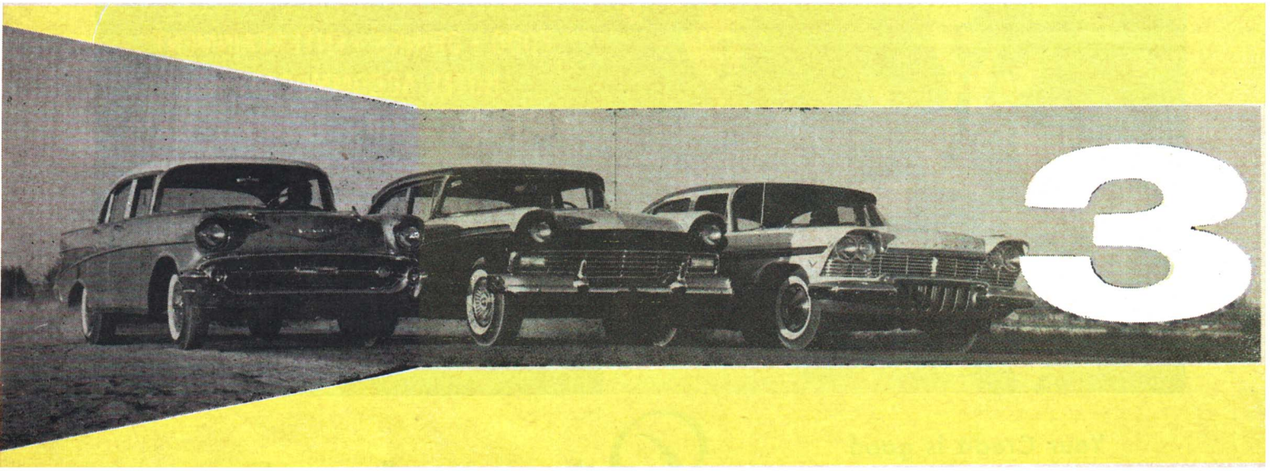



**Buyers of the lowest-priced "Big Three" made 56 out of every 100 new-car purchases last year. The remaining 16 makes divided the other 44 per cent among them.**

**You can choose, within any Big Three make, from a variety of engines, power equipment on those engines, transmissions, bodies, interior and exterior trim, and accessories—or lack of them—that is unequalled in the high-priced lines. You'll also get handling that beats most big cars, whether on the highway or nosing into a tight parking slot.**

**But it'll be hard to make up your mind this year as to which of the Big Three is best. On these pages are our road tests, so now it's your move.**

an MT Research Report by Pete Molson

# CHEVROLET ROAD TEST

THE ONLY ONE of the Big Three to resist a complete body change is Chevrolet, and it is by far the best equipped of the lowest priced group to do so. With a more than comfortable '56 sales lead over Ford and an unbroken record of winning every sales race for more than 20 years, Chevy can complacently count on coming out ahead once more in '57.

There are many changes in the new Chevrolet, and most of them seem aimed at making the even hotter one hotter yet.

The test car, a Bel Air four-door hardtop, had a fresh look when compared with its year-old counterpart. What it may have lost in identity as a Chevrolet, it has gained in resemblance to Buick and Olds at the front and to Cadillac at the rear. Not a few Chevy fanciers will consider this similarity highly desirable.

Like many first-off-the-line cars, ours had an odd combination of equipment. The engine was the hottest of Chevy's non-fuel-injected varieties, putting out 270 horsepower and using two four-barrel carburetors, solid valve lifters, and the hot cam. Curiously coupled with this was Powerglide. Either Turboglide (not available on the earliest cars, which we were forced to choose from) or a manual shift would have given us better times in the acceleration runs. Further checks will be made later in the year with cars better broken-in, as well as more logically equipped. Important variations will be reported to you.

The test car had neither power brakes nor power steering.

