

Batmobile Begins

Long before the Dark Knight brought terror to the big screen, the CSL Bat was scaring all others on the road. But is it now an endangered species?

Words Andrew Everett
Photography Dan Pullen



Of all past BMWs, it is the 2002 Turbo and the CSL which possess a single-mindedness of character that has made them the cars they are today. And of all the CSLs, it's the third series, the 3.2-litre 'Batmobile', that everybody really wants.

Personally I'm not so sure, though. Like others, I think that the original CS Coupe was far too lovely a shape to adorn with spoilers and bits, but you can't argue with the titanic significance of the thing and

while there are more Batmobile buyers than owners, it's odd that they aren't worth more. Porsche's 1973 homologation special Carrera RS is now worth anything from £60,000 and is a much less specialised or significant car than the CSL, as anyone who watched the BMW-Capri battles in the '70s will tell you.

Werner Hand is originally from Trier in Germany's Saarland, which is close to the borders with France and Luxembourg; though he long since relocated to Bavaria. "I had nothing but ordinary metal to drive when I was younger, but my passion for BMW was really awoken by an 1802. Since then, I have been having a love affair with older BMWs," he says.

Now living in a tiny village by Lake Ammersee, between Landsberg and Munich, the heavy current electrician (that's the big stuff) runs the German BMW Coupe E9 club (under the aegis of the BMW-sponsored Club Europa) and drives what could be the best CSL we have ever seen.

It's a genuine low-mileage 3.2 Batmobile. Over time that original 1802 was replaced with a 635 CSI and in 1982, a 3.0 CSI. The trouble was that, like most of them, it was a bit of a rotten pig — the CS Coupes all too often looked good, yet were complete piles underneath. I made this mistake with a CSL myself; I knew there was rot in there, but thankfully this was a tip-of-the-iceberg job caught in time.

It wasn't long before the engine coughed on Werner's CSI and instead of trying to repair the car, he had it broken up for parts. "By then I had bought a 1971 CS Coupe which was older but much, much better," explains Werner. "But the CSL virus was spreading and I knew I had to have one, so I started looking. Only 1056 had been made and they were achieving cult status even in 1984, when the 6-Series was still a new car. I found an advert for an accident-damaged CSL for 17,000DM (around £4000 in 1984). We had just come back from holiday and so the advert was already old, but I decided to call anyway." >



Despite cult status in the '80s and good looks, these cars often became rust buckets. Luckily Werner Hand found a solid low-mileage example.

E9 3.5 CSL Batmobile

OK, here we go — Bats had 3.2 engines but still wore 3.0 badges (below). However, this one packs a 3.5 racing Schnitzer unit! Confusing, we know.



Mmm, shiny badging a-go-go. Cam cover is simply sparkling.



Spoilers almost spoil the show; they had to pass TuV approval.

> Luckily the car was still for sale and despite the damage, Werner didn't hesitate to drive over to view the 1974 3.2-litre Batmobile, only 56 of which were built. His check on the chassis, body and engine numbers confirmed that it was a real one. The front end was a bit of a mess and none of the front end panels could be saved, but the chassis was dead straight and apart from some very minor rust (a miracle on one of these), it was in pretty good shape. Remember that these took only six or seven years to turn into complete rust buckets.

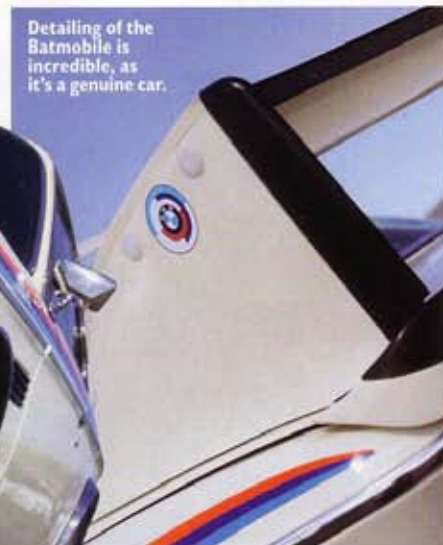
The reason for the car's solid original condition and lovely interior was soon evident — it had

clocked a mere 40,000km (about 25,000 miles) from new. "It was as if someone had cleaned the carpets with tweezers... and it was almost embarrassing for me to raise the mats," exclaims Werner. He was now the proud owner of a stunning base for a project. Once the CSL was home, the CS Coupe was sold off. The rare front end panels — the proper super-thin ones and not those of the regular CS Coupe — could fortunately still be found in those days, and he paid 1000 DM.

