

SUBTLE SOPHISTICATION:

The Lincoln Mark VII Experience

by Kit Sullivan

Lineage.

Style.

Confidence.

These are three words that can easily be used to describe the impressive credentials and abilities of the world-class Lincoln Mark VII.

At a time when American automotive manufacturers were designing their cars for a domestic market to display the most popular attributes of the world's most respected 'motorcars', Lincoln's engineers and designers jointly produced an automobile that did not just emulate these sophisticated imports, but actually equaled them in some, and surpassed them in most respects. In fact, the sinewy Mark VII actually pioneered many new and exciting technologies that none of the designers of the respected European vehicles ever even dreamed about. The innovative engineers and designers at Ford created new levels of performance, convenience and luxury for their Lincoln products that other car makers could only attempt to copy in their bid to stay 'current'.

In fact, as far as quality American-made automobiles are concerned, the name 'Lincoln' has always stood for design excellence and trend-setting products.

The incredible Lincoln Mark VII is as fine an example of that credo as there has ever been.

The Mark series of Lincolns started with the Mark II, an ultra-sophisticated and stylish vehicle commissioned by Edsel Ford himself that brought the best styling ideas from around the world together on one spectacular vehicle.

The Mark series of Lincoln 'personal luxury' cars have always been 2 door coupes, a body style that inherently states that the driver of such an automobile makes no compromise in his driving choice.

No, a Mark series from Lincoln was not an ostentatious luxury 'saloon' to take the entire family across country on vacation, nor was it stripped-down and spartan top-down corner-carver.

As capable as each of those designs may be, they are far too much of a compromise of one ideal for the enhancement of another to ever be considered a true Lincoln Mark series.

The original Mark IIs, and the later Mark IIIs were fine examples of a no-compromises design and engineering marvel, quite capable of satisfying all styles of driving.

Luxury is surely the most well-known hallmark of the Lincoln legacy, and in this area every single example of a Mark series coupe has excelled. However, unlike traditional 'luxury' cars, the Mark designers would not sacrifice any of the vehicle's

other performance or durability features just to make something “more luxurious”. A smooth riding car is certainly a pleasure on a long flat stretch of interstate, but if that same vehicle is saddled with a suspension incapable of confidently handling a winding country road, then it is not something that could ever be considered a ‘Mark’.

The Mark series of Lincoln automobiles reached a zenith of American personal luxury with the fabulous Mark IV in 1974, and again with the even more refined ‘designer series’ of Mark V in 1977. No finer an example of all-American personal luxury had ever been known.

The Mark V was succeeded by the trim and nimble Mark VI in 1980, marking the birth of the new decade with a level of sophistication that featured all the style and luxury of the previous Mark series cars, in a more ‘socially responsible’ package. The world might never have seen another vehicle with the singular and spectacular excellence of the Lincoln Marks IV, V or VI, surely as fine a series of examples of the ‘no compromises’ attitude of Lincoln as there had ever been. Others may have thrown in the towel due to ever-changing tastes and demands, but not Lincoln.

As the 1980s arrived, there were many life-changing developments happening around the globe almost faster than the world news organizations could report on them.

Whereas the typical American car was considered to be a relatively durable and comfortable vehicle, the rising popularity of European vehicles such as the BMW 6-series or the Mercedes-Benz SL series were famous for their exclusive reputation of engineering and performance excellence.

As desirable as the ownership of these fine European automobiles seemed to the average American, the reality was that they were highly-engineered marvels that required constant attention and never-ending maintenance. Most American drivers, spoiled over the low-maintenance and long-lasting durability of American cars, would not tolerate this from a simple ‘appliance’ like an automobile, no matter how sophisticated.

Just as they had done so many times in the past, Lincoln’s artisans refused to accept that fact, and decided that a car, their car, could be both sophisticated and durable. Thus, satisfying both American expectations as well as European aspirations in any prospective Lincoln driver.

With a design edict and philosophy that began in the fall of 1979, the 1984 Mark VII was total clean-sheet design for Lincoln. Never content to just spruce up last year’s chassis or model and call it “all new”, Lincoln’s craftsmen set about to design the next version of a world-leading ‘personal luxury’ coupe.

