

To B



Or Not To B?

That's the question — now badged V8S, does the evolution of the Alpina B10 have the M5 running scared?

A private track and the keys to Alpina's latest creation? Yes please. "It's really very good," says the man from Sytner, who has recently stepped out of it grinning from ear to ear. "Mind you, don't thrash it too much. It's still being run in."

Hmm. Just how lairy could one get in an auto? The B10 V8S is the latest jewel in Alpina's crown, a car created for people who really don't like the M5's insistence on a manual gearbox. It takes Alpina's stunning B10 interpretation of the 5-Series and edges its data closer to that of the M car.

The engine has grown from 4.6 to 4.8-litres, resulting in a power hike from 347 to 375 bhp. More importantly, torque is up from 347 to 376 lb-ft.

The result, predictably, is a startlingly quick machine. Alpina's published 0-62 mph time is 5.4 seconds and 177 mph. The track we're on is only a mile round, so testing the latter figure could prove tricky. However, there is a longish, slightly dog-legged back 'straight', which ends in a slight incline before a sharp right-hander. We managed to see 130 mph before the braking point.

This did leave the braking somewhat late, admittedly. But then we could. The brakes were developed in conjunction with

stop-meister Brembo, and involve 360 mm front discs gripped firmly by four-pot calipers. They work, I assure you.

With slowing done, it's time for the chassis to show its mettle. The aim of most decent E39 conversions we've tried is to get rid of the M5's tendency to understeer and the B10 does this with aplomb. It feels poised, balanced, controlled. And despite the fact that the wheels are a massive 19 inches in diameter they're light enough to stay in full contact with terra firma throughout. A more extensive test would perhaps show up deficiencies in the ride, but the laps of this little track that we enjoyed failed to unsettle the V8S.

There is, in fact, massive grip. Even with the DSC stability control turned off. One of the Sytner staff present did manage to get the rear to step out a little, but he reported that the slip was so progressive that he was able to predict it, hold it, play with it. Most essential of all, he was able to enjoy it.

