



Small Wunderbar

Dinan Supercharged BMW M3

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAN MORGAN



“**W**ARE PERFORMANCE GUYS, not gadget guys,” says Steve Dinan. One look at his S3-R M3 (\$99,000) makes it clear that a Dinan signature option package is not a vanity purchase. Body kits, wings, front-end “splitters,” and similar aesthetic gewgaws are verboten: instead, Dinan simply offers performance – pavement-ripping, eye-ball flattening, seat belt-straining performance.

“Forced induction and suspension have always been our main focus,” he says. “From there we branched out into cold-air intakes, brakes, mufflers and wheels.”

The supercharged M3 coupe exemplifies Dinan's philosophy. I can't remember the last time I saw a base M3

with a cloth interior and no sunroof, equipped with the standard 6-speed transmission and clutch pedal. It is the lightest version of this great coupe available, without any of the weight-producing sybaritic options. Comfortable and user-friendly, if a bit short on elbow room, the M3 is equipped with features that are possibly the best-handling, most responsive BMW ever.

Under the hood is Dinan's S3-R supercharged version of the smooth and flexible M3's 333 hp, S54 3.2-liter inline 6. Equipped with a Vortech supercharger and after cooler, its power output has been increased to 462 hp along with



Preserving the M3's original exterior, Dinan's custom wheels and exhaust tips provide the only visual cues to the S3-R's performance capabilities.

extra 66 ft lbs of torque." The design of the engine dictates the engineering package. The BMW engine lends itself well to centrifugal supercharging," Dinan says.

Dinan did not just add a supercharger to this engine and hope for the best. He also enlarged the intake manifold and installed increased-flow fuel injectors. A 35 percent larger radiator keeps the fortified engine cool in the hottest conditions. The supercharger uses a large after cooler to ensure high power output without engine-damaging detonation. Even the critical supercharger drive belt system has an automatic tensioner. Finally, the engine management system was tuned for that important BMW drivability.

The Dinan S3-R package is a BMW dealer-installed option. Therefore, if you order this kit on your new M3, you retain the full BMW factory warranty and free scheduled maintenance because all of the Dinan components carry an identical warranty to the BMW components. If a Dinan part causes a BMW part to fail, Dinan covers it as part of the Dinan warranty.

That Dinan is able to offer his wares through BMW dealers and carry BMW warranties is an indication of the quality of the parts and engineering. It is important that the vehicle drives like a BMW, without compromising daily use. It requires no special instructions or special service, and handles heavy traffic with ease.

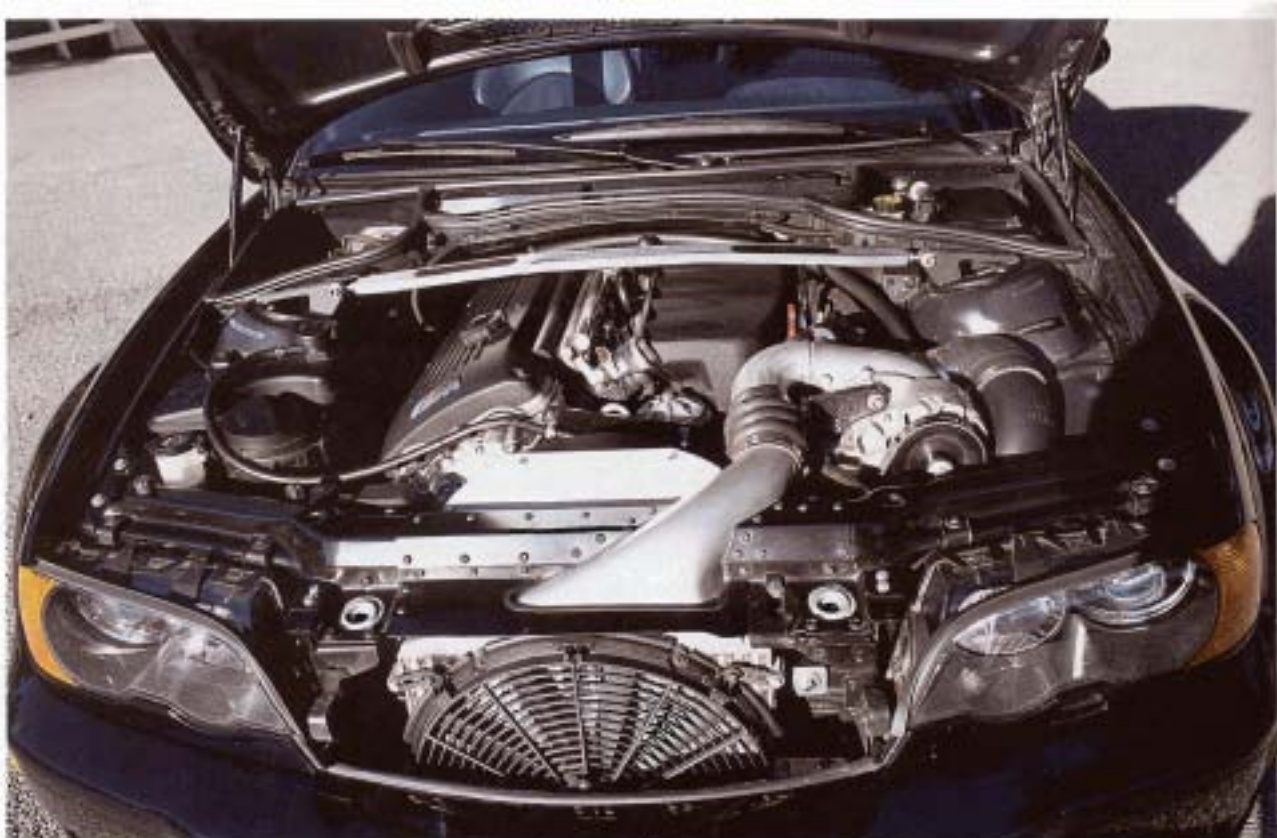
Free from traffic, the engine's performance is intoxicating. Through the standard M3 engine is flexible, the supercharged version is even more so. It is possible to drive

