



HELMET HEAD

ITS RELATIVELY LIGHTWEIGHT BODY, SHORT WHEELBASE, SUPER-QUICK STEERING RATIO AND BLISTERING ENGINE PERFORMANCE MAKE THE BMW Z4 M COUPE A FIRECRACKER OF A CAR TO DRIVE

STORY ELIAS VELIS PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN CHURCHILL



BMW put a lid on the Roadster, chucked in the M3's 3.2L engine and created the crackin' Z4 M Coupe

THE hard-headed BMW Z4 Coupe exudes a feeling of solidity that its ragtop relation simply cannot match. It benefits hugely from the extra stiffness provided by the fixed roof when compared to the Roadster; the result is an extremely strong body in terms of both torsion and flex. Despite the addition of the roof, rear hatch and extra weight of the rear windows, the BMW Z4 M Coupe is just 5kg heavier than the Z4 M Roadster.

With its classic coupe silhouette - the same long-bonnet, short-overhang profile as the Roadster - the Z4 M Coupe guarantees aesthetic pleasure. There are dramatic edges and precisely drawn lines along with BMW design chief Chris Bangle's controversial "flame surfacing" treatment. The front-end is muscular and the flowing roofline exaggerates the archetypal Hofmeister kick on the rear side windows, with the pushed-back cockpit sitting on flared rear wheel arches. Eighteen-inch alloy wheels and quad exhaust outlets are the devil in the details, while the

low-slung cockpit, with the specially-designed M leather steering wheel and seats, is similarly meticulous.

BMW's two-seater is powered by the same engine in the superseded E46 M3, a highly-strung, painstakingly engineered 3.2-litre straight-six producing an unmistakable cacophony of metallic, gravelly engine notes.

With VANOS variable valve timing on both camshafts, six individual throttle bodies and a sweet-shifting, short-throw six-speed Getrag manual gearbox, the motor sings all the way to its 8000rpm redline. It manufactures 252kW and 365Nm along the way, with no less than 80 per cent of maximum torque available from just 2,000 rpm. Five seconds is all it takes to go from zero to one hundred kays, and top speed is electronically limited to 250km/h.

The synchronicity of the components is clearly proven on the Nordschleife, the Northern Circuit of Nurburgring, where the Z4 M Coupe out performs the lap times of even the

BMW E46 M3 and the BMW Z4 M Roadster.

Ride quality is first class, compliant yet informative with no unwanted road chatter. The Beemer's inherent dynamism is complemented by a number of electronic aides, like Dynamic Stability Control, Automatic Stability Control (controls slip of the drive wheels by reducing engine output), Cornering Brake Control (reduces oversteer by controlling brake pressure) and Dynamic Traction Control (maximises brake pressure).

Focused on high performance, the 1420kg Coupe scores a variable M differential lock, lightweight suspension components and the highly effective 18-inch compound brake system from the track-targeted M3 CSL.

There's no denying the tin-lidded two-door is far less compromised than its open-topped sibling. Its relatively lightweight body, short wheelbase, super-quick steering ratio and blistering engine performance make the BMW Z4 M Coupe a firecracker of a car to drive. ■



SPECS. 2006 BMW Z4 M COUPE

Price.	RRP \$125,000 (approx.)
Engine.	DOHC 24-valve VANOS 3.2-litre inline-6
Transmission.	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive
Performance.	252kW @ 7,900rpm, 365Nm @ 4,900rpm
Birthplace.	Germany

