



Three-Two-Five

A **Rags to Riches** Tale by **BMP**

With barely 20 miles on its clock, BMP's latest project glistened under the searing Texas sun like a newborn pony. Careful lest it trip over its own feet, the car was gently driven a few hundred yards and left purring on the roadside, unaware its innocence was coming to a savage end.

It was the day after BMP's annual Fun Day had brought together a crowd of BMW enthusiasts and the objects of their affections, and this once decrepit 1984 BMW 325 was drifting through corners like a rally car, wagging its tail with impressive displays

of power-induced oversteer. There was no time for dialing in camber settings or brake bias—magazine deadlines could not wait for such niceties. This unsullied steed needed to perform... now!

A crowd gathered to get a closer look at the red machine blasting out of a cloud of tire smoke, its engine screaming, the limiter warning of excessive revs. Among the group was BMP founder Al Hafner, who watched the proceedings wearing a big smile.

"This is what we built it for," said Hafner. "But I'm sure glad we have Roy behind the wheel; one of us would have put that thing on its roof by now."



Although designed primarily for the race track, this car's crude street baptism was appropriate—it was meant to retain a modicum of civility. Remove the stickers and underneath lies an exceptionally clean two-door E-30, a model whose ubiquity causes hardly a ripple in the grocery store parking lot. Upon close inspection, however, it is

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BY LES BIDRAWN PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



ve Club Sport



1984 **BMP 325e** Club Sport

• Engine Modifications

11.5:1 compression ratio
Lightweight pistons
2.7-liter steel stroker crank
304° racing cam with h/d racing springs
Titanium retainers
2mm oversized stainless-steel swirl-polished valves
Polished & ported head
Raceware high-tensile head & main bearing stud kit
BMP Design multi-throttle-body system
High-flow injectors
BMP oil cooler kit

Highflow C/M oil filter

BMP adjustable fuel-pressure regulator
Split-Second on-board adjustable fuel-system calibrator
Split-Second HFM conversion kit
Split-Second air/fuel ratio meter
Split-Second timing adjustment
Aluminum flywheel
Sachs sport clutch
BMP Design custom valve cover
Supersprint headers, racing resonator and rear exhaust
BMP Design adjustable cam sprocket
BMP high-flow racing filter

• Chassis and Suspension Modifications

H&R coilover suspension system
BMP six-piston front brakes with heat-treated 310mm gas-slotted rotors
BMP heat-treated gas-slotted rear rotors
Earls stainless brake lines
BMP Design adjustable urethane rear trailing arm bushings
BMP Design adjustable urethane front shock tower mounts
BMP Design solid urethane front control arm bushings
BMP Design adjustable sway bar set—
22mm front & 27mm rear
BMP Design close-ratio rack, manual steering conversion
BMP Design brake cooling ducts

• Drivetrain Modifications

3:46 L/S differential
Close-ratio custom gear transmission
BMP Design adjustable short shift kit

• Wheel and Tire Modifications

Hartge 7.5x16 alloys
Yokohama Nexus 235/45-16 tires

• Other Modifications

BMP Design R/S lightweight spoiler bumper kit
14-lb fiberglass hood
Auto-power rollcage
Sparco seats
BMP Design carbon-fiber door panels
BMP Design carbon-fiber gauge panel
BMP Design carbon-fiber instrument cluster
Hella European headlight conversion
Mono-arm wiper kit
BMP Design carbon-fiber blower motor cover
BMP Design aluminum floorpans
Billet racing pedals
BMP Design custom steering wheel
Schroth racing seatbelts
Wink wide-angle racing mirror
Manual window conversion

