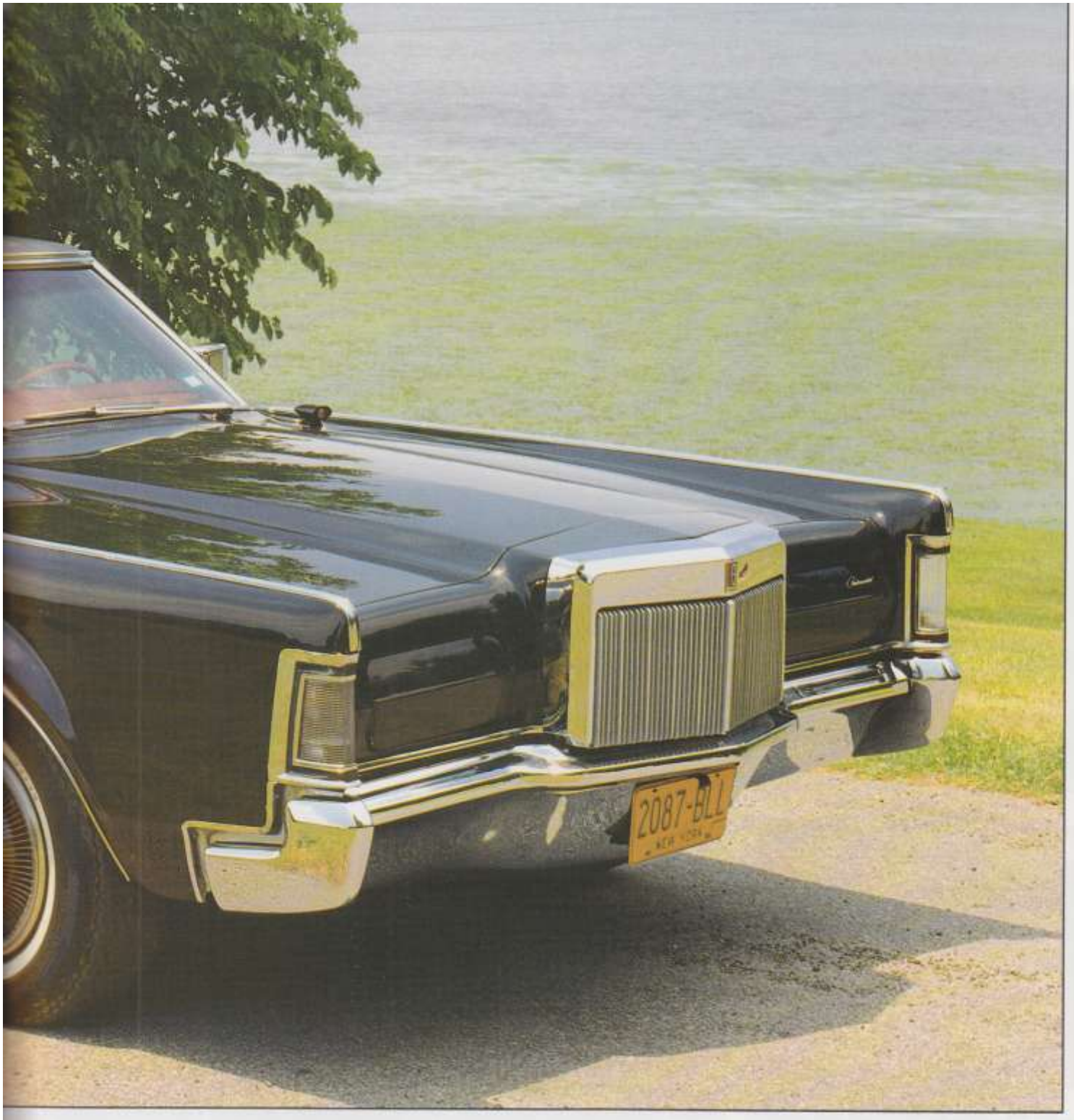
1968-71 Continental Mark III: Edsel Ford's Legacy Reborn

Eyeing an expanding personal-luxury coupe market, Lincoln entered the fray in 1968 with a new Mark.

by Tim Howley



When Henry Ford II and Ben Mills killed the 1956-57 Continental Mark II and disbanded the Continental Division, the hallowed halls of Ford were lined with broken dreams and battered egos. John Reinhart, the chief stylist, left for Budd Manufacturing Company. A disillusioned William Clay Ford bought the Detroit Lions. Others went their separate ways as corporate politics prevailed over sound corporate planning. The follow-up Continental Marks III, IV, and V of the 1958-60 era were that in name only, lacking the quality and integrity of their predecessor. In 1961, Lincoln went off in a new direction, offering a Thunderbird-derived Lincoln Continental in four-door sedan and four-door convertible guise only (*CA*, October 1991).

