

Portland Observer Auto Review

2007 BMW Z4 Roadster 3.0i

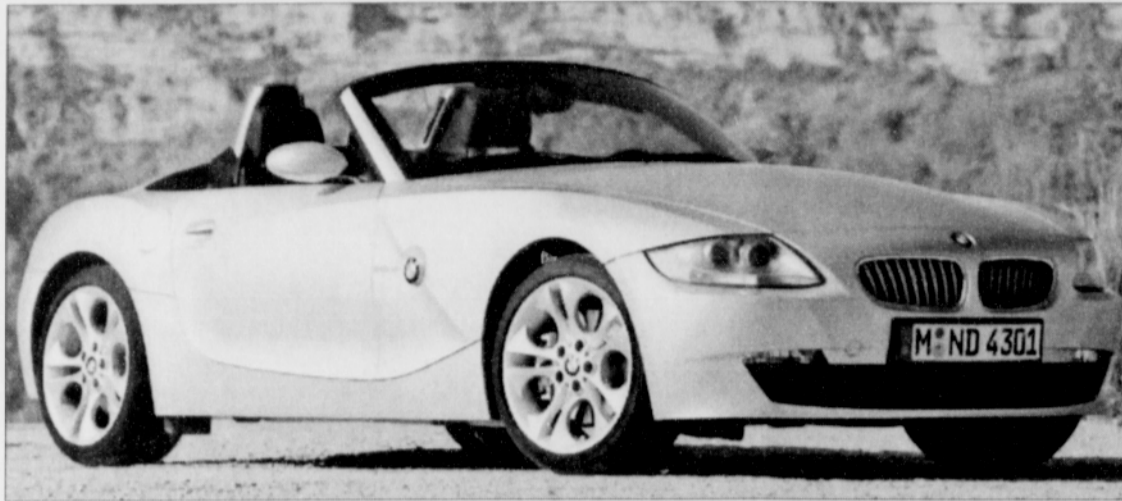
BY KATHLEEN CARR

Drop the top and hit the road, leave your stress behind in a hurry.

There are many worse things that could happen to you on an unseasonably warm fall evening than to have the keys to BMW's roadster in your pocket. Whether or not you've finally accepted this car's polarizing design, it is still immensely enjoyable to steer its taut chassis around anything remotely resembling a corner.

The BMW Z4 is one of the more intriguing sports cars currently available. It's known for its engaging handling and steering, thrilling inline six-cylinder engine and distinctive styling. Although it's stated horsepower ratings are equaled or surpassed by those of some less expensive machinery, the Z4 counters with a lighter curb weight and, in most cases, a more rewarding driving experience.

The Z4's performance is amazing; it feels alive in your hands and beams loads of feedback and sensation straight into the cockpit. The extremely well-tuned steering and throttle make the act of guiding the



Specifications: 3.0-Liter, 215 hp @ 185 lb-ft torque, 24-Valve Inline 6-Cylinder Engine; 6-Speed Steptronic Automatic Transmission; 21-City 30-Highway MPG; \$46,325. MSRP

car feel totally different than doing the same in most other vehicles. The optional sport suspension reacts harshly to significant bumps, but its handling and body-control benefits far outweigh occasional discomfort.

The BMW Z4 Roadster has received a few minor updates since its mid-cycle face-lift for 2006, like a new tire-pressure monitor and an auxiliary input jack for playing iPods and other portable devices through the car's audio system. The optional BMW Assist communication/safety system now includes

a four-year subscription.

Standard features on the 3.0i (roadster only) are 17-inch alloy wheels, rain-sensing wipers with heated wiper jets, a tire-pressure monitoring system, heated outside mirrors, full power accessories, manually operated six-way adjustable seats, vinyl upholstery, a tilt-telescoping steering wheel and a 10-speaker audio system with a CD player.

The six-cylinder engine in the BMW Z4 Roadster makes use of lightweight magnesium construction. The Roadster 3.0i is equipped

with a standard 3.0-liter, inline-6 cylinder, 215-horsepower and 185 pound-feet of torque engine that achieves 21-mpg in the city and 30-mpg on the highway. A six-speed manual transmission is standard; a six-speed automatic gearbox is optional. The automatic can be taken through the gears manually via steering-wheel-mounted paddle shifters.

BMW's responsive Servotronic electric speed-sensitive power steering is standard. An optional Sport Package includes Dynamic Driving Control,

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

which allows the driver to select quicker throttle action, reduced power-steering assist and a sport mode for the automatic transmission (if so equipped). The BMW Z4 Roadster rides on run-flat tires with a fairly stiff, corner-hugging suspension.

BMW's Dynamic Stability Control system is included. It uses throttle and brake control to help minimize wheel spin and prevent a loss of control during extreme handling maneuvers. This system further incorporates an expanded range of braking functions. Brake Standby reacts when the driver suddenly lifts off the accelerator, anticipating hard braking, and snugs the brake pads against the rotors. Start-Off Assistant automatically engages the brakes on an incline to prevent the car from rolling back when the driver lifts off the brake pedal to depress the accelerator.

