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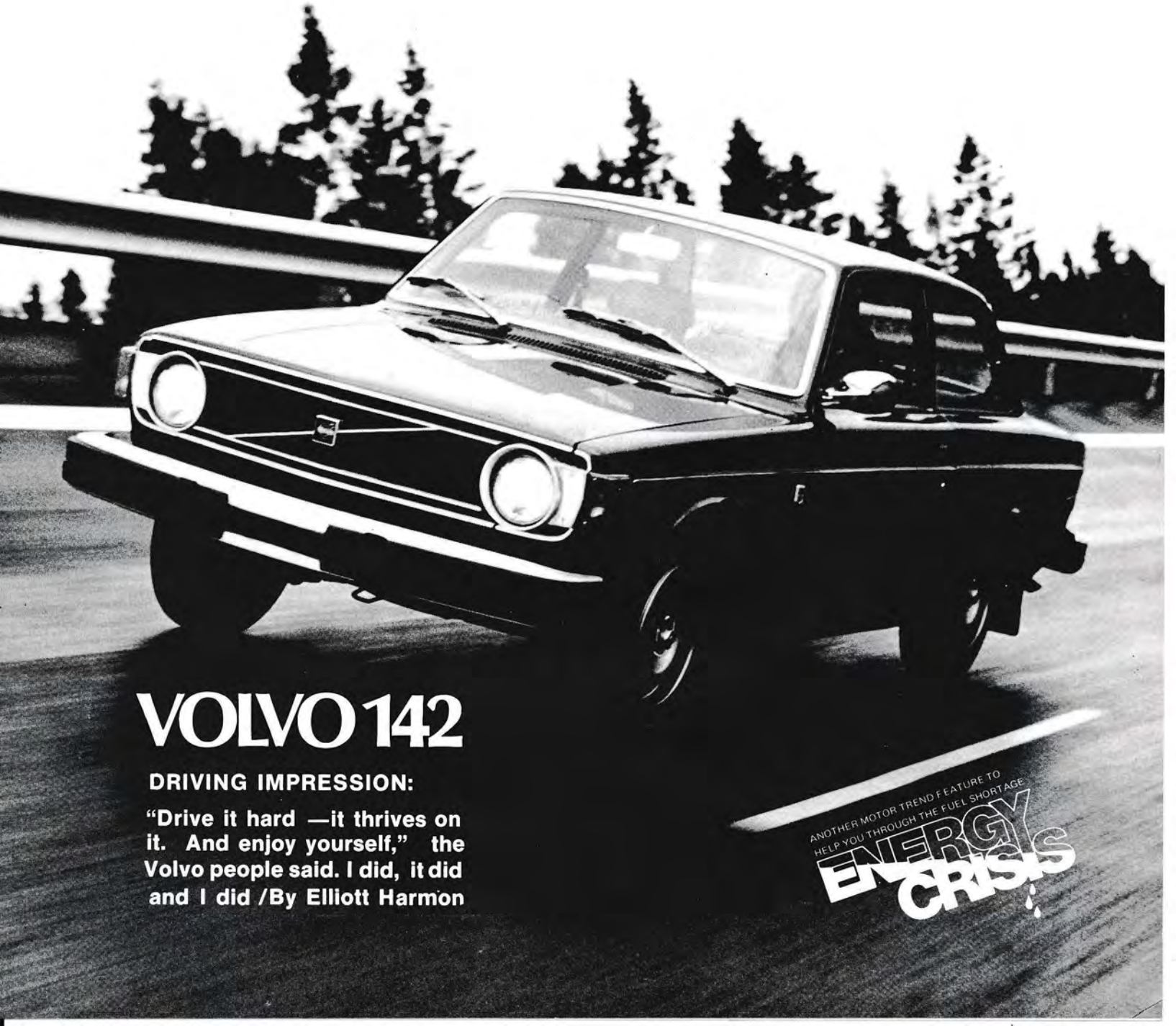
MOTOR TREND



