

'Swede' taste of luxury

The recently launched Volvo S90 might redefine the premium car segment in India in terms of sheer luxury, feels **Rajiv Mitra**

IF THE GERMANS BET BIG WITH PERFORMANCE as the main selling point for their cars then the Chinese owned Swedish car maker Volvo perhaps just upped the game by adding another dimension to it - Luxury. The latest from Volvo - the S90 is all about this. Pure indulgence mixed with elegant styling and performance rolled in the guise of an executive sedan meant for the well heeled.

And I am going to bet here that it will be a case of love at first sight when you happen to see the S90 stretched close to five metre in its full glory. The long, raked bonnet which subtly tells you that there

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are plenty of horses under the bonnet just waiting to come alive ends in to a large chrome grille and what is hard to miss is the "Thor's Hammer" LED daytime running lights. In the side profile you see the strong shoulder line which gives in to a sloping C-Pillar swooping down to blend into a short boot which in turns leads in to beautifully sculpted, very distinctive C-shaped tail lights. And all this gives it a nice sporty profile and this is what makes the current S80 replacement so very striking. The S90 sports Volvo's new design language which was first seen on the XC90 and now continues with this S90 and incidentally both the cars share the same SPA architecture as well.

If Volvo in the form of the XC90 gave us a robust, elegant, all purpose SUV with all the trappings of a modern machine, then, in this S90 they have

replicated it to perfection. Here is a sedan which looks modern, tops in terms of creature comfort with a long list of features starting with heated seats with extendable thigh support to a premium 1400 Watt, Bowers & Wilkins audio system along with a touch of chrome and real wood in the cabin and on the fascia which again boasts of a large centre display - in this case vertically mounted along with the AC vents which makes it rather unusual when you look at it but I guess it makes it more user friendly. And it is this touch screen display which is at the heart of Volvo's attempt to improve the ergonomics. And like in the XC90, Volvo in this car too has almost done away with buttons and knobs.

Instead what you get is all touch and the display is the main key to it. I will leave you to figure it out whether you find it more convenient to use or not but what it has done is to have set Volvo a little apart and all this does look very neat and hi tech as well.

And if cabin space is what you are looking for along with best of luxury then one thing is for sure - you won't find it lacking. Even if you are built along the lines of an NBA Basketball player you will still find enough space to tuck in your long legs. The S90 certainly isn't cramped although if you plan to put three side by side on the rear seat you might have a problem with the transmission tunnel running through the centre making it difficult for the person

SPECIFICATION

Engine
4 cylinder, 2 litre,
Turbocharged diesel

Max Power
190PS

Max Torque
400Nm

Price
(ex-showroom, Delhi)
Rs 53.50Lakh

in the middle. But then the beautiful Nappa leather wrapped seats more than make up for this slight shortcoming both in terms of comfort as well as aesthetics.

Volvo will only sell the S90 with a 2 litre, turbocharged, diesel powered unit here for the time being but the rumours are that in the future you might get a more powerful version of the same unit. As of now this unit is mated to a 8-speed automatic transmission which does a fine job of shifting effortlessly and the engine producing 190PS of peak power and 400Nm of Torque goes through the

(Continued on page 3)



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Above: Nappa leather wrapped seats are comfortable and look great and the front seats come with multiple adjustment including extended thigh support. Below: The vertical mounted display and aircon vents are unusual and makes the S90 interiors so very different. Leather wrapped steering comes with multi-function buttons and the instrumentation is a combo of analog and digital

rev band in the most efficient of manner producing a linear surge of power to take you past the 100km mark in just under 9 sec and this isn't bad for a car this size. And what I liked is the refinement of the engine. It's quiet for most part specially at idle and low rpm when chances of it being heard is the maximum and this is where it impresses the most but as you go higher up the rev band it get a bit strained and loud but thankfully the rev limiter cuts in. But the level of insulation is good and on the highways what you get is a very quiet cabin and the rear seat is the place you will really like to be in on a long drive.

In terms of the ride though like most European imports this one too is sprung on the harder side as far as the suspension setting goes. Consequently, you do feel the bumps and aberrations of our roads filtering in and this is perhaps the only flaw in an otherwise perfect car for a long drive. The S90 rides on 18 inch wheels with low

profile rubber and this further enhances this but the flip side is that you get really nice stability specially at highway speeds so if you are spending time behind the wheels you will find the ride very planted and reassuring and it adds to the feeling of being safe. And talking of safety, this being a Volvo, you can expect the very best both in terms of active as well as passive safety features.

Volvo India will bring this in as a CBU so it's not cheap at Rs 53.5 Lakh (ex-showroom, New Delhi) but again keeping in mind the company she will be in like the Mercedes E class, the BMW 5 series, the S90 is not really off in terms of pricing and if you look at the car in terms of loadings, build quality and sheer road presence she is pretty much up there with the Germans as well as the lone Brit in the form of the Jaguar. So if a luxury car is what you need with an understated elegance then the S90 is what you should look at. ■

