

Look – M TOPLS!

By Karen O'Brien,

Preface by Daniel Nikaiyn



Pictures courtesy of Karen O'Brien

Has anyone ever asked you why you bought your Z3? What did you answer? Did you buy your Z3 because you always wanted a convertible or a unique coupe (in the case of the coupe models), because you wanted a fast two-seat sports car, or just because? Whatever the reason, our cars represent our personalities in one form or another. And as unique as our cars already are in a world of stale, mass produced automobiles, we go a step further and create what we each think is our own "Ultimate Driving Machine", which is truly unique and personalized. There are those that do it by installing custom wheels, chrome shift knobs, after market exhaust systems, etc., and then there are those like Karen O'Brien...

Yes, I admit it. I knew when I selected it as my license plate that it would probably turn a few heads. But hey, what roadster enthusiast doesn't like to drive with their top down when the weather is right? The funny thing, however, is that the license plate is *far* from the most head-turning feature of this awesome little sports car!

Please allow me to introduce you to one of the most unique Z3s made – a special order straight from the factory. Its followers have affectionately christened it the *Gumby/Pokey Love Child*, the *Green Monster*, the *Jolly Green Giant* and the *Grinch* to mention a few of its more colorful nicknames. Others have said that it is the missing pickle relish in a montage of Z3 hot dog toppings such as Bright Red ketchup and Dakar Yellow mustard. Fellow Z3ers and Bimmerheads, meet the world's only Palmetto Green MZ3 with the special added bonus of a Kyalami Orange interior! Among other things, this rather unique color combination has been likened to an "Irish Flag on Wheels" – and as you may have guessed from my name, that suits me just fine since I am proudly of Irish descent.

Purchased in 2001, I am the lucky second owner of this very special roadster. The original owners lived in South Carolina near the BMW Manufacturing plant where this baby was born in 1999. They took a factory tour one day and saw a Z3 in production with the Palmetto Green II color. "That's the color we want!" they told the plant representative. But he quickly informed them that Palmetto Green was a European-only color and the Z3s they were looking at were bound for Europe. He then politely added that they especially could not consider Palmetto Green for an ///M! It took the original owners over a month of discussions with BMW Manufacturing and their dealership, but after some friendly persuasion, they were allowed to order Palmetto Green II for their ///M at the standard custom color charge of \$1500 (at the time).





But, you ask, how did they get that unusual interior? And why on earth would anyone ever want to pair it with a green exterior? We can thank Dennis, the salesman at Century BMW in Greenville, SC for suggesting Kyalami Orange to the original owners who just happened to like unique things. A direct result of the buyer's and seller's creativity and determination, this car is the only Palmetto Green II Z3 in the United States, let alone the only ///M version of the Z3 in this color, and according to BMW Mfg. representatives, the only one of its kind in the world.

Anticipating your next question as to how I ended up with this unusual car, I should probably give you a little background on myself first. I am a confirmed BMW nut at heart and have been a member of BMW CCA for over 18 years. My father introduced me to this wonderful brand in the late 1970s when he brought home a 320i, his first of many BMWs that included several 5-series and a 1979 M1. Carrying on his tradition, I have owned several BMWs including 1980s-era 3-series, 5-series and two M6s. After selling my M6 concours winner a few years ago, I needed a different toy -- something newer, more powerful and all-around more fun.

Intrigued by the Z3 when it debuted in 1996, I followed its progress closely and when the ///M was introduced, my appetite was ready, but my budget was not. Knowing myself all too well, I would not allow myself to test drive the car for fear of driving home with it. I already knew that I would love the ///M! On Christmas Eve 2000, however, I gave in to the temptation of a friend of mine dangling the keys to his 2000 ///M and telling me that he did not need the car at all on Christmas Day. It was time for a Christmas present to myself! How could I pass up driving the twisties of Highway 17 in Silicon Valley on Christmas morning?

After that exhilarating love-at-first-drive experience, I started my search. Not finding anything that really interested me, I took a break from my quest until one day when my father appeared in a dream and brought home a Z3 for me to test drive. That next morning, I got back on the Internet and discovered this special green car waiting for me on the Z3CCA web site classifieds. The sellers had received several inquiries, but none followed through. Not me! After examining some low quality digital photos and having the car inspected by Century BMW, I bought the car sight unseen. I did, however, have a private conversation with an employee at the dealership, asking him his gut feeling on the color combo and how it looked in person. "Hands down," he said, "there are several of us right now at the dealership that would love to have this car!"

Owning this special car has added so much joy to my life (especially after installing some Dinan performance parts!). It has brought me many new friends met online and at BMW's annual Homecoming event.

This roadster has also brought me blank stares, finger pointing, waving and laughing, but on top of that, it has shown me smiles. Smiles appear wherever this car goes! And if people are smiling at my car because they like the colors or simply because they find it funny, it doesn't matter to me either way. A smile is a smile, and if this car can provide that gift to all who see it, that's perfect in my book. Can you see M TOPLS smiling back?! I can. 😊

