

Interior Design Concept

- **Unique free-floating central instrument stack**
- **Design inspired by Scandinavian heritage and high-end entertainment systems**
- **Layered interior creates impression of space and quality**
- **Space for five adults**
- **Generous (404litre) boot capacity with fold flat rear seatbacks**

In brief:

While the exterior of the all-new Volvo S40 could be described as evolutionary, the interior represents nothing less than a revolution in car design. The cabin is constructed of several visual "layers", which focus attention on an ultra-thin central instrument stack. The stack is a world first and appears to be free floating in space. It is a reflection of Volvo's Scandinavian design heritage and its commitment to premium quality.

Form and function go hand in hand in a cabin that offers comfortable accommodation for up to five adults. An array of storage compartments are accompanied by a large (404 litre) boot. The rear seats also split/fold to leave a flat, versatile load space, and the front passenger seat also folds forward to accommodate long load items.

In full:

While the exterior of the all-new Volvo S40 could be described as evolutionary, the interior represents nothing less than a revolution in car design. Its focal point is an ultra-thin central instrument stack, which appears to be free-floating in space. This is a world-first for the automotive sector and was previewed on the Volvo VCC (Versatility Concept Car) at the 2003 Geneva Motor Show. It is a reflection of Volvo's Scandinavian design heritage and its commitment to premium quality. "The super-slim format is the ultimate icon of the car and a revolution in itself," says its chief designer, Guy Borgoyne.

The inspiration for the interior of the all-new Volvo S40 came from outside the car world. "If you want to be innovative, there is little point looking at what the competition is doing," explains Volvo's Design Director Henrik Otto, "it is far more

valuable to look at what they're not doing." Otto and his team were influenced instead by the Scandinavian design tradition of clean surfaces and uncluttered lines. They drew inspiration, for example, from the elegant simplicity of the classic compression-moulded Series 7 chair, designed by the world-famous Arne Jacobsen.

Trends in high-tech electrical equipment, such as cameras, audio systems and computers, were also studied. Notes were taken on how the designers use and combine new materials so that they form part of the user-experience. These disparate influences – classic Scandinavian style and high-tech innovation – were combined to create a radically different interior concept.

The interior is built up of several visual layers. The first is an edge that flows around the base of the windscreen and along the door frames, trimming the entire interior. This provides occupants with the impression that they are safely ensconced in a cocoon.

The second layer is the primary fascia, which is minimalist. The air vents and secondary controls are positioned in individual islands, while the main instruments are grouped in two round gauges, surrounded by contrasting metal bezels. The choice of fascia finish is also significant – Volvo has eschewed the traditional leather-look in favour of a new texture that conveys a sense of cutting-edge technical innovation.

The ultra-thin central instrument stack forms the uppermost layer. Boasting a prominent position in the centre of the car, it fulfils the role of a remote control unit in a contemporary home entertainment system. Constructing such a novel feature was no easy task – "it required considerable ingenuity and hard work to find a technical solution for this super-slim format," explains Burgoyne. But no-one will doubt that the hard work has paid dividends. The slim design creates a feeling of luxurious space and the effect is enhanced by "theatre style" illumination, which discreetly draws the occupant's attention to the unit.

The stack on 'S' models has a Bauxite grey metallic finish, but customers choosing an 'SE' spec car are able to opt for one of three different stacks. The dark 'wood effect' panel is a sober, elegant solution, while the aluminium panel (made from genuine

aluminium) has a high-tech, premium feel. Arguably the most interesting trim option, though, is the "Iced Aqua" finish, which echoes the transparent appearance of some upmarket computer systems. "Iced Aqua" looks certain to appeal to the young, and the young at heart.

But while the interior of the Volvo S40 places an emphasis on style, form has not been allowed to take precedence over function. The fascia ergonomics have been carefully designed and drivers will find that the controls are sensibly cited and within easy reach. The driver's seat is multi-adjustable and the steering wheel adjusts for both rake and reach, ensuring that driver's of all shapes and sizes can get comfortable.

The development of the ultra-thin technology enabled Volvo's designers to introduce a useful storage area behind the central stack, which can be accessed from both front seats.

There is also plenty of room for passengers. The all-new Volvo S40 is 54mm wider and 44mm taller than the outgoing model and the wheelbase has grown by 78mm. Together with packaging improvements, these increased dimensions have created a car with significantly more interior room. Five occupants can travel in comfort and they all benefit from a full three-point safety belt system. The benefits of a four-door bodyshell in a class dominated by three-door alternatives also should not be underestimated.

Neither should the practicality of the all-new Volvo S40's luggage bay. With the rear seat in place, the Volvo S40 has a boot capacity of 404litres, which compares favourably with both the BMW 3-series Compact (300 litres) and the Audi A3 (350litres). Should the need arise, the luggage bay can also be extended. The rear seat splits into two sections and the backrest folds forwards to leave an entirely flat load floor. The Volvo S40 has a fold-flat front passenger seat, which allows loads up to 3.02m long to be carried.

