

THE CHRYSLER 300-C, SHOWN HERE ON DAYTONA'S SANDS, IS MUCH QUIETER AND SMOOTHER THAN THE SIMILAR 1955-56 VERSIONS.

## CHRYSLER 300-C TEST

**M**OST powerful American production car. That's what the original Chrysler 300 was in 1955 and that's what its successor, the 1957 Chrysler 300-C, is right now. What's more, the 300-C carries the title even more gracefully than its illustrious forebears.

Why more gracefully? Well, it was not for nothing that Chrysler 300 models have come to be known as "the big white brutes" on the stock car racing circuit in the past two years. They were hot cars,

fast and with a high degree of roadability—but they never let you forget it.

Even in "stock" stock form, much less set up for racing, they had a rough idle and a much harsher ride than standard Chryslers.

There's been a big change for 1957.

First thing you notice about a 300-C is that it rides much softer and is a lot more comfortable than earlier 300s. Next you realize that the engine is smoother at idle and just generally seems more tractable.

This is disquieting. You begin to wonder if they've taken a husky, rapid male-type automobile and made a sissy of it. Does it still have the performance and excellent handling for which 300 models have become justly famed?

Flooring the accelerator reassures you on the first point. This car goes! And the way it breezes thru the first sharp turn reassures you on the second.

If you're like most drivers, you'll walk away from your first ride in a 300-C convinced that Chrysler engineers have done a really amazing job. They've not only retained the virtues of past 300s, with dividends, but added many new ones.

How? Let's take riding comfort. As a top Chrysler engineer put it: "Our '57 models have so much better inherent han-

dling qualities that we didn't have to firm up suspensions nearly as much in the 300-C to get the controllability we wanted."

In other words, the switch to torsion bar front suspension and other chassis changes, coupled with a much lower center of gravity, gave 300-C engineers an excellent base on which to work. They could build in a softer ride than 300 and 300-B owners are accustomed to—and still retain the same top-notch cornering ability and generally good handling.

Under the hood, engineers had more cubic inches to play with. Displacement has been upped from 354 to 392 inches. That, and other changes, raised horsepower from 340 to 375—with 390 on tap if you want to go for a \$500 factory power pack. (More on that later.)

Along with the shift in its mechanical personality, the latest of the 300 line has undergone a styling change.

The 300-C, like the 300 and 300-B, still shares a body shell with more prosaic Chrysler New Yorkers. Now, however, it has new front end sheet metal and a grille all its own. In addition, a convertible has been added to the two-door hardtop models offered in the past.

Happily enough, the tradition of using only the bare minimum of exterior trim

has been adhered to again this year. The result is a car that doesn't disguise its basic parentage, particularly in the high-flying rear fender fins, but is more distinctive and every bit as attractive as earlier 300s.

The 300-C is no small car. Wheelbase is the same as last year's 300-B and overall length is just over 219 inches, only fractionally shorter than 1956. Height has been reduced substantially, however; about five inches to be exact.

The odd thing is that once you get inside a 300-C you tend to forget it's as big as it is. Part of this is due to its performance, handling and maneuverability. The sloping hood and rear deck add to the illusion.

There are few small cars which will beat, or even equal, the acceleration of the 300-C. Not a single 0-60 mph run took more than 7.8 seconds. Average for 0-80 was 12.6 seconds! Times like this are amazing for a car as big and heavy as the 300-C. The test car had the standard 3.36 axle, incidentally, and experimenting with some of the other optional ratios would probably improve the above figures.

Fast corners can be taken with ease and practically no noticeable body roll. The full-time power steering with a 16.2-to-1 ratio is fast, yet light.

Fuel economy proved surprisingly good when the car was driven at normal speeds in light to medium-heavy traffic. An average of 15 mpg was recorded under these conditions. Making full use of the 300-C's performance potential would cut this considerably, of course.

Interior appointments of the 300-C are comfortable and sensible. The dash is thickly padded and covered with leather, like the seats. A big, round speedometer is easy to read and honest-to-goodness gauges show fuel and temperature levels, oil pressure and ammeter readings—no flashing lights here.

