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[In the lap of luxury: The Mercedes S-Class W116](#)

Lead

When the 'S-Class' was first introduced, it was clear that Mercedes had created a synonym for world-leading automotive luxury. In advance of the launch of the latest S-Class, we look back at the innovative W116...

Mercedes has always claimed that the S-Class is the best car in the world, and who are we to take issue with that? In 1972, the W116 was born relatively easily, into a world distinctly lacking in luxury saloon cars, vastly different from today's intensely competitive market.

The Stuttgart-based company bragged that the W116 boasted the highest torque in a production car and that the eight-cylinder power plant, capable of catapulting the car from 0-62mph in 7.4 seconds, was Mercedes' biggest post-War road-going engine. The S-Class was also the world's first luxury saloon offered with a diesel engine, for those executives wishing to save a few pennies along the way.

Considering that mercifully fewer cars graced the roads back then, Mercedes sold an incredible 470,000 S-Classes between 1972 and 1980, and we have a hunch that, today, a large proportion of those are still beating like a drum on roads all over the world - from Arizona to Zimbabwe. The vast production numbers mean that well-sorted W116s are reasonably priced. Take this attractive 1975 model, offered in its original bronze hue, for example.

We wonder whether we will look back as fondly on the latest S-Class in 40 years' time as we do on the W116. Find out if the new model lives up to the bold, 'best car in the world' claim in this week's driving report.

Gallery

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