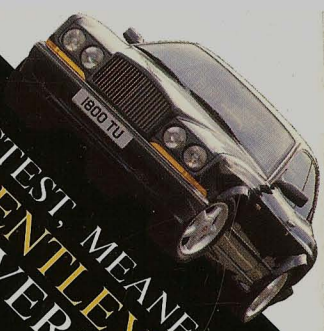


car

JUNE
1996 £2.75
France F40
Germany DM16.80
Italy L10,500
Malta Lm1.85
Singapore \$13.90
USA \$6.50

FASTEST, MEANEST
BENTLEY
EVER!



NO MORE EXCUSES

Does the new V8 turn the Esprit into a champion at last?

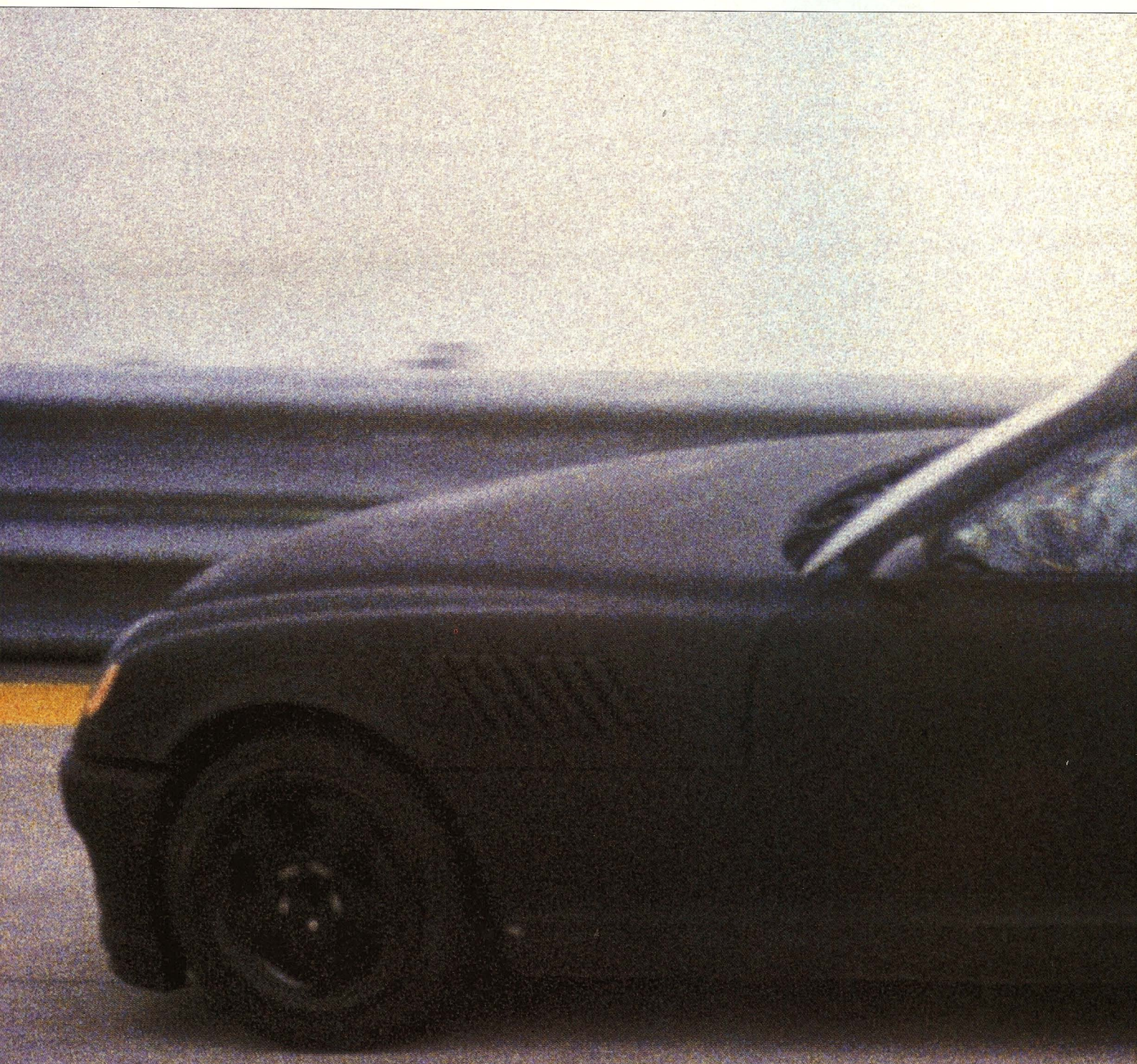
BMW'S SECRET BIG COUPE

First pictures of the stunning Z8 sportster to take on Jaguar's XK8



