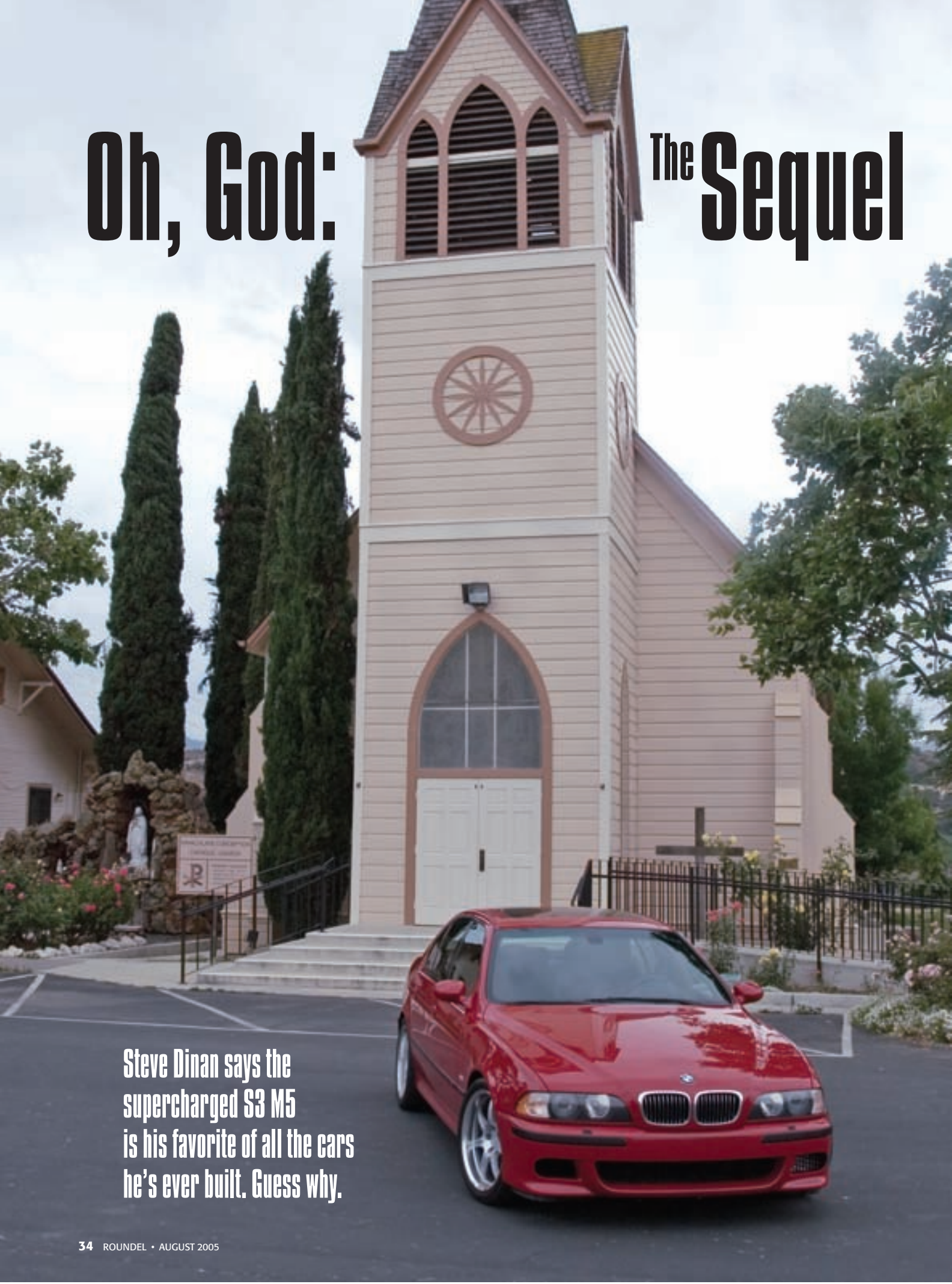


Oh, God:

The Sequel

A red BMW 3 Series M5 (E46) is parked in the foreground of a church. The church has a tall, light-colored steeple with a circular window and a large arched doorway. The scene is set outdoors with trees and a cloudy sky.

Steve Dinan says the supercharged S3 M5 is his favorite of all the cars he's ever built. Guess why.



The heart of the matter (top): The Vortech supercharger and the proprietary Dinan bypass-valving system look quite at home in the E39 M5 engine bay. Camera focus (above)—along with good judgment—is occasionally blurred by situational happenstance.