Meanwhile, a whole new personal-luxury car market was opening up. It started with the four-passenger 1958 Thunderbird coupe and convertible, whose sales immediately began taking away

When the Continental Mark III debuted in the spring of 1968, there were plenty of rivals in the personal-luxury segment: Ford Thunderbird, Buick Riviera, Olds Toronado, and the Cadillac Eldorado. The last had gotten off to a good start in 1967. While initially not intended strictly to compete with the new Caddy, the Mark III soon established itself as the first modern Lincoln to sell nose to nose against an equivalent Cadillac. The 1969 model rode the T-Bird four-door's 117.2-inch chassis and shared many hidden parts with it, but had a look all its own. This Mark has covered more than 222,000 miles. (Owner: Mark E. Figliozzi)

Lincoln buyers, and would continue to do so throughout the Sixties. In 1963, Buick entered the arena with the Riviera, Oldsmobile followed with the Toronado in 1966, and Cadillac joined the fray with the '67 Eldorado hardtop coupe. By this time, the personal-luxury market had become a $1.5 billion segment of the industry with total annual production, including the Corvette, nearing 200,000 units. Lincoln-Mercury wanted to enter this market, not necessarily to compete directly with the Eldorado, but to have its own version of the Thunderbird.

As Bert Andren, retired Lincoln-Mercury Chief Engineer recalled in 1979, "There was an endless debate as to what this new car should be. It was finally elected that it would be a reincarnation of the Mark, and the thought was that it would be something that wouldn't break our budget. Ten thousand dollars was too much money in 1957, but it was about the right price in 1967. Now at that particular time the T-Bird had a four-door with a longer wheelbase that was the real key to the whole thing. There was also the aspect of making use of some unused production facilities at [the] Wixom [Michigan, plant.] As might be expected, the T-Bird people didn't want to have anything to do with it. Well, Iacocca said Lincoln would simply go ahead with the project on their own. Finally, the T-Bird people concluded that the package was so good that they would go for it. Otherwise we would have had to get new floors and a new underbody. But this way both cars could share floors and underbodies and use the same production lines."

Lee Iacocca was really the father of the Mark III, and Henry Ford II was deeply involved in the project, likely because his father Edsel had masterminded the original Continental in 1939. The III was originally named Lancelot by chief stylist, L. David Ash. He wasn't connected with any one car line; rather, he directed a design studio called "Special Development." Planning for the car began in September and October, 1965, with stylist Arthur Querfeld working directly under Ash. Interior styling was done by the late Damon Woods. Hermann Brunn, also now deceased, selected the interior fabrics. Andren was the engineer in charge and Ralph Peters was director of product planning.

Many designs were considered. Some didn't even have the Continental "hump" because originally the car wasn't intended to be a reincarnation of the Mark either in styling or name. In the end, the whole project was dictated by the four-door Thunderbird, which meant pretty much locked-in dimensions. Designers and engineers knew that by utilizing the Thunderbird's floorpan with its deep pocket footwells they could shove the rear seat back while raising some of the floorpan areas a little. The inner dash structure, cowl area, and most of the inner panels were to be shared with the T-Bird. However, the inner trunk panels were raised because the upper back panel was to be two inches higher than the 'Bird's, this "to 'swallow up' the roof and give the car a hunched look," as author Paul R. Woudenberg put it in *Lincoln & Continental: The Postwar Years*. The perimeter frame, which consisted of side rails joined front and rear by torque boxes, would be very little changed from the Thunderbird, which for cost considerations had returned to body-on-frame construction in 1967. Only the outer body panels, outer dash panel, interior and exterior trim, and engine would differentiate the new Lincoln-built personal-luxury car from the 'Bird. Even the roof would be shared. Originally, Thunderbird doors were to be used, too, but Iacocca wisely insisted on changing them. All in all, the Mark III was a first class camouflage job.

