

Special

Mobile Tradition live

Facts and background



Marking the start of an exciting 75-year history: the BMW 3/15 PS.

75 Years of BMW Automobiles

1929 – 2004

Looking back on the history of BMW car production and its major milestones.

2004 brings with it a very special anniversary: 75 Years of BMW Automobiles. Few car manufacturers can look back on a more diverse and exciting past than that of the Bayerische Motoren

Werke. From the simplest driving machines to top-flight sports cars, from small delivery vans to luxury saloons with 12-cylinder engines – in the course of these 75 years BMW has offered vir-

tually every form of mobility on four wheels. The latest models of the new 6 Series, the X range and the forthcoming 1 Series ensure that this history also points firmly into the future.



Dear Friends of the BMW Group,

in 1929 the first BMW four-wheeler was built at a hired assembly plant. It was a small car that met the personal transport needs of broad segments of society. In 2004, 75 years on, BMW is about to launch another innovative, compact car in the shape of the 1 Series. In the intervening seven-and-a-half decades, the Bayerische Motoren Werke have turned out more or less every type of automobile that has ever appeared in the marketplace, from the microcar of the economic miracle years and legendary sports cars whose elegant lines still excite car aficionados, all the way to luxury limousines driven by large, powerful engines. In BMW car production, the attribute "sporty" has been writ large from the very beginnings: the company's path has traditionally led from production car to sports car and from sports car to production car.

The creative freedom of the engineers who repeatedly came up with and drove forward new concepts even if they didn't appear to suit the market, and the determination of the company leaders to stay on course even through difficult times, have made BMW one of the world's most renowned and reputable car manufacturers.

Among the ranks of BMW's products are many of the most famous and beautiful cars of all times. Our task is not only to preserve and cultivate this heritage, but also to use occasions such as this anniversary to vividly convey the continuity as well as the disruptions and upheavals of the past. A number of brand-new photographs have been taken to reflect the theme of 75 Years of BMW Automobiles, most of which can be seen in this special issue. The beginning of this success story is described in a new publication entitled From Vision to Success. The Development History of BMW Automobiles 1918 – 1932. There will be many opportunities at many venues for you to join us in celebrating 75 Years of BMW Automobiles in suitable fashion.

Happy reading!

Holger Lapp

Holger Lapp, Leiter BMW Group Mobile Tradition

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75 Years of BMW

A story of courage, determination and a commitment to the means to an end but have the power to stir emotions and create models.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of BMW series car development and production. As such, the Bayerische Motoren Werke do not belong to the pioneers of motoring history, as many believe, but they do rank among the most fascinating car manufacturers in the world.

Barely another motor company can look back on a more exciting and multifac-

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1929 to 1939: the first ten years

The history of BMW car production began with the BMW 3/15 PS, which marked its debut in 1929. In the decade that followed, BMW not only secured an increasing share of the market thanks to this car, but also steadily gained new customer groups with its ever-larger and more exclusive models. The high point of this development would be the unforgotten BMW 328.

by Walter Zeichner

Historical records show that the first BMW car, a small Type 3/15 PS saloon featuring a modern all-steel body, rolled out of the factory in Berlin on 22nd March 1929. Yet long before this, cars had been a subject of discussion within the company. Documents going back to the year 1918 – when BMW was exclusively an engine manufacturer – contain entries indicating that an experimental vehicle must have existed at the time, all trace of which has been lost, however. Soon afterwards, BMW began providing engine units for four-wheeled vehicles.

The first images of a test model then appear in the year 1926, when BMW designers Max Friz and Gotthilf Dürnwächter were officially commissioned with designing various prototypes for a series production model. A range of cars took shape on the drawing board – models with four and eight-cylinder engines, as well as a handful of prototypes which were taken out for test drives.

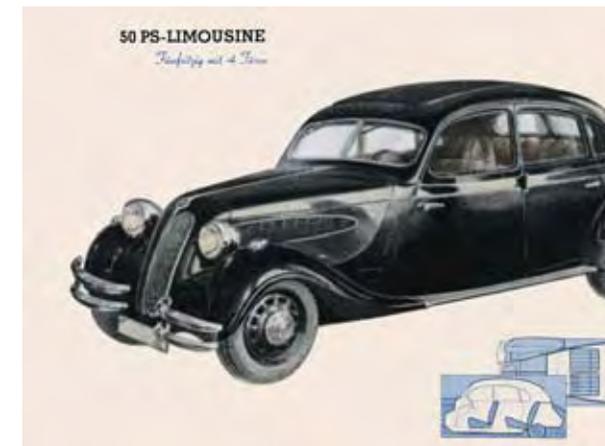
18 horsepower and 100 kilometres and hour

