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# A Touch of Class

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Tony Withers looks at the top end of the market

**D**ATEBOX recently began a regular car spot, the first appearing (well, not as it happened) in the ill-fated September/October issue. This issue of the magazine never made it to the readers due to reasons that had nothing to do with wheels.

I have owned dozens of cars over the years but only once had the opportunity to drive a BMW. Some time ago, I 'stole' my company Chairman's car and disappeared up a nearby motorway with it. Of course I was eventually caught, some hours later and reluctantly forced to return the car but whilst in my possession, the car made quite a lasting impression. At that time, it was the first car I had driven and actually been able to hear the radio. I have always admired beautiful things including those on four wheels and the BMW, whilst being right up to date on the design front, somehow manages to retain that classic look that a car should have. So, when the Editor asked me to check out a BMW, I have to admit to getting just a little bit excited. The engineering of course, is unquestionable. However, any car, especially one bought here, is only as good as its backup; the after sales service and it was this aspect that I was keen to look at when I visited the local agency, Mohamed Yousuf Naghi Motors.

On my arrival, I was greeted by Robert Snodgrass, the Regional Sales Manager who told me about the Company's policies and progress over the 8 years they have held the agency for BMW cars. I was also invited to take a close look at the Service side of the business with Adam Amos, the Service Manager. He demonstrated the sophisticated Diagnostics Bay in the main workshop area. There was much talk of teamwork amongst the 135 staff and I actually got the impression that the whole branch of Naghi Motors was functioning as a well-oiled machine, much like the product they sell.

The next stop was to visit Ashraf Habash at the has at his disposal a large range of classy is not out of the reach of a mere be a company Chairman to own have to steal one either. The used SR25,000 up and all come with mileage warranty *and* you get any car you might be interested one including financing schemes and you can also trade in your ex-ers have been known to drive an approved used car out of the doors without even paying a deposit.



Approved Used Car showroom. This lucky man motors. It quickly became clear that a BMW mortal like myself. You don't have to a piece of luxury. And you don't cars on show ranged from a very fair 12 months unlimited to see the full service history of in. There are several ways to buy available through local banks etc., isting car if you wish. Some custom-



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## The Test Car

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The New Car Showroom Manager Hesham Raouf arranged for me to test a 97 model 740i L powered by a 4398cc V8 engine. At almost 2 tonnes, this is quite a heavy car to move around but the ease at which the V8 powers it is impressive to say the least. As you'd expect from a luxury car of this calibre, the handling is spot on. The electronic damper control (EDC) instantaneously adjusts the dampers to any given road, load or driving conditions. A touch of a button gives a firmer, sportier ride. The Automatic Stability Control with traction prevents the wheels from spinning on the rear axle (for example, when setting off or accelerating out of a bend). Whenever this is likely, the engine management system reduces drive power to the respective wheel. If this is not sufficient, the wheel or wheels about to spin are automatically slowed down by the brakes until traction is restored. I would have liked to have tested this in soft sand but didn't have the nerve!



*The comprehensive spares store*



*Hi-tech diagnostics for efficiency*



*Part of the Used Car Showroom*

BMW calls its automatic transmission ‘Steptronic’. You have the option of a 5-speed automatic or a manual sports programme which enables you to preselect the gears at will. This change in driving mode can be made at any speed and at any time depending on your preference.

A quick look under the bonnet reveals a well organised layout but no battery. This is found in the boot. There are few user serviceable parts as all the major engine functions in this car are managed and monitored by a computer. This includes the spark plugs, each of which has its own coil. Almost everything on the car is top line specification wise, for example, the Xenon headlights provide more than twice the intensity of conventional halogen headlights. There are many devices that in principle are very simple, like the front and rear proximity sensors (Parking Distance Control) which help with parking and the infra-red rain sensor that automatically adjusts the wipers depending on how hard it is raining (limited use here!) The double glazing on the side and rear windows keeps the heat and the noise out and it is possible to have the air conditioning switch itself on just before you need to get into the car. No more sweaty journeys after work!

Jeremy Clarkson would say that the boot has more space than the millenium dome and that the dashboard (computer display, television, telephone, fax machine, GPS navigation, etc.) looks more like the flight deck of the space shuttle and I would have to agree. Superlatives aside, this is the most well-built, technologically advanced, most luxurious car I have ever had the opportunity to steal. With a new price tag of around SR 250,000 this particular model may be out of the range of *some* of us but remember, all BMWs are built like this and some of them are quite affordable. I can understand the businessmen who are now shedding their expensive office accommodation, opting instead to be mobile, always on the move and always in touch whilst living in their ‘ultimate driving machine’.

Final verdict: the ideal car for covering long distances efficiently in comfort and safety (“safety is not an option” say BMW). Not the best car for town driving however, but then it is not designed for this purpose. If you can afford one, don’t think twice. If you can’t, look at the other models and save a packet by looking at the approved used cars that are available from Naghi Motors. You won’t go far wrong.



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*As a car to take back home with you, you’ll save about 15% on current BMW prices in the UK but don’t forget to consider VAT payment if applicable, and conversion to UK specs will cost you a further SR 7,000.*

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*The BMW 740i L Test Car*