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# CAR OF THE YEAR

335i Coupé, 335d Touring, Z4 3.0si Coupé, Alpina D3, MINI GP and M6 Convertible

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## E52

BMW's retro-styled Roadster came in for criticism when new and sales never really took off. Now, though, it's something of a collector's item and while it's not cheap, it's pretty damn cool

## Z8 &amp; Alpina Roadster

Words: Sebastian de Latour  
Photography: Dominic Fraser/BMW



It's eight whole years since BMW unleashed the Z8 upon an unsuspecting public and in all that time it hasn't lost any of its visual impact. It's as rare a sight as ever and creates as much of a stir driving down the road now as it did when it was first revealed at the 1997 Tokyo motor show as the Z07 Concept. Speculation had been rife as to what sort of car BMW would be unveiling, but when the covers came off the new car, no one was expecting the retro-styled roadster that met their eyes. The work of designers Chris Bangle and Henrik Fisker it was a feast of design indulgence and stunned showgoers with its curving bodywork, wide stance and double-bubble roof. As futuristic as it may have looked, there was no denying the similarities it bore to the classic 507 of the Fifties. Looking at the cars side by side, the Z8 is a modern homage to the classic BMW and they share numerous styling cues – the split front grille, the shape of the bumper and the bonnet, the side vents and the raised rear shoulder line. As far as modern interpretations go, it

was spot on though at the same time it wasn't the most coherent of shapes and lacked the 507's ultimate style and grace. Two years later, once again at the Tokyo motor show, BMW unveiled the production-ready Z8 and the biggest shock was that it had barely deviated from the design of the concept at all. There had been a few tweaks to the overall styling like the addition of indicators under the headlights, a slight reworking of the front bumper, a three-spoke steering wheel and the removal of the driver's side helmet fairing but beyond that it remained true to the original design.

For the Z8, all traditional BMW styling cues went out the window and the resulting car is hard to pin down as a BMW for those not in the know – it's not a shape that's easy on the eye and you can spend a long time looking over it without ever really finding its best angle. That vast expanse of bonnet descends to the black-lined supercar headlights, the bulging 'cheeks' are split by the amber flash of the indicators while the moustache grille is punctuated by a

foglight at either end. A strip of body-coloured bumper separates this from the lower, wider valence that stretches across the car's front. The side vents are elegant and a swage line stretches from their trailing edge to the rear of the door handle which sits above it. The hump in the shoulder line is less pronounced than in the Z07, but the rear end is no less bizarre, with its high set brake lights and indicators, powered by neon tubes rather than traditional bulbs or even LEDs. There was also a distinct lack of radio and telephone aerials on the car – these were actually housed within the rear bumper itself, thus leaving the bodywork uncluttered. If the exterior was challenging, the interior was even more so, with a design unlike any other BMW before it or since. For starters, as well as an all-black or cream interior, you could choose from a black and cream or red and black combo, the latter being a little on the garish side. The retro-styled steering wheel featured a slender rim with wire spokes, while the dashboard was effectively



split into two sections. The top half was made up of a series of wraparound plastic sections with the instruments housed in a central binnacle that was angled towards the driver. Beneath the cowl sat the rev counter, within which was the clock, and speedo, flanked by the fuel and temperature gauges. The lower dash section was finished in the same colour leather as the seats and featured the oblong central air vents which seemed completely mismatched with the round outer vents which sat in the upper dash section at its very edges. Beneath the central vents were the minimalist heater controls and below that was the wide transmission tunnel which housed the radio and further back, a small cluster of switches. The rear of the tunnel featured twin cubby holes on either side and a larger storage area in the middle. The upper section of the dash reached the top edges of the doors with a small shiny triangle by the shutline.

The cabin was cosy but not uncomfortable, with room enough for both driver and passenger and once you'd got used to the colour scheme it was

somewhere you could quite happily spend a few hours of your time. The central dash pod took a little getting used to and it's a shame that there was so much plastic in the cabin, but it certainly felt like a pretty special place to be.

The Z8 was only ever released in one flavour, not that you could complain about the package on offer. The car used the E39 M5's 4.9-litre V8 which was unchanged for the most part, delivering 400bhp and 369lb ft of torque in all their glory while power was transferred to the rear wheels via the M5's six-speed manual gearbox. The Z8 featured an all-aluminium spaceframe construction, chosen for its lightness, strength and impressive impact performance. The suspension used MacPherson struts and lower wishbones at the front with a five-link rear setup and wherever possible aluminium was also used. The brakes were taken from the E38 750i and were more than up to the job of providing ample stopping power as they had been designed to slow a two-tonne executive leviathan, while the steering

was rack and pinion, worthy of note as this was the first time that BMW had chosen not to use recirculating ball steering with a V8-powered car. The engine was mounted behind the front axle in order to help the Z8 achieve that all-important 50:50 weight distribution. It also used a slightly upgraded lubrication system with one pressure and two scavenge pumps, triggered when the DSC sensors detected enough lateral G to cause oil surge.

