

The 1956 chevrolet

HIGHLIGHTS: top of 205 hp, front end with a tilt, new four-door hardtop and nine-passenger station wagon and shoulder harness seat belts

CHEVROLET plans to keep its remarkable reputation for outstanding performance going strong in 1956. With this in mind, engines ratings of up to 205 horsepower are being offered buyers for the coming year. Styling hasn't been forgotten either; although the basic body shell—new in 1955—remains the same, detail changes have been made to increase the car's already broad appeal and several new body types have been created to fill out the line.

One of the more interesting things about the increased horsepower ratings of the engines is that they have been made with no increase in displacement. The Super Turbo-Fire V-8, which now puts out the 205 horsepower, remains at 265 cubic inches. The boost comes from a new high-lift camshaft, compression ratio of 9.25-to-1 and other detail refinements. A four-barrel carburetor is standard on this engine.

Two other V-8 engines are also avail-

able: one installed in standard shift cars and the other standard on Powerglide models. The first continues at 162 horsepower, same as 1955, while the standard Powerglide engine is rated at 170 horsepower. All V-8 engines used in 1956 Chevrolets will have hydraulic valve lifters, with solid lifters optional.

The promise of outstanding performance in Chevrolet's 205-horsepower engine already has been demonstrated. A record-breaking run up Pikes Peak by a heavily disguised 1956 Chevrolet clipped more than two minutes from the former standard passenger car record for this run.

A pre-production '56 camouflaged with plastic hoods and a weird paint job made the 12.42-mile climb in 17 minutes, 24:05 seconds. The old record was 19 minutes, 25:70 seconds and had stood for 21 years.

The car was driven by Zora Arkus-Duntov, a Chevrolet engineer, and was certified by NASCAR. NASCAR officials timed the run, certified the car as stock after tearing the engine down and checking it against 1956 specifications.

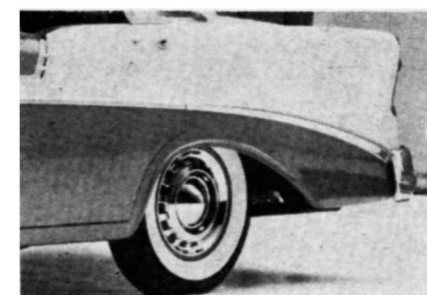
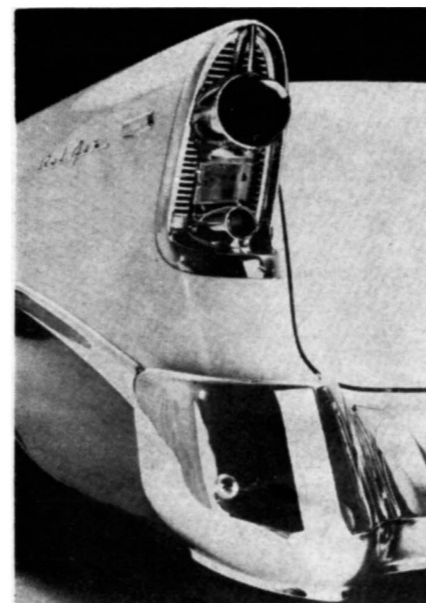
Among witnesses at the run were Bill France, NASCAR president, and "Cannonball" Baker, former holder of the stock car record for the climb.

A good test of a car's roadability and handling, as well as its power and acceleration, the road up Pikes Peak climbs thru a series of 170 sharp turns and cut-backs to the summit, 14,110 feet above sea level.

Chevrolet's traditional valve-in-head six has been retained for customers who prefer it to the V-8. Modifications including higher lift cam, new al-dipped exhaust valves and compression ratio of 8-to-1 have raised horsepower to 140, however. At the same time, better gasoline mileage is claimed. Hydraulic valve lifters are used in the six also.

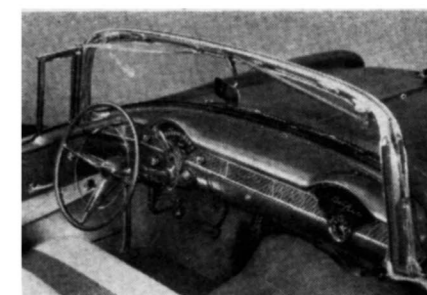
Major styling change involves the grille. Chevrolet introduced a remarkably clean-looking arrangement last year and, while it was a hit with most enthusiasts, the company's buyer research apparently indicated that a more massive appearance was desired by a majority of the car

Styling highlights of 1956 Chevrolets are represented in the three photos here. Forward cant of the front end has been emphasized by stretching the hood metal out another four inches. This, with angled headlight hoods and grille, give illusion of motion. Car at top is Bel Air convertible, center is standard sedan, while new sport sedan is at the bottom.



