Often compared to a '41 Ford, the Volvo has a certain pleasing quality. Who knows, maybe the '41 Ford is coming back.

ROAD TEST  VOLVO PV-444-L

ONLY A FEW MONTHS AGO, in April, we tested the 70-bhp Volvo. Now, along comes a real surprise, the same car with 85 bhp. Everyone remarks about the similarity of appearance between the Volvo and a 1941 Ford. Now we can add another Ford feature of that era, the 85 horsepower. Volvo called the 70-hp model the PV-444-K; the new 85-hp model is officially the PV-444-L.

The new engine (with a larger bore) is designated as the B-16-B, and already some sources are casting strong doubts as to the accuracy of the advertised bhp. Simply on the basis of a displacement increase from 1414 cc to 1577 cc, the power should go up from 70 to 78. But the compression ratio has been raised from 7.8 to 8.2:1, and this will add further to the output. Also, the torque peak now occurs at 3500 rpm (formerly 3000) which would indicate a camshaft change. Accordingly, we see no reason to doubt the ability of this engine to produce as claimed.

As a matter of fact, we essayed a rather extensive series of Tapley meter tests, toward the end of determining the exact rear-wheel horsepower. We were hampered by a low-speed carburetion fault, and the results were inconclusive. This much we do know: the Tapley readings of pulling power indicated more than the claimed 14.5% increase in torque.

The carburetion fault was corrected by our supplier (Run Pearson, the invincible Volvo exponent) but even so, the cold figures show that the 0 to 30 and 0 to 40 times were not quite so good as before. This was hard to explain until we discovered that low gear has been altered slightly, from 3.23 to 3.13. The most impressive performance gain found is in high gear and above 60 mph. The improvement is shown graphically on the acceleration chart.

The average timed top speed proved to be 93.8 mph, or 3.8 mph more than in the earlier test. Such a speed is truly astonishing for a 1.6-liter sedan. A rough calculation shows that this increase in top speed would require 8 more bhp at the rear wheels. (Based on cw = .5 and A = 22 sq. ft.)

Putting all considerations of performance aside, the Volvo is still a tremendous automobile as a sturdy and practical...
Blue and cream plastic interior suggests a very expensive customizing job.

with 85 bhp, the sturdy Swede comes out swinging

utility sedan. When really thrashed the fuel consumption drops to 23 mpg, but normal 55/60-mpg highway cruising will give 27 mpg as a best figure. It will cruise comfortably and easily at 75/80 mph, and under light throttle application the power unit is smooth and quiet. Unfortunately, the vigorous sports character of this unit becomes quite apparent when it is pushed hard. Under full throttle it seems to vibrate and becomes noticeably rough and noisy. With fond recollections of the 1931 PA Plymouth’s smoothness, we fail to see why a small 4 should be quite so harsh as this one. Yet there is no question but that this is as tough a little engine as you will find anywhere, today.

Chassis-wise, the new Volvo continues with its proven unit construction. Road-rumble has been well subdued. As a matter of fact, the Volvo is not a light car (this one had a radio and weighed 50 lb more than our 70-bhp test car) and it uses heavier than normal gauge steel in many body and structural parts. The solid rear axle is located by a long rubber-insulated trailing arm on each side and uses coil springs. This and an equally well insulated front suspension of conventional design are responsible for an excellent ride, moderate roll, and generally good handling qualities.

The steering, as before, requires 3.2 turns and is light in action, with moderate understeer. Cornered really hard, there is perhaps more roll and a shade more caster return than a sports car driver would like, but a family car man (or woman) will never complain about this. At over 80 mph the steering seems to get "light" and is a little vague, but not so sensitive as to be frightening. Freedom from road shock transmission to the steering wheel is excellent.

Clutch action is unobtrusive, with no sign of slip at any time. The brakes were used fairly hard on several occasions. They, too, are eminently satisfactory. The 85-hp car has more brake lining area than the other version.

Externally, the new model can be identified by the tubular bumper guards at both ends and a new trim around the grille. The interiors are substantially unchanged, except that two-tone plastic upholstery tends to brighten things up considerably. A heater and defroster are standard equipment, but there was no opportunity to try these.

We understand that plans for producing the sports roadster and a five-speed gearbox have been completely abandoned, but with a car like this—who needs a sports car?

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