Historically, the owners of fine Lincoln automobiles have always been possessed of a very unique and well-defined sense of style. The generic, ‘one size fits all’ styling of a typical automobile would never have sufficed as the display of refinement and taste

required from the appearance of the sophisticated owner of such a vehicle. No, for that only a vehicle as respected and desired as a Lincoln could 'fill the bill'.

To satiate those demands, the introduction of the 1984 Mark VII made available three very carefully chosen 'themes' which further defined the magnificence of the already fabulously equipped Mark VII.

The mid-1970's saw Lincoln's introduction to the automotive world a line of offerings collectively known as the 'Designer's Series'. A very select few of the world's most popular and respected fashion designers were given the opportunity to express their singular ideal of fashion excellence through their choice of color, material and fabric design. That marvelous marriage of popular fashion sense and automotive sophistication led to the creation of some of the world's most sought-after vehicles.

Lincoln continued that tradition in 1984 with the auspicious debut of the all new Mark VII 'Gianni Versace' designer edition. Versace, a young and exciting Italian designer demonstrated his distinctive design flair with his selection of an elegantly simple monochromatic exterior paint treatment: Rich looking Walnut Glamour Clearcoat Metallic, highlighted with a Tan and Bright Blue accent stripe.

Versace spelled out his name on the quarter windows, and placed his own distinctive logo on the instrument panel. As a finishing touch to this glamorous appearance, he added sparkling wire-spoke aluminum wheels reminiscent of the finest of the classic road cars from around the world.

To further enhance this exterior color scheme, Versace chose a bold Desert Tan cloth interior highlighted in luxurious leather.

Overall, a simple yet elegantly effective automotive statement.

Complimenting the availability of the all new 'Versace' edition was the return of famed American designer Bill Blass with his newest creation, the 1984 Mark VII 'Bill Blass' designer edition.

Continuing in his long line of admired Mark-series designer Lincolns, his newest interpretation was perhaps his finest yet.

For the Mark VII bearing his name, Mr. Blass mandated an outstanding earth tone dual shade combination to enhance the all-new Mark's sleek aerodynamic shape.

The upper flanks featured Goldenrod Clearcoat Metallic paint, accented with Harvest Wheat Clearcoat Metallic on the lower body. A Cream and Dark Green paint stripe adorned the sides and rear deck lid, complimenting the fabulous 2-stage clearcoat metallic paint treatment standard on all versions of the new Mark VII.

Distinctive 'Bill Blass' lettering on the quarter windows and rear deck lid along with classic wire-spoke aluminum wheels are the crowning touches to perhaps the finest and most innovative version yet created in the 'Bill Blass' pantheon of designer Lincolns.

The rich, earth-tone theme established by Mr. Blass on the exterior was duplicated inside, with the plush cloth and rich leather Flaxen Gold two-tone treatment featured on the door panels and the unique sew-style seats.

As with the exterior, Bill Blass put his personal imprint on the interior, as evidenced by his well known 'Double B' logo on the dashboard.

The 1984 Bill Blass Mark VII went beyond surface luxury to create a total atmosphere of style to enhance the pleasure of the driving experience.

For the 1985 edition of the Mark VII, Versace's sophomore designer theme for Lincoln switched to a Navy Clearcoat Metallic exterior paint set off by coordinated side striping, with an interior awash in ultra-soft leather of Admiral Blue, with plush cloth accents. This final example of the 'Versace' Designer Series Mark VII was surely one of the finest and most stylish automotive creations ever.

Likewise, The Bill Blass designer edition for 1985 enjoyed a revised fashion scheme, featuring a subtle blend of Silver Sand Clearcoat Metallic over Burnished Pewter Clearcoat Metallic, complimented with two-tone paint stripes. The interior featured the stunning combination of Carob Brown 'Ultrasuede' material with leather trim.

The continuing collaboration of Bill Blass, America's premier fashion designer with Lincoln, America's finest luxury car builder always produced results that were in vogue, year after year.