Z3's big brother

Aluminium-bodied coupé to become BMW's

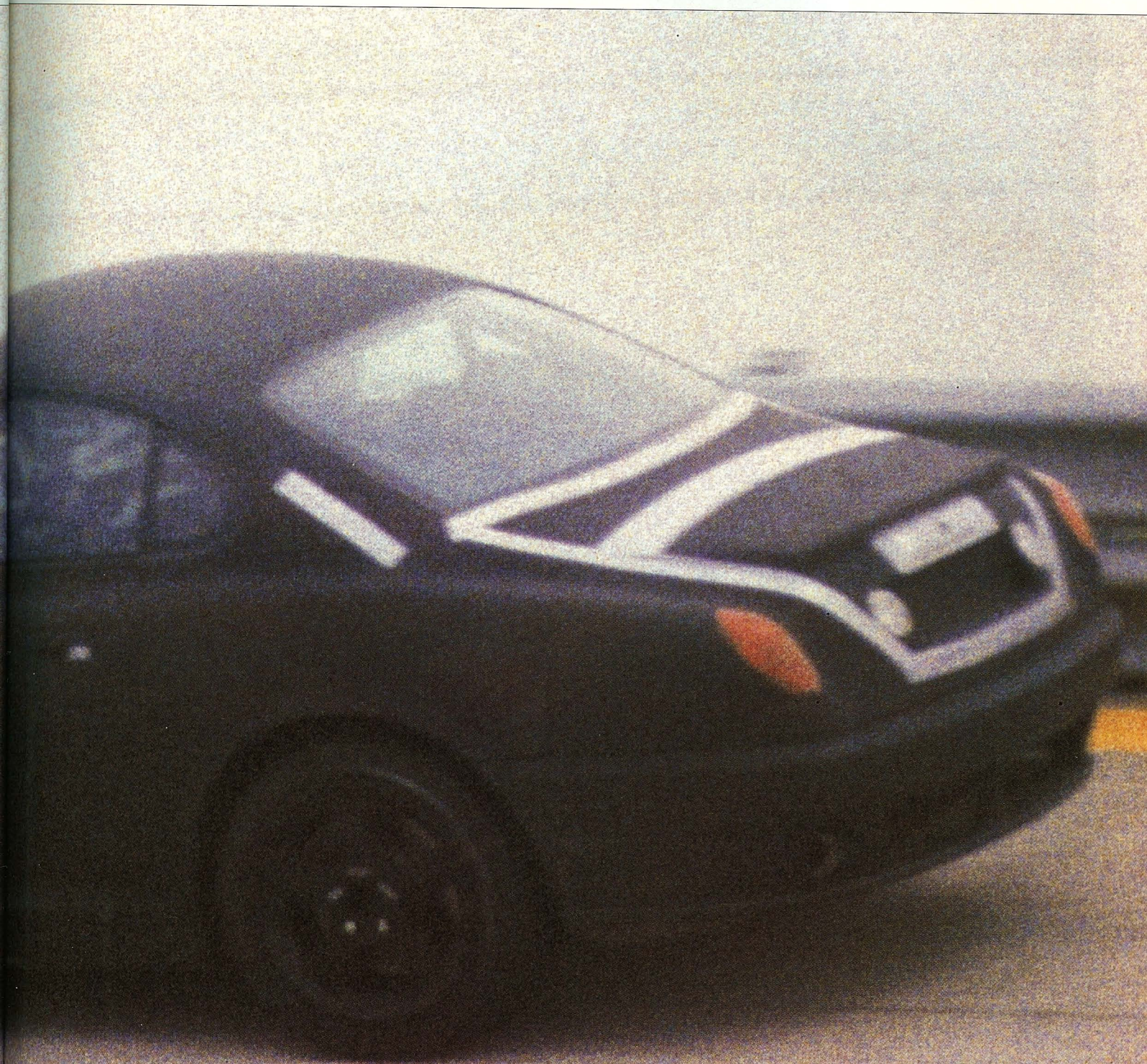


Edited by Hilton Holloway

breaks cover

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE**

400bhp, £90,000, technical tour de force



Z8's rounded headlamps break from BMW tradition and do their best to make the car look like a Merc. Floorplan is thought to be from the next generation 3-series



