

AC Schnitzer Z4
Ecoracer from Aachen

Tuner Cars:
AC Schnitzer 99d

LIGHT STYLING

AC Schnitzer sees green: The technology platform 99d is the common denominator between driving fun and environmental protection. We took a closer look.

The Aachen Ecoracer is no miser with the charm

AC Schnitzer sports steering wheel...

... and superlight Recaros

What happens when you cross a racing beast with an angel? Or if you cross ecological awareness with performance?

Can it work well? Can it work at all? That was the question in the design offices of BMW tuner AC Schnitzer, and the decision was simply to try. The aim was "funconomy" - the symbiosis of fun and economy combined into one car. A real challenge even for the brainy, experiment-happy boffins in Aachen. But who else would have tried? Because the Aachen-based engineers are already renowned for exploring previously undeveloped areas of tuning. For example, the AC Schnitzer GP 3.10, which is the fastest gas-powered car in the world with a top speed of 318 km/h. Or the "Tension" project vehicle, a modified M6, which has been the fastest road-legal BMW on the globe since 2006. Now it's the eco-challenge, with a Z4 as the base vehicle and a clear mission: to create the most sustainable coupé ever to leave the Aachen works.

The final result speaks for itself. Purely visually, the technology platform known as "AC Schnitzer 99d" already stands out. This is due not only to the strikingly beautiful silhouette of the Z4 coupé and the air intakes in the emphatically extended bonnet. Above all, the eye delights in the pleasing green-white-grey colour scheme. The design radiates precisely the values which AC Schnitzer wants to incorporate in the car: dynamics, sporting performance and ecology. In addition, thanks to its racing suspension, the body is 30 mm lower than the standard model. Already it looks ultra-fast! The only question remaining is whether the 99d will actually deliver what the appearance promises. So let's take a closer look.

Sporting symbiosis: the silhouette of the 99d looks highly dynamic

The Aachen boffins call the end product of the crossing experiment the "AC Schnitzer 99d". The figure 99 symbolises the emissions figure of just over 99 g CO₂ per km. The "d" of course - yes, you guessed - stands for diesel.

Facial expression with overtaking prestige

A first glance under the bonnet makes us sceptical. What, can this baby engine accelerate to 235 km/h? Where previously the solid six-cylinder in-line engine of the standard Sdrive23i was housed, now there's a four-cylinder turbodiesel from the BMW 320d Efficient Dynamics series - naturally with the performance upgraded from 163 to 190hp. Despite this, in comparison it's almost tiny and even looks a little lost in the large engine bay. But you shouldn't be taken in by appearances. When it comes to the body however, this is more difficult - because this is where AC Schnitzer has intervened heavily. Carbon roof, carbon boot lid, carbon wings: composites have replaced the standard metal at many places. Add various aerodynamic components such as in-house designed front and rear spoilers, a carbon rear diffuser and the ion battery which is used instead of the lead block normally fitted. The exhaust has also been put on a diet.

The extremely thin-walled stainless steel system weighs 20 kg less. The total result of this systematic lightweight construction is a weight saving of a substantial 230 kg. And it that weren't enough, the Aachen-based tuner has also put the wheels on a slimming course. The forged alloy rims in AC Schnitzer design (Type VIII) weigh in at a silly 7.9 kg each. Titanium wheel bolts and magnesium spacers are almost de rigueur. Ceramic wheel bearings and special lubricants reduce the friction, while the BLUECO tyres by Continental originally developed for the concept car minimise rolling resistance and at the same time guarantee high cornering stability.

Uncompromising lightweight construction in every detail

Once into the cockpit, it's clear: here are all the signs of weight optimisation. Narrow carbon racing seats by Recaro have displaced the heavy standard seats. One of these weighs in at just 4.5 kg. Comfort clearly isn't an issue under these circumstances, but then we weren't intending to take a nap in the car. The pedal set of aluminium strikes the eye.

This just makes you want to press the gas pedal properly. With the Start-Stop button from the 320d Efficient Dynamics, we start the engine - and are pleasantly surprised. The sound stage is incredible! At least for a diesel. The small engine sounds really good and so gets the first plus point already. The acceleration is also solid - 100 km/h is actually reached after just seven seconds and then it continues to pull steadily. No doubt, plenty of power! But somewhere, that last little touch which would really send us into raptures - the decisive spark which makes your palms damp and sets your pulse racing - is missing. The endorphins stay in check, the sports steering wheel remains dry, and the blood flows normally. Until a second thought strikes you: this is a diesel! The power is really impressive for a diesel, because the Z4 simply races away. The 235 km/h top speed is no unreachable dream. Handling on the corners is sometimes a little tricky. You notice where the developers set the focus in the tyres - and it's not in ground adhesion. But in terms of consumption, the Ecoracer is a thrifty beast. The 3.8 litres/100 km quoted by Schnitzer aren't quite achieved in reality, but the lightweight BMW slurps only slightly over 4 litres per 100 km. With emissions of 99 g CO₂ per km, the adjective "clean" is richly deserved. Thumbs up!

All in all, the AC Schnitzer 99d fulfils all criteria which make for a high-performance car. In acceleration and top speed, it easily outperforms many better-equipped (diesel) competitors. The lightweight, high performance brake system works fantastically well and the looks are undoubtedly great. Yet the performance role doesn't quite sit comfortably with this lightweight car - certainly the balance between racing fun and ecology has been successfully achieved, but the old saying that you can't serve two masters at once still retains some

validity. The Eco Z4 is not a real source of adrenalin rush, but nonetheless it is a great step forward technologically - and a true power car. For a diesel!

iPhone provides entertainment instead of the radio

AC Schnitzer 99d

Technical data

Body:

BMW Z4 Sdrive 23 i (E89). Carbon front spoiler, AC Schnitzer front grille, carbon sports wings including Aluline set, two-piece rear spoiler, rear skirt insert, roof and boot lid of carbon

Engine:

Upgraded 320d Efficient Dynamics turbodiesel engine with 2 litre capacity, 140 kW/190 hp, max. torque 420 Nm at 1900-2250 rpm, CO2 emission 99g/km, lightweight ion battery, engine styling 99d

Transmission:

6-speed manual

Exhaust:

AC Schnitzer lightweight silencer system with chromed tailpipe trim 99d (central)

Suspension:

Height-adjustable racing suspension from AC Schnitzer, 4-pot lightweight high performance brake system with PFC retraction system (front), lightweight brake discs for front and rear axle. AC Schnitzer Type VIII lightweight forged alloys, BiColor in 85J x 19" with Conti Sport Contact 5P BLUECO tyres (225/35 ZR 19), including magnesium spacers and titanium wheel bolts.

Driving performance:

0-100 km/h in 6.9 seconds, Vmax 235 km/h.

Interior: painted interior trim, carbon racing bucket seats with 99d logo. AC Schnitzer gear knob, aluminium foot rest and pedals, velours foot mats with 99d logo, multimedia solution with iPhone, four out of six speakers removed.

Consumption: 3.8 l/100 km (factory figure)

Value:

Technology platform not for sale, value 149,000 Euro