The classic earth-tone paint theme established on the 1984 and 1985 'Bill Blass' editions continued on the 1986 model of the 'Bill Blass' Designer Series Mark VII with Sandalwood Clearcoat Metallic over Dark Sandalwood Glamour Clearcoat Metallic 2-stage paint.

The interior featured a Sand Beige combination of 'Ultrasuede' cloth with glove-soft leather trim. Another masterpiece.

All trends, no matter how stylish, can become stale after time. Consequently, Mr. Blass had some dramatic ideas in store for his next Mark VII creation.

A marked change was the single-tone Prairie Mist Metallic paint treatment featured for the first time on the 1987 edition of the 'Bill Blass' Mark VII, with a Sandalwood and Dark Prairie Mist leather interior to perfectly compliment the exterior beauty. The overwhelming success of this model emboldened the designer to take his fashion ideas to even higher levels of sophistication for the subsequent editions of the 'Bill Blass' model.

A shift away from the singular availability of color is evident in the 1988 and 1989 'Bill Blass' Mark VII, resplendent in the owner's choice of any one of eight fabulous Metallic Clearcoat paint colors newly available, each featuring a unique color-coordinated interior.

A significant addition to every 'Bill Blass' designer edition Mark VII beginning in 1988 is the inclusion of the astounding 5.0 liter 'High Output' V-8 engine, along with all of this tremendous power plant's high performance accoutrements.

As before, each 'Bill Blass' edition came well equipped with luxurious wire-spoke aluminum wheels, subtle two-tone paint stripes and the famous 'Bill Blass' logos stylishly displayed on the trunk lid and beautiful wood-tone dash board.

For the 1991 and 'Grand Finale' year of 1992 Mark VII production, the 'Bill Blass' series featured the same exquisite color choices as before, yet the recently introduced 5.0 HO drive train was further enhanced with the LSC's 16" BBS-styled wheels and aggressive high performance tires along with the responsive 3.27/1 axle ratio.

All in all, the brief yet enthralling 'Versace' edition as well as the ever-popular 'Bill Blass' edition of the Mark VII were each in their own way a distinct and expressive display of the advanced sense of style and sophistication possessed of an iconic Lincoln owner.

Aside from the unsurpassed style in all versions of the newest Mark, the popularity of the ultra-performance luxury vehicles available from the world's foremost car makers provided the influence for the awesome 'LSC' edition of the Mark VII, available in the debut year of 1984 and each year hence of Mark VII production.

Sophistication as well as excellence in design being their overriding goals led the engineers and designers to develop new technologies to meet lofty design targets and to discard anything that smacked of compromise.

The Mark VII's body was considerably smaller and sleeker than any Lincoln ever to have come before it. The innovative incorporation of leading aerodynamic principles resulted in the new Mark VII having one of the lowest 'coefficient of drag' numbers of any car ever produced up to that time.

There were many advanced techniques and ideas incorporated to achieve this stunning level of 'slipperiness'.

Foremost in the aerodynamic design of the Mark VII are the faired-in 'composite' head lamps. Instead of a one-size-fits-all headlamp bulb, the new Mark VII featured the very first example of an American car featuring these aerodynamic headlamps, smooth and stylish. Made of shatter-resistant polycarbonate 'Lexan', the headlamp 'lenses' were a permanent part of the vehicle, and only the encapsulated filament element itself needed to be changed in case of replacement. This was an industry first. Pretty normal for Lincoln, however.

The Mark VII's doors incorporated the sleek aerodynamic design of aircraft doors, where the upper frame of the window would actually become a part of the roof. The drip rails were concealed within this upper rail, adding to the Mark VII's stunning engineering and functionality.

Additionally, the sleek aerodynamic body featured surface mounted windows, further reducing any power-robbing drag.

The power-operated trunk lid featured the influence of Winebulhd Kamm, one of the world's foremost aerodynamicists, and the namesake of the 'Kamm-back' design. A short and relatively high trunk lid surface, punctuated by a quick 'drop-off' creates the least amount of aerodynamic drag, increasing fuel economy as well as overall vehicle performance. Of course, the Mark VII's trunk lid displays a stylish homage to the famous 'Continental kits' featured on famous Lincolns of the past.

