



by Brooks Holden  
photography by Peter Dawson

SOMETHING  
IS GOING RIGHT  
WITH THE WORLD...

▶ ...WHEN NORMAL MORTALS CAN OWN A CAR LIKE THIS: a BMW sports sedan with a Formula 1-inspired V-10 cranking out 500 hp at 7750 rpm and connected to a seven-speed sequential manual gearbox. Sure, the BMW M5 isn't exactly cheap at \$81,200, but that price is within reach of more than a few. Things start to look even better when you realize that you also can get the marvelous 400-hp, 395-pound-feet, six-speed manual Corvette drivetrain in a carefully tuned Cadillac sedan. And the Cadillac CTS-V is almost, dare I say, affordable at \$51,395.

While these are both unearthly auto offerings, you may believe you'd be getting a significantly lesser car by saving the \$30K. But what if the Cadillac actually could hold a candle to the all-conquering BMW, a car some have called the best car in the world? Ever vigilant, we set out over the canyon roads and highways surrounding Malibu, California, to shed some light on this question.

Taking the M5 up entrance ramps from 20 mph into the three digits, I realize this is not a stunningly gutsy car. Yes, 500 hp is a really big number for a modestly-sized sedan. But I forgot that the five-liter V-10 is a revvy little piece, with a peak torque of 383 pound-feet way out at 6100 rpm, and it's mounted in a 4000-pound car. That puts its torque to weight ratio (192 pound-feet per ton) at the same level as a 2005 Porsche

52 mph/400 winding road





**"YOU'LL NEVER CONFUSE THE M5 WITH A LUXURY SEDAN."**

► Carrera S (188 pound-feet per ton), which is not bad, but not amazing either. (See the [Winding Road Torque/Weight Rankings](#))

It doesn't really matter though, because BMW has re-written the rules a bit. The glorious thing about the M5's V-10 is that it really feels happy in the 4000 to 7000 rpm range, where it needs to be to really move. Lots of revvy cars seem somewhere between slightly and very strained as you get into the strong part of the powerband, and not this one. It feels more like the RX-8's rotary motor in this regard, and I can promise that you won't feel reluctant to run the M5 engine up and down the rev range.

With that in mind, the other winning aspect of the M5 engine is that it does just about the best job I've experienced at fooling you into thinking that the power rises right up to infinite rpm. Lots of powerful engines diminish in pull as they get above 4000 or 5000 rpm, but the M5 just seems to get stronger and stronger.

I wish I could say that the M5's seven-speed SMG 'box was as seamlessly integrated into the drive as its power curve. This iteration of BMW's SMG certainly is good, but it isn't quite as good as the latest Ferrari 'box nor the VW/Audi DSG system. After spending

ample drive time with the latter, I now know there is an entirely different and higher level of performance possible. SMG isn't quite smooth enough or fast enough to be transparent, whereas DSG is.

Even so, I realize that the SMG system can be a real pleasure as I head down into several canyons to get a better sense of the M5's chassis and how it fits with the drivetrain. Being able to quickly grab a gear is a huge advantage in twisty sections of the road.

And on those twisties, I have to say the M5 handles beautifully. The chassis is balanced, it turns in well, and there is lots of grip. The steering is almost ideally quick, and it loads up nicely. As is common these

days, BMW has set up the M5 with a bias toward slight understeer, but usually you won't notice.

All of that is fine, but in the context of all this "world's best car" stuff you need to know that the M5 is not the most agile creature on the planet. Nonetheless, BMW has done a masterful job taming physics in the way they've come to a ride and handling balance. The BMW handles as well as almost any car of its weight and has a communicative chassis, and yet it has a tremendous ability to absorb road ripples and potholes.

At the same time, I suppose there is no free lunch, and the M5's ride over larger swales is quite firm. This suits my taste just fine, but you'll never confuse the M5 with a luxury sedan.

So this candidate for best car in the world actually isn't the best at anything, but on the other hand, I can't think of another car that does so many things so well. In that sense, I can begin to understand the idea of the M5's rave reviews. Which brings me to the Cadillac CTS-V. Surely, the lowly American couldn't do the things the M5 does? Or could it?

Repeating my entrance ramp trials with this car speaks volumes. As you might expect, the Caddy has more low-end grunt than the BMW. I feel this immediately as I get into the throttle coming out of turns at about 2500 rpm. The Caddy just digs down and launches itself forward. Not too surprising, given that it has far more torque per ton (205) than the M5, and that torque comes on at much lower revs. The Caddy does seem to run out of steam earlier when compared to the M5, but so does just about every other car on the planet.