The extensive use of aluminium was impressive but the Z8 still weighed in at 1585kg, making it quite heavy for what was not a large two-seater – this was blamed partly on the copious luxury equipment that was deemed necessary in a car of this price. It still weighed an impressive 135kg less than the M5, which meant that performance was even more ballistic than that of the already seriously rapid super-saloon.

As you'd expect from a luxury roadster costing as much as the Z8 did, just about everything was standard. ASC+T and CBC, electric leather seats, sat-



nav, a 10-speaker stereo, xenons, anthracite headlining and air-con were among the standard appointments. The options were few and far between and included matt aluminium interior trim, a black or beige hood and your choice of colour. There were three metallic and four solid hues too with four different interior trim combinations – black, 'Crema,' a combination of the two or Sports red and black. There was also 16 Z8s fettled by BMW Individual with two-tone exterior paint and the option of all manner of luxurious interior trim. All Z8s also came with a matching metal hardtop as standard which had been designed as much with aesthetics in mind as it had with practicality, meaning the Z8 looked as good roof up as it did down.

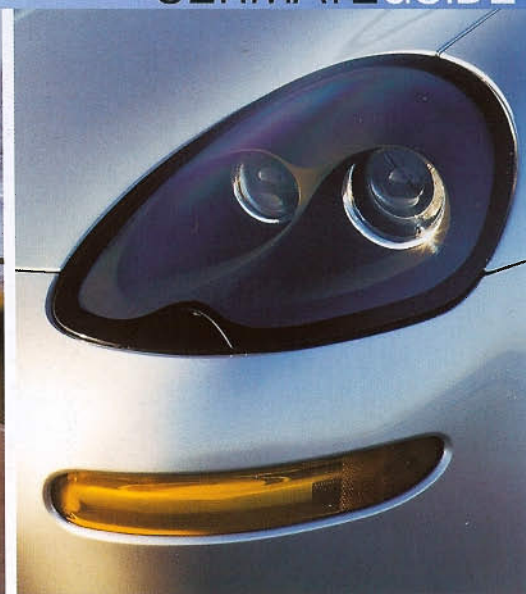
In 2002, Alpina released its own take on the Z8, the Roadster V8. Rather than trying to turn the Z8 into an out-and-out sports car, Alpina did what it does best and decided to enhance the natural cruising talents of the Z8. The biggest changes over the standard Z8 involved the gearbox and the engine. Gone was the M5-derived six-speed manual and in its place Alpina fitted its own five-speed SwitchTronic system. This immediately endowed the car with a more relaxed nature, but the addition of the wheel-mounted shift buttons meant that you still had the option of manual control when the mood took you. The problem with fitting an automatic gearbox was that the M5 V8, as with other M-engines, was not best suited to work with an auto so Alpina decided to remove the 4.9-litre V8 and replace it with the same 4.8 V8 that could be found

in the company's B10 V8S saloon. While power was down on the M V8, with 380bhp compared to 400bhp, it was five horsepower up on the B10 thanks to a less restrictive exhaust. The Alpina engine trumped the standard Z8 engine on torque however, delivering 384lb ft at 3800rpm whereas the M-engine could only muster 369lb ft at the same revs. All that torque meant it was the perfect accompaniment to the new gearbox and allowed for effortless cruising. That's not to say that performance was lacking, however, and the Roadster V8 was hardly any slower than the Z8 – it would sprint from a standstill to 62 in a scant 5.3 seconds and would power on to an electronically limited top speed of 163mph. The Z8 was faster to 62mph, but it couldn't match the Alpina's top whack, its limiter kicking in at 155mph. Alpina also turned its attention to the Z8's suspension and reworked it to make the Roadster V8 more compliant, more comfortable and a little softer, which befitted Alpina's overall philosophy for the car.

While the external modifications were limited to a set of dramatic 20-inch alloys, body-coloured mirror covers and discreet Alpina badging, the interior was treated to a full-blown makeover. You could have just about any colour combination you wanted, but the car that we featured had a stunning cream and blue leather and Alcantara retrim and this colour scheme was continued throughout the interior. Gone was the shiny trim from the standard car and in its place was far more upmarket matt plastic which stretched across the top of the dashboard, with the lower half finished in cream leather. Alpina's

trademark blue-faced dials were present, but in the Roadster V8 they glowed blue when the lights were switched on. The steering wheel was slightly different, incorporating the '+' and '-' buttons for the SwitchTronic in the thumb grips, adding a body coloured centre complete with Alpina badge and replacing each of the two central wire spokes with solid black strips. Alpina also had to add a gear selector display and this was mounted in a small pod directly ahead of the driver, though some complained that it looked a little cheap. The doors also received some attention and a retrim with the doorcards themselves finished in the same colour as the seats. The gear selector and handbrake lever also had a two-tone finish and the rollover hoops were also retrimmed to match the rest of the interior. Between 2002 and 2003 Alpina produced 555 Roadster V8s, which made it one of the company's more 'common' models, although the chances of seeing one on the road or up for sale are exceedingly slim especially as only eight were ever sold in the UK.

