

## FIRST DRIVER'S REPORT

# 1956

# Lincoln

BY KEN FERMOYLE

*The first of the new cars and it's all-new for 1956—with an engine, chassis and body style that becomes a great champion*

WHEN I first heard the 1956 Lincoln was going to be all-new, "bigger and better," I was a bit dubious. I had admired Lincolns since 1952 and hoped that the lines and handling of the new version would be worthy of its forebears. After driving the '56 I'm reassured. Lincoln has gained a lot and sacrificed little in its new model.

The huskier, 368 cubic inch engine has boosted performance significantly; the car's added size (it's seven inches longer overall) doesn't seem to have detracted from the admirable handling and roadability of earlier models.

I was introduced to the new Lincoln at Ford's Dearborn Test Track. A briefing by Lincoln chassis and engine engineers and a drive in a 1955 Lincoln—as a basis for comparison—served as an appetizer. Then I took the wheel of a pre-production '56 and started out by running thru the rugged ride and handling course. This two-lane asphalt stretch has a series



of right and left curves of varying radii designed to give a real test to a car's sure-footedness. I had just gone over the same course with a '55 and was amazed at how well the new model compared. I had noted speeds in the various turns as well as the car's reaction in running thru earlier. At the same speeds the '56, if anything, seemed to handle better in some respects! This bore out what chassis engineers had said—and I'd taken with several grains of salt: although the ride is softer and smoother in the '56, there is actually less roll! I found I could take turns faster than I had with the '55, yet feel more comfortable doing so. I couldn't believe it at first, so I made several runs . . . gaining time on each turn as my confidence in the car increased. I wound up bending the '56 thru turns eight to 14 mph faster than I had the '55!

My one complaint is that, although power steering is standard this year, there are still those many turns lock-to-lock. On 200-foot-radius curves it was almost impossible to keep my hands positioned in one place on the steering wheel and still negotiate the turn. However, this is a big car weighing nearly 2¼ tons and the high numerical steering ratio might be necessary to make parking easy.

Apparently, then, careful design by Lincoln engineers has enabled them to increase the package size without losing the stability and fine roadability of earlier models. The suspension is basically the same as '55, but the lower center of gravity resulting from a 2.4 inch reduction in height probably helped in this respect. At any rate, my short first ac-

quaintance with the car was satisfying in this direction, although the more extensive road test scheduled for a future issue of *MOTOR Life* may turn up drawbacks that didn't crop up in this trial driver's report.

From a performance standpoint, however, I doubt if any future tests will prove anything but that the '56 Lincoln is a lot hotter than the '55. After the handling runs were completed, we arranged an impromptu drag race on the dead-level straightaway in the test area and the new model literally walked away from its older brother. Although the Lincoln engineer driving the '55 was very familiar with his entry and the '56 was a bit strange to me, we beat the '55 by several car lengths at 60, and even further at 80.

From 0-30, there isn't much to choose between the two. In fact, we clocked the '56 in a few tenths of a second over the 4.5 seconds *MOTOR Life's* road test car posted last year.

From there on out the extra torque and inches of the '56 took over and we chopped nearly two full seconds off the 12.5 seconds the '55 test car hung up. We turned 0-80 in an average of about 18.5 seconds, with several runs a lot quicker than that. The car will jump from 50 to 80 in well under 10 seconds; the engineer riding with me reported that this gap had been covered in a shade over nine seconds in some tests. Top speed runs couldn't be made on the Ford track; it just isn't safe to run flat out on this circuit. (A new test track being built by Ford near Detroit and featuring a

five-mile high-speed oval will remedy that!) However, *MOTOR Life's* '55 Lincoln test car averaged 105 mph, with the speedo hitting 107 on the fastest run—and the '56 will turn well above that, you can bet. Incidentally, all speeds mentioned above are actual; the speedometer had been calibrated for error.

Concerning seating comfort, accessibility of controls and other features that are important in driving a car, the Lincoln is on a par with the best. The instrument panel has been redesigned this year, like everything else on the car, practically, and it won't be hard to live with. Switches and instrument dials are sensibly placed, not hard to see or get at.

If, as Lincoln apparently feels, there are a lot of people who may have liked this car, but wanted more automobile for their luxury car dollar—they should be pleased with the division's newest effort. All those fine Lincoln qualities and a bigger, more impressive car, too!

In appearance the '56 bears a family resemblance to the '55, but its added size makes it move impressive. Even though it is larger it's like its recent ancestors in that it doesn't look bulky or ungainly as big cars very often tend to do. Its canted headlights and reverse-angled rear quarter panel treatment, together with its new lowness, give it a lively, eager look.

This look of liveliness is not hypothetical either, because the trend to bigger and better things has been carried under the hood. Engine displacement has been boosted to 368 cubic inches (from 341 in '55), resulting in more horsepower, torque and, naturally, better perform-

ance. The added inches and other engine modifications have raised horsepower from 225 at 4400 rpm to 285 at 4600 rpm. Torque is now 401 lb/ft at 2500 rpm, some 56 lb/ft more than last year. Since the '56 engine uses a new block, crankshaft, oil pump, camshaft and air induction and ventilation systems—to name just some of the innovations—it really does qualify as “new,” although it’s similar in basic design to its predecessor.

The foundation of the car, its chassis, is new, too. Frame side rails are now full box sections, front to rear. Last year they were boxed only between the cross members. This, of course, gives the whole car greater rigidity. The X-member has been “submerged” to permit lower overall height. That is, it now runs under the propeller shaft.

A new line of Lincolns has been introduced this year and an old one has been dropped. The Premiere series is the new one—it will be the top-priced line—and the Cosmopolitans have been dropped. The Capri remains. A two-door hardtop and four-door sedan will be offered under the Capri banner; both these models will be offered in the Premiere series along with a convertible. Both lines will be basically the same, main differences being in interior and exterior trim.

Incidentally, the '56 Lincoln now features a full wraparound windshield. This was expected and makes this treatment universal among American cars now in production. The wrap-around has increased glass area 660 square inches to



Backup lights are under rear deck ledge, with bumper serving as a kind of reflector. Huge dual exhaust outlet pipes are enclosed in pods on the bumper.

a total of 3970 square inches.

Power steering is standard on both Capri and Premiere models, with power seats and windows standard on Premieres too. The usual assortment of optional accessories, including air conditioning, power brakes, etc., is available in both series.

Interiors, in keeping with Lincoln tradition, are very elegant and rich-looking. There are 49 different interior trim com-

binations, plus 17 solid and 34 two-tone exterior colors.

From both a styling and engineering standpoint the car has a lot of interesting things to offer. (For a report on engineering features, see page 15.) Added to the car’s more impressive size, which buyers of automobiles in this price bracket seem to want, the sum is a Lincoln that should keep its old friends and very possibly find a lot of new ones. •

Lincoln is seven inches longer, looks much longer, actually still has less overall length than two rival makes of '55 cars.

