



THE VOLVO

*Uncle Tom rates the new Swedish import
with the best in small European sedans.*

THE Volvo was virtually unknown on American roads two years ago. Today it is considered just about the hottest connoisseur's bucket in sedan shape. Sweden, famous for its smorgasbord and the chest expansion of its beautiful gals, is still relatively unknown in American car circles. But it is the birthplace of two of the greatest automobiles in the world, for their price. The SAAB, which we tested in Jan. '58 MI, and the Volvo just about top any small European sedans this writer can think of.



Naturally, we aren't referring to 3.4 Jags but to the popular-priced European economy cars delivered on these shores for under \$2,500. The Volvo, selling for \$2,238, is undisputed king. This four-cylinder, 1.6-liter bucket can tickle 100 mph, get from 0-60 mph in under 13 seconds (with the four-speed box) and drill through a corner like water through a hose.

Up until this test all Volvos delivered over here have had the underprivileged three-speed transmission. Our test job was the first four-speed Volvo in America and the difference was like turning on the lights in a tunnel. The car with the three-speed box was great in fact, great enough to walk away with the first five places in the international endurance race for small sedans held on John Fitch's Lime Rock, Conn. race course last year. In addition, the Volvo has won a number of rallies and in the International Safety and Performance Trials at Daytona this winter, your beloved trunk-tester Jim McMichael drove a three-speed Volvo and beat a factory-owned 3.4 Jaguar by over 70 yards! He also beat many top-flight American cars of many times the engine size and power claim.

Though Jim won the Over-All Cham-

HINGED WINDOWS are a novelty, although that blind corner isn't to motorists who date back ten years or more. Front end is not pretty but it is virtualy gunk-free.

By Tom McCahill

CONNOISSEUR McCahill says a Volvo is for the connoisseur—small, gutty, fast, and off-beat enough in the looks department so you can tell it from the others at a glance.

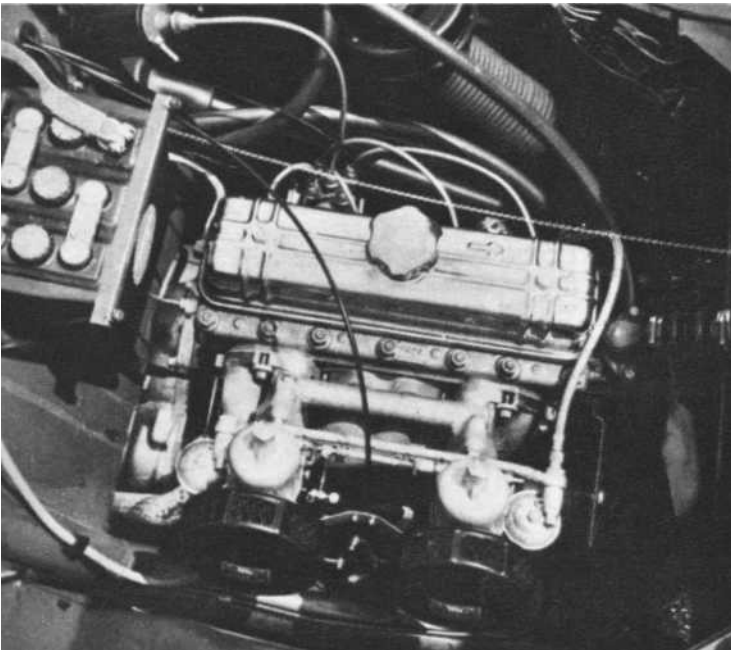


pionship while driving a Pontiac, he's wondering now if he couldn't have made even better time with this new four-speed Volvo. This job would have given the Pontiac one helluva push and it has 215 less claimed horsepower! Naturally, the Pontiac could drag the Volvo's ears off in any straightaway running but in a passing test, which includes whipping out and in, the superb handling qualities of the Volvo (totally without the aid of power steering) would out-maneuver the bigger cars like a Gold Cup boat racing a battleship of the line over a short triangular course.

As we've pointed out on these pages many times, quite a few Americans buy the small imports because they are

priced right in line with many of our not-too-good used cars. And the purchase of an import allows the buyer not only to own something brand-new but to enjoy a connoisseur's strut as well. With some' imports this connoisseur pitch reaches Walter Mitty proportions. However, with the Volvo there is no dreaming required as this Swedish Nightingale is a true connoisseur's car. It is small, gutty and fast. And it's off-beat enough in the looks department so that you know at a glance no attempt has been made to simulate General Motor's body styling.

In Europe, Volvo offers another body style called the Amazon for some weird reason unknown to us. Though there are certain lines reminiscent of



ENGINE is a 4-cylinder 1.6 liter job with nothing but guts. With this in front of you, you're a contender when the old traffic light turns green.

left-to-right movement, though there is ample straight-out legroom. The shape of the rear deck and the slant-eye rear window somewhat retard rearward vision. But this is a superbly put-together piece of machinery and the only thing I found to be on the sleazy side was the glove compartment door and latch. Unlike many small imports, this car has a good-size trunk, very similar in capacity to American sedans through the years 1945-1950.

the '47 Ford in the American import Volvo, the Amazon is pure Continental sex and as smooth as a wet bottle of beer. A call to the Volvo importers disclosed that there would be no shipment to this country of the Volvo Amazon as there are only a few being turned out, at a taffy-pull rate.

