

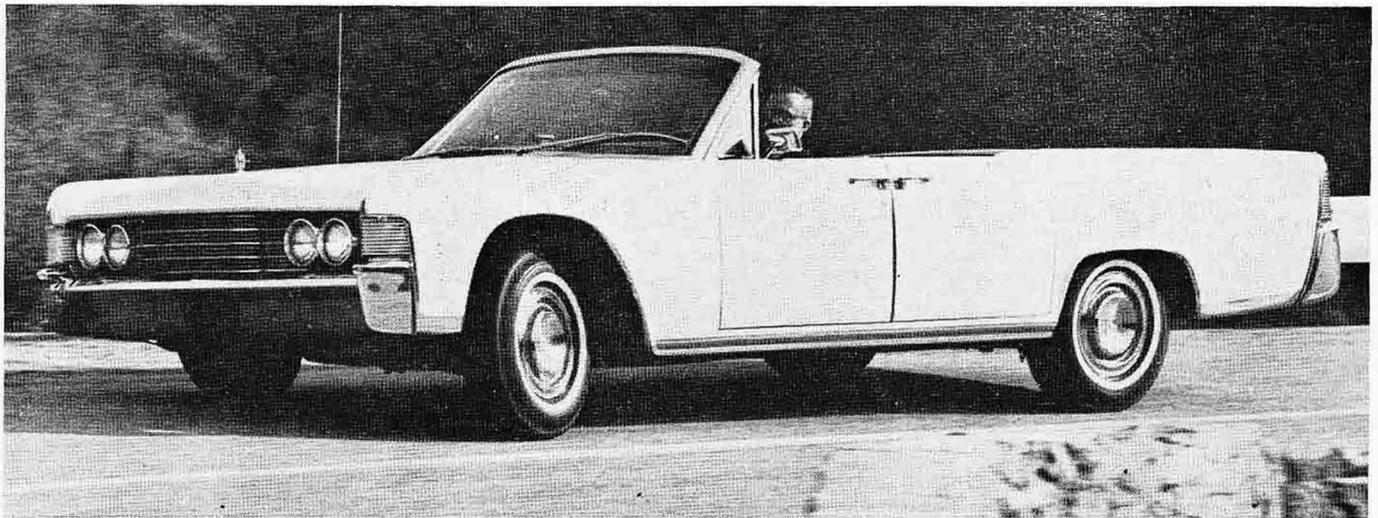
by Bob McVay, *Assistant Technical Editor*

Lincoln's Continental convertible is unique in the U.S. luxury market. Not only is it the sole make to claim a four-door convertible, but its center-opening doors and rear side windows that slide halfway down when the door is opened are indeed different. In addition to all this, the Continental is one of the most comfortable, luxurious, and one of the heaviest automobiles offered in this country. With a full tank of gas (24 gallons), our test convertible tipped the scales at a cool 5720 pounds.

Even a 430-cubic-inch V-8
that puts out 320 smooth, quiet

Lincoln Continental Road Test

Added Stopping Power From New Disc/Drum Combination Gives the Continental a Luxury-Car First



LUXURY CONVERTIBLE HANDLES WELL ENOUGH FOR ITS PONDEROUS SIZE AND WEIGHT. HUGE WINDSHIELD KEEPS DRAFTS OFF FRONT PASSENGERS.

horses can't pull 5720 pounds through the quarter-mile in record time. But performance was adequate for the uses the car was designed for.

Ride and comfort are strong points with all Continentals, and well they should be, because this is the car's forte. We'll go on record as saying that the bench front and rear seats are among the most comfortable we've ever relaxed in. Regardless of distance, we always felt comfortable behind the Continental's adjustable wheel. Good leg and back support are prime features of this soft, genuine leather seat. And the standard six-way power unit makes almost any size person comfortable in just the position he or she desires.

For a car of its size and weight, the Continental convertible handles quite well. It isn't one to be driven hard over a winding mountain road or snapped in and out of traffic. But for around town or country cruising for long distances, the car was smooth and it went where we aimed it so long as we weren't too enthusiastic. With all that weight up front, understeer was very strong in corners at anything over recommended speed limits.

Certain aspects of the convertible make it less desirable than the sedan to some people. First, there's a lot of wind noise and whistle around the side windows and its cloth

top. Second, the convertible weighs about 400 pounds more with all its top-operating mechanism — a fascinating device in itself.

The sedan has a huge trunk with lots of luggage space and a standard trunk lid that makes loading and unloading easy. Our convertible had an arrangement that made the trunk almost impossible to use. The rear deck opens from the front, making all loading and unloading a side affair. Everything goes in over the fenders, and it's quite a stretch across a car that's 78.6 inches wide.