The glamorous and gleaming finish of every Mark VII's paint is just one more example of only the finest materials and techniques to ever be considered for use on a car bearing the Lincoln trademark. Mark VII's paint featured a 2-stage base coat/clear-coat. This gave the paint's finish a shine and depth, as well as durability heretofore unheard of on any factory produced vehicle. In fact, Lincoln was the very first automobile manufacturer in America to offer 2-stage paint on a factory produced vehicle, and this world-class paint finish was standard equipment on every Mark VII.

The 'performance' version of the Mark VII is known as 'LSC', or 'Luxury Sport Coupe'. For the discriminating enthusiast who prefers not a car presenting a 'Design Decreed by Fashion', the LSC forwards the notion that a car can also successfully present a 'Design Decreed by Performance'.

The exterior of the 'LSC' features European-influenced ribbed lower body moldings, as well as a set of Marchal 750 fog lamps, from one of the world's most respected makers of high-performance lighting, Marchal S.E.V.

All this exterior beauty of the Mark VII only invites you to further experience the stunningly designed interior of the Mark VII.

The cabin of every iteration of the Mark VII is equally as remarkable as the exterior features. Control as well as comfort are both well represented in the fantastic design of the Mark VII's interior. Sparing no design or engineering principles, Lincoln's engineers soon employed the designers at 'Lear-Seigler' to develop the state-of-the-art performance seats for a world-class luxury performance vehicle, the 1985 Mark VII LSC. The individual front bucket seats are about the most sophisticated seats ever installed in a production vehicle. Not content with having simple adjustments for fore and aft, and seat-back rake, the rich leather Mark VII LSC seats feature adjustments for lower thigh support, lower side bolster comfort, inflatable lumbar support, multi-adjustable headrests, and perforated leather inserts to help the seats 'breathe' for added comfort. All seat adjustments are power operated for ultimate convenience, and there are sophisticated ergonomically-designed seat adjuster switches within easy reach on each door panel.

The dash-board features a 'cockpit' style design which puts the controls within easy reach of the driver. The staggeringly well-equipped Mark VII, as well as both the 'Versace' and 'Blass' designer editions feature an ultra-sophisticated electro-luminescent digital display dashboard. Exclusive, subtle and sophisticated, this computerized marvel of information gives the Mark VII driver an unparalleled ability to know instantly whatever information about his conveyance that he requires.

To demonstrate the genuine integrity towards the ideal of performance, the 1986 edition of Mark VII LSC came appropriately equipped with a full-analog instrumentation group. Featuring a large easy-to-read speedometer as well as tachometer flanking temperature and fuel gauges, this performance cluster perfectly compliments the sporting nature of the LSC, keeping the driver continually informed of the car's vital statistics.

Residing in the center of the dash between the driver and front seat passenger is the sophisticated 'Tripminder' driver information center. With a simple push of a button, the driver can call up a whole host of useful information, such as instant and average fuel mileage, distance to empty on fuel remaining, estimated time of arrival for destinations, average speed, an alarm clock feature, as well as a regular day/date/time function.

For audio enjoyment, Lincoln offered several levels of audio excellence to suit just about any audiophile's desires, culminating in the powerful JBL Audio designed and engineered audio system, with either a cassette player or a new-at-the-time CD player. The system featured a 10-speaker, power amplified example of about the finest factory-installed audio system ever made. The Mark VII audio systems all incorporate a power-operated antenna mounted on the rear of the vehicle.

The Mark VII was even one of the very first vehicles to offer a factory-installed cell phone, cutting edge technology made available by designers committed to driver satisfaction, convenience and security.

The amazing climate control system incorporated the marvel of a thermostatically-controlled A/C-Heater system. Just set the desired 'comfort' temperature, and the automatic system not only keeps the temperature consistent, it also decides where and when to direct the conditioned air. This system even features automatically-heated outside mirrors for improved cold weather visibility.

The Mark VII's automatic overdrive transmission is just about the most sophisticated example of an automatic transmission as could be found anywhere in the world at the time. A crisp shifting and responsive transmission, the overdrive feature reduced engine revs at freeway speeds, dramatically improving fuel economy.

