

Wish List Machines

by Barbara
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BMW M5

The V-10 engine in the BMW M5 uses one throttle for each cylinder to provide the highest level of "breathing" and to eliminate a lag time.

Nearly everyone has a dream car, something they would buy if they won the lottery, most likely fast and expensive. You see them every day in many parts of Arizona, but you may not be ready to walk out and buy one.

We recently had a chance to drive four such cars that ranged in price from about \$68,000 up to \$98,000. Two of the cars were American icons: sport cars synonymous with speed and exotic design. The other two were state-of-the-art high-performance German sedans: sophisticated, loaded with new technology, extremely fast and comfortable. Combined, these four cars had 1,984 horsepower; their average 0 to 60 mph acceleration time was just over 4 seconds.

BMW M5

As one of the most anticipated BMW offerings ever, the BMW 5 Series M5 comes from a long line of "M" cars that have pushed the already impressive BMW cars to new levels of performance.

The M5 may start life with all the great attributes of a basic 5 series sedan, but it adds about \$22,000 of performance and safety equipment over the top level BMW 550i.

The heart of the M5 is the all-new 5.0-liter V-10 engine (a first for BMW) developing 500 horsepower and 383-lb.ft. of torque. Elmar Schulte, head of engine development for

BMW, explained why the V-10 configuration was chosen, "We wanted five liters. The ideal cylinder displacement is 0.5 liter. To get five liters, we needed 10 cylinders."

Unlike some engines that use high torque as the brute force to develop the power, BMW chose to extract its performance by "revving" the engine. As such, the V-10 has a redline of 8250 rpms allowing the engine to use relative light, low-mass reciprocating components to keep the weight down and the vehicle balanced.

Performance levels have 0 to 60 mph times of 4.2-seconds and a top speed limited to 161 mph (but it would go far beyond that speed without a governor). Fuel economy is rated at 12 mpg in the city and 18 mpg on the highway. Those EPA numbers require the buyer to pay a \$3,700 Gas Guzzler tax. We averaged 15.3 mpg during our driving.

Initially, the M5 is only available with a seven-speed Sequential Manual Gearbox (SMG), but a six-speed manual will be available in the fall of 2006. The SMG uses Formula 1 racing technology to maximize the full performance but we found it awkward to drive around town even in the automatic mode. It was easiest to shift using the wheel-mounted paddles or the console mounted shifter to shift manually, but without the use of a clutch. We felt as if we were just learning to drive when it was in the

automatic mode because the shifts seemed slow and rough even after experimenting with the console-mounted adjustments and the iDrive settings. The only way it shifted smoothly and quickly, for us, was under full acceleration, but those were momentary bursts because 100 mph arrives before you can count to 10 slowly.

We equated the SMG to operating a sophisticated single lens reflex camera that can be finitely adjusted to the most precise setting, or it could be operated in a point and shoot mode. Unfortunately, we were not comfortable, or smooth, in either mode. Getting the most out of the camera, or the M5, requires a lot of practice and experimentation.

The other distraction for the M5 is the iDrive that controls audio, climate, entertainment, and other functions via a large knob on the console with choices displayed on the navigation screen. It's too complicated and often requires several steps to do a simple task. We concede that over time, the iDrive will become more intuitive, but the learning curve is high.

Along with the sophisticated engine and transmission, the M5 is fitted with an electronic dampening control that seamlessly controls the shock absorbers between soft and hard to adapt to road and driving conditions. Another system, the M Variable Differential Lock, addresses low-



Chevrolet Corvette Z06

For nighttime driving, the Chevrolet Corvette Z06 is fitted with bright high-intensity discharge lights and fog lamps as standard equipment.

and split traction situations to provide the best traction.

The M5 is fitted with massive 14.7-inch front and 14.6-inch rear ventilated and cross-drilled compound disc brakes for maximum braking power and 255/40ZR19 front tires and 285/35ZR19 in the rear to hold it on the road.

The German sedan is loaded with a long list of features including stability control, park distance control, rain-sensing wipers, Xenon adaptive headlights with automatic control, all power with driver's memory and a Logic7 surround sound audio system.

The BMW M5 has a base price of \$81,895. Options include perforated leather seating (\$3,500); comfort access (\$1,000); multi-function seats (\$1,900); rear-electric sunshade (\$575); front ventilated seats (\$800); head-up display (\$1,000); satellite radio (\$595).

