

# Suburban Observer & Eccentric Automotive Showcase

Published Every Monday



## Down in the dumps? BMW 318ti Club Sport is your ticket

By Anne Fracassa  
Avanti News Features



ROAD TEST  
By  
Anne Fracassa

I was peeved. I had been stuck in Chicago all afternoon, trying in vain to get a flight home. I had been on standby for three flights, finally getting one. The flight attendant tells me there's no room for my carry-on, so it had to be checked. Seemed like a minute after I gave her the carry-on, the door slammed shut and the plane pulled out. Without the carry-on! With the keys to the BMW 318ti Club Sport in it! Idiots!

A hurried 90 minutes later, the carry-on miraculously appeared in baggage claim and, still irritated, I sulked and muttered to anybody who would listen all the way out to the Green Lot, threw everything in the trunk and buckled up for the ride home.

By the time I got home, some 45 minutes later, the radio was blaring. I was stomping on the gas and clutch and had a smile on my face from car to car.

What does that tell you about how fun it is to drive this car? Lots and lots of fun.

Even though I got such a lousy start because of the airline, this baby Bimmer made everything all better.

The value for the dollar is impressive, to say the least. Powered by a responsive, fuel efficient 1.8-liter dual-overhead-cam 16-valve 4-cylinder — yes, 4 cylinder — the 318ti Club Sport moves when you want it to, and without complaint, I might add. Stomp on the gas pedal and it goes, and goes, and goes...

Ohhhh, the handling. This car is so solid, you feel like you're one with the car. Every move you make, it makes with you, in fluid motion. It couldn't be more in sync if the two of you were linked with Saran wrap. And the steering response is so fine that the slightest turn of the wheel will yield results.

The 318ti is nearly effortless to drive. Give thanks to the same suspension specially fitted and tuned by BMW M. That special suspension is outfitted with firmer springs, shock absorbers and anti-roll bars than the average car. The 5-spoke alloy wheels are an inch larger in diameter than those of the 318ti Sport.

I had a hard time, for some reason, getting used to the 5-

speed manual — the only transmission available for the 318ti Club Sport, by the way (as it should be). It gave me a little trouble when shifting from second to third and by the end of a weeklong evaluation, I was still having a hard time getting it into reverse.

The list is so long on standard equipment it would take way too much room, but here are the highlights: Engine-speed-sensitive variable-assist rack and pinion steering, 4-wheel disc brakes with anti-lock brakes, 2-speed windshield wipers with car-speed-controlled intermittent operation and heated washer jets, dual power heated outside mirrors, a take-out flashlight in glovebox, height-adjustable front sports seats that recline, adjustable head restraints, split folding rear seats, power front windows with key-off operation, microfiltered ventilation and a CD-radio, six speaker anti-theft AM/FM stereo radio/cassette system.

Optional equipment includes limited-slip differential, a premium audio system with 10

speakers, a power two-way sunroof with key-off operation, a remote keyless entry security system, a six-disc CD changer, cellular phone and roof-rack carrier.

Safety, always a priority with this German automaker, is evident with dual air bags, high-adjustable front seatbelts with automatic tensioners (they drove me crazy by tightening at the wrong time) and a full barrier in front and rear. It's also got side-impact beams that meet 1997 standards.

This is a pretty car. The one I drove was bright red, but it also comes in jet black. Its aggressive stance is further enhanced by neat foglights, M mirrors, M front spoiler, side sills and a rear apron. Leather seating is plush and comfy.

And, to and behold, this is a rear-wheel-drive car. Hallelujah! Up here in Michigan, most people say FWD is best in snow and ice.

Improved traction, they say. I say, hey — how many times a year in the past five did we really have snow? Not much. Rear wheel drive gives you superior handling in normal weather conditions, which is what most driving happens to be.

BMW evenly distributed the weight (51.4 percent front/48.6 percent rear) in the car to compensate a little for the car being rear wheel drive. It accomplished this by lengthening the wheelbase and mounting the battery in the rear. Well done.

Pretty car. Fun to drive. Affordable by most. 'Nuf said.

Anne Fracassa is senior editor

of Avanti News Features.

**1995 BMW 318ti Club Sport**  
Vehicle class.....Minicompact  
6-passenger, 3-door coupe  
Engine.....1.8-liter DOHC  
16-valve inline, 4-cylinder  
Mileage.....22 city / 32 highway  
Where built.....Munich, Germany  
Price.....\$23,650

## Today's Technicians Shedding 'Grease Monkey' Stereotype

(UN)—The men and women who repair our vehicles will probably always need a few wrenches and some soap and water to clean their hands at day's end, but the "grease monkey" stereotype is passing into history. Technicians with hand-held engine analyzers and on-site computer terminals are becoming the norm.

Today's auto technician faces components and repairs virtually unheard of a generation ago. Among the advances are on-board computers, electronic fuel injection and unibody frame construction.

Twenty years ago, a mechanic needed to understand 5,000 pages of technical text to be able to repair any auto on the road at that time. To perform the same feat today, a technician would have to decipher 500,000 pages of technical text—the equivalent of 250, big-city phone books.

The non-profit, independent National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence has been a driving force behind the professionalization of the auto technician. ASE is dedicated to improving the quality of automotive service and repair through the testing and certification of the repair technicians.

For a free brochure about today's auto technician, send a self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope to: ASE, Dept. NU-051, 12605 Dulles Technology Drive, Suite 2, Herndon, VA 22071.

If you'd like to see a particular model tested or if you have a car question, send Anne Fracassa a message at AVANTI 1054, Avanti's America Online mailbox... Or comment through the Internet at AVANTI1054@aol.com  
Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti News Features.

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