

THE VOLVO 145E ESTATE

By JOHN TAYLOR

FEW cars in these days of increasing uniformity reflect their national characteristics quite like a Volvo. Think of the Swedish male and one conjures up a picture of a prosperous looking, well-turned-out gentleman of very solid appearance. Think of the Volvo and you see an expensive looking, well-appointed car that looks big and solid. In the case of the 145 estate this impression is heightened by a body that looks large even for its type.

Coming from a land where weather conditions can be hard even by our own unpredictable standards, Volvos are built stronger to last longer, and they certainly do seem to last well. The body shell is a tremendously solid and rigid structure to which is applied a particularly good basic finish including galva-

verdrive or automatic transmission are options. The brakes are British-made Girling discs with triangulated dual-circuit action enabling both front and one rear wheel to be braked in the event of one circuit failing. Mention of the brakes reminds me that a high percentage of the equipment fitted by Volvo is British. About 1,000 tons of components leave the Humber every week bound for the Gothenburg factory, and these include wheels, door locks, transmission shafts, universal joints, safety glass, carburettors, pistons, clutch plates, overdrives, automatic transmissions, shock absorbers, coil springs and assorted forgings and pressings. One can almost feel patriotic when running a Volvo.

Various improvements were introduced at the last Earls Court Motor Show including a

looked enough to fill two average estates. The following day it swallowed a portable exhibition stand and packets of brochures with no trouble whatsoever. If you have a large load to move, there can be few better ways of moving it and I can understand why one sees so many 145s about.

Yet another distinctive touch was revealed during these removals. There is a large twin-lidded compartment beneath the floor by the tailgate which will take quite a lot of fair-sized objects. This is particularly useful and overcomes one of the objections to estate cars—that the contents are exposed to view, and temptation. The spare wheel is stowed under a solid cover on the left of the body, and another floor trap houses the jack and toolkit.

The 145 started well enough on the automatic choke and soon warms through. In town it was decidedly heavy to drive, with high pedal pressure being required for the clutch, and the gearchange being stiff and slow on a car that had done over 3,000 miles and would have been thought to be loosened up. The steering was certainly lighter than on the last Volvo tested and was quite neutral and vice-free. Being big and heavy, the 145 rides well in all conditions and is particularly well behaved over poor road surfaces. The cornering is very flat and free from the roll that one would expect on a large estate car.

On the open road, the Volvo comes into its own. The legal 70 mph finds it cruising quietly and effortlessly with the feel of plenty in reserve. In fact, the B20 engine in its latest form is responsive and very lively if one pushes it and uses the gearbox. It is when cruising round town that the engine shows a lack of flexibility and a dislike of top gear.

Volvo have made a great thing about safety and this is reflected in the design. They have also done their homework well on the constructional side and have ensured that servicing is minimal and straightforward. The result is a car that is large and gives every feeling of security while looking set fair to run for years. It has a voracious capacity for goods and passengers and should prove a sound investment.



"AN ESTATE WITH A VORACIOUS CAPACITY FOR GOODS AND PASSENGERS"

nised vulnerable areas and a thick underseal. The paintwork on the test car was a light metallic blue and was very good. The wheel-arches all sport mudflaps and the exterior trim is largely in stainless steel. Clean lines free from clutter make for ease of cleaning.

The body of the estate shows its saloon origins only in the shape of the rear side doors, the lines otherwise appear quite homogeneous. The front grille is now plain black with a diagonal strip incorporating a Volvo badge. This is a return to the original radiator style used by Volvo on their cars and commercial vehicles many years ago and looks more distinguished than the former horizontal bars. The single circular headlamps are set into a surround shaped to match the grille, and the sidelights are mounted at the corners of the front wings for good visibility. The side door handles are now recessed flush into the body for safety, while the lifting tailgate has prominent roof hinges. Substantial bumpers incorporating a full-length rubber insert protect the body. All round visibility is good, with slim pillars and large front and rear windows. The front doors have opening quarter lights, and the rear window panel sports a windscreen wiper and electric washer.

The power unit of the 145E is the latest development of the long-lived B20 2-litre unit. This has a five-bearing crankshaft and pushrod overhead valves, and in this form has Bosch fuel injection combined with a low compression head to enable the car to run on low octane, lead-free petrol. It drives the rear axle through a conventional single plate clutch and four-speed synchromesh gearbox, though

revised gearchange and steering wheel, storage pockets in the doors and a hinged centre console housing minor controls and giving access to the fuse panel. The front seats have been highly praised on the Volvo and have good fore-and-aft adjustment and variation in the back angle. In addition, a knurled knob on the side of the squab alters the contour of the lumbar area so that one should be comfortable regardless. Headrests, now of modified shape, are fitted but can be removed if desired. The rear bench seat gives passengers ample leg and head room and the back is securely held in the upright position by a lock with handles at either end of the seat.

Volvo have their own characteristic instrumentation, still preferring a strip-type speedometer with the added novelty of a sliding marker to remind one of the prevailing speed limit. Another distinctive touch is a speedometer reading up to 999,999 miles, underlining the long-life image. Fuel and water gauges, warning lights for handbrake and the like are grouped beneath the speedometer, with minor controls to either side. Volvo retain the distinctive knurled wheels set into the fascia with just the edge showing; these control heat and air and work well. What is surprising, however, is that no face level cold air ventilation is provided.

As an estate car, the Volvo would be hard to beat in terms of sheer capacity. Drop the rear bench seat and the space is vast and unobstructed. In a busy weekend I put it to the test by loading it with books, stationery, cartons and sundry items of office equipment. When extracted, the pile thus transported

VOLVO 145E ESTATE

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SPECIFICATION

Price:	£2,238	Steering: Recirculating ball
(including P.T. £449)		Brakes: Hydraulic dual circuit disc (servo assisted)
Body: Integral steel estate, 5 doors, 5 seats.		Suspension: Front, independent coil and wishbone. Rear, coil and trailing arms
Engine: in-line, water-cooled, front-mounted, rear-drive, 4-cyl.		Overall length: 15 ft. 3 in.
Cubic capacity: 1,990 cc		Wheelbase: 8 ft. 7 in.
Bore and Stroke: 88.9 x 80 mm		Track (front): 4 ft. 5 in.
Output: 124 bhp (net) at 6,000 rpm		Track (rear): 4 ft. 5 in.
Valves: Overhead		Overall width: 5 ft. 8 in.
Compression ratio: 8.7 to 1		Overall height: 4 ft. 8.7 in.
Fuel injection: Bosch electronic		Ground clearance: 7 in.
Transmission: Single dry-plate clutch, 4-speed synchro. gearbox		Turning circle: 30 ft. 6 in.
1st gear	3.13 to 1	Weight: 25 cwt
2nd gear	1.99 to 1	Fuel capacity: 12.8 galls (2-star)
3rd gear	1.36 to 1	Oil capacity: 6.6 pints
4th gear	1.00 to 1	Water capacity: 17 pints
Final drive: Hypoid bevel (4.10 to 1)		Tyres: Pirelli Cinturato radial-ply (165 SR 15)
		Service interval: 6,000 miles

PERFORMANCE

Acceleration:		Brakes: 30 to 0 in 31 ft. (98 per cent efficiency)
	3rd top	Maximum speed: 105 mph (estimated)
30-50	6.8 9.2 sec	Fuel consumption: 24 mpg (overall)
40-60	7.8 9.8 sec	
0-70 (all gears)	21 sec	