At the same time, BMW recognized that an affordable, quality small car would have good sales prospects. A short time later, at the end of 1928, the Eisenach car factory – which produced just such a car – came up for sale, and BMW made its move. The car in question, a Dixi 3/15 PS generating 15 horsepower, was a licensed model of the world's most successful small car of the time – the Austin Seven. Given a new, modern all-steel body and further detail refinements, this first BMW four-wheeler initially went into production in March 1929 at a rented factory in Berlin Johannisthal. Soon, however, it was being turned out in a number of variants at Eisenach. Although BMW's automotive history began during the Great Depression, this small BMW four-wheeler made its mark. The company now had a second, important foothold next to its successful motorcycle business. In 1930, BMW was even producing a small sports car in a limited production run. Named



1929: the first BMW 3/15 PS leaves the BMW assembly plant in Berlin.

By 1932, the initial BMW small cars were already being replaced by new models which no longer depended on the Austin licence. The Type 3/20 PS, built in Munich, had a markedly more generous body, accommodated four adults, and boasted an engine output that had been raised from 15 to 20 horsepower. At the same time, the BMW designers were working on a completely new car destined for a higher category. The special feature of this Type 303, on sale from 1933, would be a small six-cylinder engine which provided 30 horsepower from a displacement capacity of just 1.2 litres. It was the first model to be given the trademark “twin kidney grille”, whose stylized version on the front of current BMW models still lends them their unmistakable countenance. A modern, lightweight tubular frame design and precise wheel control made this a small car with sporting flair and a certain exclusivity, despite what appears from our present-day perspective to have been a



political changes were giving the economy a much-needed boost and encouraging the production of more cars. BMW quickly shed off its image of the small-car producer. Based on its experience with the new BMW 303, a number of attractive new models appeared in quick succession, moving steadily up the hierarchy of car categories. But it didn't mean that motorists on a narrowest budget were forgotten: as of February 1934, the new model was also available with the four-cylinder engine derived from the BMW 3/20 PS, at a not inconsiderable savings of 400 Reichsmarks compared with the more powerful version.

Barring minor detail improvements, the new body design of the first kidney grille was retained until 1937. In 1935, for example, customers could choose between models with a 1.5 litre six-cylinder engine. Generating 34 and 45 horsepower respectively, these now gave a top speed of around 100 km/h, quite ample for the time since only rarely did road conditions allow such speeds while keeping within relatively safe limits. In fact, that, BMW buyers could choose from a wide range of variants, such as a saloon, convertible-saloon, convertible, and a seater sports convertible. Those in search of true exclusivity could simply order a chassis and have a special body of their own mounted on it by a coachbuilding company. Such personalization – inconceivable today – was widespread in the 1930s, and famous coachbuilders such as Gläser in Dresden, Baur near Stuttgart, and Drauz in Heilbronn ran flourishing businesses.

BMW 328 – the legend

Needless to say there was also a new BMW sports car. The BMW 315/1 launched in 1934 weighed just 750 kilograms and produced 40 horsepower, making it a force to be reckoned with in a racing model. When it was joined by a new version designed to deliver 55 horsepower, the foundation for a



BMW 3/15

How it all began.

This model signalled the relatively late start of mass production. The early years were difficult, but the small BMW was a success. Over 100,000 units had been sold.

Still popularly known as the “Dixi”, this model was the first mass-produced car to bear the official model designation BMW 3/15 P (P for Polizei – German version No. 2). It was the first mass-produced car to be built by the Bayerische Motorenwerke AG. After BMW had made an exceptional start with its first mass-produced aero-engine production from 1917 onwards, it was high time for production from 1923, it was high time for BMW to enter the car market. In the economically straitened 1920s to build a car that could bear the reputable blue and white emblem was a challenge.

After various experiments and trials, the first mass-produced car built in Munich, it was decided in 1928 to build a new, more economical and existing and highly promising model. The choice eventually fell on the Dixi 3/15, which was produced in Eisenach. This was itself a licensed



body plant in Berlin. The first BMW would also be endowed with a superstructure of this kind.

Modelled on the small Rosengart car from France, which was yet another model built under Austin licence, a new all-steel body was developed. As the production site for this first BMW saloon, BMW rented a factory building from AMPL BUDD in Berlin. By March 1930 the

ded its range of small cars by further variants such as a two-seater Sport model, a two or four-seater convertible and what was known as the “express delivery vehicle”. About a year later it was joined by the 18 horsepower “Wartburg” sports car model along with a coupé version.

Within a remarkably short space of time, BMW had a wide range of small cars up and running that met the most diverse

Thanks to its light weight, even 15 horsepower were sufficient to negotiate Alpine passes safely.