Due to low overall height, it might be



**CHURNING THE DIRT** will hold any good accelerator back, but on pavement the 300-C does 0-60 mph in 7.7 seconds with the standard rear axle ratio. Other gearing is optional.

difficult for tall people to wear a hat inside a 300-C, but headroom is adequate for those of average size.

The three-speed Torqueflite transmission is a big improvement over Chrysler's old two-speed automatic. The test car shifted to second at about 58 mph and to high at about 80 mph with wide open throttle. It was possible to down-shift for passing up to about 70 mph by flooring the accelerator.

Like all standard 300-Cs, the hardtop test car came equipped with Torqueflite three-speed automatic transmission, power brakes, nylon racing-type white sidewall tires (14-inch, of course), dual headlamps, leather upholstery and a special fan which won't run over 2500 rpm (no additional cooling is needed at higher engine speeds).

It had such optional items as power steering, radio and heater, etc. Other options include air conditioning, power windows and sundry other accessories.

Not one of the "sundries" is what 300-C spec sheets list as the Optional Chassis Package. As the term implies, this power pack includes not only engine modifications which raise horsepower to 390, but other significant changes, too.

Power boost comes from a 10-to-1 compression ratio and longer duration cam, plus a "low back pressure exhaust system."

Chrysler is very frank in stating that "this optional engine is not recommended for the average 300-C customer as the longer duration high speed camshaft increases idle roughness and reduces low speed performance." In other words, it's

catalogued mainly for the benefit of the competition-minded.

Part of this package is a manual, three-speed transmission and manual steering. You don't get power brakes with this setup.

As with past 300 models, 300-Cs are available with a variety of rear axle ratios. They are: 2.92, 3.18, 3.36 (standard), 3.54, 3.73, 3.91, 4.10, 4.30, 4.56, 4.89, 5.38, 5.83 and 6.17. (All but the last three can be had at no extra cost.) This permits buyers to gear their 300-Cs for nearly anything they want; from drags to courses of varying lengths and characteristics, as well as just plain highway touring.

All 300-C engines have twin four-barrel carburetors, of course, and nearly square bore/stroke ratios—4.0 by 3.9 inches.

It's interesting to note that while no 300-C could qualify as an economy car, they deliver good fuel economy.

Quality of 300-Cs is about what you should expect from a car of its price (over \$5000). Even though the test car was one of the very first produced, it had no apparent defects. Finish was good; particularly the interior.

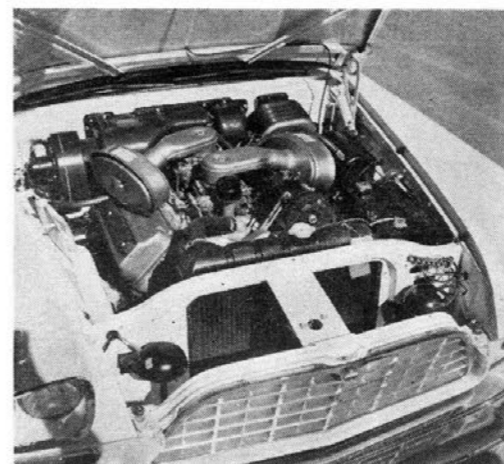
Best way to sum up a report on this car might be like this:

Chrysler 300s have been men's cars since their inception two years ago. The 300-C retains all the masculinity of those of the past two years—and now has a few more qualities, comfort and enhanced good looks especially, which will appeal to the ladies.

It's quite an automobile. •

### CHRYSLER 300-C TEST DATA

Test Car: 1957 300-C hardtop  
Basic Price: \$4929  
Engine: 392-cubic-inch ohv V-8  
Compression ratio: 9.25-to-1  
Horsepower: 375 @ 5200 rpm  
Torque: 420 @ 4000 rpm  
Dimensions: Length 219.2 inches, width 78.8, height 54.7, tread 61.2 front 60 rear, wheelbase 126  
Transmission: Three-speed Torqueflite torque converter  
Acceleration: 0-30 mph 3.4 seconds, 0-45 mph 4.9, 0-60 mph 7.7 seconds  
Gas Mileage: 15 mpg average  
Speedometer corrections: Indicated 30, 45 and 60 mph are actual 28.5, 43 and 56 mph, respectively



**TWIN FOUR-BARRELS** provide the carburetion and did not cut gas mileage average below that obtained with the standard V-8's.