



SHIFT

AUTOMOTIVE PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star

SHIFT EXCLUSIVE

THE BEST 7 SERIES EVER MADE?

Shift drives the all new 7 Series in Singapore. Coming soon to Bangladesh.



Air gestures

The list of features is ridiculously exhaustive. There are buttons for everything but in many cases, BMW has completely done away with buttons. The infotainment system now takes gesture controls where your mid-air finger movements can answer phone calls, change audio tracks and so on. Twirl an index finger in mid-air and it will change audio volume. Jab in the air to pause. This is taking hands-free to quite a different playing field. But please, no rude finger gestures.

Design

I've mentioned before that the previous 7 series gave off a bit of a heavy weight appearance. The new design has been streamlined to create subtle surface gradations that create a longer, sleeker look to the profile. The car visually looks lower making it less of a barge and more of a streamliner. The angular headlights gently sweep upward creating a sharper front end than the previous generation's headlight filled surprised face. I'm not a big fan of those massive kidney grills but those hide active fins that close on open roads to further reduce drag.

Lightness through construction

The big car has some huge weight saving tricks under its sculpted sleeves. The i3 and the i8 have paved the way to bring about carbon fibre strength and lightness to bigger cars. Cast carbon-fiber is used all through the roof structure and A-C pillar bows as well as the centre tunnel. All

The 7 Series has always been BMW's big car for big occasions. While it was always infused with the German brand's DNA for driving fun, the last couple of generations visually put on some fat to become a cruiser suited for a chauffeured moment in time. It's designed to appeal to the big cats but I am more of a 1 Series M coupe guy. Small, light, nimble is the preference. The big 7 series always felt heavy. Turns out, I was a little wrong. What's luxury?

Executive Motors invited me to head out to Singapore where the new 7 Series was being launched. The PR event was full of beautiful women and journalists itching to get their fingers on a key instead of the finger foods on offer. And that's where the newness of the 7 begins, with the key. Luxury is hard to define but a list of tech options longer than a Starbucks coffee menu is a good identifier. The key itself has become a showpiece worth displaying. The electronic fob now comes with a display that lets you toggle through multiple settings such as remote interior adjustments as well as remote parking available for certain regions. James Bond pulled some drastic manoeuvres with the beautiful E38 7 series once and now you can be a bit of that too but without the high speeds and guns.



that translates to increased strength and rigidity while at the same time drops the center of gravity compared to the previous car. Here's the whopper: they dropped 190 pounds from the car making it lighter than the current, smaller 5 Series despite having a lot more tech.

Rolling office

In Bangladesh, most of the clients will spend a significant amount of time in the rear seats. All the cars are now the extended version with additional leg space and power operated footrest. There's heating, cooling and massage functions along with a removable 7 inch tab offering full control of the improved iDrive

infotainment. You won't really need to go to office in the car because the car can become your office.

3D parking assist

The coolest feature must be the new 3D surround view. It takes in images from all around the car and creates a bird's eye view as well as a panorama view of what is around you. In the demo, the car windows were covered up so you're in the dark and everyone got to use only the screen display to park.

Driving characteristics

Let's get to the driving. The team arranged multiple cars for all journalists present and there was a course set up, part of which was a slalom to show-off the big car's agility. Agile it was as I aimed at the cones as quick as possible. The weight distribution is slightly more to the front with 54 percent. You could throw the car into a corner and use the throttle to move the rear out a little bit. On a longer drive outside in the city, I got to fully try out the new suspension system that now comes with air suspension front and rear as opposed to just rear before. Every aspect is adjustable to bring in optimum ride height, load and dampers settings. Comfort Plus setting offers the squishiest ride with a wafting boat like feel. Not quite what you associate with BMW but it is supremely comfy. You want old school ultimate driving machine? Click 'Sport', it is where I left the car most of the time. Things stiffen up instantly and turns no longer cause the car to lean.

Power

The car I got to try out was the 3.0 740Li with 326bhp and 331 lb-ft torque from an inline six. There's also a beefier 4.4-liter twin-turbo V-8 offering 445 horsepower and 480 lb-ft of torque and a diesel 3.0 with 265hp and a massive 457 lb-ft of torque. While the driving dynamics are that of a smaller, nimbler car, the steering is deliberately kept soft because the buyers in this segment prefer the steering to do what is asked and not to talk back too much. I get it, the 7 Series is never meant to be a track buster. But it has all the tricks to make it an exhilarating drive if you can find the right roads. It will turn, steer and shoot out of a corner like a missile and it will cover potholes with grace.