BMW 3/15 PS	
No. of units	15,948 (1931 – 1932)
Original price	2,500 reichsmarks

BMW 328

The legendary sports car

The BMW 328 was an ingenious coup on the part of BMW's essentials to create a model that has come to epitomize the entered the motor sport history books and was associated Henne an Mille Miglia winner Huschke von Hanstein.

Nürburgring – Nordschleife, 14th June 1936, rain:

“Henne coaxed an awesome performance out of his new two-litre. What incredible acceleration! He’s off like a missile, down the long straight and into the twists and turns of the Ring ... this

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The BMW 328 set the hearts of car fans racing the moment it appeared on the roads. Its elongated bonnet secured with heavy leather straps, its elegant lines and its rejection of anything superfluous make it the epitome of the sports car.



1952: the first BMW 501 models, soon dubbed “Baroque Angels”.

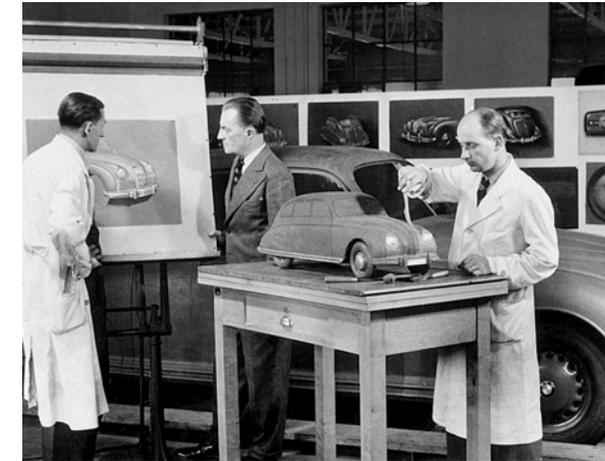
1939 to 1954: hard times

At the end of the Second World War, BMW appeared to face insurmountable difficulties. The production facilities in Munich were largely in ruins and the BMW car factory in Eisenach had been confiscated and was now under Soviet administration. It would be 1952 before BMW was able to return to car production. The legendary “Baroque Angels” – models 501 and 502 – eventually paved the way for the company’s revival and became a symbol of Germany’s economic miracle.

by Walter Zeichner

Although car production in Germany came to a standstill between 1939 and 1945 to allow for the manufacture of war matériel, BMW received special permission to continue producing cars on a small scale until 1942 for the German authorities. Alongside this, the development of new models was

In 1946, with a staff of just a few hundred, the company began producing items such as cooking pots and hardware made of aluminium as a stopgap, with a handful of lightweight bicycles to follow. When the authorities finally gave the go-ahead for a scaled-down production of motorized vehicles, BMW was



Chief stylist Meyerhuber and model-builder Schmuck with a model of the BMW 335 made in 1940.

adverse conditions and considerably later than all surviving German car manufacturers, BMW had made a promising comeback.

But it would be the end of 1952 before the first cars were able to take delivery of their new BMW. In Munich, previously only aero-engines and motorcycles had been manufactured, BMW had to build a new car plant from scratch. Crucial production equipment could not as yet be obtained. This meant that during the initial phase, car bodies were made by the Baur company outside Stuttgart and sent to Munich to be fitted onto the cars. Building each car in this way involved a great deal of time-consuming and expensive manual labour, and it quickly became clear that BMW would not make any profit from this model. Nor was the time available for a car of this size. Most people were using bicycles (with motor assistance), motorcycles or laboriously repaired war car models. Those in a position to buy a new car were few and far between. With a price tag of over 15,000 marks, the big new BMW was clearly well beyond the reach of ordinary mortals.







The high-quality interior fittings and details of the BMW 335 exuded style and class. They finally helped the Bayerische Motoren Werke carmakers to carve out their niche in the highest automobile category.

the underhead camshaft was driven by cylindrical gears rather than a chain. The engine effortlessly produced an output of 90 horsepower, making it the most powerful BMW production unit yet to be built.

In order to signal this increased power even when the car was stationary, the designers extended the front section of the 326 by more than 23 cm, while a redesigned bonnet with vertical louvres served to differentiate it from the two-litre model. To demonstrate the international credentials of such a prestige car, the premiere of the new model

badged as the BMW 335 was relocated to the London Motor Show. From 1934 on, BMW cars had been offered for sale to the Commonwealth by an English importer as Frazer-Nash B.M.W. models, some of them featuring special bodies made in England. 1939 saw the first cars being delivered to a few private customers, but above all to government addresses. Apart from the saloon with its price tag of 7,850 reichsmarks, there was soon also the choice of a two or four-door convertible with Autenrieth bodywork to meet the most exacting requirements. The open-top variant

came at a price of 9,600 reichsmarks, matching that of a contemporary Horch with a V8 engine.

