



Tap into a CCA Special Interest Group when you want to find the true fanatic—and the most ardent of all may be the M3 brigades.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY FILIPPO MORELLI

E30 M3 owners are a strange breed indeed: Any time you meet a person overly committed to this Far Right, you might conclude that they've just drunk a bit too much of the Kool-Aid. It's a strange crowd, convinced they've discovered something unique. How many people do you know who've sold their newer 5 Series because they concluded that the older E28 is just a better car? Likely few to none. Yet the E30 M3 Special Interest Group (SIG) has so many ex-E36 M3 owners that the Far Right must be doing well and good.

In the spirit of celebration for one of the most unique sports cars ever built by BMW, the current E30 M3 SIG (www.bimmers.com/m3) began in 1996 with twenty or so friends and E30 M3 owners—those of us who understood the manifest destiny which



SIGFest chairman Tony Rausch (center) and John Henriquez (left) greet members at registration.

drove BMW to design a unique car and homologate it for one purpose only: to kick butt in touring-car racing series throughout Europe. When BMW was done, more championships and national titles had been won with the E30 M3 than any other sedan in history; approximately 30 major titles in touring car and rally competition were won within five years. Over 100 E30 M3 race chassis were built by BMW Motorsport to achieve such record wins. Today about 900 members worldwide share the passion for these purpose-built cars through the E30 M3 Special Interest Group.

The E30 M3 SIGFest takes place each year on both the east and west coasts, chaired by SIG members Tony Rausch in the East and Paul DaCruz on the west coast. This year's fifth annual East Coast SIGFest drew

over 100 people to the North Jersey Shore for the three-day event, including tech session, concours, picnic, and autocross. Undoubtedly the single largest gathering of E30 M3s, SIGFest East saw over 50 cars in the concours. Since only 5,000 E30 M3s were imported into the USA between 1988 and 1991, 50 in one place is intoxicating. Especially if you thrive in the Far Right.

Are you wondering about that Far Right, what it's like to live there, and who these fanatics really are? Sometimes it is easier to understand the psyche of the group by observing the actions of the few. Charley Terhune, a SIG member from Ohio, has the Far Right affliction. He owns a few E30 M3s. But the one he was planning to drive to New Jersey for SIGFest was in pieces, needing major suspension work. But like most of us swimming in a sea of optimism, Charley figured he could get the car together in time for the ten-hour Friday trek East.

minute struggles, Charley still vows he's coming back every year.

Many SIG members seem to have the Multiple E30 M3 A affliction. Take SIG member Jimmy Pettinato, with a stock 50,000-mile street car, an M3 he converted for Club racing, and an ex-Prodrive BTCC M3. Since the symptoms are obvious, the cause has never let Jimmy make SIGFest—he's in the music industry and always on tour during summer months. But this year he was going to have the afternoon off within a couple of hundred miles of SIGFest. That's when determination set in: After a Friday-night concert in North Carolina, Jimmy headed north overnight on a 410-mile trip to Philadelphia. "First thought was renting a car... I figured we would get into Philly about 10:00 a.m. I could shower, take a cab to some downtown rental-car location, and drive myself out and back. This was a good plan, except it was time-consuming which would make me pretty



Ralph Angerbach (left), Todd Crossley, and Phil Cataldi look over Crossley's Best-In-Show E30 M3 turbo conversion.

Then he had to help his girlfriend move on Monday through Wednesday of that week.

Charley arrived home Wednesday night. Reality and the Far Right sometimes don't mix. With axles sitting on the floor, Charley began assembling the car and worked until about 4:00 a.m. With the car in one piece, more or less, Charley's trip to the alignment shop yielded no results. Thankfully a last-minute call to a friend's body shop produced alignment equipment, and by 3:00 a.m. Friday morning, the car was ready to go. This kind of dedication can pay off; in Charley's case, it won the SIGFest Long Distance Award trophy: a polished S14 M3 piston engraved with the E30 M3 SIG logo. How do you know Charley is in the Far Right? Because after all his last-

late—and the prospect of showing up to SIGFest in some crappy rental car was not too appealing." As it turns out, Pettinato's wife was able to leave their Northeast Pennsylvania home and meet Jimmy in Philly for the 90-minute drive to the SIGFest picnic. But the concert-crew check-in at the hotel really slowed things down, what with 44 rooms reserved. Jimmy arrived at Thompson Park around 3:00 p.m. on Saturday afternoon, just as the concours judging had finished. Finally, after five years, he'd made it to SIGFest—even though no sooner had he arrived than the event started to break up. But Pettinato was undaunted. "I'm such an M3 geek," he says, "even getting a taste of it was great."

