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Upgraded speakers sound pretty good to me

Part of the joy of owning my E30 M3 is listening to the killer sound system I installed in it. I've been a music lover ever since I first fell in love with the sound of Simon and Garfunkel and the Beatles back in grade school. I can still recall with great delight the first time I cued up my copy of Simon and Garfunkel's *Sounds of Silence* album on a turntable my parents got me for my thirteenth birthday. Ever since then, music has always been the one thing I can count on to transform my mood; it's the perfect tranquillizer.

Since I'm a car guy who loves to tinker, I've always modified my rides with the best sound system I could afford. Usually that entails changing out the head end (receiver) and the speakers to the latest technology. On the M3 I did just that, and I also wired in a very clean-sounding and powerful amplifier to boot. The system sounded so good when I was finished I was able to place second in a local sound-off competition. That's much better than I'd ever dreamed, considering that the cars I competed against all had budgets three to four times larger than mine.

Knowing my love for stereo gear, Satch must have figured I'd be the perfect candidate to audition some pieces that one of our advertisers sent us. Bavarian Soundwerks—or BSW—has been a faithful advertiser in *Roundel* for years, and they were interested in having someone critique their equipment. In case you've missed their ads, BSW is known for offering very sleek and affordable upgrades for popular BMW models; some of their gear includes a very cool iPod controller, a stealth subwoofer system (my next addition for the M3), satellite radio kits, and speaker upgrades. The iPod controller is especially cool, as it seamlessly integrates with today's newer BMWs. This killer piece even allows you to control an iPod through iDrive and your steering wheel.

What I got to try out was a speaker upgrade kit for my wife's 535i. Even though I don't drive the car very often, I was excited by the prospect of enhancing its sound system. The speakers arrived in a very-well-packed box; each speaker was additionally individually boxed—the packaging was so well done it reminded me of how Apple packages their computers. It says something about the quality of a company when they take the time and expense to carefully package their goods. After reading the enclosed instructions, I dutifully visited the BSW website, where I was able to download much more detailed instructions on how to install the speakers.

Being a little cautious, I decided to tackle replacing the rear-deck speakers first. Once again, BSW showed a lot of class by posting a set of really thorough instructions, including detailed pictures, on their website. After reading through everything, I started the process of swapping out the new for the old. Step One was to remove the grille; the instructions have you use a special tool, but I made do with a small flat-bladed screwdriver. Once you find the two locking tabs, the grilles pop off easily. With the grille off, it's simply a matter of removing five small screws holding the speakers in place; actually, there are two speakers in each position, a tweeter and a mid-range, and both come out quickly. Once they're removed it's a simple matter of plugging in the new speakers. BSW has gone to the trouble of installing snap-in electrical connectors for you, so it's a simple matter of unplugging and swapping. Like I said, nothing could be easier; all told it took about fifteen minutes to complete both sides.

The speakers behind the door panels were a little more involved, but still not that intimidating. Step One has you removing the only two screws securing the panel to the door; once they're removed, it's time to release

the panel-retention clips and pull off the panel. This isn't difficult, but it does require a little finesse. Because the door panel has an airbag attached to it, all the remaining tasks must be accomplished while holding the panel in your lap; you DO NOT want to remove the wiring from the airbag, otherwise you'll set a fault code. This fact makes the job somewhat awkward but still doable.

With the airbag sitting in your lap, it's a child's play to remove and replace the two speakers. Then it's a simple matter of reversing the steps to secure the panels back to the doorframe.

The reward for your efforts comes immediately after you fire up the car's sound system. To audition the new speakers, I selected one of my favorite blues singers, Buddy Guy. Right away I could hear quite a difference between new and old; the later speakers had a much fuller sound, Buddy's voice sounded better, and his guitar had notes I didn't remember hearing before. I was amazed how much better the simple upgrade made the car sound. But I shouldn't have been so surprised, because as soon as I opened the box I could see the difference in the construction of the speakers.

The biggest surprise came from my wife.

Usually, any time I install new gear I only get a simple "That's nice" comment from her. This time around things were different. The day after I installed the speakers, the car had to go in for routine service, so my wife was forced to drive a loaner 5 Series. After driving the loaner for a day and then getting back in her car, even she was surprised at how much better the car sounded. Coming from a person who rarely makes mention of any changes, that was the best compliment BSW could have received. So if you're looking for a noticeable improvement in the sound in your car, give BSW some serious consideration. ♦