1969 Continental Mark III Specifications

Base price:	$6,758
Wheelbase (in.):	117.2
Tread, front and rear (in.):	62.3
Ground clearance (in.):	5.3
Overall length (in.):	216.1
Overall width (in.):	79.4
Overall height (in.):	53.7
Headroom, front seat (in.):	37.1
Legroom, front seat (in.):	42.1
Curb weight (lbs):	4,762
Turning circle, dia (ft):	40.0
Fuel tank (gal):	25.5
Tire size:	9.15 × 15
Engine:	
Type:	ohv 90-degree V-8
Bore (in.):	4.362
Stroke (in.):	3.85
Displacement (cid):	460.0
Horsepower @ rpm:	365 @ 4,600
Torque (lbs/ft) @ rpm:	500 @ 2,800
Compression ratio:	10.5:1
Carburetor:	Autolite 4-bbl
Electrical system:	12-volt
Transmission:	3-speed automatic
Final drive ratio:	2.80:1; 3.00:1 opt.
Suspension:	
Front:	independent, coil springs, link-type stabilizer bar
Rear:	live axle, coil springs, transverse track bar
Steering, turns lock-to-lock:	3.68
Brakes:	power front disc/rear drum
Braking area (sq in.):	130.6
Construction:	all-steel body-on-frame

"It was a styling exercise of the first magnitude," recalls Ash. "After we had spent some time designing the car and had come up with something which we thought was rather good looking, Iacocca came in with some suggestions of his own. He thought our design was rather lacking in character. It was Iacocca who suggested the classic radiator shell and the tire hump on the rear deck. Iacocca had a great sense of what would sell." The final design was approved March 23-24, 1966. At this time, Ash's name Lancelot was changed to Continental Mark III, which was another one of Iacocca's correct marketing decisions. Mark VI had been considered, but Mark III won out not only because it was more in the spirit of the elegant 1956-57 Mark II (*CA*, June 1986), but also because the 1958-60 Mark III-Vs (*CA*, June 1988) were considered best forgotten.

"There were a couple of other efforts made on the same package, done by the exterior studio under Buzz Grissinger," recalls Ash. "They were well done cars, but I guess in the final judging they were not accepted."

Many of the Mark III's detractors, especially the critical motoring press at the time, have said that the Mark III was a copy of the Rolls-Royce, especially its radiator. Ash has pointed out, however, that the Rolls' radiator shell was perfectly flat. The Mark III diecast unit had extremely pleasing angles, giving it much depth. It was also the costliest grille in the U.S. industry to produce, about $200 according to author Thomas E. Bonsall in *The Lincoln Motorcar: Sixty Years of Excellence*.

During the late Sixties, several classics were redesigned as contemporary cars, and at least one of them, the Stutz Blackhawk (*CA*, February 1991), actually got into limited production. Ghia, meanwhile, built a Virgil Exner-styled reincarnation of the Duesenberg (*CA*, July 1984) that didn't. In a sense, the Mark III was a car in this mode, only infinitely better executed than the others because of Ford's vast financial resources and outstanding design and engineering talent. It could have been virtually any Classic: Packard, Pierce-

(continued on page 50)

Opposite page: The Mark III's humped decklid (*top*), which was reminiscent of the 1956-57 Continental Mark II, was reportedly Lee Iacocca's idea—and a good one as it turned out. Sumptuous describes the interior (*bottom left* and *center right*); it features a passenger's side reclining seat. The 460-cid V-8 (*bottom right*) cranked out 365 horsepower. (Owner: Mark E. Figliozzi)


