

# SC1 ROAD TEST CHRYSLER 300-E

A is for alphabet, which is how you tell them apart. It's also for action which you get in this cart.  
 B is for big which it is undeniably, while  
 C is for Chrysler who make it and sell it.  
 D is for devices which this car overflows with;  
 E is for this year, and other things too; enormous, extravagant and energetic for sure.  
 F is for frantic as in Let's Get Hustling.  
 G is for gas-guzzling and such a large grille. It's sure this car won't run on a pill.  
 H is for handling where this Chrysler is hot, though some still insist that it really is not.  
 I is for those inches, square, cubic and linear.  
 J is for Jaguar drivers, who avert their eyes. You're faster? Lies, all lies!  
 K is for King of the Road, because that's what you are.  
 L is for luxury motoring, a bit out of our line. It's also for loose door handles which rattled and shook.  
 M is for mirrors, inside and out. One dips automatically, clickety-clack. The other's adjustable without stretching your back.  
 N is for no ticket when you're on AutoPilot.  
 O is for outer space where you might want to fly it.  
 P is for power and push buttons, too.  
 Q is for quality; in details, it's lacking.  
 R is for rear end which is typically Chrysler, changed from last year's, it's no hit, more a bunt. Why can't it be different, just like the front?  
 S is for steering, ridiculously light. On smooth roads once used to it, it works out alright.  
 T is for transmission, Torqueflite by name. It's also for tires which suffer and scream.  
 U is for ultimate in fast moving luxury, though finances required involve you in usury.  
 V is for velocity, absolute maximum. It's figure is such we didn't dare, much.  
 W is for wits which we're now at our end of,  
 X, Y, and Z are the ones we can't think of.



**CHRYSLER 300E**  
 Suggested Advertised Retail Price  
 at Detroit ..... \$5,318.50

**PERFORMANCE**

**ACCELERATION:**

From zero to	Seconds
30 mph	3.7
40 mph	5.0
50 mph	6.7
60 mph	8.7
70 mph	11.0
80 mph	13.4
90 mph	16.5
Standing 1/4 mile	17.2
Speed at end of quarter	92 mph

**SPEED RANGES IN GEARS:**  
 Full throttle up-shifts take place at about 50 and 85 mph

**SPEEDOMETER CORRECTION:**

Indicated Speed	Timed Speed
30	.30
40	.40
50	.49
60	.59
70	.68
80	.77

**FUEL CONSUMPTION: SPECIFICATIONS** 11-14 mpg

**POWER UNIT:**

Type ..... Water-cooled V-8  
 Valve Operation ..... Pushrod in-line ohv  
 Bore & Stroke ..... 4.18 x 3.75 in. (106 x 95.2 mm)  
 Stroke/Bore Ratio ..... 0.90/1  
 Displacement ..... 413 cu in (6770 cc)  
 Compression Ratio ..... 10.1/1  
 Carburetion by ..... Two 4-choke  
 Max. Power ..... 380 bhp @ 5000 rpm  
 Max. Torque ..... 450 lbs-ft @ 3600 rpm  
 Idle Speed ..... 650 rpm

**DRIVE TRAIN:**

Transmission ratios  
 I ..... 2.45-5.39  
 II ..... 1.45-3.19  
 D ..... 1.00-2.20  
 Final drive ratio 3.31 (2.93 optional)  
 Axle torque taken by rear springs  
 Limited slip "Sure-Grip" differential fitted as standard

**CHASSIS:**

Frame ..... Box section side rails with lateral cross-member  
 Wheelbase ..... 126 in  
 Tread, front and rear ..... 61, 60 in  
 Front Suspension ..... Independent, unequal wishbones, longitudinal torsion bars, anti-roll bar. Spring rate at wheels: 170 lbs/in  
 Rear Suspension ..... Rigid axle, unsymmetrical leaf springs. Spring rate at wheels: 165 lbs/in  
 Shock absorbers ..... One-inch tubular  
 Steering type ..... Rack and sector  
 Steering wheel turns L to R ..... 3.5  
 Turning diameter, curb to curb ..... 47 ft  
 Brakes ..... 12 inch drums, vacuum-assist  
 Brake lining area ..... 251 sq in  
 Tire size ..... 9.00 x 14

