

M2 Delivers Thrills

Powerful, Taut and Focused, Smallest M Upholds Reputation

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

The M2 is BMW's entry point to the M line, but don't let that mislead you. There's nothing entry-level about this car's performance.

After a thorough overhaul for 2023, the M2 enters its second generation as one of the most ferocious cars in BMW's lineup. Its small size belies just how menacing it feels from the driver's seat.

Like all M cars, it's powered by Greek gods, with this one taking the form of a 453-horsepower turbocharged inline six-cylinder engine. It's a thunderous, rip-roaring power plant that's made even better by the fact that you can control all that force through a manual transmission, something getting rare even on performance cars.

Nerds will point out that the eight-speed automatic version of the M2 is even faster to reach 60 mph from a standstill. That happens in 4.1 seconds with the six-speed stick shift or 3.9 with the automatic, but I don't care. Slower or not, shifting it yourself is a whole lot more fun.

The combination of all that power with a manual transmission and the insanely firm M-tuned suspension on my tester made it one of the most thrilling cars I've driven in years — including some of the big-



BMW has redesigned the M2 for a second generation this year. A turbocharged inline six-cylinder engine helps it reach 60 mph in just 3.9 seconds when you opt for the automatic transmission. A six-speed manual satisfies purists but slightly slows its acceleration.

ger and pricier M models.

Its greatest strength is its agility, not just its speed. With rear-wheel drive and somewhat short wheelbase of 108.1 inches, it's a car you can fling into corners and sense every atom of feedback it sends through your body.

Granted, that's not necessarily a good thing for everyday driving. The M2 is

a tool designed to do one job perfectly: excite the driver when pushing it hard. Comfort — and nearly every other practical concern, for that matter — falls to the wayside when you drive a car this intensely focused.

Take its seats. My test vehicle came fitted with the Carbon Package, a suite of upgrades that cost nearly

\$10,000, including special "M Carbon" bucket seats designed for track use. They weigh a whopping 24 pounds less than the standard seats and do a great job at what they're intended to do, pinning the driver and passenger firmly into position on screaming track runs. But they also are the hardest, least comfortable seats I've ever experienced

in a street car.

Therein lies the appeal, and the conundrum, of driving an M2. It's a factory-built track car, a blessing when you want thrills and a curse when you want groceries.

Fortunately, the M2 comes packed with high-tech creature comforts that make everyday drives more entertaining.

Two gigantic curved screens are fused together to create what looks like one big digital display that seems to stretch from the driver's window to the passenger's knees. It's beautifully designed, matching the car's assertive look with its fast response and polished, modern graphics.

The functionality is designed around the driving experience, too, another way it perfectly matches the M2's demeanor. A built-in lap timer is ideal for track days, and the M Drift Analyzer software help drivers show off their high-speed cornering skills.

Really, though, the M2 is best enjoyed with the sound system off and your attention focused outside the windshield. It's designed around the pure joy of driving, distilled down to its strongest and most rewarding form.

Not surprisingly, all this power and engineering magic doesn't come cheap. The M2 starts at \$62,200.

AT A GLANCE

What was tested? 2023 BMW M2 Coupe (\$62,200). Options: Metallic paint (\$650), carbon package (\$9,900), lighting package (\$650), BMW M 50 years emblems (\$200), Live Cockpit Pro (\$1,100). Price as tested (including \$995 destination charge): \$75,695

By The Numbers

Wheelbase: 108.1 in.
Length: 180.3 in.
Width: 74.3 in.
Height: 55.2 in.
Engine: 3.0-liter turbocharged six cylinder (453 hp, 406 ft. lbs.)
Transmission: Six-speed manual
Fuel economy: 16 city, 24 highway

RATINGS

Style: 9
Performance: 10
Price: 4
Handling: 10
Ride: 4
Comfort: 2
Quality: 7
Overall: 10

Why buy it? It's laser focused on its mission to deliver excitement and speed, pushing all competing interests aside.

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The BMW Curved Display dominates the new M2's dash, and optional M Carbon seats save weight while keeping the driver and passenger pinned in place on track days.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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