2087-BLL

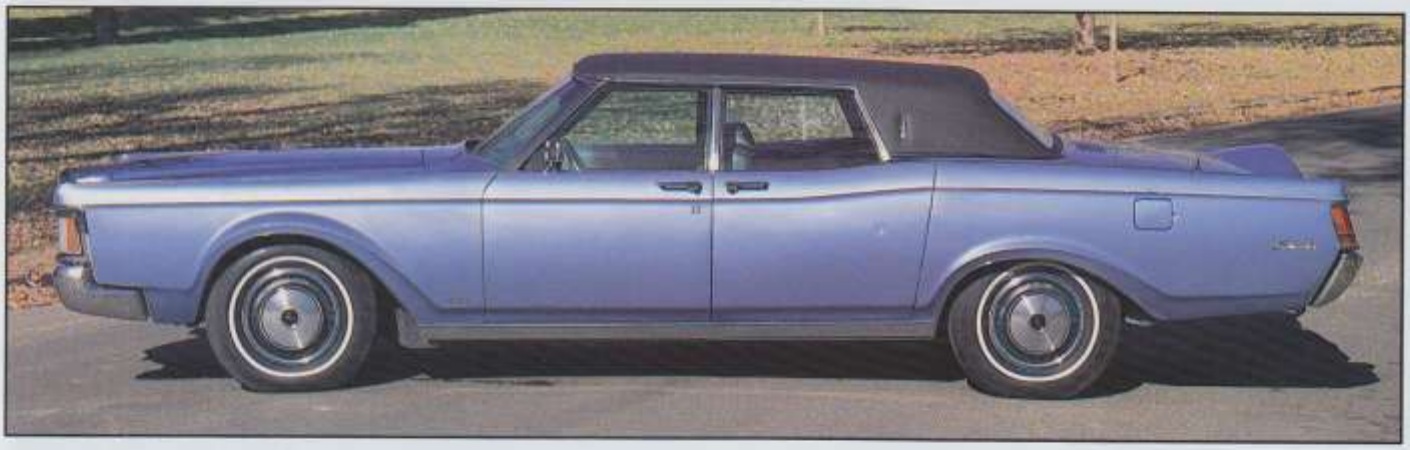
Continental Mark III: The Rare Ones

At least three unique Continental Mark IIIs were built. The first was a four-door sedan custom altered for Henry Ford II by Lehmann-Peterson of Chicago in 1969. The second was another four-door sedan done in 1970 for one Grover Hermann, the retired chairman of Martin-Marietta Corporation who lived in Monterey, California. The cost of customizing the Hermann car was $13,000 plus the original price of the Mark III coupe. Reportedly, Hermann's wife didn't like the gray color when she saw it, so the car was completely stripped down and repainted metallic blue, upping the tab another $3200. In 1977, after Hermann traded it in for a new Lincoln, it was sold to Frank Masi, a collector in Denver, Colorado, who still owns the car. Masi has extensively researched the present whereabouts of Henry Ford's Mark III, and there is reason to suspect that this car was never actually built—neither the L-P shop foreman at the time nor Peterson remember the car, for example. What is known is that a Mark III four-door was fabricated for Ford Product Planning in 1968 (a few snapshots exist), but it's not clear whether this was essentially a reskinned four-door Thunderbird or a stretched Mark III. Possibly

this is what some have assumed to be the Henry Ford II car. In any case, Henry was reported to be adamant about *not* offering a Mark III four-door because it would dilute the close-coupled coupe/cabriolet concept that had begun with his father Edsel's Continental in 1939 (*CA*, Februay 1989).

In 1979, the Lincoln-Mercury Division built a Mark III Dual Cowl Phaeton for the November 1979 Detroit Auto Show. It sported twin windshields and a front grille that wrapped under the front end. Pontoon-like front fender extensions jutted forward four inches, and there were no bumpers front or rear. The rear end, with its extended quarter panels, featured horizontal taillights matching the shape and location of the parking lights. Painted a special Mirror Flake Silver hue highlighted by plum-colored pin stripes, the Phaeton's interior was plum leather and corduroy. The car wasn't a true dual-cowl phaeton four-door, rather a two-door. It's doubtful that this creation still exists because of Ford's policy of eventually destroying its show cars.

There may also have been some Mark III convertible conversions built by Andy Hotton Associates, Belleville, Michigan. Hotton did a number of Lincoln Continental conversions and Marks in the Seventies.



Although there is some mystery concerning the number of Mark III four-doors built, this one (*above left*) was commissioned by Grover Hermann, retired chairman of Martin-Marietta Corporation. Lehmann-Peterson did the work for $13,000, Hermann paid for the car. It was originally painted gray, but was immediately changed to metallic blue. Note the generous rear-seat legroom. (Owner: Frank Masi) The Mark III Dual Cowl Phaeton (*bottom row*) was built for the November 1969 Detroit Auto Show. It sported twin windshields, extended front and rear fenders, a grille that wrapped under the car, and matching horizontal parking and taillights. Note the lack of bumpers front and rear.

Arrow, or the Lincoln K—had they survived into the Sixties.

