

Victor Harman is

Mr Chips

GETS MORE

Want the power of the 330d without planting the seeds of going up a company car tax notch? Mr Chips lets Superchips nurture a 320d.

There's no escaping the towering ability and performance of BMW's 204bhp 330d, in saloon, lifestyle estate, or the forthcoming (early 2004) Ci two-door coupé form. But at over £28K without any almost obligatory goodies, and with a 20% CO2 company car tax rating, a 330d SE Touring will cost any fortunate 40% taxpayer some £189/month in 'benefit-in-kind' tax. So, apart from any budgetary limitations that an employee may have, it's a significantly more costly alternative to the 18% rated and

£4.5K cheaper 150bhp 320d, which takes a more modest £143/month tax from the employee's pay packet. This is exactly two thirds the same tax on a petrol-powered 320i SE Touring. No wonder car-blessed executives are going diesel in droves! But, as I discovered on a flying visit to Superchips' Buckingham HQ, you can almost 'have your cake, and eat it' – saving the extra £46/month tax – thanks to the advanced technology of a modified ECU Superchips package applied to the standard BMW 320d engine. And what

“This Superchips BMW represents a definitive example of the current cutting-edge science of turbo-diesel tuning.”

stunningly refined and muscular performers such 'brainwashed' Beemers turn out to be! The 320d Touring in question is a newcomer to the Superchips company fleet which, needless to say, stayed in standard tune for no more than a few days! Rolling on standard 15" alloys, the car shows all the expected BMW class and refinement in terms of its roadholding/ride compromise – albeit a touch firmer than the saloon – and the controversial offset pedal layout!



The BMW 320d is just begging to be chipped.



The fun part is the testing.





The Tourer gets the full treatment.

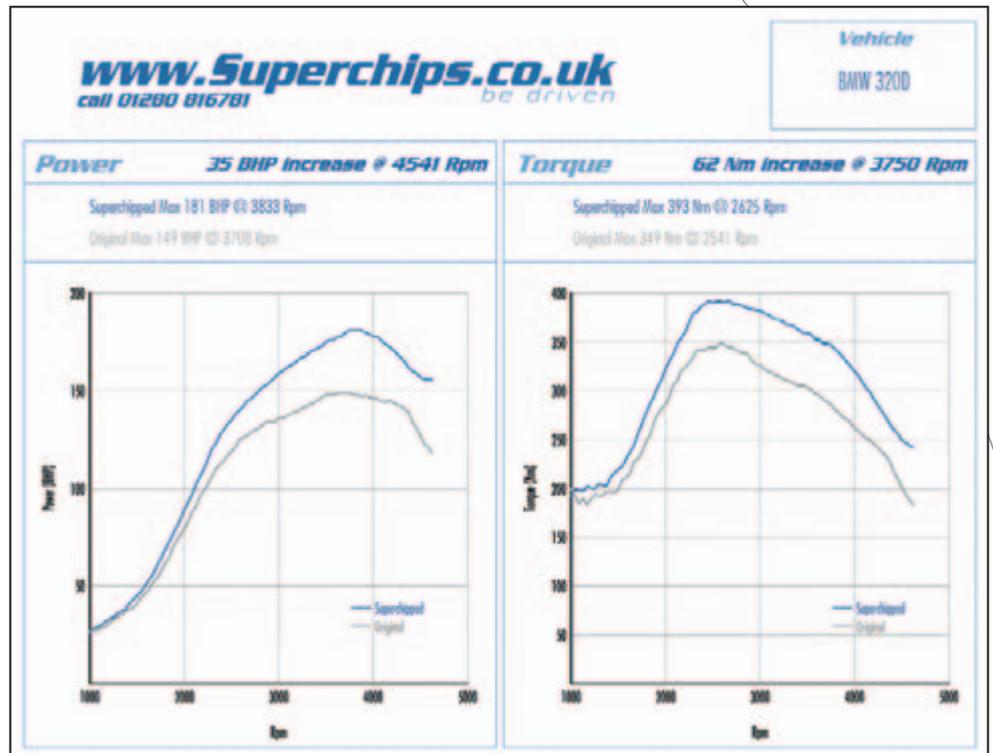
But performance-wise this car is a totally different story, with the modified engine exhibiting either blatantly extrovert overtaking and mile-munching capabilities, or suave, mild-mannered flexibility and total lack of temperament, as road conditions or the driver's mood dictate! The Superchips promise of a more responsive car, with more torque, and more power was honest too, with the dynamometer test figures showing a 20% boost in power to



181bhp. Along with an 'after' torque figure of 294lb.ft, this puts the car right up in 330d territory on a power and torque to kerb weight basis - the bigger 'six' being 110kg, or 7%, heavier than the 320d. That translates into sub-8 second 0-60mph times, whilst the car would doubtless better our test 330d's 6.8 second 50-70mph in fifth gear time, on account of somewhat lower gearing. That's going some. This Superchips BMW represents a definitive example of the current cutting-edge science of turbo-diesel



The Superchips 320d - very impressive.



The power and torque to weight ratios are almost into 330d territory.



Faster, torquier and more economical.

"The car shows all the expected BMW class and refinement."

tuning, exhibiting a total absence of temperament, no increase in noise and little difference in the working range of the already free-revving standard motor. Other than a greater willingness to nudge the 4,600rpm tachometer red line perhaps as the temptation is hard to resist when conditions allow. It still pulls willingly and smoothly from 1,500rpm if one feels lazy and, needless to say, there's never any suggestion of the black exhaust smoke from the over-fuelling suffered by some conversions. It's a tribute to the qualities of the brilliant standard engine that all this is possible and, based on

Superchips' past experience, there will be little or no penalty in terms of fuel economy. So the modest cost of £513.12 inclusive of VAT and fitting will soon be recovered from anticipated fuel savings of around 8-9mpg against the thirstier 330d, and I'm of the opinion that for many the tuned 'four' Superchips car represents a more wieldy and comfortable tool than the heavier, more firmly-suspended, and fat alloy-shod, 'six'. I've also a suspicion that when the existing 2 litre engine goes 'Euro 4' compliant (before very long) there may well be a few more hidden horses on tap that the Superchips boys will be chomping at the bit to unleash!

Superchips
Superchips Engine Management System Tuning
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www.superchips.co.uk

Goodbye,
Mr Chips.