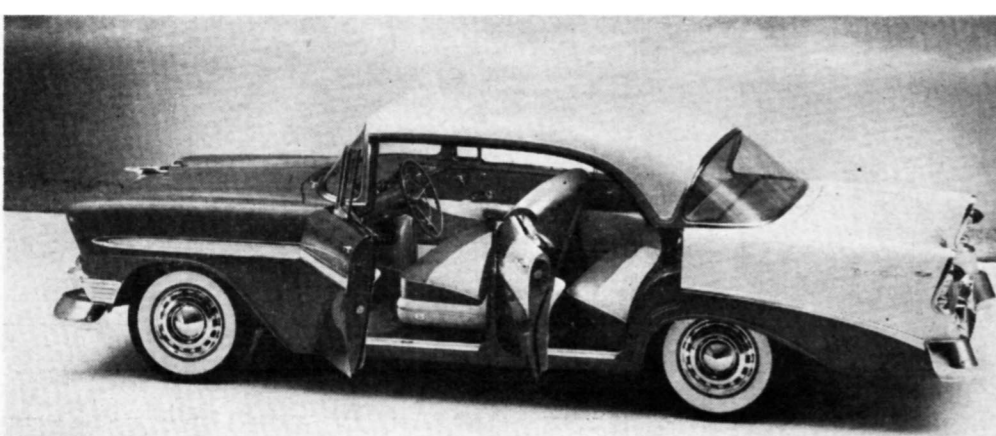
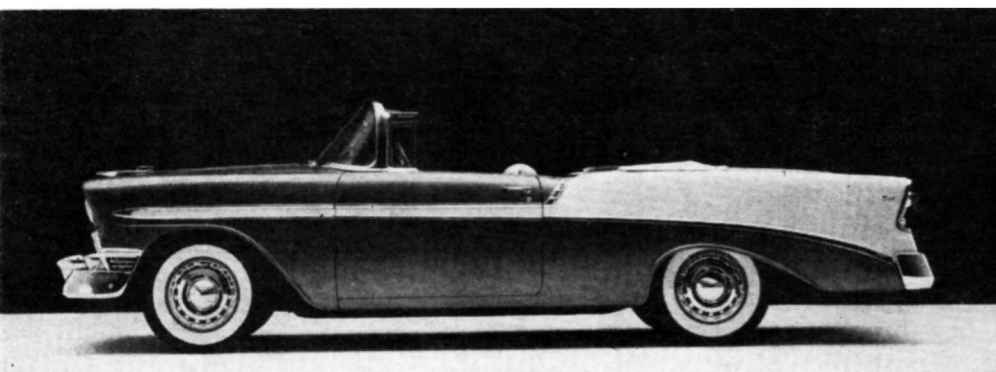
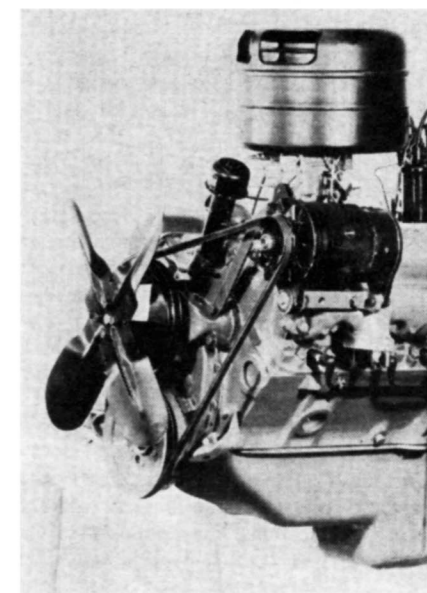
Cleaner lines (left, top and bottom) results from hiding gas intake in Buick-like taillights. Note wheel baffles above.

Massive frontal treatment is rather drastic change from much simpler treatment in 1955 front ends. Car has longer look.



Instrument panel changes are few for '56. Chevrolet now offers seat belts with shoulder harness as optional equipment.

Chevy V-8 in its first year unquestionably became the new favorite among enthusiasts. Top rating for 1956 is 205 hp.



driving the 1956 chevrolet

THE 1956 Chevrolet has already proved itself by breaking the stock car record for the Pikes Peak climb—in a time only about three minutes over the current race car record. I drove the same heavily-disguised four-door hardtop which set the record and was very impressed by its performance and handling. The 205-hp engine makes top speed and acceleration excellent and the car has a responsive, very stable feel.

Maurie Rose turned the wheel over to me after giving me a fast tour of the varied roads and high-speed track at GM's proving grounds. After a few familiarization runs, we made a few quick performance checks using fifth wheel and two stop watches. Although the car was handicapped by the clutch—the heavy-duty one standard with the 205-hp engine

was badly worn after practice and record runs at the Peak and had been replaced by a standard unit—acceleration was good. Zero to 60 mph took 12 seconds flat and 50 to 70 about 6.9 seconds. With the heavier clutch which would make faster starts possible, the 0-60 time could have been cut noticeably, I'm sure.

Braking was very positive, though a little sudden due to dirt in the drums from the Peak runs. Chevrolet's anti-dive feature introduced last year is one of the things that makes driving the car very enjoyable.