Of Father, I have sinned: On an otherwise unremarkable Monday morning in rural California, I traveled down a deserted road... at 191 miles per hour. I didn't notice the posted speed limit, but I suspect it may have been somewhat less than that.

However, it wasn't entirely my fault.

Having moved to the U.S. in 1992, I first began paying attention to the BMW market here in about 1994—especially after taking delivery of my first BMW ever in 1996 (a Cosmos Black E36 M3 coupe, one of the first delivered with the 3.2-liter motor). Naturally, I joined the CCA, which

brought *Roundel*, and with *Roundel* came my first exposure to the name *Dinan*.

Ignorant immigrant that I was, I had no idea what this name meant. To me, Dinan was a town in Brittany, one of my favorite parts of France. It was also the last name of a large Irish family I had heard of but had little to do with. So when it showed up on the deck lids of my marque of choice, I had no idea how to pronounce it—or whether it belonged to an Irishman, a Frenchman, or some German aftermarket tuning company like those whose names appeared in much the same spot on other deck lids: AC Schnitzer, Alpina, Hartge.

As I became a CCA enthusiast, however, I heard the name correctly pronounced—often by people whose opinions I trusted—and I heard the respect it was generally accorded. While I reserved a certain skepticism, as I became more and more of a BMW addict, *Dinan* came to mean *the connection*: great parts, reliable upgrades, more performance—*American* performance—and a superb solution to the understeering propensities of my M5 (which had replaced the M3 when the little terrorists I call my children arrived).

However, it was not until he strode into the foyer of his factory near San Jose and shook my hand that I realized that I had not once considered the *person* behind the name. Dinan the tuner; Dinan the engineer; Dinan the name on those “too expensive” performance products, those outrageous “Dinan Signature” project cars; suddenly it seemed relevant to find out something about Steve Dinan, the man. And it became

BY CHRIS WRIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KRIS LINQUIST

more relevant still when that particular Dinan used the car that bears his name—and much of his identity—to propel us both to the highest land-bound velocity I believe I've ever experienced.

What Dinan car is this, you ask? *The Dinan car*—the one that bears the personalized DINAN plate: the Imola Red supercharged Dinan S3 M5. The one that, despite all the wonderful vehicles he's wrought over 26 years in the business, Steve Dinan unhesitatingly calls his favorite.

Oh, yeah: 620 horsepower... and 500 foot-pounds of torque. *That car.*

In fact, the engine could have made more (still does, on a cool day); but at these numbers, the car is civil, reliable, drivable—still

an M5. Just one that seems oblivious to the ridiculous forces a vehicle this size encounters when pushing air out of the way at around 200 mph. (Had we been turning the stock 3.15 differential in the car rather than the 3.45 that Dinan prefers, the 7,300-rpm fuel cutoff would have come at 209 mph—almost fifteen mph faster than the top end Ferrari claims for the brand-new F430.)

What Dinan man is this, you ask? *The Dinan man*: Ducati enthusiast. Husband. Engineer. Father. Pilot. Businessman. Drinking buddy. Race-car driver. Workaholic. And dyed-in-the-wool, got-it-bad-as-a-crackhead, unrepentant and unapologetic BMW junkie. Here's a guy who, at 51, drags his knees on the asphalt on a weekly basis finding the lim-

its of what Ducati's finest can do, but who stands up in front of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and lectures them on engine modification theory. Here's a guy running the most successful business of its kind in the Americas, interacting daily with the shiniest of BMW corporate brass in both New Jersey and Bavaria, who makes his time (not to mention his favorite car in two-and-a-half decades) available to some *Roundel* stringer he's never even met before: "No, really—I've cleared my day for you. Where would you like to drive the car?"

So off we go, and the opening miles are hardly a religious epiphany. It's all pleasant, affable stuff, if filled to bursting with technical information—Vortech unit, pro-

The Balanced Life Is The Best Revenge

I've waxed ecstatic about how the Red Sled goes. But how does it *look*? The car is handsome, but understated: no bling. No wing. Just engineer-ing. No PhatBox/JukeBox/BoomBox/iPod-omania; chances are good that in the five years or so he's had the car, Steve Dinan has never preset the radio buttons. However, he is acutely aware of how much

pure engineering and the Science of Looking Good. Perhaps it's analogous to the relationship between character and personality; while Dinan (the company) and Dinan (the man) are vastly entertaining in the personality department, it is the character of both that leaves the lasting impression—that and the sense that there's a whole lot more here

"How old?" he asks. I wonder if Dinan is merely feigning polite interest.