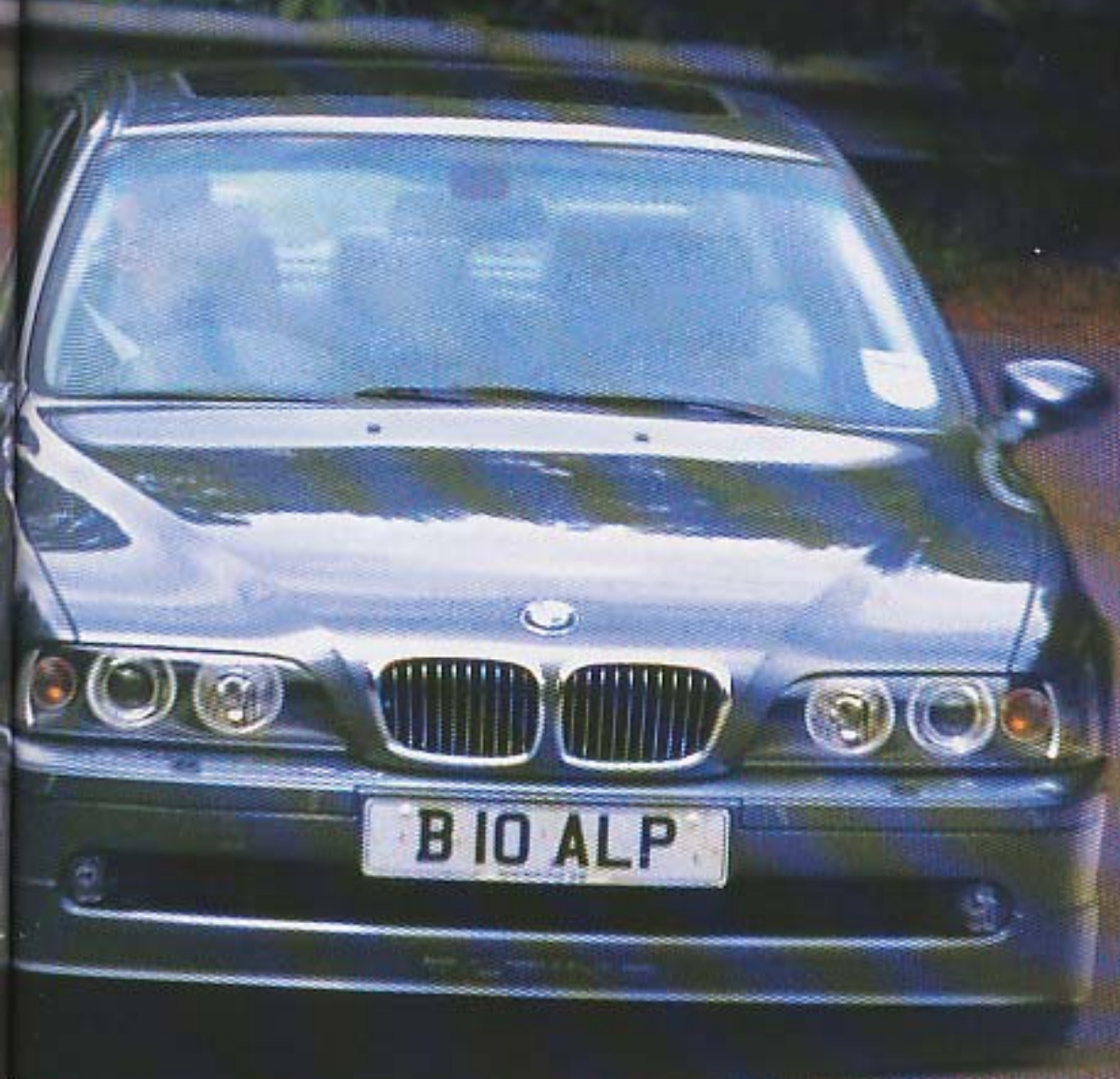
Which is partly what this car is all about. It combines huge driver pleasure with the E39's usual ability to convey you huge distances with the maximum of ease. It is also a seriously convincing argument for automatic gearboxes.

The five-speeder comes with Alpina's Switchtronic steering wheel-mounted shift buttons and the system really works. Gone is the lag between pressing the button and gear shifting that I felt in the last Switchtronic Alpina I tried. You brake late, change down swiftly and get on with the enjoyable business of turning in, putting the power down and balancing the superb chassis through the bend.

That all the while you are in one of Alpina's trademark green and blue-stitched leather cabins is simply icing on a really, really tasty cake.

In addition, the Alpina front and rear spoilers are a distinct enhancement, yet are unlikely to attract attention from law enforcement types. The only thing stopping me placing an order is, of course, money. I simply don't have £57K. But anybody who does really should get their chequebook out. The E39 is a seriously noble car, one of the most complete motoring packages yet designed by man and computer. But the Alpina B10 V8S is one of a very small number of versions that are simply royalty. We are not worthy.





#### ENGINE

4619cc V8 modified by Alpina with revised camshafts, cylinder heads, engine management and exhaust.  
Max power: 375 bhp at 5700 rpm  
Max torque: 378 lb.ft at 3700 rpm

#### TRANSMISSION

ZF 5HP24 five-speed Steptronic automatic with Alpina Switchtronic steering wheel shift buttons

#### SUSPENSION

Alpina modified springs and dampers

#### BRAKES

360 mm discs with Brembo four-pot callipers

#### WHEELS & TYRES

8.5x19 front and 9.5x19 rear Alpina alloys with 245/35 and 275/30 tyres

#### BODY

Standard BMW 540i with additional Alpina spoilers

#### INTERIOR

Alpina seat upholstery and steering wheel

#### PERFORMANCE

0-60 mph: 5.4 secs  
Max speed: 177 mph

#### PRICE

£57,000, contact Alpina GB 0115 9241234