Luxuriously wrapped in leather, the transmission shift lever is housed in a well-designed console that incorporates an ash tray with lighter, a dual compartment lid, power window switches, the power mirror switch and a concealed dual cup-holder, one each for driver and front passenger. The full-length floor console even incorporates ingeniously-designed heater ducts which direct warmed air towards the rear floor for rear seat passengers.

Comfortably padded, a perforated leather-wrapped steering wheel has a nice fat rim that makes it easy to grip in spirited driving. The leather keeps the rim cool and comfortable in all weather conditions. This wheel features a tilt mechanism for ultimate comfort and control, and the cruise control buttons are conveniently located on the front of the wheel so the driver need not take his eyes from the road. Leading the industry is no stranger to Lincoln's designers or engineers, and accordingly an advanced driver's side supplemental air-bag was added to the steering wheel in 1990, one of the world's firsts.

Controls for windshield wipers, washers and headlight high/low beam activation are conveniently placed on stalks directly behind the steering wheel, allowing the driver to keep their eyes on the road while operating any of these items.

The advanced 'lighting system' employed in the Mark VII delivers the epitome of convenience and performance.

The headlamps can be controlled with Lincoln's unique 'autolamp' system, which can be set to turn the lights on automatically in low-light conditions, and turn them off automatically whenever the vehicle is turned off, or in daylight. An 'autodim' feature even lets you have the 'high beams' activate automatically, further improving night vision, yet dims them whenever an approaching vehicle's headlights come into view, preventing blinding glare to oncoming drivers. The LSC's fog lights can even be controlled from the 'autolamp' control panel.

Overhead between driver and passenger is yet another example of a well-equipped console featuring an outside-temperature thermometer readout, as well as a digital compass. This console also features warning indicators for 'front and rear 'lamp out' conditions, as well as an air suspension system monitor. This console even houses the available power glass moon roof switch. The front of the console has provisions for storage of the dealer-available Lincoln garage door opener, which is just one more example of the completeness of the Mark VII's control environment.

The overall quality of the entire interior is on a par with the world's finest, from the thick-pile carpet, the full leather interior and even the astounding quiet afforded from the sophisticated use of advanced sound-deadening materials used throughout.

For any of the car manufacturers around the world, this may well have been the pinnacle of their ability, but Lincoln's demanding creators would never have been satisfied to leave it at that.

A sophisticated 'coach' needs a sophisticated 'chassis and drivetrain', and in this area the Mark VII may well have set a world standard that may never be equaled.

From the very first Mark VII in 1984, there have been world-leading engines. A fuel-injected and efficient 5.0 liter V-8 was standard equipment, and an advanced Turbo-Charged diesel engine was an available option.

1988 saw the introduction to the Mark VII LSC the famed 5.0 liter 'High Output' V-8.

The 'HO' is rightfully respected as one of the most famous and 'important' engines ever manufactured. Lightweight, yet powerful as well as durable, this amazing powerplant delivered an impressive 225 horsepower and a joyous 300 lb/ft torque to give the driver one of the world's most responsive and impressive vehicles.

The 'HO' engine's specs read like those of a race engine: Aluminum intake manifold, high-flow heads, low-friction roller camshaft, and even factory-installed stainless steel 'headers', an industry first. Again.

Spent exhaust gases were sent down an actual 'dual exhaust', which featured twin catalytic converters for reduced backpressure. Of course this set-up was much more expensive to produce, but the performance advantage it delivers is nothing short of astounding. And anything less would be a compromise, and therefore not allowed on a Lincoln automobile.

The sophisticated multi-port sequential fuel injection system was monitored and controlled by Ford's fantastic 'Electronic Engine Control-Fourth Generation' computer system, famously known as the EEC-IV. The incredibly powerful EEC-IV was the world's first automotive computer that could actually 'learn' as the car accumulated mileage. This enabled the EEC-IV to continually monitor many of the engine functions and to make precise adjustments, such as timing, spark advance and fuel flow. Not only did this deliver outstanding power and drivability, but amazing levels of fuel economy for such a powerful engine were also enjoyed by the Mark VII LSC owner. There is even a 'low oil' monitor that warns the driver of any impending damage the engine may suffer due to a lack of motor oil.

