**media release**

**Embargoed for Thursday, 13 December 2018**

From splendour to dust bowl and back.

The revival of a forgotten icon, the SA-only built BMW 530 MLE.

* One of the last of the original motorsport-inspired BMW 5 Series models unearthed in South Africa.
* Car number 100 of South Africa-only “homologation” special built at BMW Group Plant Rosslyn to be subjected to full restoration.

**Midrand, South Africa** – BMW South Africa is embarking on another exciting journey in its classic car expedition. It will restore a lauded model – unveiled by some of the very men who built the original more than 42 years ago – to its former glory.

When BMW South Africa wanted to go racing in the mid-1970s, the company sought out famous racing driver and Head of BMW Motorsport Jochen Neerpasch. Shortly thereafter, two of the first generation BMW 5 Series (E12) race cars were prepared to compete in the flagship Modified Production Series in South Africa.

The BMW 530 Motorsport Limited Edition (MLE) rolled up to the starting line in the Modified Production Series in 1976. Fifteen wins from 15 consecutive starts followed, and BMW stamped its authority on the racing series with three championship titles in three years. The BMW 530 MLE was the most successful racing BMW 5 Series in history when it was retired in 1985.

To qualify for entry, however, BMW South Africa had to sell 100 road-going versions of this first generation BMW 5 Series, known as the 530 MLE, to the public. Developed by BMW Motorsport as a limited edition “homologation” model for South Africa, 110 units of the Type 1 were produced in 1976, while 117 versions of the Type 2 rolled off the production line at BMW Group Plant Rosslyn in 1977. The six cylinder engine was a factory tweaked version of the same motor found in the 3.0L, boasting figures such as 147kW, 277Nm, a 208km/h top speed and a 0 – 100km/h sprint time of 9.3 seconds. It proved to be an early step of BMW’s ventures into track oriented cars for the road.

**Serial number: 770100**

After years of searching, BMW South Africa recently acquired one of the only BMW 530 MLEs known to have endured beyond its 70s heyday. Car number 100 comes with a particular pedigree – it was owned by race driver and the racing 530 MLE’s team manager Peter Kaye-Eddie, and its engine and chassis numbers are a matching set.

Now, with the input of BMW Group South Africa employees who assembled the original vehicles, the 530 MLE will be restored to its glory. Unique in the world, the Rosslyn-produced vehicles saw weight-reduction measures that included bodywork and pedals drilled by hand, manual windows with no air conditioning, and Mahle wheels.

South Africa enjoys a long history of rare and storied BMW special editions. In 1973, BMW Group Plant Rosslyn was the very first BMW plant established outside of Germany and several models were specially built for the local market until 1990. A growing list of these have been meticulously restored by BMW South Africa in later years, including the cult classic BMW 333i. The restoration of the 1976 BMW 530 MLE, which is the latest to join this legendary list, will be led by Luis Malhou of Custom Restorations.

Follow #BMW530MLE on social media to see the progress of the restoration.

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