By now, if I have any readers left, they may be asking, "Doesn't this Scandinavian smelt have any faults?" The answer is, "Yes, it has." So let's roll them out on the table and see what they are. As I'm slightly on the large side, I find that about two to four more inches of interior width between the doors would make this car twice as desirable to me. With the windows closed, I get a feeling when sitting alongside big Jim McMichael that if we both breathed in heartily at the same time, the doors would pop out and go into orbit before you could count to seven.

However, by staggering the seats (and the passenger seat goes back almost into the trunk), two big guys can ride without too much discomfort. The big, high floor tunnel sometimes has a tendency to give your feet claustrophobia. It doesn't allow them too much

In the glove compartment of the Volvo there's a neat little leatherette case containing two books. One is an excellent *instruction* manual something that's been missing from Detroit cars since they forgot how to write. The second is a book called Travel, Study And Research In Sweden and is a real jim-dandy. It tells you How To Get Mar-



"THIS BUCKET." says Tom, "can drill through a corner like water through a hose." And that's no hearsay, as you can see above.

ried In Sweden, How To Get A Job and How To Perform If You're A Musician or an "Etcetera." The chapter I liked best was How To Find Your Forefathers. It starts off, "If you know the Parish in Sweden where your relatives lived, etc." That sentence alone is enough to cause one of my forefathers to rise from his grave and part my bald skull with a well-seasoned shillelagh. However, as my great-grandfather was quite a swimmer, I just might have a relative or two in Sweden.

I have one other beef against this car and that is the gas capacity. Though the Volvo will give a solid 25 mpg (and at times a fraction more), its nine-and-one-fourth U. S. gallon capacity gas tank is a definite black mark. A Chrysler Imperial with its 23-gallon tank is good for 350 miles or better between fuel stops. And the Rambler with its 20-gallon tank can push hell out of 600 miles on one filling. The Volvo's less-than-250-mile-cruising range would become as annoying as bugs in your nightshirt on a long turnpike trip, or even on a run to Florida. This is a fault many small imports have. Fuel stops aren't always easy to come by and the Volvo owner on a long trip might find himself out of gas some dark and stormy night, cursing the en-

TEST CAR SPECS

MODEL TESTED: Volvo PV 444

ENGINE: OHV 4 cyls; 97 cubic ins; 85 brake hp; 87 ft-lbs max torque; 8.2 to 1 compression ratio. Bore 3.125 ins; stroke 3.150 ins; Fuel required: Regular. Standard axle ratio: 4.56. Wheelbase 102.5 ins; length 177 ins; height 60.25 ins; width 62.5 ins; front tread 51 ins; rear tread 51.75 ins. Weight 2,140 lbs. Gas tank capacity 9.4 gals. Turning circle diameter 35.50 ft. Tire size 5.90 X 15.

PRICE (without options): \$2,238.

PERFORMANCE: 0-30 mph, 3.7 secs; 0-50 mph, 8.7 secs; 0-60 mph, 12.7 secs; 40-60 mph, 6.5 secs. Top speed 100 mph. All times recorded on corrected speedometer.

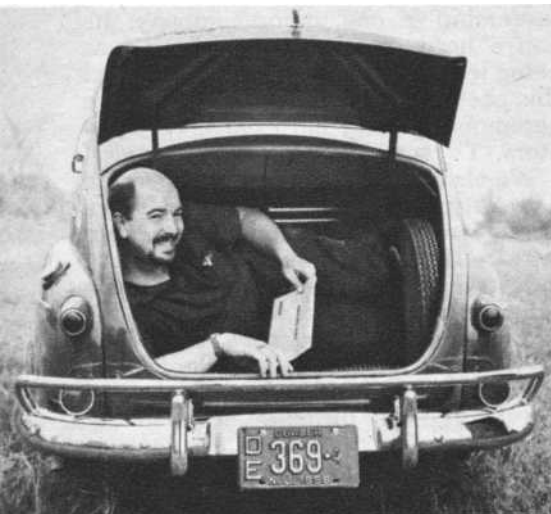
tire Swedish nation.

In the comfort department, aside from the closed-in feeling due to lack of body beam, the seats are excellent and extremely comfortable. Incidentally, they can be converted into a bed, a la Rambler. The ride is tops and while testing this car over potholes and third-class country roads, its all-around coil springing left no shock discomfort which you might expect from such a neat 2,140-pound package.

My test car was the first Volvo with rear windows that open and the very first with a [Continued on page 164]

TRUNK TEST shows cargo hold will take a compacted jinn McMichael with goatee.

REAR WINDOW allows poor rear vision-one of the Volvo's faults. Who's perfect?



McCahill Tests Volvo

[Continued from page 75]

four-speed box on these shores. Despite the few drawbacks I've outlined, it's been a long time since I've seen a car that created such a desire in me to own one. In this small import you won't have to grin and bear it when the light turns green and that parade of monsters whips by. If you're real sharp in your stick work you'll stay ahead of most of them. Once underway, if the road is winding, you'll stay ahead of just about all of them. The car can go and, thanks to its self-adjusting brakes, can stop on that proverbial dime. In case you're wondering how the name Volvo originated it means "I Roll" in Latin. On these shores that could mean more than the Swedes ever figured. If you're tired of being a Civilian Plain Joe with a Civilian Plain Car, look this Volvo up. It has a lot to recommend it. In fact, no import offers more.

August, 1958