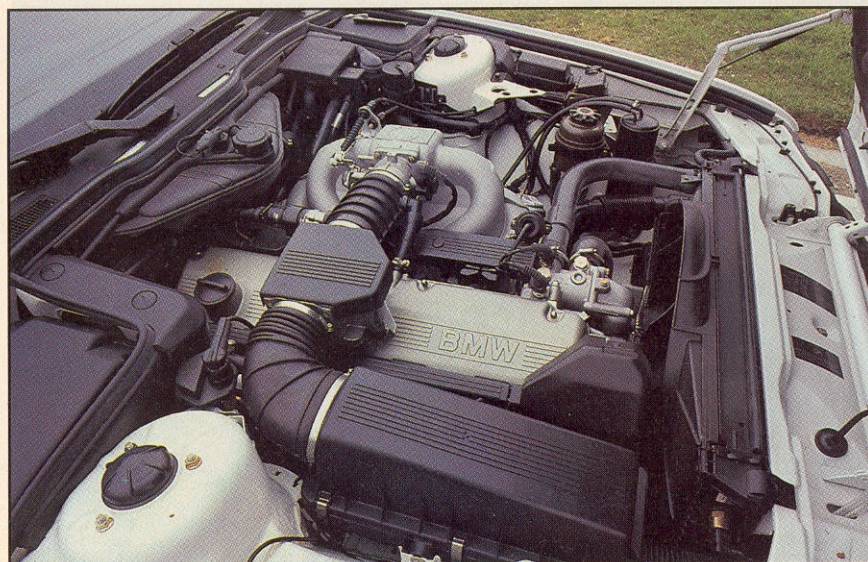




BMW 735i



polite traffic and even when you're cooking along.

The BMW's interior architecture includes vast expanses of severe black padding, uncluttered white-on-black gauges, plenty of glass, and a high driving position that provides excellent outward visibility but not much headroom for tall drivers. Generally, the control efforts are moderate and smooth.

At the same time, this car has quirks that are hard to forgive at its \$55,140 (including guzzler tax) price. The air conditioner wheezes loudly and lacks an automatic setting for the fan speed. The brake-light switch clacks with every pedal application. Our test car had rattles. The engine ties for the loudest of the group at idle, and it sounds coarse under power.

At 10.3 seconds to 60 mph, acceleration is the weakest of the group, too.

Still, there's something undefinable about the 735i that engenders warmth in the heart and votes in the ballot box. That, finally, is the all-important insight that only a direct comparison with the competition can reveal.

### Audi V8 Quattro Third Place

The Audi did not win a single category of the balloting but scored high in all of them, indicating well-rounded abilities. Its highest marks came in handling and in driving fun, in both cases just one point behind the Infiniti.

The Audi V8 Quattro's handling is direct and secure, with inexorably increasing understeer as power is increased. The suspension did seem to bottom a few times in the rough stuff, but even then the car retained its composure.

"Fun to drive" is a loose, catchall cate-