

GIT
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EARLIER this year when Volvo Australia announced its new range of "big bumper" Volvos, the company expressed its intention of holding prices until the end of the year. But intentions are one thing and realities are another — and the reality of the great Australian "grab as much as you can while you can" economic conditions forced the company to a premature Price Justification Tribunal application.

The way the motor industry is going right now it doesn't take a genius to guess that they left the tribunal with a revised albeit more expensive price list.

Well at least they tried which is better than the Australian manufacturers, fresh from their third "quarterly price adjustment," have done.

In terms of the injected, automatic-gear 164 test car, Volvo's increase tacks on a hefty \$775 taking the car to the \$8375 mark. This puts it amongst some pretty advanced machinery and it could be argued that the extremely well-oiled safety sell given to Volvos may well be irrelevant at this price because a buyer in this area would accept it as a matter of course.

And generally speaking the competition presume this in their promotion and spend their money in getting over the message of their various and usually well worthwhile technical innovations.

Apart from innovation in safety, much of which took place some years ago now, the Volvo has very little to talk about because mechanically it is a very conservative affair. But it is this very conservatism, its security its solid, safe looks and comparatively uncomplicated engineering which has a great deal of appeal to many buyers, particularly in the age groups more able to afford it.

There are other cars like it in the cheaper market areas that do particularly well. One that comes off the top of the head is the Toyota Corona, hardly an excitement machine but a good steady seller as good reliable, straight forward transport. There are more interesting cars but many of them don't do as well as the Corona.

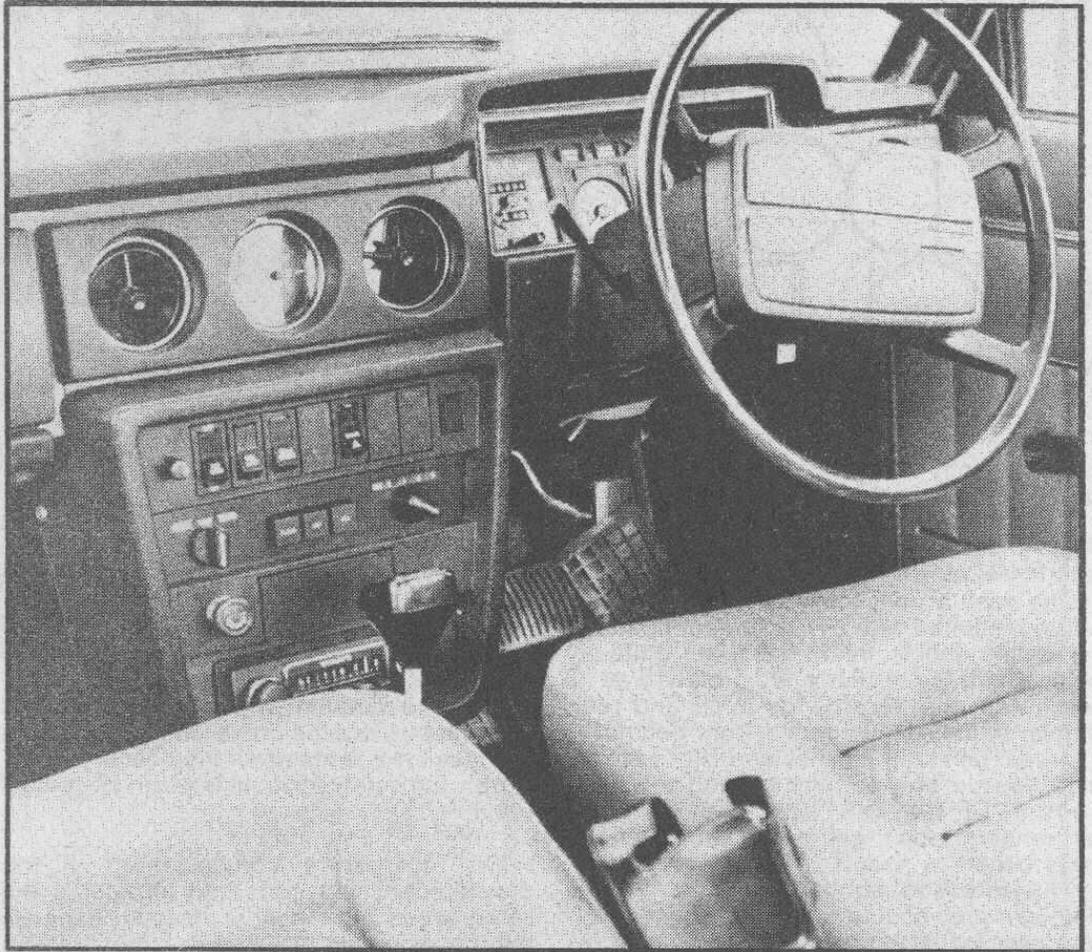
But one can't get away from the feeling that the Volvo's is a specification of too long a duration. The three litre, six cylinder engine has pushrod overhead valve gear and the sounds of tappets, although subdued, is not quite the thing for today's quality cars. The level of sophistication in the suspension, while well sorted, is a trifle old hat with a live axle bringing up the rear.