around in third gear and still have adequate acceleration for most situations. The engine pulls smoothly from just under 2,000 rpm in any gear. Past of this flexibility is the 3.91 final drive, which may seem steep until you realize this ratio allows the S3-R a top speed of 191 mph in sixth gear.

This leaves a very short first gear, which is perfect to get the lightweight coupe moving, or to vaporize the rear tires, if that is your pleasure. With the throttle open, the power delivery is hydraulic, accompanied by that excellent BMW soundtrack, courtesy of the Dinan exhaust system. One surprise here is the lack of blower whine. I would prefer a slight aural indication of the supercharger beneath the hood, but quiet is acceptable with this much power. Acceleration is certainly adequate, with 60 mph arriving in 4.2 seconds, in spite of having to shift gears twice, while the standing quarter mile passes by in less than 13 seconds.

Underneath, the S3-R rests on Dinan's own suspension package, with adjustable Dutch J/R Z dampers, springs, anti-sway bars, and bushings. The package lowers the M3 about an inch, yet improves the original ride quality, while improving boosting cornering grip and steering response. Of course, the brakes are also enhanced, with massive 15.2-inch front and 13.6-inch rear rotors all clamped by four-piston Brembo calipers.

Dinan signature wheels and the huge brakes are the only visible clues to the S3-R's performance capabilities. Otherwise, the exterior of the S3-R BMW is exactly like the standard M3. Because wheels and tires are the most important



Dealer-installed and covered by full BMW factory warranties, the supercharger and aftercooler under the hood work with Dinan's signature suspension and exhaust systems to enhance performance. Dinan wheels and Michelin PS-2s complete the package.

part of any performance handling setup, Dinan installs his own 19-by-10-inch rims in the rear and 19-by-9.5-inch rims in front. Michelin PS-2s are the specified tires.

On canyon roads, where an unsorted suspension with too much power can be a real handful, the **Dinan S3-R** remains distinctively BMW, with all the **stability** compliance, and grip that make the M3 a **great** canyon carver. This suspension removes the M3's one "flaw" of excessive understeer. The Dinan suspension leaves the firmly damped BMW compliant and affords the S3-R a near-perfect balance. Combine the power increase with neutral handling and a skilled driver has all he or she will need for speed.

Switching off the stability control, I was able to slide the car around, using throttle to promote a bit of oversteer. At no time did the car do anything silly, make untoward noises from

the undercarriage, or deliver more power than I asked for.

For this supercharged version, Dinan supplies the **kits** to the individual dealers. To simplify the installation, the **larger** radiator and supercharger aftercooler are supplied as a single assembly—complete with upper radiator support—ready to drop in. The supercharger has beautifully machined and plated **brackets**, and the installation looks as though it came from the factory. Nothing appears cobbled together or out of place.

Dinan's stealthy M3 is the performance enthusiast's **dream** car. With only the wheels to identify it, the M3 appears innocent enough to fly under the radar, and it offers a real trunk, a useful backseat, and perfectly balanced, satisfying performance. □

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