

Back in for final fettling



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

I HAVE BEEN rather down in the dumps about my Baur during the last couple of months. Initial forecasts were that its restoration would have been finished last May, but work was delayed on several occasions due to parts being very difficult to source. As we edged towards the end of summer I knew all hope of enjoying the warm sunshine with the roof down was out of the question.

But finally, and to my delight, the call came and I collected the finished car in October, with just enough pre-winter weather left to enjoy a few topless drives. And that's when I discovered all was not as it should be.

The car looked absolutely gorgeous but, to my horror, it drove nothing like as well as it looked. Clearly it would have to go back for some further mechanical

work; as things stood, it was hard to believe this was the same car I'd delivered for a paint job 12 months before. Sometimes you have to be careful what you wish for.

I'd bought the car because it drove beautifully and was mechanically sound. Before the restoration it became my daily driver and it seemed completely at home in busy traffic, quiet and very comfortable despite being 35 years old. All that was required was bodywork to match.

Naturally I expected a few snags; when you have an engine-out, ground-up restoration, it takes a while for all the components (and there were many new ones, including suspension parts) to bed-in and work together, but this felt rather more serious. The back end of the car swung out when cornering at 35mph, it stopped poorly, and the differential and gearbox whined. It would also stall in low gears, the

Below

New hood and shiny red paintwork look resplendent, though more work is needed to solve the BMW's mechanical issues.

gearshift was extremely stiff and it stank of fuel. Quite a long list of snags, then, and the car was duly returned to Automo to carry out further checks.

Automo's proprietor Chedeen Battick was horrified that the car had been returned to me without proper shakedown testing, and assured me that all the problems could – and would – be fixed. With winter now upon us, and the first dusting of salt having hit the roads in November, I resigned myself to the fact that I would unlikely

be driving the car again before the coming spring.

Still, although I was gutted that I would need to wait much longer for the finished result, I was confident that the problems could be solved by Chedeen and his team. I hope my patience will finally be rewarded and that the BMW will drive to match its looks.

THANKS TO Chedeen Battick at Automo (www.automo.co); Katrin Mölle and Benjamin Voss at BMW Group Classic (www.realoem.com).

