For Your Bookshelf – “BMW M3 & M4 – The Complete History of These Ultimate Driving Machines”

Published: July 8, 2021

Author:

Online version:

https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/for-your-bookshelf-bmw-m3-m4-the-complete-history-of-these-ultimate-driving-machines/



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Published by: Veloce: https://veloce.co.uk/

253 pages (hardback)

UK Price: £40.00 BUT check Veloce's website – currently they advise "Get 35% off until further notice when quoting 'STAY-INDOORS-AND-READ'!"

ISBN: 978-1-787115-79-8

Originally compiled in 2013 to celebrate 25 years of the BMW M3, this new edition brings the story to the current G20 range. And a complicated story it is, becoming increasingly so as the years pass. BMW, says author Graham Robson, has had an almost romantic attachment to its Motorsport department (hence 'M') engines, continually developing them, each more technological than the last. He readily admits that each successive M3 would merit its own book.

The work makes full use of factory material, especially engine and transmission images and together with BMW archive photography is informatively and attractively illustrated. Robson is a prolific writer and his jaunty, chattily informal prose makes complex engineering concepts more accessible and this glossy volume, stronger on illustration than text, will please most enthusiasts. He unearths some fascinating details: In its unending quest for lightness BMW even experimented with a magnesium cylinder head; the 2001 E46 M3 did not share one common panel with the rest of the E46 range, illustrating how in a decade the M3 had become a performance car in its own right rather than the straightforward racing homologation of the mass production three-series, which was how the M3 started in 1988.

In the days before turbocharging muddied the waters, the E46 yielded an outstanding 343 bhp from 3245cc, over 100 bhp per litre, amazing in a production car, superior even to the 355 bhp of its direct rival the Porsche 911GT3. Strangely the author does not make this

point and indeed he makes disappointingly few statistical comparisons with competitors. Although SMG (BMW's sequential manual gearbox) is described, as are other engine and transmission evolutions, there is comparatively little on suspension and chassis developments which may disappoint readers looking for a more comprehensive engineering story. However, the general reader is well served and the author's sunny enthusiasm makes for an engaging work, even if occasionally causing him to over-write – ".....astonishingly high-profile success.... at the season's most high-profile event."

VERDICT

BMW M3-M4 is a very worthwhile addition to the marque library.