



# wide

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We saw a long-wheelbase E3 3-litre abandoned the other day. Metallic brown with beige velour inside, not bad-looking at all, but the exhaust was hanging off and it had a flat tyre.

It's a real shame to see a rare car like that simply dumped, but in reality what can you do with an old E3? Banger racing seems a bit harsh and everyday use could really get expensive, but if the bodyshell is sound then there's one thing you can definitely do: you can race it. We should know, because we've just met somebody who does exactly that.

Olaf Meyer is from near Dortmund in Germany and he's really into his E3s. But why? "When I was growing up, my Dad used

to drive them and I guess it started from there," he says. Yes, but surely you'd have a nice E3 to take to shows and cruise about in. But racing the thing? What on earth for? After all, it's big and quite heavy and it must be like racing an old Ford Granada.

Olaf had always wanted to go racing and his self-employment in the world of fitted kitchens and central heating was enough to pay for it all. The donor car was a 2500 manual from about 1973, with just one owner from new and 85,000 km, which works out to around 52,000 miles.

It was in excellent condition and, as Olaf admits slightly shamefacedly, ➤

An unlikely choice for a racer, the big E3 saloon can still take home the silver.

# BOY

was really too good to race. But it's too late for regrets now.

Before the car was sent away and race-prepared, Olaf did an event with the minimum of safety mods required by the FIA. Apart from that, he raced it as a standard 150 bhp BMW 2500 and came a resounding last.

"That was my first race at Zolder in 1999 and although I came last it was fun," Olaf recalls.

For the 2000 season though, the car was really going to need some pretty serious

sorting and preparation if Olaf was going to stand any kind of chance at all.

Although BMW never raced the E3 seriously like it did with the CSL 'Batmobile', the big old barge does have some racing history behind it. In 1973 and 1974, BMW Concessionaires Great Britain ran a couple of 3.0Si cars for Roger Bell and Tony Lanfranchi. They were prepared for BMW by Mathwall Engineering, but nobody seems to know a lot about them or the best results.

As far as we know, the Si was raced up until about 1977, which is when the first E23 7-Series appeared and absolutely nobody was prepared to race that.

For the full race preparation job, Olaf took the car to Rolf and Klaus Hendrichke, who trade as R K Restauration Klassischer Automobile. They operate from a small town called Peitz which is on the east side of Berlin and which until 1989 was way behind the Iron Curtain. The brothers



**It's easier to get more power from the carburettor engines than the early Bosch D-Jetronic injection**





Perhaps it's just as well that Olaf didn't go for the long-wheelbase version of the big old E3 saloon.



Below. The usual FIA safety mods have been neatly integrated into the car's original dash.



Above. Even Olaf drew the line at modern carbon fibre racing mirrors, so the chrome stays put.



Below. Roll cage was custom-made for the car. Retaining the original instrument cluster with its mechanically driven speedometer dictated the use of an E12 M535i gearbox.



**ENGINE**

BMW M30 with twin 35/40 Zenith Solex INAT carbs, standard air box, polished cylinder head ports, balanced reciprocating parts, tubular manifold, free-flow exhaust with catalyst. Max power: over 190 bhp

**TRANSMISSION**

Getrag 'dog-leg' close-ratio five-speed gearbox and 3.07:1 ratio limited-slip diff from E12 M53Si

**SUSPENSION**

Standard 2500 suspension with Bilstein 'yellow' gas dampers, 3.0 springs and anti-roll bars

**BRAKES**

Standard 3.0S brakes, 10.7 inch vented discs front and rear with four piston front callipers and twin piston fixed rear callipers. Ferodo brake pads front and rear