How would you expect this particular Chevrolet to stack up to some of the other performance combinations available in the line? This is the hottest carburetor engine; compared with the 250-horsepower FI powerplant, or any of the other carburetor-equipped choices, this engine should give more go and less economy. Comparing Powerglide with other transmissions, it doesn't give the acceleration you'll get from the new Turboglide or from a stick shift. The stick shift has better economy than either automatic, and Turboglide's fuel mileage shouldn't differ much from that of Powerglide if you drive conservatively. That, by the way, will be hard to do.

### Will It Be Best-Handling Car Again in '57?

It doesn't look that way. Retaining its ball-joint front suspension, Chevrolet has cancelled out some of its advantages by going to a somewhat softer ride, with resultant greater lean on corners, and less confidence for the driver. There is no question that the car looks and feels bigger, and we can't blame Chevy for giving in to the buying public's apparent feelings in the matter. Personally, we prefer the taut feel of the '56.

The non-power steering is easy. Except in parking, the GM power steering really isn't needed except for someone whose physical condition demands it. Chevy retains its high-mounted wheel and most drivers will sit high, as in the Ford.

The instruments are newly mounted in a higher position, the cowl itself having been dropped slightly to give a newer look. (Unfortunately this made it necessary to move the fresh-air intake back to the front of the car. The "new" grilles around the headlights for this purpose are in a position that has been generally discredited because of exhaust fumes in close traffic.)

Vision is good and, we're glad to say, undistorted. An exception is the rear-view mirror, now cowl mounted. It blocks the right front fender for shorter drivers and isn't big enough to make the wrap-around rear window truly useful. The Eldorado fins help in parking.

Out on the open road, connoisseurs of handling will note the same tendency to get bigger and softer at the expense of crispness in handling. Though you won't have to fight the wheel, front-end heaviness is evident in a mushier feel. The figures show that Chevrolet has the best weight distribution among the three cars, but the driver benefits little.

Recovery to an originally straight course when the wheel is whipped from side to side is fair. A sharply crowned road demands considerable correction.

Despite these criticisms, the '57 Chevrolet remains a good car to handle. We feel that the tendency to let power outstrip the chassis has popped up here, however, and we're ag'in it.

### Is It As Roadable As It Was?

It takes irregular surfaces in its stride. Normal highway dips cause it no embarrassment. When they get bad, it bounces (but doesn't bottom) and then recovers quickly with no oscillation to bother the driver.

On curves, body lean and tire squeal combine to warn you of approaching limits. You have all the necessary power to pull out if you get in trouble, but see that you stay on the pavement for sure control.

At ordinary speeds on soft or washboard roads, control is surprisingly good. Elapsed time need ot suffer on back roads, and passengers will fare better than in earlier Chevrolets.

### Is the Hotter One the Hottest?

There's no doubt that it still holds the title in its field. Particularly when you remember that we had a low-performance transmission, the test figures are impressive. It beat all the times of last year's powerpacked test car and all the times of the Ford and Plymouth this year except for the Plymouth's time from 0-45 mph.

Much more pleasing to us than the standing-start times are those for acceleration at passing speeds. They should, of course, not be abused by the power-happy, and quite possibly that's what will happen. Still, a car that can almost fly from 45 to 60 in a mere 2.9 seconds is one that should be capable of keeping you and your family out of trouble.

The extremely slow shift of the Powerglide transmission makes us hope that it will soon be dropped in favor of Turboglide. Rough idling can be expected from the hot camshaft in the powerpack engine.

### What Has Happened to Fuel Mileage?

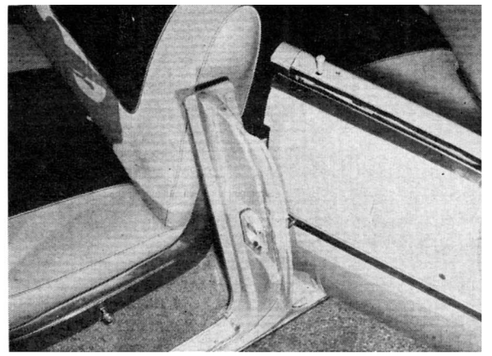
The steady speed consumption figures have suffered with the huge increase in power. Ordinary driving, with its conditions closer to those you might experience with your own car, yielded little change from last year's comparable car. If you want a real high-performance car this year and still have to consider your gasoline bill, we have a suggestion: learn to drive smoothly and conservatively as a general rule, saving bursts of speed or acceleration for special occasions. It's more fun that way, it will mean money in your pocket, and your passengers will be less ruffled.