Chevrolet Corvette Z06

The economy car of the group is a special edition of the newest generation of the 'America's sports car'. As if the standard Corvette is not impressive enough with its 400-hp, the Z06 takes the brand to new levels of performance powered by a 7.0-liter small block V-8 engine producing 505 horsepower and 475-lb.ft. of torque. With its six-speed manual transmission, the car reaches 60 mph before shifting out of first

gear and the experience happens in just 3.8 seconds. With the right track or an extremely good road, we were told the Z06 has a top speed of 198 mph.

Two features make the Z06 the economy car of the group: (1) the \$65,800 base price and (2) the EPA rating of 16 mpg for city driving and 26 mpg on the highway. As a bonus, this also happens to be the fastest car of the group.

Engineers were able to augment performance by keeping weight down to 3,130 pounds. The Z06 is built on an aluminum and magnesium platform with carbon fiber fenders and door panels. The cast aluminum engine is filled with racing-style parts like dry-sump lubrication, titanium connecting rods and titanium intake valves. All the exhaust is expelled from the car through a pair of three-inch exhaust pipes and automated mufflers that allow a less obstructed passage during higher performance levels.

The fastest Corvette ever is fitted with monster vented and cross-drilled brakes measuring 14-inches in the front and 13.4-inch brakes in the rear. To help keep it attached to the road it has Goodyear Eagle F1 275/35ZR18 tires in front and 325/30ZR19 rear tires. The tires are Supercar Extended Mobility and can be driven up to 50 miles at 55 mph without air.

Access and egress requires some agility, but once in, the seats are comfortable and supportive, especially during hard cornering. Unlike many sports cars, the Corvette has a large cargo area with room for 22.3 cubic feet or two sets of golf clubs and luggage for a week.

We were impressed by how easy the Z06 was to drive. The clutch didn't require the leg of a shot putter to depress – it was firm but comfortable. The shift linkage was positive, with gears easy to find.

The Z06 is equipped with a head-up display system that projects the vehicles speed, engine speed, cornering G's, temperature, etc on the windshield. The system allows the driver to configure the display to his or her preference. It's a "must have" for a car that is capable of 125 mph in a quarter mile.

Bottom line for the Z06 is a base price of \$65,800 including delivery. Our test car added polished aluminum wheels (\$1,295) and special paint (\$750). Other available options include XM radio and a DVD based navigation system. Missing from the Z06 is the Gas Guzzler tax that usually plagues high performance cars.

Dollar for dollar, the Corvette Z06 is the best performance value available and in the Velocity Yellow Tintcoat color, it's a head-turner.

KEEP RIGHT >>



Dodge Viper SRT10 Convertible

Once again the iconic Dodge Viper is available in both convertible and coupe configurations. The hardtop version was created because some racing series required the cars to have a top.

Dodge Viper SRT10 Convertible

Just like the kid who moves to a town, goes to a new school, gets into fights and earns a reputation as the toughest kid in school, the Dodge Viper has accumulated a reputation as one of the fastest cars around. The notorious Viper name and the dramatic styling contribute heavily to the tough car persona, too.

With its 8.2-liter V-10 engine producing 510-hp and 535 lb.ft. of torque, the spartan two-seater is a brute producing statistics like 0 to 60 mph in just 3.8 seconds, 0 to 100 to 0 in the mid-12 second range and top speed of 190 mph.

Even though the latest generation Viper is a bit more civilized than the original, it is still basically a street-ready racecar. Bold styling includes the signature Dodge crosshair grille, deep-cut side scallops, swept-back fenders and lowered hood lines. It's built on a tubular (racecar style) space frame with separate cowl structure composition. The body is made from resin injection molded components and sheet-molded composite panels that keep the weight at a trim 3,410 pounds.

Climbing into the Viper is a chore, as the driver and passenger have to slip over a wide exterior sill and drop into supportive leather bucket seats. The aluminum-look center console is wide and high with the shift linkage, a single drink holder and hand brake on the

lower level. The aluminum look continues up the center of the dash where four instruments are stacked on the left hand side and the climate control and audio are on the right.

Turn the key in the ignition; press the red starter button and the V-10 roars to life with massive exhaust pipes blaring from both sides of the Viper just in front of the rear wheel wells.

On the road, the ride is rough with the big 275/35ZR18 front tires and 345/35ZR19 rear tires seemingly transferring the bump of every pebble to the cockpit through the aluminum suspension. The roughness pays great dividends, though, in the form of remarkable handling, just like a racecar.