HANS LEHMANN

CODENAMED E52, AND LIKELY to be badged Z8, this aluminium-bodied two-seater is the extraordinary new BMW sports car set to compete head-on with Jaguar's XK8 and Mercedes' SL range.

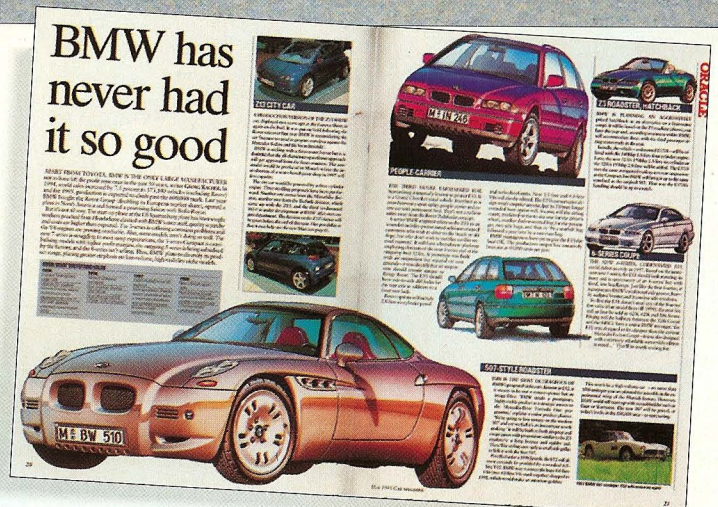
Caught here testing at the Nardo test track in Italy, the pictures are the first visible evidence of the car's existence. Despite its matt-black paintwork, the voluptuous coupe's stunning features can be clearly seen – and show it to be surprisingly compact, probably based on the floorpan of the next-generation 3-series.

Due to hit the streets in 1998, the startling Z8 appears to be the first modern BMW to wear exposed circular headlamps.

The car will be powered by the new

286bhp 4.4-litre V8 as well as a tweaked 6.0-litre version of the V12 5.6-litre 380bhp engine currently used in the 850 CSi coupé. Insiders also say BMW is considering resurrecting the colossal 8.0-litre V16 (made up from two 4.0-litre V8s end-to-end) that it dropped from its development programme in 1991 for the flagship model.

With huge amounts of power on tap, Z8 will need a sophisticated multi-link rear suspension system. It is probable that the advanced aluminium suspension fitted to the new 5-series will be adapted for use at the rear. Traction will be all-important for the front-engined car, so it is certain to use the switchable ASC+T system fitted alongside EDC III, BMW's



The artist's impression of the new BMW Z8, which appeared in *CAR*, May 1995, accurately predicted the firm's intention to build a sports car to take on the best

NEWSBRIEFS

ROVER HAS PULLED THE PLUG on its Maestro assembly plant in Bulgaria, just seven months after it was opened. The £13m Rodacar project saw painted Maestro bodysells exported from the company's Cowley plant to the factory in Varna. Rover blamed local market conditions and a lack of help from the Bulgarian government.

SSANGYONG IS TO LAUNCH ITS first executive car, based on the last-generation E-class. Development of the new car is being carried out by Mercedes at its Stuttgart base.

BMW HAS TURNED ROVER'S £91m 'profit' in 1995 into a £148m loss. BMW arrived at the new figure after putting the Rover accounts through the German firm's stricter accounting methods. Rover claimed it made £91m in 1995, up on £83m in 1994.

