

NEW WINE, OLD BOTTLE



THE 164 VOLVO

WHEELS impressions of the first Volvo 164 to arrive in Australia.

IN a market geared to impressing The Joneses, the Volvo 164 is almost unsatisfactory. From profile or rear view it could be a 140 series Volvo. From the cheque book angle it is in small Mercedes or Jaguar territory.

The Volvo 164 is the second big move from the Swedish manufacturer in recent months and the most significant for the past decade. The release of the 164 or B30 engine culminated with an increase in capacity for the four cylinder engine (now the B20) as a new car program to have been completed in late 1968.

Running on schedule, the car was presented late last year. The first have only just arrived in Australia with the order books full for units still waiting shipment. The scarcity of the model made it impossible for Swedish Motors, the local importers, to lay on a car for test. However, through British and Continental Motors, the Sydney retailers, we were able to sample the 164 in a short drive.

The car we had was automatic — which did nothing for lively performance — and the car was naturally extremely tight. The most impressive part of the 164 was the turbine-like smoothness of the new six. The crank runs in seven bearings and obviously balancing has been subject to terse quality control.

The six is virtually a stretched four producing 145 bhp and 163 lb/ft of torque on a 9.2 to 1 compression ratio, from 2890 ccs.

The 164 is quite conventional in all respects. It is also the ultimate in sophistication. The interior is sumptuous with the chairs finished in leather and retaining all the good points of Volvo orthopedic adjustment. Safety is high on Volvo's priorities and not only does the new body feature predictable crumble rates but the chassis carries tandem braking systems and a new type of variable ratio, power-assisted steering.

As proof of their faith, Volvo installs a million-mile odometer.

New silky smooth six cylinder (Type B30) engine is big news for Volvo. Twin carburetors are designed for close emission control for US.

The twin carburetors have been especially designed, after considerable research, to deal with exhaust emission while a viscous coupling fan cuts out a predetermined rpm to reduce the noise level and stop unnecessary power drain from the engine.

The automatic quadrant selector works in similar manner to the automatic 144 we tested recently. The lever moves in the opposite direction to the indicator and an inexperienced driver can end up selecting reversing on the move — which is not good for the gearbox.

Swedish Motors will be supplying a road test car as soon as shipments can satisfy demand. Until then we can only vouch for the new engine's extreme smoothness and, of course, Volvo's austere but durable quality. #