Ash further stated that "At one point Art Querfeld and I went over to the Henry Ford Museum in Greenfield Village to look for classic car styling 'cues.' The only one we found was the octagonal wheel nut that was used on so many classic cars." However, many others found later were to be used on more recent Marks. These have included louvers, opera windows, and carriage roofs.

If Mark III styling was somewhat of a concession to—or a celebration of—the past, the car was state-of-the-art from an engineering standpoint. The perimeter-type frame, originally introduced on the 1956-57 Continental Mark II, had been updated for the 1965 Fords and Mercurys. By utilizing it, Lincoln began its move away from unitized construction. Even though a few collectors are loath to accept any criticism of unitized construction, it has long been a debatable issue within the Ford Motor Company, even though it was believed to be the wave of the future when Lincoln and Thunderbird adopted it in 1958. It worked out quite well for the latter, but the Lincoln was just too big to be unitized, hence the downsizing for 1961. Still, problems persisted. While unitized construction works very well in smaller cars, it tends to transmit road sounds and vibration to the interior in very large cars. Consequently, all Lincoln Continentals of the Sixties had big tuning bells under the front fenders. In addition, the convertible sedans got tuning weights. Furthermore, the Lincolns required far more insulation than the separate body/frame cars of equivalent size. When they grew longer in 1964, the problems increased and,

The 1970 Continental Mark III measured 216.1 inches from bumper to bumper and weighed in at a hefty 4675 pounds. Though it was little changed, the price escalated from $6758 to $7281, although options could push that much higher. This car, for example, has leather upholstery and an automatic temperature control air conditioner. The latter was a $523.20 option, while standard air cost $503.70—96 percent of the '70 Mark IIIs had one or the other. Externally, concealed windshield wipers and redesigned wheel covers were featured, along with slightly rejiggered taillights and parking lights. Production was down this year, from 23,088 in 1969 to 21,432, but this was more a reflection of the economy than the Mark. This original condition car was first sold by Beverly Hills Lincoln-Mercury. (Owner: Don Secovy)

predictably, they grew heavier year by year. With the introduction of the Mark III, Lincoln engineers persuaded management to return to the more traditional body-on-frame construction for other Lincolns, beginning with the 1970 models. True, the current Mark VII is unitized, but it's not really a large car.

The Mark III measured 216.1 inches overall, five inches less than the '68 Continental. On the other hand, it was 6.2 inches longer than the four-door 'Bird, from which its 117.2-inch wheelbase was borrowed. By past Lincoln standards, it wasn't a big vehicle. The six-foot-long hood, longest in the industry, gave the Mark the illusion of being much larger than it actually was. The relative compactness was quickly evidenced when driven, for handling was far superior to that of the same year's Lincoln Continental or Cadillac Eldorado. As expected, the suspension was a refined version of the T-Bird's all-coil setup.

The Continental Mark III was loaded with advanced engineering technology. It received Lincoln's new 460-cid V-8 rated at 365 bhp at 4600 rpm. More relevant, perhaps, was the 500 pounds/feet torque at 2800 rpm. This engine was developed to cope with increasing smog restrictions, especially in California. An improved combustion emissions control system was an integral part of the engine. Better breathing and a new four-barrel carburetor were also introduced to handle emissions so effectively that air pumps were eliminated. Before 1968 was out, all Lincoln Continentals were equipped with this engine, which was offered through 1978.

The Mark III may well have been the world's first car to make use of microchips, which are commonplace in the electrical systems of all cars today. A miniaturized microelectronic voltage regulator was the heart of the new space age electronics. Great care was taken to prevent noise from reaching the passenger compartment, so nowhere in the running gear was there a continuous path for noise or vibration to travel through steel. The amount of rubber insulation used and the skill in insulation engineering was a result of the engineering lessons Lincoln had learned with unitized cars. While the Mark III didn't necessarily ride any more quietly than a '68 Cadillac Eldorado, the degree of "quiet" engineering was far more sophisticated. In fact, anywhere you looked in a Mark III you found engineering that was superior to the Mark II of 10 years earlier, which would have cost about $20,000 in 1968 dollars. The reason Lincoln-Mercury could provide such a quality package for a base price of $6585 in 1968 was the advancement in technology. That price, incidentally, was misleading in that most of the early Mark IIIs were sold fairly well loaded for approximately $9000-$10,000, and initially at least dealers didn't need to discount them.

