

I LOVE MY BMW

By LOGAN KUGLER
Photos MARK CARSON





(Left) Finished in an exclusive Ontario Gold Metallic paint, Mark Carson's custom-designed BMW M6 Individual gleams in the Hawaiian sun.
 (Above top) The M6's interior is trimmed in exotic koa, a rare hardwood that's native to the Hawaiian Islands.
 (Above bottom) Another exclusive Individual interior touch: plush Champagne and Gold Brown Merino Leather seats are accented with full contrast stitching.

Mark Carson dreamed of owning a BMW from the minute he first rode in one in 1972. But it would be almost three decades before he would own his first BMW automobile – and another decade to get the one that was uniquely and exclusively his.

"I had a ride in a 2002i that sold me on BMW," recounts Carson from his home in Hawaii. "I was so impressed by its cornering and the brisk eagerness of the engine. I was just a passenger, but it made a definite impression on me."

A few years later, Carson bought his first BMW: an R90S motorcycle. "That was great!" he says. "I rode that bike all over. I rode it from Iowa out to Yellowstone, and from Chicago to Los Angeles, round trip, alone."

But it wasn't until 2000 that Carson got his first BMW automobile. "I always wanted a high-performance car," he says. "Like a lot of people, I always wanted more than I could afford." So when his career was well established, he bought a 2000 528i. Then in 2003, he brought home a 745i. And two years later, a 645Ci.

Around that time he started talking with his client advisor at BMW of Honolulu about how he'd love to have Hawaiian koa wood inside his BMW. Carson had learned about BMW's Individual program, but since the program was not available in the U.S. at the time, it seemed like a pipe dream.

While Carson was in Munich taking European Delivery of his 645Ci, on a whim he made the trip up to BMW to talk with someone from the Individual program. "I knew there was no Individual program in the U.S., but I thought 'it doesn't hurt to try.'" Carson arrived unannounced, carrying a piece of the Hawaiian koa wood he envisioned gracing his dashboard. They confirmed what he already suspected. Carson left disappointed, but the idea was still itching in the back of his head.

In 2006, Carson heard that BMW was introducing their Individual program in the U.S., but only for the 7 Series. Two years later, before going to Berlin on a business trip, he placed a call to BMW Individual in Munich to set up a meeting. There, to his delight, he found out BMW's Individual program in the U.S. extended to models other than the 7 – but only if you asked. "People sort of know about it, but BMW's Individual program is not well known in the U.S. But I think that's changing." In fact, ordering a BMW Individual model today is as easy as visiting an authorized BMW center.

With the lease on his 645Ci ended, they discussed what he wanted to do. "I knew I wanted an M6. We talked about the possibilities of the leather in combinations; they showed me paint samples and leather samples. It was a really fun thing to do," Carson explains. "They were willing to do almost anything I threw out at them. The only limitations were what's reasonable and what's extravagant, in terms of cost."

Carson was already set on the M6, even though he'd never driven one. He loved his 645Ci, and the M6 was the logical upgrade. "It's more of the same. Only more. And more!" says Carson.

Working with the team at BMW's Individual program, Carson laid out his dream. Rich Hawaiian koa wood interior trim, in homage to his home in the Islands. Supple Champagne and Gold Brown Merino Leather seats with full contrast stitching, and matching Champagne Alcantara headliner and floor mats. Outside, the Ontario Gold Metallic paint makes his M6 a one-of-a-kind head-turner – only five cars in the world have been sprayed this color, four of them being 7 Series models.

"A day doesn't go by that someone doesn't say 'Nice car!' or 'Beautiful car!'" says Carson. "It universally draws comments." It took 12 months and cost \$30,000 over the base price to fulfill his dream, but Carson couldn't be happier. "There will be other BMWs down the road for me. But I'm keeping this car until I die."

BMW.tv/individual-carson