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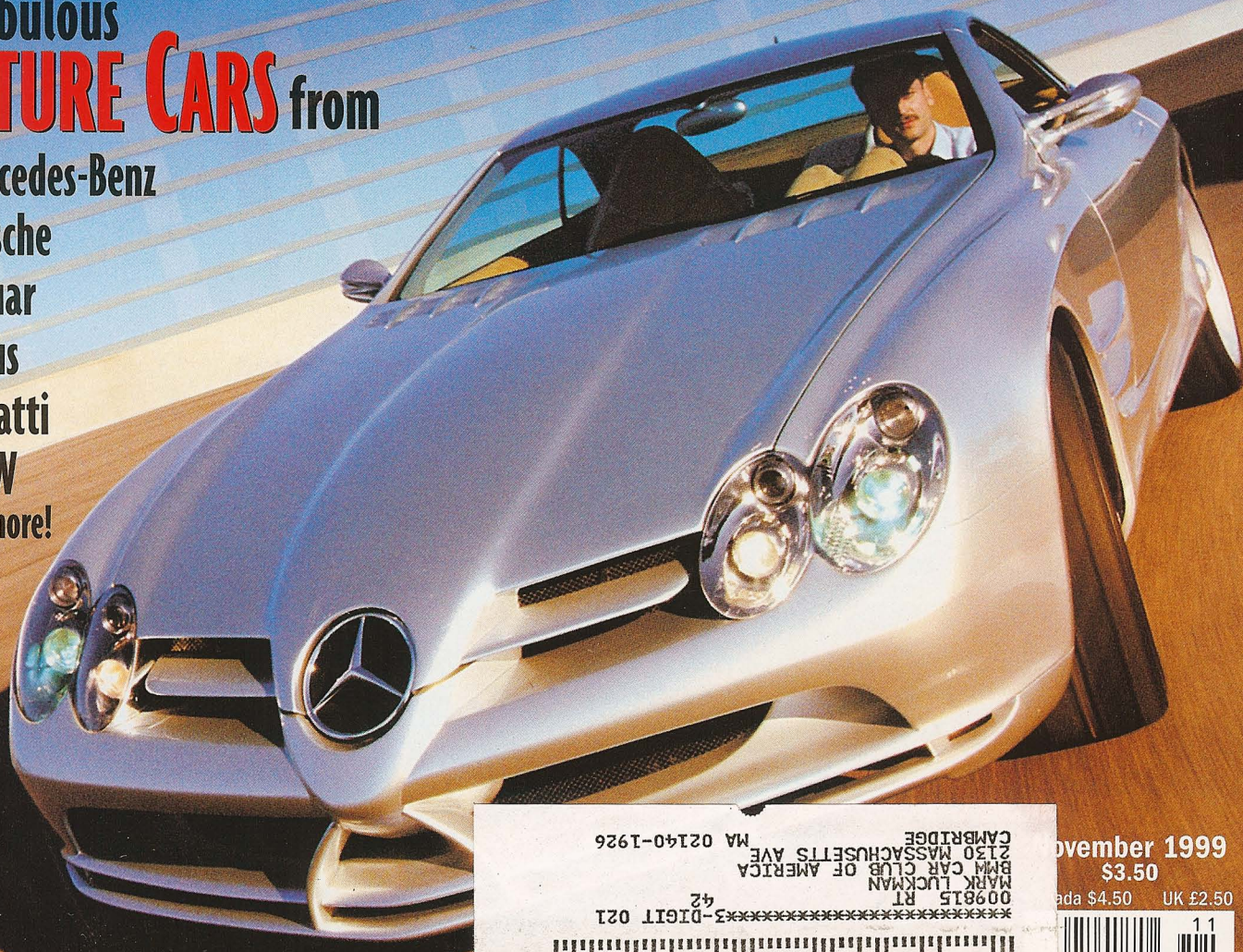
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BMW Bits

Keeping busy in Munich

ONE OF THE THOUGHTS PUT FORWARD in explanation of a new small Jaguar sports car is the fact that Jaguar chief Wolfgang Reitzle, who didn't leave BMW on the best of terms, knows just what Munich's future model plans are.

We believe that these plans include a coupe version of the 400-bhp Z8 roadster, which made its worldwide debut at the Frankfurt motor show this fall and goes on sale in the U.S. next spring.

If this Z8 coupe, whose body panels and space frame are made of aluminum, does indeed become a reality, it will arrive in 2002, long after a brand-new M3 coupe reaches the market next fall. The show car version of the M3 (photo below), shown this year at Frankfurt, is said to look almost identical to the production M3 coupe, which will be powered by an inline-6 that puts out a stout 350 bhp, thanks in part to VANOS variable valve timing on both the intake and exhaust camshafts.



■ BMW's Z8 coupe, above, will likely have the Zagato-style double-bubble roof seen on the Z07 concept car from the last Tokyo motor show. At right, the pleasantly simple—almost British influenced—dashboard of the production Z8.

One thing that Reitzle knows for sure is what BMW plans to do with its Z3 roadster. Conspiracy theorists say he knows how Jaguar could get some of the Z3 cake, and he's ready to act on his knowledge. It could be that BMW's plan also relies on America's love of British sports cars, and that the Z3's replacement, due around 2003, will be not a BMW but an MG. The little MGF has been well received wherever it has been sold, but as readers know well, those territories do not include the U.S.A. BMW, however, still lives by the principle expounded



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by former boss Bernd Pischetsrieder that a car company that does not sell its products in America is not a real car company. Rover, now an integral part of the BMW organization, is expected to compete on the world stage and its best-known international brand is MG.

The thinking is that although the Z3 has been a success, it has been because it was a BMW rather than because it was a sports car. When it comes to the end of its life, the argument goes, why not replace it with an MG developed from the same platform and made in the same American plant? BMW could concentrate on what it does best—4-seaters—and MG could put some sports-car input into the design. The marketing logic is that enthusiasts, led by our own Nigel Shifright, would storm dealerships to buy MGs with reliable electrics.

It makes commercial sense, and it fits in with BMW's plans to release some of the equity tied up in the British sports-car brands that British Leyland squandered in the Seventies. If a modern MGB proves a success, it would be no surprise to see an Austin-Healey badge on a similar car with a BMW V-8 under the hood.—Ian Norris

Renault Sport Clio V-6

■ Renault's most exciting 2000 offering is the Sport Clio V-6, a whiz-bang super-mini that follows the pattern of previous limited-production Renaults with a rear-mounted V-6 driving all four wheels. It's a competition special that will form the basis of a full-on rally car, but there are enough buyers out there for Renault to make a few thousand for sale—but not, alas, to you, my American friends.—Ian Norris