The spare tire location makes an AAA membership almost mandatory, especially for women drivers. You have to: climb *over* the fender, wrestle the spare out of its center well, heave it back over the fender, change the tire, and try to get the flat back into the trunk. This is a chore few women are physically capable of tackling, and not many men would even want to take up such a challenge.

Most of the luggage compartment is taken up by the top mechanism, so there isn't much room for luggage with the top up, and virtually none with it down. Continental convertible owners either have to travel light or use Railway Express for most of their luggage.

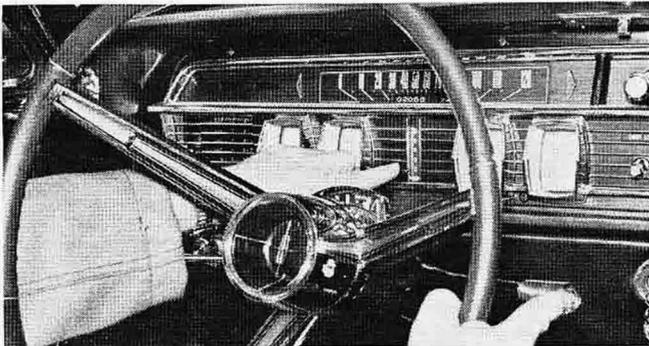
But another complaint about the four-door convertible



RESTYLED REAR END SQUATS UNDER ACCELERATION, BUT NOT ONCE DURING TEST DID THIS 5720-POUND CONVERTIBLE SPIN ITS TIRES.



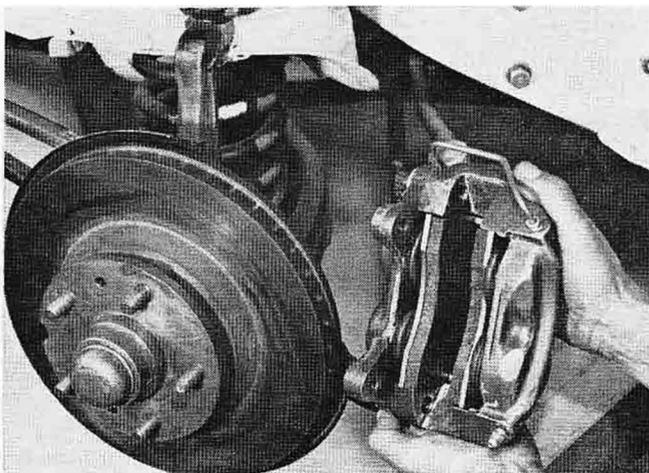
Riverside's Turn Two, taken at 65 mph, brought out considerable body lean, but this car is suspended for a comfortable ride.



One handy feature is adjustable steering column. Shift lever button actuates it, and dash indicator tells position of column.



Brakes weren't completely fade-proof but did show big improvement over last year's drums. Stops were swerve-free each time.



Four hydraulic pistons press molded asbestos shoes against ventilated, cast-iron disc. Changing pads should be quick job.

is that, due to the body design, it's necessarily not so rigid as the four-door sedan. On rough back roads, where the car wasn't completely at home because of low ground clearance, we heard all kinds of rattles, creaks, and groans from the chassis and body due to flexing. Yet the Continental's unit construction, with its torque-box under-body structure, was whisper-quiet on smooth roads, where it was intended to be used. Deep dips and holes in the roads bottomed the front suspension easily if taken at more than posted city speed limits.

And now back to the good points of the car — and it has far more good than undesirable features.

Lincoln has gotten the jump on other luxury cars by being the first to offer front-wheel disc brakes. Our stopping tests showed that the new brake system cut 56 feet off last year's stopping distances from 60 mph and brought the 30-mph figure down from 40 to 27 feet. Pedal action was very smooth and progressive. Lincoln uses discs up front and cross-ribbed, flared, cast-iron drums of 11-inch diameter at the rear.

No matter how good the brakes are, 5720 pounds is a lot of weight to stop, and we felt considerable fade from high-speed stops during our top-speed runs. The car managed a 103-mph absolute top speed on Riverside's famous back straight. After one stop from this speed, the Continental needed some cooling-off time, but the brakes did withstand a lot of abuse and are a big improvement over last year's system.

Four hydraulic pistons force the friction pads against husky 11.87-inch-diameter, finned, cast-iron discs. The caliper discs are automatically adjusted, with the two brake pads kept .005 inch from the disc. Removing two bolts takes off the caliper, and two more bolts take off the brake pads. This should make shoe or pad changes a quick, simple matter.