While the looks may have been challenging, the Z8 found many fans, the most famous of which was James Bond himself, who piloted the Roadster, albeit briefly, in *The World Is Not Enough*. Despite this, it never proved as popular as BMW would have liked. It never received the rave reviews that it looked like it deserved, but another major sales limiting factor was no doubt the cost of entry into the Z8 club. £86,650 was required to get behind the wheel of the Roadster, and many potential customers may well have been put off by the



prospect of spending so much on a car whose ultimate resale value and appeal was uncertain. You'd have to really love your BMWs to spend that much on the Z8 especially when you could have had a Porsche 911 or an AMG-fettled Mercedes SL. Part of the reason for the Z8's extortionate asking price beyond the fact that it had an aluminium body, M-engine and a luxury interior was the way in which it was produced. The Z8 was manufactured on a special prototype-build line in Munich and was put together largely by hand, taking 10 times longer to build than a 3 Series Saloon. In 2003, production of the Z8 ceased, with a total of 5703 cars manufactured over five years. Unsurprisingly, the Z8 quickly became something of a collector's item and while its looks may continue to divide opinion it has finally become as desirable as BMW had wanted.

### On the road

There's no denying that getting into a Z8 feels like a special occasion. Everything about it is so different to any other BMW that it's quite easy to forget it has actually come out Munich. Everything in the cabin feels alien, with only the gearlever bringing some familiarity but it's a nice place to be, though some of the more garish interior colour combinations take a bit of getting used to. The seats are very comfortable and hold you in all the right places and it's easy to get comfortable. The thin-spoked wheel feels a bit odd to hold, with perhaps not as much to grab on to as you'd like but it's a good size and fits in well with the car's whole retro-look. Visibility is good all round roof up or down and with no instruments

directly ahead of you, there's nothing to block your view of that long bonnet, stretching into the distance. The central instrument pod isn't that successful as despite the fact that the dials are all angled towards you, you still have to look down and to the side to read them, but at least they're clearly marked and easy to read. The Z8 isn't a particularly large car, being low and wide as well as quite short which makes it easier to place on the road, though sitting quite far back and having that vast expanse of bonnet ahead of you does make it slightly tricky to manoeuvre when things get tight. The V8 starts at the press of a button and you're immediately smitten by the noise coming from those meaty twin exhausts, a real old-school V8 burble that fits the Z8 to a T. The M5's gearbox was never regarded as having the best shift action, but it's perfectly adequate even if it is a bit rubbery, requiring a firm hand to get the most out of it and to overcome the long throw. The rack and pinion steering is a welcome change after the less involving recirculating ball system in other V8-powered models and while it's quick it does feel a little lifeless at times. Of course, if you're not buying a Z8 for its looks then the chances are that you're buying it for the performance and there's plenty of that. No one would ever call the M5 slow but with a substantial reduction in weight, the Z8 is just plain fast whichever way you look at it. With a 0-62mph time of just 4.7 seconds, the Z8 can outperform almost anything else on the road and acceleration is just relentless all the way up to the 155mph limiter. It's not all about top end though and the M5 V8 is

wonderfully flexible at pretty much any revs in any gear, which makes for effortless progress. Then there's the noise, a V8 roar that builds as the revs rise, getting harder and louder as you accelerate towards the redline where it finally becomes a crackle-edged bellow. It's awesome and with the roof down it's a visceral experience which makes the Z8 feel raw, wild and alive. A lot of work went into getting the exhaust note just so and it shows.

The Z8 offers prodigious grip courtesy of its stiff suspension and wide tyres and errs on the side of understeer when pushed, but up to its limits the Z8 is an impressive performer and one which will be more than a match for the demands of most drivers. Amazingly, despite the combination of sports suspension and run-flat tyres, the Z8's ride is a comfortable and compliant ride without ever feeling soft. It means the Z8 is as comfortable playing the GT as it is attacking a sinuous B-road, making it a great all-rounder. One major disappointment was that BMW chose to sell the Z8 without an LSD – it may not have been an M car outright, but it had enough performance to make it seem like a compulsory item. While the raft of electronic safety devices were more than capable of keeping the car in check, without them the Z8 wasn't nearly as adjustable as it could have been and getting the power down quickly became an issue. The press always seemed to enjoy the Z8 but it never seemed to live up to expectations, though in all honesty it was hard to resist the charms of the blisteringly fast and extremely capable Roadster and it will never fail to excite.



## History

**1998:** Z07 concept revealed to the public at Tokyo motor show. Retro design harks back to Fifties 507 and the concept adds a modern twist to the classic design.

**1999:** Production Z8 unveiled at Tokyo motor show. Z07 conceived as production model so changes are few and minor for Z8 and it loses none of its impact. All-aluminium spaceframe construction offers strength and helps keep weight down, though Z8 still tips the scales at 1585kg, partly due to luxury specification. Standard equipment includes electric leather seats, sat-nav, xenons, a 10-speaker stereo and a metal hardtop. Power comes from E39 M5 V8 with 400bhp and 369lb ft of torque channelled through M5 six-speed manual gearbox and thanks to 135kg weight saving over M5 performance is stunning, though lack of LSD a surprise. Public and press both impressed but £86,650 plus price tag puts many potential buyers off.

