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Tuning for the Middle Classes: Early AMG saloons

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Today, AMG is responsible for some of the most capable cars produced by Mercedes (think SLS AMG). But before it was officially incorporated into the Mercedes family, AMG worked in a semi-official capacity on cars in the company's 'middle class' range. We take a look at some of its earliest endeavours.

The first of these to receive AMG's attentions was the W123. Vehicles were sent by customers to the AMG headquarters near Stuttgart for upgrade. But it wasn't only saloons which were improved; coupés and estates also proved popular. A typical upgrade was the installation of the 5.0-litre V8 from the S-Class, while a full bodykit and upgraded wheels (early ones by BBS, later AMG's own) were often specified.



AMG performed similar upgrades to the W124 E-Class but, by then, the cars were now developed in partnership with Mercedes and could be sold through the company's official dealer network. Early examples of this cooperation were the E36 AMG (3.6-litre 24v inline-six) and the super-rare E60 AMG, which packed the M119 6.0-litre V8 – the very same engine used later in the CLK Le Mans racing car. Just 126 examples of the E60 were built.



By the time the W210 had superseded the W124, Mercedes had acquired a controlling stake in AMG. There were several official AMG versions of the W210: E36, E50, E55 and E60, with varying specifications and availability depending on market. With the E55, there was also an option for all-wheel-drive (4Matic), a feature that has recently been re-introduced with the revised W212 E63.



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