

## Contemplation, Slow Jams and Fast Cars

By Roger Witherspoon



There are times when words just won't do.

It's that contemplative period when you are looking inward as much as you are gazing outwards; watching and feeling the world roll by. At times like that, you can get lost in the delicate flute solo in the Harold Johnson Sextet's *Moses*, or the nuanced variations in the a capella Gregorian chants of Cerddorion.

But the mood would be destroyed in most cars, where the soft, delicate, distinctive notes would be lost under the drone of the wind rushing by. But not in the new Lincoln MKZ, where the outside world is firmly shut out and the occasional thump of the bass rolls through the heated seats like a personal massage.

If the ability to provide a quiet, personal, melodic, contemplative environment at 100 miles per hour is the mark of a well designed, quality controlled, luxury vehicle then the 2010 MKZ is a distinct improvement over its predecessors and a mark of how competitive Ford's Lincoln division intends to be in the cutthroat car world of the future. What is crafted here is a stylish, comfortable, unpretentious and understated luxury liner which offers a lot for under \$45,000.

While the MKZ may fill a niche intended a few years ago for the hastily conceived, under powered, over rated, Lincoln Zephyr – which noisily blew in and was quietly blown away by the competition – that is the only similarity between Lincoln's former top sedan and this new one. With the MKZ, the folks holding Lincoln's crayons went back to the beginning and started over with benchmarks from Lexus, Cadillac, and Mercedes in mind. And it will give those three luxury brands a run for their money.

Outside, the MKZ starts with the distinct, unassuming, split grill and flows back from there. While it is not trying for the supersonic sleek appearance of the Cadillac CTS, the MKZ has dropped its usual, large, tank appearance in favor of a slimmer, more sculpted look. Under the hood, the MKZ sports a 3.5-liter V-6 engine which produces only 263 horsepower and takes a bit over seven seconds to zip from 0 to 60 miles per

hour. But this sedan was never intended to hit the drag racing circuit, even if it does have a six speed automatic transmission with an electronic manual mode and a top speed of 130 miles per hour. Its power plant is productive enough to keep the MKZ sedan ahead of the traffic, and cruise in triple digits when you are running through the wide open spaces. And it has all wheel drive, which tosses all torque to the rear wheels when starting, and equalizes the wheel speeds when traveling on slippery surfaces.

It is not the most fuel efficient of power plants. The EPA estimated the MKZ would drink a gallon of regular gas for every 17 city miles and every 24 highway miles. The car, as tested, placed in the middle with about 19 miles per gallon in mixed driving.



Inside this Lincoln, there is a bit more than you would expect in a car at this price range. The entertainment and navigation systems are run by Ford's SYNC system, which is controlled through either voice activation or a touch

screen. The Bluetooth cell phone connection is one of the easiest to set up and use. SYNC gives the Lincoln's navigation system the nearly as much flexibility as one finds in the new Lexus line. Like the Lexus, the satellite driven navigation system provides weather updates and five-day forecasts, the latest fuel prices at some 120,000 gas stations, and locations and schedules of most of the nation's movie theaters.

For entertainment, the Lincoln has a 600-watt THX-II sound system with a 12-channel amplifier and 14 speakers playing music from AM/FM and Sirius satellite radio, an MP3 or iPod player, or CD. And, if you want, the system has a 10 gigabyte hard drive juke box which can store some 2,400 of your favorite tunes.

The technology provides minor conveniences, such as fingertip controls on the leather steering wheel for the phone, navigation, cruise control, Bluetooth, and entertainment systems. And there are innovations, including the radar which turns on a light in either side view mirror whenever there is a vehicle in your blind spot, and the adaptive headlamps which automatically dim when there is an oncoming vehicle. During the summer, you might also appreciate the fact that the front seats can be air cooled; in colder climes, they can be heated.

This Lincoln is not going to push red lines with the Mercedes and CTS racers. But if you like a lot of comforts and prefer them in the leisure lane, you might want to cruise in a revamped MKZ.



### **2010 Lincoln MKZ AWD**

<b>MSRP:</b>		<b>\$43,245</b>
<b>EPA Mileage:</b>	<b>17 MPG City</b>	<b>24 MPG Highway</b>
<b>As Tested Mileage:</b>		<b>19 MPG Mixed</b>

#### **Performance / Safety:**

<b>0 – 60 MPH</b>	<b>7.1 Seconds</b>
<b>Top Speed</b>	<b>130 MPH</b>

3.5-Liter DOHC aluminum V-6 engine producing 263 horsepower and 249 pound-feet of torque; 6-speed automatic transmission; all wheel drive; independent front and rear suspensions; 18-inch aluminum wheels; 4-wheel disc brakes; traction control; adaptive Halogen headlamps; rear camera; side alert radar; heated side mirrors; dual stage front airbags; driver & passenger side airbags.

#### **Interior / Comfort:**

AM/FM/ Sirius satellite radio; CD, MP3, & iPod player; 10 GB hard drive juke box; 600-watt THX-II sound system with 14 speakers; leather, heated or cooled seats; power sunroof; navigation system; leather wrapped steering wheel with fingertip audio, Bluetooth, and cruise controls.