**2002:** Alpina launches Roadster V8. Focus is more on enhancing Z8's cruising ability rather than trying

to make an out-and-out sports car. Manual gearbox replaced with Alpina SwitchTronic auto and M5 V8 replaced with Alpina modified 4.8-litre V8 as M engine doesn't work well with auto. Power is down at 375bhp but torque is up to 384lb ft and performance is still brisk. Suspension slightly reworked to offer a softer ride though handling remains impressive. Exterior modifications are limited to 20-inch alloys, Alpina badging and body-coloured mirror covers while interior is treated to sumptuous retrim. Price is very similar to that of the Z8 at £86,000, but exclusivity is guaranteed with only 555 cars produced and only eight of those make it to the UK.

**2003:** Both Z8 and Roadster V8 production ends. A total of 5703 Z8s have been produced and Z8 fails to be the sales success that BMW hoped for.

## Buying one

There's not really a whole lot to choose from where the Z8 is concerned – there's only one model after all and there were never any changes throughout its four years in production. With 5703 cars produced, the Z8 was not especially hard to get hold of with the main limiting factor to uptake being the high asking price. All cars were left-hand drive, all came with the metal hardtop and were near enough fully loaded. You did have a few options, namely the interior and exterior colour, the choice of which changed during the car's time in production. At launch until March 2002, you could

have your Z8 in metallic Titanium silver, metallic Topaz blue, solid Black II or Light red. From March 2002, these colours were replaced with metallic Stratus grey, solid Bright red and Jet black. The Z8 looks good in just about any colour and you'll see a lot of silver and grey cars about with a few blacks up for sale, but the other hues are much rarer which is a shame as the Z8 looks great in red, though the blue won't be to everyone's taste. The same can be said for the interior trim and while Sport red and black seems to be the most popular combination there are a few cars with all-black trim which looks

good and far more subtle. If you've got your heart set on a particular colour combination then don't limit yourself to the UK classifieds as there are never more than a handful of Z8s up for sale at once – all the ones we found on the Auto Trader site were all from Hexagon of Highgate, in fact. Mobile.de is a great place to go shopping and as all the cars are left-hand drive anyway, it doesn't matter about buying from the Continent. We found a huge selection of cars, most very low mileage examples in a wide range of colours and at very reasonable prices.

## Front

Recently a supposed issue came to light with the Z8 regarding the front and rear shock towers which may deform and bend the spaceframe itself, putting the panels out of alignment under normal driving conditions. American publication *BusinessWeek* ran an article in January 2006 and reported that a number of owners had stopped using their cars in case hitting a large pothole could cause the towers to distort. This is not a problem that is exclusive to the Z8, however, or any car with an aluminium spaceframe. Either way, BMW issued a strut brace kit in order to prevent the deformation from occurring, a 'performance package' priced at \$4900/Euro 3900. Following an investigation BMW concluded that only a small percentage of Z8s that were inspected showed signs of damage. This had subsequently been caused by driving too quickly over poorly surfaced roads and only one car sustained

serious damage following an impact. Speaking to BMW GB, they told us that there is no fix because there is no problem with the car's design and construction and there were no reported cases of damage in the UK.

If your car has been having some work done and the headlights seem to be pointing right in front of the car it's not uncommon to find that the headlamp auto levelling sensor has been disconnected and reconnected backwards so get your dealer to correct it.

Cracking windcreens appear to be a common problem and are caused by a number of things including the soft top being adjusted too tight – the glass is quite thin so is prone to cracking with little provocation.



### Engine

If the check engine light comes on and the car goes into safe mode it could either be down to the MAFs or a faulty cam position sensor. With the former, the MAFs get dirty over time and should be inspected every few years – a clean MAF is a happy MAF and owners have reported that a pair of new MAFs have transformed the car, making it feel so much more responsive. A faulty cam position sensor isn't so easy to fix and is an expensive problem to repair.

Don't worry if you can hear a ticking noise coming from the engine when cold – this is caused by the oil draining out of the Vanos valve gear when the car is sat for long periods of time and the noise should disappear once the car is warm. If you can't stand the rattle you can get a Vanos accumulator shut-off valve installed to get rid of the noise. If the rattle persists even when the car is warm you can get hold of a stiffer spring and thicker washer set for the Vanos disc.

There was a UK recall issued for cars built between 11 November 2000 and 30 September 2001 regarding the engine cooling fan. There was a manufacturing error with the fan which could cause the electronics to thermally overload and be destroyed, resulting in the failure of the fan and in some cases this could lead to scorching or even a fire in the fan. Affected vehicles had their fans checked and replaced depending on the type and build number.



### Rear

BMW's decision not to fit an LSD as standard came in for a lot of criticism but many owners have overcome this problem by fitting a Quaife ATB LSD – it'll help you put the power down and kick the tail

out when the mood takes you. The roof pulling away from the rear window is a common problem – your dealer will be able to repair it for you, and there's also a DIY guide on [bmwz8.us](http://bmwz8.us).

