

2013 BMW M3 V8 - Worst car I've ever owned!

February 10, 2020

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Don't get me wrong, I really liked my M3. It met all my "ideal" car parameters; quick, reasonably compact, overpowered for its size, handles ok, comfortable to drive long distances, plenty of room for people & stuff and doesn't look half bad either.

To set the scene; I purchased this car "brand new" off the local BMW dealer's showroom floor as an ex-BMW demo car. I've since learned that, being a demo car, it might not have been quite as brand new as it was purported to be, but I had no reason to suspect otherwise.

I'm sold on black wheels, certainly takes the chore out of cleaning them. Speaking of that, the brake "dust" comes mostly from the disk rotors, which have a similar hardness quotient to butter, becoming smelly, smoking ruins in just one quick run over the Tairua hill. In case you don't check, it calculates for you how much further you can go before you have to stump up five grand for new pads & rotors; 70,000km in Tairua down to 23,000km on arrival in Whitianga a short time later (about 40km of M3 country).

Of course, tyres, especially the rears, get shredded pretty quickly too. I swapped out the Pirelli Zeros, which I personally think are rather hard riding and overrated, for something else that were immediately much quieter and far better grip in the wet (i.e traction control didn't cut in).

The other big point of discussion among M3 aficionados is the amount of gas they use. Let me assure you that whatever quantity of fuel you pour into it, the cost will pale into insignificance compared with the depreciation. A \$152k car in 2013 barely makes it over \$40k six years later, with maybe only 60-90,000km on the clock. It worked out to over \$2 per kilometre for me!

I should emphasise here that there is no way I was ever concerned about the running costs of this car, otherwise I would never have bought it in the first place. I fully expected it to consume gas, shred tyres and demolish brakes at a rapid rate. I wasn't disappointed and it was a lot of fun doing it. However, there are much more fundamental reasons why the value of these cars has "tanked".

What isn't fun is when issues start cropping up beyond day-to-day running of the car, especially when such issues are ostensibly covered by the new vehicle (and extended) warranty. In short, the main problem here is getting the dealer to acknowledge a problem and fix anything.

Failed to correct steering problem for three years

Within weeks of taking delivery of the car I reported poor steering, mainly "tramlining" and "darting" on undulating road surfaces. Absolutely no improvement was made even though the workshop apparently did an alignment three times. I have never seen the printouts.

Eventually, the front tyres were ruined on the inside edges, which in conjunction with the "darting" effect was consistent with a toe out condition. Front tyres were replaced and an alignment performed by a proper tyre shop. The steering has been perfectly fine ever since.

The dealer reckoned wheel alignment was a "black art", which clearly, they hadn't mastered.

Failed to replace faulty window trim for two years

The window trim on the left hand side of the car started to corrode badly at about 18 months from new. Various people looked at it, photographed it and then plainly just forgot about it. Finally, someone took another photo in early 2017 and trim was replaced at a service in June, approximately two years after I had first brought it up. It should've set off alarm bells, but unfortunately it didn't.

However, someone made a bit of a mess of putting it on, because it didn't match up with the lower trim, which I think was meant to be removed in order to install the main bit properly. It also looks like a screwdriver was used to lever the old trim off leaving a slight mark in the paintwork.



Failed to resolve “pinking/rattling” noise coming from engine over 18 months

When I first reported this issue, and after a quick drive with a BMW Tech who mentioned he'd heard the sound before but (somewhat evasively) didn't say what he thought it was, the response from the service outfit was that it had to be fuel, plugs, oil or maybe a worn out sensor.

In other words, clearly my problem and at my cost to fix. Fine. I immediately authorised replacement of plugs, oil and ran plenty of fresh 98 octane fuel through it. No sensor was replaced.

Unfortunately, that didn't make any difference at all, so a couple of months later I brought the car back in and the next day took it for a drive with a different tech, who had evidently decided before he got into the car that I was an idiot. He assured me that all this clattering coming from the engine was “normal operation”, not the sound of big end bearings falling apart, and proceeded to give me a lengthy definition of pinking, which I had last experienced in a '67 Fiat Crusader. However, having experienced “lost” communication with this service outfit in the past, I requested that this be put in writing, which it was agreed if not forthcoming until some months later.