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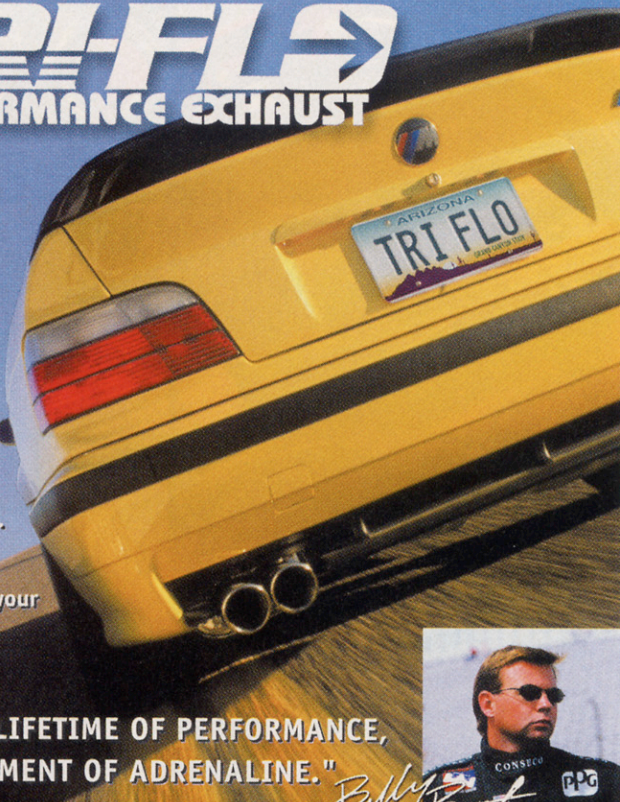
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Three-Two-Five Club Sport

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apparent this is a more purposeful machine than usually encountered in suburbia. It looks as deliberate as a sledge hammer.

Sparco race buckets, carbon-kevlar door panels, aluminum floor pans, and other competition-related components adorn the interior. Under the hood lies a high-compression 2.7-liter stroker engine with race cams and six individual throttle bodies. Visible between the spokes of the Yokohama-shod Hartge alloys are massive six-piston calipers and gas-slotted rotors.

"Our idea was to see how far we could take an E-30," said BMP's marketing man Dolph Miller. "We didn't want to build an all-out racer but rather a car the enthusiast could build for fun on the track while keeping its street-legal status." Judging from the excited reaction of test driver Roy Hopkins (he campaigns an E-30 M3 hillclimb car and an E-36 M3 club racer), the project was off to a great start.

This particular car (born in 1984 as a 325e with five-speed) was purchased from a salvage yard for \$500. The vehicle was intact, no rust was found and it had suffered no collisions. As with many long-lived engines, its fatal shot to the head was a timing belt that broke at 4000 rpm. The project was assembled after hours by warehouse manager Ricky McLemore in one of BMP's well-appointed service bays while Hafner supervised. As a 2002 owner with a desire to go racing, McLemore had ample motivation and a ready supply of the many components it would take to make the hulk a road-racing beauty. Essentially a ground-up restoration, it benefited from access to the entire BMP catalog. The serious sports-car aspirations came from the heart and soul of the dedicated enthusiasts at BMP.

"People try to make their cars dual purpose—racers on the weekends, grocery-getters during the week," said Hafner. "Rather than a compromise like that...you know, baby-jarring suspensions and head-knocking cages...we figured this would be purely a club racer, a car with just one purpose. It's allowed us to make it very competitive, especially using our aggressive gearing. Ultimately, this car will be a lot more fun.

"I think this is a good time to buy an E-30," Hafner continued. "Strong-running



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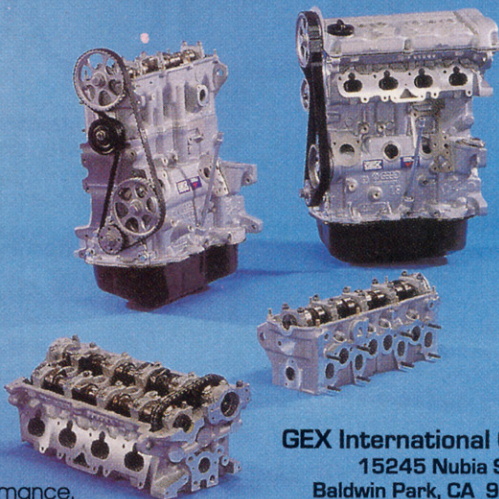
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cars are fairly inexpensive, and there is a lot you can do with them. It's somewhat unfortunate the E-30 chassis was retired when it was; the factory's M program and the aftermarket had just caught up to these cars. Their loss is our gain."

