



**"4.1 is fast...faster than a Ferrari 612 Scaglietti, every Aston Martin and the Bentley Continental GT."**

hurt acceleration times either.

The suspensions for the M5 and M6 are similar to the aluminum-intensive systems of the standard 5 and 6 Series, but optimized for the cars' much higher power and correspondingly greater cornering demands. They both use BMW's EDC (Electronic Damper Control), which provides for three different levels of suspension stiffness: Comfort, Normal and Sport. Swapping among the three modes, though, proved that Comfort is not that soft and Sport is not that much firmer than full soft. Why not make them more differentiated?

Dimensionally, the M5 and M6 are quite similar. In the interest of passenger space, the M5 rides on a 4.2-in.-longer wheelbase, yet the M6 is actually 0.3 in. longer than its 4-door sibling. The coupe is also 0.3 in. wider but 3.6 in. shorter in height, with a slightly narrower front track of 61.7 in. (vs. 62.2 for the M5) and a marginally wider rear track of 62.4 (vs. 61.7 for the M5). But what's key here is that the M6 is lighter than the M5—3770 lb. vs. 4035—due in part to such weight-saving components as a carbon-fiber roof (the first in series production), carbon-fiber bumper supports and forged alloy wheels.

Both cars wear identical shoes—Continental SportContact 2 tires, size 255/40ZR-

19 up front and 285/35ZR-19 at the rear. No doubt about it, the M6's double-spoke wheels look far sexier.

Although our seat-of-the-pants analysis told us the M6 is the scalpel of these two 2-ton Teutons, our track numbers say it's nowhere near a dominant performance, much like the "Does it really matter?" difference between Garner and Biel. The M5 slid to a 0.87g around the skidpad while the M6 managed 0.88g. The M6 showed its more nimble nature through the slalom course, averaging 69.5 mph, though the M5 was no slacker at 68.9. With identical brakes (14.7-in. cross-drilled and vented rotors up front and 14.6-in. cross-drilled and vented rotors at the rear), identical tires and relatively similar curb weights, it only makes sense that the braking numbers were a virtual dead heat: The M5 stopped in 120 ft. from 60 mph and 207 ft. from 80, while the M6 used 1 ft. less tarmac from 60 and 2 ft. more from 80. Pedal feel is extremely firm, just as we like it.

These are easy cars to drive fast, both on the *Autobahn* (where those big brakes give complete confidence that, yes, you will be able to slow down in time) and on back roads. The M6 has slightly quicker, more direct steering and as a whole feels more lively and nimble than the M5. But both

exhibit handling manners near perfect for road cars, with steering neither darty nor too slow, and with excellent feedback.

Despite the 500 bhp, don't expect Cadillac CTS-V-like huge corner-exit oversteer. BMW's variable M differential lock—which increases the locking force as the speed difference between the driven wheels rises—sees to that, optimizing traction; but if really provoked (with the DSC yaw and traction control system turned off), the M5 and M6 will provide smoky slideshows. While we wish the cars had a bit less understeer (no doubt dialed in to keep over-ambitious drivers from oversteering off the road), truth is you'll be hard-pressed to find two more competent, confidence-inspiring cars for high-speed traveling.

Both cars are distinguished from their lesser brethren by new front air dams with brake and engine cooling ducts, side sills, flared fenders, new mirrors and new rear fascias from which a typical M quad exhaust sprouts. And, of course, M-logo side gills. The M6 is the beauty queen of the two, its sleek coupe shape and raked windshield far outweighing its ugly trunklid.

Hop into either the M5 or M6, grab onto the thick red and blue-stitched M leather-wrapped steering wheel...and you're not immediately certain which car you're in; both