"Hannah and Tess are six and three," I reply, "and my little boy, Emerson, is about to turn one."

"Oh, wow!" says Dinan. "My daughter is 34!" I can see him watching my brain tick over, calculating—this was shortly after he'd told me he was 51. "I got

my accountant, too."

Well. So much for my theory about driven individuals being one-dimensional. "So you've built this business," I say, "and done all that racing, and kept a marriage and a family together, for over three decades?"

My mock incredulity elicits a broad smile. "I might not have been the best parent," Steve laughs. "We just took our daughter with us wherever we went, so she'd be at a party, aged seven, conversing with all the adults. She was good at it."

What on earth does all this have to do with the supercharged M5 I was sent to review, I hear the childless among you mutter? *Balance*, that's what. The art of living is complex, and many parameters must be managed if one is to do it well. Just as the automotive relationships between power and drivability, torque and horsepower, handling and comfort, and so many other subtleties in the interface between car and driver are dealt with more effectively by Dinan—the company—than by any of its competitors, so too has Dinan—the man—apparently mastered the chess pieces in the game of life. He seems to be doing a hell of a job of living well.—*Chris Wright*



money he leaves on the table by *not* offering the appearance-only mods so beloved of the competition: "We're thinking about a line called 'Dinan Style,'" he allows, "but I don't know...."

Such is the interface between

than most people see. Over lunch at The Vault, an intriguing restaurant built in a former bank in the buzzing metropolis of Hollister, I lapse into conversation about my young children, as I am wont to do from time to time.

started in high school," he states, matter-of-factly, as he sees me finally complete the math.

Which brings up Jan Dinan, Steve's legendary counterpoint. "My wife's still the one who holds it all together," he says. "She's

Dinan S3 M5

Driveline, brakes and suspension:

- S3 clutch package (lightweight flywheel, pressure plate and slave cylinder)
- 3.45 limited-slip differential
- Front and rear shock tower braces
- Stage 3 suspension (performance springs, Dinan by JRZ racing-type monotube shocks (adj.), 17-mm adj. rear anti-roll bar, 28-mm front anti-roll bar, front camber plates)
- Rear subframe reinforcement
- Dinan by Brembo performance brakes (355x32 mm front/345x28 mm rear slotted rotors, four-piston cast-aluminum calipers with Dinan-spec pads, Goodridge stainless-steel brake lines)

Wheels and Tires

- Wheels: 18x9.5" spread-forged performance aluminum alloy wheels (18 pounds each)
- Tires: 275/35-ZR18 Toyo Proxes RA1
- Tire pressure: front, 35 psi (cold); rear, 34 psi (cold)

Accessories

- Serial-numbered S3 M5 under-hood plaque, Dinan deck lid badge, Dinan Signature floor mats

Warranty

- 12 months/12,000 miles

E39 M5 VS. DINAN S3 M5

	E39 M5	Dinan S3 M5
Engine		
CC/Type	4,941 V8, 4 valves/cylinder	4,941 V8, 4 valves/cylinder
Bore/stroke (mm)	94/89	94/89
Valve diameter (int/exh)	35/30.5	35/30.5
Lifters	hydraulic	hydraulic
Power output (BHP)/rpm	394 @ 6,600	621 @ 7,000
Torque output (ft-lbs)/rpm	368 @ 3,800	502 @ 4,500
Compression ratio	11.0:1	11.0:1
Rev limit (rpm)	7,000	7,300
Top speed		
3.45-1 final drive	155 (electronically governed)	191 mph
3.15-1 final drive	155 (electronically governed)	209 mph
Transmission		
I/II/III/IV/M/R	4.23/2.53/1.67/1.23/1/0.83/3.75	4.23/2.53/1.67/1.23/1/0.83/3.75
Final drive ratio	3.15:1 25% limited slip/DSC	3.45:1 25% limited slip/DSC
Wheels/Tires		
Wheels, front (ins)/rear	18x8.0, 18x9.5	18x9.5, 18x9.5
Tires, front/rear	245/40ZR-18, 275/35ZR-18	275/35ZR-18, 275/35ZR-18



proprietary three-valve system to cope with pressure waves arising from opening and closing those eight throttle bodies located downstream from the plenum—while we cruise down the freeway at a sedate pace. We're *casual*, the hands-on tuner and the *Roundel* writer-cum-immigration lawyer: casual dress, casual demeanor.