Yet it goes about its work in a most competent way. The car was in our possession for longer than normal and with each day our affection for it grew. As a city commuter one received an armchair ride with pliable leather covering on the deep-cushioned seating pampering the body.

At city speeds there was little work to do with power steering relieving the driver of effort at the wheel (but leaving sufficient feel for good judgment), automatic obviating gear selection decisions and the wide torque band (almost flat from 2200 rpm to 4500 rpm) giving good flexibility and response.

On outright performance the three-speed automatic transmission soaks up a lot of the power at the wheels that the electronic fuel injection gives to the engine. Our standing 400 metre run produced a figure of 18 seconds flat which compares with 16.8 seconds for our manual 164E test of some time ago over the slightly longer standing quarter mile.

Strangely enough our fuel figure this time was much better with a return of 14.5 l/100



km (19.5 mpg) compared with 15.7 l/100 km (18 mpg) for the manual car.

The long travel on the coil springs gives a soft even ride with a slight penalty of some body lean in corners. A normal approach to bends produces some understeering characteristics but calling on the injected sixes resources (and second gear) produced the hint of oversteer easily corrected. Roadholding via radial rubber was good.

Noise levels were generally low right through various surfaces and speeds with the engine becoming audible when called on for greater revs in lower gears. Steering in the straight ahead position lacked exact precision and the car moved around a little in crosswinds.

Under brakes the big front ventilated discs and to a lesser extent (because of the brake limiting valve) the rear discs take the



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164's 1880 kg bulk in hand and drag it to a halt efficiently and quickly. No drama, just good, straight braking.

All round visibility is good, enhanced on the 74 cars by the deletion of the front quarter windows.

The dash area is imposing in its padding and punctuated with a multitude of heating-ventilation outlets. Instruments are white on black and easy to ready. Controls are all in reach with the hazard, fog lamp and rear demist switches illuminated from behind.

A seat belt lamp flashes and clicks at you until you do the restraint up and a weight sensor in the left seat makes sure passengers don't get away with undone belts either.

The direction controls for the heater-demister are vacuum operated by push buttons and we noted a rush of hot air at the feet under hard acceleration when only the demist button was selected. It was rather amusing really as though it was getting all hot and bothered about being pushed. It



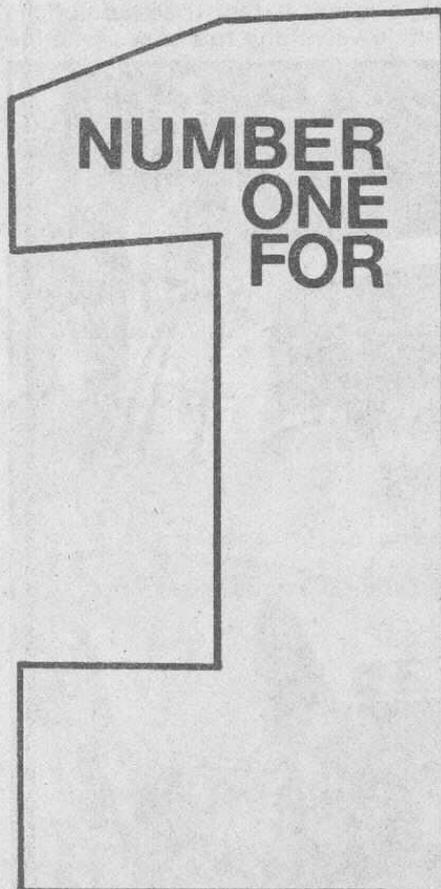
turned out to be caused by a pressure variation at the vacuum source. One point that mystified us was the provision of hot air from the face level vents when the heater was on. Surely the safety formula is warm body-cool head.

