

CLASSIC DRIVER

Art, stance and sport all meet in this BMW 320 Group 5 replica by Kustom Kolors

Lead

After Ultrace had ended, we made use of the grounds around Wrocław Stadium for an impromptu photo shoot with one of the event’s most striking cars and the original Jägermeister Racing Group-5 that inspired it. Colin Ware, Kustom Kolors director, talks to Błażej Żuławski.



“It’s really my wife’s car, we are both in love with the BMW brand. Apart from having two M3’s, and some other models, Lucy and I have got four e21’s in total. She has won many international shows with one of them, also “on bags” (meaning lowered on air suspension), but fairly stock in comparison to the one you see here. About four years ago, however, we were coming back from Wörthersee and stopped at BMW Welt, where a Jägermeister Racing Group-5 e21 was on display and I thought, OK, let’s build that next.”



Is this really an e21 underneath all those striking panels, like the original next to it?

"Yes and no. First of all, the car needed an engine. The original Formula 2-derived unit is absolutely impossible to find and an exact replica would cost a fortune to build, so we opted for the next best thing. A big V8. This meant finding a suitable donor car, in the form of a e39 BMW 5-Series with the 4.4 M62 under the bonnet. The bodykit panels had to be manufactured especially for us and we picked them up literally from some guy in the middle of Germany, who has done an amazing job on them. They just wouldn't fit the 5-series chassis no matter how hard we tried."



I'm sure there was a creative solution to the problem...

"We were blokes building a car in a shed, which in itself is a great British tradition, so of course there was. We decided to build the chassis ourselves, and my friend Chris Wyatt, who is a boating engineer, did an amazing bespoke job. We then married the chassis to the e39's subframes, on which we superimposed body parts from an e21 320 donor car. We then installed a roll cage fitted the body kit, and another friend who's an aeronautical engineer, Neil Ford, crafted a custom wiring loom to make it all work, as this engine doesn't run if it doesn't recognise the ABS module of the original ECU for example."



How long did this build take?

"About two years. Which is fairly quick because it kept us occupied during the pandemic lockdowns. But we only worked on the car on Wednesday nights and during weekends. Looking at it, a lot of people think that the car's been built by a big company, and although Kustom Kolors has been around as a car restorer and body repair shop since 2006, we are really just a few mates having fun with strange builds."



Tell me about the livery.

"It's the brainchild of Josh and Jamie, two graphic designers whose company "The Syrup Room" specialises in design-based physical projects. We call this car our "art car", because we decided not to replicate any known livery, like the Jagermeister or Coors one, and then let every Tom, Dick and Harry tell us what's wrong with our car, and how unoriginal it is. So it's an abstract, asymmetrical design, inspired by the boating world. The car started out black, but all the colours you see are painted. And I did it myself, by hand.

"It has Airlift Performance air suspension, and Rotiform seventeen and nineteen inch replica wheels, granted with a central locking mechanism, but huge in comparison to the smaller wheels of the racecar. It also has a hydraulic handbrake, just because it looks right. So, let's say that it's race-inspired, but what it's supposed to be, first and foremost, is fun."



Is this just a showcar or do you intend to actually drive it?

"Absolutely! My wife and I plan to use it almost as a daily, although the cops might not like how huge the back wing actually is... but yes. It's got turn signals which you can actuate on the race-inspired steering wheel, which is a clip on, but all the buttons on it work wirelessly . The 5-series' manual, six-speed gearbox (albeit with a shortshifter) is still in the car, which makes it usable. The custom made side exhaust can be free-flowing, but the exhaust gasses can also be rerouted to pass through mufflers which make the sound of the engine slightly quieter."



I have to congratulate you on the level of attention to detail, not only the Rotiform, BBS-replica wheels, or the bodykit itself, but also other, smaller things like the steering wheel shape or how the seats are upholstered.

"Glad you noticed. We went for the "M" fabric for the cushioned part of the seats, and as you can see, the harnesses match the interior colour. The roll cage is painted the exact same blue as some of the exterior, and that colour is also extended to some of the bits underneath that you can't see, as it goes through the bulkhead into the front of the car, to form the suspension turrets etc. There are actual intercoolers in the side vents, NACA ducts to direct airflow, and I even wanted the air suspension elements visible and looking nice."



I guess all I can say is thank you for upholding proper coach building traditions!

"Thanks for taking an interest in our modest build."

Photos by Błażej Żuławski

Gallery

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