

40 years of the BMW M3. Contents.



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40 years of the BMW M3. Six generations of high-performance sports cars for the premium midsize class. (Introduction)



It was not the first model in the history of BMW M GmbH; that honour goes to the BMW M1 small-series, mid-engined sports car. But for the past 40 years now, the BMW M3 and its inimitable skillset have served as the archetype of a BMW M car for fans around the world. Agility, dynamism and driving pleasure of the highest order are as much a part of a BMW M3 as striking looks. And it is all backed up by a regular supply of standout victories in race competition. Below we look at some of the key chapters in this story of success:

Starting out in style – on the road and the race track.

The original BMW M3 made its first official appearance at the IAA motor show in Frankfurt am Main in 1985. The vital statistics of the new car: its 2.3-litre four-cylinder engine with four-valve technology, output of 147 kW/200 hp and a vehicle weight of 1,200 kilograms. The distinctively styled two-door accelerated from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in 6.7 seconds on its way to a top speed of 235 km/h (146 mph). A soft-top version was added to the line-up later. The first generation of the BMW M3 attained legendary status on the track, racking up a scarcely believable collection of race wins all over the world, including victories in the German DTM touring car series (then known as the "Deutsche Tourenwagen Meisterschaft"), the World Touring Car Championship and the 24-hour race at the Nürburgring.

New additions to the model family.

Where the first BMW M3 exuded the excitement of youthful sportiness, the second generation launched in 1992 was a much more grown-up proposition. The two-door coupé cut an elegant figure from the outside and was powered for the first time by a six-cylinder engine. The model range was growing, and a four-door sedan soon made its debut alongside the coupé and convertible. From 1996, the BMW M3 could also be specified as an option with the Sequential M Gearbox (SMG).

Special edition with a legendary name.

The third generation of the BMW M3 made a powerful impression. Arriving in the year 2000, it captured the imagination with its power dome, flared wheel arches and dual-branch exhaust system. And a 3.2-litre six-cylinder in-line engine developing 252 kW/343 hp delivered on

the car's visual promise. The special-edition BMW M3 CSL then raised the bar further still with increased power and additional weight savings. Producing 265 kW/360 hp, it could sprint from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in 4.9 seconds. On the track, the BMW M3 GTR celebrated numerous victories in the ALMS series in the US, and also won the 24-hour race at the Nürburgring on two occasions.

The BMW M3 DTM makes motor sport history.

A naturally aspirated V8 engine went to work in the fourth-generation BMW M3 launched in 2007. The high-revving 4-litre engine delivered 309 kW/420 hp and accelerated the BMW M3 Coupé from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in a rapid 4.8 seconds. In 2012, BMW returned to the DTM (now standing for "Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters") race series after an absence of 20 years with the new BMW M3 DTM. The comeback was a triumph: Bruno Spengler was crowned the drivers' champion, BMW Team Schnitzer topped the teams' standings and BMW won the manufacturers' title.

Higher output and torque, lower fuel consumption.

When the fifth model generation was introduced in 2014, only the four-door sedan variant carried the BMW M3 badge. And change was also afoot under the bonnet, a completely newly developed, high-revving straight six with M TwinPower Turbo technology taking the place of the previous V8. The result was more power and torque than the predecessor model, yet also 25 per cent lower fuel consumption and emissions. The BMW M3 Sedan with Competition Package – producing 331 kW/450 hp – set a new fastest time for the BMW M3 over the 0 – 100 km/h (62 mph) sprint: 4.0 seconds.

Long anticipated by fans: the BMW M3 Touring.

The sixth-generation car has built on the fabled lineage of the BMW M3 with great success since it joined the fray in 2020. The six-cylinder in-line engine is still present and correct, in 2021 the intelligent all-wheel-drive system M xDrive made its BMW M3 debut, and in 2022 the new BMW M3 Touring added another new body variant to the line-up. The limited-run BMW M3 CS is the fastest series-produced BMW M3 yet, the sedan sprinting from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in just 3.4 seconds and posting an electronically limited top speed of 302 km/h (188 mph).

The first generation. From initial idea to the pinnacle of success.



The anticipation began in August 1985. That summer, Germany's car magazines built up their readers' expectations for the fastest BMW 3 Series of all times. The key data revealed a sports car that would punch way above its class: 200 hp, top speed in excess of 230 km/h (143 mph), sprint from a standing start to 100 km/h (62 mph) inside 6.7 seconds. However, the story was that "the most dynamic BMW 3 Series drivers" would have to wait until mid-1986. The pundits were right on that count. But one prediction missed the mark by a mile: anyone who "wants to make it in Group A racing needs to be turbocharged under the bonnet". Not true. The BMW M3 became arguably the most successful touring car in motor sport history.

The BMW M3 project was launched just a few months earlier. Production of the BMW M1 mid-engined sports car had already been discontinued for some time and BMW boss Eberhard Kuenheim commissioned a design for a successor, almost as an aside, according to legend. After one of his regular visits to BMW Motorsport GmbH in Munich's Preußenstraße he said, almost as he was leaving: "Mr. Rosche, we need a sporty engine for the BMW 3 Series." His aspiration was in good hands. BMW Motorsport GmbH, with its managing director of technical development Paul Rosche, had demonstrated its expertise with the legendary BMW 5 Series sedans fitted with M engines as well as developing the Formula 1 turbo engine that powered Brazilian Nelson Piquet to the World Championship title in his Brabham BMW in 1983.

Power source: a four-cylinder engine with 2.3-litre displacement and four-valve engineering.

The new BMW 3 Series engine had something in common with F1 unit: the crankcase. It originated from volume production and actually formed the basis for the two-litre engine with four cylinders. Four cylinders meant less weight and high torque, an ideal platform for a sports engine in the projected displacement class. Naturally enough, the standard four-cylinder was much too tame for a sports application. A comprehensive power boost was called for in order to turn the plucky daily workhorse into an athletic and sporty power unit. The BMW design engineers increased the displacement to 2.3 litres and applied a formulation that had already achieved significant successes over a period of many years:

four-valve engineering. There was also another reason for the decision to opt for a four-cylinder engine and not adopt the six-cylinder engine introduced in the BMW 3 Series. The longer crankshaft in this large engine started to vibrate much earlier than the shorter four-cylinder shaft. The design engineers therefore designed the crankshaft drive of the BMW M3 with sufficient torsional stability to achieve 10,000 revs per minute and more. By comparison with the four-cylinder engine installed in the series vehicles, this represented an increase of more than 60 per cent. The rated speed for the road version of the BMW M3 was still significantly below the critical range at 6,750 rpm and therefore offered sufficient scope for further developments.

Paul Rosche later recalled: "We started work immediately. One advantage was that the big six-cylinder engine originally had the same cylinder gap as the four-cylinder engine. We therefore cut two combustion chambers off the four-cylinder head of the M88 and bolted a panel over the hole on the rear side." This meant that the new four-cylinder engine had a second forebear. The six-cylinder engine that had initially created a sensation in the BMW M1 and since transformed the BMW M635CSi into one of the fastest coupés in the world. Paul Rosche: "Believe it or not, we had created an outstanding four-cylinder engine for the BMW 3 Series within the space of two weeks. Under the development name S14, this engine was to generate headlines in racing and in volume production over the years to come. One Sunday, I drove to von Kuenheim's flat and gave him the car for a test drive. When he came back he said: 'Good, I like it.' And that's how the BMW M3 came into being."

Unlike with the BMW M1 mid-engined sports car, the BMW M3 was not going to be crafted by hand in small batches, but built as a volume model on an assembly line. It was destined to compete in near-production touring car motor sport, or more precisely as a Group A racing car. This was defined in Annex J of the international motor sport regulations as a "production car", of which at least 5,000 units had to be built within the space of 12 consecutive months. Naturally, this meant that the BMW M3 had to be capable of operating as an everyday road vehicle.

Clean running: developed for operation with a catalytic converter right from the start.

This was not the only challenge taken on by the engine specialists in spring 1985. If the BMW M3 was destined to become a pioneering sports car, then this should be the case in as many disciplines as possible. And that also applied to exhaust emissions. The four-cylinder

engine was developed right from the start so that a three-way catalytic converter could easily be fitted. This approach involved BMW in another public relations exercise because lead-free petrol didn't exactly have the reputation of promoting the life expectancy of high-performance engines in the mid-1980s. Another factor was that bolt-on catalytic converters significantly stifled the power build-up of some cars. The BMW M3 proved that there was also another way. The development of catalytic converters was still in its infancy, but the sporty BMW 3 Series still generated an unrivalled 143 kW/195 hp.

Test at the Nürburgring.

There's no joy without sorrow – the developers of the BMW M3 experienced this on the initial test drives. Although the engine performed without any incidents, the exhaust system clearly failed to digest everything that was blown into its manifold by the high-performance power unit. The pipes fractured and this gave the development department some sleepless nights. It transpired that these problems were caused by the very high temperatures of the exhaust gases when the engine was operating at full power. The test drives on the Nürburgring's Nordschleife circuit were particularly hard on materials and the high-performance exhaust system became so hot that it expanded by as much as 25 millimetres and became distorted within its mounting. This problem was solved shortly afterwards with a distinctly unspectacular solution. A simple set of different washers allowed more play. The vehicle was now ready to roll, and the test drivers from BMW Motorsport GmbH immediately proved the point with an impressive performance on the high-speed test track in Nardo, Italy. The exhaust system withstood the test just like the rest of the car.

