

HOWLING BIMMER

DINAN HAS BEEN BUILDING THEM FOR 27 YEARS

BY MARK VAUGHN



THIS WAS NOT YOUR typical automotive product introduction. Oh man, no. Sure, we were riding in the new car with the CEO of the company and yes, the vp of marketing was... nearby. But at that very moment we were going 185 mph on a very narrow tree- and cow-lined country road in a car driven by Dinan chief Steve Dinan, and right there in front of us—only a bumper or so away—was marketing vp Herb Shattuck on his personal Aprilia Mille R 1000-cc V-Twin, and we were passing him, *passing him*, when Dinan spoke.

"We've been discussing this for about a year and a half, what's faster, a car or a bike," he said, as if he were on the way to Home Depot for some wing nuts and not about to turn his vp into road pizza.

Turns out it's a car (fire up your hate mail, bikers). But not just any car, this particular one was the Dinan S3-R M3, a 462-hp fully tuned howler that sells for more than \$100,000. We had been driving it earlier, though going simply fast (not former World Challenge-racer fast),



and found it did everything it was supposed to do just fine, like an M3 but more so in every area of performance: better handling, way faster, but not harsh and jarring like a crazed race car.

Yes, \$100 grand is a lot more than a stock M3, which retails for about half that, leading to the question: Is a Dinan S3-R M3 worth double the sticker? Well, that depends how badly you want to catch your vp of marketing.

First there is the engine hardware: a Vortech gear-driven supercharger adding 5.5 psi of boost, air-to-air intercooler, bigger fuel injectors and much better oil cooler and radiator, as well as

countless hours spent setting the optimum engine management calibration, all of which help give the S3-R that 462 hp and 328 lb-ft of torque at the flywheel.

Then there's the 3.91 limited-slip for quicker launches and the Dinan/JRZ adjustable shocks, front negative camber plates, better bushings and bigger brakes front and rear. Bigger 275130 front and 285130 rear Michelin PS-2s on 19-inch wheels help, too. That's not everything, just the highlights.

But, you say, I can get stuff very much like that on the internet for next to almost nothin' and slap it willy-nilly onto my own M3 and have plenty of coin to go

out and buy a superbike, too.

Well, yes, technically you could. But the reason Dinan stuff is so expensive is that the crew at Dinan spends months in R&D making sure your particular parts don't actually make your car worse than when you started.

There are 14 guys working in research and development at Dinan, five of them poking around in the engine software department (there are 65 total employees). R&D work progressed full time on the suspension on our test car from August to right now. And Dinan BMWs and Minis share the same four-year/50,000-mile warranty of the stock versions.

There are 180 sales locations in the United States where you can buy Dinan stuff—parts or whole cars—150 of them are BMW dealers. The immediate goal is to consolidate and support those 180, increasing sales of Dinan cars from 5000 a year now to 15,000 a year, according to Shattuck. And then? Well, there's a big hole in the European market that could use some well-engineered BMW parts.

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