

MY NEW NEMESIS: Mazda has revealed the "Nemesis," the third special edition of the RX-8. Only 350 of the vehicles will be sold, the company said, 200 in "copper red" color and 150 in "stormy blue." Rotary crests will also be in polished aluminum.

BMW M6 Ain't No Pushover

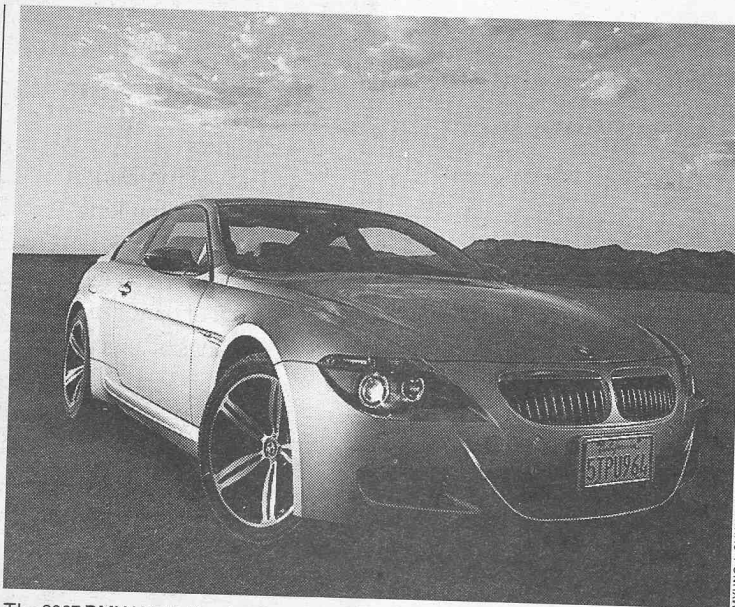
It's not best for your daily driving, but has grace under pressure

ROAD TEST | The problem is not with the BMW M6. The problem is the world around it. It's just too small. No off-ramp is long enough, no highway straight enough, no parking lot so empty as to wring out half this car's scale-pegging potential. The M6 requires a much larger planet, and we, alas, are out of those.

The M division is, of course, in the business of full-clip overkill, making fast cars quite a bit and unnecessarily faster, so it's not really a surprise that the M6 capacities are so thoroughly rank and audacious. The trouble is that, to enjoy the M6, you have to flog it like you're Captain Bligh in mid-mood swing. There is perhaps no modern car more allergic to gentle-throttle, stop-and-go driving than the M6.

The key issue is what BMW drolly refers to as the transmission: the seven-speed sequential manual gearbox (SMG). These devices are intended to strike a compromise between an automatic tranny that tends to sap torque and the crisp, authoritative, driver-involved manual gearbox operated with a shifter and clutch. Lots of cars have these race-derived, paddle-shifter gearboxes. None is quite so balky, reluctant and aggravating as the SMG.

If you push the M6's beautiful center-console shifter into "D" for



The 2007 BMW M6 is like that smart kid in class who used to be too lazy to put effort into his/her homework, then would completely ace each of the hardest tests.

Drive, all is well until you come to the automated first-second shift; then the computer disengages the gear, the throttle goes down to idle, the digital clutch considers its options a moment before re-engaging in second gear and ordering the throttle back into action. This process takes, approximately, an eternity, and when the gear re-engages, the car lurches like it's sucked up a bit of bad gas. There is, in fact, a scalar controller on the console with which you can adjust the aggressiveness of the gearshift, but there is no way to smooth out these gear transitions except by feathering the throttle yourself. Otherwise, the car

is constantly hitching and falling off throttle, gathering itself back up and surging. Life as an automotive yo-yo — though DIYers can change gears manually either by the gated shifter or the paddle shifters.

The one way you can enjoy this car is if you forget about the automatic mode and use the paddle shifters behind the steering column, as God and Hans Stuck intended. Even then, gear changes at routine speeds are scandalously clunky.

All the M6's orneriness gradually dissipates, then disappears the harder you drive the car. Push the "Power" button — this changes the engine mapping and other functions — and depress the M button, which puts a sports spiff on both throttle and steering behavior. Dial in the adjustable suspension to its stiffest setting and go to work.

Suddenly, the computer logic all comes into focus. Now the car starts to feel its own pulse — honestly, the sensation is of riding a fast horse just as it breaks from an awkward canter to gallop. The upshifts begin to blend together in one seamless, elastic yank of acceleration; the throttle-blipping downshifts, coming bang-bang under hard braking, are just about perfect. Drive it like you stole it, and the M6 is sensational, the mortal sin of transportation.

Much the same applies for the suspension. Rigged with strut-based front suspension and four-links in the rear, the car has a pretty stiff ride. DAN NEIL (THE LOS ANGELES TIMES)

2007 BMW M6

- **POWERTRAIN:** 5-liter, 40-valve, DOHC V10 with variable-valve timing; seven-speed sequential manual gearbox with automatic mode; rear-wheel drive
- **WHEELBASE:** 109.5 inches
- **LENGTH:** 191.8 inches
- **WEIGHT:** 3,908 pounds
- **HORSEPOWER:** 500 at 7,750 rpm
- **TORQUE:** 383 pound-feet at 6,100 rpm
- **MILEAGE:** 12 miles per gallon city, 18 mpg highway
- **PRICE:** \$99,795

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2006 MODEL FALL CLEARANCE



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