

Classy and hot new BMW 340i

By  Henrie Geyser

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The BMW 3 Series is the founder of the modern sporty sedan segment - a crown it has been wearing for nearly 40 years by successfully leaving the opposition in the dust with a succession of awesome models such as the newly arrived 340i.



The new 340i takes over the baton from the much-loved 335i and under its sloping hood grows an all-new 3-litre, six-cylinder engine that flexes its muscle with 240kW and 450Nm which is good for a 0-100km/h sprint time of 5.5sec to put it at the top of the 10 "normal" 3 Series variants with only the two tar-scorching 320 M models being quicker (and a lot more expensive).

Sporty and agile

Our test car also wore M badges and other M body décor thanks an optional extra M Sport package (part of substantial list of other nice optional goodies) all of which push the 340i's standard retail price of R656,000 up to R864,233 - steep, but still about R200,000 less than the two 3 Series M models.

The 340i churns out less muscle than the hot twosome but it is only about one second behind them in the sprint and it gulps nearly 2.2-litres less than the two pack leaders. Not that this car is about petrol consumption, because its character is beamed at sporty performance, agile handling and relentless grip to ensure that it dishes up huge helpings of driving fun.

I have not driven a real sporty BMW for a while and the 340i car impressed the socks off me, particularly because it manages to hide its thrilling soul with well-camouflaged sporty, yet fairly subtle looks until you pick up on the duel chrome exhaust outlets, alloys wrapped in low profile rubber and its tar-hugging stance. Slit-eyed front and rear headlights, black kidney grilles and sporty interior further confirm its naughty character although all of this is neatly balanced the car's smart handling demeanour and practicality when on day-to-day commuting and family transport duty.



Go-to-jail speed

However, take out the whip and fire up the engine and the deep growl rolls out from under its sleek bonnet. Floor the loud pedal and the 340i blitzes off the mark, whipping through the 8-speed transmission to go-to-jail speed in a flash, whether left in Standard auto mode or set in Sport mode so that the driver can flick through the cogs via the F1 style flappies on the steering wheel.

The brakes are superb and do a particularly good job when the car is being hustled along through a combination of tight corners and traffic-free stretches of tarmac in between the twisties. The steering and suspension set-up work in sweet harmony to keep the car rock-steady through the corners with stylish ease in a manner not bettered by anything else in this class.



Classy interior

The 340i's living quarters are furnished with numerous classy goodies including chrome dials and gauges, electric seats wrapped in rich leather, front and rear arm rests, auto aircon with microfilter, electric sunroof, state of the art telephony with extended smart phone connectivity, intelligent emergency service calling, rear view camera and much more.

The list of optional extras (too many to mention in detail here) fitted to our test car cost about R210,000 but it pushed up the interior by a considerable margin. The optional goodies are nice to have, though potential buyers should go shopping with a calculator turned on, unless of course money is no real object.

Even in standard format the new 340i is a seriously cool dude and a very attractive magnet for enthusiastic drivers. No doubt it will further enhance the 3 Series' Top Dog status. The 3 Series price range varies from R415,000 to R1.08-million and on the 340i this includes a five-year/100,000km motorplan and two-year/unlimited mileage warranty.

ABOUT HENRIE GEYSER

Henrie Geyser joined the online publishing industry through iafrica.com where he worked for five years as news editor and editor. He now freelances for a variety of print and online publications, on the subjects of cars, food, and travel, among others; and is a member of the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists. henrieg@iafrica.com

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