**GENERAL**

Length ..... 221 in  
 Width ..... 79 1/2 in  
 Height ..... 55 1/2 in  
 Curb weight ..... 4560 lbs  
 Weight, as tested ..... 4715 lbs  
 Weight distribution,  
 F/R as tested ..... 53/47  
 Fuel capacity ..... 23 U.S. Gallons

**RATING FACTORS:**

Specific Power Output ..... 0.92 bhp/cu in  
 Power to Weight Ratio, as tested ..... 12.4 lbs/hp  
 Piston speed @ 60 mph ..... 1535 ft/min  
 Braking Area, as tested ..... 106.4 sq in/ton  
 Speed @ 1000 rpm in top gear ..... 24.4 mph

► As a matter of fact, an alphabet with only 26 letters is insufficient for a Chrysler 300E, so we will add further thoughts in no particular order—especially not alphabetical.

We complain bitterly that the steering is too light, so light that the ordinary jostling about you get in the cockpit overshadows the subtle clue available from the steering wheel rim. And yet this very lightness of operation, in this as well as other items is what makes the 300E so fascinating. Dimensionally, it is huge, yet an aggressive driver finds it has the agility of a 1500 cc sportscar. Truly, a Porsche Carrera with an overactive thyroid.

The question now in our minds is this: Would stiffening up the steering (less of the power assist or still lower gear ratios) give better feel without destroying the almost unbelievable lightness of control? We think it would. With power steering, the overall ratio is now 19.37; without, it's a sky-high 29.97 and 5.2 turns L to R.

It's purely a subjective reaction on our part, but the idea of more than two tons of automobile to transport four people is somehow unacceptable. To others, it surely isn't, and the prospect of touring in a car of this performance is inviting indeed. Whether it's Gran Turismo or Gross Touring is a moot point.

What is certainly grand is the way any 1957 or later Chrysler product will hustle around turns. Despite the super-light steering, complete and precise control is maintained up to a startlingly high cornering force. There is no sudden transition from under to over steer attitudes and the steering does not need violent corrections to hew to a selected course.

However, on irregular surfaces where oscillation of the road wheels make it more difficult to maintain a grip, the lightness of the steering so masks what is going on at the front wheels as to destroy the driver's confidence. It may be that the car CAN corner fantastically well on rough roads as well as smooth, but the driver is being robbed of information that is rightfully his and thus is unable to make appropriate corrective movements. This all applies to driving on the "ragged edge", where many onlookers would say we had no business trespassing in a two-ton plus machine.

Incidentally, early Chrysler advertising claimed for the torsion bar front suspension the credit for the vastly improved handling. Actually, the torsion bars are nothing but coil springs unwrapped, the geometry of the front suspension being more significant than that of the springs. But far more important than these changes (the upper wishbone slants downward at the rear to eliminate nose-dive on braking) are the rear suspension rearrangements. The latter are finally getting some mention though little credit in their current advertising. The leaf spring is not displaced symmetrically about the axle casing. Instead, about one-third of the total length is to the front and the rest is to the rear. The front bit is much stiffer than the rear and acts quite a lot like a radius rod, locating the heavy

rear axle better than usual, eliminating many undesirable rear-axle roll-steering effects.

The amusing thing about all this is that the rearrangement was not done in order to improve handling at all. The engineers were told to do something to shrink the floor hump required for the driveshaft. In moving things about to solve this sales problem, they stumbled upon a happy solution indeed.