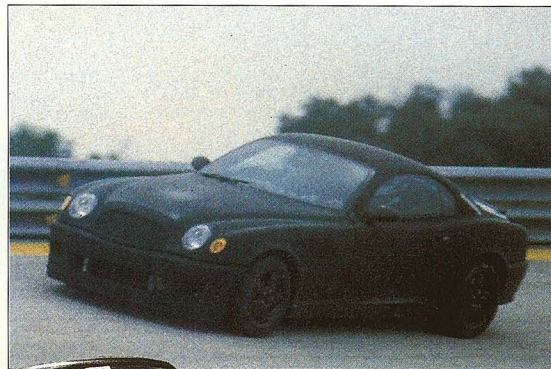
FORD HAS TAKEN OVERALL control of Mazda and installed the first non-Japanese boss at the head of a Japanese car firm. Briton Henry Wallace, 50, succeeds Yoshihiro Wada as president. Ford took control after investing \$500m (£330m) to lift its stake to 33.4 percent. Since 1991, Mazda has lost 125bn yen (£2bn), but it expects to break even in '96.

RELIANT HAS BEEN RESCUED from receivership by the son of Jaguar engineer William Heynes. The company crashed last December with debts of £2m.

Z8 could almost be mistaken for a miniature Bentley or Aston Martin. Z3-like louvres along the front wings help identify it as the new BMW flagship



Z8 will be available in coupé and roadster guises when it goes on sale in 1998. BMW wants the car to re-establish the Munich firm's technical credentials



The 507 was the first post-war BMW V8 sports car. Ruggedly reliable, only 250 were made, but it transformed BMW's image, if not its profits

electronic damper control system. It is thought the Steptronic automatic transmission will be an option. This is similar in concept to Porsche's Tiptronic box, allowing the driver to choose between fully auto or clutchless sequential changes.

The spiritual successor to the 507 roadster from the late 1950s, the Z8 will be sold in both coupé and roadster guises and is expected to be assembled in the experimental wing of BMW's Munich factory at a rate of 1000 per year. If demand outstrips capacity, it's possible BMW will team up with a coachbuilder such as Karmann or Baur to continue production outside the factory.

The Z8 is not about volume sales, however. It has been conceived as

BMW's technological 'jewel in the crown', designed to demonstrate the firm's technical strength and flair, rather than generate profit. BMW bosses are said to be very concerned that other German manufacturers, such as Audi, have stolen a technological march on them by launching cars like the aluminium A8.

According to a senior BMW product planner, the Z8's prime role is therefore to be an image-lifter. 'BMW needs a prestigious, highly visible product as a strategic answer to both the Mercedes Formula One programme and Audi's technical proficiency. We're going to lose money on this modern 507, and yet we feel it's an investment worth making.' Early indications are that the Z8 will sell

for around £90,000 – £25,000 more than the top of the range Jaguar XK8 due in October. The pricey, slow-selling 8-series coupé is expected to continue to sell alongside it until 1999.

The appearance of the powerful, long-bonneted Z8 has also added weight to the theory that it could spawn the much-rumoured Austin-Healey. BMW is known to want to exploit Rover's portfolio of unused badges and the Z8 is as close to the classic Healey 3000 formula as a modern car could get – namely it's big, powerful and rear-wheel-drive. Sources inside Rover, however, have indicated that reviving the brand is no longer considered a viable option because the name has been 'dead' for so long.

GO FIGURE

If you think numbers speak louder than words...

Number of vanity plates sold by DVLA since 1989 **400,000**
Highest price paid for a registration (K1 NGS) **£235,000**
Total revenues thus generated for Treasury **£200 million**

Automatic transmission option price on £13,345 Vauxhall Astra GLS saloon **£850.00**

Automatic transmission option price on £11,595 Chrysler Neon LE (on sale June) **£0.00**

Weight of one gallon of petrol **4.5kg**
Lifetime consumption of petrol, 25mpg car over 100,000 miles **4000 gallons**
... equal to **18 tonnes**

Weight, Mercedes SLK230 Kompressor **1325kg**
Weight, Mercedes C230 Kompressor **1380kg**

Weight saving of sports roadster over saloon (losing 450mm length, two doors and rear seat) **4.0 percent**
Claimed 0-62mph SLK230 Kompressor **7.6sec**
Claimed 0-62mph C230 Kompressor **8.3sec**