

The Mercedes SLS AMG's raw power and good looks guarantee it a place in the motoring hall of fame



There's nothing quite like the thrill of opening the gullwing door of a Mercedes SLS AMG, sliding into its bucket seats and pressing the start button; the roar that emits from the 571 bhp 6.3-litre front mid V8 engine is spine tinglingly satisfying.

Modelled to resemble the classic 1955 300 SL Gullwing, the SLS is the first car AMG has developed from start to finish and its passion for precision engineering is evident in every inch of this incredible vehicle. From its lightweight aluminium structure – keeping its weight down to just 1,620 kilograms – to its double-wishbone suspension and dual clutch gearbox, every inch of the SLS screams supercar.

Unlike the competition, though, the SLS screams 'I'm a sports car' in a more refined manner. Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson described the SLS as "pure elegance"; a car for "someone who

has taste and refinement”, and we would have to agree.

Maybe it's the smooth curves of the SLS, the hand-stitched leather interior, the lack of any gaudy badges or stickers shouting of the immense power that lurks beneath its polished exterior. Or perhaps it's the knowledge that the AMG precision engine tucked beneath the SLS's sleek bonnet has been built from scratch by one man – 'One man, one engine' is something of an AMG guarantee.

Whatever it is, it works; the Mercedes SLS is certainly getting some good reviews.



In our opinion though, its appeal has absolutely nothing to do with what the SLS AMG looks like or how well it's been put together, it's simply an incredible car to drive. The awesome power at the driver's disposal is intoxicating and we had trouble containing of squeal of delight as we pressed the accelerator to the floor for our first lap of the Yas Marina Circuit.

With its racing start mode, the SLS is capable of reaching 100 km/h in just 3.8 seconds, and with its lightweight carbon drive shaft to the rear axle, a seamless shift time of a mere 100 milliseconds has been achieved – the same as in a Formula 1 car. The end result literally takes your breath away as the SLS takes every corner effortlessly, speeding into the following straight, the engine roaring at every touch of the accelerator pedal.



The V8 engine's muscular power delivery pulls hard in every gear and there's even a wonderful crackle and pop as you back off the throttle. As the pace picks up, the gearbox shifts seamlessly, ensuring that none of the 571 bhp is wasted.

Currently the official Formula 1 Safety Car, the Mercedes SLS AMG is as close as you can get to a racecar on the road, but AMG engineering means this is raw power you can still control. The car's weight is distributed 47:53 front to rear, giving stunning balance, while grip is exceptional, and at high speeds, the extra stability provided by the pop-up rear wing boosts the car's grip even further.

Anyone who thought AMG's first foray into Lamborghini and Ferrari territory would be all show

## A future classic

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and no go is sorely mistaken. Quite simply the SLS is pure fun, and for half the cost of the SLR McLaren, starting from \$175,000-200,000, it is a sports car that those with the money to spend can buy with confidence. Born out of the legend that surrounded the Gullwing of the 1950s, but revising that myth at every turn, the SLS is sure to be a future classic.



**Megan Wynes**

### The stats

- 2-door

- Rear-wheel drive
- 563 bhp
- 650 Nm of torque
- Seven-speed automatic gearbox
- 6.3 L 32-valve V8 engine
- 0-100km/h in just 3.8 seconds
- Top speed 317km/h