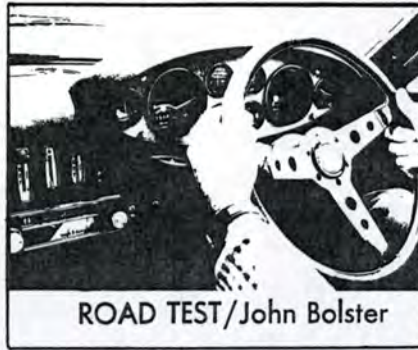


## ● Volvo 144GL

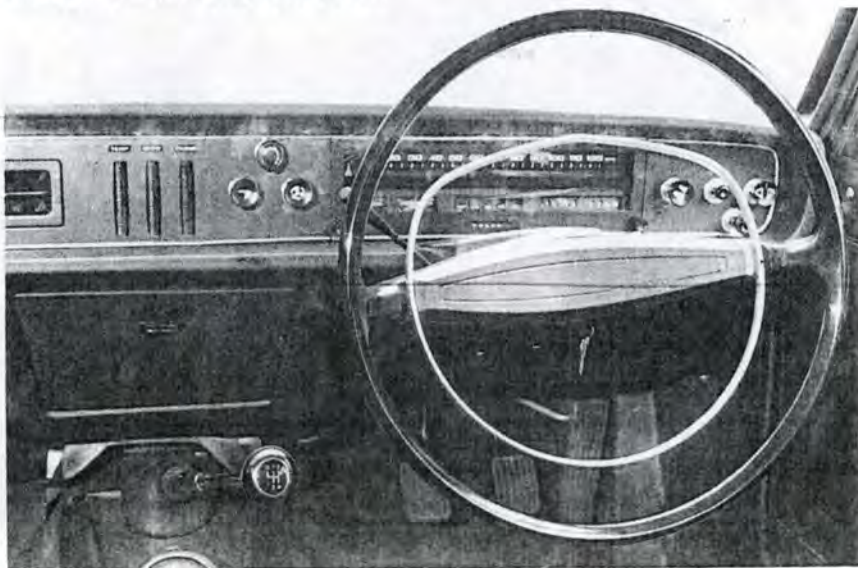
# Potent fuel- injected 2-litre



ROAD TEST/John Bolster



The Volvo is a hardworking car and carries no unnecessary decoration (above). There is plenty of interior space and comfortable seats for five passengers. The gear lever is conveniently located close to the steering wheel (below).



The Volvo has a splendid reputation as an unusually tough car with a very long life. Pioneers of built-in safety features, the firm are still leaders in this field. The four-cylinder Volvo engine is an efficient unit which is popular for propelling fast boats, but the cars that it powers are large and heavy, tending to mask the potency of this 2-litre 5-bearing power plant. Now, a fuel-injection version of the engine, with a high compression ratio and strengthened gearbox, put the Volvo car well up among the high-performance 2-litres.

The engine and transmission are of orthodox construction with shaft drive to a hypoid axle. The independent front suspension is of ample proportions, as befits a car of go-anywhere type from a land where drastic winter conditions last for many months. Dual circuits and elaborate safeguards banish the fear of brake failure, while discs on all wheels provide fade-free stopping power.

Plenty of interior space and comfortable seats are provided for four or five people. The driver is well placed with a good all-round view and the gearlever is conveniently located close to the steering wheel, but the clutch pedal has rather a long travel. Provided that the accelerator is not touched when the engine is cold, but pressed halfway down when it is warm an instant start is assured. Thereafter, the fuel injection system can be forgotten, though the test car was set to idle rather slowly and could be stalled by careless driving. Very even slow speed running is a feature of this electronic system.

The engine peaks at 6000 rpm but will run considerably faster than this with the greatest ease. It is therefore surprising that a rev-counter is not fitted as no premonitory valve bounce discourages over-revving. There is a good deal of power roar when the engine is accelerated to its limit in the gears but it is satisfactorily quiet at high cruising speeds. The low level of road noise is praiseworthy and the sound of the wind is only noticed as the maximum speed is approached.

The extra torque of the fuel injection engine is most apparent in the middle ranges, the car being flexible on the higher gears if the driver feels lazy. However, the gearbox is easy and the high third gear is most useful. The clutch of the test car was not up to racing starts, which may have lengthened the acceleration times slightly, though it gripped firmly as soon as a getaway had been made. It is easy to exceed 100 mph on quite a short straight and 110 mph may be touched under slightly favourable conditions.