World premiere at the Frankfurt Motor Show in 1985.

At the BMW stand at the Frankfurt Motor Show in autumn 1985, the BMW M3 was presented to a broader public audience for the first time. Even without a special paint finish, it was not difficult to distinguish the car from the other BMW 3 Series variants. The boot lid was crowned by a spoiler across the width of the car. Aprons all round indicated the refined aerodynamic work that had been carried out on the body. The C-pillar of the BMW M3 was slightly wider than that of the series model and had a flatter taper in order to avoid breaking the airflow over the edge of the roof and at the same time direct it more effectively onto the rear spoiler. Wheel arch extensions had sprouted over the wide rims of the BMW M3, culminating in a striking lip below the edges of the wings. There was no question about it – the BMW M3 looked fast even when it was standing still.

However, test drivers and customers alike had to be patient for at least another six months. In spring 1986, the first pre-production cars were ready and the BMW M3 was launched to a press audience – appropriately at the Mugello race circuit. The test drivers established that the dynamic styling of the new BMW M3 in fact understated rather than exaggerated its capability. Sophisticated racing technology was housed under the beefy bodywork, bringing changes to the axle kinematics, suspension and damping. The braking system with ABS as standard comprised inner-vented brake discs at the front and a high-pressure pump operated by the engine. This servo pump delivered power to the steering at the same time so that both systems were able to operate independently of the negative pressure of the engine.

The BMW M3 weighed in at just 1,200 kilograms without ballast, making it very much a lightweight racer. A weight-to-power ratio of only 6.15 kilograms per hp was an extremely impressive figure by the standards of the time. This was primarily due to the use of plastic components. Although the bodywork – including the wide wheel arches – was made of metal as was customary, the front and rear bumpers, side sills, boot lid and spoilers were made of plastic.

A 235 km/h (146 mph) top speed for 58,000 marks.

The detailed aerodynamic work paid off with an outstanding Cd (drag coefficient) of 0.33. Lift at the front axle was around half that of the other two-door BMW 3 Series models. The large rear wing reduced lift at the rear axle by some two thirds. This was evident to the driver in the form of significantly increased driving stability and more precise steering characteristics at very high speeds. In fact, the standard BMW M3 reached a top speed of 230 km/h (143 mph) with catalytic converter and 235 km/h (146 mph) without catalytic converter. And yet it was relatively fuel-efficient. Under the then current "Drittelmix" fuel consumption formula – taking into account driving at 80 km/h (50 mph), 120 km/h (75 mph) and in urban conditions – the BMW M3 consumed significantly less than nine litres for every 100 km (62 miles) driven. However, this powerful car came at a price: a BMW M3 cost 58,000 marks when it was launched in 1986. By comparison, the BMW 325i convertible – at 43,300 marks – was the next most expensive car on the BMW 3 Series price list.

Nevertheless, finding customers for the requisite volume of 5,000 vehicles simply wasn't a problem. In the summer of 1986 – long before deliveries started – purchase contracts for the BMW M3 were being offered in small ads at a premium price. Eventually, in 1987, all 5,000

units of the first BMW M3 gathered at the BMW parking lot in Munich-Freimann for a family photo before being shipped all over the world.

300 hp for race competition.

However, many of them immediately disappeared again into garages and workshops to be given new liveries. After all, the BMW M3 had been designed as a racing car, and now was the time to prove that it really could race. The World Touring Car Championship was held for the first time in 1987. And that was exactly what the BMW M3 had been built for. But not quite in the guise in which it was seen on the streets. Instead of 200 hp, the 2.3-litre engine delivered up to 300 hp at 8,200 rpm in the racing version. This put it on a par with the BMW M635CSi. BMW didn't line up on the starting grid with its own team but supported a number of famous racing outfits like Schnitzer and Bigazzi. Drivers including Markus Oestreich, Christian Danner, Roberto Ravaglia, Winfried Vogt, Anette Meeuvissen and Mercedes Stermitz took the wheel, Meeuvissen and Stermitz forming an all-women's team.

Roberto Ravaglia becomes the inaugural World Touring Car champion in a BMW M3.

The first race in the 1987 World Touring Car Championship was at Monza on 22 March 1987 – and produced a sensational result. All the BMW M3 cars were excluded from the placings. The vehicles were checked under chaotic conditions and disqualified because of sheet-metal thicknesses that were allegedly contrary to the regulations. BMW appealed but the sports tribunal decided that the appeal had been lodged too late. There was no longer any talk of infringements of the rules. All the brouhaha naturally didn't have any effect on the result of the championship. At the end of the season, Roberto Ravaglia was standing on the podium as the first World Touring Car champion. BMW's success was repeated elsewhere. Winfried Vogt took the title of champion in the European Touring Car Championship and Altfried Heger came second – both driving a BMW M3. And Eric van de Poele won the prestigious Deutsche Tourenwagen Meisterschaft (DTM) in a BMW M3 run by the Zakspeed team. Moreover, the sportiest BMW 3 Series was also enjoying success in competitions away from race circuits: Bernard Béguin finished first in the Tour de Corse in a BMW M3, securing BMW's first victory in a round of the World Rally Championship for 14 years.

The “most sporty sedan of the year”.

The newcomer's success was also recognised by fans, as readers of racing magazine “sport auto” voted the BMW M3 “the most sporty sedan of the year”. The high-profile BMW 3 Series also became increasingly

exciting in its road version. In 1987, it was equipped with electronically adjustable shock absorbers. Drivers had a knob beside the handbrake lever which allowed them to choose between sport, normal and comfort settings. Control lamps on the instrument panel displayed the setting that had been selected.

The resilience of the four-cylinder under tough operating conditions on the race tracks rewarded private customers with two special offers in 1988. BMW created an exclusive special series of even more powerful BMW M3 cars bearing the "Evolution" badge. Identifiable by even more lavish spoilers, these special BMW M3s were powered by a 220 hp engine. The BMW M3 Evolution was joined by a model variant intended for a very special clientele: a BMW M3 based on the BMW 3 Series Convertible. The 215 hp open-top model had a top speed of 239 km/h (148 mph) and was by far the fastest small-series four-seater convertible on sale.

1989: another triumph in the DTM.

In the meantime, the BMW M3 was really getting going on the race track. The two-door car claimed national titles in France, England, Italy and Australia, among others. Belgian Marc Duez battled through the 1989 Monte Carlo Rally in a BMW M3 and took eighth place, ranking as the best driver in a car without all-wheel drive. The same year, Roberto Ravaglia won the DTM title in a BMW M3.

The BMW M3 was a commanding presence on the international touring car racing scene for many years. Numerous victories and championship wins at international level made it arguably the most successful touring car to date. As well as the World Championship title in 1987, these included success in the European Touring Car Championship and the 24-hour race at the Nürburgring. Here, the BMW M3 racked up four overall wins in a row between 1989 and 1992.

The four-valve engine in the BMW M3 had to be adapted according to competition rules before the car could race in national championships. For example, for England its capacity was limited to 2 litres, while for Germany and France it was raised to 2.5 litres with effect from 1990. This enabled the four-cylinder engine to deliver up to 360 hp. Depending on the version and the deployment profile, engine and mixture management also varied. Air intake was managed by independent throttle valves and valve control systems. In the version with the biggest capacity, the BMW M GmbH engineers went up against the limits of what was feasible. In order to make full use of the 2.5-litre limit, they not only

increased the stroke of the originally 2.3-litre unit from 84 to 87 millimetres, but also increased the bores of the four cylinders from 93.4 millimetres each to 95.5 millimetres. This reduced the width between the cylinders to just 4.5 millimetres. The car's success proved the development engineers right. The engines withstood the stresses and strains of touring-car racing at maximum output without any problem.

Special edition: the Sport Evo.

A road-going version of the largest-displacement original BMW M3 was launched with the "Sport Evolution" badge. Its characteristic feature was the two-tier rear wing. This 238 hp sports car was limited to 600 units. A model with a version of the two-litre engine used in Italy was also made available for everyday use. It was named the BMW 320is, packed 192 hp and was sold in Italy and Portugal to comply with the statutory capacity limits in force here for highly taxed luxury cars.

By the end of 1991, 17,970 examples of the first-generation BMW M3 had left the factory, including 786 convertibles. Nobody had anticipated this overwhelming success, on either the road or track. Building on these achievements was an obvious next step – with the new BMW 3 Series launched in 1990.

The second generation. Six cylinders fuel the journey into a new dimension.