If we were to be asked whether the 300E handled better than the Chevrolet tested last month, we would be hard put to find an answer. Neither car is intended for being driven "on the limit", that requirement is only for racing or sports-racing cars. If for no other reason, both cars are unsuited to continued ragged edgemanhip because of the high rate of tire wear. One 300C owner wore out the front left tire in only two fast laps of the Bridgehampton circuit. Both these cars are set-up for fast touring, neither is set-up for racing. When pressed to the limit (presumably unintentionally, unless you have a credit card with a tire company), both maintain stability and controllability to the end which is all you can ask for. They aren't happy there—the scream of the tires remind you of that, but they're not ill at ease either.

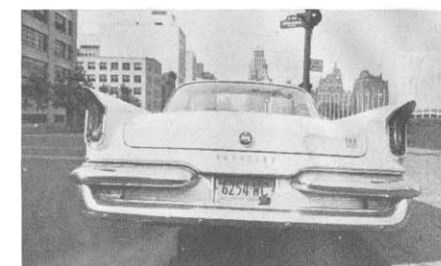
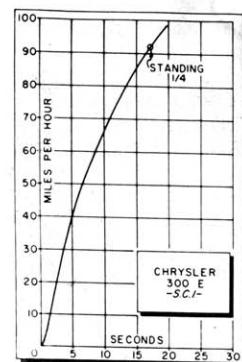
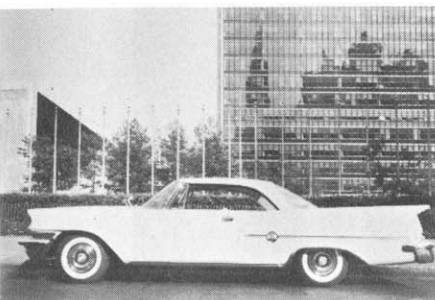
Like the Chevy "Pursuit" car, the 300E enjoys slightly stiffer springs, though the one-inch shocks are unchanged. Rates at the wheel are 170 and 165 pounds per inch, front and rear, instead of 115 and 135.

Other technical items where the 300E differs from the New Yorker line of

Chryslers include an 8% larger anti-roll bar and a half-inch larger driveshaft to handle the extra torque from the 431 cubic inch engine. The latter features a Silent-Flite fan cutout to save horsepower and gas at higher speeds, two four-barrel Carter carburetors and a hotter camshaft. Valve timing is 20-60 and 58-22 instead of 15-57 and 57-15. Duration is 260 degrees instead of 252 while overlap jumps to 42 from 30—still rather mild for the output obtained. Despite use of identical valves and springs, rated horsepower is 380 at 5000 rpm. Torque drops to 450 at 3600 from the milder engine's 470 at 2800 rpm. Starting technique is simple: push the N-button, switch on and twist while holding 1/8 throttle. Correct idle is at about 650 rpm. When you start up from what has been a long rest you may hear a thumping sound which gradually dies away. This comes from the nylon tires which temporarily maintain the flat spot at their bottoms. It is very noticeable after a lunch-stop on a turnpike, since you pull out immediately onto smooth roads. It feels like something in the front suspension is terribly out of balance and it's certainly good ammunition for the Tyrex people. As to which tire is safer, ah well, who knows?

Among the many standard extras are the Sure-Grip limited-slip differential tucked inside the 3.31 to one final drive gears (2.93 optional). Another nice touch is that the 39.8 cubic foot trunk is upholstered with plush carpeting.

The big three may not yet have discovered the joys of a fully reclining seat,



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## Singer Gazelle Series

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50 mph. Approaching us around the curve came a car moving at about 70 and partially sideways. It was advisable to move to a safer line of larger radius and abruptly straightening the front wheels caused the body to change its attitude and the rear wheels to break loose momentarily.

Every car has its limits and they are very important to learn. Fortunately while we had the Singer the Southwest's months-long drought was broken by heavy rain and we were able to learn about the car's behaviour in the wet. To the credit of the chassis and particularly to that of the British Goodyear tires, running in the wet seemed not to affect road adhesion of this combination. Even hard braking on wet asphalt failed to produce any loss of traction.

