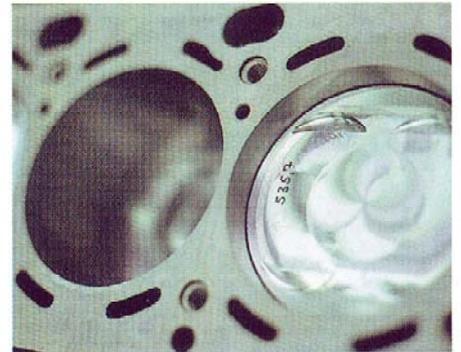


If you drive an Alpina BMW there's a good chance your engine was put together on this same bench.



Alpina parts warehouse is vast and needs to be since production is closely tied to BMW plants.



The V8 Roadster is a super lairy car for a brash new market — creating the stir Alpina wanted

and delivery system. Parts ordering and stocking is tightly regulated, and kits made up for each engine. These are kept in a mechanised racking conveyor that runs 9 m underground until the engine shop demands them. "Controlling this is quite fun," Günther says. That's fun as in risky. Get the stocking wrong and the engine build sequence is compromised — a big deal because Alpina's manufacturing is integrated with the build schedule of BMW's own plants. For some

years now it has been aware that dismantling cars, then reassembling them is an utterly inefficient way of building vehicles.

The answer, it seemed, was to order base cars from BMW minus the bits Alpina would remanufacture. E36-based models, for instance, used to arrive at Buchloe lacking things like engines. This was tricky logistically, and a better solution turned out to be remarkably simple — take the mountain to Mahommet. Alpina and BMW have ➤



American Beauty: The V8 Roadster

This is the flagship that is launching Alpina's face in the USA. The Z8's appeal, Alpina reasoned, was always going to be compromised on the US market by the, ahem, stick-shift gearbox arrangement. Americans, it seems, don't really like going to the effort of changing gear.

The Alpina solution is simple in concept, if not in execution. Instead of the M-Sport engine and six-speed manual 'box, install the superbly well-matched 4.8-litre V8 engine and five-speed automatic transmission enjoyed by the B10 V8S. Its 381 bhp and 384 lbf.ft torque are enough to get the 1600 kg car to 62 mph in 5.3 seconds, and those wishing to get involved in the ratio-shifting process can deploy the steering wheel buttons of Alpina's own Switch Tronic system.

The chassis now wears massive 20 inch rims — 10 inches wide at the rear and nine at the front — while 285/30 and 255/35 Michelin Pilot rubber have an immense presence at each corner. The suspension has been reengineered to suit, softened a little compared with the Z8, which won't harm its appeal in its major market.

Inside, there is the odd telling change. The upholstery, for instance, can be specified however a customer wants it. But as standard it comes in cream hide with bright blue Alcantara seat centres. Oddly, the middle two rays of the three-spoke steering wheel spokes have been filled and trimmed. And in front of the driver now sits a little pod to indicate what gear has been selected.

The V8 Roadster is a super lairy car for a brash new market, and its sales success indicates it has created the stir Alpina wanted. We predict given the American love of the E39 5-Series as everyday transport, its 428 purchasers so far should pretty soon have a B10 in their garages too.



The V8 on the dyno stand was spinning at 9000 rpm when this photograph was taken.

