

unstoppable

LONDON DOUBLEDECKER

Buses, especially double-decker buses are the quaint but very effective means of getting around the city of London. Blessed as it is with a great underground rail network, the double-decker buses in London ply just as effectively for business and pleasure.



This open topped double-decker tourist bus does the round of Westminster Abbey. The romance of the double-decker has been kept alive through the years courtesy of such legendary names like AEC, Foden, Leyland and more recently Volvo and MAN.



Edition 5 of a special CV series by

APOLLO TYRES



Twin icons of a great city: the London double-decker and the London Taxi Cab.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU FOUGHT WITH your younger siblings or your friends to be first on to the top of a double-decker and also first to the top front section? Yes the lure and the heightened sense of expectation one gets from being perched in the top deck of a small building on the move is something to savour but is slowly being lost on many, more so in these days of congested traffic and the proliferated mass of personal mobility.

Double-decker buses have been around as long as the very first omnibus with an internal combustion engine made its way around the streets of Berlin and London, probably within



So what if it is a double decker of the London Metropolitan Transport Company. It yet has to be deft and nimble to get through.

months of each other one should guess. However they were by no means the first road-going horseless carriages of double-decker configuration, there being the steam-powered units of a gargantuan nature preceding them. Of course these vehicles with their very large diameter wheels made out of a mix of wood and steel components with solid rubber tacked on the circumference were unwieldy but they got the job done.

Given the tight nature of the roads in most of the European cities at the turn of the last century, it was difficult to make the omnibuses longer than required given their turning circles and the need to wriggle in and out of tight circles. The only way was to go up and tall, much like most modern cities have done and that's how the double-decker bus evolved. In many a case it was a bare bones affair to begin with and for creature comfort one just had a canvas roof and roll-down window shades to keep the sun and sleet off the occupants.



APOLLO TYRES LTD.
unstoppable

Never wary of progress, never skeptical about success,
Never scared of challenges, never tired of trying,
Every step of the way we travel with our customers,
On the "unstoppable" journey to success.

It was the British coach builders who though took the double-decker to a high position, not just in transportation folklore but also grabbed impressionable minds wherever they were introduced. Coach builders like Duple did much of the work but commercial vehicle manufacturers like Dennis, Foden, Albion, ERE, AEC and Leyland to name a few went out of their way to develop and perfect the double-decker concept. The overall configuration remained constant by far for very many years with a front engine and a driver's cab next to the bonneted engine bay – part of the detail which charmed many a bus aficionado the world over. There was full frontal control and by and large manual transmissions were the norm until Leyland and AEC adopted the pneumatic-gear shifters to ease the workload of the driver. Of course once automatic transmissions took over the lot of the double decker pilot was made even easier.

Perhaps the best known and the most loved of the British



All London double deckers are now rear-engined and they come in either single rear axle or tandem rear wheel drive as on this tour bus.

double-deckers has to be the AEC Routemaster, a bus specifically ordered for duty in London but which has gone to epitomise the classic Brit double-decker. It was in service for well over three decades and was pulled out of service just a few months ago. Today's specialist double-deckers come from Volvo, MAN, DAF and Scania as also a few Mercedes-Benz units while in India even though Teeco did make a few, it was the Ashok Leyland ilk which proliferated. In fact in a city like Mumbai, so very close in character to cosmopolitan London, these Ashok Leyland double-deckers are just as strong an icon.



Where formerly it was all British bus makers on the London roads, after the demise of the AEC Routemaster it is all Volvo, DAF and MAN.