VOLVO 142

DRIVING IMPRESSION:

"Drive it hard —it thrives on it. And enjoy yourself," the Volvo people said. I did, it did and I did /By Elliott Harmon

ANOTHER MOTOR TREND FEATURE TO HELP YOU THROUGH THE FUEL SHORTAGE

ENERGY CRISIS

ROAD TEST

If true wealth is the ability to survive, then Volvo is rich /By John Lamm

ANOTHER MOTOR TREND FEATURE TO HELP YOU THROUGH THE FUEL SHORTAGE

ENERGY CRISIS

VOLVO 142E

21.4 mpg

Fuel consumption calculated on a 73 mile loop of city, suburban, freeway and hilly roads. Speeds did not exceed 60 mph.

21.3 mpg (at 50 mph)

19.8 mpg (at 65 mph)

VOLVO 142

DRIVING IMPRESSION:

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The target on my trip was the snowy slopes of Lake Tahoe, high in the Sierra Nevada, a geographic location similar to the white sweeps of Sweden, home of the Volvo. It would be a test geared perfectly for the import with the rugged reputation.

Our car was the Volvo 142, a compact-sized two-door sedan. Into the car we put three people of normal dimensions, each carrying a week's worth of luggage, plus ski equipment and a set of tire chains. The trunk, amazingly, still had luggage space for a fourth person.

From Los Angeles, Lake Tahoe is some 500 miles and eight hours to the north. Four hundred of those miles are on flatlands stretching from the Imperial Valley to the edge of the Eldorado forests, and then its a winding climb upward. On the trip to Tahoe, I kept the speed at or below 65 miles an hour, in spite of the machine's willingness to easily cruise faster. With ski racks in place, and the little Volvo loaded to the gills, I averaged 19.8 miles per gallon!

The car was equipped with radial tires, and displayed reasonable handling characteristics, although even with the four-speed manual transmission accelerated rather slowly into traffic, albeit steadily and smoothly. Putting my foot on the brake pedal transmitted a sure sensation, and the comforting assurance that the four-wheel disc brakes could stop on a dime—even on the winding, snowy Sierra highways.

The temperature panel of the Volvo is logically and efficiently designed for easy access and control, but the defroster did not carry enough air without closing off all interior vents manually. Just depressing the defrost button did not divert enough air to the windows. And for no apparent reason, the heat occassionally would shut off, replaced annoyingly by a blast of cold air. Hopefully, it was a problem confined to this particular test car.

There was another problem with the dash instruments. Remembering that I'm six-feet-one (and Swedes are supposed to be equally tall, right?), the speedometer dial was obscured with my hands in the 11 o'clock and 1 o'clock positions. Even with hands off the wheel, the all-important gauge is partially obscured. If it were not for Volvo's excellent, firm-supporting adjustable seats, I would have suffered from neck cramps, brought on by craning for a glimpse of my speedometer progress. I don't suggest this, but at night I learned to read the speedometer by its reversed reflection in the left-front window.

Obviously, a lot of American drivers are convinced of the Volvo's reputation for ruggedness. When we reached the summit of the Tahoe area and moved on to the snowy shores of this most-beautiful lake, I noticed what seemed to be an unusual number of Volvos making their way through the snow, slush and salt-filled mud. The combination of rock salt on the roads, and ice and mud, are disagreeable elements to any car, but the Volvos seemed right at home in the winter weather.

After clearing the snow off the car mornings and evenings, the rear-window defroster quickly melted the ice from the glass. In addition, the Volvo started every time—quickly and efficiently, and that's a critical point in deep-winter climes. With the chains on, for the heaviest going, the Volvo kept its grip on the street remarkably well, and only once did it momentarily lose that grip. The car has remarkable balance.

