

THE RACER'S EDGE

Beemer boy toy is built for speed **BY HOLLY REICH**

I don't want to offend you, but you might want to put it into sixth gear. You're going 80 mph in fourth. I know that the engine is so quiet that you can't hear the transmission." My buddy Ashly was teasing, but he was right. We were testing out the 2008 BMW M3 Coupe in Northern California. This is a high-end sports car that just begs to have its limits pushed.

Ashly is a skilled driver and a total gearhead. Take me off the race track and I will forever be a cautious, driver — blame it on motherhood. So it was very kind of Ashly to help me, um, kick it up a notch without making me feel like a total wimp.

The M3 is a guy's car. Its low prowl, bold shoulders and fierce-yet finely-tuned handling just ooze machismo. I am not being sexist here — there are

just some wheels that feel more feminine.

But not the M3. The stats on it are phenomenal. In fact, the engineering is so complicated that I won't even attempt to explain it. Anyway, even the most tech-savvy auto lovers might shy away.

Suffice it to say, every bit of interior and exterior surface is designed for speed. All the components from the ground up are constructed with the goal

2008 BMW M3 COUPE

MSRP: \$60,000

of exceeding the potential of the last generation of M3.

How did BMW do it? With exceedingly lightweight parts—from the aluminum suspension to the alloy wheels to the air intake valves and the carbon-fiber roof. The engine is a 4.0 V-8 (414 hp) that screams from zero to 60 in 4.6 seconds for the coupe and 4.7 seconds for the sedan.

The interior is lean, trackworthy and just what you would want from a vehicle meant to, as BMW puts it, turn the tarmac into your playground. But, let's not get too practical. One can opt for Novillo leather seats in Fox Red and accent the cabin with dark anthracite—a coal-colored, pinstriped trim.

The exterior is all honed metal and sculpted muscle. The M3 is a portrait in power even when standing still. I expect that auto enthusiasts are going to go wild for these wheels.

Well, at least that's what I thought until I posted a blog about the M3 on Edmunds.com and got the following response:

"Actually, Holly, from an enthusiast's point of view, the M3 is a waste of money. ... The 335i is far



more worth it. The 335i, with just minor software upgrades, can get close to 400 hp and 421 pound-feet of torque! The M3, not being a turbo, doesn't have much tuning potential ... so a seriously tuned M3 will probably be slower than a seriously-tuned 335i! The long and short is that, for between \$10k and \$20k less, you can get a 335i that's equally fast or faster than the M3. ... In short, I'll pass on the M3. So would most enthusiasts."

Feeling a little out of my element, I consulted Ashly, who is not just a great co-pilot but also an auto industry analyst and reporter.

His response? The M3 is a whole different character than any lesser three series, he advised. If you doctor a car, as a rule you're losing value. The new V-8 M3 has exclusive technologies that no other three-series has ever had.

In other words, the M3 is purpose-built for the kind of gutsy speed you can only get from a German-engineered powerplant. Beefing up a three-series V-6 can give you higher numbers in terms of engine output, but it can't beat an M3 at its own game.



Specially designed mirrors boost the M3's aerodynamics

HOLISTICS YOUR DRIVE

By Holly Reich

Positive ENERGY

How feng shui principles can relax your ride

In the language of feng shui, a bagua is a type of map to help you identify the parts of your home that pertain to career, family, health and other topics. According to the bagua, the northwest corner represents "travel and helpful friends," so that's where I have my home office. Actually, my home office is just a large closet, but I decorated it with pictures of people and places I love, writing crystals and models of VW Bugs, Mercedes-Benzes and other cars.

I'd say the strategy paid off, since I now make a living by driving and reviewing the newest and most exciting cars on the market. But no matter how you get around, you can make your travels more tranquil by applying feng shui in your home to the travel area of the bagua.

"You can bless it by lighting a candle or bringing in a quartz crystal," says Marise Hamm, a feng shui designer and founder of Living Energy Designs. "Activate the area with the intention that you will buy the car of your dreams and it will take you to places that you have dreamed of and open up new areas for your life."

Hamm also has some great ideas for people buying a car, renting or simply taking a ride or trip.

"Our car reflects who we are to the outside world," she notes. "They are your mini home, so it's important to keep the interior and exterior of your car clean so that you keep the chi energy flowing."

Where your car lives is just as important as how you keep it. If it's a garage, keep that organized and fresh and if it's parked on the street, put it in a safe spot.

If you can't decide on a color for your new car, Hamm says that a good bet for 2008 would be red or gold, colors that attract power and wealth in the Year of the Rat.

Barbara Bizou, a rituals expert and author of "The Joy of Ritual and The Joy of Family Rituals," says, "You have a relationship with your car and it should reflect your energy."

But whether you rent or own a car, you can't control the energy of your passengers, she warns. A mechanic who works on your car could have negative vibrations.

So, what's a person to do?

"You want to clear your car. ... Just like you would wash or wax the outside, you need to take care of the inside," she says.

Hamm suggests using a splash of geranium or lemon aromatherapy spray to help keep the interior calm and cleansed.

Another way is to hang a talisman, like a small Chinese luck charm for travel, from the rearview mirror.

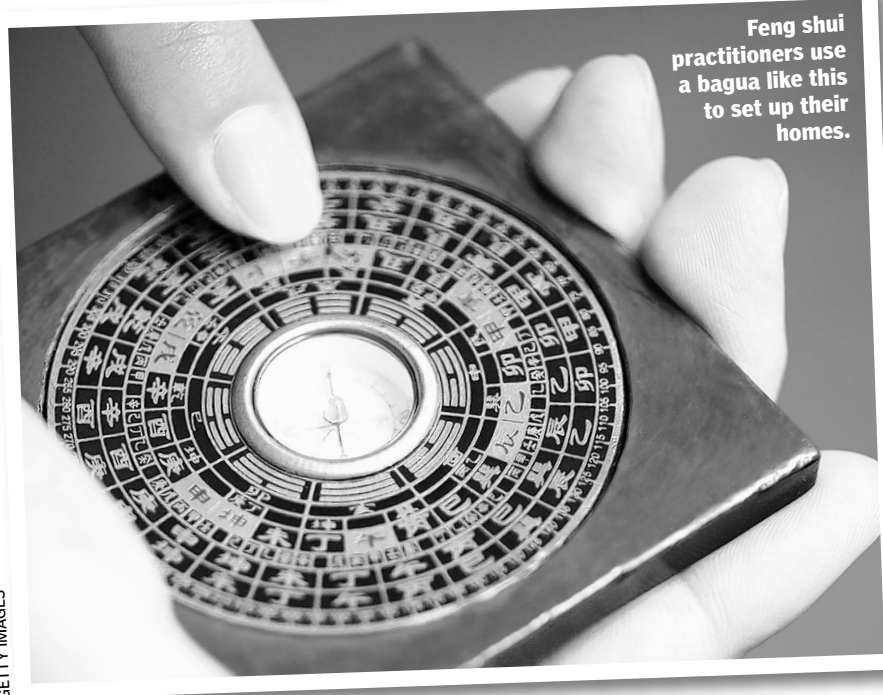
"It doesn't have to be religious," Bizou says. "Almost every cab driver in New York City has sacred objects on their dash."

However, this spiritual stuff isn't the be-all and end-all.

"It's not that you bless your car and drive with your eyes closed," Bizou says. "You still have to drive safely and take care of your car."

Her parting words of wisdom: "Think of these rituals as christening a ship on its maiden voyage." Here's wishing you smooth sailing.

Think of these rituals as christening a ship.



Feng shui practitioners use a bagua like this to set up their homes.