In the end, the outbreak of war and radical constraints on the production of civil goods put paid to any further success on the part of this “heaviest” BMW model of the pre-war era. Only a limited number of cars, commissioned by the authorities, were produced up until the early 1940s. In all, only around 400 units of the BMW 335 were built, and the few that have survived to this day are counted among the rarest classics in the history of BMW.



BMW 335 Saloon	
No. of units	233 (1939 – 1941)
Original price	7,850 reichsmarks

BMW 502

Return to the top echelon with a light-alloy V8.

The BMW 502, sibling of the 501 that still leaned heavily on pre-war engineering, introduced a true innovation in the form of the first light-alloy V8 volume-production engine in motoring history. With this unit, the BMW 502 was clearly targeted at the upper reaches of society and reflected the company’s aspiration to return to the leading ranks of car manufacturers.

With its BMW 501 model launched in 1951, the company had impressively stepped out of the shadow of the post-war years of privation, by which it had been particularly hard hit. Yet the new car’s powerful appearance could not disguise the fact that, at least in its engineering, this was no all-new product. It wasn’t until 1954 that BMW unveiled a genuine innovation in the shape of its sibling, the 502. One crucial innovation was a completely new engine, hitherto unseen in Germany. It was a light-alloy V8 unit with a 2.6-litre displacement and an output of 100 bhp. Following comprehensive preliminary studies beginning in the early 1950s, a first test engine was already undergoing





The BMW 320i specifications are similar to the 1950s fast



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Sketch of the BMW 507 from a sales brochure.

1954 to 1972: on the offensive

During this period, BMW's model portfolio initially spanned opposite ends of the spectrum: the Isetta microcar and the BMW 507 dream sports car were launched in the same year. Not until the early 1960s with the introduction of the New Class did a systematic, modern product policy emerge.

by Walter Zeichner

Despite the difficulties and financial challenges the hugely appealing BMW 501 brought in its wake, the year 1954 saw BMW embark on a concerted offensive that remains unrivalled in the history of German car manufacturing after 1945. Even as the company

featured more luxurious specifications to become the 502, the precursor of a generation of very different, upmarket cars sporting the blue and white emblem. Principally with the aim of competing in the expanding export market for entry-high class cars abroad, it



into a financial fiasco for the company. Leaving aside stagnating motorcycle business, BMW seemed to be climbing increasingly unreachable heights for the company's devotees.

Rescue initially came in the form of a bold move in the historically opposite direction. In 1954, BMW engineers in search of an urgently needed, affordable small car had come across a car built by the Iso company of Milan. This comical, egg-shaped car was striking for its extraordinary details, such as a front-hinged door and an offset mid-engine, but also presented a promising concept for the time in providing a simple, cheap vehicle that afforded protection from the elements. BMW acquired the rights to build the Isetta and further developed the model in preparation for its production launch in spring of 1955. True to its name, this BMW Isetta proved far superior to the Italian original, powered by a two-stroke unit. In the years that followed, the Isetta emerged as a resounding success. By the end of production in 1962, more than 160,000 models had come out of the Isetta production plant. This lovable "bubble car" had won over a large following thanks to its unique design, its quality and its affordability.

Since the mid-1950s, there were also plans afoot for a new medium-class car, which was as yet sorely absent from the model range on offer by BMW. However, the realization of an all-new design for volume production lay well beyond the company's investment potential. And so BMW resorted to using components from its motorcycle manufacturing programme to create small cars such as the BMW 600 and the BMW 700 series. The latter evolved into a highly successful stepping stone on the way to the new medium-range class. The Italianate bodies of the



BMW 507

The design classic.

The BMW 507 Roadster ranks among the most significant and valuable cars in design history. From its inception, it was regarded as one of the most beautiful cars of all time. With a production run of just 251, it was a short route from rarity to coveted classic.

The years following 1945 proved more dramatic for BMW in Munich than for any other of Germany's major car manufacturers. The entire car production plant in Eisenach was under

Soviet control and as such irretrievably lost. There could be no thought of building motorcycles, let alone aero-engines, in Munich for the foreseeable future. The stopgap production of items such as cooking pots, hardware, agricultural implements and a handful of bicycles signalled a modest revival. But when the first motorcycle – based on a pre-war model – was proudly unveiled at the end of 1948, thoughts began to turn to new cars as well. Yet despite several attempts, it was not a timely small car that would be the first post-war production model to sport the blue and white company logo.

