

Tower, BMW X6 M & X5 M – ready for Launch



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How to describe these two 'refined' brutes ...?

There is really only one word that can... '**Magnifique**'! The name BMW is synonymous with utter perfection and sheer driving pleasure.

The BMW X5 M and the BMW X6 M are no exceptions and I have the pleasure of sharing my experiences of both vehicles with you. Having had the opportunity to drive the cars in the BMW SUV range, I have always been amazed at the quality and dynamics of each model. It is always a thrill to receive an invitation to a launch from a vehicle manufacturer, and it's even more exciting when you're given 'free reign' to road test the vehicle under inspection.

To gain a clear understanding of the cars' capabilities, we undertook a 300 km road trip from Port Elizabeth to Somerset East. The road conditions ranged from excellent to very poor and the journey included, for

good measure, a mountain pass.

While travelling it became evident that the road holding and responsive feedback to the driver of both the X5 M and the X6 M is excellent – even at high speed, attaining their top speed of 275 km/h with ease. The xDrive all-wheel-drive and selection of the applicable setting brought the damper control system into play when cornering through mountain passes, and the vehicles never gave the sense of reaching the extremes of their potential. A great help during high speed driving and cornering is the information on the head up display, giving you the minimum time lapse between concentrating on the road and your critical onboard information.

After a refreshing break at 'Somerset House' guest house, a jewel in this lovely Karoo 'Dorpie', and after a truly delicious luncheon, that can only truly be appreci-

ated on tasting, we set off for the Aldo Scribante Race Circuit in Port Elizabeth.

Travelling back to Port Elizabeth I kept to a more leisurely pace in order to get a feel for the car in a way most drivers would experience it. Both vehicles are excellent cruisers and, even with hard driving, averaged 14 litres per 100 km.

Ride quality and luxury is a given and when you need it, there is 408 kW of power delivered through the 4395 ccV8 M Twin Power Turbo, that will catapult you from 0 to 100 km/h in just 4.7 seconds. Power is released through the permanent four wheel drive and torque is given where required. The M Sports Automatic transmission with six gears, optimised gearshift dynamics and outstanding gearshift comfort confirms the sporting orientation of both models through extremely short gearshift times. Gear shifts can be made either via an electronic gear selector lever or through shift paddles on the steering wheel, again specific to the BMW M. At the same time you can intervene with the gearshift process by operating one of the paddles in the D Mode. The Launch

Control function – for maximum acceleration – may also be activated in the M Mode, while in the Power Mode, the driver may vary the engine and transmission control, using either the Sport or the Efficiency driving programmes.

Being let loose on the Aldo Scribante Race Course, it quickly became evident that the characteristic highlight of both models are their outstanding driving dynamics, supreme driving stability and excellent traction. The pleasure of driving is further enhanced by the level of agility of these brutes. The all-wheel drive ensures variable distribution of drive power front-to-rear and cornering at speed is a breeze. Dynamic performance control allows particularly dynamic acceleration out of a bend.

Both feature air suspension and self-leveling on the rear axle; BMW xDrive Dynamic Performance Control; Dynamic Stability Control (DSC); and Servotronic and Adaptive Drive. They are co-ordinated by Integrated Chassis Management (ICM) as the central control unit which makes for an unusually high standard of driving dynamics and motoring safety.





On the track I was impressed by the handling and performance of the BMW SUVs, and had no idea vehicles in this class could attain such extreme levels of performance and outstanding control.

The interior

The cockpit is M-specific and features a great number of sophisticated driver assistance systems.

The instrument cluster features a variable pre-warning field in the rev counter, specific vehicle function displays and white display illumination. Driving is further enhanced by innovative driver assistance systems with cruise control incorporating its own brake function.

Standard features include, electrical seat adjustment complete with a memory function, seat heating at the front, two-zone automatic air conditioning, an automated tailgate. The BMW X6 has an electronically operated sunroof, while the BMW X5 has a panoramic sunroof.

The wide range of optional features available on both models include; four-zone automatic air conditioning, active seat ventilation, full leather upholstery in Merino leather, the BMW Individual High End audio system, adaptive headlights and a High-Beam Assistant.

The exclusive character of both the BMW X5 M and the BMW X6 M results, to a large extent, from a level

of driving performance never seen before – even in this particular segment. Both models offer the ultimate in every respect, providing performance and dynamic driving reserves quite unique to the competition, and ensures an experience of unlimited supremacy in everyday traffic.

I am not going to dwell on the exterior except to mention that it differs from its siblings in that the M models feature air intakes and skirts that will do a fighter jet proud. It looks like it means business, and that is precisely what it does.

I take my hat off to my driving colleague, Sudhir Matai from 'Car', for really showing me what the X5 M and X6 M are capable of.

My recommendation to any person is, spoil yourself and get that adventurous inner child fired up, go for a test drive in any one of these two refined but gentle brutes.

Competitors at this level of performance are the Mercedes Benz ML 63 AMG and the Porsche Cayenne Turbo S Tiptronic.

The BMW X5 M is priced at R1 225 000; and the BMW X6 M at R1 260 000. It's competitors, Mercedes Benz ML 63 AMG goes for R1 1690 00 and the Porsche Cayenne Turbo S Tiptronic a whopping R1 700 000, giving BMW a price advantage.