In late June 2017 the car was due for a WOF and service. Again, the persistence of the “pinking/rattling” noise was raised as an issue and this time the car stayed in the workshop for a month while a fuel treatment was applied and various test drives carried out, including a 400km test drive by the service manager.


Authorised
BMW Dealer



19th July 2017

Reference: Engine “Excessive Pinking” – Engine knock

Dear Mr 

Thank you for allowing us time to investigate the concern you have regarding the “excessive pinking” of your BMW M3 - 

My diagnostic technician did experience the pinking noise when presented on 03rd May 2017 and we deemed it excessive by BMW standards, we have taken steps with your permission to remedy this.


We are happy that the pinking has now gone and there are no other excessive noises of any kind present in the engine that is outside normal operation. I drove your car to Tauranga and back personally and experienced great drivability and no pinking whatsoever.

I can also rule out any connection with your concern with premature bearing failure.

As your manufacturer warranty has now expired for peace of mind extended warranty is available for purchase on your vehicle.

Kind regards




Service Manager



After 4 weeks, the car was deemed ready to go and finally the letter of assurance that I had requested was provided, even though it overlooked the fact the car had an extended warranty. It was most appreciated, especially as it ruled out the “big end” bearing problems that I'd heard so much about. Let me put it this way, aside from my general lack of knowledge about how this particularly complex engine actually works, if I hear odd sounds coming from the bottom end and then find considerable discussion in web forums about said bottom end being a problem, I want it checked out pretty thoroughly, thank you very much.

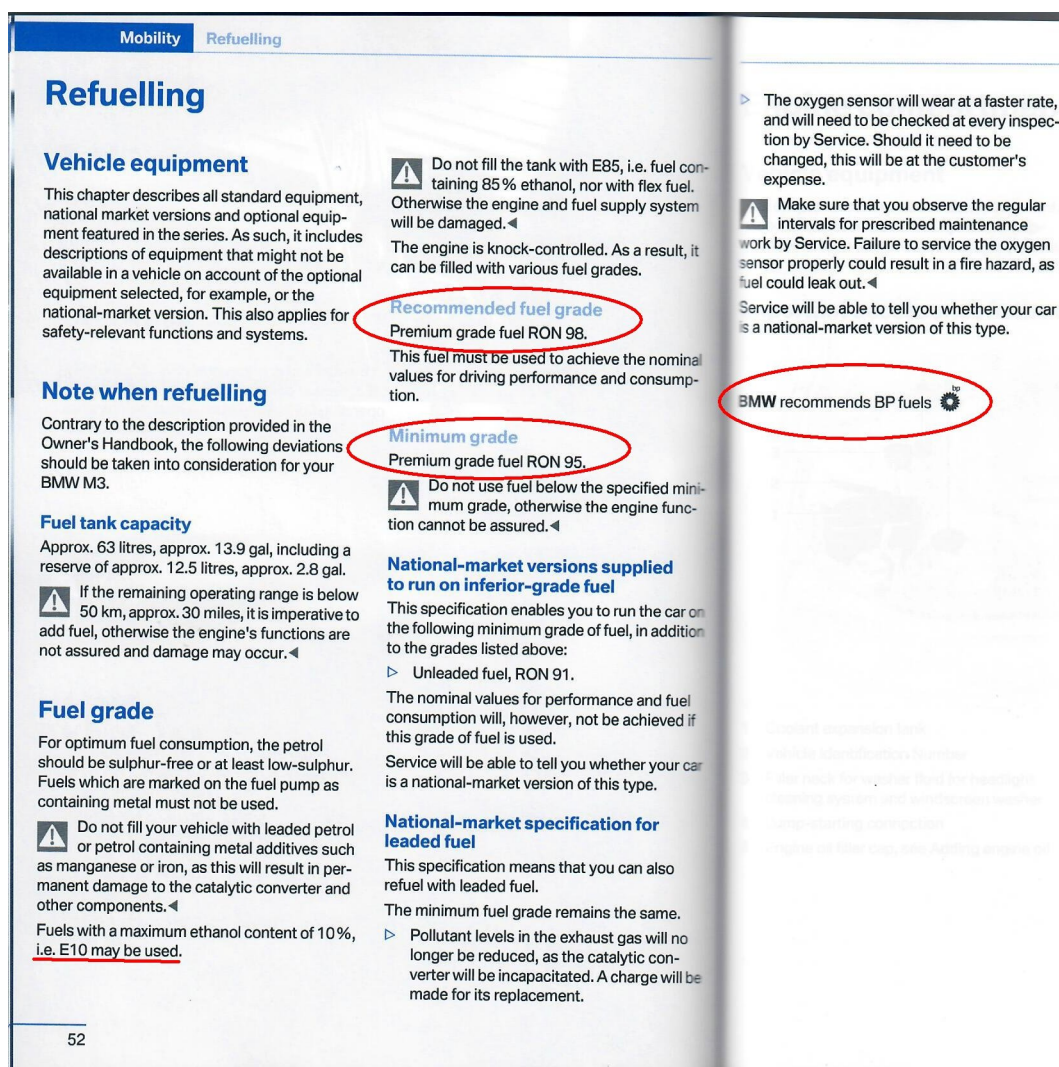
For the next couple of months the car seemed to go well, just the occasional rattle, over three trips to Ruapehu and a couple to Whitianga. I work from home, so the car doesn't commute.