All that effort just for a taste? That's the Far Right for you. ♦

How many M3s does one guy really need?

And so begins another chapter in the saga of Unfinished Calabrese Car Projects: Regular readers may recall my plan to build a replica of the Warsteiner Group A German Touring Car Championship-winning E30 M3. The problem is that I already own an E30 M3, but it's red; the Warsteiner car is white. So it's either paint the red car or find a white one.

This particular chapter starts when good friend and co-worker Rick Krapples—or Radar, as we affectionately call him at work, since he really does look a lot like Radar from *MASH*—spots a low-priced 1988 M3 on eBay, with a current bid of \$8,200 and the promise of a low reserve. Radar knows me well enough to guess that the price will arouse my interest, and it surely does; not only is the car cheap, but it is also white, and located nearby—three of the most important requirements I have for my next car project. So after bookmarking the auction, I call my friend Filippo Morelli, and we spend the next hour mulling over the car—and the project.

Morelli is an absolute godsend when it comes to E30 M3s; there's just no one else on Earth who knows more than he does about “the real M3.” In fact, Morelli is the founder of the E30 M3 Internet group—the best BMW Special Interest Group in existence. And after crunching the numbers and tossing several ideas around, we decide that this car could indeed suit my needs... if I can get it for under Ten Large. So the next day with thirty seconds of the auction remaining, I submit a bid for \$9,000 and actually win the car.

Oh, great: I now own *three* of the legendary M3s.

I bought my first one, a Cinnabar Red '88 model, back in early 1990 just after hiring on with Federal Express. At the time I needed something really special to cheer me up, since I had just made a drastic lifestyle change by moving from Miami to Memphis. Thank God my old friend Phil Marx had just the cure I needed: a practically-new red M3. Luckily for me, one of his former customers—Marx was actually a BMW retail dude for some time—had recently bought the car, but couldn't abide its firm—she would have said “harsh”—suspension. So after driving it for only four thousand miles, she wound up trading it in. Today the odometer shows over 175,000 miles; I've used the car as my daily driver, my track car, a rally car, and even as a concours winner for fourteen years. I can honestly say without the slightest hesitation that it's been the best car I've ever owned.

A few years later, while under the intoxicating influence of a just-finished driving school, I got the notion that I wanted to become a Club racer; and since I didn't

want to subject my prized M3 to the risks of racing, I convinced myself—and my wife—that I needed another car. Several months later I found the perfect candidate: another '88 M3. Only this time it was silver.

The car was on its way to a salvage yard because its young owner had managed to run it for a while without oil or water; his stupidity allowed me to buy the car for a song. Once I had it safely back in my garage, I promptly gutted it of almost every single part—including the complete wiring harness. Today the car sits on jack stands in the back corner of my garage with a rebuilt 2.5-liter stroker engine, a roll cage, and most of a Dinan Stage Three suspension. I still have the major task of building and installing a custom wiring harness and all the instrumentation before the car will be track ready, but at least the house-remodeling project that kept me from working on the car for the last several years is finished, and I'll finally be able to devote a little time and money to the project. With any luck I may be able to finish the car this winter and have it on the track by springtime. However, with my track record for distraction and procrastination, the odds are against me.

Now that the Alpine White has joined the Calabrese stable, I own an M3 in three of the four original colors; if I bought a black one, I'd have them all. (Actually, there were several shades of red over the years, but I'm not that picky.) Anyway, the current project—okay, the race car is current, but the Warsteiner replica is *currently* current—involves further paint options. There were several different schemes used on the factory Group A cars during their dominant years as touring-car champions, but the Warsteiner livery has always been my favorite. If you're not familiar with it, picture a car with three wide Motorsport-color stripes running from the left front fender across the roof to the back right quarter panel, and you'll have its basic scheme. What's more, with Morelli's help I've already found a guy in Germany who can duplicate every decal that was originally displayed on the race car! To complete the car's transformation I'll also have to change to seventeen-inch BBS wheels and replace the rear wing and side mirrors. On the inside, I plan to install Recaro seats in front and reupholster the rear seats using an old M3 fabric selection. Of course, there will be many other little details that I'll change, but you'll have to wait for another column—or next year's Oktoberfest in Greensboro—to find out about those!

Meanwhile, reality has set in. As I survey the square footage of my garage, and start counting cars, motorcycles, lawn mowers, and tools, I realize that no matter how much it pains me, something has to go.

Something in Cinnabar Red. ♦



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The car was headed for the salvage yard after its owner had run it without oil or water.