The late spring rain permitted a thorough test of the convertible's weather-tightness. Both passenger space and trunk remained dry. The soft top's effectiveness in sealing against wind was excellent. The unit-construction Series III convertible is much more ruggedly reinforced than its predecessors and our test car was impressively free—for a convertible—from squeaks and rattles. The construction of the convertible top is similar to that used by English Ford. There is a definite knack to erecting it and our test car's top required the use of much brawn. This perhaps can be corrected by adjustment of the accessible center-pillar stop screws.

The effort required to manipulate the top is our most serious criticism of this car. There is only one other: the throttle spring is too weak to provide any support for the foot. You can fix this yourself for a dime. Gas mileage is not all that you might expect from a 1500 cc machine but its performance is above expectations. The Gazelle draws admiring glances and comments everywhere and the quality of its finish throughout inspires well-founded pride of possession. It is bound to do well on the American market.

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## Chrysler 300E

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but the fully automatic "six-way" adjustable front seat provides many of the former's advantages plus several of its own. A long blade-like switch is mounted horizontally on the driver's side of the seat cushion. Sliding it fore and aft has the expected result, but "bending" it up or down will, with a great whirring of small electric motors, raise or lower the seat. The nice touch is that the front end of the switch controls a motor at the front of the seat while the other end controls one at the rear. The result is that the whole seat can be tipped forward or back to give either an attentive upright position or a comfortable, reclining one—or any position in between. At the risk of running the battery down, it is quite fascinating to run the mechanism through its paces, exploring its full range of positions. Of course, the reclining position is a result of the difference of the front and rear heights, so with full recline, there isn't any chance to vary the height. But as the degree of recline is paid off, more and more height adjustment becomes possible. At all times the full range of fore and aft adjustment is available so there would seem to be a position available to suit every potential driver. We noticed occasionally that after extensive use, the switch would refuse to function for a few minutes. Perhaps the wiring is protected by circuit breakers, for after a while, everything would work satisfactorily.

We cannot emphasize too strongly how important a comfortable seating position is to good driving. In addition, the ability to change position occasionally will delay the onset of driving fatigue.

A car like this is so good that when we look at it, we tend to be horribly critical, pointing out all the things that keep it short of perfection. This is pretty unfair when you realize that it sells for only \$5318½, suggested base price at Detroit.

At this price it is indeed long on performance (albeit at the expense of operating economy) and understandably short

on detail quality. To make it with the quality, say, of a Mercedes-Benz would more than double its price. To many, this wouldn't be desirable. At it is now, it is probably considered amongst our readers as one of the best possible tow-cars for sports-racing cars. (Take that, Detroit!)

It's also, we would point out, absolutely top-notch for fast comfortable touring. Though most readers would probably prefer something sportier-looking, there's nothing as fast, as comfortable and as civilized in the world. We took it from New York to Cape Cod for a weekend and enjoyed it very much. It was as agile as one could want on secondary roads (they still exist, thank goodness), while on the new Connecticut Turnpike it practically drove itself. The only thing we could have asked for was a two-bit dispenser that would throw quarters at the too frequent toll stations as we whizzed by.

For roads such as this, an interesting device called the Autopilot has been developed. Most of it is within an aluminum case under the hood, but on the steering column is a knob, a dial, and a pushbutton.

The twist knob is set to any speed between under-30 and over-90 that you don't wish to exceed. When the car reaches that speed, the accelerator spring becomes much stronger at any throttle opening larger than what's necessary to maintain speed. If you come to a hill the pre-loaded spring "moves away" when the speed drops 1 or 2 mph. Your foot pressure then opens the throttle the necessary amount and when you reach the top, it will close again as the spring force pushes your foot back. So far it's useful in heavily patrolled areas where speed limits are lower than one likes. The final touch is the push button part. Press it while driving at a selected speed and then no force at all is required on the accelerator. From now until the brakes are touched, the Chrysler will maintain the same speed uphill and down. Around corners too, which is almost as disconcerting as reaching down and cranking up the cruise speed by ten knots or so. The response to the latter takes place at

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# ALL NEW!

