BMW 335d xDrive

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WOW! Yes, if it’s wow you want, here’s the car, says Tom Scanlan

Of course, there are loads of cars that can wow us, but this one also offers so much more, especially, in the Touring version tested, practicality for the family driver.

The car weighs well over two tons (even with BMW’s ‘lightweight’ engineering) and has 313 hp at 4,400 rpm. This is an impressive, but not huge, figure. But the torque! 630Nm coming

in from a mere 1,500 rpm and with you up to 2,500 rpm is the big driving force in this car getting you into super-car territory with a zero to 62 mph figure of just 4.9 seconds. Whoever first used the word ‘grunt’ to describe a car’s performance could have thought of it with the 335d in mind.

The noise helps, too. BMW’s brilliant in-line six cylinder engine, four valves per cylinder of course, emits a big-grin-inducing audio sensation that can be all too intoxicating. That’s when you slam your foot down and let the 8-speed automatic transmission do the changes quicker than you can blink.

The brakes cope admirably with whatever’s asked of them. They are ventilated disc all round and it really is remarkable how these little pieces of material can haul up such a hefty lump’s huge momentum to a safe stop in a short distance; in itself, full-on braking is almost as much fun as flat-out acceleration. (There’s a petrol-head for you, and the car is a diesel!) In more relaxed driving, the car is perfectly quiet. A little road noise, yes, as usual, from the tyres on some road surfaces, because the sound-damping efficiently keeps out the rest; OK, there’s just some slight wind-noise at high speed, too.

The electric power steering, which is rack-and-pinion, is another plus on this car’s list. Again, we’re examining a heavy car on fat tyres, yet BMW’s engineers have done the maths beautifully to give the driver just the right amount of feel for all types of driving. It’s never too heavy, never too light. The handling, too, is excellent, on the Adaptive M-Sport suspension, an option at £515.

Not just for the driver, but for any passenger, there’s one more and perhaps the most important aspect: comfort. The combination of the car’s suspension and its seats (assuming a reasonable amount of space), has to be just right so that you don’t have to keep shifting about as the miles go by on a journey. High marks to the 335d here, again, then, because, once settled in to the right position, I could just be there for ages.

The Touring version being an estate car, opening the boot reveals a very-nicely finished

space, not the biggest on the overall estate car market, but useful and adaptable nonetheless.
xDrive is BMW's term for four-wheel-drive. This is can be included in the long list of safety features to be expected in such a car.

Under the company's Efficient Dynamics' heading, features included are Auto Start-Stop, Brake Energy Regeneration and reduced rolling resistance tyres. These efficiencies help to keep expenses down a little.

However, the toughest job for BMW's diesel designers has been to meet the very latest Euro6 exhaust emission rating this month (September 2014). It must be said that to get the figure from this 3-litre unit down to 143 g/km is a real achievement (of course, some other manufacturers can claim the same). The annual road tax is therefore only £130.

Internally, the BMW offers smart looks, a plethora of neat instrumentation, controls that feel good to use – light yet solid – and high-grade materials. In this sector, competing against the other big German marques, there's nothing remarkable in that; but it IS all there. Use of digital technology is plentiful and may take some learning for some of the older generation (me, for instance). One example that defeated me was the voice recognition system. You would expect that a simple request to go to, say, 'Oxford Road', would easily be achieved. But, and I like to think I speak reasonably clear and well-enunciated English, all I got was 'do you mean BMW HQ?' I'm afraid I found myself answering fairly expletively. Perhaps the system could be made to be more intuitive, because there's no doubt that voice recognition should be considered a very important safety feature that keeps our eyes on the road ahead.

VERDICT

This car offers a hugely entertaining driving experience with very competitive running costs in terms of fuel emissions as mentioned and fuel consumption: I got an overall indicated 41 mpg. Not so many years ago, people would have laughed at such a suggestion for such a car.
The car as tested was priced at £42,820 plus options amounting to £6,990.



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BMWd xDrive M Sport Touring

Drivetrain: Front engine, four wheel drive
Engine: 2993cc 6-cylinder in line, variable geometry turbo direct injection
Power: 313 bhp @ 4400 rpm
Torque: 630 Nm @ 1500-2500 rpm
0–62 mph: 4.9 seconds

Top speed: 155 mph
Fuel consumption, ‘official’ figures:
‘Urban’: 42.2 mpg
‘Extra urban’: 55.4mpg
‘Combined’: 50.4 mpg
Actual figure displayed during our road test: 41.3 mpg
CO2 emissions: 135g/km

PRICE (‘On The Road’): £41,895. Extras on test car £6,990

Warranty: 5 years/60,000 miles (with £425 service costs)
Insurance group: 43