The second generation of the BMW M3 was a completely new car – and a completely different car. This was the end of an era for an uncompromising sports car that was consistently tailored to be competitive in racing and demanded bold qualities from its drivers. An elegant and sophisticated coupé now emerged on the roads with a powerful yet cultured six-cylinder engine. The four-valve engine delivered 210 kW/286 hp, thanks to VANOS variable valve timing. This innovation allowed the opening point of the inlet valves to be adjusted to the engine speed and load. The advantage was that torque, power and consumption could be optimised simultaneously. The new BMW M3 engine was a pioneer among naturally aspirated engines, generating 320 newton metres (236 lb-ft) at 3,600 rpm. The six-cylinder unit generated as much torque virtually from idling speed as the previous BMW M3 engine could manage at its maximum: 230 newton metres (170 lb-ft). With 97 hp for each litre of displacement, its specific power output was one of the highest worldwide. The coupé took 6.0 seconds to sprint from a standing start to 100 km/h (62 mph), and the acceleration only stopped at a speed of 250 km/h (155 mph). This was not because the engine had run out of power but because the electronics brought the acceleration to an end – BMW had set this voluntary limit.

Meanwhile, the DIN consumption values were at a level that would also have looked good for a mid-range car: the BMW M3 used 9.1 litres of petrol per 100 km according to the Drittelmix formula. Lead-free fuel was standard because naturally the sports car had a catalytic converter. The engineers had revised the catalytic converter technology specifically to meet the needs of the new engine and developed the “stereo” oxygen sensors. This allowed the mixture for groups of three cylinders to be regulated separately with their own oxygen sensor, thanks to separate exhaust pipe systems. It enabled the vehicle to comply with the specified exhaust limits, in fact undercutting them by more than half.

Chassis and brakes: adapted to the performance data.

The substantially enhanced engine output of the new model demanded a revision of the chassis and braking system. The result had to be thoroughbred athleticism yet suitable for everyday road use, as well as being specially designed to meet the requirements for 17-inch tyres.

Despite the extreme width of the tyres and the 40-section specification, BMW M3 customers expected an acceptable level of comfort and good straight-line stability. A key element was once again a single-joint spring strut front axle with reinforced spring plates and axle knuckles. The centrally guided rear axle, used for the first time on the BMW Z1, reduced pitching of the body when driving off and braking to a minimum. And the longitudinal arm was adjusted to the increased hp. The dampers and anti-roll bars also had to be tuned more tautly. These changes were reflected in the height of the body. The BMW M3 was exactly 31 millimetres lower than a BMW 3 Series Coupé. The values for lateral acceleration also demonstrated how well all the chassis components were tuned to each other. Under normal circumstances, the adhesion limit was reached at a lateral acceleration of 0.8 g – 0.8 times the earth's gravitational acceleration. The chassis of the BMW M3 was subjected to the same intensive tests at the Nürburgring as that of its predecessor, and the value for the new chassis of the BMW M3 came out at an impressive 1 g.

Where powerful forces are being exerted, excessive power needs to be kept under control. The new model was therefore given a particularly powerful braking system with generously dimensioned, inner-vented, floating-calliper front and rear disc brakes. At that point, ABS systems were already being installed as standard in every BMW, and the ABS for the BMW M3 was specially tailored to the performance of the high-power sports coupé. The result was that the new BMW M3 decelerated from high speeds even more effectively than its predecessor, which had set benchmarks in this area. At a speed of 100 km/h (62 mph), the car only needed 2.8 seconds or 35 metres to come to a standstill. Braking from 200 km/h (124 mph) was possible in less than 6.0 seconds.

The mirrors were an identifying feature.

The new BMW M3 exhibited an understated profile but the car was unmistakable for aficionados. An aperture the size of the BMW kidney grille opened up under the front bumper, and behind the fly guard a generous oil cooler assisted in regulating the temperature of the six-cylinder engine. The BMW M3 had unique, specially developed alloy rims in a double-spoke design and two specially crafted exterior mirrors. The mirror housing was attached by two wing-shaped struts to keep drag to a minimum – and these struts became the ultimate status symbol for coupé drivers. After all, they signalled a car with a price tag of 80,000 marks. That was around one and a half times the price of the two-door BMW 325i, which was the range-topping model in the volume-production line-up at the time.

Yet the new BMW M3 could be more than just a sophisticated road-going sports car. BMW Motorsport GmbH developed a version for race competition in record time, starting in April 1992.

BMW M3 GTR wins the Warsteiner-ADAC GT Cup.

In April 1993, the new BMW M3 GTR was ready to go – in the striking chequered flag livery. The six-cylinder engine developed 325 hp, and the car weighed 1,300 kilograms in accordance with the regulations. Johnny Cecotto and Kris Nissen lined up in the BMW M3 GTR in the Warsteiner-ADAC GT Cup, which Cecotto was ultimately to win. However, this brought the BMW M3 motor sport chapter to an end for the time being. Changes in the regulations did not leave the powerful BMW 3 Series any realistic hopes of victory.

However, the BMW M3 was still a winner away from the track. Readers of "sport auto" voted this most agile of all BMW 3 Series models "Car of the year" twice in succession, while "Auto Plus" in France even gave the BMW M3 the accolade of "Car of the century". Immediately after the market launch in the USA, trade journalists from "Automobile" magazine also awarded the new star in the market the endorsement "Auto of the year" – the first imported car to be granted this title. And this was despite the fact that the BMW M3, while still very well equipped, had to make do with significantly reduced power for the American market. In order to be certain of complying with US exhaust emission laws, engineers used a BMW 525i engine enlarged to three litres. This engine generated 244 hp in the BMW M3 thanks to the VANOS variable valve timing and generated speeds of up to 220 km/h (137 mph). It could have packed a bigger punch but the regulations precluded this.

1994: debut of the new BMW M3 convertible.

Although the BMW M3 Coupé was elegant and beautiful, some customers wanted more. Calls for a new edition of the BMW M3 Convertible became more vociferous. By now, the motor sport subsidiary of BMW had been renamed BMW M GmbH and it had anticipated this demand by laying down plans for a convertible. In 1994, the new open-top BMW M3 based on the four-seater BMW 3 Series Convertible was launched – fitted with a power-operated soft-top and innovative safety technology as standard. BMW's rollover protection system provided occupants with innovative protection unknown in previous convertibles. In combination with the extremely rigid frame design of the windscreen, two rollover bars integrated behind the head restraints of the rear seats provided protection for passengers if the car turned over. Sensors monitored the position of the vehicle and released the locking

mechanism of the rollover bars once the limit values were reached. A spring-action mechanism rather than a pyrotechnic device forced the bars out. The newcomer featured strengthened elements under the body to ensure its high power could be effortlessly transformed into driving pleasure. The convertible weighed some 80 kilos more but this only had a minimal effect on performance. Instead of 6.0 seconds, the open-top BMW M3 required precisely 6.2 seconds for the sprint from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph). The top speed was the same as the coupé at 250 km/h (155 mph) – and was electronically limited, as with the coupé. When production ceased in 1999, 12,114 units of the safe and swift BMW M3 Convertible had rolled off the production line.

In 1994, a four-door sedan variant of the BMW M3 made its debut. This car enabled BMW to meet the desires of a large number of customers for a compact, luxury sedan with the genes of a high-performance sports car. The four-door car was undoubtedly the most successful combination of sportiness and everyday usability yet put on sale with the BMW M3 badge. This model was particularly attractive to customers who found the convertible and the coupé too sporty and tightly focused. The driving characteristics of the sedan were the same as those of the coupé, and the sedan also impressed with the superlative interior fittings included as standard, including wood inlays and Nappa leather seats. The production figures told their own story: by 1999, 12,435 examples of the BMW M3 in this body version had been sold.

In spring 1995, BMW M GmbH introduced a rather special version when it launched the limited-run BMW M3 GT Coupé for homologation. This car was intended to race in the IMSA GT Series in the USA – and therefore appealed above all to road drivers who wanted their BMW M3 to display even more bite. The already generous power output was again raised. This special edition could only be purchased in British Racing Green. The upgraded 3.0-litre six-cylinder engine now offered 217 kW/295 hp and accelerated the BMW M3 GT from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in 5.9 seconds. The car's aerodynamics were also revised and now boasted striking spoilers at front and rear. The really special feature was that the angle of the front spoiler could be adjusted by the driver. As far as equipment was concerned, the BMW M3 GT Coupé was a genuine benchmark. Two airbags were included as standard, together with sports seats in Nappa leather and carbon-fibre interior trims. The price of this special-edition model – of which only 350 were made – was 91,000 marks.

Power boost: upgraded engine with 3.2-litre displacement and 321 hp.

Nothing is so good it can't be made even better. Shortly after the addition of the four-door sedan to the BMW M3 line-up, BMW AG announced on 20 July 1995 that the BMW M3 was getting even more dynamic. The new model could only be distinguished by white indicator lenses, a black cool-air intake in the front spoiler and wheels styled differently from the coupé.

The special feature of the new BMW M3 was its upgraded engine. Firstly, it had a bigger capacity than the existing unit – at precisely 3,201 cc – and was therefore a good basis for boosting key statistics. The maximum torque rose by some ten per cent to 350 newton metres (258 lb-ft), while the reference engine speed fell from 3,600 rpm to 3,250 rpm. The six-cylinder engine with four valves per cylinder generated 236 kW/321 hp at 7,400 rpm. At the same time, the development engineers increased the compression ratio from 10.8 to 11.3, which benefited both power and fuel economy.