At the Show in the wrap strikingly BMW 507 "Angel" for sive box engine v pared wi 326 mad modern model. attempts engine w porary A struced





Elegant lines: the BMW 507 Roadster created by industrial designer Albrecht Graf Goertz is deemed by many to be one of the most aesthetic cars ever built. Its 3.2-litre engine generated 150 bhp and took the two-seater up to a speed of 220 km/h.

eventually hand-built of sheet aluminium beaten over a wooden form. By 1955, BMW was ready to present a prototype of the model in New York's Waldorf Astoria hotel. A little later this two-seater bearing the model designation 507 created a similar stir at the

body design that ranks to this day as one of the most beautiful of all time. There was nothing remarkable about its engine performance, however. A Mercedes-Benz 300 SL or Italian sports cars of a similar category clearly outstripped this gorgeous roadster in the

BMW 507	
No. of units	253 (1955 – 1959)
Original price	26,500 marks

BMW Isetta

The economic miracle car.

The BMW Isetta, a development of an Italian concept, became a boom of the 1950s. The quirky design of this “bubble car” and the Isetta sparks affectionate comments. It was the cuddly c





Egg-shaped and bristling with original features, the BMW Isetta clearly stood out from all other microcars. The BMW badge inspired confidence and contributed to the Isetta's phenomenal success.

factors offering a huge variety of bubble cars and small cars to suit every taste and most wallets. Necessity and sheer inventiveness turned out some strange fancies. Two passengers might be sitting one behind one another in a Messerschmitt, for example, or even back-to-back, such as in the aptly named Zündapp Janus.

Although in the mid-1950s BMW had returned to car manufacturing, as well as having survived as a motorcycle

producer would not out-retain the motorcycle industry. A decision to produce a saleable product meant that the boom in the motor industry was over. The economic miracle was over.

And the search for a replacement for the Isetta had far been a technical challenge. The unusual opening mid-engine track, the recognized shape of the vehicle replaced the tiny vehicle. The front opening steering passenger the car.

It took to design, and BMW





BMW's fascination with high-quality cars, long demonstrated in the luxury category, now focused on the BMW 1500, the new "middle-class" car. A mature design language and attractive details contributed to the car's success as much as its all-new engine, which propelled it to a blistering speed for the time of 150 km/h.





Practical and progressive: the instruments indicated that the BMW 1500 marked the inception of a “New Class” on the inside as well.

The new “middle-class car” was eventually conceived as a four-door saloon with a unitized body, its design arising from a collaboration with Italian stylist Giovanni Michelotti, who had already played a major part in creating the body for the BMW 700 small car. As for its engine, eventually an all-new 1.5-litre, four-cylinder in-line unit was developed under the direction of BMW’s “engine guru” of the time, Alexander von Falkenhausen. It generated 80 bhp, taking the car to a top speed of 150 km/h – an outstanding figure compared with the competition of the time. While the 1961 Frankfurt Show witnessed a pro-

Class, and even the 02 Series unveiled the following year was closely related to the four-door models at least in terms of its engineering.

For BMW, the sweeping success of its New Class finally brought about the company’s breakthrough as a manufac-



BMW 1500	
No. of units	23,807 (1962 – 1964)
Original price	9,485 marks
Engine	four-cylinder in-line
Capacity	1,499 cc
Bore x stroke	82 x 71 mm
Output	80 bhp at 5,700 rpm
Transmission	four-speed stick shift
Brakes	front: disc brakes rear: drum brakes
Weight	1,050 kg
Top speed	150 km/h

turer of modern cars with international appeal. Although the original BMW 1500 was only produced until 1964, the entire model series – almost identical in appearance – would remain in production until 1972, when it was replaced by the first BMW 5 Series.

BMW 2002

Powerpack with success g

The Munich carmakers landed an extraordinary coup with the practical and dynamic at the same time: a formula that turned

The BMW 2002 came to symbolize what was by far the most successful BMW model to date, the 02 Series. From 1968 to 1975, the 2002 was an object of desire for sports-minded BMW drivers, and remains so today for

fans of recent paintwork Colorado pact four





A BMW 2 Series car from the 1970s, a striking

Manager, hesitant, Paul Hall, to persuade the executive floor, succeed

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1972 to 1988: new generations

In the early 1970s, BMW ushered in a new model policy which has essentially remained in place to this day. The company introduced a systematic scheme of model series, each designated by a number. It began with the 5 Series, which was followed by the incredibly successful 3 Series range, the exclusive coupés of the 6 Series, and finally, in 1977, the first models of the 7 Series. It was an era that also saw the inception of the M variants and the launch of the legendary BMW M1.

by Walter Zeichner

With the introduction of the first 5 Series range in the early 1970s, BMW launched a model offensive that was unprecedented in the company's history. Within just five years, the entire spectrum of BMW cars was redefined and fitted into a scheme to which BMW has remained large

1972 – the year of the Munich Olympics. In the years to come, BMW 5 Series customers could choose between four and six-cylinder engines generating an output from 90 to 218 bhp.

