



LONG, low and impressive, the Lincoln is a top prestige car by any standard. Car rides serenely on huge 9.25 by 15in. tyres, handles, stops and performs remarkably well.



LUXURIOUSLY equipped, leather-trimmed cabin is air-conditioned and has power controls for four-way front-seat adjustment, and all windows.

GIGANTIC carpeted boot will accommodate large amounts of luggage, but the spare wheel is a tough proposition to move.



AIR CLEANER and accessories effectively conceal Lincoln's 430cu.in. V8 engine which provides good acceleration and 110-plus m.p.h. top speed.

PUSHBUTTON PALACE

David McKay reports on the joys of driving long interstate trips in a Lincoln Continental sedan—America's, and Ford's, answer to Rolls-Royce and Mercedes

AIDED by Presidential preference and its own merits, the Ford Motor Company's costliest car, the Lincoln Continental, is still one of America's top prestige automobiles. It is a rare beast in Australia, so I was more than pleased to be loaned one for an extended test.

Australians have always had a high regard for Lincolns. I remember the sensation it caused in Sydney before the war when a wealthy businessman imported two V12s — a seven-seater limousine and a coupe. They are still going, silent and immaculate.

In spite of some periods in history — namely in the 'fifties, when most American cars turned really ugly under the weight of chrome and surplus metal — Ford have managed to maintain the Lincoln in a place of honor which upholds the traditions of the great era of American cars.

The 1964 Lincoln Continentals come in two basic styles — four-door sedan and, surprisingly, four-door convertible.

It was the former that Ford let me drive from Sydney to Melbourne after the car had been displayed at a Press function.

Some weeks earlier I had sighted the same big black Lincoln at a Ford "do" in Melbourne, and could hardly keep my eyes off it. It looked every inch a motor car — elegant, low, fully equipped, nothing loud or gaudy inside or out.

The morning after the Sydney function I picked up the Lincoln, had it quickly checked over at Hastings Deering and the sticky finger-

marks wiped off. Then, after a 15-minute delay while the car was shown to a potential Lincoln buyer, I pointed towards Melbourne, stopping momentarily at home to pick up some baggage.

Ease of Control

For the first block or two of driving the Lincoln felt a big car, but like the Jaguar Mk. X, it soon shrank down to Holden size because of the lightness and ease of driving.

These early impressions lasted for the whole trip, as did the feeling of silent strength and smoothness in the 430cu.in. engine and three-speed automatic transmission. Brakes and steering were, of course, power-assisted.

Standing alongside my Holden wagon workhorse in my driveway, the Lincoln looked about half as high. In fact, this lowness of 4ft. 6in. emphasized the moderate overall length of 18ft.—and there was not much overhang, either. The only bric-a-brac that mattered was a strip of lattice chrome across the tail.

Leaving Wairoona at 11.45 a.m. I was 100 miles away, at Exeter, south of Moss Vale, in under two hours—rapid motoring in anything. Much of the journey was slow going, the latter part over the appalling Wingecaribbe roads, but I have never made it more efficiently. Then on to Goulburn.

Those first 153 miles used half of the tank's 20-gallon capacity. The next stage, from Goulburn to Albury,

resulted in 14 m.p.g. and the heavy-throttle work on the Victorian side of the border reduced this to 13 m.p.g. But overall this was pretty satisfactory considering that many big cars can't do better than 10 m.p.g. under the same conditions.

The weather during the trip was bitterly cold, much of it embellished with strong, gusty winds and rain squalls. Nevertheless, within my luxury transport I was driving in shirtsleeves and exerting no more effort than I would have been in front of the fire at home turning the pages of MODERN MOTOR.

It was uncanny — the silence of the engine, the lack of any wind noise and the amazingly rapid rate of progress. I had all the windows tightly (electrically) sealed, the antenna fully up (electrically) and curved in the windstream, and the seat kicked up in front (electrically) at the right height (electrically) and an exact distance from the wheel (electrically).

The small, well-raked wheel fell into my hands as comfortably as any GP car's; vision was vast and I soon knew all the latest hits, for I was on a Sydney station all the way to Melbourne and reception was perfect.

Naturally, the interior trim was top quality with excellent carpets and fine leather. The attention to detail was also of the highest order, even down to the switchgear and the dashboard-mounted air-conditioning directional vents.

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CONTINENTAL

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I made three brief unscheduled stops to close the bonnet, which required adjustment. It was hinged (as they all should be) from the leading edge and would only pop up on to a safety latch.

Driving slowly in town the Lincoln had some body roll rounding a corner, but on the highway at speed this roll was eliminated and the car adopted a firm, taut ride.

I was using 28lb. all round instead of the normal 24. The handbook advised this for fast highway driving.

The wheels were huge 15in. affairs with wide rims to carry 9.25 Good-years. The tyres were silent and gave good adhesion on the wet roads at high average speeds. I had to check my speedo frequently, for the Lincoln gave that detached sense of speed you get in a plane.

As night fell and the rain got heavier I had one or two moments when going into fast right-handers, as I was temporarily blinded by on-coming lights and had to confine the large sedan to a narrow strip of bitumen on the outside of the bend. I needn't have worried, for the Lincoln behaved impeccably and never gave any indication of viciousness.

High Cruising Speeds

In fact, it had me doubting the speedo until I checked it and found it was only one percent fast at 90 m.p.h. I had it up to 110 on a slight up-grade, so a genuine 115 should be possible under favorable conditions. Even at these speeds you feel you could open the door, unlocking it electrically or manually, and step out, so peaceful and quiet is the Lincoln.

I thought the interior illumination of the Lincoln — particularly the dashboard — was superb, but I would have liked better driving lights. The focus wasn't all it could have been, too spread and too short, and I feel stronger bulbs were needed. There was no headlight flasher and the horn was insufficient to warn of the Lincoln's approach.

My only other complaint was that, as with all Ford products, the indicator on the transmission-selector panel was too indistinct at night.

Mechanically, the Lincoln is 100 percent. The three-speed transmission was silky in the extreme.

I had expected the suspension to bottom and the car to wallow over some of the weary bitumen in southern N.S.W.; neither happened. I would have been disappointed had the brakes not coped with the speed and weight, but they did.

A running time of eight and three-quarter hours between Sydney and Melbourne is possible in many modern cars, but I'd rather do it by Lincoln than anything else. Price-wise, I consider the Lincoln and the Mark X are outstanding value. The Lincoln is roughly £2500 cheaper than a Rolls.

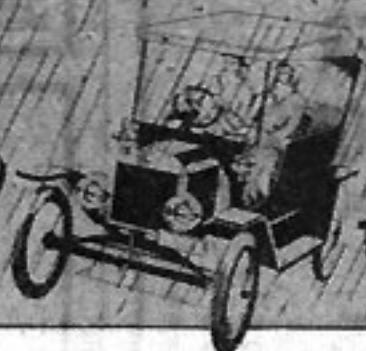
Travel by Lincoln is free of fatigue and not that much slower than by air when you take into account the time to and from airports.

The Lincoln has more leg room than any car I know. The doors, opening from the centre, make getting in and out easy for elder statesmen and their ladies. The air-conditioning of cars is something only the Americans seem to have mastered.

Unlike most American cars the Lincoln doesn't suddenly disappoint you when you lift the bonnet; the finish of the engine isn't in Jaguar or Rolls class, but it is better than any other American car I've driven. I certainly rank the Lincoln as top of its class.

The car I tested was fully equipped with push-button radio and air-conditioning and its approximate price, excluding the conversion from left-to-right-hand drive, was £5800. Add between £700 and £1000 for the changeover and you can have one of the world's best cars.

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71°



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