All these improvements had been facilitated primarily by the new engine electronics jointly developed by BMW electronics specialists and engineers at M GmbH. Computing power of 20 million commands per second enabled the MSS 50 to calculate the relevant optimum operating data such as ignition point, injection time and knock control. And it also managed the new double VANOS variable valve timing and adaptive stereo oxygen sensors. And there was much more. This engine management system represented a pioneering step for the subsequent generations of electronic control systems.

Double VANOS variable valve timing for the exhaust camshaft as well.

Improvements continued to be made to power, torque, idling and level of pollutant emissions in the new BMW M3 by installation of an adjustable inlet camshaft. Synchronous control of the exhaust camshaft was also added. This permitted internal exhaust gas recirculation, which significantly reduced nitrogen oxides. However, the variable system also increased torque at lower and medium engine speeds, generated lower levels of unburned gases during idling as a result of less overlap, and thereby assisted in further reducing consumption. The overall effect was that the new BMW M3 consumed 8.7 litres of petrol per 100 km according to the Drittelmix formula, despite its added power. Naturally, the most impressive aspect of the new BMW M3 was its performance. The sports car could sprint from rest to 100 km/h (62 mph) in just 5.5 seconds, and this explosive power delivery was combined with a high

level of elasticity: the driver needed just 5.7 seconds to accelerate from 80 km/h (50 mph) to 120 km/h (75 mph) in fourth gear.

Six-speed gearbox with overdrive effect.

The engine in the new BMW M3 was not the only area to have a thorough overhaul. The engineers at M GmbH also carried out some intensive work on the power transmission and chassis. For example, they acted on the desire of many BMW M3 customers for an additional gear with a new six-speed gearbox. The sixth gear had an overdrive effect, reducing revs at high speeds. The extra gear therefore served mainly to minimise driving noise at very high speeds and cut down fuel consumption.

The chassis was – and indeed remains – one of the focal points of a BMW M3. For this generation of the car, the engineers were mainly working on chassis tuning. Dampers and spring rates were completely reset, without reducing ride comfort. The rack-and-pinion power steering system was retained in principle, albeit with a rather more direct steering ratio. It therefore also offered the driver even better road feel than previously.

Unique: M Compound brakes.

The new front-axle brakes provided a very special highlight that was otherwise only available in this form on the BMW M5: compound brakes. The advantage of this system was in the compound design of the aluminium disc brake chamber and the grey cast-iron friction ring. The friction ring was attached to the chamber on a floating mount so that it could expand when braking without becoming distorted. This system provided excellent heat dissipation even at very high temperatures and this additionally had a positive effect on service life.

World first in 1997: the first Sequential M Gearbox.

Although the BMW M3 had by now become purely a road-going sports car, it still benefited from developments in racing-car technology on a regular basis. In 1997, BMW M GmbH became the first manufacturer in the world to offer the BMW M3 with the Sequential M Gearbox (SMG) as an option. This gearbox offered seamless gear changes, with the clutch operated fully automatically. The inspiration for this was the successful BMW 320i touring car racer. The driver simply pulled back briefly on the selector lever to go up the gears and pushed it forward for downshifts. This system delivered extremely short shift times while also preventing the driver from selecting the wrong gear.

The new gearbox combined the easy operation of an automatic with the opportunity to carry out sporty, manual gear changes, and demonstrated many advantages on the road. A clutch pedal was not required and there was also no hydraulic converter – as you would find with a conventional automatic – and so none of the associated losses, weights and inertias. Compared with a conventional manual gearshift, there were neither losses in performance nor efficiency compromises caused by converter slip. Most importantly, the joy of changing gear was noticeably enhanced because the Sequential M Gearbox enabled extremely fast manual upshifts and downshifts even when the accelerator pedal was floored. The driver no longer had to concentrate so much on changing gears and could instead exploit the high-revving character of the BMW M3 and focus entirely on other aspects of driving.

No wrong gears and no skidding when taking your foot off the accelerator.

The Sequential M Gearbox also proved to have many benefits in terms of operating safety. Generally speaking, the driver could no longer select the wrong gear because the system only accepted commands that could be implemented without any danger. The limit to the engine drag torque was defined automatically so that in critical driving situations – for example, shifting down the gears on slippery roads – the car would not slide into an uncontrolled skid.

Aside from all the improvements to enhance sporty driving, the SMG also offered an increase in comfort. The automatic clutch made driving in stop-and-go traffic effortless. A second shift level allowed driving in Economy ("E") in the same way as an automatic. If peak performance was required, the driver simply had to floor the accelerator and the SMG shifted through to sixth gear. A gear change only took approximately 250 milliseconds. In order to avoid over-revving the engine, the engine control system intervened by adjusting the ignition timing or shutting off one cylinder.

Success story: every second BMW M3 had an SMG gearbox.

The gearbox took the BMW M3 into new territory in the sports car sector – and was a runaway success story. A boom followed on from initial scepticism: when production was brought to a close, almost every second BMW M3 in this generation was fitted with an SMG gearbox. The exceptional sports car had become a sales hit, with precisely 71,242 examples rolling off the production line in Regensburg. From 1992 to 1999, it was an unsung hero – in coupé, convertible and sedan form – among the extensive range of BMWs manufactured there. The concept

was so compelling that two more derivatives joined the BMW M3 in the final two years of production. The BMW M Roadster and the M BMW Coupé had the same engine with identical output, but were otherwise based largely on the Z3 in its open-top and fixed-roof forms respectively.

The third generation. Top performance and precision in an exciting package.



The community of aficionados of the BMW M3 didn't have to wait long. The next BMW M3 gave lots of scope for discussion when it was unveiled as a show car at the Frankfurt Motor Show in September 1999. Six months later, it celebrated a world premiere at the Geneva Motor Show.

The third BMW M3 was very powerful, wide and yet elegant. Thanks to a special front apron with integrated fog lamps and large cooling air intakes, it presented a significantly different profile to all other models in the BMW 3 Series. The bonnet made of aluminium was curved in the centre, forming a power dome to create space for the BMW M3 engine.

The side profile of the BMW M3 body including the wheel arches had undergone an increase in width of 20 millimetres, with air intakes and BMW M3 badge in the front side panels. The BMW M3 cut a muscular figure, which was a visible consequence of aerodynamic optimization and distinguished it from the BMW 3 Series Coupé. It was accompanied by suitably wide tyres (225/45 ZR 18 at the front and 255/40 ZR 18 at the rear).

The impressive visual appearance of the M high-performance machine was underscored by aspherical M exterior mirrors, side sill trims and an aerodynamically optimised rear apron with rear spoiler lip. Any drivers still unaware of which car had just overtaken them would be left in no doubt it was an M model when they saw the four tailpipes of the dual-branch exhaust system.

Sports seats developed in-house with outstanding ergonomics provided an impressive combination of lateral support and unrestricted usability for long journeys. In addition to the wide range of electrical adjustment through all levels provided as standard, seat backrest width adjustment was also offered as an option.

New six-cylinder engine with even more power and torque.

It was broadly expected: the heart of the new BMW M3 was again a six-cylinder in-line engine – the classic BMW power unit. Like its predecessor, this completely new engine offered lots of torque, even

more power and all this for relatively modest petrol consumption and low exhaust emissions.

The BMW M3 engine generated its impressive 252 kW/343 hp from 3,246 cc at an engine speed of 7,900 rpm. Maximum torque was 365 newton metres (269 lb-ft) at 4,900 rpm. The result was specific output of 105 hp per litre, a value only achieved by a small number of high-performance sports cars not fitted with a turbocharger.

The highlights of the engine included a friction-optimised cylinder head with cam follower valve timing. The double VANOS variable timing familiar from the other M models was further optimised. Electronic throttle valve control was responsible for actuating the six individual throttle valves. It communicated directly with the MSS 54 engine control unit specially developed for the BMW M3. This multiprocessor system had two 32 bit microcontrollers, two timing coprocessors and computing power of 25 million calculations per second.

However, the main goal of developing the new BMW M3 engine was not simply the generation of torque. Instead, the primary objective was to demonstrate how propulsion could be generated by harnessing the available power to the best possible effect. Propulsion came mainly from the exceptionally high torque of this engine combined with a relatively short final drive ratio. The available power could be converted into acceleration much more efficiently than with lower-revving engines. And this was true at all speeds. In addition, an oil supply system that adjusted to lateral forces ensured reliable lubrication and cooling for the engine through hard cornering and manoeuvres involving heavy braking.

A few statistics can provide an indication of the performance at hand: for example, the BMW M3 accelerated from a standing start to 100 km/h (62 mph) in just 5.2 seconds and took just 5.4 seconds to accelerate from 80 to 120 km/h (50 – 75 mph) in fourth gear. A special switch, the M Driving Dynamic Control, also allowed drivers to select between sporty and comfort-biased engine response.

World first for the BMW M3: the variable M differential lock.

This refined but also muscular power delivery was effortlessly transferred to the road via the six-speed manual gearbox. The variable M differential lock being used for the first time in the BMW M3 provided effective support.

