

Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

2008 BMW 128i Convertible Droppin' the Top and Soakin' Up the Sun

BY KATHLEEN CARR

Ah, summer time to drop the top and soak up some sun. If you're looking to join the convertible club, BMW has added a model to the mix with its 1 Series, which is new to the U.S. for 2008. I tested a 128i convertible with the 230-horsepower inline-six-cylinder engine.

The 128i is everything you'd expect from BMW. It offers a robust engine, engaging rear-wheel-drive dynamics and communicative steering. It also comports itself well as a convertible (a coupe version of the 1 Series is also offered). What's bound to make buyers gasp, though, is the price tag for this pint-sized ragtop, which can reach \$40,000 easily once some basic options are added.

The 1 Series convertible has a standard power-operated cloth top, as opposed to a power-retractable hardtop like the BMW 3 Series convertible. One of the advantages of a retractable hardtop is that it lets the convertible keep the sleek lines of its coupe counterpart. As you might expect in a convertible, rear and over-right-shoulder visibility with the top up isn't as good as it is



Specifications: 3.0-Liter DOHC, 230-hp @ 200 lb-ft. torque, 24-Valve Inline 6-Cylinder engine; 6-Speed manual transmission; 18-City 28-Highway MPG; \$41,950. MSRP

in the coupe, but it's not terrible, either.

If you're looking at the 1 Series convertible primarily as a car for Sunday drives, the 230-hp, 3.0-liter inline-six-cylinder engine in the 128i should provide more than enough thrust. The inline design of the engine yields impressive smoothness, and the engine also provides quite a bit of low-end power that's appreciated in city driving.

I'm not a huge fan of BMW's extra-tall manual transmission shifters, but I'd definitely favor the greater control and slick overall operation of the standard six-speed manual to the automatic. You also

pay a small highway gas mileage penalty with the automatic; it gets 18/27 mpg city/highway, compared to 18/28 mpg for the manual 128i. BMW recommends premium gas.

BMW's are known for exceptional handling, and the 1 Series continues that legacy. The rear-wheel-drive 128i rewards the driver with nicely balanced cornering performance and a chassis that's entirely comfortable powering out of a turn.

Contributing to the sporty driving experience is the steering system, which offers good feedback and requires a little muscle to steer the car. Some people might not like the extra effort needed to turn the

wheel—it's not one of those steering wheels you can easily spin with a finger—but I like this setup, and I imagine the enthusiasts that BMW caters to will like it as well. A big concern with convertibles in general is structural rigidity, which is compromised when you remove the roof. In the 128i convertible, though, there's no noticeable flex in the body, and the convertible's windshield pillars only shake slightly when you hit a large bump in the road.

The 128i convertible I tested featured the \$1,300 Sport Package, which features 17-inch wheels shod with performance tires, sport seats,

a sport suspension and different trim. Even with this package the ride was tolerable on rougher pavement. With the top up, the cabin is well-isolated from its surroundings, but with the top down at 60 mph it's a little windy in the driver's seat.

Simple elegance is the name of the game with BMW's interiors, which have a modernity to them that isn't found in all luxury cars. The 128i convertible's cabin is a good example of this design concept, as it features mostly plain surfaces splashed with upscale accents, like gray poplar wood trim.

The 128i convertible is a fairly small car, but there's enough room

in the front seats for taller people to get comfortable, and headroom with the top up is good. Leather seats are optional, and the sport buckets provide comfortable cushioning and have side bolsters that grip the sides of your torso, which is appreciated when cornering quickly.

The coupe has six standard airbags, including side-impact airbags for the front seats and side curtain airbags. An electronic stability system and antilock brakes are also standard. The convertible loses the side curtain airbags, but keeps the side-impact airbags and features popup roll bars.

The 1 Series also comes with a full complement of technology: Bluetooth for the phone, USB connection for the iPod and Sirius satellite radio, HD radio and a premium sound system for the audiophile.

Whether due to higher gas prices or an iffy economy, many car buyers are considering smaller, less expensive alternatives to what they might have purchased just a few years ago.

Despite the other models in its price range, the 128i convertible still seems like a lot of money for such a small car. Convertibles are often play cars, though, where price matters less than it would in another segment. If that's what your convertible will be, then the driver's seat of a 128i droptop seems like a great place to pass the spring and summer months.

Running Our Nation Into the Ground

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Bush, a self-styled war president, 'the normalization of war' was thus established."

What's more, Carroll writes, under former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the Pentagon in 2002 embarked "on the stunning project of developing a new generation of nuclear weapons including a burrowing device designed to go after underground targets and 'mini-nukes' to be used in concert with a conventional attack."

The effect of all this, Carroll writes, "is to legitimize nuclear-based power politics, giving other nations, friend and foe alike, compelling reasons to acquire a nuclear capacity, if only for deterrence, and prompting them to behave in similar ways." Carroll says the U.S. return to nuclear development was to spur Iran and North Korea to become nuclear-capable and to make states that renounced the atom—such as Brazil, Egypt, South Africa—rethink that decision.

Meanwhile, Carroll says, Russia, China, Israel, India and Pakistan "are all furiously adding to their nuclear arsenals" and "The Pentagon has become the engine of proliferation."