### How Are the Brakes?

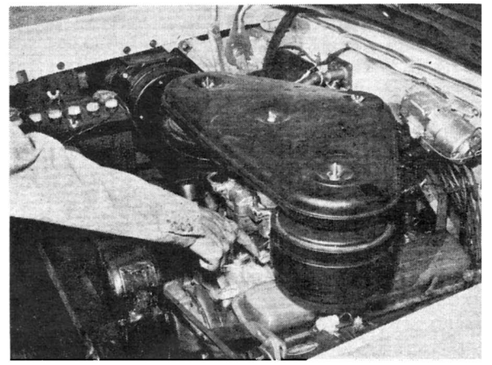
This test car had just been born when we took it over, so we had tester Jeff Cooper take it on a leisurely trip over varying terrain to break it in. He returned it with this note attached: "Brakes are inadequate for mountain driving or highway with traffic. Fade early." Time was so short that we couldn't complete our regular tests in time for this issue. A full report will follow.

### Does It Ride Better?

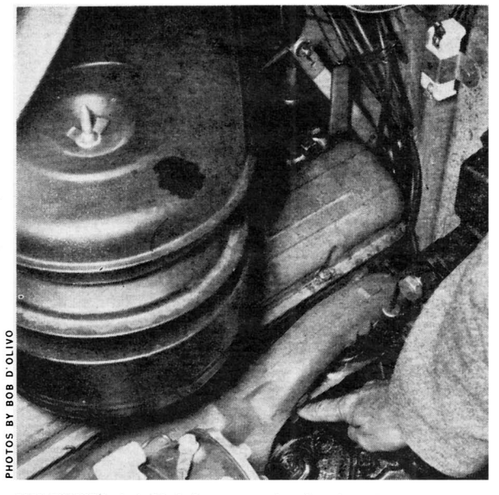
The ride is considerably softer than on the '55 and '56 Chevrolet. Road irregularities, from highway tar strips up



**STURDY STUB post kept test car's body rigid, free from creaks and groans of many hardtops. Flush sills, washable headliner make interior easy to clean.**



**GIANT AIR CLEANERS conceal thirsty dual carburetors. Finger points to linkage that cuts in front carburetor when rear one needs a helping hand in acceleration.**



PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO

**COOL ENGINE is desirable before you go changing plugs. Despite this, light and compact V8 gives remarkably shipshape engine room, an example for others to follow.**

# CHEVROLET ROAD TEST continued

through the tribulations of a washboard surface, will give passengers no trouble. As in the Ford, driver and passengers are aware of the surface without being bothered by it.

The body leans more than before, and passengers will be pitched about very slightly more than in previous models.

### Is the Engine Compartment Cluttered?

It's one of the cleanest we've seen, even allowing for the power equipment not present on the test car. An enormous space in front of the radiator is useless, but you can get around the compact V8 with refreshing ease. A giant air cleaner assembly has to be removed for any serious work. Plugs are inaccessible.

### What's Different About a Chevrolet?

You'll like a firmly put-together air, characteristic of its Fisher bodies for years past and of its chassis since 1955. Along with the V8's smoothness, the high quality of interior trim, the softer ride and the use of various components present in bigger GM cars, this can almost make you think you're in a higher price bracket. Specific features worthy of engineering respect and exclusive to Chevrolet in its field are the lightweight engine and the Turboglide, which we heartily recommend if a Chevy is your choice and it's optional on the model you want. Unsurpassed smoothness and accelerating power combine with the new HR (hill retarder) range to make as *satisfying* a transmission as any automatic we've driven. In our brief test on the GM Proving Ground at Milford, Mich., it slowed us down on steep grades as though with a giant hand, which it should since this is its only function. It gives no advantage in acceleration (not that one is needed!) and so makes Turboglide just about as completely automatic as it can get until the day when it can see a hill ahead and decide itself to shift to the hill retarder.

