



BMW 318d

by Tunit



No, you aren't seeing things, the 330d badge was bought on eBay.

Ms X (for reasons that will be revealed later, we'll call her that to protect her virtue) is a Regional Manager for a Finance company. A couple of months or so ago, they changed her BMW 320i Compact, which she liked a lot, for a BMW 318d, which she doesn't like very much at all – despite the M Sport spec. (Chacun à son goût!) The 3-Series M Sport, of course, is not to be confused with the M3 which is powered by a 420bhp, 4-litre, V8 petrol engine that should, by rights, run on rocket fuel. Power-wise, the M Sport is mechanically identical to the other 318d models: the ES and the SE. In essence, you're paying anything between £2,290 and £3,320 extra for a body kit, sports suspension, sports seats, and one or two other goodies. There's no doubt that it's a highly desirable piece of kit, though I'm not too sure that the larger (17-inch) alloys and low-profile tyres do the ride any favours. But then, the M Sport is about style and not comfort.

Like so many diesels nowadays, the 318d performance is the equal of its petrol sibling, albeit with the help of a turbo. I lie: on paper it's a whole 0.2 seconds slower in the 0-62 sprint – 9.3 seconds plays 9.1 seconds. But when it comes to mid-range pulling power, the picture changes somewhat. In fourth gear (out of the manual six), the 318i takes 9.4 seconds to reach 75mph from 50mph. The 318d does it in 8.4 seconds. And that's before we start looking at economy. The 318i will return a very creditable 35.8mpg Urban figure from its 2-litre petrol engine. (I know, tell BMW – time was when a 318 was 1.8-litres.) The official Combined figure is a very respectable 47.9mpg. The figures for the 318d, on the other hand, say 49.6mpg Urban and a remarkable 60.1mpg Combined. (We all know, of course, that the chances of achieving the official Combined figure in the real world of day-to-day motoring, are somewhere between slim



M Sport trim means sports suspension and deeper front and rear bumpers.

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and expletive deleted.) Whatever, even if you only average 50mpg, it's still pretty good going for a full five-seater, 2-litre saloon that goes like the proverbial.

The 3 Series has long been held up as probably the best compact 'executive' car around, and with good reason. Beautifully engineered, they handle superbly, go exactly where one points them and always give the driver the feeling of being in complete control. To that, you can add performance that ranges from pretty decent to absolutely mind-blowing, superb build quality, and a standard of 'fit and finish' that's exemplary. They may not have quite the cache they once had (pace Ms X) particularly since Audi really got its act together, but the image is still way up there. But back to Ms X. To tease her colleagues, she very quietly took the 318d badge off the back and, courtesy of eBay, replaced it with a 330d

badge. The 330d M Sport, of course, as well as going rather more quickly also costs rather more. In fact, at £33,095 it's some £6,000 more.

Desired result achieved as regards ruffling a few feathers in the corporate chicken coop, but, behind the badge, she was still left with a 318d which, according to BMW's published figures, offers 'only' 143bhp at 4,000rpm and maximum torque of 221lb ft at 1,750rpm.

And that's where Tunit came in. The first job was to check the car on Tunit's exceedingly accurate dynamometer (+/- less than one per cent) and, as is often the case with manufacturers' figures, they proved to be inaccurate. The best recorded power they could get was 131.8bhp, but torque was marginally up - 222.9lb ft at 2,383rpm.

I then took the 318d out for a spin and was impressed with the way it performed. It sat tight and the steering, via the smaller 'sports' wheel, was perfectly weighted. Acceleration was adequate and pulling power in the higher gears quite acceptable. I enjoyed it. Back to Tunit HQ for the unit to be fitted. Less than half an hour later and I was on the

dynamometer again. And what a difference. Peak power had leapt to 171.9bhp (just over 30 per cent up) and maximum torque was now 265.1lb ft at 2,400rpm (19 per cent up). It is also worth bearing in mind that while Tunit makes no claims with regard to economy, it says that it is not unusual to see a 10 per cent improvement.

As always, though, the real test is how the car feels on the road and I have to say it was little short of amazing. There was a very noticeable increased urgency right the way through the



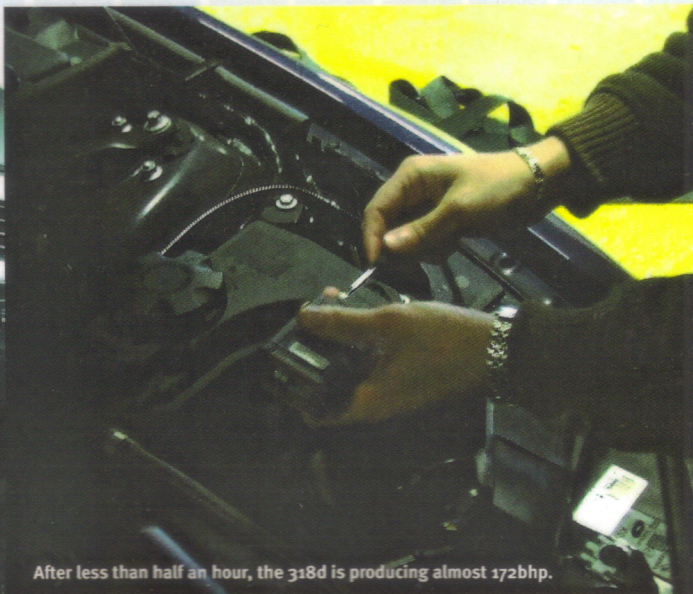
THE BMW 318D TUNIT CONVERSION - AND SIMILAR ONES FOR A WIDE RANGE OF DIESELS - COSTS £526, INCLUDING VAT AND POSTAGE. FULL DETAILS OF THE TUNIT RANGE AND THEIR NATIONWIDE NETWORK OF DISTRIBUTORS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THEM ON 0845 8381405 OR AT www.tunit.com

gears, and even in top the 318d would now pull from as low as 1,000rpm. Not spectacularly, but well enough to avoid the need to change down.

So, while Ms X doesn't quite have 330d power to go with the badge, she's now certainly on the way.



Smaller, M-badged steering wheel is part of the M Sport package.



After less than half an hour, the 318d is producing almost 172bhp.