

Upgrade to **FIRST**

Scania's new R and S series models, revealed last August and now appearing in fleets, were the big news launch last year. To see what the improvements are from the driver's perspective, Ian Norwell takes an S500 out for a drive

Scania may be the last truck maker to provide a high, flat-floor cab, but it has come into the sector on the top rung of the ladder. My next-generation (NG) truck featured its new SCR-only 493bhp, 13-litre straight-six engine, and that S series cab in the first test on UK roads.

First, where does the much-vaunted flat-floor cab sit in the market today? Higher than you may think. The first flat-floor high cabs were from Mercedes-Benz and Volvo, with all other makers eventually following suit. The Actros Megaspaces was launched in 1995, when its flat floor was a striking innovation. The market viewed it as a luxurious niche vehicle for owner-drivers 22 years ago, but that has changed.

Phil Rootham, technical manager at Scania (GB), said: "We've been surprised to see about half the current volume of NG model sales going to the S series." As expected, it is being taken by long-haul European operators, and by owner-drivers, but there are extra volumes going into regular fleets. Rootham adds: "With drivers in short supply, and good ones even thinner on the ground, it looks

like this up-specing is being done to attract, reward and retain driving staff."

Those lucky enough to get one will have a capacious living and working space, 6'8" of standing room, with exceptionally high-quality fittings and finish. Overnighting drivers will be protected from continental heat by air conditioning that can run all night on leisure batteries, or be kept warm by a night heater of Scania's own manufacture that is integrated into the cab's ventilation system. Design features of convenience and quality are everywhere.

ROAD MANNERS

With the technical and engineering aspects previously covered (see also <https://is.gd/xisoze>, [/nemume](#) and [/axihub](#)), I concentrated on the driving experience. A commanding view, negligible roll on corners and very low noise levels are apparent, and the CC (cruise control), ACC (adaptive cruise control) and CCAP (cruise control active prediction) buttons and switches are all located at

the bottom of the steering wheel. On long-haul work, much of the driving is done with the thumbs, manipulating the setting of these three devices.

Ride and handling are very good, aided by the front axle having been moved 50mm closer to the front, creating a shorter overhang and reducing the degree of kneeling under heavy braking, particularly as the cab's centre of gravity has also been lowered. The driver has been moved, too.

The Opticruise 12-speed transmission is now faster, with the introduction of a layshaft brake to slow the internals and cut shift times to 0.4 secs. It's noticeable, as is the truck's overall 5% economy improvement: 2% from aerodynamics and 3% from drivetrain improvements.

Security and safety from this Swedish impact-tested cab is very high, with extra internal door locking beautifully integrated into the grab-handles. All-in-all, it's a premiership performance. **TE**