Chevrolet continues the GM keyless locking system. A Chevy driver has two blessed conveniences missing from the Ford and Plymouth: a centered glove compartment, and complete absence of distortion in the wrap-around windshield. We regard both as minimal requirements in a modern car. Nor are they conveniences alone; both are aids to safety and all manufacturers should adopt them permanently in 1958, even over the wails of their stylists.

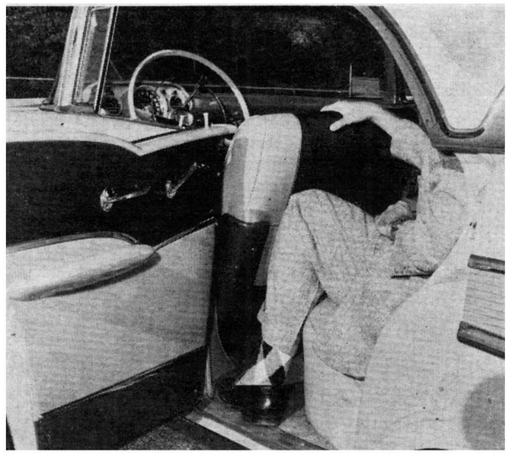
You get the most accurate speedometer in any U.S. car.

The new low-set tail lights, smaller than most, do not give adequate protection against rear-end collisions.

### Will It Last a Long Time?

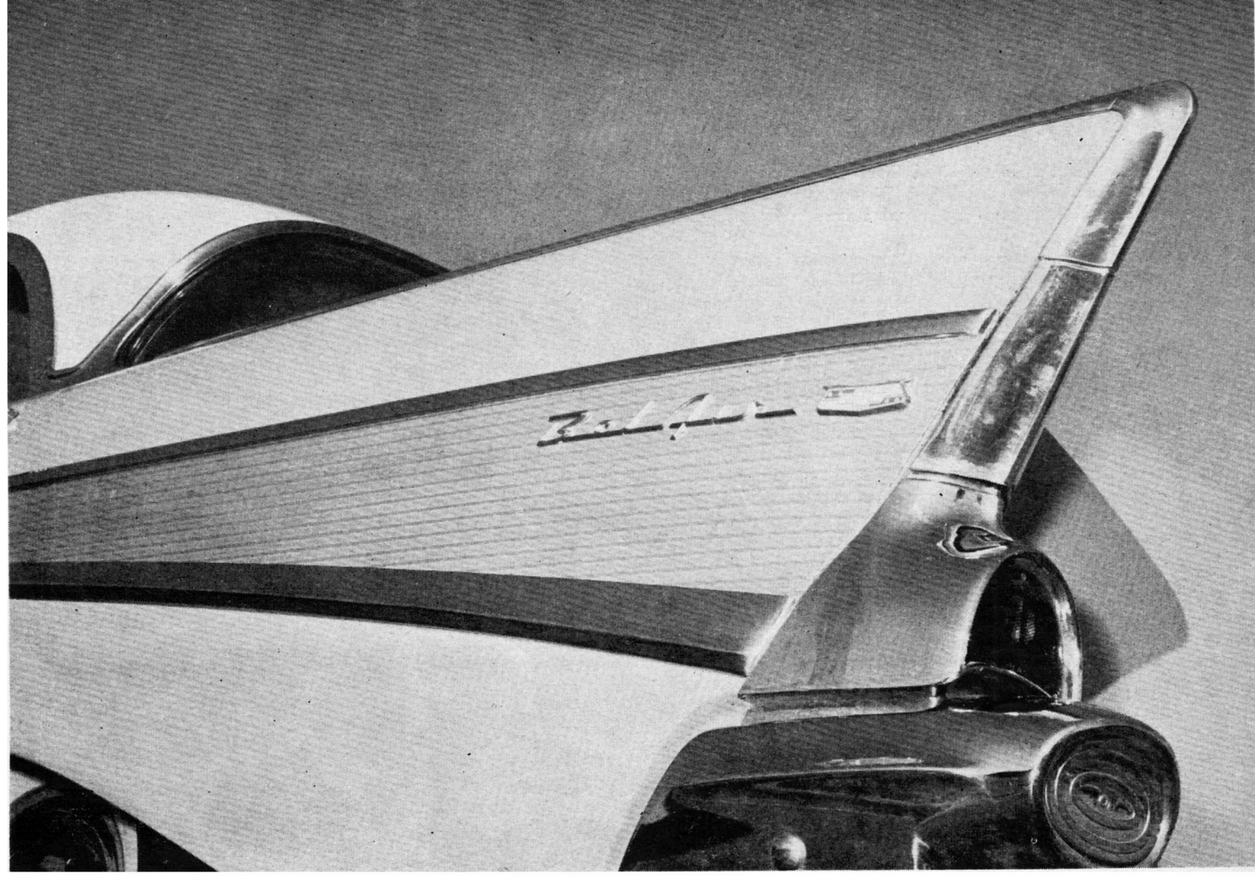
A car that is *not* all new is likely to be a better bet for the long-term owner than one that still has some wrinkles to be ironed out during the first model year. A poorly hung rear door whose window was extremely tough to roll down, uneven paint on the dash molding, and badly fitting brightwork on the dash itself marred the looks of the test car. Check these points (which should be improved later in the year) along with quality of exterior paint and any rear-axle hum in the particular Chevy that meets your specifications.

