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BMW M240i Convertible Road Test

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Looking ahead to sunny days in the new year, Chris Adamson assesses a fast four seater drophead from BMW.

Speeding to 60 miles an hour in just six seconds obviously isn't quite enough for BMW's compact 2 Series convertible - so for 2017 the boffins are throwing in another 95 horses and clipping the sprint time down to well under five seconds.

Welcome to this year's bright new young drop-top contender - the BMW M240i Convertible.

It gains all this extra wind-in-the-hair acceleration thanks to the installation of a new, deep growling three-litre, straight-six, twin-turbocharged petrol engine which pushes power



output up to 340 bhp but, more importantly, for on-road dynamics, the torque figure now hits 500 Nm (369 lb.ft).

The heart of the unit is a compact twin-scroll turbocharger, which is linked to an indirect intercooler along with electronic wastegate control and an on-demand cooling pump plus map controlled oil pump.



This is transplanted into the 2 Series convertible that was first made available in the UK just under two years ago when it was the direct replacement for the 1 Series convertible, which itself was one of the best-selling models in its class at the time.



Longer, wider and set onto a longer wheelbase the 2 Series soft-top doesn't venture far from its lineage with all the typical BMW characteristics from the kidney grille to the low-line boot lid. In this case the performance potential is only identified by the M badging and the blue brake calipers.



Inside it's more familiar BMW territory, all clean efficiency, starting with the soft textured dashboard which, after the installation of the instrument cowl and slim-line information read-out, doesn't leave much space for anything else.



Elsewhere, how much comfort you enjoy with your open-top motoring is going to depend on your bank balance.

As we have come to expect from BMW the starting price of any model is just that, so by the time you have added in as many options as you can imagine you can end up paying close on another £10,000.

On the version I was let loose in, a driver-comfort package featuring park distance control and cruise control was £520, adaptive headlights with high beam assist another £440 and a media pack with satellite navigation, traffic information and remote services will set you



back a further £900.

That's before you bolt on a useful wind deflector (£260), reversing camera (£330), comfortable figure-hugging electrically heated and operated front seats with lumbar support (£1,140), Bluetooth (£395) and online entertainment system (£160).

Most of this is designed for front seat occupant comfort and that it delivers, while those in the rear will find leg room a little restricted and they might discover the folding fabric roof has to be dodged as well.

The well-insulated electric roof raises and lowers in 20 seconds (which is slow by today's standards) and can be carried out at speeds up to 30 mph. Once in place it manages to shield occupants from a lot of extraneous exterior noise.

It disappears in the boot under a boat deck hatch without impinging on the load area, which still leaves 335 litres (11.83 cu.ft) of luggage space, making this compartment one of the best in its class.

On the Road

From the bare statistics it is clear that this convertible is going to be quick and would put many a sportscar to shame - and it doesn't disappoint.

As soon as you press the starter button and fire up those six cylinders they are raring to be unleashed; slot it into drive and away she blasts with sustained smooth-flowing acceleration that just keeps going.

The huge amount of torque on tap means that you can stamp on the accelerator and it will instantly respond, blasting past any traffic that gets in its way and it never seems to get to the end of its abilities, there is always something in reserve.

The computer brain of the optional eight-speed Sport automatic transmission works faster



than the human hand and foot so is 0.2 seconds quicker over the sprint time than the manual, and it is also more fuel-efficient, returning an average 38.2 mpg compared to 34 mpg for the manual, in part helped by an automatic stop-start system and brake energy regeneration.

It is also significantly cleaner on emissions with BMW claiming 169 g/km, compared to 189 g/km for the stick shift.

In the long-term the extra £1,600 you will pay for the sports auto will probably be worthwhile in terms of both running costs and ease of use.

A wide spread of the gear ratios (which can be conveniently operated through the paddle shifts) means that the convertible is capable of multiple downshifts in a smooth seamless sequence, assisted by an engagement control function that blips the throttle on downshifts for increased smoothness and it also sounds great.

For those who really must be first away from the lights there is launch control function that maximises power from standstill - a bit unnecessary when this is already a hugely capable piece of kit.

Being an M version means this convertible rides on an adaptive sport suspension (£515), which, surprisingly, is not as harsh or firm as I had anticipated - there is plenty of give in the set-up to smooth out even severe road indentations.

Another surprise is that the handling gives the 2 Series the assured feeling of a larger vehicle; it doesn't exhibit the nervous fidgeting of a small compact.

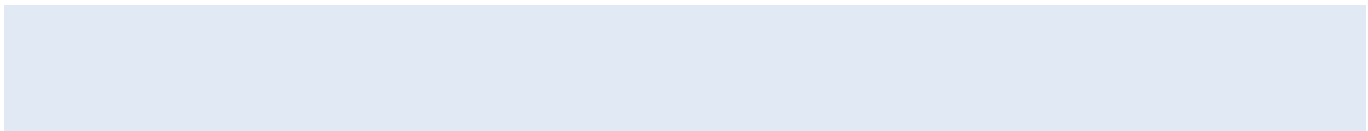
My only complaint, and an unusual one for a BMW, is the slightly light sensation on the standard electronic assisted power steering. I am used to BMWs that need to be grabbed by the scruff of the neck and forced through corners, but not a bit of that in this case.



Verdict

The M240i convertible is a triumph of packing a lot into a small space, starting with the 3 litre engine and then onto the on-board kit, and finally a handling package that ought to belong on a much bigger sporting saloon.

To this you can add in its practical features and its transformative nature which means it is just as happy on shopping runs in the city as it is on Continental touring.





Wheels-Alive Tech Spec. in Brief:

BMW F23 M240i Convertible B58 3.0i Sport Automatic

Engine: 3 litre twin-turbo petrol

Transmission: Eight-speed sports automatic

Power: 340 bhp

Torque: 500 Nm (369 lb.ft)

Performance:

0-62 mph: 4.7 seconds

Top Speed: 155 mph

Fuel Consumption (Official Figures): Combined: 38.2 mpg

CO2 Emissions: 169 g/km

Price (On the Road) £35,090 (as tested with options) £42,425