It's not uncommon for water to get into the rear lights – the Z8's boot lid drainage channels have come in for criticism, allowing water to gather inside the edge of the boot.



The Z8 doesn't have the best aerodynamics in the world and this shows both roof up or down. Even with the wind deflector up, there's a lot of turbulence above 70mph and with the roof erected there's a lot of wind noise.



The Z8 is fitted with a clutch delay valve (CDV) which is notorious for causing problems with the gearshift on manual E39s. The CDV delays the engagement of the clutch, causing the clutch to engage the flywheel at a slower rate no matter how quickly you take your foot off the clutch pedal. It does this in order

to protect the driveline but actually makes for a very jerky driving experience and wears out the clutch prematurely, which is why Z8s suffer from clutch-wear issues. Zeckhausen.com sells modified CDVs which essentially retain the CDV casing but remove the internals, giving you full control over your clutch.

Intermittent heater problems are a known fault so make sure the heater and the air-con is working properly on any car you're looking at.

Despite its multitude of speakers, the Z8's radio isn't considered to be one of the best around. Quite a few people have opted to install aftermarket head units in their Z8s with the Becker Cascade offering a clean-looking option, complete with sat-nav while Alpina's IVA-D310 also works with the BMW sat-nav and comes with a rather flash fold-out screen.

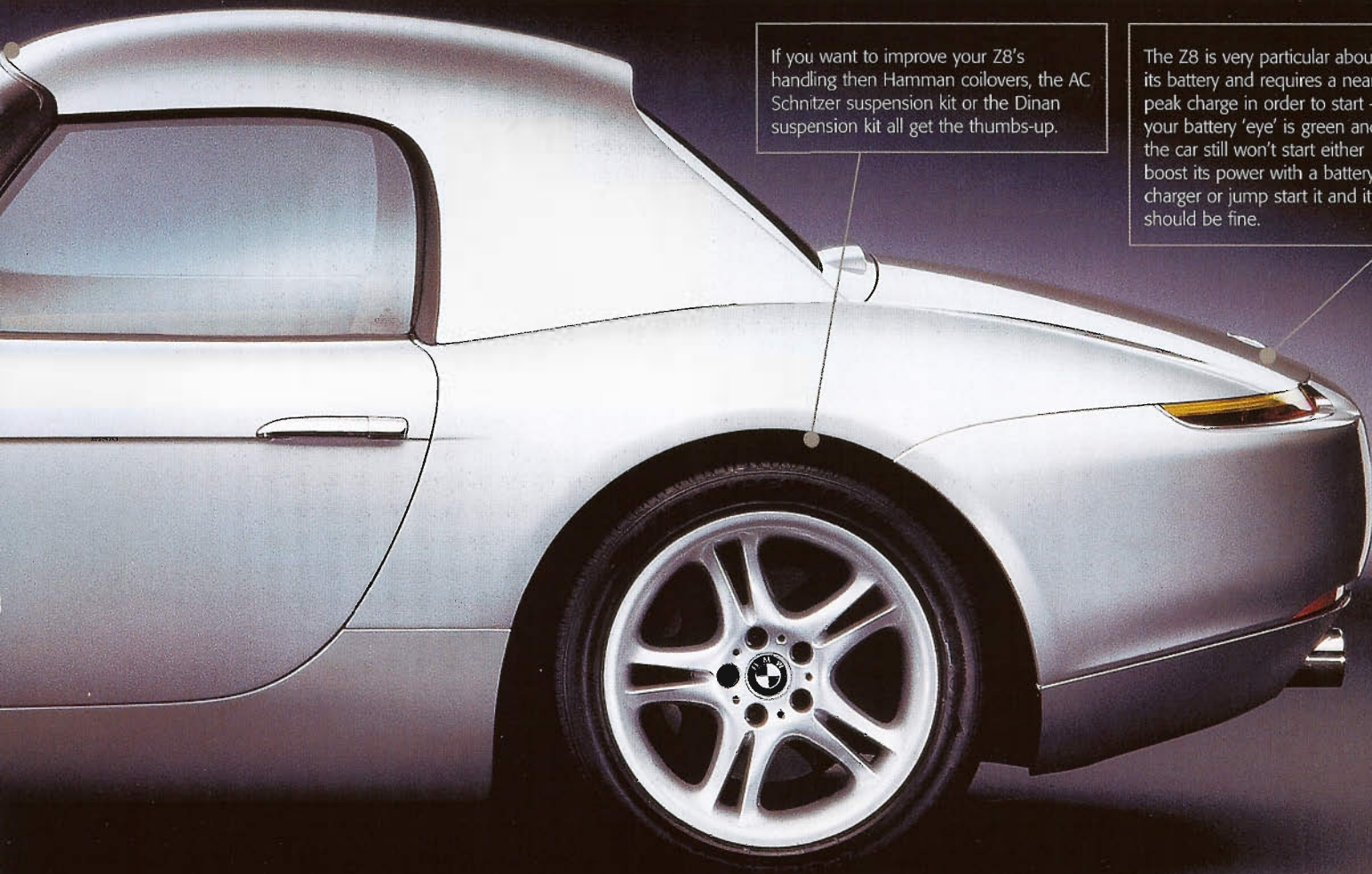
If you live in a high humidity area then the air-con has a tendency to deposit water in the footwell – if you have a look at [bmwz8.us](http://bmwz8.us) there's some useful advice regarding the cause and how to fix it.