Verdict

Luxury is easily defined as the options you can have and this new Bimmer comes chock full of that. The bulkiness of the last two generations has been toned down to create a sleek car that's big on performance, safety and efficiency. Will it be fun? A fellow journo asked a BMW spokesperson if it will drift. His reply, "It's a BMW, of course it will." Expect to see a full review when it gets to our shore. Hit the site for more photos.

COLLECTIBLES

RMZ's 1:64 lineup

RMZ City is a scale model car line-up from Uni-Fortune Toys Group, a Hong Kong based manufacturer that has now shifted operations to China like all toy manufacturers. It's not a very big name in the collector's circle even though they started operations back in 1996. The Bangladeshi market has recently started seeing many of their new line of die-cast cars primarily of the 1:32-1:38 scale. RMZ has also recently started making 1:64 die casts and these offer significant competition to the popular Hotwheels models in terms of detail and finish. The RMZ 1:64 have separate headlight units and a perfectly modelled dashboard featuring a proper steering wheel shaped like



the one in the real car. In comparison Hotwheels usually makes do with a generic circular disc stuck on a slab from the dash. RMZ features rubber tyres wrapped around two designs of generic rims that can pass off pretty well as original designs. I love how the spoilers are thinly formed units that look so much better than the thick chunks of plastic/metal on Hotwheels.

Pros: Accuracy of detail, rubber tyres, door mirrors, properly scaled wheels and interior. Inexpensive unless you're buying here.

Cons: The 1:64 are available both as pull-backs and free-wheeling cars. As a result, the rear seating area is non-existent because of a hump to house a wind up spring motor. Also, not a whole lot of models released yet.

Popular models would be: Nissan GTR, GT86, WRX STi, Land Rover Defender and the new Hurracan. Prices are as low as 160tk depending on where you buy it. In BD, expect prices to fall within 250-400tk depending on model, who's selling and how badly you're screaming in excitement at the shop.

WORDS AND PHOTOS: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

AUTO NEWS

Ford Mustang Cobra Jet



Despite its superior power, throughout the years Ford Mustangs were humiliated in tracks by European and Japanese muscles due to its lack of cornering abilities. Come 2015 and Ford finally fixed the issue with its brand new independent rear suspension, but there's one stretch of road where the solid axle is still king- and it is a quarter mile long.

Like the last couple of years, Ford went berserk at the 2015 SEMA show to unveil the 2016 Cobra Jet which is a factory-built drag racer that can go straight from the dealership to the strip. It's been stripped out, then built back up with a reinforced roll cage, fuel cell, Corbeau racing seats, 5-point harness, 3-speed drag race specific automatic transmission, and a coil-over suspension with four link rear suspension that houses a 9" axle. The engine is based on the Mustang GT's 5.0-liter V8, and shares 75 percent of its parts, but gets a Whipple supercharger from the Ford Performance parts catalog that bumps its power up to around 575 hp, plus an electric water pump from the Ford C-Max hybrid to help cool the motor faster between runs. Serious business.

So what does all that do? This Cobra Jet does an EIGHT SECOND QUARTER MILE. Very impressive, Ford Racing. The only other contenders we can think of this lunatic drag racer are 2016 Copo Camaro and Dodge Challenger Drag Pack, which was recently announced with a supercharged Hemi V8 and a \$109,354 price tag. Our Ford contender is priced cheaper (?) at \$99,990. 50 units being made, the Cobra Jet will be one of Ford's most sought after collectible racers in history.

Obviously, there is a reason why the Cobra Jet is a factory built quarter mile drag racer. You cannot drive one in public roads. Check out the video at www.thedailystar.net/shift

