Bargain Basement Bimmer – Part Two of our three part series about enjoying and improving a modern classic Z3

Published: March 19, 2021

Author: Jeremy Walton

Online version:
https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/bargain-basement-bimmer-part-two-of-our-three-part-series-about-enjoying-and-improving-a-modern-classic-z3/



Can a £1,000 BMW be a winner? Jeremy Walton thought so – and sorted through extensive ‘to do’ jobs list…

In his second instalment of a three part series, Jeremy explains how he set about improving his BMW Z3, tackling some of the work himself…

Kim adds: Jeremy will be well-known to many readers for his numerous well-respected articles and books covering a vast range of vehicles. He has a wealth of experience in driving sporting machinery on the road and track, and his enthusiasm is second to none.

If you missed Part One of his BMW story, you can catch up with it here: Jeremy's BMW Z3, Part 1 of 3

He has also written for Wheels-Alive about his modern classic Audi TT; if you would like to read that feature too, please go to: Jeremy's TT

Here Jeremy continues his story about his Z3…

(Note: All text and photographs courtesy of, and copyright, Jeremy Walton).

CAR: 2000 BMW Z3 2.0

MILEAGE: 138,985 when purchased

OWNER: Jeremy Walton

Some 900 miles covered in my "Cheap as Chips" Z3. So far, a very rewarding experience especially on some areas of cheap DIY progress. Previously [Part 1] I had just picked up the year 2000, 6-cylinder Z3, fitted decent rear Kumhos and used Zed more than I expected. Lumpy sports ride aside, Z3 on 150 horses was a much more desirable companion than I had ever imagined a £1000 vehicle registering 139,835 miles could ever be.

I had never bought a car with such a long 'to do' job list, but what to tackle first? Just weeks after I bought the Z3, a friendly owner of classic pre-war and post-war MGs delivered a practical priority list when I attended an informal Somerset pub meeting. A snob-free gathering, it ranged from tractors through to hot rods, embracing a 1952 Motor Show Aston Martin DB2, plus a brace of upright 1930s Rollers, never mind all the familiar British classics. Under the June evening sun I found a fund of practical advice, particularly from the owner of a massively modified Jensen-Healey: glass fibre-bodied, Mazda powertrain with supercharged power and more.

Z3’s obvious downsides were the scarred front spoiler, orange peel bonnet paint and wounded BMW Individual leather interior. Seating was the area in which Jensen Healey man spotted that two sectors of the driver’s seat needed help beyond the average DIYer. The first thing I learned—subsequently reinforced by advice from Gliptone, plus a professional restoration company—was that colouring leather that has lost a top gloss is not a permanent fix. It may work short term, but often results in the colouring agent fading away in weeks rather than months. The secondary and equally salient seat setback was that the righthand lower squab also needed a replacement foam insert.



Driving seat cracks… Owner work expended, plus professional bolster insertion.

I took multiple advices on the hazy sectors to the Cosmos Schwarz Metallic painted bonnet. Tried various polishes, treatments such as ubiquitous T-cut and more, including a power tool brush and polish. The only visual improvement came from Autoglym Super Resin Polish and that is a trick of the eye: Autoglym delivers such a shine, that you admire that – rather than the blooming haze! Jensen Healey man spotted that this paint problem demanded professional rectification and—having scanned the eBay ads for numerous Z3 bonnets prices from £150 to £350—I decided to do our first winter and then reconsider respray/replacements next spring.

Similarly, the front 7.5 x 17 Style 32 inch alloys survived a winter too. A few spokes flaked, but passed safety inspection. There are plenty of original and replica BMW alloys around, but like the bonnet I prefer to examine the goods at an accessible breakers, rather than trust digital pictures from sites over 250 miles away.