1979 saw the launch of the BMW M1 super sports car and the first BMW sales on general sale to

code name of E 21, would soundly break all previous records of BMW cars up to the end of its production. With sales of 1.36 million examples, the company crossed the magical million threshold for the first time in its history. Compared to the 02 models, the first BMW 3 Series was much more comfortably designed, while the addition of several six-cylinder models to the range also appreciated the company's prestige in this class. For those in search of a particularly exclusive car, there was the possibility of buying a so-called "Topcabriolet" from Baur of Stuttgart. Window frames and a roll bar ensured that the required safety standards were met, and the entire spectrum of 3 Series engines was available. The Stuttgart coachbuilder would go on to produce modified open-top versions of the BMW 3 Series range well into the 1990s.

Year on year further model series made their appearance, starting with the large coupés of the 6 Series. Finally, by way of capping the range, the 7 Series was launched with the previous six-cylinder coupés, Karmann



In the late 1970s, the BMW M1 sports car ranked among the fastest of its kind. The D



The BMW M1 has remained unforgotten in motor racing, particularly for its involvement in the Procar racing series that was conceived for this model and contested by Formula One drivers in identical models.

But the “tuning” job turned out to be far more extensive than anticipated. Only the cylinder block could be taken over from the production engine. A divided cylinder head with four-valve technology had to be developed from scratch. Furthermore, the new engine – named the M 88 – was given a Kugelfischer mechanical fuel injection system and dry sump lubrication. The final result was 277 bhp/204 kW for the street version.

But the joint venture with Lamborghini ran into problems, and new partners had to be sought. One of these was BMW’s longstanding collaborator Baur, who had developed a number of special models for BMW at their premises outside Stuttgart. With their custom-

Paris Motor Show in October 1978 created a stir among fans of high-calibre sports cars, but it wasn’t until February 1979 that the first customer was able to take delivery of his BMW M1. All those involved in Project E 26 had succeeded in creating a highly impressive sports car. Even when parked, the M1 emanated supreme dynamism. Less than six seconds for the standstill to 100 km/h sprint and barely more than 20 seconds from 0 to 200 km/h were figures matched by no more than a handful of cars worldwide. The suspension system, designed with the 470 bhp Group 4 M1 models in mind, coped easily with the kind of braking, acceleration and lateral acceleration forces associated with the race track. Steering was common-

Procar racing series specially devised for the M1. In early February 1981, finally, the last two M1 models out of a total production run of 456 – including the race versions – were completed at the Baur assembly plant. Uniquely in the history of the brand, each M1 displayed three BMW logos – symbolizing the utterly unique status of this tamed driving machine.

BMW M1 (production model)	
No. of units	399 (1978 – 1981)
Original price	113,000 marks

BMW

The sporty success fo

With the M3 BMW finally made the economic breakthrough with its ultra-sporty models. The 5,000 units required for homologation purposes were easily sold, encouraging BMW to produce more M3-based versions, some in very limited editions.





“The most powerful letter in the world”: the success of the M Series has continued into the present – in motor racing as well.



BMW M3 (E30)	
No. of units	17,184 (1986 – 1990)
Original price	58,000 marks

BMW Z1

Innovative roadster of the 1980s.

The BMW Z1 was an impressive continuation of BMW's great roadster tradition and featured a raft of technical innovations, a high-performance engine, a monocoque-style unitary frame, retractable doors, plastic body panels and a specially developed Z axle. Only the engine stemmed from the volume-produced 325i.

Since BMW's very first roadster, the "Wartburg", was launched in 1930, the roadster theme has always been a favourite of the Bavarian car manufacturers. The 1930s saw the appearance of the 315/1 and 319/1, open sports cars

with six-cylinder engines and attractive bodywork that ranked them among the most desirable models of their kind in Germany. With its celebrated BMW 328 Roadster, finally, BMW created a legend of international motor sport whose suc-

cesses in Le Mans and the Mille Miglia are vividly remembered.

After the Second World War, the BMW 507 Roadster caused an international sensation and many regard this limited-production V8 sports car as one of

Roadsters had been a speciality of the Munich car manufacturer. With the Z1 launched in the 1980s, BMW created a concept that has lost none of its appeal and

the most beautiful automobiles of all time. Then things went quiet at BMW on the roadster design front. The company was going through a phase of realignment and had to produce successful high-volume cars in order to create a fresh, healthy foundation on which new roadster models could be evolved as well.