However, by November the “pinking/rattling”, with a distinctly metallic rap to it, came on with a vengeance, just driving around locally and even occurring after each up-shift. To be honest, it was quite scary and, although adding a litre of oil seemed to quieten it down a bit, I arranged to take the car back to the dealer yet again.

I wasn't to know then how long it would take, things went quiet for a couple of weeks.

First, an email turns up from BMW NZ's chief Technical Engineer, who apparently has the remarkable ability to completely diagnose vehicle problems by email without driving them;

“If he hasn't already tried it, I recommend he try Gull Force 10 and see if it makes any difference.”



Yeah, I know, hard to believe, I spent a small fortune on a car and actually read the manual..!

The implication is, of course, that I'm putting the wrong fuel in the car which is patently untrue and I send back five years worth of forecourt receipts to prove it. Further, the fuel suggested is a 10% ethanol mix, which although within BMW's recommendations, is only available in a handful of rather inconveniently placed service stations with none in the South Island (at the time). Just because the racing fraternity at Hampton Downs love it doesn't mean it suits everyone. Anyway, turns out it was just a "personal recommendation", because he refused to put it in writing on BMW NZ letterhead when challenged to do so. Good call, I would've copied it to every petrol company.

In any case, no indication was given of what using Gull Force 10 was supposed to achieve, nor how long it might need to be run in the car to prove anything at all. According to my reading of the M3 handbook, 95 octane is the minimum, 98 is recommended while E10 fuel is ok if it's all you can get.

The next idea of this Tech whizz genius, was to get another M3 to compare/test with mine. Well, granted I'm no car technician, but it totally escapes me as to what purpose that would serve given the techs already had masses of data in my M3's computer to analyse with their fancy diagnostic equipment. Nevertheless, that's what they decided to do and what a farce it turned out to be.

So, they swapped out spark plugs and coils between the two, which might have had some merit as something to try, although I had never experienced any discernible power loss or misfire other than the few obligatory snorts at startup, while the plugs had only been in service 10k. Clearly that didn't make any difference, another week went by...

