

# Cars on Call - Episode 2

Thu, 4/14 8:59PM • 48:58

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

bmw, car, mercedes, drove, absolutely, thought, suvs, series, road, 80s, horsepower, enthusiast, turbo, jaguar, volvo, saab, shelby, inline, agree, topic

00:00

00:04

Okay, let's get started. Welcome to episode two of cars on call. My name is Steve Schutz. And I along with my co host Stephan Moran, we'll be discussing car topics. The topics today are number one, has BMW lost its way and number two do tuners like Shelby have a future? Based on that, I wrote it down anyway, shall be or Roush or whatever, what we'll get to that. But you know, are they relevant in the new world of electrification? And, and before we get to that, I was thinking about something, this is not on the topic, but I was just thinking I've seen some interesting cars on the road. And, you know, we always, you know, if you're a car guy, you're always looking at cars, you're always noticing cars. But I saw Well, I'll start with the one I thought was the coolest. This was a really nice, very well preserved, mid 80s Mercedes 190. And when's the last time you saw Mercedes? 190?

01:39

Man, I haven't seen one in forever. But I do remember the day that my chief resident back in, jeez, probably about 91. And he drove up in a brand new 190. And we're like, is that a real Mercedes? You know, because that was the first time they'd actually brought something like that. It's why the smallest vehicle they ever brought to America. And I was like, is it a Mercedes, but is it really been I do remember that car and it was next to the 30? E? You know, it didn't look like a real Mercedes, but I remember it very well.

02:13

They called it the baby Benz and it was a risk because they had made their name on the 300 SL and the the the r1 oh seven SL which, which they made from like, 1972 or something until 1989. Throughout the 70s and 80s. It was the s class and that SL the famous SL. And then of course, they brought in the the E Class. And so it was like those were the real Mercedes and this baby Benz shows up and everyone's like, what's this? And then I think there was a lot of concern about whether or not was it was a real Mercedes? I think it was. I don't know what your what your resident said about it. But my my brother in law, who you know, Russ, Russ Brown, he had to he had the 2.3 liter, four cylinder, and then he had the 2.6 liter inline. So you had two in a row in line six. You had two in a row. And he said that car never gave him any trouble was never a problem. Having said that, Stefan, they were very well built. They're great. My brother in law says they ran forever again, never gave me any problem. You never see him.

03:21

Exactly. And but there was one cool 190 That I remember, it's kind of like means first time you saw a super bird coming down the road. The eve wasn't the EVO EVO was the

03:35

last of the that was like the competition version. It was the 2.3 16 with a Cosworth engine. And and they made it and it had a big wing, just like you said. It was really homologation special for the DTM racing in Germany and it was the answer Mercedes answered. So the BMW M three the original e 30. M three, but it the EVO was like the, the I don't know, the extra competition. I don't know what you call it. But it was the that was the kind of the ultra one oh, by the way, they didn't sell it in United States. But they did sell the 2.3 16 and the thing I remember about it was the wing. You're right that that really stood out. The other thing I remember but but it was it was so expensive. I don't know what the number was price wise, but it was really expensive. Just like the the the original M three the e 30. M three, very expensive and I looked at both those cars like gee whiz, four cylinder engines, very picky. Not lots of power. Very expensive cars.

04:38

With this in the sight of that back in the 90s was just, it was something else. Yeah, it

04:45

would have been the early 90s. Like I said, I stumbled on this car on the road just parked on the road. It was it was in wonderful shape. It was an automatic. I was hoping it would be a five speed but it was an automatic and it was in great shape and you see a lot The you know the W 124 e classes for whatever reason here the coupe convertible or sedan or wagon. You see him running around people still drive them but the 190 I don't know. It's just a rare thing. So anyway, yeah, the other one I saw Stefan was the one it was pretty unusual in the even in the 80s. You noticed it, but one car that was very ubiquitous was the 240 series, Volvo and I saw a 240 series Volvo probably 8586 You know, circa one of those years, mid 80s 240 wagon, and it was in great shape and it reminded me that you don't see those and those were all over the place.