**WHEELS & TYRES**

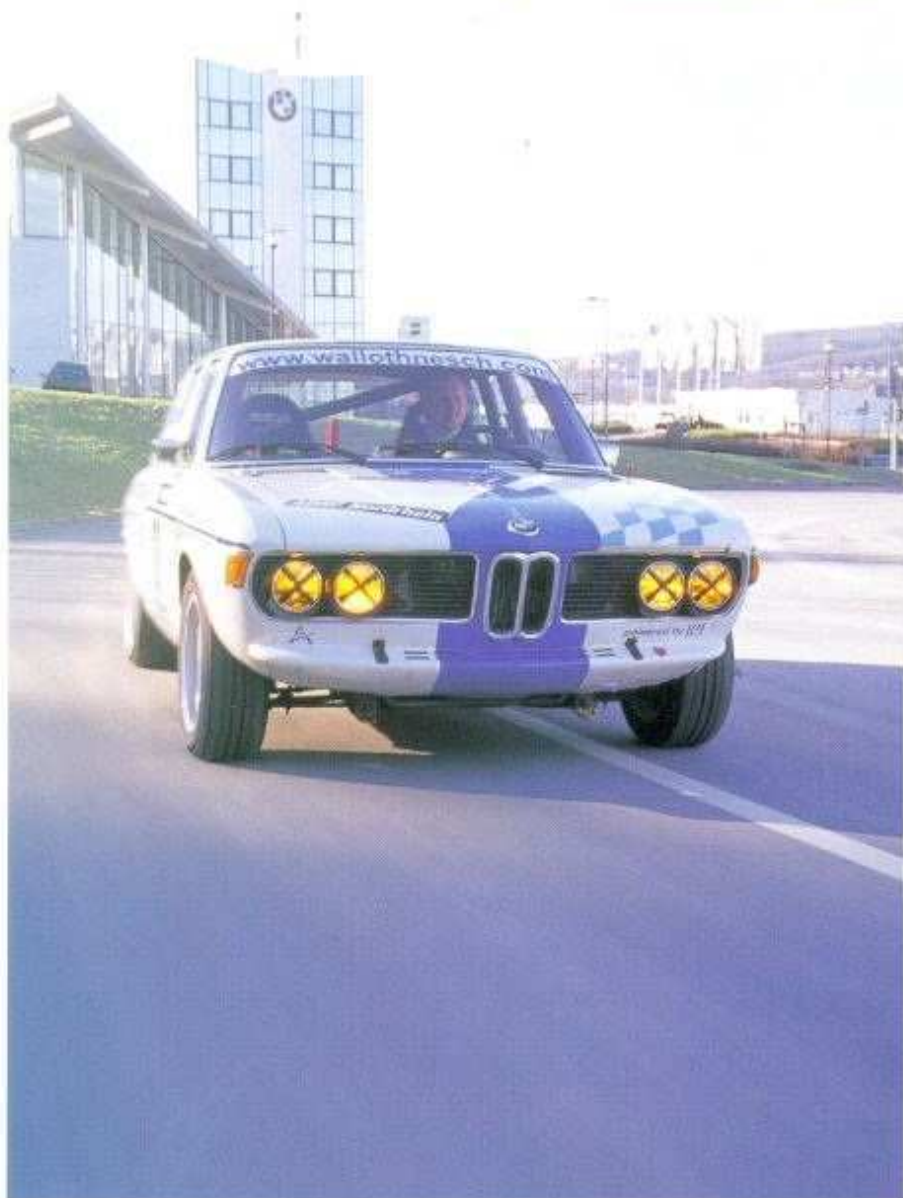
Alpina 7x16 inch alloys with Michelin Pilot 205/55 tyres

**BODY**

Original, unrestored BMW 2500 shell, full FIA cage with door bars, bumpers removed, bonnet pins and bootlid rubber hooks

**INTERIOR**

Standard 2500 with Sparco seat and OMP steering wheel



Handling upgrades are basic but effective: 3.0 Si anti-roll bars and springs plus Bilstein dampers.

Hendrichske rebuilt Olaf's E3 for the ADAC historic Youngtimer Trophy, which is a pretty popular series in Germany.