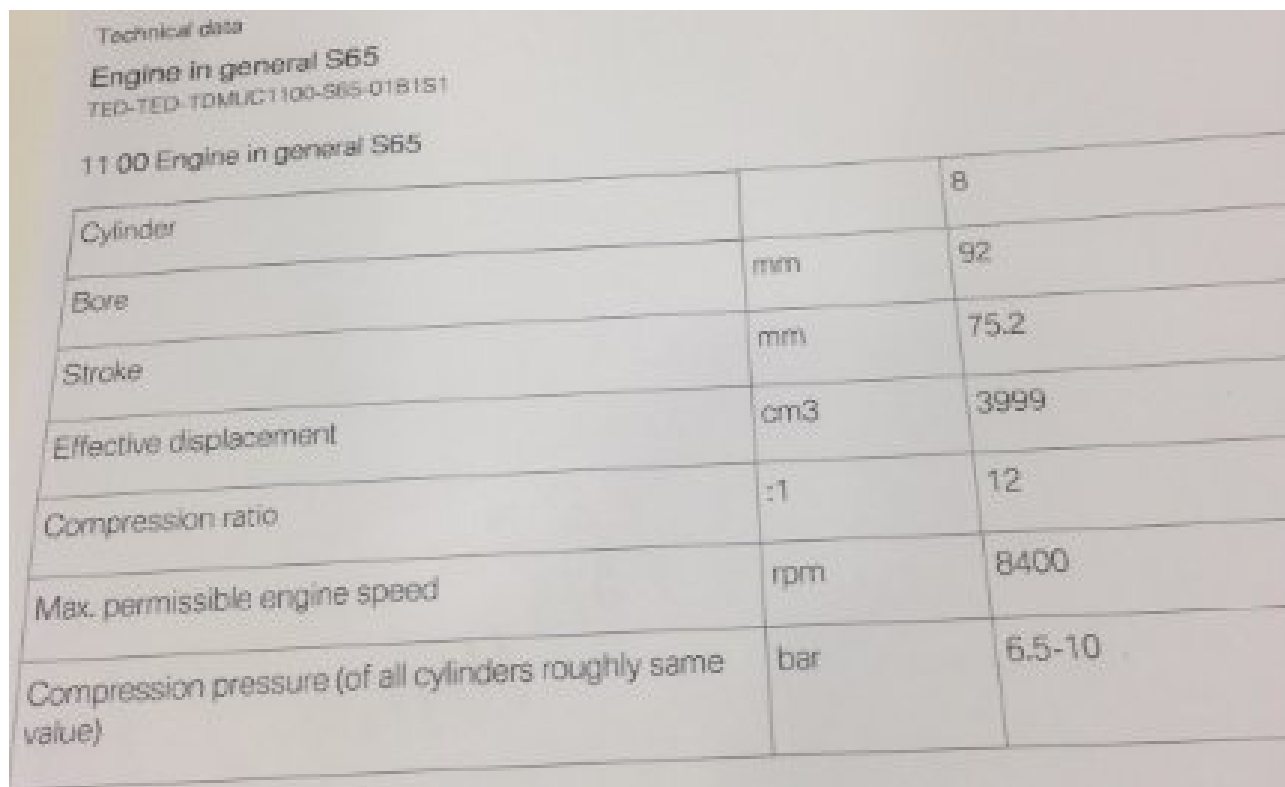
Then they decided to do a compression test, which was the first actual physical diagnosis to ever be carried out on the engine, rather than relying on the gibberish from electronic diagnosis. The results, however, weren't terribly conclusive, since confirmed by comments from my own advisors.

Perhaps the most amazing, not to mention perplexing, thing is that they decided to compare my 5 year old car with a 10 year old car, apparently owned by the ex-employee of the dealer.

Year/Model	Kilometerstand	Zyl.	Bar
2013 M3 59,000km		1:	15.6
		2:	15.0
		3:	16.8
		4:	16.2
		5:	15.5
		6:	15.7
		7:	15.7
		8:	16.2
		Datum	
		Max	16.2
2008 M3 Unknown km		1:	14.1
		2:	13.2
		3:	14.3
		4:	14.6
		5:	13.0
		6:	14.3
		7:	14.4
		8:	14.6
		Datum	
		Max	15.2

Certainly it seemed that my M3 had a higher compression (10% on average) than the comparison car, which might be understandable considering the comparison car is 5 years older with unknown kilometres, maintenance or usage. Interestingly, the low/high pressure variance was only 0.7 bar on my M3, which is well within the BMW's "roughly the same" tolerance and might well be described as "mint", while the comparison car variation is 1.7 bar and already half the allowable tolerance.

Frankly, the owner of the other M3 might have had some cause for concern, just as well he/she was a mechanic, although I seriously doubt the results were ever shared with him/her.



Technical data
Engine in general S65
TED-TED-TDMUC1100-S65-0181S1
11 00 Engine in general S65

Cylinder		8
Bore	mm	92
Stroke	mm	75.2
Effective displacement	cm ³	3999
Compression ratio	:1	12
Max. permissible engine speed	rpm	8400
Compression pressure (of all cylinders roughly same value)	bar	6.5-10

Another bizarre issue is how the compression measurements taken were meant to equate with the manufacturers specification of 6.5-10 bar. One of the experts ([AA Expert](#)) I asked questioned whether the spec was right or whether the measurements were taken correctly. I wouldn't have the faintest idea.