05:41

Oh, yeah, I met my uncle had one that was just a great car that there are tanks. And one of my favorite stories about that car was one of my medical students fell in medical students sister had one and she was driving down the road in there for door to 40 and lo and behold, there is a cow in the middle of the road. And they're doing like 50 miles an hour. And you know, that's the one of the last things you hit. Well, they hit the cow head on the head under seat belt. Basically, the cow flipped up over the front of the car, trashed the course the front and the hood than it hooked, took out the rear window. The car never changed lane and came to stop and they're all fine once again another testimony to the amazing safety of a Volvo but he was like you know he just I couldn't believe it either. Back then it was just but they were their tanks on wheels reliable solid and they're very comfortable those seats and then usual plastic headrest it was I didn't particularly because I like lean my head against the headrest, but those headrest for for a whiplash design and the tremendously well designed safe and very purposeful vehicle really great vehicle. And there are some people dropping VAT into those things in this country. I remember that. And didn't we see one on auction not too long ago, and we were both drooling over it. It was a two as a wagon, that somebody put down a VA conversion I think what what a sleeper that would be akin to a Volvo and some kid near a little hot rod Tin Can JDM and you just leave a line and a Volvo station wagon.

07:17

Yeah, I lost it after that. And then I don't remember the one. You're talking about the came up for auction. I know it was pretty common. It was like a Connecticut thing. David Letterman had one I think Paul Newman had one. And then what they did was they took their their Volvo station wagon. They kept the same wheels, probably a better tires. And then they drop in a five liter Mustang with a five speed transmission. They drop that in. And it was a total sleeper car. I always thought that was that was great. I really want to win the 90s and you know you have kids and stuff and all sudden all those. All those dreams go out the window. Like I said, What likes to find when's the last time you saw a Volvo? 240?

08:00

I haven't seen one. And I haven't. I can't even recall last time I saw one. I can't even recall the last time I saw Saab on the road. The three doors the old Saab turbo that we lusted after and in college in medical school hadn't seen one of those in forever either.

08:16

Yeah, the 900 Turbo. I actually you know, people talk about poster cars. Maybe I really am a nerd. But my poster car. I had a couple but one of them was 99 Turbo. So

08:26

that's that's pretty nerdy. Ya know? Yeah. And I started in the 99.

08:31

The 99 Turbo. I thought that was good. So it was very much like the 900. But it had a different front end, the rear was pretty much the same. It was this kind of sloped hatchback, and had the same wheels as white kind of turbo whatever. Wheels. It only came with a turbo. And I thought, Oh, that is so cool. I thought turbos were absolutely fantastic in the 80s. And yeah, you don't you don't see either one. You don't see the Vols you don't see the sob and of course Saab no longer exists. And involve those the Chinese company really, I mean, sort of

09:03

Volvo had the original, you know, we laugh at the, you know, when you see a t shirt with a stick shift on an anti theft device. Yes. Well, Saab was the first to have that kind of anti theft device.

09:17

Where did you put the key

09:18

in the SOP?

09:18

Oh, yeah, it was right. Oh my gosh, yeah.

09:21

Then you had Yeah. And you had to do some with the stick of buddy mine had one I just gave up I had no idea how to get the damn thing started.

09:28

Alright for our listeners where do you put the key?

09:32

Somewhere down the right by the way Yeah.

09:34

Between the seats in between the seats. You look on the dash or on the on the steering column it's not there attempt between the two front seats. It's it's a weird thing.

09:45

Yeah, I remember that thing. I just I just I'm I then you had to do something else with the clutch or the or the gear shift or something. It wasn't as obvious as you thought. But yeah,

09:54

there's there's the thought I'd tell me if you remember this. There's one thing that Saab had. That I'm like, That is cool. And I wish they had a today in any brand and no brand has they had something called the Dark panel, and it was a button and you were driving at night, you push the dark panel button and everything went dark. The only thing that would you would see is the speed. And every other gauge every other light was completely turned off. I thought that was absolutely great. You know, there's so many, especially now with with screens, you know, you've got these screens all around you. And it's like, oh my gosh, it's too much information, by the way, none of what you really need.

10:30

Yeah, I mean, I know I was going down the road, they're not my bullet. And there was just too much light. And I found the dimmer had to dim the dash all the way to as low as I could. And then I took the screen and dropped all that. But you're right when you're going down the road focusing. All you really need is that that's a cool feature. I would love to

10:50

have that. I wasn't aware of it. And then I test drove a Saab in the No, that's cool. Had it and I'm just like, wow, this is really cool. And, of course now sobs gone that buttons gone. It was like a pretty good size button. And it just said Remember, it's a dark pound. Like, what's this? That's cool. And I was driving at night? Well, I pushed it. I think during the day, whatever. Everything went off, and then and then from then on whenever I drove that car at night, I would just push that push that button. Oh, by the way, one cool thing that was true about that button was if you got low on gas, the gas gauge would light up all of a sudden,

11:23

genius. Genius. Yeah, from a company designed airplanes. Of course, of course.