MAHBUH HUSSAIN

King of Kustom: George Barris

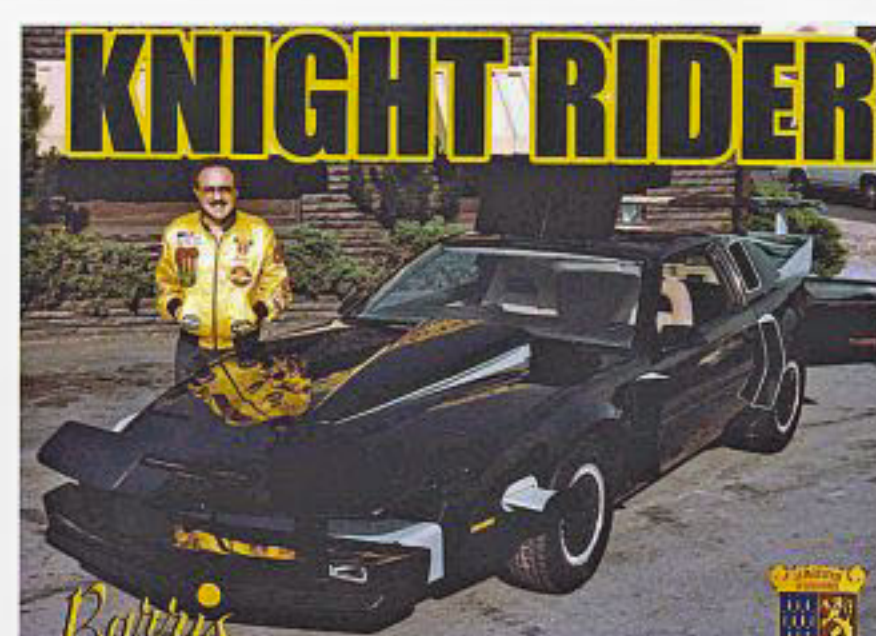
"He passed on peacefully in his sleep at 2:45 AM (on November 5, 2015). He was surrounded by his family in the comfort of his home. He lived his life the way he wanted tilt the end. He would want everyone to celebrate the passion he had for life and what he created for all to enjoy."

There are few people whose life and work represents the best of Americana, that blend of chrome, metal, flames and blondes that is such an integral part of the American Dream. George Barris, much like Kenny Howard "von Dutch", is one of those people.

Born in 1925 in Chicago, Barris would come to be called the "King of Kustom" for the outrageously American custom cars he built, which oozed with Hollywood chic and glamour. He grew up in sun-kissed California, and an early start at customising would seal his fate. Barris and his brother (and eventual business partner) Sam built their first custom car out of 1925 Buick before they even hit high school. Barris' first full custom would be based on a 1936 Ford convertible, and when he eventually moved to Los Angeles and opened his first custom car shop after World War II, the stars aligned to make sure the man and his work would reach sky high.

Fact: Barris used to create small scale models of cars out of balsa wood as early as the age of 7. His attention to detail and his ability to mould any material into any shape was an early indicator of the incredible craftsman he would later become famous for being.

Close proximity to Hollywood and a rising popularity of Barris Kustom built cars after the runaway success of the American economy after WWII made sure that George Barris quickly gained main-



stream exposure. Featured prominently in Alfred Hitchcock's movies such as North by Northwest and High School Confidential, Barris' fame would skyrocket when he was brought in to build a suitable ride for a TV adaptation of Gotham's caped crusader. The Batmobile that George Barris built was based on a Lincoln concept car, the Futura, which he had stored in his garage for over a decade, having bought it for a dollar. That one dollar car, when transformed into the Batmobile, would eventually fetch a

whopping price of 4.6 million dollars when sold at an auction in 2013.

Fact: Barris was responsible for designing K.I.T.T. from The Knight Rider, and created the iconic "striped tomato" look of the Ford Torino used in Starsky and Hutch, the Torino regarded as one of the most iconic TV cars of all time. He was also responsible for the "General Lee" Dodge Charger which Bo and Luke drove in The Dukes of Hazard.

The basic element of all of the Barris

designs were extremely loud, garish colours and rocket-ship influences from America's jet-set age. Double bubble roofs, canopies, finetails and turbines, rakish fronts and voluptuous profiles were the mainstay. When applied to the traditional American hot-rod, the results were incredible and helped nurture the creative spirits of those who got into the custom car business after being inspired by the work of George Barris.

Fact: Barris and his brother Sam were a good friends of Robert E. Petersen, who would go on to found Hot Rod and Motor Trend magazines, two of the most popular automotive publications in the United States today.

Although his main rise to popularity was through his work with Hollywood and the silver screen, George Barris was the leader of a custom car culture on the West Coast that would eventually evolve into a billion dollar industry that exists to this day. From the glory days of post-world war American boom to the Californian speed shops of the 60's and the emergence of import tuner culture in the mid-90's, what George Barris started would transform California into a mecca for anyone interested in custom cars and automotive sub-culture. For that, we salute this great man, and mourn his passing. Wrench on in heaven, Kustom King.

SHAER REAZ