



# MADE IN AMERICA

There are a few things that can still be claimed as uniquely American, though each year we seem able to find fewer and fewer. The quirky black-cherry-based soft drink, Dr Pepper, has been made in America since 1885—and since 1891, it has been produced and bottled in the original plant in tiny Dublin, Texas, using the original recipe. This is still the only plant that produces Dr Pepper exclusively the same way it was done over one hundred years ago using Imperial pure cane sugar, not its ubiquitous substitute: high-fructose corn syrup, the scourge of our youth, destroyer of metabolic function, and one of the primary causes of obesity in our country today.

It's been said that it costs only a nickel a case more to use pure cane sugar versus the corn derivative, and even that may be changing with the rise in price of all corn-related products as we find ourselves having to import ethanol to gain our energy independence. Some blame the USA's protectionist policies with respect to sugar subsidies and tariffs for causing companies like Life Savers to move production to Canada, or Hershey to Mexico.

But in Dublin, Imperial cane sugar still reigns supreme. The difference in taste is startling; even those who don't like Dr Pepper find the original-recipe version intriguing, flavorful, fruity, and satisfying. A Texas tradition for over 100 years, may it last at least a hundred more.

And what better way to travel the 90 miles from Fort Worth to Dublin during Oktoberfest than in another uniquely American product: the Z4 M coupe from BMW

Manufacturing in Spartanburg, South Carolina? One difference between Dublin Dr Pepper and the Spartanburg M coupe is that Dr Pepper will continue to be made the tried-and-true way for many years to come—but Z4 production will be leaving our shores within the next few years, replaced here by higher-volume SAVs as a currency hedge for BMW AG. While this may not happen until the Z4 becomes the up-market Z5 or Z6 next-generation sports car, for sure the Z4 series—and this M coupe—will be the last BMW cars built in America for some time. Sugar is expensive, but dollars are cheap. And we like trucks.

Driving the M coupe almost 3,000 miles over ten days gave time to reflect on what a unique vehicle it really is. Not only is it the last BMW car to use a real key to start the car, it is the last BMW car range to avoid iDrive, and the last to come only with a manual transmission—no clutch-a-phobics need apply. In an era when we constantly hear BMW aficionados ask when BMW lost its soul, here we have a niche player intentionally not compromised in any way to appeal to anyone beyond the dedicated crazies. This is one vehicle designed to be a second—or third—car for those who can afford and appreciate it.

For the average BMW buyer, too many minuses far outweigh the pluses, even disregarding the lack of an automatic. For starters, the M coupe has very little utility, with minimal space for two passengers—and not enough trunk space for those to contemplate a decent road trip without motorcycle-like packing restraint or a pre-emptive

*Roundel managing editor Phil Marx stocks up on the Quicker Pepper-Upper. The M coupe holds six cases of Dublin Dr Pepper with room left for one helmet bag, a camera case, a laptop, and two pairs of shoes. Who needs a suitcase?*

trip to FedEx. In addition, the car is so low to the ground it's hard not to hit your head on the short door opening when falling in. Ride quality on all but the smoothest of highways is jarring at best, and downright uncomfortable more often than not. Throttle, shifter, and brake operate with near-instant response, making shifting and stopping in urban traffic not always smooth or refined.

Was it a fun ride? You bet! Did I miss it after maybe 40 hours behind the wheel? Not really—until I got back in my own BMWs. Then all of a sudden every steering wheel felt too thin, every lowered sedan still too tall, every modified suspension still too soft, and every stop or pass took much longer than expected.

Yeah, the M coupe is a unique BMW. It's not for everyone, but it might just be a good choice for those who complain that BMW is trying to make cars to please everyone these days. If too many new models lack BMW soul, it must all be stored at Spartanburg on the M line, and metered out with every M coupe that leaves on its way to over 200 countries around the world—and still made only in the USA, at least for a short while longer.

Dr Pepper is one American classic that will be around for a long while—and it's not for everyone, either. Like the M coupe, it's an acquired taste.—*Phil Marx*