## BAKERS ALL-WEATHER DUAL SLIDING WINDOWS

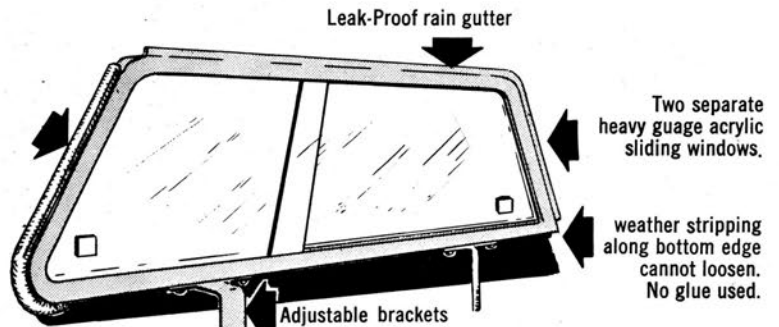
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## Chrysler 300E

(Continued from page 86)

nearly full throttle, which is dynamic to say the least.

This device fills an unfortunate need in this country, for nothing can be duller than "cruising" down a turnpike at the legal limit plus whatever you figure the Highway Patrol will allow. It's a sad commentary on the current state of affairs that now that American cars *are* becoming more pleasant to drive, the environment is becoming less so. But that's the way it is.

As usual, we have doubts about such devices. For instance, with one less thing to do, driving is admittedly less tiring. But there's nothing to keep a driver from starting out tired, so won't he fall asleep much more easily? He now has less to stimulate his senses and require his attention. As with all simplifications of driving technique, it has both advantages and drawbacks. We would suggest only that the Autopilot be turned off when the driver feels the least bit drowsy. (But when you're sleepy is just when it's hardest to remember such discipline.)

The 300E is well-equipped with mirrors. Both are ingenious, but both have faults. The outside one is adjustable from the driver's seat with a small toggle on the dashboard. It works smoothly enough, but the mirror itself is so far away that it offers an inadequate field of view. What to do? If it had a convex surface, it would have little use for estimating distances. If, better yet, it were moved closer, then it could be easily adjusted by hand (and how can you advertise that?)

The interior mirror contains an electric eye which dips it whenever the light from behind is too bright. Two stages of control care for city and open highway conditions. So far so good. What the mirror designer forgot was to confer with the upholstery shop. In the dipped position, the view through the rear window is thoroughly obscured by the pale image of brightly shining ceiling trim. And if any passenger should be well-upholstered enough himself to try the central seating area, the movements of his head will be telegraphed as his shadow covers and uncovers the photo-electric cell. Fortunately, there is an off position to shut it down completely.

The same is not true of the automatic headlight dipper. This accessory, long established in GM cars, is another one of those nice ideas that seem to have more shortcomings in practice than they're worth. Unique to the Chrysler line is a sensitivity adjustment on the scanner, but it still doesn't know which way the car is going (as opposed to pointing). The result is that on sweeping right-hand bends, your high-beams scorch the oncoming driver's eyeballs, dipping only as he reached the haven of darkness off your port bow.

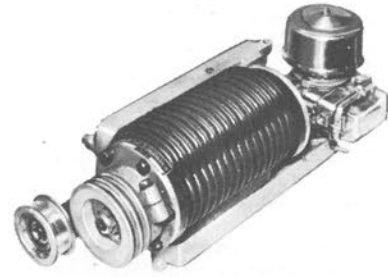
The foot-operated dip switch will override the "eye" but unless you keep track of whether you're on auto-dip or manual dip, you may find your lights turning themselves up just as somebody new comes over the horizon at you. It's embarrassing to have your own machine make you appear rude.

—sfw

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