Casual, that is, right up to when we exit the freeway and the car glides up to a stop sign.

I doubt that Dinan is even aware of the change in his body language, but before I know what he's going to do, I notice the shoulders hunching a little, the head cocking analytically, the hands taking more authoritative ownership of the wheel. Huh? Then *WHAM!* The right pedal is floored, and the car winds its way through first so impossibly fast that even those practiced feet are a fraction too late to stay out of the rev limiter. *WHAM!* again; the huge 275/35 Toyo RA1's chirp their protest, and second gets dusted. And so on. And on. And *on*.

Having driven an E39 M5 for four years, I am familiar with the thrilling rush of its acceleration. But *this*? The bloody thing just doesn't let up! There is no abatement

of the ludicrous rush through third, fourth, now we're redlining fifth, accelerating *hard* in sixth—and suddenly, in the silliest of short distances, *we've buried the damned speedometer*. Think about that, all you E39 M5 owners, the next time you look at the clock in *your* car: Imagine, if you will, the needle arcing quickly *past* that 185 marker. This is simply other-worldly stuff, this blatant worship of Our Lady of Blessed Acceleration. Downright spiritual.

I feel a conversion coming on.

But for the man driving, this Dinan man, it's just another day at the office. His head remains tilted, listening intently: One senses very clearly that every sensation—thrust, sound, suspension squat—all of it is being uploaded for later evaluation.

Calibration is a word Steve Dinan uses often. "I have a team of twelve software engineers, but I still do all the calibration," he says. "I get lost in the work—I'm working seven days, 60 to 70 hours a week, getting the calibration right." It shows; the Dinan S3 M5 is as close to perfect as anyone will ever make it, and the

only way it could get there is by having an obsessive, brilliant engineer who also happens to be a veteran race-car driver (but one not prepared to compromise the luxury and utility of the vehicle) willing to spend seven days, 60 to 70 hours a week, making it so.

Which is why the damn thing took so long.

The technology in the normally-aspirated S2 M5 was eloquently and entertainingly described by Satch Carlson in the August 2002 *Roundel*—and it was that naturally-aspirated red M5 which, once it reached the pinnacle of its development, was taken all apart to be rebuilt as the supercharged S3.

What, it takes three years to bolt on a blower?

Not quite. While it seems unnecessary to re-document all of those S2 developments, however remarkable, it is noteworthy just how unpredictably the ripple of modification can spread across the still pond of the developed set-up. Such is the torque of the supercharged iteration of the car that with the S2 suspension set-up, flat-out launches simply lit up the rear tires—through the first

Suggested Retail Prices

Engine

S3 M5 intercooled supercharger system:	\$23,999
4-2-1 stainless-steel header system:	7,999
High-flow throttle bodies & velocity stacks:	5,399
Free-flow exhaust:	1,998

Driveline

S3 high-performance clutch package:	included
	with supercharger
3.45 limited-slip differential:	2,499

Suspension/chassis

Stage 3 Dinan/JRZ:	3,231
Front strut-tower brace:	549
Rear shock-tower brace:	349
Subframe reinforcement:	included
	with supercharger

Dinan-by-Brembo performance brakes:	6,090
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Wheels and tires

18x9.5" wheels:	3,996/set of four
Toyo Proxes RA1 tires:	1,050/set of four

Accessories

Signature floor mats:	150/set
Dinan deck lid badge:	included
Dinan S3 M5 serial number plaque:	included

Parts Total:	\$57,309
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Installation labor (105 hrs @ \$115):	\$12,075
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three gears. While bringing boost down in development from ten psi through eight and finally to 7.5 brought this partially under control, Dinan realized that to hook up the rear end properly in such aggressive departure mode, he had to get more weight to transfer rearward. That meant softening up the adjustable rear JRZ shocks a click or two. That impacted the balance of the car during transitions—an impact that resulted in concomitant adjustments becoming necessary both to the *front* JRZs and to the sway bars. And even then, on high-performance street tires, the wheelspin was excessively antisocial; it took a set of 275/35-ZR18 Toyo Proxes RA1 tires (yes, they're legal) to maximize the stick.

How did Dinan get all that figured out? By driving the car—a lot. By *calibrating*.