Power from this marvel of horsepower production was channeled through the transmission to the available 'Limited-Slip' high-performance rear axle. Not just a plebian 7.5" lightweight unit, the Mark VII received the strongest rear axle available from Ford, the durable 8.8" unit. Instead of the standard 3.08/1 axle ratio, the Mark VII LSC featured an upgraded 'performance' rear-axle ratio of 3.27/1, further contributing to the LSC's awesome accelerative ability.

Mark VII's featured an available Teves-designed 4-channel anti-lock brake system, an innovative and sophisticated brake system design from one of the world's leaders in brake components.

Another industry first, the 4-channel function of this system was the first used on an American vehicle from any manufacturer.

To further contribute to the awesome braking capability of the Mark VII, 4 wheel discs were employed, quite a rarity among American cars of the era.

To say that the Mark VII's suspension system is the most refined suspension system available on any car, from any manufacturer world-wide would be quite an astounding statement. It would also be quite incorrect. No, Instead of simply 'refining' the suspension techniques used by the world's leading manufacturers, Lincoln engineers wanted a suspension system that was capable of such an astoundingly high level of performance that those goals would simply be impossible with any type of then-currently known suspension technology.

To achieve this admittedly lofty goal, Lincoln's engineers, along with the world-leading engineers from Goodyear Tire and Rubber invented an entirely new and completely unique suspension system technology, with capabilities that so far surpass the abilities of conventional systems that they seem crude by comparison.

Instead of coiled steel springs used to suspend each corner of the vehicle, Mark VII features a rubber bladder 'air-spring' at all four corners.

A conventional steel spring must have a series of compromises designed in to give an acceptable level of comfort yet handling abilities. Consequently, neither one of the design parameters can be fully realized due to this necessary compromise.

Since 'compromise' is a word Lincoln engineers refuse to accept, the complete development of an entirely new suspension system was needed. One that could fully

deliver on the 'comfort' requirements, yet sacrifice nothing in terms of 'handling'. And vice versa.

Lots of manufacturers have made claims of vehicles that felt like they were "riding on air". Of course, that was all 100% advertising hyperbole.

However, the occupants of a Lincoln Mark VII are indeed actually riding on air. These amazing air springs offer stunning advantages over any conventional type of coil spring system.

There is an on-board computer-controlled air-compressor that constantly keeps the air springs inflated to exactly the correct pressure. Different load capacities, extra passengers, or driving habits can all put unique demands on a car's suspension.

Mark VII's no-compromise air-suspension system takes it all in stride, adjusting precisely to the needs as they are presented. The result is a ride unlike any other in the world. The car is always maintained at the proper 'trim'. Headlights are always aimed correctly. Handling is never compromised. The marvelous comfort afforded the Mark VII driver and occupants by the air spring system is excelled only by the extreme confidence and handling capabilities inherent in the system.

The durable air springs developed by Goodyear are reliable and long-lasting, and all this suspension wonderment happens silently and automatically, needing no input from the driver.

The design of the air-suspension system allows such a fine degree of 'tuning' that each version of the Mark VII, all the way up through the designer series and even the LSC receives a suspension precisely calibrated for that particular model's attributes. The LSC features higher-rate springs as well as increased performance roll bars and other suspension 'tweaks' to give the LSC its world-class handling prowess.

From the very first model introduced in 1984, the wheel and tire package available on each Mark VII was an integral 'player' in the car's overall personality. Premium radial ply tires mounted on attractive and precision-cast aluminum wheels delivered outstanding driving confidence.

The LSC further exemplified the ideal of 'performance' with its standard wide aluminum performance rims with high-performance Goodyear tires.

Debuting with the 1988 edition, the LSC featured 16"x7" 'turbine' performance aluminum rims onto which were mounted the world's leading high performance tire, the Goodyear Eagle, sized at an incredible 225/60. This aggressively sized and designed wheel and tire package in concert with the sophisticated air-suspension system endowed the Mark VII LSC with such breathtaking handling capabilities that only the supreme luxury attributes of the fabulous Mark VII LSC could indeed remind you that you are, after all, driving a 'Lincoln'.