On the return trip back to Los Angeles, I spent a major portion of the trip driving at 50 miles an hour. The object was to test my emotional state at having to drive at Mr. Nixon's suggested speed, and also to compute mileage at the slower speed. Traveling at that speed in the slow lane gave me a queasy feeling in the pit of my stomach, and a resultant new outlook on driving. I felt quite alone, intimidated. I was one of those drivers who usually cursed at fellow motorists traveling too slowly on freeways. To me, the freeway driver doing 50 deserved a citation much more than did the driver going five miles over the limit.

The shoe was now on the other foot. Truckers, who obviously were not experimenting with Mr. Nixon's sugges-

tion, came roaring up on my tail, literally closing to within inches of my 5-mph bumpers. They roared past, changing lanes at what seemed like inches before disaster, and then pulled back in front of me too close for at least my comfort. I could feel their angry breath on the back of my neck before they pulled alongside my Volvo.

Fifty miles an hour was an awfully tedious speed to endure, particularly when you're on a long trip. Surprisingly, at the lower speed my mileage increased only by 1.5 miles per gallon, or 21.3 for the return trip. Personally, time is money and not worth the small increase in fuel economy.

Overall, the Volvo 142 was a thoroughly rugged performer, perhaps best suited as a dependable utility/family type of car in all climates. The mileage is good, and there is an overwhelming feeling that the car will run solidly for a long, long time. My only criticism is American in nature—I'd like to see the Swedish engineers and stylists provide the Volvo owner with a little more flair in the design of the vehicle. ■

SPECIFICATIONS	VOLVO 142 E
Engine:	OHV In-line four
Bore & Stroke - ins.	3.50 x 3.15
Displacement - cu. in.	121 cu. in.
HP @ RPM	109 @ 6,000
Torque: lbs.-ft. @ rpm	109 @ 3,500
Compression Ratio	8.7:1
Carburetion	Bosch electronic fuel injection
Transmission	4-speed manual
Final Drive Ratio	4.11:1
Steering Type	Cam & Roller
Steering Ratio	17.5:1
Turning Diameter (curb-to-curb-ft.)	31.6
Wheel Turns (lock-to-lock)	4.4
Tire Size	165SR15
Brakes	4-wheel disc
Front Suspension	Indept.-coil springs
Rear Suspension	Live axle, coil springs
Body/Frame Construction	Unit
Width - in.	67.1
Front Track - in.	53.1
Rear Track - in.	53.1
Wheelbase - in.	103.0
Overall length - in.	188.0
Height - in.	56.5
Curb Weight - lbs.	2780
Fuel Capacity - gals.	15.8 U.S.
Oil Capacity - qts.	4.0 w/filter
Storage Capacity - cu. ft.	21.5 cu. ft.
Base Price	$4750
Price as tested	$5942
PERFORMANCE	
Acceleration 0-30 mph	4.0 secs
0-45 mph	8.9 secs
0-60 mph	12.6 secs
Standing Start ¼-mile Mph	72.6 mph
Elapsed time	18.6 secs
Passing speeds 40-60 mph	6.0 secs
50-70 mph	8.8 secs
Stopping distances From 30 mph	34' 2"
From 60 mph	149' 4"
Gas mileage	21.47
Speedometer error Electric speedometer	27.3 46.9 56.8 66.3
Car speedometer	30 45 50 60

*Speeds in gears are at shift points (limited by the length of track) and do not represent maximum speeds.

MAZDA RX-4

21.4 mpg

Despite what the EPA says about rotary engines, here's living proof of rotary economy. Mazda's newest car features a larger two-rotor engine than was in the RX-2 or RX-3, and a four-speed transmission. Power level is still excellent in this '74 two-door hardtop, and it gets more than 20 mpg.

SAAB 99LE

21.4 mpg

Yet another economical imported sedan is this four-door model from Saab, featuring front wheel drive, a fuel-injected SOHC 1985-cc four-cylinder engine, and a four-speed trans. Comfort and durability both rank high with this Swede and a mileage figure of 21.4 mpg makes it thrifty as well.

VOLVO 142E

21.4 mpg

Though this Swedish import has a fuel-injected engine that's 1-cc larger than Saab's, the mileage is identical. This is not only one of the quietest and most comfortable sedans currently on the roads, but is considered one of the safest as well.

