

CARS DESCRIBED

THE FORD ZEPHYR ESTATE CAR

By J. EASON GIBSON

THE distinctive appearance of the current Ford Consuls and Zephyrs has tended to distract attention from other equally interesting Ford models, especially the more utilitarian versions such as the estate car, which is increasingly becoming one of the most important models in any manufacturer's range. In spite of the Ford Company's immense facilities, the construction of the estate-car model is entrusted to an outside organisation: it is in fact a conversion of the standard saloon, carried out by E. D. Abbott, of Farnham. It must, however, be stressed that no casual observer would ever guess that the finished product was a conversion of what started life as a saloon car.

Mechanically the differences between the saloon version of the Ford Zephyr and the

main interest of a Ford estate car must be in the bodywork. Before describing its obvious advantages, I will make two small criticisms. First, the internal trimming is in my opinion much too light in colour, so that one would hesitate to load oil drums or farm implements into it. Second, the method of removing the rear seat to increase the load-carrying capacity could, I think, be simplified. These points apart, I have nothing but praise for the lay-out of the bodywork. My test of this car coincided with a family move from one house to another and the transport of considerable material from London to Silverstone Circuit, so the value of this type of car was truly underlined. It was of particular interest that, while the suspension was a little on the hard side with only the driver on board, as one would expect with the stiffer

price, and it is only when maximum speed is reached that some vibration is noticed from the front of the car. Similarly, it is only when an emergency stop is done from high speed that any roughness is noticed in the brakes. No brake fade was noticed, even after the most brutal treatment. Reversing into confined spaces is easy, although at first glance one gains the impression that the car is much bigger than the equivalent saloon model. All-round vision is good, which contributes to restful driving on long runs, especially when heavy traffic is encountered. The high line of the front wings helps one to judge the car's width. Throughout my test the car started instantaneously without use of the choke. This might suggest that the mixture was set rather on the rich side, but the consumption figures disprove it. The good vision given by the window space is diminished because the mirror is set high in relation to the rear window, and this tends to reduce the view to the rear. This is accentuated when a heavy load is being carried, owing to the subsidence of the rear springs. In the hands of the average user the tank capacity of over 10 gallons gives a good range, even when the car is driven at consistently high speeds. The value of the overdrive is stressed by the fact that an engine speed of 2,000 r.p.m. gives 38.32 m.p.h. on top gear and 54.74 m.p.h. on overdrive.

Although the bench-type front seat is comfortable, it would be much better if more shape were given to the squab, which would then hold the driver more firmly in position. The headlights were good on the car I tested and in the dipped position the cut-off was level and even. The instruments, which are grouped in front of the driver, are lit indirectly, and there are no distracting reflections in the windscreen. With the front seat adjusted back to suit a tall driver knee-room in the rear seat is limited. The width of the doors, which open widely, makes entry and exit easy and comfortable manoeuvres.

The silence and smooth performance of the Zephyr, allied with the advantages of the estate-car body, make this a most useful car, although I am sure that it would be more useful and have a wider appeal if the internal trimming—particularly of the rear seat and luggage platform—were made more robust and utilitarian.



THE FORD ZEPHYR ESTATE CAR. It can carry large loads inside and on the roof

estate-car model are confined to the fitting of rear tyres of larger section—6.70 ins. in place of 6.40 ins.—and the use of stiffer and stronger rear springs to allow for the carrying of heavier loads. Although the technical specification of the Zephyr is well known, certain details are worth repeating. The overhead-valve six-cylinder engine has a capacity of just over 2½ litres—2,553 c.c.—and at the relatively low speed of 4,400 r.p.m. delivers 85 brake horse power. As the total weight of the car is 25½ cwt., it will be appreciated that the performance should be above average. An interesting feature of the Zephyr engine is that a good proportion of the power is delivered at comparatively low engine speeds, with the result that top-gear acceleration and hill climbing are above average. A low-compression cylinder head is optionally supplied for use in those countries where only low-grade fuel is available. A full-flow oil filter, which can be renewed at intervals, is incorporated in the lubrication system. The cooling system is thermostatically controlled, and this assists in rapid warming-up, and leads to efficient lubrication and reduction in fuel consumption as a result.