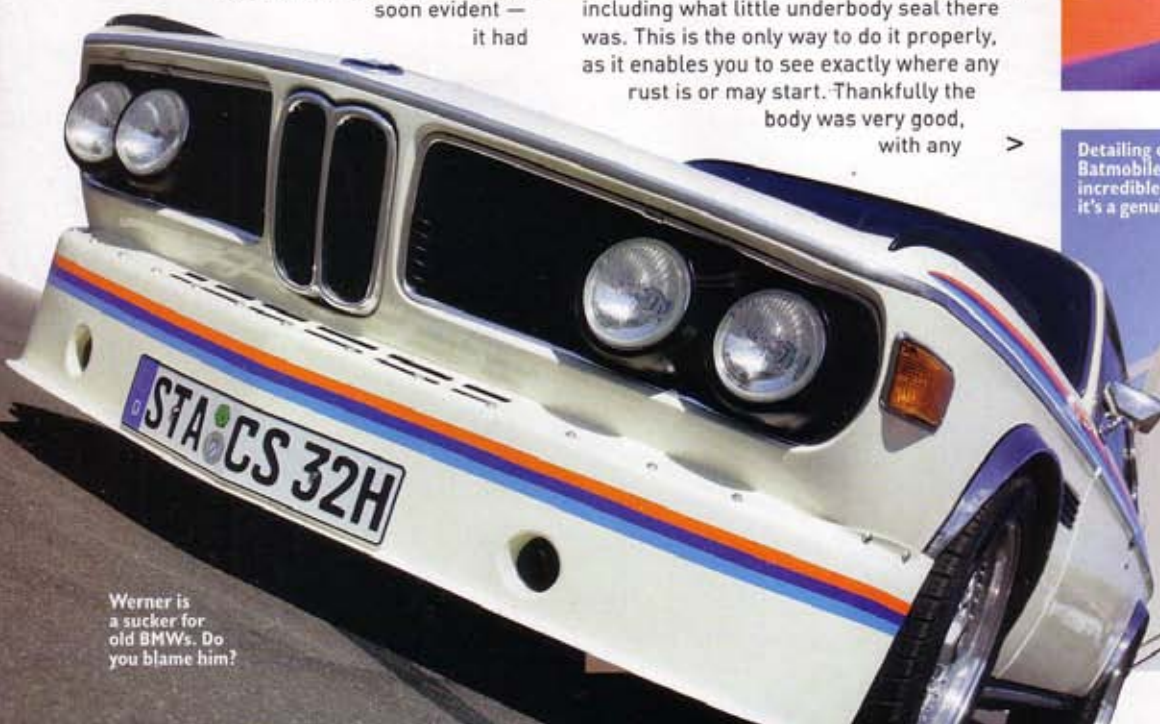
The car was stripped to a shell, all the bits were carefully stored and then the shell was grit-blasted to remove everything including what little underbody seal there was. This is the only way to do it properly, as it enables you to see exactly where any rust is or may start. Thankfully the body was very good, with any



Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?



> Detailing of the Batmobile is incredible, as it's a genuine car.



Werner is a sucker for old BMWs. Do you blame him?

E9 3.5 CSL Batmobile



This car is flawless. Interior (above left) is spot-on; badging (above centre) all present, but not correct — nice sleeper tactic there; dials (above right) show the car's pace.



Oh-so-'70s steering wheel is a thing of innate beauty.



> small amounts of festering surface rust under the underseal removed by the grit-blasting. No nasty surprises waiting for him.

By the summer of 1985, the shell was complete and an acquaintance of Werner galvanised it. It now offers incredible rust resistance — when was the last time you saw a rusty Audi or Porsche 944? — however, this job must be done very carefully, as an inexperienced person can distort the thin panels with the hot zinc.

But even before the first coat of zinc could go on, Werner had his work cut out. "It was a never-ending task to remove the sand from all cracks and crevices after the blasting," he groans. Once done, the shell was completely painted in primer and everything else was restored. The engine and gearbox were in fine health and were both carefully blast-cleaned along with all the axle and suspension components, before being painted and lacquered. These parts had been prepared in advance and stored in Werner's cellar.

When the [large] bill for the first batch of parts came, Werner realised that the car wasn't going to be painted anytime soon, so to keep himself busy, he carefully prepared the shell with thin stopper filler to get the surface absolutely perfect. All the interior metalwork was painted in Chamonix White — it's simple to paint that kind of thing, as it just needs several thick layers applied with the cheapest of paint guns. After very careful priming and spray undersealing, the CSL was finally given a stunning paint job in Chamonix White.

"Now I could begin the assembly, and the engine, transmission, axles and brake assembly all went back in, followed by the interior. My wife and son Andreas helped me frequently... not without my gratitude either!" he admits. After a couple of years of work [it's actually amazing how long it



Discuss: the E9 Bat is the handsomest BMW ever.



Spectacular period 16-inch BBS splitties.



There just aren't enough superlatives in the universe for a car as stunning as this.



With the Batmobile's correct spoilers and thin-gauge panels on the outside, and an original CSL interior plus more, what a stunning base for a project!

