

The iconic BMW 3 Series lives on

By  Naresh Maharaj

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Mention the brand BMW and up pops this vision in my mind of a 3 series cream-coloured box-shape BMW that takes me back to 1982. It was the first BMW I owned and thoroughly enjoyed everything about that vehicle.

Fast forward to 2019 and the iconic legend continues to impress in more ways than one. So, let's explore the evolution of a best-seller.



The BMW 3 Series is a compact executive car first manufactured in May 1975. The first generation of the 3 Series was only available as a two-door sedan (saloon), however, the model range has since expanded to include a four-door sedan, two-door convertible, two-door coupé, five-door station wagon, five-door hatchback and three-door hatchback body styles.

Since 2013, the coupé and convertible models have been marketed as the 4 Series.

The 3 Series is BMW's best-selling model, accounting for around 30% of the BMW brand's annual total sales.

There's no doubt that BMW has long been a staple in the luxury and sports car arenas, both among the seemingly unattainable exotic niches as well as the road-going everyday machines that we can walk into a dealer and buy on the spot.

Exterior Design

Simply eye-catching! Aesthetically, it's eye-candy to such an extent that you find it difficult to take your eyes off it. The design is clear, concise and most importantly precisely drawn lines and strikingly contoured surfaces. It is 76mm longer than its predecessor. This has a direct and positive influence on its poise and agility.



The large BMW kidney grille and the headlights leading off it are striking themes of the front end of the car. Their familiar two-way split is emphasised by an eye-catching notch in the front apron that rises up into the headlight contour.

Full-LED headlights come as standard, while the LED headlights with extended features and Adaptive LED headlights with BMW Laserlight for non-dazzling high beam (with a range of around 530m) are available as an option. The dynamic side view is shaped by a pair of character lines and a dynamic side skirt contour.

The all-new interior is pleasurable

The brand's new design language also brings a clear arrangement of surfaces to the interior of the new BMW 3 Series Sedan. This accentuates the spaciousness of the cabin and, together with the cockpit's focus on the driver and enhances full concentration on the road. The new screen grouping of Control Display and instrument cluster, the tall centre console and the coordinated design of the light, modern instrument panel and door panel trim create an all-round feeling of space and a 'feel-good' aura.

The controls are clustered into clearly structured function panels. In the centre of the instrument panel, the displays and buttons for the air conditioning and the air vents form a sharply designed unit, while the light functions are operated from a panel of buttons next to the steering wheel. The light functions are operated from a panel of buttons next to the standard-fitted sports leather steering wheel.

The start/stop button for the engine is now positioned in the newly designed control panel in the centre console, where the gearshift lever or newly designed selector lever is joined by the iDrive Controller and the buttons for the Driving Experience Control switch unit and electromechanical parking brake.

An efficient and powerful engine

We have come to expect nothing less than an engine that is light, yet delivering power and efficiency. Simply amazing! The all-new BMW 3 Series Sedan engines comprises a pair of four-cylinder petrol engines with 135kW in the BMW 320i (fuel consumption combined: 6.0 – 5.7l/100 km) and 190kW in the BMW 330i (fuel consumption combined: 6.1 – 5.8l/100km) plus 140kW/190 in the BMW 320d (fuel consumption combined: 4.7 – 4.4 l/100km). A 195kW six-cylinder in-line diesel engine powers the BMW 330d (fuel consumption combined: 5.2 – 4.8l/100km).

I found both the petrol and diesel engines remarkably quieter than previous editions, with the diesel derivative a tad, just a tad and predictably louder than the petrol engine.

Innovative chassis technology for driving comfort

It is hugely evident that a number of clear priorities were set when developing the body structure and chassis technology of the new BMW 3 Series Sedan. Agile handling characteristics, high-precision steering and superior braking performance. Overall, the new BMW 3 Series Sedan weighs up to 55kgs less than the corresponding predecessor model.

The new BMW 3 Series Sedan also has a low centre of gravity and 50:50 weight distribution, while the stiffness of the body structure and suspension mountings have been significantly increased. Optimised aerodynamics reduce the cars' drag coefficient, making the ride so much more pleasurable. I will give the 30d full marks for ride and handling.

What will it cost you?

Both the 320d and 330i starts from R649,000 (Standard Model).

All new BMWs sold in South Africa include a 5 year/100,000km Motorplan maintenance contract. This covers all service, maintenance and repairs resulting from normal wear and tear, excluding tyres and fuel.

Verdict

When they say "Sheer Driving Pleasure", they mean just that. I tested both the 320d and the 330i and handed back the keys very grudgingly. It is clear that BMW have a clear cut winner in a model that has even surpassed BMW's expectations. It is very difficult not to be impressed. It's probably all you wanted in a family sedan. Sleek exterior, impressive interior, versatile and practical.

ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

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