The car is of integral construction. The front suspension has long coil springs of low periodicity, with telescopic hydraulic dampers. The rear suspension is by semi-elliptic leaf springs, aided by double-acting hydraulic dampers. In addition, an anti-roll bar connects the suspension laterally. The hydraulic four-wheel brakes have the good friction-lining area of 104 square inches/ton, which suggests that brake fade should not become a problem for the user. Pendant pedals are used, with hydraulic operation of the clutch. Although this gives light and delicate operation, the pedals are placed high in relation to the accelerator pedal, with the result that appreciable movement of right foot is required at times.

For most readers or potential buyers the

rear springing, it was better with four passengers and a load reaching almost to the roof. It is worth noting that roll on corners is not noticeably increased with such a heavy load.

The rear loading door is hinged at the side and, because of the pronounced forward tilt of the rear panel, opens with an upward movement. A cleverly-arranged check arm prevents the door from opening beyond the width of the car, and at the same time stops the door from closing on one. A light is provided beside the rear loading door, which assists loading after dark; if it were placed higher it would make unloading equally easy. All door frames are padded, a point which was appreciated when I banged my head through careless loading.

The car I tested was fitted with the Borg-Warner overdrive, which undoubtedly helped the performance. The average fuel consumption for my entire test was 26 m.p.g. and even a short distance covered at the highest possible speed reduced this figure to only 22 m.p.g. I see no reason why 30 m.p.g. should not be obtained regularly by a careful driver, determined to drive for economy. With the overdrive fitted a free-wheel comes into operation at speeds below about 27 m.p.h., which certainly contributes towards the fuel consumption figures obtained. In addition the use of a free-wheel device allows one to change gear at low speeds without the clutch, which undoubtedly reduces driving strain in heavy city traffic.

A good feature of the Zephyr is that high driving speeds can be maintained without in any way disturbing one's passengers. This is to some extent due to the upholstery material used, which prevents the passengers from sliding laterally on the seat, but equally it is due to the suspension, which enables high cornering speeds to be enjoyed without roll or other disturbing symptoms. The silence and smoothness are good for a car of the Ford's

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Makers: Ford Motor Co., Dagenham, Essex

SPECIFICATION

Price	£1,227 12s.	Brakes	Girling hydraulic
(including P.T. 410 2s.)		Suspension	Independent
Cubic capacity	2,553 c.c.		(front)
Bore and stroke		Wheel base	8 ft. 11 ins.
	82.55 x 79.5 mm.	Track (front)	4 ft. 5 ins.
Cylinders	Six	Track (rear)	4 ft. 4 ins.
Valves	Overhead	Overall length	14 ft. 10½ ins.
B.H.P.	85 at 4,400 r.p.m.	Overall width	5 ft. 8¾ ins.
Carb.	Zenith	Overall height	5 ft. 2 ins.
Ignition	Coil	Ground clearance	7 ins.
Oil filter	Full-flow	Turning circle	36 ft.
1st gear	11.08 to 1	Weight	25¼ cwt.
2nd gear	6.40 to 1	Fuel cap.	10½ galls.
3rd gear	3.90 to 1	Oil cap.	7 pints
O'drive top	2.83 to 1	Water cap.	22 pints
Final drive	Hypoid bevel	Tyres	6.70 x 13

PERFORMANCE

Acceleration		Max. speed	82 m.p.h.
Top	2nd	Petrol consumption	
30-50	9.2 secs. 6.3 secs.	26 m.p.g. at average	
40-60	11.0 secs. 9.8 secs.	speed of 50 m.p.h.	
0-60 (all gears)	18.5 secs.		
BRAKES: 30 to 0 in 34 feet (88 per cent. efficiency)			