This is not just any old 3.5 engine though, it's a 310bhp semi-race unit breathing through three Weber 45 DCOEs and running a 305-degree cam so wild it would bite your leg off

takes to reassemble a car really carefully), the CSL stood there as new.

One of the biggest problems though, was the TuV, or German MoT. The CSL Batmobile 3.2 came with wild-looking spoilers, and the rear one was causing the tester some consternation. He needed BMW to confirm that the spoilers were as original, as a material appraisal was required "in order not to endanger the public with inferior spoilers" (don't you just love those crazy fun-loving Germans). Correspondence with the original manufacturer led to no positive result and although tuners were allowed to use bits from Schnitzer

and Alpina to aid aerodynamics in the '70s, Werner still did not have TuV permission. This went on and on, and it looked as if the roof and tail wings would have to be removed, though no way was Werner going to remove the spoilers from a genuine 1974 Batmobile. No, the answer lay in a 'sample appraisal by single acceptance' with the Bavarian TuV in one of the wind tunnels along BMW's test section in Munich, to certify the purpose and legal standard of the installed spoilers. Result! Werner drove back to Raisting with a fully-spoilered CSL and a new TuV certificate.

With so little mileage on the clock, the engine was in fine health. Werner decided to remove and store it away, then replace it with a genuine Schnitzer racing unit based on an early 3.5 engine which, unlike the genuine 3153cc Bat engine, is readily available for peanuts. Not just any old 3.5 engine though, but a 310bhp semi-race unit, breathing through three Weber 45 DCOEs and running a >



Whilst managing not to 'endanger the public with inferior spoilers', this CSL goes like a Batmobile out of hell, but with the engine note of a Batmobile from heaven, all of which causes us to debunk the notion that old BMWs can in no way match new ones.



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E9 3.5 CSL Batmobile



This is what makes this Bat so special; behold a Schnitzer racing 3.5 M30 with 310bhp (above), courtesy of 305-degree tiger of a cam and a reworked head. Exhaust (below) starts with a tubular manifold and is a free-flow system. Lovely!



> 305-degree cam so wild it would bite your leg off. The unit was set up by Viktor Guenther and a few mods were needed to fit the engine, such as a different 'fan elbow union' (the bit on the water pump that the viscous coupling screws onto) and another exhaust system.

The gearbox is a mega-rare (as most were Getrag units) five-speed sports ZF unit. The diff is still the original 3.07 ratio LSD, but it has the clutches tightened up to give 75 per cent lock-up — performance enhancing changes that required mods to the brakes, because the CSL's standard vented discs were the same as those on a 180bhp 3.0CS Coupe. Werner added Alpina front brakes with fatter and larger diameter discs and bigger four-pot callipers.

The stock CSL chassis was OK in 1974 — 30 years ago when a Vauxhall Chevette was considered a half-decent car. If truth be known, the CS Coupes never seemed



to handle as well as the E3 saloons and so to uprate his car, Werner rebuilt the suspension again with Bilstein shock absorbers, Eibach springs and some superb new rims. His CSL now rolls on 7x16 inch BBS splits on the front, with 205/55 section front tyres and 245/45 x16 rubber with 9x16 rear rims. The TuV people kicked up a fuss of course, but the rims are still there; though the rear arch lips had to be modified under those stainless CSL arch trims.

Since its rebirth, the CSL has covered 50,000 fast kilometers and my drive in it along the 258 past the Nürburgring proved that it goes very well indeed and with real urgency. The sound from the old engine is quite superb. It would be churlish to say that modern BMWs aren't as good as the old ones — of course they are.

No doubt there were those who went misty eyed at the mention of an old 502 Baroque Angel in 1974 as BMW was busy sticking stripes, spoilers and turbos on 2002s; and the same happens today. Time moves on and while you won't catch me daydreaming about rescuing an old E23 7-Series, I'm sure I'll be extremely tempted by the new Z4 Coupe when it appears. You can be sure though, that an original CSL has made its mark on my soul.



Tech Spec

ENGINE

Schnitzer racing 3.5-litre M30, fully worked head, 305 degree camshaft, tubular exhaust manifold and free-flow system, power 310bhp

TRANSMISSION

ZF five-speed close ratio gearbox and 3.07 ratio limited-slip diff with 75 per cent lock-up

SUSPENSION

Standard CSL anti-roll bars (22mm front; 18mm rear), but with Eibach springs and Bilstein dampers

BRAKES

Standard rear vented discs, but with larger Alpina front discs and larger four-piston Alpina callipers

WHEELS & TYRES

BBS 16 inch split rims with Pirelli P7000 tyres, 205/55 fronts on 7 inch wide rims, 245/45 rears on 9 inch rims

EXTERIOR

Restored Chamonix White CSL 3.2 Batmobile with all correct spoilers and thin gauge panels

INTERIOR

Original CSL interior with Scheel buckets seats and sports steering wheel