

# THE NEWEST LITTLE M IS THE ENTHUSIAST'S ANSWER



lost track of time, I guess; it seems to me that only yesterday we were driving Laguna Seca at the launch of the new BMW M2. But that was seven years ago, and the popular F87 version, the Littlest Emmer, has now seen several variants, from the M2 Performance Edition to the M2 Competition to the M2 CS. Suddenly it's 2023, and here we are in Phoenix, Arizona, clamoring for the fobs to the *new* M2, the G87, which is being launched alongside the mighty BMW XM.

This is not fair. The new M2 deserves a launch of its own—preferably at Laguna Seca or some other track where we bickering journalists can give it the kind of workout that it truly deserves.

If this sounds like the M2 is some kind of a track rat, well, um, yeah: It is. And our arm-wrestling over the fobs has to do with the mere three six-speed manuals mixed in with a sea of automatics, because here's the thing: We old-school enthusiasts *like* manual transmissions. And you don't have to be a geezer to want a manual; my driving colleague, Jared Rosenholtz, probably still gets carded if he asks for

a beer, and he's as set on driving the stick as I am, preferably on a track—but oh, well.

If you can't find a race track, the next-best thing is a twisty mountain road, and Arizona has a very nice one, Route 89 heading west from Prescott. Since our designated driving loop consists of two legs in two cars, from Phoenix to Prescott to Phoenix, we manage to

If the M2 can't put a smile on your face, call the coroner.

The M2 cockpit features a curved display; M Carbon buckets have some drawbacks.

reserve a Zandvoort Blue manual M2 for the afternoon leg, taking a red XM in the morning. I have been to Prescott before, and I have a plan. "Trust me on this," I say as we begin our drive in the XM.

Sure enough, the XM provides a pleasant road trip, two fellow Pastafarians chatting amiably through the Arizona countryside, a task for which





the XM is perfect. But I think that both of us view the morning as merely the prelude to the M2 afternoon. I am sure that BMW will sell an abundance of XMs to people with plenty of money and a lust for power, a sense of dominance, a streak of aggressive behavior; it's exactly the M car you want to be driving when you show up at your ex-wife's house to pick up the kids for the weekend.

The M2, on the other hand—well, this is my kind of car. For one thing, except for the crappy POS Chevy S10 pickup that I bought new and eventually gave away for nothing, just to be rid of it, the largest car I have ever owned was a four-door Audi 4000 Quattro. When it comes to M cars, the E30 M3 fits me well, and I am quite comfortable in an E36 M3; the E46 M3 seemed like a much larger car. So you can imagine my agoraphobia at the wheel of something like an X5 M, an X6 M, or the new XM.

In the M2's M Carbon bucket seats, however, the opposite is true; indeed, these seats hold you like Vise-Grips. If you are like me, you will love these seats on the track, but hate them on the street—unless by *street* you mean Route 89, which, as I predicted, Rosenholtz is enjoying more than somewhat once we bolt our lunch and hit the road out of Prescott in the M2—the *stick* M2, an appropriate term for both the gearbox and the way the artful, agile baby brother to the M4 handles the curves. (You can ride along with us at [tinyurl.com/Route89](http://tinyurl.com/Route89). Note the smile that takes over Jared's countenance.)



With 453 horsepower and 456 pound-feet of torque, the M2 is in the Three-Second Club for the zero-to-60 dash at 3.9, but if you opt for the stick, you'll lose about two tenths. Opt for it anyway; even if you haven't spent half a century learning to rev-match your downshifts, the M2 will still make you look like a hero driver, because it does the rev-matching for you, which, as my younger cohorts might say, is just sick. Much of the car's superb canyon-carving abilities come from its genetics; the suspension of the G87 is closer to that of the G82 M4 than that of the previous M2. However, at a base price a bit over \$62,000—you can quickly run that up with options, of course, but the six-speed manual is a no-cost item—it's at least ten grand *less* than an M3 or an M4, which makes it a relative bargain.

Aesthetics are always subjective,

The M2 is powered by a twin-turbo six producing 453 horsepower and 456 pound-feet of torque.



Note the retro BMW Motorsport badging.

but to my eye, the M2 is currently the most attractive offering from M GmbH. (When is the last time you heard someone say of a BMW, "I really like that grille!?"?) I know, I know: Nobody really *needs* all that torque and horsepower, and most drivers, even enthusiast drivers, would be hard-pressed to exceed the limits of an M240i, which has a base price of under \$50,000. After all, the E36 M3 had 240 horsepower, the E46 M3 333; unless you're a genuine track rat, it's hard to imagine needing more than the 382 horses of the non-M-but-kind-of-sorta M240i in the real world.

But I don't care. Three pedals make all the difference for me, so if I were to buy another BMW it would be this one, hands down. Unless you insist that I buy the M Carbon seats; then the deal is off.—Satch Carlson