The plastic seat backs have a tendency to fall off over time and will either need to be replaced or can be fixed at a dealer, or you can do it yourself by bending the clips gently and gluing the seat back on to the seat.



A number of owners have experienced problems with their rear-view mirror – for some, there appeared a bubble of liquid in the mirror which would cause things to appear fuzzy, while others found the mirror blacking out in places much like a broken LCD screen. Either way, a new mirror will be needed to solve this problem.

The low oil light sensor can be faulty, coming on even when there's plenty of oil in the car – this can be cured with a software fix.



If you want to improve your Z8's handling then Hamman coilovers, the AC Schnitzer suspension kit or the Dinan suspension kit all get the thumbs-up.

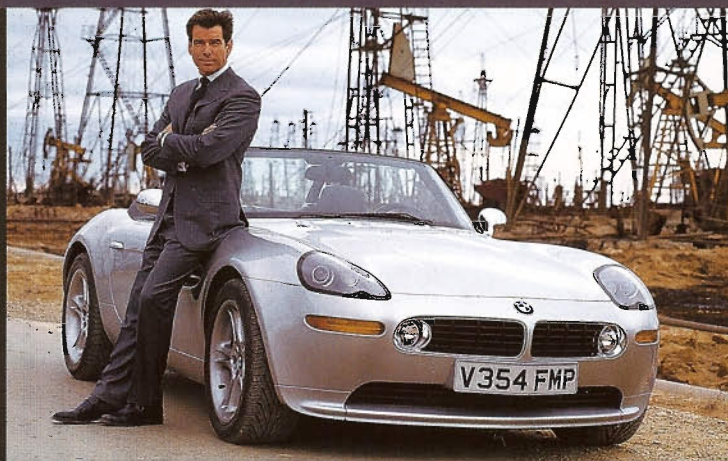
The Z8 is very particular about its battery and requires a near peak charge in order to start - if your battery 'eye' is green and the car still won't start either boost its power with a battery charger or jump start it and it should be fine.

**Should I buy...?  
Z8 or Roadster V8?**

With there being so little to choose from between the Z8s, if anything at all, the only real choice there is, if you're flush enough that is, is between the Z8 or Alpina's offering. The cynical may view the Roadster V8 as being a more expensive way of travelling more slowly and losing the M-elements that are part of the Z8's appeal in the first place. However, you've got to ask yourself how often you'll actually be driving your Z8, let alone hard. The vast majority of Z8s are bought as second cars and are highly unlikely to get year-round use. Of course, there will be those who want to get maximum enjoyment, but most of them will be bought to be admired and enjoyed when the weather is good and the roads are dry. If that's what you're after then the Roadster V8 may be exactly what you're looking for - it's super-exclusive, has the added kudos of the Alpina badge, looks fantastic on its 20-inch alloys, is still a quick car and is far from being a dynamic deadbeat. It'll cost you more, of course, but if you prefer a cruiser and an auto, it's money well spent. We'd stick with the Z8



ourselves, as it's still rare enough to excite and is the faster and more exciting car outright. Alpinas are hard to find and very expensive when they do surface whereas a Z8 can be bought on a relative budget and will still feel and look special enough for most people. It can be a relaxed cruiser when you want it to be, but when the mood takes you it can still perform.



## Inside knowledge – Andrew Macpherson, Z8 owner and enthusiast



What makes the Z8 so special to me is the perfect blend of style and function. It echoes the dream cars of my childhood while giving a modern magic carpet ride powered by BMW's rock solid five-litre V8, an engine with a strong reputation from years of hard use in the E39 M5. In short it is the perfect platform for a GT enthusiast to enjoy the beauty of the American west, and with almost half the 5700 Z8s sold in the USA, this LHD only car was certainly made with the USA in mind.

BMW designed the Z8 as an homage to its own 507 sports car of the Fifties, which was designed by Albert Goertz; the first Z8, designed by Henrik Fisker, was even called the Z07. It looked like a 'D'

Type Jag blended with an early Corvette and a dash of Cobra. I was hooked, but I had to wait almost three more years before the car came to market.

The day I picked up my first one I was thrilled. All my first drives in the mountains and deserts to the north of LA were breathtaking. However the honeymoon didn't last long: I soon discovered that in stock form the Z8 has some evil habits. It can understeer violently on the twisty canyon roads that make driving here such fun, and on fast sweepers it has a worrying way of pushing wide. Dinan's swaybars and suspension set neutralised the car, and trading the stock tyres for Bridgestone's grippy S03s and realigning the wheels with -1.5° camber transformed its handling.