Differential locks can distribute different levels of tractive force individually to the rear drive wheels, depending on which wheel currently has the best traction. The special feature of the variable M differential lock was that it recorded the different rotational speeds rather than the different torque of the left-hand and right-hand rear wheels, as in conventional systems. The difference in rotational speeds was evened out by the limited-slip system containing viscose oil so that the required forward thrust could be provided. This system offered a locking effect from 0 to 100 per cent. This brought noticeable benefits for the BMW M3 driver both when pulling away in difficult situations and under hard cornering.

Having been put to the test many times in international motor racing, the upgraded M Sport suspension of the BMW M3 ensured outstanding roadholding. This allowed the BMW M3 to live up to its reputation as the best handling car. The engineers at BMW M came up with a wealth of ideas to ensure the car was able to respond at all types of handling limits. Extreme levels of rigidity and the minimisation of unsprung masses combined with direct handling unrivalled even in this class. Big power also demanded considerable braking force. That's why the BMW M3 was fitted with a generously dimensioned high-performance braking system, again featuring BMW M Compound brakes with floating callipers and perforated discs.

A revelation: the BMW M3 Convertible.

Not long after its highly successful launch, the new BMW M3 Coupé was joined in the line-up by a second attractive model variant that wasted no time in making waves. The new BMW M3 Convertible – an open-top sports four-seater in the premium class – was introduced in spring 2001. Although identical with the BMW M3 Coupé as far as its A-pillars, it had a character very much its own. The distinctive belt line and the character of a convertible made the car appear even wider and more powerful.

Naturally, numerous typical M characteristics were integrated in the BMW M3 Convertible, such as the high-revving, naturally aspirated engine developing 252 kW/343 hp, a perfectly tuned M chassis, the variable M differential lock, M high-performance brakes and M-specific design elements. These combined with familiar qualities of a BMW 3 Series Convertible: electrically adjustable sports seats with an integrated seat-belt system, a variable soft-top compartment and a high level of safety achieved through maximally rigid body stiffness and the standard-fitted rollover protection system.

The interior ambience was even classier than that of the previous model, which had already enjoyed major success in what was a small market niche. The BMW M3 Convertible had awesome power, taking just 5.5 seconds to sprint from a standing start to 100 km/h (62 mph), and requiring only 5.9 seconds to accelerate from 80 to 120 km/h (50 – 75 mph) in fourth gear. Its top speed was 250 km/h (155 mph) and average fuel consumption was just 12.1 litres per 100 kilometres.

The BMW M3 GTR racer for the US: the most powerful BMW M3.

Meanwhile, quite a different BMW M3 was creating a sensation in the USA. In 2001, the new BMW M3 GTR with 450 hp V8 engine started its racing career stateside. The most powerful BMW M3 to date set new benchmarks in the GT class of the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) with its 4-litre engine. A quartet of BMW M3 GTR racers competed in the series. The BMW Motorsport Team entered two cars under the management of Charly Lamm, while the American BMW Team PTG run by native German Tom Milner entered another two cars. The coupé posted seven wins in ten races with six pole positions. BMW works driver Jörg Müller won the Drivers' Championship in the GT Class, BMW Motorsport took victory in the team placings, and BMW won the Manufacturers' Championship in the company's most important foreign market.

In February 2002, the racing car for the road could went on sale – with its engine dialled down from 330 kW/450 hp to 258 kW/350 hp – for 250,000 euros. The road-going car was very closely related technically to the racing version. Under the bonnet, which featured additional cooling slits, was a high-performance V8 engine with dry sump lubrication. A six-speed manual gearbox was also on board, together with a two-disc clutch like the one used in the racing car. The body was also similar to the track version. The roof, rear wing, and front and rear aprons were made of carbon-fibre reinforced plastic to save weight.

The second generation of the SMG: with paddles on the steering wheel.

The ongoing development of the BMW M3 concept continued unabated. The next highlight followed within just a few months, reflecting the urgency of the cars themselves. The Sequential M Gearbox (SMG) had already perfected in the second generation in the BMW M3. But now, the SMG enabled super-fast gear changes using gearshift paddles on the steering wheel. This meant the driver could keep the accelerator pedal floored. The latest engine electronics interrupted the power of the engine for only milliseconds, the control unit changed gear and opened and

closed the clutch using an automated hydraulic system. This second generation of the SMG also provided impressive performance with even shorter power interruptions; the time for the fastest gearshifts was now just 80 milliseconds. Changing gear that quickly using a manual gearshift is all but impossible. Drivelogic also provided BMW M3 drivers with the option of adapting the gearshift dynamics – for sequential shifts carried out manually – to match their driving style. There were six different programs here, ranging from moderately dynamic to extremely sporty. Moreover, the S6 driving program could be selected if the Dynamic Stability Control (DSC) fitted as standard in the BMW M3 was switched off. The SMG would then execute gearshifts with the focus and speed of a racing car's gearbox.

The BMW M3 CSL: the 110 per cent car.

In 2003, BMW launched the production version of a concept car that had created a sensation at the Frankfurt Motor Show in 2001: the BMW M3 CSL. The initials stood for Coupé, Sport, Lightweight and reflected a tradition extending back to the 1930s at BMW, when the legendary BMW 328 Mille Miglia Touring Coupé came into being. The focus for the design of this vehicle was not a radical slimming regime consisting of removing individual components, but intelligent weight reduction by using the most suitable materials at the right points. The experts managed to cut the weight of the BMW M3 by more than 110 kilograms so that the CSL version weighed in at just 1,385 kilograms. The engine was also revised and generated 256 kW/360 hp in this version. This resulted in a weight-to-power ratio of only 3.85 kilograms per hp – a truly sensational value that gave the BMW M3 CSL even more agility than the standard BMW M3. The sprint from a standing start to 100 km/h (62 mph) was achieved in just 4.9 seconds. Acceleration from zero to 200 km/h (124 mph) took only 16.8 seconds. The top speed was limited electronically to 250 km/h (155 mph).

M Track Mode.

M Track Mode was a real treat for keen drivers with racing aspirations. This function of DSC was specially tailored to driving on race circuits and had to be deliberately activated by pressing a button on the steering wheel. The system only intervened when the car was being driven to the very limit. In this way, M Track Mode allowed ambitious lay drivers to take corners safely at the physical limits.

Innovative materials in the right places.

The intelligent lightweight design employed for the BMW M3 CSL was showcased particularly prominently by the roof presented in exposed

carbon-fibre reinforced plastic (CFRP). This large component was manufactured by specialists at the BMW plant in Landshut. Not only was it around six kilograms lighter than a conventional roof, using CFRP in this position within the car reduced its centre of gravity. The BMW M engineers put virtually every component in the BMW M3 through a weight test and integrated each component using the most suitable materials geared to saving weight. Even glass-fibre reinforced plastics from aerospace were used for the BMW M3 CSL, such as in the thermoplastic composite for the structure of the through-loading compartment and the rear bumper mount. The honeycomb sandwich panel for the load compartment floor was another example. Like the BMW M3, the BMW M3 CSL had a bonnet made of aluminium while the rear window was made of thin glass.

2004 and 2005: the BMW M3 GTR dominates at the Nürburgring.

Eleven years after the first BMW M3 GTR competed on the rack track in Europe, the new-generation BMW M3 GTR lined up on the starting grid in 2009. Two of these racing cars fitted with eight-cylinder engines entered the 24-hour races at Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium, and the Nürburgring. The result was a class victory at Spa and two one-two victories at the legendary circuit in the Eifel mountains.

Concept car in 2007: greetings from the new BMW M3.

Seven years after sales started, the BMW M3 had by no means become an old car, but in the fast-moving sports-car scene it was already getting on in years. BMW showed the way forward at the 77th Geneva Motor Show. The concept study presented to the public for the first time in spring 2007 gave an impression of what a future BMW M3 might look like on the road. The basic design of the BMW M3 Concept Car followed traditional lines and was based on the current BMW 3 Series Coupé. However, only a few components were transferred directly from the series-produced model. They included the headlights and taillights, and the two doors and boot lid as the only bodywork elements. The bonnet made of aluminium again had a strikingly large power dome. Like the air vents positioned alongside, it provided an indication of the high potential to be expected from an engine in a BMW M3. Moreover, it heralded a premiere. The BMW M3 Concept Car was powered by an eight-cylinder engine rather than a six-cylinder. Right from the start, it was an open secret that an engine of this nature was also planned for the subsequent production car.

The fourth generation. Eight-cylinder engine sends performance to new heights.



The fourth generation of the BMW M3 actually made its debut a few months later and included everything promised by the concept car. Apart from a few components, the fast coupé was a completely redesigned vehicle. A newly designed eight-cylinder V-engine formed the impressive power unit to guarantee outstanding performance and uniquely dynamic sportiness. The new engine developed output of 309 kW/420 hp from 3,999 cubic centimetres and maximum torque of 400 newton metres (295 lb-ft). Accordingly, the new BMW M3 was able to demonstrate breathtaking performance. It accelerated from a standing start to 100 km/h (62 mph) in just 4.8 seconds and achieved a top speed of 250 km/h (155 mph) – limited by the engine electronics.

The new V8 was exceptionally lightweight at just 202 kilograms. The BMW M engineers even succeeded in beating the weight-optimised six-cylinder engine of the predecessor model, which was some 15 kilograms heavier. The weight of two additional cylinders was therefore more than cancelled out.

