

Octane Cars

BY OCTANE STAFF AND CONTRIBUTORS

Baur wow wow!

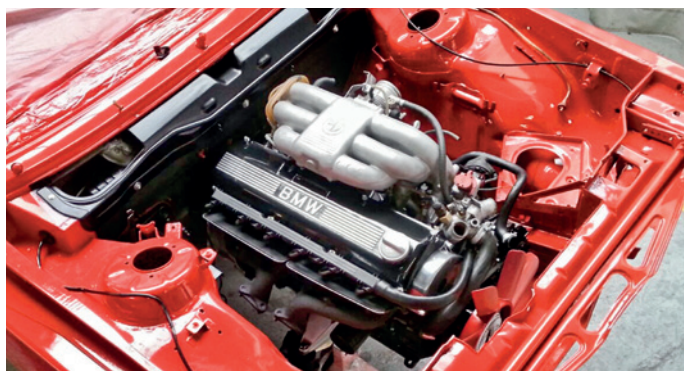


**1981 BMW 323i
TOP CABRIO**
SANJAY SEETANAIAH

AFTER EIGHT months in the workshop, completion of the Baur's restoration may be in sight. But getting to this stage has seen the job list get ever longer. The engine needed nothing beyond a good clean, but further inspection of the bodyshell revealed more rust, this time around the front floors where they join the sills, the jacking points and the rear subframe's mounting points.

So we had the discussion. Now we have started, was there any point in stopping the paintwork at just the exterior, the engine bay and the boot? So the suspension, exhaust, fuel pipes, brake pipes and fuel tanks were all stripped from the BMW, and the whole of the underside metalwork has been blasted and repainted.

The next question was: what to do with the hundreds of parts that have been taken off the car? Do we just clean them up and put them back, or do we try to make them as good as new? So Chedeem Battick, owner of Automo where the Baur is being brought back to life, showed me what is possible.



Clockwise from above
Refinished underside gains new heat shielding; bodyshell looks like new in shiny red, with all rust surgically removed; engine needed just a check and a clean.



There are various ways to make parts look like new again, but one of Chedeem's favoured methods is vapour blasting, which uses water vapour and a flow of water-borne abrasive. The flushing action of the water gives a fine finish and stops grit and dirt being impregnated into the component or being broken up into dust, unlike with dry blasting in which the finish comes from the force of the abrasive particles' impact.

So I decided, even with all the extra costs of a project in danger of escalating out of control, that we could not miss this opportunity. I agreed to have everything reconditioned... every single nut and bolt, as well as all major parts that weren't to be renewed. Other parts such as brake and fuel pipes

would be renewed, though. Most of the suspension parts, too.

The classic BMW part-searcher's best friend here is BMW Group Classic's www.realoem.com website, on which every part is listed for each BMW model. You can search every section of your car, see detailed drawings and a list of all the parts for that section, and discover how much it will cost. From a bodyshell to wiring looms to brake pipe clips to individual washers, all are here with their part numbers. Whether a specific part is actually available is another question, but at least with the part numbers you can look for it elsewhere if BMW doesn't have the part itself.

So we made a list of all the parts we needed. This is not as easy as it sounds: discretion is required not only to keep the costs sensible but also to avoid unnecessary work. Between us, though, Chedeem and I still came up with a list of about 100 parts.

Most expensive were the two fuel tanks at £800, but we needed them because blasting the originals revealed that they were badly corroded and clearly unusable. Our list also included a complete wiring loom, because the one on the car was showing signs of perishing and we wanted the restoration to last another 35 years. The engine loom and front loom came to £700.

Then there were a complete set of water and air hoses, a brake line kit and new pipes, all the fuel and injection pipes, all the rubber seals for windscreen, doors, boot, bonnet and roof, chrome trim for the doors and rear windows, the targa top and rear folding roof, suspension springs, dampers and struts. So another quick call to the bank manager was required as all parts had to be with Automo as quickly as possible!

The Baur has now been painted and it looks stunning, even as a bare shell. I think the Automo team are pretty proud of it, too. I can't wait to get it back – and, with luck, there will still be some nice end-of-summer days to enjoy it.

Thanks to Chedeem Battick at Automo, Taplow (www.automo.co); and Katrin Mölle and Benjamin Voss at BMW Group Classic.