determined expression with the BMW M8 GTE. The car has a formidable presence, and this is partly due to its essential proportions sourced from the production car: It has the classic two-box proportion with long hood, and visual emphasis of mass on the rear wheels which make it, fundamentally, a sports car. As we added nearly 100mm to each side of the car, and with its explicit aerodynamic elements, the car overtly conveys its intent to win races.

At the front of the car, we've taken the opportunity to pronounce the internal ducting of the kidneys with a bold colour application, and celebrate the purpose-driven aerodynamic shapes. Combined with the intense, forward-focused headlights and endurance racing-specific corner lights, the car has a highly determined expression... something that I feel is relevant to the purpose of the car."

### **Your grandfather was an influential architecture historian. Do you think this is a co-incidence or do you believe you can inherit the language of shape and design?**

Scully: "My Granddad taught me that there is added significance when a building or an object acknowledges its context, and that designing in a situational vacuum is fruitless. An object can add positively to the human experience if conceived with an awareness of its surroundings. Sometimes this connection can be accomplished by directly referencing that environment; for example a house on a mountain range with the roofline gesturing to the mountains' specific slopes, or sometimes by blatantly disavowing the existing surroundings to provoke a larger dialog. Both can be valuable depending on the specific instance, but making those deeper connections is a designer's onus. I think that's where I learned about finding relevance, meaning, and impact in an object or image."



### **So, if the mountain range is the context for the building, the circuit is the context for the race car?**

Scully: “Exactly. The context of a race car is the competitive arena. I’m captivated by objects that are built for competition use because they look, and are, so purposeful. As a result, they happen to send a very clear, visceral message of their intent. For the BMW M8 GTE to be relevant in this context, modern, bold, and impactful shapes and graphics were in order, and I think the car succeeds in carrying those attributes forward to the world’s stage.”

### **What are the other challenges for a car race designer?**

Scully: “At BMW Design we use precise lines in conjunction with nuanced surfaces to achieve an interplay between the two, and lend a visual structure to the shape of the car. The regulations for the BMW M8 GTE however, forbid any kind of crisp lines being added to the surfaces; in fact, they require a minimum of a 50mm radius to any surface addition in many areas. This tends to necessitate very clunky, albeit legal shapes. With this project we were continuously looking for ways of maintaining the integrity, richness, and precision of the BMW 8 Series production car design, while also abiding by the regulations, and achieving our aerodynamic and packaging targets. One of the ways we have accomplished this is with inlets and outlets for the air in the bodywork: they perform critical functions, and also give a precision and structure back to the shape that could otherwise get a bit heavy.”

### **How did the relationship with your BMW 8 Series colleagues work?**

Scully: “BMW Design’s leadership has obviously had a very active hand in the BMW 8 Series, and that also includes the GTE variant. Additionally, the exterior designer of the BMW Concept 8 Series is a good friend and co-worker of mine: understanding where he was coming from thematically was really helpful in maintaining continuity between the cars. We also had the chance to directly exchange ideas for the GTE, so in that sense it was a natural extension of the BMW 8 Series lineage.

I see race cars and production cars at the BMW Group as having a two-way relationship: A lot of manufacturers promote how their race cars inform their production cars, and we do that too, but at BMW our production and concept cars also inform our race cars. And I think that’s what gives an authenticity to each of them.”



### **Do you have an example of that two-way relationship?**

Scully: “On the mirrors of the BMW M8 GTE, I was striving throughout the development process to get the iconic BMW ‘M hook’ that points back towards the centreline of the car integrated into the main housing of the mirror. It’s an element of our M production cars that really resonates with BMW purists. From my initial sketch with an underslung, cantilevered support, and in iterative collaboration with the aerodynamicists, we found some notable functional benefits from the shape of the mirror, particularly in the highly sculpted base: it’s something that really does positively affect the aerodynamic flow regime down the side of the car. So with the mirrors we have a relationship where the race car’s functionality is improved, but the fundamental design vocabulary and direction is inspired from the production cars.”

### **What are your favourite parts of the BMW M8 GTE and why?**

Scully: “As I mentioned, I’m proud of the mirrors because they have an embedded aerodynamic function, carry the M iconography, and have a modern, purposeful expression. I also really like the front kidneys with their exposed interior surfaces for the specific care and feeding requirements of the race car. The kidneys evoke the history of BMW with the forward-leaning shark nose, and by opening them up with exposed internals, we reference that heritage in an entirely modern way.”

### **To sum it all up: Where does the BMW M8 GTE rank compared to the other BMW race cars you have worked on?**

Scully: “The BMW M8 GTE is truly distilled down to its essence. It is an efficient, competitive machine. It has a highly defined purpose, and a distinct, dynamic persona. For me, it’s the most elemental, determined car that we have ever built.”

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