The eight-cylinder engine owed its most striking feature to the power-to-displacement ratio typical of BMW M. The V8 only reached maximum revs at 8,400 rpm, and the accelerator pedal delivered the joy of imposing thrust. By contrast, the fuel consumption of the new high-performance V8 was almost modest at an average of 12.4 litres per 100 kilometres.

This impressively low figure was largely due to intelligent energy management. Brake Energy Regeneration further increased the efficiency of the power unit. Generation of electricity for the on-board network focused on the overrun and braking phases, while during traction the alternator was generally uncoupled. Aside from particularly efficient power generation, this procedure also resulted in more tractive force being available for acceleration.

Lightweight chassis provides optimum implementation of superior engine performance.

The suspension of the new BMW M3 was based on that of the BMW 3 Series Coupé, although virtually all the components were completely

redesigned. As well as upgrading it to deal with the significantly higher tractive forces, the overall objective here was to significantly reduce weight. The front axle had a double-strut design and virtually all its components were manufactured from aluminium. The five-link rear suspension also had a lightweight construction and was completely redesigned apart from one link. A weight-saving of some 2.5 kilograms was achieved here. Engineers at BMW M GmbH even succeeded in saving more weight in the high-performance braking system with compound discs. The new rear axle differential of the BMW M3 was equipped with the variable M differential lock, which could provide up to 100 per cent locking power and therefore ensured optimum traction even in particularly demanding driving situations. The lightweight chassis was supplemented by the Servotronic steering, a high-performance braking system with all-round vented discs and electronically managed Dynamic Stability Control (DSC). The new BMW M3 could also be ordered as an option with Electronic Damper Control (EDC).

Electronics allow the car to adapt to individual driving styles.

The newly developed chassis of the BMW M3 provided ambitious drivers with an outstanding platform. Particularly sporty drivers could use the electronic controls to match the coupé even more precisely to their individual driving style. For example, DSC could be switched off completely. The iDrive operating system could also be used to preselect the level of power assistance provided by the Servotronic steering. The optional Electronic Damper Control had three settings, which could be pre-set at the touch of a button. Adjusting the damper force optimised dynamic response when cornering, braking and accelerating. Three control maps were also available for engine management and they significantly modified the response of the eight-cylinder.

A feature offered by no other car in the segment: a carbon-fibre roof.

The roof was the area of the BMW M3 where its advanced technology was most clearly apparent. This component of the bodywork was made of carbon-fibre reinforced plastic (CFRP). The interesting aspect was that the fibre structure of the lightweight material remained visible – only a clear varnish coated the high-tech surface. As well as its exclusive visual appearance, the main attribute of the CFRP roof provided a definite technical advantage: it weighed significantly less than a steel roof. This not only reduced the total weight of the vehicle, but the weight-saving at

the highest point of the bodywork also significantly reduced the car's centre of gravity and hence optimised performance when cornering fast.

Debut fireworks: sedan and convertible followed just months later.

Within a period of eight months, BMW set off a veritable BMW M3 fireworks display. In autumn 2007, the five-seater sedan lined up alongside the four-seater coupé. Then the BMW M3 Convertible came along just in time for the open-air driving season in 2008. This was only one year after the concept car had celebrated its world premiere at the Geneva Motor Show. The consequence was that BMW M GmbH achieved the second best results in its history in the business year 2008. The BMW M3 in particular provided the driving force for this positive development. In the first full year of production, almost 18,000 units of the BMW M3 had been sold worldwide. A vast array of awards and test wins provided customers with confirmation that they had bought the right car. Like its predecessor with six cylinders, the V8 installed in the BMW M3 gained the prestigious accolade of "International Engine of the Year" a number of times, and it was repeatedly voted the "Sportiest Sedan of the Year".

Available from 2008: M DKG with Drivelogic.

BMW M GmbH presented the world's first double-clutch transmission designed for high-speed power units with the M double-clutch transmission (M DKG) with Drivelogic in 2008. It enabled gear shifts to be made without interruption of power and traction, and seven gears offered optimum gear increments for particularly dynamic acceleration. The new M double-clutch transmission with Drivelogic was the fourth, consistently enhanced generation of the automated manual gearbox in M-specific configuration. It was offered for the BMW M3 Coupé, BMW M3 Sedan and BMW M3 Convertible.

Triumphant comeback: the BMW M3 gets back on the race track.

The new BMW M3 is also made a flat-out return to the race track. BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen said: "Sportiness is undoubtedly in the genes of the series model of the BMW M3. That's what motivated us to develop a racing version of this car." As a near-series BMW M3 GT4, it assists privateer drivers in winning races, and as the BMW M3 GT2 with the resilience for covering long distances it is used to compete as a works car. In May 2010, the new 500 hp long-distance athlete won the 24-hour race at the Nürburgring at its first attempt.

M GmbH launched the BMW M3 GTS at virtually the same time. The coupé was designed for "clubsport" racing and was powered by an

upgrade of the V8 engine with increased displacement and enhanced power. It also brought specific tuning for the seven-speed M DKG with Drivelogic. Likewise featured were modified chassis technology and targeted optimisation as far as aerodynamics and lightweight design were concerned. The eight-cylinder engine of the BMW M3 GTS – expanded to 4,361 cubic centimetres – developed 331 kW/450 hp, and thanks to a weight-to-power ratio of only 3.4 kilograms per 1 hp, it powered the coupé effortlessly. The BMW M3 GTS had a gearbox and chassis configuration optimised for the race track and accelerated from a standing start to 100 km/h (62 mph) in just 4.4 seconds. The 1,000-metre sprint was achieved from a standing start in just 22.5 seconds while its top speed was 305 km/h (189 mph).

Intelligent lightweight design drives performance to new heights: the BMW M3 CRT.

In 2011, the new BMW M3 CRT was added to the range. CRT stood for “Carbon Racing Technology” and underscored the concept behind the new arrival. A globally unique production process for CFRP components was used for the first time for the BMW M3 CRT.

Built at the BMW M GmbH factory on the basis of the BMW M3 Sedan, the BMW M3 CRT featured a number of model-specific lightweight components. It therefore continued the tradition of super-exclusive BMW models optimised with the help of intelligent lightweight design – cars like the BMW 3.0 CSL from the 1970s. Here, the considerable experience of BMW M GmbH in racing car construction came into play. The CFRP bonnet of the BMW M3 CRT was around 50 per cent lighter than the standard aluminium item, and the bucket seats for the driver and front passenger, the rear spoiler and the air-channelling element integrated into the front apron were also made from CFRP.

Produced in a limited run of 67 examples, the BMW M3 CRT had a kerb weight of 1,580 kilograms – making it 45 kilograms lighter than the standard BMW M3 Sedan. When the extensive specification of the special edition was taken into account, the weight saving was actually as much as 70 kilograms. The high-performance sports car had a power-to-weight ratio of 3.5 kilograms per horsepower.

Like the BMW M3 GTS, the BMW M3 CRT also had a 4.4-litre eight-cylinder engine producing 331 kW/450 hp. It sent this power to the rear wheels via a seven-speed M double-clutch transmission with Drivelogic and was fitted with coilover suspension. The BMW M3 CRT needed just

4.4 seconds to power from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) and its top speed was an electronically limited 290 km/h (180 mph).

DTM comeback culminates in a historic triumph.

The BMW M3 GT2 also kept the motor-racing headline writers busy in 2011. BMW won the manufacturers' championship in the GT class of the American Le Mans Series and a BMW driver team secured the drivers' title.

Another item of breaking news in the summer of 2011 set the pulses of BMW fans racing, as BMW announced its return to the DTM touring car series for 2012 after 20 years away. The new BMW M3 DTM developed for the campaign had a CFRP monocoque chassis and a 4.0-litre V8 engine developing some 353 kW/480 hp. Power was channelled through a sequential six-speed gearbox, operated pneumatically using shift paddles mounted on the steering wheel.

A total of six examples of the new BMW M3 DTM – run by the Schnitzer, RMG and RBM teams – were duly entered in the 2012 Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters. The BMW driver line-up included reigning DTM champion Martin Tomczyk and multiple touring car world champion Andy Priaulx. Canadian driver Bruno Spengler notched up the first victory of BMW's DTM comeback in just the second race of the season at the Lausitzring. Thus began a sensational run of success that culminated in an unexpected triple triumph: Spengler wrapped up the 2012 DTM drivers' title, BMW Team Schnitzer topped the teams' standings and the DTM manufacturers' title went to BMW. Following the final race of the season at Hockenheim, BMW Motorsport Director at the time, Jens Marquardt, offered a fitting summary: "We've made motor sport history."

Only 54 examples: the BMW M3 Champions Edition.

BMW's achievements in its DTM comeback year of 2012 had exceeded all expectations. To celebrate this success, BMW M GmbH released the BMW M3 Champions Edition. The car was produced in a limited run of 54 in a reference to the number of DTM race victories amassed by BMW since 1984. Presented in December 2012, the special edition was available exclusively in Frozen Black metallic, mirroring the colour of Bruno Spengler's race car. The design of the BMW M stripes extending over the CFRP roof and boot lid also closely reflected that of the triumphant BMW M3 DTM.