At speed, the thin top serves only to keep the wind out of your hair and does little to cut the noise. People don't buy a Viper for comfort; they buy it for the emotion and exhilaration of driving a racecar. Under full acceleration, you can actually feel the skin on your face pull back.

To get the full feel of the power, try accelerating from 0 to 100 mph and then dynamiting the brakes to bring it back to a stop. If you have the guts and a safe place to do it, the exercise takes less than 13 seconds and less than a quarter mile. We didn't...

The Viper SRT10 convertible has a base price of \$82,745 plus a \$3,000 Gas Guzzler tax. Notable standard comfort and convenience features include air conditioning, alarm,

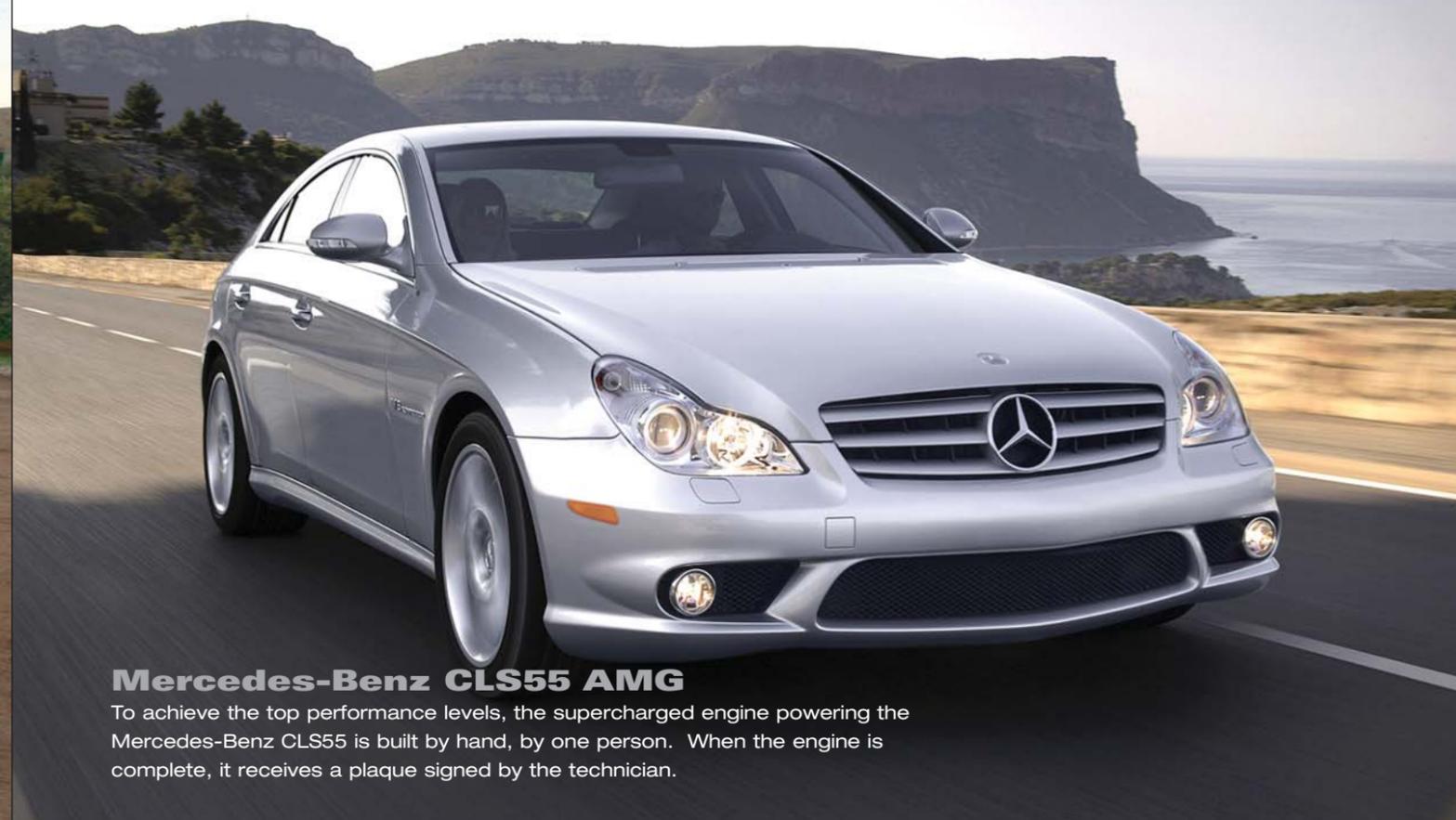
AM/FM stereo with 6-disc CD changer, keyless entry, leather seats with suede insets, Xenon lights and aluminum wheels. Options are limited to stripes, polished wheels, Sirius radio and a choice of six colors.