What makes the CTS-V so much fun is that it delivers power right where it is usable day to day. The M5 isn't hard to spin up into a range where it really cranks, so this is no knock on the Bavarian approach, but with the Caddy torque is just there all the time. If

	cts-v	m5
Manufacturer	CADILLAC	BMW
Model	CTS-V	M5
U.S. Base Price	\$61,670	\$61,200
Price as Tested	\$52,390	\$74,965
ENGINE Type	V-8	V-10
Displacement	4.0 L	5.0 L
Valvetrain	OVV, 2 VALVES/CYLINDER	DONC, 4 VALVES/CYLINDER
Max Power	400 HP @ 4100 RPM	500 HP @ 7750 RPM
Max Torque	395 LB-FT @ 4400 RPM	383 LB-FT @ 4100 RPM
Power/Weight	211 HP/TON	250 HP/TON
Torque/Weight	208 LB-FT/TON	192 LB-FT/TON
CHASSIS Drive-train Layout	FRONT-ENGINE, RWD	FRONT-ENGINE, RWD
Transmission	4-SPEED MANUAL	7-SPEED SMG
Steering	POWER ASSISTED	POWER, SPEED SENSITIVE
Brakes	VENTED DISC, ABS	DISC, ABS, DSC
Tires	P245/45 R18	285/40ZR-19 (R)
DIMENSIONS Wheelbase	113.4 IN	113.7 IN
Length	190.1 IN	191.1 IN
Width	70.6 IN	72.2 IN
Height	57.7 IN	57.8 IN
Passenger Comp.	5 PASSENGER	5 PASSENGER
Curb Weight	3850 LB	4012 LB
PERFORMANCE 0-60	APPROX 4.6 SEC	4.5 SEC
EPA City	15 MPG	12 MPG
EPA Hwy	23 MPG	18 MPG

## CADILLAC CTS-V VERSUS BMW M5



When you drive in the city or suburbia, and never do track days, the Cadillac philosophy makes a lot of sense.

The CTS-V shares its Tremec six-speed manual with the Corvette C6. This transmission is very usable, though it sets no new standards for short throws or quick shifts. I find as I run back and forth through the gears that the heavy action and notchy movements fit nicely with the rumbly and somewhat coarse, but always beefy engine. While far from the epitome of refinement, I don't see how you could fail to have fun with this drivetrain. It isn't quite as amazing as it is in the 'Vette due to an extra 300 pounds, but it is close.

When it comes to handling, the CTS-V has a different philosophy than the M5. The latter is all about controlled smoothness. The CTS-V isn't as well controlled, but it offers significantly more texture than the BMW does. From driving a host of good cars recently, I'm coming to the conclusion that it is the rare car that delivers both in quantity. The CTS-V's handling is pretty flat, and turn-in is good with excellent weighting through the steering wheel. The rear of the car moves around a bit more on bumps, so in some sense it isn't as perfect as the M5, but I find it a bit more interesting at street speeds. More verve and more swing, within limits, can be more fun.

30 mph on winding road

Heading down some long stretches of Interstate highway, I notice that the Cadillac reveals one really impressive trait of the M5 that was only in my subconscious before. At high speeds, the Cadillac feels stable, but rather normal. When I jump into the M5 and repeat the same run, I am reminded of the otherworldly high-speed control of the F430 and 360 Modena. The M5 just feels planted as the speeds creep up toward 100 mph. You barely notice the difference between 60 and 90 mph. The CTS-V doesn't feel bad, but you can tell the speed is rising.

That sort of thing is minor for many drivers, but it really characterizes the difference between the M5 and the CTS-V. The M5 feels more refined than the CTS-V, with higher quality materials and smoother controls (though you get Bangle styling and iDrive in the bargain).

At the same time, the CTS-V seems a little more spirited and punchier, yet still suited for a drive to the opera. The M5 feels more special than the CTS-V, but the CTS-V is more fun. The M5 gives you the sense that you would never regret buying it, so competent yet involving are its ways, at least until you start wondering if the M3 will be even better. The CTS-V, surprisingly, makes you think that Cadillac may have done the Corvette one better, at least from behind the wheel. Now that's impressive. [www](#)



← **Hear that? That's an M5 breaking the speed limit somewhere in California. Vroom, vroom. (Click here to listen)**

Where do you go from the top?

You climb even higher.

### Introducing the Fujitsu AVM-II Digital Video Processor.

When we introduced AVM, we set the standard in the plasma display industry. Now we're taking your viewing experience to even greater heights with the new AVM-II. Our award-winning technology creates a vivid high-definition picture with noise reduction, picture text optimizer, ambient light sensor and advanced color management. Broaden your horizons with one of four screen display sizes: 42", 58", 55", and 63". Fujitsu Plasmascanner™ Display. Appreciate the view.

Available only at an authorized Fujitsu retailer. To find one near you, call 1-800-888-3424 or visit [www.plasmascanner.com](http://www.plasmascanner.com)

IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE™



THE POSSIBILITIES ARE INFINITE

FUJITSU