The Mark III sported full instrumentation. The understructure and five pods were identical to those of the Thunderbird. What the customer saw, however, was quite different because the facings were different.

For 1971, the Mark III received a slightly different grille texture, and a big boost in price from $7281 to $8813, though the sting was less severe due to standard automatic air conditioning and tinted glass. Also standard (beginning in 1970) was the Sure-Track Brake System, which helped prevent rear wheel lockup. Despite the price boost, production spurted to 27,091 units, an increase of 26.4 percent.

The instrument panel design was deliberately intended to be reminiscent of classic-era dashboards. It was a subtle reminiscence at best, but the dash was quite attractive in its own right. The Cartier chronometer wasn't offered on the car originally, but it became standard in 1970. In addition to the usual array of warning lights, the Mark III featured a taillight monitoring system with an indicator on the package tray trim panel, which the driver could check by looking into the rear view mirror. Further, a cluster of warning lights resided on a header console. Both of these concepts came from the fourth-generation 1964-66 Thunderbirds (*CA*, February 1992).

Standard interior trim was nylon tricot cloth and vinyl, though leather was optional. The simulated wood trim on the instrument panel and doors was either East India Rosewood or English Oak. A split bench seat comprising individual armchairs was standard up front, but true bucket seats weren't even optional. In its original form, the Mark III didn't have a lot of standard equipment: even air conditioning and an AM radio cost extra. On the other hand, the options list stood tall from the very beginning and grew year by year. For 1968-69 one could order an AM/FM stereo radio with triple front and dual rear speakers plus a stereo 8-Track tape system for about $250.

Building the Mark III on the same assembly line as the Thunderbird worked out extremely well. When the latter changed from unitized to separate body-on-frame construction for 1967, an untapped production capacity had been created in the Wixom plant. Iacocca wanted to fill it, of course, and the Mark III neatly did just that. The frames of both makes could be built together; they came down the line upside down for the installation of the suspension. Then they were flipped over and conveyed to another line where the bodies were dropped down. The instrumentation was nearly identical from a production standpoint, so that was no problem. Sub-body assembly was totally integrated. Body side panels all went on the same merry-go-round. But some special arrangements had to be made for the different Mark parts, such as the rear quarter panel assemblies and the ventilation system. From a manufacturer's viewpoint, the T-Bird-Mark "mix," as it was called, proved ideal because it provided a substantial savings in production costs for both cars. Originally, Mark quality didn't suffer, this in spite of an improved suspension, stiffer frame and body, more insulation, and better fit and finish than the T-Birds. But as the years went on, quality control did become a problem with the Marks IV and V, partly because of their increasing sales volume. Beginning with the 1980 Mark VI, the Lincoln people decided they weren't getting the quality they wanted and told the Thunderbird boys to go find another plant. Today,

As from the beginning, the '71 Mark III was powered by Lincoln's 460-cubic-inch V-8 (*above*), which was still rated at the same 365 horsepower at 4600 rpm and 500 pounds/feet torque at 2800 rpm. This Mark III (*top* and *center*), originally an Ohio car, has only 7020 documented miles, making it one of the lowest-mileage Mark IIIs known to exist. It has been detailed, has the standard interior (*right*), and carries very few options. (Owner: William John)

Wixom builds only Lincolns: Town Cars, Continentals, and Marks.

The Mark III was introduced in March 1968, making it a mid-year 1968 model. Lincoln was coy about that by not giving it a model year designation. In fact, historian Paul Woudenberg quoted General Manager Edgar Laux as saying that "There will be no vintage on this car." On the other hand, Ford Motor Company *did* provide production breakdowns for both 1968 and 1969. The Lincoln & Continental Owners Club, meanwhile, has considered all of the '68s to be '69s, and indeed there were no significant differences between them. But there were quite a few differences between 1968-69 and 1970-71.

The motoring press, as perhaps might be expected, really cut the Mark III to pieces. "The designers' goal of the ultimate in luxury turns out to be more state-of-the-mind than state-of-the-art," wailed *Motor Trend*, concluding that "It just doesn't turn you on." "It's a Superbird," scoffed *Popular Mechanics*. "The Ford Motor Company took an already overdone car—the Thunderbird—and overdid it some more." *Car Life* threw its share of rotten tomatoes, too: "Our overall impression can be summed up by a single word—disappointment."