Power brakes are standard, and the two-diaphragm master power cylinder maintains a 60% front, 40% rear braking balance. Rear drum brakes are self-adjusting whenever the car is backed up and the brakes applied. This new system is a big improvement that gives better braking, more quick stops more often, and almost completely swerve-free performance, thanks to the rapid cooling of the front discs.

As might be expected, economy leaves something to be desired, but considering all the work the engine has to do and all the accessories it has to drive, our mileage range of nine to 12 mpg (premium) wasn't bad at all.

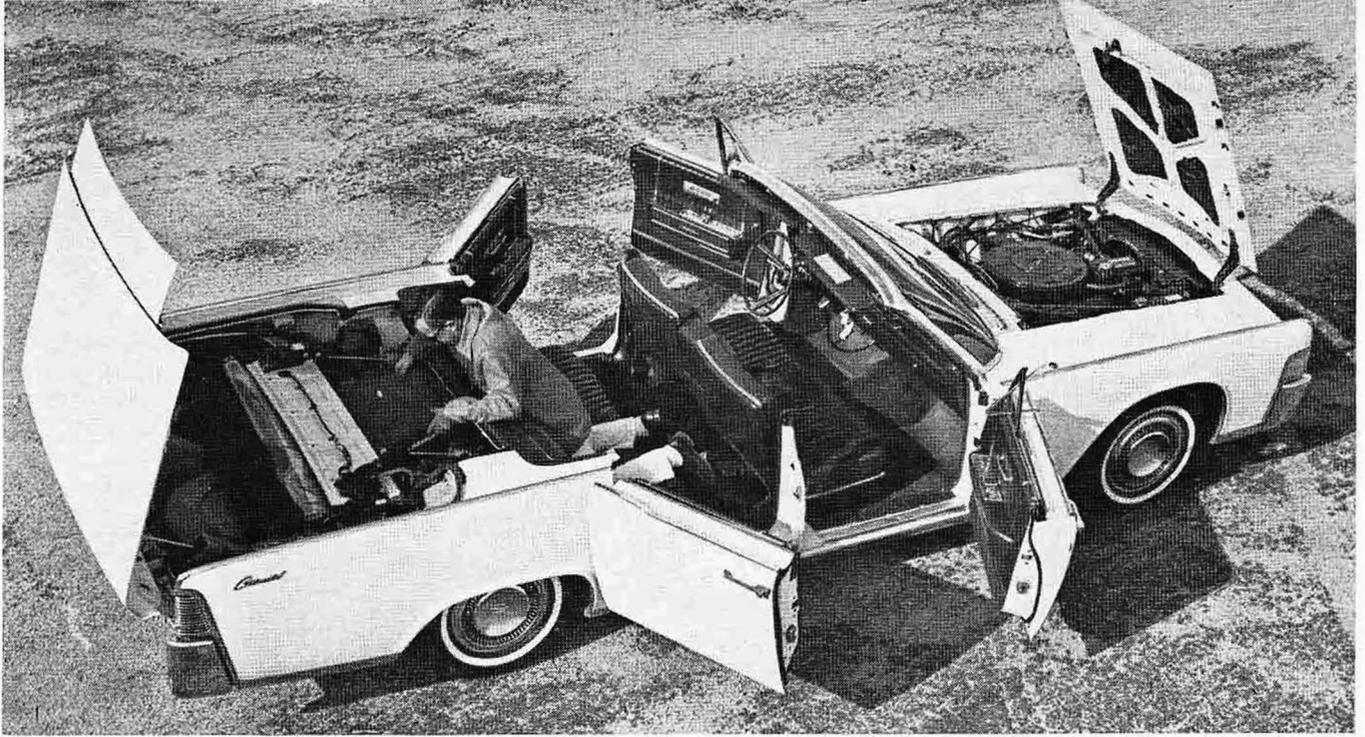
It takes a trained eye to tell the new Continental from last year's offering. Styling changes are subtle and reserved — why change a good thing anyway? Grille changes and redesigned tail lights are evident. The turn-signal lights are now mounted in the front fenders.

Luxury is the Continental's main feature, along with comfort. The car abounds in creature comforts and nice little luxury touches seldom found in lesser automobiles. Interior fabrics range from the genuine leather on our test car to moiré fabric and wool broadcloth in a pleasing array of colors. Convertible tops can be ordered in white, black, blue, or tan. The sedan also offers an optional vinyl-covered roof.