Hafner estimates the engine produces between 215 to 220 bhp with a healthy serving of torque, and it's all delivered with a silken smoothness characteristic of the BMW six. The BMW was perfectly content at idle, had good mid-range grunt and, when the cams came on in the upper revs, it was like a turbocharger kicking in. Considering its estimated 2,300-lb curb weight, the BMP Club Sport should prove a formidable match to a current M3 (not bad for a 15-year-old chassis).

While power is more than adequate, BMP improved the formula with special gearing and ratios that allow it to better utilize a track environment. "The factory set-up needs to do everything—city, highway, high speeds, the works," said Hafner. "It's somewhat of a compromise gearbox. A simple rear-end swap can make the E-30 more fun to drive—and not just on the track," he added.

I didn't have the opportunity to shake the Club Sport down properly; it was finished just in time for these pictures. A quick assessment by Roy indicated that it had plenty of power but the suspension was too soft, specifically the spring rates. "This car will serve as a testbed for many of BMP's future E-30 hardware," said Hafner. "We'll sort this all out at the Texas Motor Speedway."

BMP Design started out as a German automotive repair facility in Los Angeles, California. From 1976 to 1989, Al Hafner Tuning became one of California's largest independent service and accessories facilities dealing exclusively with BMW cars. Servicing as many as 250 cars a month, Hafner's crew became well-versed in BMW parts, systems and ever-improving tech-

nologies. In 1989, all the company's energies were put into BMP Design, and the business was moved to Tyler, Texas, to serve its U.S. customers from a better geographic location. With family origins in Germany, the organization has strong ties in the German and European automotive business community. The ability to speak fluent German has been a big advantage in establishing and maintaining these relationships. In addition to NOS, O.E. and used parts, BMP also stocks an impressive array of go-fast gear, stuff for both road and track.

Every BMW enthusiast should have a copy of BMP's sizable, full-color catalog tucked beneath their mattress and www.bmpd.com bookmarked in their computer—the information is nicely displayed and you won't have to hide it from the kids. ❧

BMP Design

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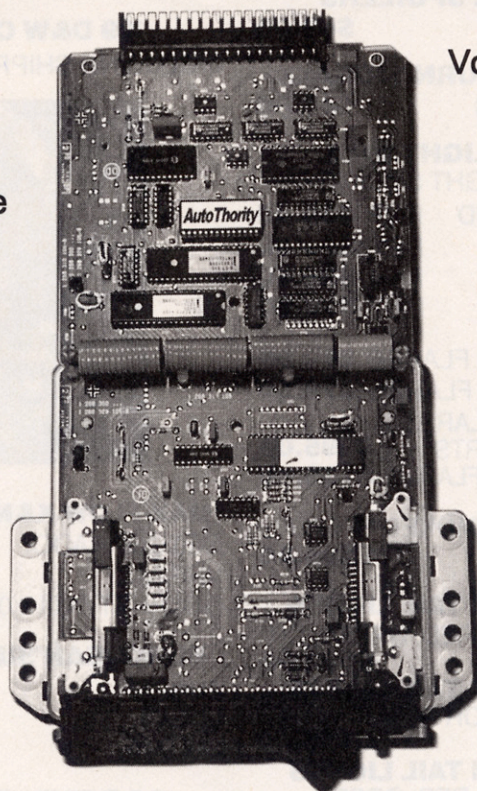
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