DATSUN 260Z

21.1 mpg

The updated version of Datsun's popular two seater sports/GT car is now called the 260 because of the larger 2565-cc SOHC six-cylinder engine. Our '74 model with the four-speed not only gave good economy but also ran the quarter-mile in under 17 seconds.

MUSTANG II GHIA 2.8

20.7 mpg

The more expensive two-door hardtop Mustang II Ghia had the larger 2792-cc V-6 engine and an automatic, yet it still managed over 20 mpg on our loop. No wonder Mustang II was named *Motor Trend's Car of the Year for 1974.*

CHEVROLET VEGA

20.6 mpg

This hatchback version of the Vega had the 2287-cc engine coupled to an automatic transmission and a lower rear-axle ratio. Though the mileage is still respectable, a comparison with the Vega in 9th place shows the difference an automatic and lower axle ratio can make on a small car.

MUSTANG II MACH I

19.4 mpg

This Mustang II is the three-door performance version and features the V-6 coupled to a four speed. Again mileage is fairly good, thanks to the smaller engine size and the smaller overall size of this year's new Mustang.

FORD MAVERICK

19.0 mpg

Hot on the heels of the Mach I is this compact sedan from Ford, featuring a 302 cubic-inch V-8 and the automatic transmission. For families of four or five people a compact or larger car is almost a necessity, but it can also be economical. A six cylinder and a manual trans would be thriftier yet.

CITROEN SM

18.7 mpg

This $13,000-plus sedan from France isn't normally considered an economy car, since it's full of trick items like a 2979-cc fuel-injected V-6, front-wheel drive, hydraulic self-leveling suspension, four-wheel disc brakes and a five-speed transmission. But it still got good mileage around our loop. Maybe that's why the SM was named *Car of the Year* by *Motor Trend* in 1972.

CHEVROLET NOVA

18.2 mpg

Despite the 350 cubic inch V-8 engine and automatic transmission in our 1974 Nova Hatchback, the mileage was better than average. Chevy's compact car will also accommodate five comfortably and both a six-cylinder and a manual trans are available.

AMC HORNET

17.8 mpg

The five-seater Hatchback from American Motors also had a large V-8, a 360 cubic incher, and an automatic trans, but mileage was still good for this size car. It also shows that mileage is very dependent on how a car is driven, and the seemingly thirsty V-8s don't have to get bad mileage.

VOLVO 164E

17.8 mpg

The largest engine available from Volvo is the 2979-cc fuel-injected six-cylinder in the 164. Though equipped with an automatic, this comfortable four-door sedan still managed to cover our 73-mile course with fairly respectable mileage. Again, base price is not in the economy range.

MAZDA RX-4 WAGON

16.7 mpg

The heavier and bulkier wagon version of the new Mazda RX-4 shares the same larger two-rotor engine and four-speed transmission, but the mileage is lower than the two door hardtop. As with other rotary Mazdas, performance is excellent for this sized machine.

OLDSMOBILE OMEGA

16.5 mpg

Another of the GM compacts that share the basic Nova body is this model from Oldsmobile. Our 1974 two-door Hatchback test car also had the 350 cubic-inch V-8 and automatic trans. Here again there's comfort, room for five, good economy, and Oldsmobile's attention to detail besides.

DODGE CHALLENGER

15.5 mpg

We tried to get a six-cylinder sporty car to show the economy of this type of car, but the only one available was equipped with a 318 cubic-inch V-8 and an automatic trans. Still, economy is respectable and it indicates that a six-cylinder stick combined with the good looks of a Challenger might be just the ticket to beat the gas shortage.

DODGE DART

14.8 mpg

Again test car availability limited us to a 318 V-8 Dart with an automatic, and Chrysler traditionally gets much better mileage with their sturdy slant six engines and manual transmissions. Otherwise this compact from Dodge again provides room for all but the largest families and better than average economy.