To start with though, the first thing to hit the skip was the wonderful low-mileage 2500 engine — well, it didn't get chucked away because anything that good still has a value, but a 2500 is always going to be at a huge disadvantage compared to a 3-litre. Therefore, R K built a new 3-litre carburettor unit with polished ports but a standard camshaft and standard 35/40 INAT Zenith carbs.

"Why a carburetted engine and not fuel injected?" I asked them. The answer is that it's easier to get more power from the carburettor engines than with the early Bosch D-Jetronic injection system.

Like the ADAC rally series, the Youngtimer Trophy race cars need to have a catalyst — their bit of grovelling to the greener parts of German government. Apparently, the derestricted Autobahns are fine but a race car used maybe 20 times a year needs to have a clean exhaust.

Let me tell you about German motorways, by the way. Sometimes they're just horrible. In places there is still absolutely no speed limit and on a previous trip I was cruising at 130 mph in a new 520i hire car and still having these madmen firing past me at 150-plus. This is all very well until you really have to stop and then you see the most awful accidents. Speed limit? Oh no, we'll compromise — make all racing cars have a catalyst. And you thought our government was on another planet...

The slight power sap caused by having a catalyst — if there is a power drop at all — is compensated for by replacing the old iron manifold and standard exhaust with a tubular free-flow system.

Even with a catalyst, power is rated at over 190 bhp and sat behind this engine is a 'dog leg' close-ratio five-speed gearbox taken from an E12 M535i. This was chosen because the old E12 had a mechanically-driven speedometer which ran from the gearbox, while later E28 cars had the electronic speedometer so the gearbox is unsuitable.

This gearbox fits perfectly because the E3 and the E12 were so similar under the skin and for that very reason, the 3.07:1 ratio limited-slip differential from that same E12 M535i pops straight in on the E3 mountings.

When it came to suspension, no E3 was ever made with the yellow, thick-tube Bilstein dampers and getting some made up would be pricey. But once again, the E12 had an almost identical front suspension strut and yes, the dampers from an M535i will go straight in.

A lot of the new parts involved came from classic BMW parts specialists Walloth & Nesch, which we featured back in the February 2002 issue, and the Bilsteins were no exception. ADAC rules mean that the springs have to remain standard and for this, 3.0Si springs are just about good enough. Sure, the car rolls but with a decent set of shocks half the battle is won. 3.0 Si anti-roll bars are fitted but this is permitted.

Standard brakes are also mandatory, which is no bad thing as they have four-piston callipers on the front and vented discs all round as standard — well, the 3-litre did. As it came to Olaf, this car still had the standard 2500 solid discs, so new 3-litre callipers and discs had to be fitted front and rear.

The left-hand-drive cars such as this also have a conventional combined master cylinder and servo arrangement, and not the rather nasty twin-servo setup which blighted the RHD cars. The only modification made (or allowed) is the fitting

of better brake pads — Ferodo, in this instance.

Apart from a blue and white paint job and leaving the bumpers off, the body on this car is pretty much standard. A pair of bonnet pins is all that's required, as well as rubber boot spoilers. Back in the '70s, Bell and Lanfranchi raced on standard 14 inch steels with the hubcaps removed, but Olaf wants a bit more grip than that and under each arch sits a genuine Alpina 7x16 alloy complete with a Michelin 205/55 tyre.

Inside, check out the (expensive) custom-made roll cage with full door bars, the Sparco seats and the OMP steering wheel — all serious stuff.

But how much did the car cost to prepare, and what success has Olaf had with it? "The car cost about 20,000 euros [about £12,000] to buy and prepare," reckons Olaf. As for results, the 500 km race at the 2000 Nürburgring Nordschleife produced a first overall in Group 1 and there were two more victories in the 500 km and 250 km races.

Over the last three years of racing, Olaf's car has been really reliable, but on the day of the shoot the three-year-old engine was beginning to sound a bit unwell. Even so, the rest of the car has held up perfectly and while I still think it was a pity to use such an original car for racing, nothing lasts forever. ☺