But Art Querfeld, styling assistant to Dave Ash, has noted that "From a sales standpoint the press was quite wrong. When we originally did the car in clay we had to bring in some people from Wixom where the car was to be built. The laymen from the plant fell in love with the car and we knew we had done the right thing. You don't ordinarily find that laymen like big cars, but on this one they did."

And even the automotive press did give the new Lincoln grudging respect. "The Mark III, however, is not a bad automobile," opined *Car Life*. "On the contrary, the chassis and structure of the Mark III are fine examples of sound automotive engineering applied to a very luxurious vehicle. General performance is certain to be acceptable, even to critical owners. In all, the Mark III represents a polished execution of a lack-luster concept." That "general performance," incidentally, gave the Mark III a 0-60-mph acceleration time of 8.3 seconds according to one report, so it was certainly no slouch.

Bill Peacock, Director of Ford Public Relations in the late Seventies, remembers the introductory advertising. "The announcement ad was especially interesting," Peacock has stated. "The company looked at the ads of the Twenties and Thirties. They noted that these ads were essentially an emotional photograph or rendering with very little copy. They tested a whole lot of advertising and found that the old timers knew exactly how to sell this type of car. The announcement ad had only about 14 words of copy in it. It showed a very arrogant guy leaning against his Mark. He had on shooting glasses and he was in the middle of a grain field, and it had a very low amber glow over the whole photo, just as though the sun was setting and he was in a South Dakota grain field after shooting pheasant all day. The ad kind of said 'I've got the world by the tail and one of the reasons is that I own a Mark III.'"

Continental versus Eldorado: Production 1968-79

	Continental	Eldorado
1968	7,770	24,528
1969	23,088	23,333
1970	21,432	28,842
1971	27,091	27,368
1972	48,597	40,074
1973	69,437	51,451
1974	57,316	40,412
1975	47,145	44,752
1976	56,110	49,184
1977	80,321	47,344
1978	72,602	46,816
1979	75,939	67,436
Total	586,848	491,540

Note: 1968-71: Continental Mark III; 1972-76: Mark IV; 1977-79: Mark V. Eldorado figures include convertibles 1971-76.

The most noticeable external changes for 1970 were the concealed windshield wipers, redesigned wheel covers, plus minor modifications to the taillamps and parking lamps. Four new "Stardust" paints were offered, and in addition to the black, ivory, and green vinyl roofs of 1969, buyers could now select a dark blue or brown. It was possible from the very beginning to get a roof without vinyl, though such Mark IIIs are extremely rare, because this treatment was considered an option until it became standard for 1970.

Interior refinements that year were more extensive with more colors and fabrics, new design door panels and seats, and more trim luxuries. Natural walnut replaced the simulated wood appliqués on the dashboard and doors, and the steering wheel adopted a three-spoke oval design to improve instrument visibility. A large number of items that had been either optional or not offered at all in 1969 became standard equipment.

On the technical side, a simulator test replaced the 12-mile road test at the factory. The Sure-Track Brake System helped prevent rear wheel lockup during maximum braking, even on ice and snow. Optional at $195.80 in 1969, it was made standard for 1970. A power-operated sunroof became a $459.10 option in 1970; any Mark III so equipped today is an extremely rare find. And the 1970 Mark was the first American car to come with steel-belted radial ply tires as standard equipment.

Though there were no significant changes for 1971—Lincoln's Golden Anniversary year—sharp eyes could detect a few, such as a slight difference in the grille texture and high-back front seats with built-in headrests. Automatic air conditioning was standardized and, along with it, tinted glass. These goodies didn't come free, however, as the base price jumped $1532 to $8813. The '71s had a short run because Mark III production ended on June 12, 1971, so the factory could retool for the Mark IV. Even so, model year output climbed to 27,091 units, a scant 277 behind the Eldorado.

Mark III prics are presently quite depressed, not for lack of collectors, but rather because so many were built: 79,381 in all. And because they were so well built, a high percentage have survived. You can still buy a good one for as little as $3000. Expect to pay a little more for 1970-71 models because they tended to have more features and the hidden windshield wipers. A year ago this author was offered a '69 from the original owner for $500—and it was a very nice car. There is nothing at all unusual about the very nice but high-mileage Mark III. However, buyers today are paying a premium for very low mileage examples. Several have turned up with 10,000 miles or less, and such cars are bringing $20,000 or more. A few years ago one turned up with only 32 original miles. The original owner was a Lincoln-Mercury dealer who took one off the showroom floor and put it in his family room. When he died, the children sold the car to a collector for an undisclosed price. You can throw away the value guides when you find Mark IIIs like that one.

