

Tom McCahill Tests the Cars of Sweden



THE cars of Sweden—all two of them, the Volvo and the Saab—cover the mythical medium-price bracket like Jackie Gleason on a bar stool. These two Swedes are as different beside our American cars as Geronimo would have been at a flower-child convention. Both imports are rugged, functional pieces of transportation with top emphasis on quality and ability in smallish packages.

The average Joe Blow finds less appeal in the Saab and Volvo than in those other Swedish imports with the long blond hair because the cars call for an acquired taste. Not everyone will like them. The quality buff, however, resents being a sucker to tinsel and may give the Volvo and Saab more than a second look. On the next four pages we'll give you a rundown on these hot new rigs.

SWEDEN'S cars, all of them, flank McCahill. The one on the left is the new Saab 99. The new six-cylinder Volvo 164 is shown at right. Saab is priced just below \$3,000, the Volvo at \$4,000. Both are quality rigs.

THE Volvo 164 is the first Swedish offering ever to hit these shores with a six-cylinder engine. Until now, Volvo was famous for its reliable four-belter. With the new Six, rated at 145 hp, things will not only be smoother but faster. The styling in many ways is similar to the older 140 series with the exception of the grille, which is heavy Anglo-Saxon. The 164 also is larger than former Volvo sedans, hitting the tape at 186 in. in overall length with a wheelbase of 106. One nice thing about this car is the fact that you can turn it like a chipmunk because it has a turning circle of only 31 ft. 6 in. The steering, which is power, is extremely fast with a 15.1 ratio.

The interior comfort surpasses all of our sporty-type cars with excellent legroom up front and good legroom in the rear. The front bucket seats and the wide rear seat are upholstered in leather and are soft and comfortable.

The front seats, incidentally, have more adjustments than a Chinese bacarat player's income tax returns. In addition to the usual fore-and-aft move-

ment the seats can be tilted all the way back to form a bed with the rear seat. If you happen to be oddly shaped these seats can be adjusted with what they call a lumbar support. This means that by turning a knob more pressure will be exerted on the small of your back. By turning the same knob the other way you get less support for your funny little fanny. These seats also can be adjusted up and down and, if you're a real nut, you can reverse the passenger front seat so that it faces the rear.

One fault, while we're still sitting in the seats, is the window controls, which take too many winds to get up or down. One point in Volvo's window favor is the fact that the 164 still features front vent windows but the Saab in the sister test has swung away to the GM school of ventless windows.

The price for this new Volvo will undoubtedly cause a few gulps, especially the tag on our test car which was completely stripped and without any options. Delivered in Florida this naked chestnut costs \$4,000 (actual East Coast POE is \$3,995). Now for this kind of

Cars of Sweden: VOLVO 164



dough the typical American buyer not only expects dozens of geegaws but a loaded canary cage with a bath in it. This job of ours didn't even have a radio, which makes it the king of Starksville by our standards. Naturally, radios are available and so are automatic transmissions. Ours had an Aire-dale tail, four-speed manual winder.

If you are a real dude you can get your little Swede with air conditioning and even a stereo-tape system. It is at this point of the crossroads that the price tag must be considered. To use an old antique dealer's rule-of-thumb buying guide: "Does it look like \$4,000?" With this system the Volvo would flunk. It doesn't.

This is where the connoisseur part comes in. The Volvo, with its heart of gold and quality not even found in a Cadillac, is worth the money if you go for this sort of thing. Volvo has disguised the value pretty well. Among good imports Volvo is not alone in this because the BMW, a top-quality rig, would flunk the test and, if you really want to get down to specifics, the Mer-

cedes-Benz 300 SEL V8 (the best car in the world) doesn't look like 14 grand to the average eye.

Going on the assumption that you are an automotive connoisseur and not a champion of showy flash, let's take this box of bolts out for a test.

The first thing you will notice is the excellent quality of the finish, then the top-grade carpeting and the ample glove compartment plus Mercedes-type net catchalls behind each front seat for sticking in summonses or your collection of Playboys. Once inside you will be sure to notice the high seating position for easier, good driving and you will note a fairly complete set of instruments. In addition to the regular odometer this job has a trip meter. This item has all but disappeared from the American scene in the interest of profit.

