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have similar twin-hood dash layouts, the central one for the iDrive/navigation system. The M6, however, has a flowing, more cohesive, driver-oriented center console versus the M5’s more traditional setup. Both of our cars were equipped with BMW’s optional (\$1000) head-up display, with digital speed and current-gear indicator (the latter helpful when you have seven of them!), handy for keeping eyes on the road.

Our M5’s seats had the optional active width adjustment (\$1900), which means the bolsters automatically move to hold you in place as you enter a corner. This might be fun for some, but to have a seat

»Both the M5 and M6 exhibit more low-speed understeer than we expected, but handling improves as speed increases. iDrive simplifies the M5’s center console styling. Shifting the 7-speed gearbox is done via the center console lever or by the paddles behind the wheel; the “plus” and “minus” symbols on the paddles light up at night for easy viewing.

start groping you mid-corner is downright distracting. Luckily, it can be turned off.

The M6 has more laterally supportive seats, the bolsters of which are power adjustable. By a person. But the M5 has a

more upright driving position, giving a greater view of the road ahead. Of course, the M5 is a lot more practical, with seating for five along with adequate head and leg room for rear-seat passengers. As a low-slung coupe, the M6 lacks rear-seat head room and the deeply sculpted bucket-like rear seats would be comfortable, except that the seatbacks are too upright.

Although the cars we tested were European specification, the M5 is now on sale in the U.S. at a base price of \$81,200, which makes the M5—dare we say it—a bargain in the high-priced world of well-bred road burners. The M6 won’t be on