Although the option list may look small for such a lesser car comes as standard equipment on the Lincoln Continental. Certain interesting options include a choice of bucket front seats with a console, heavy-duty springs, and a 3.11 rear axle for mountain driving.

Personally, we'd choose the sedan, because it's more rigid, quieter, and has more trunk room. But the prestige of owning the biggest, most comfortable and luxurious four-door convertible available is reserved solely for Continental owners.

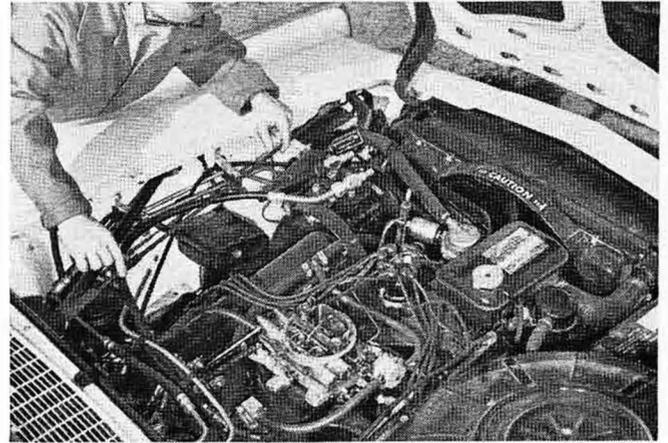
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WITH EVERYTHING OPEN FOR INSPECTION, CAR SHOWS OFF ITS HUGE INTERIOR DIMENSIONS, TINY LUGGAGE SPACE, SMOOTH, QUIET ENGINE.



To get to spare, all luggage must be removed, and we had to go in after tire. Flat in rain would result in a good dousing.



Huge 320-hp engine puts out maximum torque at a low 2600 rpm and never seems to be working hard despite its big workload.

LINCOLN CONTINENTAL

4-door, 6-passenger convertible

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: Air conditioning, AM-FM radio, adjustable steering wheel, automatic headlight dimmer, emergency flasher, door edge guards, tinted glass, floor mats

BASE PRICE: \$6938

PRICE AS TESTED: \$7928.25 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 2000 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5200 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph.....	4.1 secs.
0-45 mph.....	8.0
0-60 mph.....	12.9

PASSING TIMES AND DISTANCES

40-60 mph.....	7.1 secs., 518.0 ft.
50-70 mph.....	7.8 secs., 686.4 ft.

Standing start 1/4-mile 18.9 secs. and 79 mph

Speeds in gears @ shift points

1st.....	45 mph @ 4000 rpm
2nd.....	74 mph @ 4200 rpm
3rd.....	103 mph @ 4000 rpm

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading.....	33	49	55	65	76	86
Weston electric speedometer.....	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear.....26 mph

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 27 ft.; from 60 mph, 141.5 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv V-8
Bore: 4.30 ins.
Stroke: 3.70 ins.
Displacement: 430 cu. ins.
Compression ratio: 10.1:1
Horsepower: 320 @ 4600 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.744
Torque: 465 lbs.-ft. @ 2600 rpm
Carburetion: 1 4-bbl.
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Gearbox

3-speed, torque-converter automatic; column shift

Driveshaft

1-piece, open tube

Differential

Hypoid, semi-floating
Standard ratio: 2.89:1

Suspension

Front: SLA stabilizer bar, with pre-lubed ball joints, rubber-bushed compliance struts, coil springs, direct-acting tubular shocks
Rear: Solid axle, with 7-leaf semi-elliptic, rubber-bushed shackles, and direct-acting, tubular shocks

Steering

Recirculating ball nut, with integral power assist; vertical tilt column
Turning diameter: 47.41 ft.
Turns lock to lock: 3.9

Wheels and Tires

5-lug, stamped, full-contact steel disc wheels
9.15 x 15 4-ply tubeless whitewall tires

Brakes

Ventilated, cast-iron caliper disc front; duo-servo, cast-iron, cross-ribbed and flared drum rear
Front: 11.87-in.-dia. x 1.25-in.-thick discs
Rear: 11.09-in.-dia. x 3.0-in.-wide drums
Swept drum area: 443.0 sq. ins.

Body and Frame

Unit construction, with torque-box under-body structure
Wheelbase: 126.0 ins.
Track: front, 62.1 ins.; rear, 61.0 ins.
Overall length: 216.3 ins.
Overall width: 78.6 ins.
Overall height: 54.2 ins.
Curb weight: 5720 lbs.