Incidentally, I was ruefully amused by the archaic printout from the compression test dot matrix printer (maybe thermal), that appears to be in need of a service itself with a couple of pins stuck. It struck me as being a somewhat ancient piece of equipment, maybe as old as the dealership itself.

The conclusion from all of this was that carbon build up was responsible for the higher compression, on the face of it nearly 60% higher than it ought to be given it was done right, indicating rather massive carbon deposits to increase compression to such an extent.

It's a wonder the engine could function so normally (leaving aside the sound of metallic clattering) in that state, without any noticeable degradation of performance. I suggested they went over to Supercheap, got a USB probe camera and had a look inside the cylinders for these huge carbon deposits, which surely would be hard to miss. No response to that, too simple, I guess. They even talked about taking the heads off, a major operation on an M3 V8 requiring about a dozen gaskets.

The solution was to import some BMW branded carbon removal chemical, which had to be shipped by sea from Singapore. I declined to drive the car in the meantime, on the basis that I might get the blame for any further degradation, so it sat in their workshop over Xmas and the next three months.

Eventually, the service manager called me one day, very excited, telling me that the magic solution had arrived and they would apply it the very next day... didn't hear anything that week or the next, I'd long given up calling them about it, then two weeks later he rang again to tell me it was ready.

We had a meeting with the Managing Director, Service Manager and the Technician, who made it clear I was still the idiot in the room, and basically got them to confirm in front of my witness that the car was "fit for purpose". They told me that if it needed any more work, having already billed BMW NZ over \$5k for the exercise, I'd be paying for it. I told them if it still knocked, I would dump it.

I did point out it was still under warranty, but that didn't seem to bother the dealer or BMW NZ, who both made it quite clear that whatever was wrong, if anything, it was my problem and perhaps, for peace of mind, I might like to purchase another useless warranty or even a new car. I doubt it.

Within a couple of days it was pretty obvious why they hadn't pronounced the car "fixed" the day after the service manager had called, so excitedly, two weeks before. There was absolutely no difference, the carbon clean had achieved absolutely nothing. I wasn't surprised. A week later, I went on a fairly brisk 4,500km South Island trip and, sure enough, the engine made the same extremely disturbing bottom end noises just as it had done before.

At this point, I'd had enough, I'm done with it.

A few weeks later my M3 went back to the dealer, for the last time, to get its new WOF and some obscure service that it was demanding. No mention was made of the infernal racket coming from the engine, although they did put some petrol additive in just in case. With its shiny new, clean "bill of health" and freshly serviced, it was picked it up and driven straight to the nearest dealer and traded.

Good bye and good riddance..!

My conclusion & learning from this experience;

I should just say again that I really did like this car and that I accept that virtually any new vehicle could have a problem or two. However, what the dealer does about it is what matters. A starting point of blaming the customer for everything is totally unacceptable. I'll shop elsewhere.

There was certainly a pervading attitude within the BMW dealership that these cars are so damn good, nothing ever goes wrong with them. Clearly, not the case, and difficult to get them to listen. I'm afraid to say that a similar attitude thrives among some BMW owners online, who can go to extraordinary lengths to defend the brand and dispense pretty aggressive "advice". It's about ego, really, no-one wants to admit to making a horrendous mistake. I don't have that problem.

Warranties in NZ are close to worthless unless backed up with action through the Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal. That's obviously a big call, while you need to have all your documentation in order. That's not as easy as it sounds, because BMW dealers give you virtually nothing in terms of service records. The Tribunal would've been the next step for me and I had prepared quite a dossier. In my case, I think the car would've had to "blow-up" before the dealer really took any action, whereas prior to that they aren't much interested in prevention. I found that rather disturbing. It isn't beyond the realms of possibility to win a case against a dealer; [Man wins \\$48,000 refund because Holden V8 was too noisy](#)

I read somewhere that the reason everyone in the dealership runs for the hills, out the back door, when you bring your vehicle in for the third time with the same unresolved problem is that the dealer can no longer recover technician and parts costs from the distributor/manufacturer, who are

basically unimpressed with the dealer being incapable of resolving the problem. Of course, that's compounded with an exotic animal like a BMW M3 and I'm left with serious doubts that the dealer's technicians had the requisite skills and expertise to sort my M3's problems.

Happy motoring.