An unusually comfortable ride, considering that the car has a live rear axle, is given on even inferior roads and there is an absence of the rear-end fidgeting that usually gives the game away. Perhaps this is due to the weight of the 144, but it rides and handles better than the big Volvo 6-cylinder 164.

The 144 feels well-balanced on corners, the handling being virtually neutral with just enough understeer to give stability on the straight. There is less rolling than one might expect from the size of the body. It seems a big car to drive at first, but Volvo performances in tough rallies have shown that it is small enough to be thrown around in spirited fashion. The brakes are extremely powerful but do not tend to lock the wheels, while the pedal is light enough for a woman to cope with emergencies. The brake lever is placed horizontally on the right where it is out of the way, and a guard prevents the knob from being accidentally struck or kicked, thus ensuring that the pawl is not involuntarily released from the ratchet, as can easily happen with another make of car.

Though one would prefer a round dial, the speedometer of the creeping make type is altogether better than these things usually are. The trip reading can be set to zero at the touch of a button and the main mileage recorder reads up to 999,999, if you keep your cars that long.

As befits a car from a cold climate, the heating is powerful and easily controlled by three edge-type dials. In contrast, there is a lack of cold breathing air and no eyeball vents are provided, the use of the swivelling quarter lights provoking some wind noise.



A well-made sunshine roof is standard on this model, which opens and closes easily by turning a handle.

The Volvo is, above all, a hardworking car and it carries no unnecessary decoration. The fit of the doors, bonnet, and boot lid bear witness to the quality of construction and the interior, though practical, has a touch of luxury about it. The shape of the car is unusual and its appearance may not appeal to everyone, but it has a marked individuality and escapes the terrible sameness that afflicts so many saloons today—I admit I can't tell 'em apart. The luggage boot has a generous capacity and the bonnet gives plenty of working space around the compact engine.

All Volvos are tough cars, designed for the man who covers large mileages. Their excellent reputation will be enhanced by the Grand Luxe, which has just the extra flexibility and performance that adds so much to the pleasure of driving. Fuel injection, developed for racing, has now turned out to be a worthwhile improvement for everyday family cars like this.

#### SPECIFICATION AND PERFORMANCE DATA

**Car tested:** Volvo 144 Grand Luxe 4-door saloon, price £1,973 68p including tax.  
**Engine:** Four-cylinders 88.9mm x 80mm (1990 cc). Pushrod-operated overhead valves. Compression ratio 10.5 to 1. 120 bhp (net) at 6000 rpm. Bosch electronically-controlled fuel injection and ignition.  
**Transmission:** Single dry plate clutch. 4-speed all-synchromesh gearbox with central change, ratios 1.0, 1.36, 1.99 and 3/23 to 1. Hypoid rear axle, ratio 4.1 to 1.  
**Chassis:** Combined steel body and chassis. Independent front suspension by wishbones, coil springs, and anti-roll bar. Cam and roller steering gear. Rear axle on trailing arms, Panhard rod, and coil springs. Telescopic dampers front and rear. Disc brakes all round, servo-assisted, with separate drums for hand brake. Bolt-on disc wheels fitted 165 SR 15 radial ply tyres.  
**Equipment:** 12-volt lighting and starting. Speedometer. Fuel and water temperature gauges. Heating, demisting and ventilation system. 2-speed windscreen wipers and washers. Flashing direction indicators with hazard warning. Quartz halogen foglights. Reversing lights. Sunshine roof. Radio (extra).  
**Dimensions:** Wheelbase 8 ft 7 in. Track 4 ft 5 in. Overall length 15 ft 2 in. Width 5 ft 8 in. Weight 1 ton 3 cwt 67 lb.  
**Performance:** Maximum speed 106 mph. Speeds in gear: third 82 mph, second 60 mph, first 38 mph. Standing quarter-mile 18.1 s. Acceleration: 0-30 mph 3.6 s, 0-50 mph 7.8 s, 0-60 mph 10.1 s, 0-80 mph 20.9 s, 0-90 mph 31.6 s.  
**Fuel consumption:** 19 to 24 mpg.

The car's shape is unusual, and may not be to everyone's choice, but has a marked individuality which many of today's cars lack (above).



The luggage boot is of enormous proportions (above). Power comes from a Bosch fuel-injected high compression 2-litre developing 120 bhp at 6000 rpm (below).