The motor is a torque monster treat at the track, and with the suspension mods the car is an absolute blast. I took my E46 M3 SMG and my modified Z8 to one of our local tracks to do a serious back-to-back comparison a couple of years back. The Z8 was every bit as fast as the M3, but it was way, way more fun to drive! The M3 felt clinical

and perfect, but also rather dull, like a video game in which the driver almost didn't matter, while the Z8 demanded that you drive it, and it rewarded you in spades. The handling mods really show their benefit at the track, and it is a hoot to drive there, but it isn't a track day car, it is a long-distance GT.

I am now on my third Z8, and I have applied some the best mods I learnt about on the first two to this one. It isn't a car I take to the track, I use it as a practical classic to do special drives and events with. I love the car, and plan to keep it a very long time, so I'm taking great care of this one.

So, on to the practical facts – what to look out for. The car has a few little bugbears like any machine, but the main ones to look out for are:

1) The Vanos valve gear must be checked on the earlier 2000 to mid '01 cars. After that they solved the issue with new seals inside the units.

2) The clutch can wear out early (15-25,000 miles isn't unusual) due to the Clutch Delay Valve, which I recommend removing and replacing with a hollowed-out valve.

### What's out there? On the cheap

**2001 Y reg:** 40,200 miles, Titanium silver, Sport red and black Nappa leather, DSC, CBC, air con, sat-nav with TV, front side airbags, headlamp wash. £54,995.

Cheap is always a relative term when discussing Z8s, and this is the cheapest UK-based car we could find. High miles for a Z8, but it's a good colour and while the interior is a bit on the bright side you can live with it. It's got everything you'd expect and must have all the paperwork too. A good buy.

### Money no object

**2003:** 7500km, limited edition Individual car, special lacquer finish, special light grey Nappa upholstery, Kodiak silver trim, anthracite headlining. Euro 168,000.

We went International this month and tracked down one of the eight Individual cars in this colour on mobile.de. Everything about this car is special and it's even got the optional anthracite headlining and it's only done 4660 miles. It

might not be to everyone's taste, but it's the ultimate collector's Z8.



### Tempting



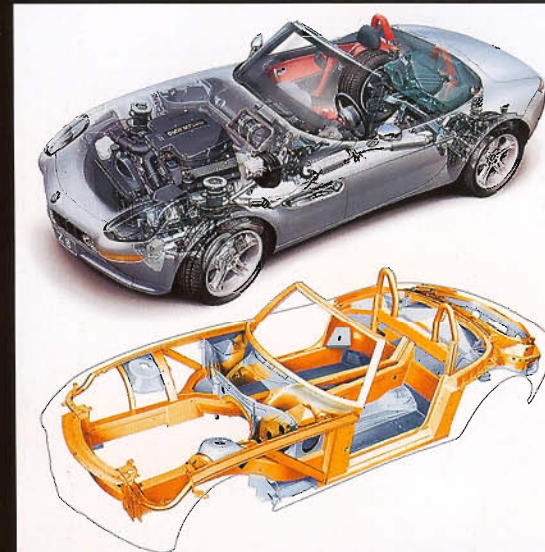
**2003 Alpina Roadster V8:** 27,800km, Alpina blue metallic, Alpina V8 Roadster No. 014/555, cruise control, two-tone Alpina leather and alcantara interior, 20-inch alloys, telephone preparation. Euro 139,800.

With only 150 or so Roadsters not sold to America, finding one is pretty hard. This one is gorgeous, with the wild Alpina retrim, all the usual toys and finished in beautiful Alpina blue with only 17,000 miles on the clock. Very tempting.

### Best buy

**2000:** 9000km, silver metallic, Sport red and black Nappa leather, heated seats, sat-nav, fsh, telephone, sat nav, CD changer. Euro 99,000.

Mobile.de came up trumps again with this ridiculously low mileage early Z8. Silver is a very popular colour, and here it's once again combined with the red and black interior. All the usual goodies and a full service history combined with an asking price just over £66,000 seals the deal.



### Something special

Despite the Z8's rarity, price tag and impressive performance none of that stopped the tuners from adding their own touches once they'd got their hands on the car. Hamann's tuning programme endowed the Z8 with an additional 20bhp courtesy of a remap along with 387lb ft of torque and the removal of the top speed limiter. The body styling divided opinion and featured more aggressive front and rear aprons along with side skirts and a crescent shaped rear wing. There was also a meaty sounding quad exhaust, sport suspension, a short-shift gearchange and tasty three-piece 20-inch split rims. MST Wiesmann went one better with its Z8 and while on the outside there was nothing more than a

set of 19-inch split rims and the ride height had been lowered by 30mm courtesy of a set of sport springs, under the bonnet it was all change. An induction kit, new exhaust from the manifold back along with uprated cylinder heads and camshafts resulted in 450bhp and 395lb ft of torque. It wasn't cheap though, with the whole package as we tested coming in at £20,000 on top of the price of the car. The wildest take on the Z8 was without a doubt the one-off Hamann Monaco, named after the customer's hometown. Resprayed in Ferrari Rosso Corsa, the car sported a carbon fibre front splitter, rear diffuser and side skirts along with adjustable sport suspension and a huge rear wing. On the

inside there were drilled pedals, a 300km/h speedo, chrome rollover hoops and a short-shift kit, but it was under the bonnet that the real magic had been worked. Hamann's engineers decided to leave the engine's internals alone, stating that too much time was needed to extract comparatively little power and it just wasn't worth it. Instead, they added a modified air intake, recalibrated ECU and Motronic ignition, a free-flowing exhaust manifold, sport cats and a quad exhaust system which resulted in a massive 485bhp and 417lb ft of torque. Performance was stunning, both in terms of acceleration, with a 0-62mph time of 4.2 seconds and a top speed of 191mph, and also retardation