Access to the driver's seat is good, but the seat doesn't adjust far enough to the rear. Tall people will bump their knees on the steering wheel.



LEG CONTORTIONS are required in entering the rear seat, but there is little real difficulty since the high roof line doesn't interfere as it does in the Ford and Plymouth, where a bumped head is the rule.

CHEVY TRUNK can only be unlatched with the key. Lid lifts to reveal entirely adequate compartment, good spare location. Bumper-type jack fits behind spare, didn't work in tests performed in trying to replace flat tire.



## PERFORMANCE

| | '57 (270-bhp engine) | '56 (205-bhp engine) |
|---|---|---|
| ACCELERATION | From Standing Start<br>0-45 mph 6.75 0-60 mph 9.9<br>Quarter-mile 17.5 and 77.5 mph<br>Passing Speeds<br>30-50 mph 3.55 45-60 mph 2.9<br>50-80 mph 9.9 | From Standing Start<br>0-30 mph 4.2 0-60 mph 10.7<br>Quarter-mile 18.3 and 76 mph<br>Passing Speeds<br>30-50 mph 3.9 50-80 mph 12.0 |
| FUEL CONSUMPTION | Used Mobilgas Special<br>Steady Speeds<br>16.75 mpg @ 30 14.8 mpg @ 45<br>13.1 mpg @ 60 12.2 mpg @ 75<br>Stop-and-Go Driving<br>13.6 mpg tank average for 136 miles<br>Highway Driving<br>15.0 mpg tank average for 312 miles | Used Mobilgas Special<br>Steady Speeds<br>20.8 mpg @ 30 19.4 mpg @ 45<br>16.6 mpg @ 60 13.6 mpg @ 75<br>Stop-and-Go Driving<br>14.2 mpg tank average for 800 miles |
| OIL CONSUMPTION | One quart added in 974 miles | |
| SPEEDOMETER ERROR | Read 30 at true 30, 45 at 45, 51 at 50, 60 at 60, 76.5 at 75, 81.5 at 80 | Read 31 at true 30, 47 at 45, 63 at 60, and 78 at 75 |

SPECIAL 1957 SHOW ISSUE !