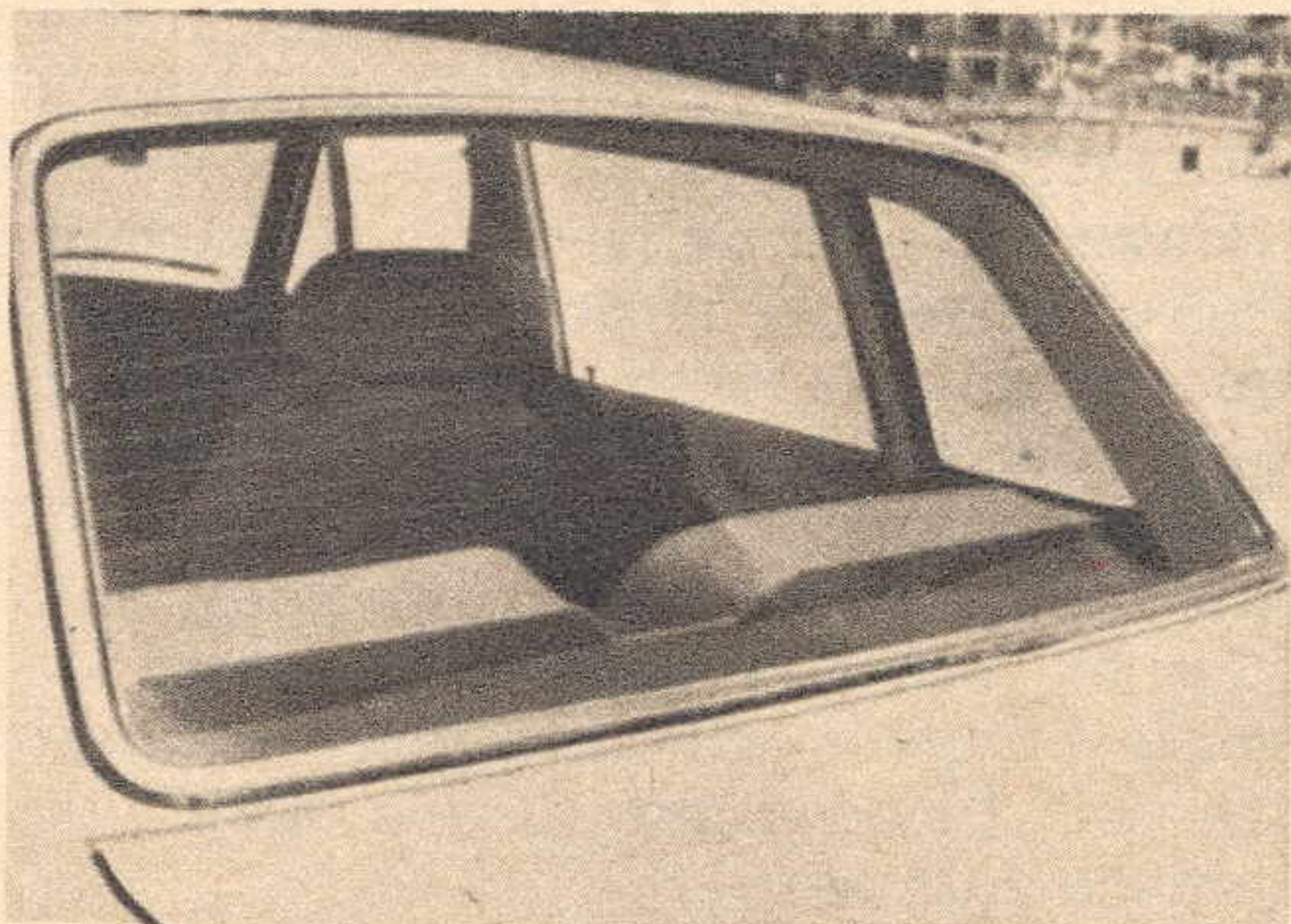
Once underway the smoothness of the new six-cylinder mill is a little more than impressive and when you start to hit road bumps and street rumbles you realize how a good car should ride. After several hundred miles of cross-country run- [Continued on page 125]

TEST CAR SPECS

Model Tested: Volvo 164	Bore: 3.50 in.	Ground Clearance: 7.1 in.	Tire Size: 6.85x15
Engine: 6 cylinder	Stroke: 3.15 in.	Front Tread: 53.1 in.	Price: \$3,995
Displacement: 182	Axle Ratio: 3.7:1	Rear Tread: 53.1 in.	0 to 30 mph: 3.5 sec.
cubic in.	Wheelbase: 106.3 in.	Weight: 2,928 lb.	0 to 50 mph: 7.2 sec.
Brake hp: 145	Length: 186 in.	Gas Tank Capacity: 15.51	0 to 60 mph: 10.3 sec.
Torque: 163 ft.-lbs.	Height: 56.7 in.	gallons	1/4 mile: 17.4 sec.
Compression: 9.2:1	Width: 68.3 in.	Turning Circle	Top Speed: 110.9 mph
		Diameter: 31.5 ft.	

All times recorded on corrected speedometer.

REAR window has tiny electric wires built into it for quick defogging and defrosting.



VOLVO'S virtues include excellent road-ability, interior comfort, plus performance.



Volvo 164

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ning I was sold on the car's roadability—and I'm not easily sold. The four-wheel disc brakes were excellent and when I finally took it to the Daytona Speedway I made several emergency stops from 100 mph and there was no fade. During my acceleration runs I found I was hitting 0 to 60 in 10.3 seconds and getting away from the mark to 30 in 3.5. It did the quarter-mile in 17.4 seconds and around the high-speed oval of the Daytona track, working the chute by coming off the high bank, the Volvo got up to a top speed of 110.9 through the straightaway trap.

As Volvo indicates in its ads, this rig will look a lot newer ten years from now if it isn't wrecked or sunk than any American car being made. Of course, a lot of people will scream, "Who wants to keep a car that long?" But that's up to the buyer, not me. That \$4,000 price tag will be a little hard to swallow for some but it will seem delicious to others.

Here is one of the best cars in the world, from a quality standpoint, that should prove as reliable as sunrise and as enduring as a tax bill. It is tough and rugged and has reasonable performance for turnpike use and will prove outstanding when the roads get second- or third-class. The Volvo is a first-class rig, well disguised. •