Fed up with my slow progress, I attacked leather with cleaners and restorative treats. Three times I returned to the fray and returned visible progress, but for such standout craftsmanship I wanted more. I lived with it for three months and finally did take it to a recommended local leather specialist, but that’s a later story. Similarly, I expended a lot of energy on the stubbornly grimy headlamps, utilized household window cleaners and a purchased rotary [hand-powered!] cleaning kit. A professional subsequently restored lamps to showroom readiness. All part of a service/ fault rectification operation, agreed prior to purchase.



Jeremy says, “I’ve never found the secret of cleaning lamps in this state and end up with my local garage during repairs”.

Meantime I bodged the lower front spoiler and half a dozen pant bubbles, smoothing out some of the parking grazes and applying cheap touch up 352 paint coded as BMW Cosmos black. Results varied from acceptable at a passing glance to mediocre, so that was another Z3 zone carried through winter.



Half a dozen blotchy paint zits treated to DIY undercoat , then touch up paint with variable success!

Thus far I was happy, mainly because the BMW delivered plenty of top-down miles and attended a lot of shows in a memorable pre-Covid-19 summer. I still needed a win for the home team on the DIY front, as the point of buying it was to be more hands-on.

I got two startling results: First, those sound but occasionally flaky front alloys and the rears responded fabulously to a thorough clean plus a very old dose of Wonder Wheels that came from my dustiest garage corner.



Z3 after hefty DIY wheel cleaning session, plus Wonder Wheels product.

Next, Pete Jenkins at my local Auto Services company casually handed over an unused 1-litre container of Renovo soft-top canvas cleaner with the comment; " try this, it was recommended for my Z3's hood."

My results were amazing, even at the retail price [£33.25 for 1-litre]. It took three coats and two dedicated brushes to accomplish, and you must be careful to mop up any dribbles across glass promptly. Be pretty generous with each application, especially in my case, for the faded black hood exhibited under tree storage stains and had suffered assaults with household cleaners, applied via a stiff brush, with predictably poor results.



Hood responded magnificently to Renvo treatment in three stages; in progress here.



The difference in the hood ‘before and after treatment’ was astonishing. This shot shows ‘work in progress’, plus a tiny section of Gorilla tape temporarily securing the Perspex roof top surround.



On completion, the appearance of the hood transformed the look of the BMW. The final flourish for the roof was Evo-Stik replacing the Gorilla tape!

Next time, the oily **bits pack an air leaking surprise! – *Jeremy Walton***

Useful Contacts*:*

Gliptone Leathercare UK: Used for my BMW 635 and Z3's classy interior leather. Still a Z3 work in progress, booked into professionals now, but pleased to reorder Gliptone products [2]. www.liquidleather.com or **Tel**: 0161839 2941.**Leather-Forever:** Show buy of satisfactory cleaner, not convinced of untried and expensive [£60 plus] custom-order colour restorer www.leather-forever.net **Tel**: 01886884569

Alloy wheels: *Wonder Wheels*, brilliant on three cars 2017-18.Preliminary, thorough water wash and Meguiars quick wheel detailer. **Glass**: *Meguiars* spray, excellent. www.meguiars.com

Bonnet in Cosmos Schwarz Metallic paint: bloom damage from old accident repair. Most effective so far *Autoglym Super Resin Polish*, and vigorous wiping! Shiny photographically, but still noticeably blemished. www.autoglym.com

Roadster top: Fabric rejuvenated by 3- coats Renovo [www.renovointernational.com—Tel:01444 443277]. *Gorilla Tape* patch to non-factory replacement Perspex rear window surround. OK, but replaced after Renovo application by Evo Stick glue. www.gorillatough.com

Chrome/bright metalwork: German-sourced **Autosol** efficient at https://www.autosol.com **Hermetite** Good results, *Hermetite Metal Brite* effective on on engine bay brightwork surface rust.



Z3 during early video comparison test with MG TF as featured on www.fromthedrivingseat.com

Kim adds: You may be interested in delving further into the fascinating array of motoring/motor sport features on www.fromthedrivingseat.com

Operated by Peter Osborne and Jeremy Walton, this well-presented automotive website may have you hooked for hours…