The BMW Z4 Roadster comes standard with a soft top that opens and closes manually without much fuss. A power-operated top is available as a stand-alone option or as part of a Premium Package of options. In the roadster, wind-buffeting with the top down isn't a problem, even at high speeds. With the

top up, the Z4 is quiet for a sports car. With it down, you are susceptible to the sounds of your surroundings.

As with most small sports cars, interior space is at a premium and it takes some dexterity to climb in and out with the top up. Getting into this small two-seater involves a ducking and stepping down into the low-slung seats. Once inside, however, you are surrounded by BMW solidity and style. The simple dash layout places all controls at your fingertips. The seats are excellent. Contoured for sporty driving, they also offer long-trip comfort. We did some hard cornering, and appreciated the pad against the transmission tunnel for that body-contact spot.

The BMW Z4 is a sensuous sports car, not a visceral one. It encourages you and purrs in response to your demands. Most of all, the Z4 is a blast to drive. The engines provide smooth, ample power. The BMW Z4 roadster offers sharp handling that is the match for anything on the road and the interior is comfortable and well-assembled. If you're shopping for a second car that can provide some weekend excitement, make sure to put the Z4 on your list.

SPORTS

Athlete's Stunning Fall from Grace

Confession strips Jones of medals

(AP)—For years, Marion Jones angrily denied using steroids. On Friday, she admitted it was all a lie.

The three-time Olympic gold medalist pled guilty in federal court Friday to lying to investigators when she denied using performance-enhancing drugs.

She said she was told by her then-coach Trevor Graham that she was taking flaxseed oil when it was actually steroids.

"By November 2003, I realized he was giving me performance-enhancing drugs," she told the judge.

It was a stunning fall from grace for Jones, once the most celebrated athlete in the world. Seven years after winning five metals at the Sydney Olympics, she is broke, her reputation is ruined and she is looking at prison time.

The flaxseed oil Jones said was

given to her actually was "the clear" — a performance-enhancing drug linked to the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative, the lab at the center of the largest steroids scandal in professional sports involving home-run king Barry Bonds of the San Francisco Giants and more than two-dozen other athletes who testified before a federal grand jury in 2003.

Bonds denied ever knowingly taking performance-enhancing drugs, saying he believed the clear substance and a cream, given to him by his trainer, were flaxseed oil and an arthritis balm.

In addition to any jail term, Jones could face a long competition ban from the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency.

"I don't feel any sense of vindication," said BALCO founder Victor Conte, who was sued by Jones for \$25 million in 2004. "All of us have made poor decisions in our lives and suffered the consequences. Marion is not a bad person."



The three-time Olympic gold medalist Marion Jones (right) is escorted Friday to a federal courthouse with her mother Marion. (AP photo)



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Vikings Lose Close One

Senior quarterback Brian White's two-point conversion pass with six seconds left failed, allowing Northern Arizona to hold on Saturday for a 44-43 win over Portland State, snapping a six-game Big Sky Conference win streak dating back to last season.

Trailing 44-37, the Vikings (2-4) took over possession at their own 22-yard line with 3:38 remaining in the game. White then moved Portland State 78 yards in 12 plays, capped by a one-yard

TD pass to senior fullback Olaniyi Sobomehin to make it 44-43. On the two-point conversion attempt, White rolled to his right, but his pass sailed behind a Portland State receiver.

Northern Arizona (3-3) then recovered the ensuing onside kick, and junior quarterback Lance Kriesien went to a knee once to kill the clock.

The Vikings will now have a week off before traveling to Idaho State on Oct. 20.

Rose Garden Gets Facelift

Some big changes are in store for fans attending Portland Trail Blazers games this season at the Rose Garden.

The arena is in the midst of three-year, \$13 million capital-improvements project that will feature one of the largest video scoreboards in the nation. The Rose Garden's main concourses are also undergoing a facelift, including the addition of a new 240-seat restaurant featuring two circular bars that open up to the 100-level concourse.

"As we enter this new chapter of Trail Blazers basketball, we felt it

was important for the Rose Garden and the fan experience to be redefined," said Larry Miller, Portland Trail Blazers president. "These improvements, specifically the spectacular scoreboard, will guarantee there is no better way to experience Trail Blazers basketball than live at the Rose Garden regardless of your seat location."

Improvements include a refinished and redesigned basketball floor, new stats boards and auxiliary scoreboards, print-at-home parking tickets and handheld ordering devices for courtside-seat patrons.

Eastside Clashes Dominate Schedule

The Marshall Minutemen and Madison Senators kick off some eastside prep football rivalries 6 p.m. on Thursday at Marshall High School. Grant visits Roosevelt at 7 p.m. the same day, and a Cleveland at Jefferson match caps off the

weekend of neighboring clashes on Friday at 7 p.m.

Other games on Thursday at 7 p.m. involve Franklin at Lincoln and Benson at Wilson. Tickets are available at the gates for \$6, \$2 for students.

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