In 1985, BMW Technik GmbH was set up as a small think tank with the aim of developing forward-looking products and processes. With a staff of just 60 or

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BMW 750i

Luxury saloon with impressive engine performance from 12 cylinders.

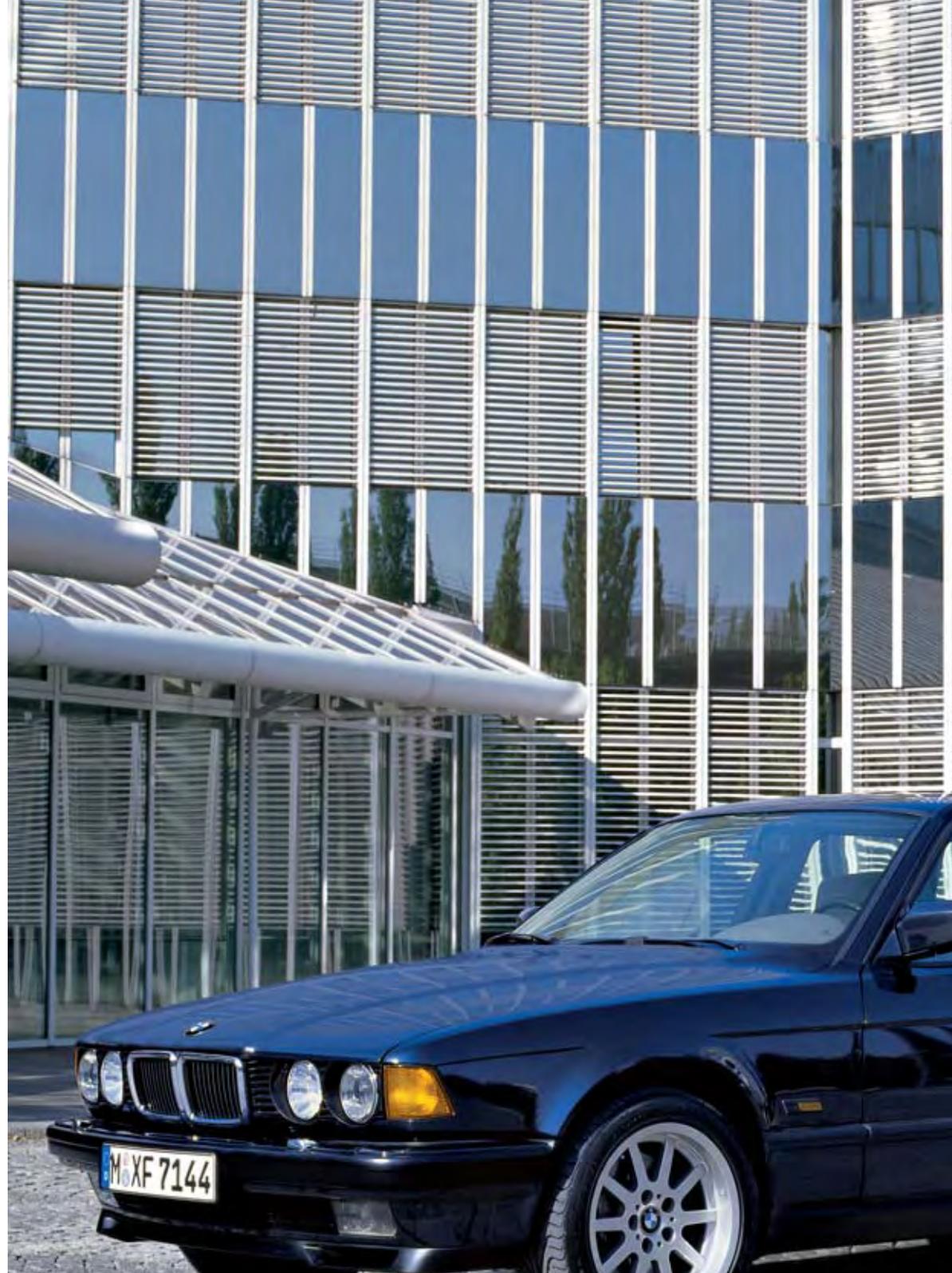
The BMW 7 Series positioned the company firmly in the automotive luxury class. This was enduringly demonstrated by the BMW 750i, whose 12-cylinder engine put all other rivals in the shade and revived a tradition that had last been seen in Germany's motoring industry back in the 1930s. Equipment levels and engine performance left nothing to be desired, with many a sports car struggling to keep pace with this speedy saloon. With such impressive specifications it comes as no surprise that the 750i was a big seller despite its hefty price tag: more than 48,500 short and long-wheelbase versions of this luxury saloon left the factory.

