

Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

2009 Lincoln MKS MKS: Evolution of the American Luxury Car

By KATHLEEN CARR

The venerable Lincoln Town Car had its day; it's the workhorse of limousine services everywhere. The last body-on-frame car for sale in the U.S., it rides on a chassis first designed in 1981. It isn't much for a luxury car marquee to hang its hat on.

So for 2009, Lincoln has ended production of the Town Car, and will introduce its new flagship replacement, the MKS. Intended to bring Lincoln brand into the 21st century; a car that Ford hopes will help put its luxury division back on the map after years of losing ground. The MKS looks more like what the competition has been offering for years. It offers technologies now common to Mercedes-Benz and Lexus cars.

Its most striking exterior design feature is its double-wing grille, which sweeps up into the jewel-like headlamps, wrapping around the front fascia and forming a sharp crease that defines the high beltline. A subtle kick-up over the rear wheel calls back cues found on many classic Lincolns. Strong shoulders, dramatic C-pillars, clean body sides, a tall rear deck and large wheels and tires lend the Lincoln MKS a confident stance.

Modern luxury carries through inside, as well. Space is abundant. Lincoln claims the MKS has the largest rear cabin in its class in every important dimension, including head, leg and shoulder room.

Its interior is sleek. The symmetrical instrument panel has a clean look with relatively few break lines. The flow-through center



Specifications: 3.7-Liter, V-6, 24-valve, 273-hp @ 270 lb-ft. torque engine; 6-Speed automatic transmission w/ select shift; 17-City 24-Highway; \$44,570. MSRP

stack is clean and uncluttered, with an information screen integrated at the top. The cabin is swathed by real wood (ebony or olive ash) and Bridge of Weir leather.

Interior design is on par with other cars in this segment. Materials quality is a mixed bag, however, with too much chintzy plastic and Ford-grade switchgear.

Control virtually anything found on the car's center console with your voice...All accessible with one button and your voice.

Lincoln's ventilated seats are a nice touch, as are the MKS's standard rear heated seats. Moreover, the 2009 MKS offers plenty of interior and cargo space -- the trunk will hold 18.4 cubic feet. Rear passenger room and comfort are particularly impressive.

Ford introduced its revolutionary Sync system last year on cars like the Focus. In this luxurious new Lincoln, Ford has taken Sync to its logical next step. While Sync

is standard, you'll need to pop for some of the pricey option packages to take full advantage of the system.

Control virtually anything found on the car's center console with your voice. Want to change the radio station, play a CD or input a destination on the navigation system? How about finding movie times or even sports

scores? All accessible with one button and your voice. All of this high-tech stuff is wrapped in Lincoln's sleek new full-size sedan, the MKS.

You start the 2009 Lincoln MKS with a push button, and the 3.7-liter V-6 springs to life with a pleasing rasp. Pull the gearshift lever into Drive, and you're off: there are no shifter paddles or other newfangled gearchanging devices here, but MKS owners

can make the best of the 3.7-liter V-6 and its six-speed automatic transmission by sliding the gearshift lever to the right, thus engaging the SelectShift mode which allows you to push forward to downshift and pull back to upshift.

Thus engaged, the 3.7-liter V-6 eagerly races to its redline and provides strong acceleration and linear power, even if it's not particularly scintillating. In manual mode, the gearshift lever bangs against its stops as you push it back and forth, which sounds and feels a little cheap, but you quickly learn not to move it through its full range of motion. The V-6 is certainly a good engine. Spring of 2009, the EcoBoost twin-turbo V-6, will be released.

The 2009 Lincoln MKS comes standard with stability and traction control, front-seat side airbags, side curtain airbags and antilock brakes with brake assist. An all-new independent rear suspension design is aimed at maximizing suspension travel and allowing for more precise tuning. The front suspension uses MacPherson struts. MKS will be

available with 18-inch, 19-inch, or 20-inch wheels.

A great deal of effort clearly went into the design and production of the Lincoln MKS, which marks a point in the transition of a brand as it carries tradition into the future by using technology. The sedan leaves behind the leisure suit and gold chain image by way of measurable improvements in physical and digital systems.

The Lincoln MKS is a modern alternative for the full size luxury car customer seeking American style and innovation. While the naturally aspirated V-6 and six-speed automatic serve the current car well, the Eco-Boost twin-turbo V-6 coupled with AWD will clearly propel this luxury machine onto an entirely different level.

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Editorial

continued from A4

brought into the 21st century by adding coverage for part-time and contingent workers. We also need to enact paid sick leave and family leave insurance.

Invest in the Public Good Through Fair Budget and Tax Policies. The state's revenue shortfall threatens critical public structures. This revenue problem must be met with a revenue solution, not cuts to vital public services.

Preserving our Nation's Rental Housing. We should realign our public investments in housing to support affordable rental and owner-occupied homes. The legislature should redirect resources that now subsidize wealthy individuals who purchase large homes to poor and near-poor families who do not have the affordable housing they need to allow them to succeed in life.

Create Redemptive Opportunities for People with Criminal Records. Voters said "no" to a draconian "lock 'em up" scheme on the November ballot. The legislature should respond by providing treatment and job training opportunities that help reduce violence and recidivism and increase community safety.

Increase Economic Mobility Through Lifelong Education. Intel has noted that one reason the company moved to Oregon in the 1970s was Oregon's "K-life education system." Investment in an education-for-life system, from preschool through adult education, would enhance economic mobility for Oregonians.

Link Economic Development to Workforce Development Opportunities. Our economic development practices need transparency and accountability so that we do not squander resources on jobs that pay little and offer few benefits. We also can't afford to give more tax breaks to businesses that lay off their Oregon workers and leave the state.

Advance Low-Wage Workers by Making Work Pay. It's time to

Fired Up and Ready to Go

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increase the Earned Income Tax Credit to make work pay for low-wage workers with children.

Build and Protect Assets for Financial Stability and Growth. We can make sure people being assisted in public benefits programs are allowed to acquire assets, and we can develop mecha-

nisms so more Oregonians can save for retirement.

Protect Access to the American Dream for Immigrants and Refugees. All Oregonians ultimately pay more for health care when we deny health care to people because of their immigration status. Barring college doors

for undocumented students penalizes innocent victims of a failed immigration system and destroys the American Dream.

Ensure Economic Opportunity and Safety for Women and Girls. We should build safer and more affordable housing for victims of sexual and domestic violence, create a better trained workforce in the childcare industry and develop a more affordable childcare system.

These goals are achievable. I'm "Fired up! Ready to go!" and confront poverty. Are you?

Charles Sheketoff is executive director of the Oregon Center for Public Policy.

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