

So what's the fuss about the BMW M Festival?



By Imran Salie

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The second-ever BMW M Festival was a unique event. It was the culmination of experience and celebration. Here's what it makes it so special...



Car enthusiasts must've hopped out of their seats when news came that the second instalment of the BMW M festival would take place again this year. The enjoyment and excitement they felt is unmatched, and rightly so.

The powerful symbol of "M" lights up a car lover's eyes - it sparks admiration, and it represents a dream to the lovers of automotive speed. The festival is a way to celebrate the M - to bask in all its glory - and to understand the significance of BMW's motoring division.

The festival took place from 24-25 October 2019 at Kyalami in Midrand, with the first-ever M Festival taking place in 2017.

During the media day, which took place before the actual festival, I had the pleasure to divulge in dialect with BMW's very own CEO, Markus Flasch.

He spoke on the success of the M brand in South Africa and just how important the festival is. He shared the statistics of the M's upward swing in the country, which indicates SA as an important market for BMW. The CEO also briefly elaborated on the unreleased vehicles that were showcased.

I was further able to glance at the new vehicles and listen to descriptions of them from BMW's product specialists.



Words from BMW South Africa CEO

Before Flasch offered his insights on the M brand, we gathered around to listen to a few words from the CEO of BMW South Africa, Tim Abbott.

“The development from 2014 to 2019 shows an increase of 207% in terms of sales in the high-performance segment. We plan to do 120,000 cars in 2020, and we are not going to stop there. In 2019, almost every second BMW is an M. It is one of BMW's strongest pillars and foundations. The M brand in South Africa is one of the highest-selling M brands in the world. Back in 2015, it was number five in terms of market share, and last year it was number three across the whole world.

"We are doing this festival because our customers want to see our high-performance cars in person. They want to see and hear the vehicles running around the Kyalami Circuit. They want more understanding of the brand," said Abbott.



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The new M models

Other than the new M models, BMW also revealed its new 1 Series. It's the manufacturer's first FWD car. The X3 M, X4 M, X5 M, and X6 M Competition were displayed. These models are set to appear in South Africa in 2020. A highlight was the M8 Gran Coupé Competition model that was shown ahead of its world debut at the Los Angeles motor show. Lastly, the M340i xDrive and M135i xDrive were the only non-SUV models were in attendance.



Hot laps with Sheldon van der Linde

Another highlight of the festival was riding alongside Sheldon van der Linde in his BMW M4 DTM. Van de Linde graciously took me around the track with a car that perfectly encapsulates the term "M power". This opportunity was also available to those that attended the festival. It truly is a once in a lifetime opportunity, as clichéd as it may sound. Where else will one get a chance to be in the passenger seat of a DTM car? It was a heart-throbbing experience, but I would do it all over again. I can only imagine how many people flocked to the event just to get a ride.

My final thoughts

What I came to realise about the festival is that BMW strategically orchestrated it to further entrench the M brand into the minds of its loyal customer base. Why else would they showcase old classics like ML50, the M1 and others? Why else would there be an array of new unreleased vehicles sitting pretty on display? Allowing ordinary people to experience a DTM car is just beautifully outrageous. The showcasing, the new product descriptions, and the celebration of legacy is all part of the plan, and it's a plan that works.

ABOUT IMRAN SALIE

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