This car had been driven very hard, as you can imagine, at Pikes Peak; many practice runs were made before the official record-breaker. Despite that, it performed nobly and was really a lot of fun to drive.

—Ken Fermyole

The company has jumped on the safety bandwagon. In fact, in the matter of

restraining devices it has gone the rest of the industry one better, offering not only seat belts but shoulder harnesses, too! This is just a bit surprising because Chevrolet in the past seemed to feel that these items had little future in the passenger car. The value of safety belts was not questioned so much as the number of people who would actually use them. Could be that this is still the private belief of many, but at least they are now available. Crash-tested, positive-locking door latches and precision headlight aiming devices are two other items claimed to contribute to safety.

In what might be an attempt to appease dealers—those handling all makes screamed over the almost unlimited variety of colors and trims available in 1955—a “standard” two tone trim has been adopted for interiors of each series. “A wide range” of other harmonizing interiors will be optional, however.

Tail light treatment has been changed and '56 Chevrolets will have a distinctly Buick-like appearance from the rear. Gas filler caps are now concealed by hinged left rear tail lights instead of being under hinged flaps in the fender. This permits a smooth fender surface.

Here are the body styles available: 150 Series—two and four-door sedans, utility sedan and two-door, six-passenger station wagon; 210 Series—two and four-door sedans, Delray coupe, sport coupe and sedan, two and four-door six-passenger wagon and four-door, nine-passenger wagon; Bel Air Series—two and four-door sedans, sport coupe and sport sedan (hardtops), convertible, Nomad station wagon and four-door, nine-passenger wagon.

The 140-horsepower six-cylinder engine mentioned above will be the only six offered, incidentally. (Last year there were two. It will be used with both automatic and manual transmissions.

Optional items available will be full-flow oil filters, power steering, power brakes, push-button power seats and windows, air conditioning, tinted glass, etc.

Cited by Chevrolet as mechanical improvements are redesigned rear engine mounts (for better isolation of noise and vibration), electric water temperature gages replacing the old tube-type, improved batteries (carrying 36 instead of 21 month guarantees) and spark plugs and woven asbestos composition clutch facings for V-8 clutches. A high-capacity clutch of coil spring design is used instead of diaphragm spring clutches on 205-horsepower models.

Just as predicted in MOTOR LIFE's Forecast for '56 (September 1955) Chevrolet has followed a process of evolution in its 1956 models, not surprising in view of the extensive changes made last year. The result is a car that should uphold Chevrolet's tradition as a top seller. •



the 1956 packard

HIGHLIGHTS: 374 cubic inches with 310 hp top, pushbutton gear selector, non-slip differential, safety features, reversible seats, double kick-down transmission with aluminum housing

IN A DETERMINED effort to regain some of its past share of the automotive market Packard last year introduced a line of cars featuring new engines, much-revised styling and the advanced torsion bar suspension system. It just takes a look and a ride to prove there will be no coasting in 1956. Major engineering innovations, bigger and more powerful engines, important changes and improvements in the transmission and numerous detail styling changes have been introduced in new models.

In addition, greater distinction is being made between Packards and Clippers—they're now two separate lines and styling differences are more emphatic than in the past—in order to establish the Packard line as a group of true luxury automobiles.

Big and solid in appearance, the '56 Packards feel powerful, yet smooth and comfortable. A ride around the company's 2½-mile test track proved that. The car in which we rode was a Packard 400 hardtop.

It cruised effortlessly at 70 and 80, just loafing. It went from there on up to 110 and 115 on the speedometer with no trouble and held that pace with no trace of fuss or bother. This silky-smooth power is due, of course, to Packard's having introduced the biggest, most powerful en-

gines in the industry in its 1956 line. All the new Packard engines have a displacement of 374 cubic inches! Engines offered in Caribbean models are rated at 310 horsepower and those for the Patrician and 400 models are rated at 290. Torque of both is 405 foot pounds at 2800 rpm and each have a 10 to 1 compression ratio.

Packard has not aimed at higher top speeds, however. Its engineers report that the emphasis was on economy and improving low and mid-range acceleration for better passing ability. They claim they have increased fuel economy up to 20 per cent over previous models, despite the fact that engines are bigger. They point out that axle ratios can be lowered (numerically) due to high torque.—(Ratios as high as 2.87 are available this year with Ultramatic transmissions.) This improves economy, extends engine life.

Handling, excellent in 1955, has been improved with no sacrifice in comfort. The torsion bar suspension has been changed slightly to increase stability. The two-piece rear roll bar has been lowered about two inches and the pivot point of the rear torque arms has been lowered about an inch.

In addition, weight distribution has been improved; it's 52 per cent front, 48

Dual radio aerials on some top luxury models are acceptance of an idea which long has been custom car feature.

Deeper hooded headlights and rearrangement of grille-bumper layout alter front. Note lowered bumper section.