11:29

So well, let's move on to our first topic Stefan. And I'm going to kind of start with this because it's a topic that's near and dear to my heart. But I know you have opinions about this too. And that is I'm going to be a little contrarian this, but the topic is has BMW lost its way. And as you know, if you spend any time on YouTube or our car websites, this is a pretty common topic. And the the implication, or the conclusion is always yes. And my answer is no. But I'll go into that. And I'll start with the 2002. I mean,

like you I'm a big BMW fan and tell me you. Alright, I'm going to ask you to guess because I was totally wrong on this. I immediately when I started thinking about the BMW 2002, I thought of David Davis is at Davis Jr's classic review, with a line that said, Turn your hymnals to page 2002. And as a great line, and basically he just said, this is the greatest thing ever. That review which ran and current driver really gave BMW, a lot of notoriety, attention, and energy and momentum. I mean, he it's he was he's the most influential automotive journalist in this country that I'm aware of. And I think he died 20 years ago. But anyway, he wrote that article, it was very influential. And it really launched BMW in this country. So I got this way where I was at least five years off. So I'll ask you the question, what year did that article running current driver? Geez,

13:16

I would have to guess 1972

13:25

My guess was 1973. The correct answer is 1968.

13:29

Wow. Yeah.

13:33

I guess we should say, we were too young. And that's why we don't remember. But yeah, he he ran that and that really put them on the on the on their way. But after that came, first of all the the original five series, the e 12. And then after that, the e 21. Three series. The three series is the one that really for me. I was never really a big fan of the 2002. I thought it looked okay. But I really liked the first three series. One thing I was I just stumbled upon this kind of reading was that the first three digit BMW with the nomenclature where the three digits was the first five series and that was in the early 70s. And then of course came to the three series was after that, what we knew in this country that 320 I I thought the 320 I was beautiful. I thought it was much better looking than the 2002 is that sacrilege?

14:33

No, I absolutely agree. I think I think it may have to do their age too. Because you know, when I went to college ever, all the rich kids in college drove sobs and 320s BMWs and one of my fraternity brothers actually went through two of them in a period of two years is Dad bought him bottom one replacement they were that was the car that you just absolutely coveted back in the day in college and I thought the design was absolutely beautiful but it or Sandra, I got I got a Honda Accord because I couldn't afford a BMW. But yeah, I think that car, that car really put, in my mind put BMW on the map, as is the ultimate driving machine because it was a it was an attainable car. And it really drove like absolutely nothing else you could even touch in America. And it was a fabulous car.

15:22

Yeah, they kind of got a beachhead, I looked at this. And I still think of BMW back then as a disrupter. And yeah, I know that. And I guess really what I think about BMW is they were disrupted back when they first started. And in this country, that would be 70s and 80s. And they had to get a toehold in the US market, which was then the biggest market in the world. And they launched the 2002 that were predecessors, but mainly in 2002, and then the three series and five series. And they differentiated themselves from the leader of the market, which is Cadillac, by being better driving cars, and they had German engineering, and they were, they were really good to drive. And then they started to expand.

Well, you can do disruption, when you're the new kid on the block, you can't do disruption when you're a leader, which they are now. But it was really the 80s when was my favorite era, probably yours too, Stefan, but the e 28. Five Series II 33 series, those were follow ups to the first generations. So the second generation three series and five series were very much evolutionary, they looked a lot like the first generation. And then they came up with a six series and then the seven series, this would have been mid 80s 8586, six series, and then the then the seven series SIX series, of course came earlier. And they they just started to expand. And once they got to which what I would call their absolute heyday, which was 20 to 25 years ago. You know, everyone, when they think about BMW, they think about the classic e 39, and five, the classic e 46. And three, and then the three and five series that were related to them. And that's when they really were absolutely at their peak, their sales were high. And those cars were, I mean, you you know, that generation, the V eight, e 39. And five is an absolute classic, and the inline six e 46. And three, both of them are considered the best, M five and M three, respectively. And they were just absolutely nailing it at that point. I think since then it's been quote unquote, downhill. I'll address that in a second. But would you say that's the that was their high watermark?

