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BMW M6 Gran Coupé: Meeting the parent

Lead

Rather than pitching the new BMW M6 Gran Coupé against the rivals with which it shares the narrowest of niches, we thought it'd be more interesting to return it to its roots...

There were times in the past when the process of building a single model could almost completely consume a company's resources – one only needs to look to the M1 for proof of this, its development troubling both BMW and the company originally contracted to build it, Lamborghini.

But with the modular nature of today's machines, car-makers are clambering over one another to create niche-within-niche products. Take the new M6 Gran Coupé, for example: it's a four-door derivative of a two-door car, which in turn is an offshoot of the M5. At face value, the £24,000 discrepancy between the two saloons seems difficult to fathom – especially when they share the same 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 and associated running gear. Dynamically, only a more comfort-orientated chassis setup sets the M6 GC apart, no doubt with intentions of proving its abilities as a four-door GT.

Curves, creases and colours



However, within the price bracket in which BMW has pitched its latest M-offering, people are prepared to pay for style. Arguably, it's not only better-looking than its coupé and convertible siblings, but also the best-executed design in BMW's range. Hunkered as far down to the floor as real-world practicality allows, it has proportions which look right from every angle. A mention of the colours worn by our pair of test cars must also be made: Sakhir Orange provides a modern-day take on the hue of its legendary ancestor, while Frozen Silver boasts a striking visual effect which photos seem incapable of relaying.

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Adding to its visual muscle (and partly serving as justification for the financial leap away from the M5) is a carbonfibre roof, which plays its part in lowering the centre of gravity. You might think that a sloping roofline would be a nuisance to the rear passengers, but sub-6-footers are surprisingly well catered for. The near-silence of the engine at cruising speeds further enhances its long-distance credentials.

A grand tour for four



Sledgehammer performance from the quoted 552bhp is to be expected – but more impressive is the linearity of its delivery, in spite of relying on a pair of turbos. Suspension firmness, throttle mapping and steering feel can be cycled through three modes, though the artificial weight provided by the latter is most unwelcome. Most of the time, you'll be better off leaving these settings in their tamer modes and using the wheel-mounted programmable 'M' buttons for spontaneous overtakes – which the M6 will complete in a few car lengths regardless of closing speed and selected gear, thanks to its healthy dose of torque.

Yes, the price point is a little ambitious, but if you apply a 'don't look down' mentality and instead draw comparisons with the Aston Martin Rapide, it's a little easier to swallow. Consider the M6 Gran Coupé as a grand tourer with two extra doors and supercar pace, and it's a justifiable proposition. Only we have a niggling feeling that this probably wasn't what the M Division's forefathers would have envisioned as a contemporary personification of the brand when siring the M1 four decades ago.



Photos: Joe Breeze/Adrian Smith

Gallery

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