The culmination of this was reached in 1990 when the LSC featured 16"x7" aluminum 'BBS' style rims, manufactured under license from the famed BBS wheel company themselves. BBS is known world-wide as the pinnacle in high performance rims, and has been factory-installed equipment on many sophisticated and respected

European sports coupes over the years. It is only fitting then that the world's finest 'Luxury Sports Coupe' wear the world's finest luxury sport rims. A perfect match.

A vehicle this sophisticated requires computer control, and there are several computers in the Mark VII to silently monitor and fine-tune the performance of the car at all times.

These computers are housed discreetly within the rearmost portion of the generous trunk area, behind a luxurious carpet-covered panel. In fact, the entire trunk is lined in this same soft material including the trunk lid inner surface, protecting any valuables stored within.

The Mark VII proudly features a motorized trunk lid pull-down, making slamming the trunk a thing of the past.

The real testament to all this marvelous engineering and impressive design is that the Mark VII, in all its models and editions is remarkably easy to operate and own. The vehicle goes about all this magnificent functionality silently and unobtrusively. The fact that the Mark VII requires such a low level of regular maintenance is made all the more impressive by the high level of engineering refinement as well as developmental engineering.

As thoroughly complete as each of the various editions of the Mark VII were throughout its production life, incremental improvements and upgrades were introduced with each successive model year, ensuring that the Mark VII continually outpaced the rest of the products from the world's premier vehicle manufacturers.

Case in point: The striking monochromatic appearance of the stunning Mark VII LSC 'Special Edition', which debuted mid-way through the 1990 model year. Whereas all previous Mark VII's came equipped with gleaming chrome trim and accents, the 'Special Edition' featured a European inspired full 'black out' treatment. The standard exterior trim in chrome and 'brightwork' was instead totally enveloped in dramatic 'low gloss' black. This blackout treatment was no small affair, either. All window trim, rear light trim, fender trim, door handles and lock escutcheons received the ebony hue so fashionable on the most desirable European imports at the time.

Even the high-performance 16" BBS rims displayed a unique dark charcoal center section with polished lip, further enhancing the 'Special Edition' LSC's statement.

In fact, about the only chrome trim left on the exterior were the classic 'Lincoln' grill surround, a thin horizontal strip in the lower body moldings and the 'Mark VII' nomenclature.

As if any Mark VII could ever be considered 'normal', the standard chrome 'LSC' emblems attached to the sail panels were deleted on the 'SE' edition. Alternatively, the 'Special Edition' LSC featured its own special identification: Bold cloisonné emblems in red, black and silver affixed prominently to each front fender proudly decreed this to be the 'LSC Special Edition'.

The pallet of exterior paint colors offered for the LSC 'Special Edition' was initially limited to one of only three breathtakingly dramatic shades: The awesomely sinister

Midnight Black Clearcoat Metallic, the exhilarating Garnet Red Clearcoat Metallic, and the ultra-rare, one year only shade of Dark Titanium Clearcoat Metallic. The bumpers, lower body sides and lower body side moldings were all trimmed in the same monochromatic color.

Successive 1991 and 1992 Mark VII LSC 'Special Edition' models were offered in either the Black or Red color scheme exclusively.

Whereas all other editions of Mark VII exude quiet confidence most noticed by fellow enthusiasts, the aggressive styling of the 'Special Edition' left no doubt that this vehicle was making a statement about its driver, and indeed its own world-class capabilities.

Each of the Mark VII's produced from its inception in 1984 through its lamented finale in 1992 represents possibly the true all time high-water mark for any automotive manufacturer. Fitting then that they should all carry the 'Lincoln' name.

To the lucky driver of a Lincoln Mark VII, confidence in driving and the fine feel of quality and luxury become a daily experience. The knowing smile, barely perceptible, of the Mark VII driver as he communes amongst lesser vehicles and their owners is a testament to the satisfaction that comes with superior craftsmanship and exemplary capabilities.

Overall, no finer an example of 'no compromises' could be produced.

And after all, isn't that what owning "The World's Finest Motorcar" should be all about?

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