17:37

I agree. Because, yeah, absolutely. And and we'll get into it, I think, you know, unfair, unfortunately, you know, the beam, everybody's got to make the bean counters happy in the. So they've had to make the move to the whole crossover SUV thing, but I agree that was the peak time where their product line defined the company. And it's when you thought a BMW does where the vehicles there was no, the signal to noise ratio was absolutely they'd nailed the signal to noise ratio. Now, there is so much noise coming out of BMW, that it's inversely proportional now. And it just, I feel like they've lost their mojo to me as what I view as a core, but in, but that's an enthusiast talking. That is not the person that buys the car on Saturday. You know,

18:31

I think that that for me, yeah, as an enthusiast, and that's, I'm glad you said that's fine, because that really is what we're talking about. For an enthusiast for like holy crap, a V eight and an M five are really, really the ultimate kind of evolution of the normally aspirated inline six, and the M three, oh my gosh, this is this is great. I would take a step back and I'd say, okay, they were growing in the 80s. And they were becoming a legitimate luxury contender in the United States. And they were absolutely the darling of enthusiast in the 80s. But back home, they were still absolutely second to Mercedes and we're not really in Mercedes class. And I do I do remember vividly, the one moment where they suddenly said, Hey, we are not going to we're not going to be second fiddle to Mercedes anymore. We're legit competitors. You guys need to take us seriously. And his one car when it came out? Absolutely. Told Mercedes. All right, this this whole thing we're where your, your, your your your little brother. This is over. And it was the e 32. I think it was a seven series that came out in the late 80s. And the thing you'll know which one I'm not sure I get the nomenclature on that. It is the first seven series that had v 12. And they were always six cylinder seven series was pawsitively competing with the S class Mercedes had an inline six, Mercedes had a V eight, and at least the V at option. And all of a sudden Mercedes had to face BMW with their v 12. And Mercedes at that point did not have the 12. And that's what said, Okay, we are absolutely competing with you. And I think that's what started to give BMW confidence and the confidence to go for Mercedes and the confidence to go after leadership in the in the United States, and that would have been 8889 90. And again, it was the 10 years after that, where they just emerged. Yeah. All right, I'll say this stuff because I know you're gonna you're gonna you're gonna get



to this if I don't so let me just mention this because I was I was writing down some notes for this and I put down signs of BMW decline and here's what I wrote x 1x 2x 3x 4x 508 x seven. Do you agree?

21:02

Yeah, well, yeah, that's everybody in a Porsche had to make a crossover SUV to pay the bills to keep the 911 I mean, that's just unfortunately that's and that's fine. Build those things. But you know, I was I was at a Costco the other day and I walked by and I'm like, that's the biggest Honda Crosstour I've ever seen. It's like a Honda Honda Crosstour on steroids as I get closer on like, what is it BMW X? Six M 50. I would M bad is all over the thing. And I'm like cheeses that's just that that just that is just so wrong on all counts not make the car that's fine sell it but to slap the M badge on that thing and call it a sports activity coupe. That's no damn coupe.

21:48

W's listening, they're not going to like the like to hear Honda Crosstour BMW, the same sentence.

21:54

Sorry. That's the first thing that I saw. Today, take a look. Pull up, pull up, pull up across tour. And

22:01

actually, I saw across two on the road yesterday. But yeah, I think your rights defining it ultimately. And the reason I think BMW has not lost its way is that they have to compete on the global stage. And they have to compete for volume. Right? And if you don't, you become irrelevant. And BMW has to create these crossovers. What I would say is, instead of well, my son Carl likes to say because he's in he's in the corporate world. Don't hate the player hate the game. And that's where we are. That's what this is. Yeah, absolutely. It the game is you have to make crossovers. And by the way, thank goodness, you can go into a BMW dealership and order and a probably can't buy or you can't buy anything now. But you go in and you can order an M three or an m two with a manual transmission, you're gonna have a really good car. So it and of course, with Porsche two, you can buy manual transmissions and sports cars, and it's the SUVs that pay for that. So you know, you can't, if you get all high and mighty, I think you you lose the bigger picture, which is you have to compete. You have to compete for volume. And if you don't, you become irrelevant. I thought about this as I was thinking about this because a Jaguar jaguar in the early 2000s. I went to a press event for the x j. And whoever was in charge of Jaguar or North America at that time, got up and made a really big point about the fact that Jaguar was not going to make SUVs, they were going to make cars and they were going to make cars that were for the easiest, and for the sophisticated luxury buyer. And you know where that got them. Of course, they had to backtrack on that not too long after that and nakedness. Now they have two SUVs. Arguably three of you include the electric one, but it looks at this at some sales figures in 2002, Jaguar sold 61,000 vehicles and of course they were cars in this country BMW sell 256 and in 2021, Jaguar, which, again, 20 years earlier, they were at 61,000. They went and they said we're not gonna we're gonna be pure, we're not gonna do SUVs. And in 2021, they were down from 61,000 to 17,000. BMW, which of course, as we all know, have embraced the SUV. They went from 256 to 336. And of course, they could sell more if they could if they can make more. And that's that's it people like SUVs, and I've driven most of the BMW SUVs. My favorite one is the X seven. It's a wonderful car. It's very luxurious. It drives very well. ultimate driving machine. It is not.