Likewise revealed in 2012 was the BMW M3 Coupé Lime Rock Park Edition, available in the US market only. Limited to 200 examples, the

car was named after the renowned Lime Rock Park race circuit in Connecticut. Track owner Skip Barber described the special edition as “a classic car for a classic track”. The BMW M3 Coupé Lime Rock Park Edition was available exclusively in the colour shade Fire Orange metallic. Its specification included the Competition Package and a lightweight titanium exhaust system.

BMW M3 signs off with more race wins and a title in the DTM.

2013 brought another wave of major victories for the BMW M3 DTM. Between them, BMW works drivers Augusto Farfus, Bruno Spengler and Timo Glock won five of the ten rounds of the DTM, enabling BMW to successfully defend its DTM manufacturers' title. Farfus also finished second in the drivers' standings, ahead of 2012 champion Spengler.

Production of the fourth generation of the BMW M3 came to an end in 2013. And the BMW M3 DTM also bid farewell at the conclusion of the race season. It was succeeded in 2014 by the new BMW M4 DTM, which went on to enjoy a highly successful track career of its own.

The fifth generation. High revs and turbocharging lead the way.



The launch of the fifth-generation BMW M3 brought various changes to the model line-up. The two-door coupé and convertible would now both carry the BMW M4 badge, with the richly storied BMW M3 name reserved for the four-door version alone. The new BMW M3 Sedan celebrated its world premiere at the North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) in Detroit in January 2014.

A highly efficient new six-cylinder engine makes its debut.

The most striking change over the predecessor model could be found under the bonnet of the new BMW M3 Sedan, where a six-cylinder in-line engine took the place of the outgoing V8. This marked the return of BMW M GmbH to an engine type familiar from the second and third generation of the iconic sports car. At the same time, M TwinPower Turbo technology made its debut appearance in a BMW M3.

The newly developed, turbocharged 3.0-litre unit produced 317 kW/431 hp, comfortably outstripping the maximum output of the V8 in the previous-generation BMW M3. The engine in the new BMW M3 Sedan also increased peak torque by almost 40 per cent. 550 Newton metres (405 lb-ft) could now be accessed across an extremely wide engine speed range (1,850 – 5,500 rpm). With a limit of 7,600 rpm, the new engine also demonstrated a willingness to rev that was exceptional for a turbocharged unit. The efficiency of the engine was also outstanding, with the new BMW M3 Sedan reporting fuel consumption and emissions around 25 per cent below those of the previous model.

The new four-door model was fitted as standard with a six-speed manual gearbox that enabled throttle-blipping on downshifts. This engagement speed control function helped stabilise the car and had its origins in motor sport. Customers could also order the seven-speed M double-clutch transmission (M DKG) with Drivelogic as an option, which allowed manual gear changes using the selector lever in the centre console or the gearshift paddles on the steering wheel.

Innovative flap arrangement gives the BMW M3 Sedan a distinctive soundtrack.

The performance figures for the new BMW M3 Sedan emphasised its standout sporting character. For example, the optionally available M DKG transmission used its integrated Launch Control to unlock top-drawer acceleration off the line: the BMW M3 Sedan with seven-speed M DKG needed just 4.1 seconds for the 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) sprint. In cars fitted with the standard six-speed manual gearbox, this figure was 4.3 seconds. The top speed of the BMW M3 Sedan was electronically limited to 250 km/h (155 mph), but could be raised to 280 km/h (174 mph) if the optional M Driver's Package was specified.

The sporty engine note produced by the BMW M3 Sedan was created with the help of an innovative flap arrangement in the dual-branch exhaust system. The electrically controlled flaps positioned just before the rear silencer ensured a boldly distinctive sound, while minimising exhaust gas backpressure.

Eye-catching front end and characteristic design elements.

Hallmark BMW M design cues shaped the exterior appearance of the BMW M3 Sedan. A modern take on the twin-headlight design played its part in the car's expressive face, as did the striking BMW kidneys with their black-painted grille bars. Another distinctive feature was the power dome atop the bonnet and the powerfully sculpted front apron with its three large air intakes for engine and brake cooling. The car's muscular wheel arches accentuated the dynamic potential of the new BMW M3 Sedan when viewed from the side. The rear apron with integrated diffuser and a pair of twin high-gloss polished exhaust tailpipes were the signature features of the rear end. And a clearly defined Gurney-style spoiler lip reduced lift, while also bringing added visual impact.

Interior with M-typical equipment details.

The driver focus for which BMWs are renowned also shaped the interior of the BMW M3 Sedan. The cabin included equipment details that shone a powerful spotlight on the car's sporting character. These included the M-specific circular instruments with white graphics, and the M leather steering wheel with chrome trim and stitching in a contrasting colour. The optional M DKG transmission came with gearshift paddles in a metallic look. The front seats also displayed a clear link to racing-car design. The BMW M Sport seats had width-adjustable side bolsters and a low-set seat surface, providing excellent support and an ideal seating position.

Low weight for enhanced efficiency and dynamic ability.

The new BMW M3 Sedan achieved weight savings of around 80 kilograms over a comparably equipped predecessor model. This was enabled by the rigorous application of intelligent lightweight design measures, which brought advantages for both driving dynamics and efficiency. These measures include the increased use of lightweight materials such as carbon-fibre-reinforced plastic (CFRP) and aluminium. One example here was the carbon roof, which was fitted on the BMW M3 Sedan for the first time.

Chassis solutions from racing car design.

The high rigidity yet low weight of the axle systems played a vital role in the exceptional agility and dynamic potency of the new BMW M3 Sedan. The aluminium construction of the front and rear axle delivered significant weight savings over the predecessor model. The rigid bolted connection of the rear-axle subframe to the body without any flexible rubber elements was taken from racing car design. It produced a further improvement in wheel location, elevating driving precision to new heights. In addition, the Active M Differential optimised traction and directional stability with the help of an electronically controlled multi-plate limited-slip differential.

Electromechanical steering enables precise manoeuvres.

The electromechanical steering system newly developed by BMW M GmbH for the BMW M3 Sedan offered superbly direct steering feel and precise feedback. The integrated Servotronic function electronically adjusted the level of steering assistance according to vehicle speed. The steering system came with three settings – which could be selected at the touch of a button – as standard.

The standard-fitted BMW M Compound brakes were a compelling proposition with their outstanding stopping power, excellent controllability and fade-resistant performance. And the BMW M3 Sedan could also be specified as an option with weight-minimised BMW M Carbon ceramic brakes. As well as offering further improved performance, they were also more durable and more effective in track use.

Competition Package brings power boost.

From spring 2016, BMW M GmbH offered a Competition Package for the BMW M3 Sedan. It increased output by 14 kW/19 hp to 331 kW/450 hp, the additional power further enhancing the car's performance. The BMW M3 Sedan with optional seven-speed M double-clutch

transmission sprinted from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in 4.0 seconds. The Competition Package also included adaptive M suspension – which brought new springs, dampers and anti-roll bars – and exclusive 20-inch M light-alloy wheels.

Special anniversary edition.

In summer 2016, BMW M GmbH celebrated 30 years since the market launch of the first-generation BMW M3 with an exclusive special edition of the iconic car: the BMW M3 30 Jahre Edition. It was limited to a production run of 500 units worldwide, based on Competition Package specification and developed 331 kW/450 hp. All examples of the car were painted in the exclusive Macao Blue metallic exterior finish.

The fastest fifth-generation model: the BMW M3 CS.

Even lighter, even more powerful and even faster – that was the new BMW M3 CS, revealed in 2017. The exclusive special edition was only produced for a limited time. Containing a large number of CFRP components, it saved around 35 kilograms in weight compared with the standard BMW M3 Sedan. Its six-cylinder in-line engine with M TwinPower Turbo technology developed 338 kW/460 hp and peak torque of 600 Nm (442 lb-ft). The BMW M3 CS came as standard with the seven-speed M DKG transmission and a sports exhaust system generating a CS-specific sound. The BMW M3 CS accelerated from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in 3.9 seconds on the way to an electronically governed top speed of 280 km/h (174 mph).

The sixth generation. Now with intelligent all-wheel drive and in Touring form.



Before the sixth generation of the BMW M3 had even celebrated its premiere, an announcement from Munich was already making headlines. In August 2020, BMW M GmbH revealed in a press release that it was developing a BMW M3 Touring. Although the date the car would go into series production had yet to be confirmed, it was now certain that a BMW M3 with an extra-large and highly versatile load compartment would be added to the range for the first time.

In September 2020, around a month after this bombshell, the new BMW M3 in four-door Sedan form was front and centre of the digital world premiere – in two different variants. The new BMW M3 Sedan was making its debut alongside the new BMW M3 Competition Sedan. Both were powered by a 3.0-litre six-cylinder in-line engine with M TwinPower Turbo technology – and both had maximum outputs well beyond the previous generation's reach. In the new BMW M3 Sedan, the engine produced 353 kW/480 hp, which was channelled to the rear wheels via a six-speed manual gearbox. Peak torque was 550 Nm (405 lb-ft). In the new BMW M3 Competition Sedan, a 375 kW/510 hp variant of the high-revving unit teamed up as standard with an eight-speed M Steptronic transmission with Drivelogic and delivered 650 Nm (479 lb-ft) of torque between 2,750 and 5,500 rpm. The BMW M3 Competition Sedan also sent its power to the rear wheels.

