

Lyons on Wheels

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

2022 BMW X3 M40i

MSRP: \$43,700 (X3 sDrive 30i) As Tested: \$64,290 (M40i)



The top selling model in the BMW lineup, the X3 returns for 2022 with minor changes over '21.

It's classified as a small luxury SUV; one of seven models that BMW refers to as Sport Activity Vehicles. Their point is taken. While no crossover looks or feels as sporty as, say, a sleek, two seat convertible, BMW's DNA runs through the lineup. So, even models that are designed for utility (like crossovers), have a fun factor baked into them.

X3 is offered in four variations. sDrive30i (MSRP: \$43,700) and xDrive30i (\$45,700) are powered by a 2.0L turbocharged four cylinder engine (248 h.p., 258 lb.-ft. of torque). The top, M series (\$70,100) gets a 3.0L twin turbo inline six (473 h.p. (503 optional), 442 lb.-ft. of torque). In between is the M40i (\$57,800), which I drove for this review. It's also fitted with BMW's twin turbo I-6, tuned in this application to 382 h.p., and 369 lb.-ft. of torque. The twin turbo six in the M40i offers robust performance. BMW posts a 0-60 time of 4.4 seconds, which is more than a match for any rush hour Northway onramp merge. That compares with 3.9 seconds in the M, and 6.0 seconds in the Drive 30i. Gone from the lineup this year is the plug-in hybrid xDrive30e. But, the M40i now has a 48-volt, mild hybrid system. The system's additional battery improves acceleration, and the beefed-up starter-generator eliminates stop/start lag in bumper to bumper driving. The six is matched with an 8-speed automatic



Photos courtesy of the manufacturer



transmission, and power flows evenly. The EPA says that your expected fuel economy is 21/26/23 in M40i (I logged 22), 15/20/17 in the M, and 23/29/25 in the 30i. X3 can be equipped to tow a maximum of 4,400 lb. There's an overall solidity to the feel of the X3 on the road, and handling is above average for its class.

The interior has a function first design. Controls are straight forward in operation, and happily lacking in things like touchpads, that are often found in premium makes, and are better suited tablets and laptops than automobile cabins. New and standard for X3 in 2022 is a 10 1/4" standard, center display screen, as well as BMW's updated iDrive 7 user interface. The infotainment system is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. The M40i gets a 12.3" digital instrument panel and an integrated, cloud-based navigation system. The Harmon Kardon surround sound system (16 speakers, 600 watts, \$875) is an ear-worthy addition from the option sheet. Forward, lateral and rear visibility are better than average for the crossover class, and standard blind spot monitoring has your back. Six footers seated in back will be a snug fit behind six footers in front. Cargo capacity is a useably large 28.7-62.7 cubic feet, with a flat load floor and low liftover height for loading.

The M40i's abundance of power and taut handling is will please enthusiast drivers, but for most people, I think that the xDrive30i is a better bet. The standard suspension has a smoother ride than either the M40 or the M, the turbo four is plenty quick (with better mileage), and BMW's xDrive AWD system tamps down winter driving anxieties. X3's utility and size will suit the needs of many buyers; a fine blend of function and sportiness.

A 40 year resident of the Capital District, Dan Lyons has been reviewing new cars for publications for over 30 years. He is the author of six automotive books, and photographer of more than 200 calendars.