## SPECIFICATION – Z8

3) The front shock tower domes must be flat, and the three bolts pointing skyward in parallel. If they are domed, with the bolts splayed out, walk away.

4) The soft-tops need constant care, and the strings which help fold them correctly must be checked often. If they break and you don't notice you can 'scissor' a hole in the canvas.

5) The headlights should not have any fogging on the inside of the glass.

6) The hard to replace/rare/expensive parts are the little special Z8-only things, like the neon indicator lights, or any of the specially made interior parts, so check those are all perfect.

Pretty much anything else you might want to know is covered on my website, [www.bmwz8.us](http://www.bmwz8.us).

What are the compelling reasons to buy one? Beauty, practicality and they hold their value well, but most of all it is a wonderful car to drive at a fast clip across the Alps. The Z8 Club in Germany runs several events every year that are amongst the most enjoyable motoring adventures I've had. Joining up with those would be reason enough in my book.

	Z8	ROADSTER V8
<b>ENGINE:</b>	8 cylinders in vee, DOHC, 32-valve	8 cylinders in vee, DOHC, 32-valve
<b>CAPACITY:</b>	4941cc	4837cc
<b>BORE/STROKE:</b>	94x89mm	93x89mm
<b>COMPRESSION RATIO:</b>	11:1	10.5:1
<b>POWER:</b>	400bhp @ 6600rpm	375bhp @ rpm
<b>TORQUE:</b>	369lb ft @ 3800rpm	384lb ft @ rpm
<b>DIMENSIONS (L/W/H MM):</b>	4400/1830/1320mm	4400/1830/1320mm
<b>TRACK F/R (MM):</b>	1550/1570mm	1550/1570mm
<b>WHEELBASE:</b>	2505mm	2505mm
<b>TANK CAPACITY (LITRES):</b>	73 litres	73 litres
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	1585kg	1585kg
<b>BRAKES F/R:</b>	Discs, servo assisted, ABS, CBC	
<b>SUSPENSION F/R:</b>	Double-pivot MacPherson struts, lower wishbones, coil springs/Multi-link axle with trailing arms, twin transverse upper links, lower control arms, coil springs	
<b>STEERING:</b>	Rack and pinion, power assisted	
<b>GEARBOX:</b>	Six-speed manual	Five-speed SwitchTronic
<b>WHEELS F/R:</b>	8.0x18/9.0x18	9.0x20/10.0x20
<b>0-62MPH:</b>	4.7 seconds	5.3 seconds
<b>TOP SPEED:</b>	155mph	163mph
<b>ECONOMY:</b>	19.5mpg	19.5mpg
<b>PRODUCED:</b>	1999	2002



thanks to a big brake kit with 355mm grooved discs. It wasn't cheap at £124,000 but seeing as you couldn't even buy one it didn't really matter. Our final foray into the world of the modified Z8 was the most impressive when we came across the Discovery Automotive Z8 in 2004. This stunning machine was finished entirely in black, from paintwork to leather to the matt 20-inch three-piece custom-built alloys and was an engineering masterpiece. The main component of the tuning programme was a Vortech V-2 supercharger running 10.5lb of boost, and this was backed up by Schrick cams, Hamann manifolds, cats and exhaust and a UUC flywheel, clutch and short-shift kit. Hamann

fully adjustable coilovers, eight-piston and four-piston Brembo brakes front and rear and a Quaife LSD completed the package. With 750bhp, this one-off monster was frighteningly fast and just as loud, and marked the peak of Z8 tuning as far as we're aware.



### Extras

#### 1:12 scale

**BMW Z8, Topaz blue**  
(BMW part number: 80 43 0 020 879)



**BMW Z8 RC Hobby, silver**  
(80 45 0 027 854)



#### 1:87 scale

**BMW Summerdiorama 2005 with Cosmos black Z8**  
(80 41 0 410 088)



**BMW Z8 hardtop, Violet red**  
(80 41 9 411 724)



### Other

Blancpain Big Date and Flyback with Z8 weight. Not a lot of information on these watches is available and it would appear that only one of each is in existence with the Flyback having been sold. While there is nothing obvious that sets these beautiful timepieces aside from the ordinary versions, turn them over and the clear back displays the exquisite Z8-shaped weight. According to Blancpain the project is currently 'on hold'.



### Thanks

[www.bmwz8.us](http://www.bmwz8.us)