



Smooth operator...

the new BMW Z4 Roadster

Anyone who says they wouldn't like a two-seater sports car with a quality engine under its bonnet is either very boring or being economical with the truth. A friend, seeing this intro, added that the person in question would more than probably be male. What rubbish. I know for a fact that there are loads of ladies who would die for a swish little sports number – especially one that has a conveniently folding 'hard top' like the latest offering from the BMW stable.

BMW's new Z4 is without doubt, one of the more desirable conveyances on the market. It's svelt, smooth and very sophisticated, very comfortable and, I think, very desirable!

So what do you get for your money?

Well three 'horses have emerged from the stable', if

you'll forgive the metaphor. The sDrive23i; powered by a 2.5-litre engine, has a top speed of 151mph and will reach 62mph from standing in 6.6 seconds.

Consumption is claimed to be around 33mpg on the combined cycle and emissions are around 199g/km of CO.

Next comes the sDrive30i with the same engine as above but boosted to 3.0-litres. A maximum speed of 155mph is claimed, otherwise consumption and output figures are the same as for the sDrive23i.

Top of the range is the sDrive35i powered by BMW's famous twin-turbo, direct injection straight six. Giving a claimed 30mpg, top speed here is an electronically controlled 155mph with 0-62mph being reached in just 5.2 seconds. This figure can be



knocked down a notch by using the Double Clutch Transmission (DCT). Emissions are 219g/km of CO so it does escape those extra tax rates.

The 2.5-litre has a five-speed manual gearbox as standard. The 3-litre has a six. There are additional options of a 5 speed Steptronic automatic or six speed sequential manual box. The sDrive35i however comes with the option of a new, seven-speed, dual-clutch transmission. And to add icing on the cake the Z4 is the first production BMW to be fitted with Driving Dynamic Control. When activated by a special button on the centre console, this provides an immediate, lighter feel to the throttle control. In its turn this alters the amount of assistance provided by the electric steering. Even this function has been fitted by the manufacturer for the first time.

Space inside is more capacious than many sports rivals and, to my mind, rather more tastefully furnished. There is plenty of room, seats hold you close and everything is easily to hand. The only grumble is that with the hood down, the wind does make itself slightly felt, the wind deflectors could work better. Hood up however, and both wind and road noises are well insulated.

The boot would require you to travel, if not light, at least carefully. The partly aluminium hood folds down, in 20 seconds flat, into the boot of course so you will find baggage restrictions apply. With the hood up you get a useful 310-litres of space, with it down however,

you only get 180-litres. And though there is a fold-through hatch between the front seats for extra stowage space, should you wish to access the boot with the hood down, you do have to raise the roof slightly, which could be annoying to say the least. But then, would you buy this car for practicality? I doubt it!

About that folding roof - as said above it is partly aluminium and part soft material. The aluminium part acts as a cover for the rest when it's down. It is a masterly design I have to say and works very smoothly. Being partly soft, that hood does offer the ungodly a certain amount of temptation. An efficient alarm and immobiliser are there to discourage them. And of course, being basically an open topped car, protection in case of a roll is provided by metal hoops behind the seats to protect the occupants.

And what's the price for all this super technology? The standard, entry level sDrive23i comes in at just over £28,500. The top sDrive35i will knock you back just over £37,000. Bells and whistles cost some more but all models come with alloys, the Dynamic Drive Control chassis system, adjustable DSC, dual climate control, six airbags, Xenon lights and a key fob that operates the hood remotely. Recommended cost extra options include; the seven-speed dual clutch transmission with paddles on the steering wheel; the Adaptive M Sport suspension plus several other modes of operation.

If you have the money, buy one! If you haven't? Well carry on dreaming! - Simon Taylor

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