But that's only a fraction of the development story. Beneath the raw performance, in both power and handling, is a car that can be (indeed, is) driven without complaint as a luxurious, reliable daily driver, with BMW's long standard intervals between services. Compare that to the lumpy-idling beasts that show up for the occasional performance shootouts arranged by other magazines; no doubt you've read how, despite having teams of engineers on hand, many of those cars fail to make it through even the few runs allocated to them on a single test day without collapsing into engineering

failure: high maintenance, in the purest sense of that term, despite the supposedly illustrious reputations of the tuners who developed them. Not at Dinan. That simply wouldn't be... *acceptable*.

So: How acceptable is the Dinan S3 M5? As someone who can (well, who does, anyway) immodestly claim to know the handling of the E39 M5 very well—not by any innate talent, but by virtue of having spent a large amount of time in it on the track—I can offer only the most salivatingly lascivious opinion on how all those Dinan hours add up: I want my car to handle this way. For me, driving this car is akin to coming home one evening, getting into bed, and encountering not my beautiful wife, but the identical twin sister she'd never told me about—especially not the fact that she's a porn star.

A very, very *fast* porn star.

Early that morning, looking down from my window seat at the ineffable beauty of dawn over California's Central Coast, I'd made a deal with myself not to drive the car beyond six or seven tenths. But after 40 minutes or so at the wheel, with Dinan in the passenger seat giving superb navigational cues to a road over which he has scraped a knee on every single corner ("short-chute straight, then third-gear decreasing-radius left-hander") like some latter-day Dennis Jenkinson, I somehow

forget my promise. Despite a polite warning that I might not be conscious of just how much faster the supercharger makes the car, I arrive at an off-camber left-hander quite significantly too hot.

Mistake.

Large oak trees line the road. I recall rally great Walter Rohrl's definition: "Understeer is when you can see the tree you're about to hit. Oversteer is when you can only hear and feel it." But the moment passes—we make it through the corner undamaged, if somewhat subdued. Does Dinan chastise me for getting in over my head, for putting at risk both him and a vehicle worth, if development hours were assigned a dollar value, a million or two? Hell, no. "Nice reaction," he nods. "I like how you early-apexed to give yourself more room to brake. Most people would've just panicked. You've clearly gone into corners too hot before!" Then he adds a surprising compliment. "Actually," he says, "I'm kinda glad Carlson sent someone who knows the car well. Makes it more fun!"

Perhaps he was just being polite, and perhaps what he really meant by "fun" was "not quite so eye-wateringly dull as when the editor drives," but I don't think so—and I was grateful for the praise. That's because Steve Dinan says exactly what he means and tells you just what he thinks—a trait that can come across as arrogance or conceit: "I'm

really fast in the car. I'm quick on the bike, too, but not as quick as some." Spend a little time with the man, however, and you realize that this is simply the blunt, unvarnished truth. It's that ongoing analysis again, simply uploading information: calibrating.

Near the end of the day, when we return to the factory, my driving gets a similarly blunt evaluation. "A good day," says Dinan to his sales manager, Bob Brandt. "Better driver than most journalists."

I take it as a tremendous compliment.

But forgive my digressions. While this article may seem filtered through the star-eyed vision of a Dinan acolyte, it's all the fault of that damnable Dinan S3 M5; if it can't convert you to the Dinan cult, than you are indeed immune to the charms that will

reduce most members to babbling adolescence. I'm all, like, totally Ferris Bueller about the car: It is so *choice*. If you have the means, I highly recommend picking one up.

If you really need the analytical logic underlying the passion, read the Dinan white paper on the system they have developed to bypass the supercharger in the intake tract when the engine is not under boost. I cross-examined Dinan on the genesis of this remarkable piece of engineering, and eventually hit pay dirt: He pulled out a twenty-year-old pencil drawing of a system he initially dreamed up for an E28 5 Series application! Think *Back to the Future*, and Professor Emmett Brown's primitive drawing of the Flux Capacitor.

Two decades in development, if you

count the years it spent as a notion in Dinan's cortex, and several years of hands-on tinkering later, the S3 M5, the Ultimate Beast, is now finally ready—and hence, available for sale. Yes, it's expensive; in fact, some might find the price tag too steep for a car that cuts such a conservative profile. If that's your view, go buy a yellow Murcielago—but don't be surprised when a red sedan with a week's groceries in the trunk and four adults comfortably ensconced inside blows your doors off.

For the passionate fan of things BMW, however, your hard-earned money will buy you the best system of its kind on the planet—along with a little chunk of Steve Dinan's soul. It's a screaming deal.

It's been *calibrated*, you see. ♦