

Suburban Observer & Eccentric Automotive Showcave

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BMW 840Ci smooth, fast and full of fun

By Annie Fracassa
Avanti NewsFeatures

This car is really something. It turns heads. It has a 5-speed manual transmission.

It has an automatic transmission as well.

It goes like the wind. And costs a bundle.

The 1996 BMW 840Ci has been significantly changed this model year. This ultra high-performance sedan is powered by a 4.4-liter 32-valve V8 engine that's not only smooth, but also fast. The road feel and responsive handling are so superb. This car is classy all around.

This is the first year BMW has installed its Servotronic speed-sensitive system in the 840Ci. It was first introduced in the 850Ci in 1994.

The Servotronic system reduces steering effort more at low speeds than engine-speed-sensitive systems — yet doesn't sacrifice the firm and accurate road feel at higher speeds.

The result is optimum control and handling characteristic of a world-class sedan.

You've heard about meshing automatic transmissions with



ROAD TEST
By
Annie
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manuals before, so this isn't new.

But BMW has it mastered with its Steptronic system. The automatic transmission is there, but you can switch to a manual transmission mode with just a flick of the wrist. To shift up or down, all you have to do is move the shifter.

All you have to do is this: From the "D" position, you can move the lever to the left, where "M" (manual) is located. To select the lower gear you pull down or up on the shift lever. Really simple.

What I did find, however, is that the automatic is much, much more responsive pulling away from a standstill. The manual is a little bit sluggish, which is a surprise. Both transmissions were very easy to operate — and kind of fun to switch between.

The best part is having the choice. Optimum manual control over an automatic transmission. Really neat.

Interior upgrades to the 840Ci include a new in-dash audio unit, auto-storing of AM and FM stations and a larger, easier-to-read display. BMW has also included automatic locking retractors on passenger seatbelts that let you use child restraint seats easily.

Back to the engine. Horsepower is rated at 282 and it has a richer torque curve. This smart engine reaches a torque peak of 310 lb.-ft. at just 3900 rpm. In comparison, last year's engine did 295 lb.-ft. at 4500 rpm.

Power peak is at 5700 rpm, rather than last year's 5800. This is a strong, solid engine. Of course, this engine has OBDII as well.

Four-wheel disc brakes and 4-channel antilock brakes are standard, as well as automatic climate control system with integrated microfilter (that have individual driver and passenger controls), automatic dimming inside rearview mirror, power tilt steering wheel, leather trim, cruise control, fog lights, heated front seats, fold down rear seat, all-season traction control and power sun roof.

The 12-speaker 200-watt audio system is quite superior. Roll up those windows and you feel like you're in a fine music hall. You can even enhance the system by adding a 6-disc CD changer. The 840Ci is also pre-wired for dealer installation of a cellular phone.

Another neat feature is the vehicle-speed-controlled windshield wipers. The wipers automatically speed up when the

vehicle does. There's also a coded driveway protection system that provides an ever-changing coding of ignition key and lock to prevent starting the car with an unauthorized key.

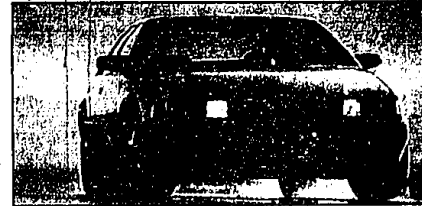
Remote keyless entry security system is standard.

In the glove box you'll find a rechargeable flashlight. In the trunk you'll find a full-size spare wheel and tire and a toolkit.

Base price of the 840Ci is a bit steep at \$74,400, but once you slip inside and drive it a few

miles you'll see it's worth it.
1996 BMW 840Ci
Vehicle class: Large sedan.
Engine: 4.4-liter, 32-valve V8.
Mileage: 16 city/20 highway.
Where built: Dingolfing, Germany.
Price: \$74,400.

Write for your favorite car of 1996:
Write Avanti NewsFeatures
Senior Editor Anne Fracassa
online with your choice at AVANT-
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Studies show that Daytime Running Lamps help to reduce accidents. They may also lower consumer insurance rates.

(NAPS) Daylight Running Lamps (DRLs), an automatic lights-on system where the headlights are on at a reduced intensity during daylight hours, have been recognized as a significant factor in reducing automobile collisions. In fact, DRLs are now standard on all Cadillacs for 1996, and available for older models, making them more visible to other drivers; which improves collision avoidance.

A recent study in Canada, where DRLs have been standard equipment on all vehicles since 1989, showed an eight percent reduction in opposite-direction crashes for DRL-equipped vehicles.

Owners of 1996 model Cadillacs should check with their insurance provider to see if their DRL-equipped Cadillac provides a reduction in insurance rates. Other countries around the world have had DRLs since the early '90s, and evidence to substantiate DRLs as a legitimate safety system that deserves an insurance discount is growing in the United States.

The United Services Automobile Association (USA), a top-rated insurance firm with more than 2.7 million members, offered a nationwide five percent discount on insurance premiums for DRL-equipped cars as of April 1, 1996.

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