On this year's Volvos, most of the development has gone into improving the safety areas and the most obvious change is the provision of big rubber mounted five mph bumpers. While these are a US safety requirement they do offer the benefit of reducing the damage of minor city knock-for-knock prangs, providing of course the

bumper that hits you or the bumper you hit is of the same height.

The 164E is locally screwed together (but the bits aren't local) and the test car was a good example of how the local boys can do a quality job if they put their minds to it. Or maybe, with Volvos, they get more time to do it.

While it may not have a sophisticated specification the 164E is a most comfortable sturdy cocoon which breeds an air of well-being. It is conservative, secure and safe, a nice way to drive around town and a nice way to lope through the countryside. It's just the thing a lot of people are looking for.



VOLVO



PETER MANTON MOTORS

Melbourne's only city Volvo dealer

683 Elizabeth Street,

MELBOURNE 329 7088

MOTOR MANUAL

TEST DATA

MAKE Volvo
MODEL 164E
FROM: Volvo Australia, Brooklyn, Vic.
PRICE AS TESTED \$8375
OPTIONS FITTED None

ODOMETER:

Before 3785 km
 After 4263 km

WARRANTY:

Period 12 months
 Distance Unlimited

INSURANCE: For comprehensive purposes insurance with AAMI Ltd*, this vehicle is listed in category 3. The premium for a fully owned vehicle carrying a 60% no-claim discount and an excess-free policy would be \$151.89.

ENGINE:

Location Front, rear drive
 No. of cylinders Six
 Configuration ... In line, overhead valve
 Carburation ... Electronic fuel injection
 Capacity 2.978 litres
 Comp. ratio 8.7:1
 Bore and stroke ... 88.9 mm x 80.0 mm
 Power ... 119 kW (160 bhp) @ 5800 rpm
 Torque ... 230 Nm (170 ft./lbs.) @ 2500 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

Type Three-speed automatic
 Control location Floor
 Ratios:
 1st 2.39:1
 2nd 1.45:1
 3rd 1.00:1
 Final drive 3.31:1

PERFORMANCE (Figures run at Calder Raceway).

Test conditions ... Dry, cool, still
 Speedometer error (km/h):
 Indicated 60 80 100 120
 Actual 59 77 97 115

Acceleration:

Zero to:
 60 km/h 4.7 sec.
 80 km/h 6.8 sec.
 100 km/h 10.2 sec.
 120 km/h 16.4 sec.

Standing 400 metres:

Elapsed time 18.2 sec.
 Terminal speed 123 km/h

Maximum speed in gears:

1st 90 km/h
 2nd 132 km/h
 3rd approx. 180 km/h

Braking:

110 km/h to 0 ... 49 metres (160 feet)

Fuel consumption on test ... 14.5 l/100 km (19.5 mpg).

Fuel consumption expected ... 15-13 l/100 km (18-22 mpg).

Cruising range approx. ... 420 km (260 miles).

BODY/CHASSIS:

Length 4870 mm (191.7 in.)
 Width 1710 mm (67.1 in.)
 Height 1450 mm (57.1 in.)
 Wheelbase 2720 mm (107.0 in.)
 Track F 1350 mm (53.1 in.)
 Track R 1350 mm (53.1 in.)
 Clearance (min.) N/A
 Weight 1880 kg (4145 lb.)
 Tank capacity 60 litres (13.2 gallons)

SUSPENSION:

Front: Independent with rubber mounted control arms and stabiliser, coil springs, telescopic dampers.

Rear: Live axle, longitudinal rubber-mounted control arms and torque rods, track rod. Coil springs, telescopic dampers.

BRAKES:

Type of system ... Power assisted, dual circuit. Pressure limiting valve.

Front Ventilated discs
 Rear discs

STEERING:

Type Recirculating ball
 Ratio N/A
 Turning circle ... 10.5 metres (34.6 ft.)

WHEELS:

Type Pressed steel
 Diameter 15 in.
 Rim width 5.5 in.

TYRES:

Type Radial ply
 Dimensions 175 HR 15
 Speed rating 180 km/h

*Australian Associated Motor Insurers, 365 Little Collins St., Melbourne. Tel. 60 0751.