Mercedes-Benz CLS55 AMG

When first introduced in early 2005, the CLS surprised the public and quickly claimed our personal "best looking car" rating. Breaking from the traditional conservative Mercedes-Benz styling the CLS looked more like an exotic Italian coupe with its sleek low design, than a four-passenger sedan. Closer examination shows that it actually has four doors and so the four-door coupe nomenclature was started. It the short time since that introduction several other manufacturers have announced plans to build their own version of the four-door coupe.

A year later, the CLS received its AMG wings when the CLS55 was rolled out. AMG engineers developed a stiffer sport suspension based on the Mercedes-Benz semi-active air suspension. Eight-piston 14-inch disc brakes were added to the front with 13-inch discs in the rear.

In the engine compartment the 5.0-liter V-8 was replaced by a supercharged 5.5-liter V-8 developing 469 horsepower and 516 lb.ft. of torque. It was tied to the rear wheels by a redesigned five-speed AMG Speedshift



Mercedes-Benz CLS55 AMG

To achieve the top performance levels, the supercharged engine powering the Mercedes-Benz CLS55 is built by hand, by one person. When the engine is complete, it receives a plaque signed by the technician.

automatic transmission. The special supercharger is designed not to be spinning all the time, rather, depending on the load and speed, it is engaged and disengaged by an electromagnetic clutch as needed for more power or better fuel economy.

The modified Mercedes-Benz transmission shifts 35 percent faster than the standard unit, and is designed to handle the heavier torque load. Unlike the standard model the AMG transmission is designed to hold the gears without up- or down-shifting automatically to allow the driver better control of the shifting process.

The CLS55 is something like a top fashion model that just happens to run the mile in

under 3-minutes and 50-seconds. The CLS just happens to accelerate from 0 to 60 mph in 4.2 seconds. The top speed is limited to 157 mph, but ungoverned it should be capable of speeds in the 180-190 mph range.

The CLS55 is easily the most civilized of the four cars featured here. It's remarkably user-friendly and comfortable. The cabin has easy access for four adults and treats them like the passengers of a private business jet. The driver need only start the car and put it into drive before enjoying performance levels similar to the jet (before it takes off).

Like most Mercedes-Benz vehicles, the CLS55 is loaded with high-tech goodies that add to the comfort and convenience of the

passengers and driver. For example, standard equipment includes four-zone climate control, leather seating, sunroof, Smart Key keyless entry and start, Harman/Kardon audio and rain sensor wipers for the base price of \$87,320. Options on our test car included: Distronic (radar-based cruise control that maintains distance from the car in front) (\$3,130); Lighting package (bi-Xenon headlights with active Curve Lighting and washers) (\$1,220); electronic trunk closing (\$550); Premium package (ventilated front seats, Drive Dynamic seats, power rear-window sunshade, DVD COMAND navigation system and 6-disc CD changer) (\$3,900). With the \$1,700 Gas Guzzler tax the total price was \$97,780. ■



| | BMW M5 | Corvette Z06 | Viper SRT10 | CLS55 AMG |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Base price..... | \$81,895 | \$65,800 | \$82,745 | \$87,320 |
| Price as tested..... | \$94,965 | \$67,845 | \$85,745 | \$97,780 |
| Horsepower..... | 500@7750 | 505@6300 | 510@5600 | 469@6100 |
| Torque..... | 383 @6100 | 470@4800 | 535@4200 | 516@2650 |
| 0 to 60 mph..... | 4.2 sec. | 3.7 sec. | 3.7 sec. | 4.2 sec. |
| Weight..... | 4,110 lbs. | 3,121 lbs. | 3,410 lbs. | 4,324 lbs. |
| Cargo capacity..... | 14 cu. ft. | 22.3 cu. ft. | 2.25 cu. ft. | 15.8 cu. ft. |
| Passengers..... | 5 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| EPA fuel economy..... | 12/18 mpg | 16/26 mpg | 12/20 mpg | 14/20 mpg |