With the introduction of the new 7 Series (E 32 line), BMW made, as it were, a quantum leap in the bid for success in the luxury saloon category. The 7 Series had a very compact, even sporty appearance compared to its competitors, and blended dynamism, modernity and prestige in a way rarely seen in this class.

Just ten months after this impressive launch, BMW unveiled the 750i, a car the likes of which Germany had not seen since the 1930s – a 12-cylinder. The two model variants, the 750i and the 750iL with a wheelbase extended by some 12 cm, were in every respect in a class of their own.

Naturally the new BMW flagship could not deny its close kinship with its six-cylinder counterpart. But it was mainly the extended range of standard fittings that revealed the subtle difference in visual terms alone. Full Nappa leather upholstery in a choice of seven colours, electrically adjustable front seats with memory function in the 750iL, electrically adjustable rear head-rests and seats, automatic climate con-

BMW 750i / iL	
No. of units	48,500 (1987 – 1994)
Original price	98,000 marks



1982 to 2004: the road to the future

By the 1980s BMW had lost none of its innovative prowess, turning out such forward-looking models as the BMW Z1 Roadster with its famous retractable doors, or the 12-cylinder 750i luxury saloon. It also unveiled interesting new concepts in the shape of its 8 Series Coupés. It is a tradition to which BMW remains faithful in the present and beyond: in launching the new 6 Series or the X3, the company is fusing its own past and future in characteristic BMW style.

by Walter Zeichner



BMW 850CSi: the launch of the 8 Series marked the impressive continuation of BMW's large coupé tradition.

What had begun in the 1970s with a remarkable diversity of models and variants based on BMW's precise alignment of its model ranges would be expanded further during the following two decades thanks to the company's highly successful model policy. But it would be beyond the scope of this publication even to broach the most important developments, model variants and innovations which BMW presented to the motoring world in this short space of time. So we shall turn instead to some of the outstanding automobiles that are unquestionably the stuff of classics.

Anyone who thought that in the mid-1980s BMW had reached the apex of exclusivity was in for a fascinating surprise

in 1989. The development brief for the new 850i luxury coupé had been to build the best and most modern sports coupé in the world. The highest comfort levels, a design that was an impressive fusion of dynamism and exclusivity, BMW engineering and technology at the limit of what was then physically possible, powered by the V12 unit, of course, plus highlights such as four-wheel steering (active rear axle kinematics), all catapulted this car well into the lead among the rarefied competition worldwide. It was yet another unparalleled international success, with sales of more than 20,000 8 Series V12 Coupés up to end of production in 1999.

The 1990s and early 21st century were and are marked by the expansion of the company's brand portfolio, the development of innovative and alternative technologies such as hydrogen-powered drive units, and a further diversification of the BMW model ranges and variants.

Based on the technology of the third generation of the 3 Series, a new BMW roadster was unveiled at the 1995 Detroit Auto Show – the Z3. Built entirely at the new BMW production plant in Spartanburg, South Carolina, this open-topped two-seater with its exciting styling enjoyed widespread publicity when it debuted in the James Bond movie *GoldenEye*, and quickly became a sensational success. The first roadsters were launched with four-cylinder engines, soon to be followed by high-performance six-cylinder sports cars, all the way to the M roadster with an output of well over 300 brake horsepower. The sibling Z3 coupé with its fixed roof and distinctive tail end was a particularly striking model.

Towards the end of 1999, a vehicle concept that was a



complete novelty in the BMW range went into series production at the Spartanburg plant: the X5 "Sports Activity Vehicle" (SAV). This upmarket combination of a sporty five-door and an off-road all-wheel drive was just what motorists with a sense of adventure were waiting for. The first built at BMW's US plant was powered by six and eight-cylinder engines, and also proved a global success story.

On the threshold of the third millennium, a new, superlative BMW roadster was launched on the marketplace. Already at its premiere it was being described as a classic. First unveiled as a design

High time for an autobiography.



This year BMW celebrates 75 years of BMW automobile production. To look back is also to look forward. The story begins in the year 1929 with the launch of a modern small car, followed by such milestones as the BMW 328 and the iconic 2002. Today BMW continues writing this story with each new model. That is how visions of the past have become today's history. And that is how visions of today will in turn write tomorrow's history. There's no future without a past.

BMW Group
Mobile Tradition
 Schleißheimer Straße 416
 D-80935 München
 Fax +49-89/3 82-2 70 22

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