All in all, the Mark III was a smashing success. It was the first postwar Lincoln to sell nose-to-nose against an equivalent Cadillac, laying the groundwork for the enormously successful Mark IV and V.

Club for Continental Mark III Connoisseurs

Lincoln & Continental Owners Club
P.O. Box 68308,
Portland, OR 97268
Telephone: (503) 659-3769

Value Guide

Restorable: *A complete car requiring some bodywork and mechanical work, but not a "basket case" or a total rust-out.* **Good:** *A clean original or older restoration, completely driveable and serviceable, but not a show winner: capable of scoring 70-85 points in its present state.* **Excellent:** *A fine original or restored car capable of at least 85 out of 100 points in typical show judging, and requiring no significant work though possibly deficient in minor details. Cars in poorer condition will bring drastically reduced prices. Exceptionally fine "100 point" examples command a premium on the highest values stated.*

1968-71 Continental Mark III

Restorable	Good	Excellent
$5,000-7,500	$7,500-9,000	$9,000-12,500

We have started the "restorable" category fairly high here, because it is arguable that a Mark III really isn't restorable if it's too far gone. This is a big luxury car loaded with power and convenience gadgets: a prime example of a car that can cost twice as much to restore than the finished result will be worth.

Mark IIIs have been following more or less the value curve of the earlier Mark II, but on a much lower level. Both are closed body styles and have thus not been subject to the rampant inflation among convertibles that was prevalent during what we now nostalgically refer to as the "1980s recovery." IIIs are appreciating, just barely. This is all to the good if you are a collector, because these are fine, well-built, good-looking road cars which are perfectly at home in contemporary motoring conditions. Many Continental fanciers say the III was the best of the "modern" Continentals. Your assignment, if you choose to accept it, is to find the lowest mileage, cleanest Mark III you can, and pay what the owner is asking for it. You'll be miles ahead in the long run, compared to any example in poorer condition.

1953-54 Pontiac

	Restorable	Good	Excellent
1953 sedan delivery	$2,000-5,000	$5,000-8,500	$ 8,500-13,000
Station wagons	2,000-4,000	4,000-7,000	7,000-10,000
2d & 4d sedans	1,000-2,500	2,500-5,000	5,000-7,000
1954 Star Chief htp	3,000-6,000	6,000-10,000	10,000-15,000
Chieftain htps	2,500-5,000	5,000-9,500	9,500-13,000
Convertibles	4,000-8,000	8,000-15,000	15,000-25,000

Among sedan models, mid-Fifties Pontiacs excite few save Pontiac folk, but some of the other body styles are quite hot. The 1953 sedan delivery is worth a pile, considering what it is; the handful of 1954 models are worth twice as much because of their extreme rarity and the powerful demand for them among the knowledgeable. Pro-Pontiac price guides show convertibles—particularly the '54 Star Chief—pushing $30,000, but in the present economic doldrums, we doubt it. Join the Pontiac-Oakland Club International and go shopping in their newsletters; there are lots of hardtops and ragtops to choose from. The latter will continue to push upward in price when the economy recovers.

1940-48 Plymouth

	Restorable	Good	Excellent
Convertibles	$6,000-12,000	$12,000-18,000	$18,000-23,000
Station wagons	2,500-5,000	5,000-11,000	11,000-16,500
Coupes	1,500-3,000	3,000-5,000	5,000-8,000
Sedans	500-2,000	2,000-3,500	3,500-5,000

Speaking in generalities, these Plymouths, including the First Series 1949 models, are poor investments but very good collector cars. They fall into a period that has not produced many high rollers on the auction/investor circuit; only the convertible and perhaps the woody wagons are worth even considering if appreciation is your aim. In their favor, they were well nigh indestructible, and they have good club support, plus a fair supply of parts. Furthermore, they cost less, body style for body style, than a Ford or Chevy from the same period. They are recommended for collectors who don't want to spend a fortune, or make one.

Chevrolet versus Ford in the Thirties

They fought a battle royal for sales 60 years ago, and they're still doing it on the collector market today. Current values for similar body styles are remarkably uniform between the two makes. A Ford phaeton in the best possible condition costs $30,000 at the