If the public hasn't figured it out yet, the United States of America cannot go on this way forever, spending nearly half of every tax dollar on war. It is being run by a criminal enterprise, just as surely as if some family of Mafia gangsters occupied the White House and decided to loot the world.

The Bush regime is in Iraq to steal oil, to swindle taxpayers, to give lucrative defense contracts to its friends, to fleece motorists, to explode radioactive ammunition, to test new weapons, and to intimidate the world.

And the tyrannosaurus Rex in the family room smashing our domestic tranquility is the military industrial complex. President Eisenhower had the guts to warn us of it. Sen. McCain is a traveling salesman for it. And Sen. Obama, who seemed to be the last best hope for checkmating it, appears in his July 3 call for expanding the military, to have sold out to it. What now, peace-lovers?#

Sherwood Ross is a Miami-based writer formerly employed as a reporter at the Chicago Daily News.

FOR YOUR HEALTH

BY LARRY LUCAS

Summer is a season of celebrations. Graduations, family reunions and holidays provide opportunities for catching up with friends and loved ones. For many, these special occasions also mean parties filled with lots of delicious, yet high-calorie, food. But with the National Institutes of Health reporting that more than half of all African Ameri-



can adults are overweight or obese, readily available to treat a whole host of diseases, including many that are linked to obesity, such as type 2 diabetes. But prescription medicines are not the solution to the obesity crisis — lifestyle changes are.

In fact, being overweight can impact the effectiveness of your medicines. A recent study by Wake Forest University found that participants who were obese had higher blood pressure and blood sugar levels and more abnor-

Being overweight isn't just about vanity — it's staying alive.

mal cholesterol profiles than did normal-weight participants, even though the former group took more medications for these conditions that are common heart disease risk factors.

I know what you're thinking: "Some people just aren't built to be tall and thin," or, "I'm big boned!" Yes, genetics play a part. But it's the things we can control—like diet and exercise habits—that primarily contribute to obesity. To start reining in your diet and kicking up your exercise, it's important to establish goals that are measurable, specific and attainable.

We're lucky to live in an age when innovative medicines are

Don't Let Summer Sabotage Your Health

For example, while it's wonderful to say you're going to "eat healthier," a better goal would be to "eat five servings of fruits or vegetables five days a week." This holds you to a clear standard, but is also flexible.

For our kids, summer vacation is a particularly important time to reinforce good eating and exercise habits.

A study published by the Ameri-

can Journal of Public Health found that one measure of obesity rose more than twice as fast when kindergarten and first-grade students were on summer vacation than when they were in school. Don't let these be the lazy days of summer — try taking them to the park instead of playing video games, and give them water instead of soft drinks.

Managing your weight this summer isn't about depriving yourself

— indulging in a piece of cake at your daughter's graduation party is okay! What is important is to exercise more often than not, and to fill most of your diet with fruits and vegetables, whole grains and lean meats. These changes won't just help you look better — you'll feel better too.

Larry Lucas is a vice president for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.



Dr. Billy R. Flowers

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Q: I continue to hear that diet and exercising are helpful in maintaining a strong body. But where do I begin? There is so much literature and when I ask my doctor he seems unconcerned. How can I get started?

A: A good way to begin is with the basics. Since 1895 Chiropractic has been the leader in teaching the basics of health to our society. Good health must include proper nutrition. A general rule of thumb is that foods high in fiber are best for you. Limit your meats and refined foods as

well as alcohol. Get plenty of exercise. For most people it only takes an hour or so a week to stay fit. Walking at a brisk pace with good arm swing is excellent. Rest is paramount. Everyone feels better after a good night's sleep. In Chiropractic, we will often recommend relaxation exercises as well. Have a joyful spirit. Scientists know now that our attitudes actually affect our

entire chemistry. Finally, always keep a healthy nervous system. Chiropractic is especially suited for understanding the effect of stress on the nervous system and how to eliminate it. Total fitness can be only a call away and worth so much more than just another pain prescription. Isn't it time you stepped up to safe effective Chiropractic?

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Stay In Touch with Your Health

A Day of Wellness for Women of Color

Join us for a morning of educational talks by trusted health professionals, with screening tests, information, tasty healthful eats and fun activities related to your well-being!

Hormone Therapy and Menopause

8:30 a.m.
Presented by Dr. Linda Moore, OB-GYN

Keeping a Healthy Colon

9:30 a.m.
Presented by Dr. Angela Lewis-Traylor, surgeon

Cancer Risk Reduction: Screening, Lifestyle and Nutrition

10:30 a.m.
Presented by Dr. Nathalie Johnson, surgeon, and Marci Reed, RD, LD, dietitian
Legacy Cancer Services

The following screenings and blood tests will be offered:

- Heart Health — blood pressure, body fat measurement, cholesterol testing, blood sugar analysis
- Stroke Screening — with stroke risk mini-assessment
- Colorectal Screening — take-home kits to test for blood in stool

Information and activities related to a variety of health topics and community resources will be offered, including breast health, cancer prevention, chair massage and exercise. Participants include the African American Health Coalition, Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the Breast & Cervical Cancer Program and the American Cancer Society.



Saturday, August 2, 2008
8 a.m. — 12 p.m.

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