24:37

Right. Yeah. And I think like we said, I think this is a topic that enthusiasts love to discuss, but from the person that is out there buying the vehicles, they'd love to see those badges slapped all over their cars, but do they really know what it can do now, but I mean, I understand what they're doing but I don't know the new front end kind of reminds me of the the bangle but era you know 2001 seven series it's so the new front end is very polarizing and BMW is always kind of known to be occasionally polarizing. But that that new front end just I just doesn't work for

25:14

me. Yeah, it's it's it's controversial it gets noticed it is. It's weird. I once I read that somebody described that as beaver teeth. Yeah, I can't. I can't look at it the same way.

25:30

Yeah, I agree I agree with Utah had,

25:32

I think that their new electric SUV I'm sure you've seen it was called brutalist design. So I think maybe they're going too far again. But at the same time, we all thought they went too far, in the early 2000s, with the bangle designs, and they turns out bangle and BMW were right then because the world was changing. And, and they needed to. It just comes down to the fact that if you're a disrupter, you have the luxury of being able to focus on a niche and, and being quote unquote, pure. And if you want to be mainstream, and it doesn't matter what industry you're in, you can't do that. You have to market to everybody, you have to market to a much broader segment. And I guess that includes you have to market to cross tour buyers. So anyway, yeah, we'll go ahead and, and move on. And the next topic, it's really more up your alley, but it's, it's our tuners, like Shelby and Roush and whatever. Are they still relevant? And I myself have questions about that. I would kind of say no, but what's what's your take, Stefan,

26:44

I think they're moving from relevancy as a tuner to being a brand or image label slap on like, you just, you go by two exact same shirt, but one's got a Roush label, and one's gonna have a Shelby label, but And what I mean by that is the internal combustion engine, I mean, you know, it's eventually going to become a relic of the past. But right now, all r&d, money and dollars are being spent into the electrification automobile. Now, what we have seen here, especially in this century, and I would say the last 10 years is unbelievable progression of the efficiency, emissions, packaging and horsepower that are coming out of engines is unbelievable. I mean, you know, you can order from Chevy 1000 horsepower, ZZ 63 motor, you know, dodges. I mean, it's, it's unbelievable what you can but I think so we have, at the same time that we have hit the absolute peak of development and the internal combustion engine now is going to be pretty much r&d dollars moving you know, everything is going towards electric so, well, the guys like Hearst of the past, which you know, was the Hearst Oldsmobile man, that was such a cool car and the Lingenfelter is the salines. The Callaway is, you know, Jack Roush, who's a friend of mine and former patient in Carroll Shelby and I'm the hugest Cobra fan and I've had a for 27 replica. I've got one on order. Absolutely love. The Shelby's have got a bullet Mustang. But I think, unfortunately for these guys in these names, yes, they're moving towards irrelevancy.

28:30

No, let's just just go back for a second to talk about horsepower, because we both remember one 200 horsepower was a lot. And of car 200 horsepower. You were really impressed. I remember one zero to



60 times in the 70s and 80s. If you were less than 10 seconds, that was a fastest that number. It was a sports car. The 70s My gosh, you you had five litre Mustangs, late 70s, early 80s five liter Mustangs that had 120 150 horsepower. It was it was crazy in just the numbers were so was so low. I'll never forget the day. I read that all of a sudden, they were gonna make a Dodge Challenger, which I thought that's pretty good car. But a Dodge Challenger was 707 horsepower was the Hellcat. I mean, give me a

29:20

break. That's insane. And you're I actually looked this up, but you probably will only ever see what your answer is. Alright, you know, the semis were a dismal time for automotive enthusiast, emissions controls and all that. How many horsepower? Do you think the Corvette had in 19 7070 and 1970s.

29:42

emissions controls didn't really kick in until 7273.

29:47

So mid mid 70s Corvette, oh, mid horsepower of all time.

29:51

Low, I would say 1974 7576 And I would say I'd say 192