

AUTOMOTIVE

BMW illustrates electrification of sonic experiences

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Composer Hans Zimmer and Renzo Vitale discuss how to create a fitting sound for the M vehicle. Image credit: BMW

By KATIE TAMOLA

German automaker BMW is revealing how it created a unique driving sound for its electrified BMW M cars with the help of an Academy Award-winning composer.

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In a short vignette, film score composer Hans Zimmer and Renzo Vitale, creative director of sound at the BMW group, embark on a meaningful journey to develop a sound that matches the emotional, cinematic experience of the electric M vehicles. BMW M models are the automaker's high-performance vehicles, so a distinctive driving sound is integral to the upcoming electrified models.

"This video spells out BMW's intention to be somewhat experimental with the sounds of future all-electric BMW M vehicles, which is intriguing," said David Undercoffler, editor in chief at [Autolist.com](#), San Francisco.

"Automakers like Porsche and BMW have for decades been revered for their cars' distinct engine and exhaust notes; they told your ears what brand of vehicle it was long before you saw it.

"With the move into electrification, these brands are struggling a bit with how to maintain a similar identity when the vehicles are inherently silent, or nearly silent," he said. "Thus, you see Audi, Porsche and now BMW making a point to show the world that their electric vehicles will be just as engaging as the gas cars on which they built their reputation."

Electrified sound

The video begins with aerial views of Los Angeles and Munich. A series of shots are then spliced together, including a man walking, a sound system and two clouds of the color red permeating a black background.

Mr. Vitale's voiceover then begins.

BMW works to create the driving sound took coincides with the exciting experience of an M vehicle

"M is a type of car which goes in the blood of people," he says, immediately establishing the thoughtful approach of the video.

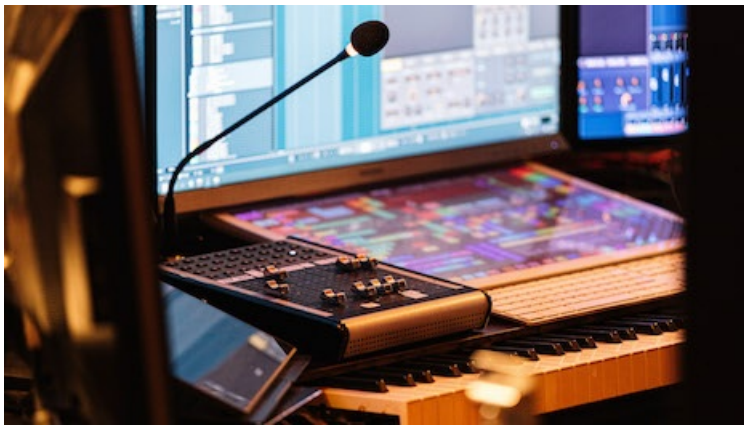
Suspenseful music plays in the background as the shot cuts to Mr. Zimmer at a computer. He explains they are composing a sound that is a beast in itself, yet still has precision the overall ethos of an M vehicle.

The entire video is highly cinematic, with additional closeups of a hand manipulating a stereo and music-composition tools, keyboards and computers as Mr. Vitale explains how they are creating a sound that coincides with the extremely physical yet emotional experience of riding in an M vehicle.

"When you are pressing the pedal of an M car, you suddenly have goosebumps all over your body," he says. "It's something that shuts down your head and is a pure, emotional feeling."

The shot cuts back-and-forth between Mr. Vitale and Mr. Zimmer explaining their thought processes, as additional dramatic shots including birds flying together, the moon and more play in between.

Mr. Zimmer talks about how he and the automaker asked themselves how they could produce a sound that was unlike any experience consumers may have had in a non-electric car before. The composer wonders aloud how he can make the M vehicle experience even more exciting and joyful with this sound creation.



In the short film, Mr. Zimmer and Mr. Vitale experiment with several sounds. Image credit: BMW

The shot then cuts to Mr. Zimmer and Mr. Vitale together in a studio, discussing the project and experimenting. Mr. Vitale explains that he aimed to have those who stepped into the M vehicle experience an explosion of sound.

The BMW creative director of sound adds that they wanted to create a sound texture that could simultaneously express force, a fusion between strength and a flowing energy.

Mr. Zimmer then adds that they are aiming to have the sound represent the willingness for something new and adventure that is inherent in the M vehicle and its drivers.

Sound and song of the future

Mr. Zimmer has collaborated with BMW and other automakers on composition and musical efforts in the past.

In 2018, Mr. Zimmer created a musical score inspired by a drive in a 2018 Range Rover along the Angeles Crest Highway. While adventure is central to Land Rover's brand messaging, this was a more upscale take for the automaker as it captured the emotion of riding in its vehicles ([see story](#)).

Last August, Mr. Zimmer was a guest for the second episode of BMW's Play Next podcast which highlights new artists and covers challenges facing the music industry. In his episode, Mr. Zimmer discussed the evolution of music production ([see story](#)).

BMW is among the premium and luxury automakers continuing to innovate and invest in electric vehicles, without sacrificing style, speed and even sound.

"The new trend in electric vehicles is performance, as we are seeing luxury automakers release high-performance EVs to compete with Tesla," said Julie Blackley, communications manager at [iSeeCars](#), Boston. "This BMW M video helps usher in the next generation of electric vehicles that are aimed to win over car enthusiasts who equate performance with loud brawny engines."