Rest to 100 km/h (62 mph) in under four seconds.

These imposing power figures were reflected in the extremely sporty performance of the two models. The new BMW M3 Sedan sprinted from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in 4.2 seconds, while 0 to 200 km/h (124 mph) was over in 13.7 seconds. These already outstanding figures were outstripped by its sister model, the BMW M3 Competition Sedan. It needed just 3.9 seconds to accelerate from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph), and 0 to 200 km/h (124 mph) was dealt with in 12.5 seconds.

The top speed of both model variants was electronically limited to 250 km/h (155 mph), although this could be increased to 290 km/h (180 mph) if the optional M Driver's Package was specified.

Adaptive M suspension fitted as standard.

The vehicle concept of the new BMW M3 Sedan featured a long wheelbase, wide tracks, a low centre of gravity and virtually 50:50 weight distribution – ideal ingredients for a car focused squarely on dynamic excellence. The extremely high torsional rigidity of the body and chassis mounting was also a key factor in providing the dynamism, agility and precision for which BMW M models are renowned. The BMW M3 Sedan and BMW M3 Competition Sedan both came as standard with adaptive M suspension including electronically controlled dampers. Likewise on board were M Servotronic variable-ratio steering and an integrated braking system, which provided superb pedal feel in any situation. Standard specification also included M Dynamic Mode, which unlocked a particularly sporty driving experience, including controlled drifts.

Striking front end with new, larger BMW kidney grille.

A large, vertical BMW kidney grille dropping a long way down towards the road shaped the eye-catching front end of the BMW M3 Sedan and BMW M3 Competition Sedan. To either side of the grille, additional large intakes optimised cooling for the brakes and engine. The standard full-LED headlights had a strikingly slim design. Prominently flared wheel arches and side skirt extensions were among the other distinctive elements of the exterior design.

Interior and equipment.

The interior of the new BMW M3 models, with its ergonomically ideal cockpit design, ensured the driver's focus remained entirely on the richly engaging experience at the wheel. Standard specification included fine-grain Merino leather trim and newly developed, electrically adjustable M Sport seats, with seat ventilation available as an option for the first time. The new M Carbon bucket seats were a particularly attractive addition to the options list. Both BMW M3 models came as standard with the BMW Live Cockpit Professional (including a fully digital display grouping) as well as the BMW Intelligent Personal Assistant. The range of driver assistance systems was expanded significantly.

The M Race Track Package was made available for the new BMW M3 models as an option for the first time. It reduced the vehicle weight by around 25 kilograms.

Intelligent all-wheel-drive system M xDrive provides superior traction.

In April 2021, just a few months after sales began of the new-generation BMW M3, BMW M GmbH presented a new variant with even sharper

dynamics. For the first time, the high-performance sports car was available with an M-specific all-wheel-drive system. The new BMW M3 Competition Sedan with M xDrive split the power from the 375 kW/510 hp six-cylinder in-line engine between the front and rear axle to best possible effect in every situation. Working in tandem with the Active M Differential, the M xDrive all-wheel-drive system enhanced traction, directional stability, agility and dynamism. This allowed drivers to experience the M-typical performance attributes in particularly compelling form. The BMW M3 Competition Sedan with M xDrive accelerated from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in 3.5 seconds, shaving 0.4 seconds off the time set by its sister model with rear-wheel drive. Added to which, three M xDrive modes allowed drivers to adapt the M feeling to their personal tastes. 4WD and 4WD Sport were joined by 2WD for pure rear-wheel drive with DSC switched off.

North America only: the BMW M3 Edition 50 Jahre BMW M special edition.

In 2022, the "50 years of BMW M" anniversary prompted the launch of a special-edition BMW M3. 500 examples of the limited-run BMW M3 Edition 50 Jahre BMW M with specific equipment features were produced exclusively for the US and Canadian markets.

BMW M3 Touring: a high-performance sports car with a spacious boot.

The long-awaited BMW M3 Touring celebrated its world premiere at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in England in June 2022. The new body variant in the line-up was offered exclusively in BMW M3 Competition Touring with M xDrive guise. The new model was fitted with the high-revving, six-cylinder in-line engine with M TwinPower Turbo technology developing 375 kW/510 hp. Power was transferred via the eight-speed M Steptronic transmission with Drivelogic to the M xDrive all-wheel-drive system. This drive technology was a recipe for intoxicating performance: the BMW M3 Competition Touring with M xDrive could race from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in 3.6 seconds.

The new BMW M3 Touring combined the standout dynamics and agility of a high-performance sports car with unmatched levels of practicality. Indeed, its load capacity could be increased from 500 litres to as much as 1,510 litres. The BMW Curved Display, meanwhile, was making its debut in a BMW M3 model. The fully digital display grouping of 12.3-inch Information Display and 14.9-inch Control Display was arranged behind a glass panel angled towards the driver. This concept reflected the new

interpretation of driver-focused cockpit design and was also carried over into the BMW M3 Sedan.

The new BMW M3 CS: more power, less weight.

BMW M GmbH added another bold chapter to the history of its iconic model range in early 2023 with the launch of the new, limited-edition BMW M3 CS. Its powertrain concept brought a 405 kW/550 hp six-cylinder in-line engine together with an eight-speed M Steptronic transmission and the intelligent all-wheel-drive system M xDrive. Lightweight design measures delivered a weight saving of around 20 kilograms. The new BMW M3 CS powered from rest to 100 km/h (62 mph) in 3.4 seconds. The top speed of the BMW M3 CS – which came as standard with the M Driver's Package – was electronically limited to 302 km/h (188 mph).

Update with new design and equipment features.

The BMW M3 Sedan and BMW M3 Touring have been available in their current form since 2024. All model variants have new design and equipment features. For example, the front end has been refreshed with newly designed LED headlights. And the new M leather steering wheel with flat-bottomed rim plays its part in the dynamic driving experience. Added to which, the engine output of the all-wheel-drive versions has been boosted by 15 kW/20 hp.

An extra dose of sportiness: the BMW M3 CS special-edition models.

In January 2025, BMW unveiled the first BMW M3 CS Touring for a limited production run. Fitted with a 405 kW/550 hp engine and M xDrive, it sprints from 0 to 100 km/h (62 mph) in 3.5 seconds. The BMW M3 CS Handschalter presented in May 2026 will be produced exclusively for the North American market. It is fitted with a six-speed manual gearbox and will also be built in strictly limited numbers.

From April Fools' prank to successful crowd favourite.

On 1 April 2025, BMW M Motorsport released pictures of what was claimed to be a BMW M3 Touring GT race car. But what was intended as an April Fools' joke prompted unexpected excitement among the fan community. Inspired by this enthusiastic reception, the decision was taken to turn the hoax into reality. Just eight months later, the BMW M3 Touring 24H was ready to take to the stage – and it duly swept to SPX class victory and a sensational fourth place overall in the 24-hour race at the Nürburgring in 2026.

CO2 EMISSIONS & CONSUMPTION.

BMW M3 Sedan:

Fuel consumption, combined: 10.4 l/100 km; CO2 emissions, combined: 237 – 235 g/km in the WLTP cycle, CO2 class: G

BMW M3 Competition Sedan:

Fuel consumption, combined: 10.0 l/100 km; CO2 emissions, combined: 228 – 226 g/km in the WLTP cycle, CO2 class: G

BMW M3 Competition Sedan with xDrive:

Fuel consumption, combined: 10.3 l/100 km; CO2 emissions, combined: 235 – 233 g/km in the WLTP cycle, CO2 class: G

BMW M3 CS:

Fuel consumption, combined: 10.4 – 10.1 l/100 km; CO2 emissions, combined: 234 – 229 g/km in the WLTP cycle, CO2 class: G

BMW M3 Competition Touring with xDrive:

Fuel consumption, combined: 10.7 – 10.6 l/100 km; CO2 emissions, combined: 242 – 241 g/km in the WLTP cycle, CO2 class: G

BMW M3 CS Touring:

Fuel consumption, combined: 10.5 l/100 km; CO2 emissions, combined: 238 g/km in the WLTP cycle, CO2 class: G

In the event of enquiries please contact:

Corporate Communications

Marc Thiesbürger

Spokesperson BMW Group Classic

Telephone: +49-151-601-76534

E-mail: marc.thiesbuerger@bmwgroup.com

Christian Pomp

Spokesperson Product Communications BMW M

Telephone: +49-89-382-77770

E-mail: christian.pomp@bmw.de

Internet: www.press.bmwgroup.com

E-mail: presse@bmw.de

The BMW Group

With its four brands, BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial services. The BMW Group production network comprises over 30 production sites worldwide; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2025, the BMW Group sold 2.46 million passenger vehicles and more than 202,500 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2025 was € 10.2 billion on revenues amounting to € 133.5 billion. As of 31 December 2025, the BMW Group had a workforce of 154,540 employees.

The economic success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. Sustainability is a key element of the BMW Group's corporate strategy and covers all products – from the supply chain through production to the end of their useful life.

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