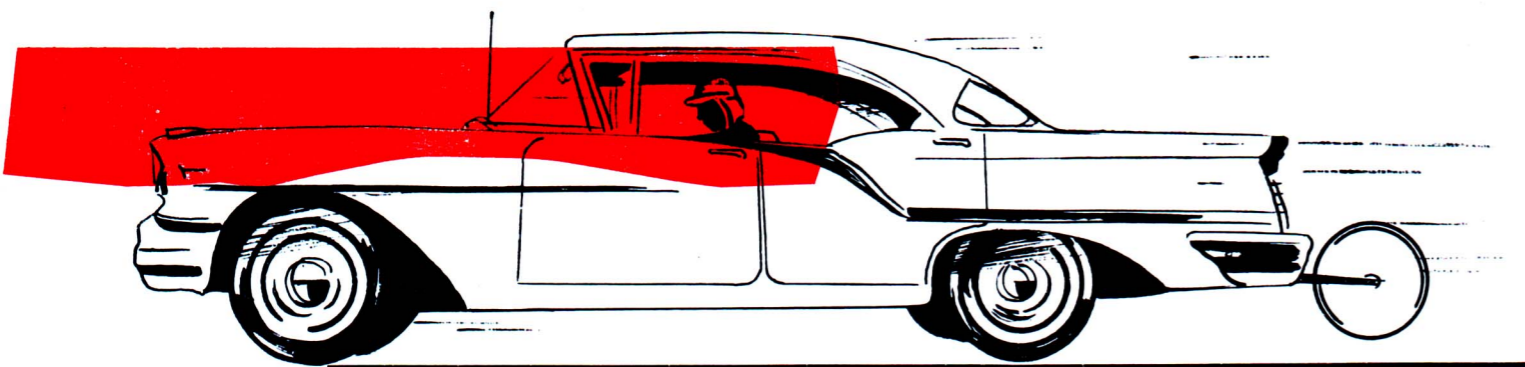


Compromise car of the three tested, this Super 88 may be your choice

DON'T BE PUT OFF by Olds' advertising "the most sweeping model change in 20 years." No mutation, the '57 Rocket is the naturally healthier descendant of the '49 V8 that brought new popularity to this make. In almost every respect it will not only delight its regular fans but interest new prospects as well.

We're not just being nice. This car shares with Cadillac the genuine honor of having introduced the modern short-stroke, overhead valve V8. When Olds abandoned quadruple coils in



favor of conventional coils-at-front, semi-elliptics-at-rear suspension the car moved toward roadability that nearly matched its spirit; this year the chassis approaches the engine's advances more nearly than ever before. Hydra-Matic has wisely been coupled with the V8 from the start; last year and in '57 the jerkiness has departed, leaving most if not all of the efficiency. Interior trim has obviously cost Olds more than most of its competitors, and quality has even gone up in the past few years, bucking an industry trend.

So we hope Oldsmobile's advertising agency won't be too angry with us. We were very pleased with this latest Super 88, and gratified that it doesn't represent as broad a departure from previous Rockets as we had feared.

This is a vastly different car from the other middle-priced GM product tested in this issue, though they share a body shell, hot performance, and, as shown by their sales, an obvious appeal to the U.S. public.

Our test four-door hardtop was semi-loaded, with automatic transmission, power steering, and power brakes. We who have not been over-eager in our initial response to these options would not now consider buying an Olds without them except for special purposes. Hydra-Matic penalizes performance—at least for non-professionals—not at all, economy only insignificantly. Power steering, though with more turns than it needs, effectively overcomes the big load on the front wheels. Power brakes offer, to us, mainly a pedal that you can reach faster than the conventional type, whether you're a left- or a right-footed stopper.

How Does Its Handling Stack Up?

It's conservatively better than last year's car. The chassis, still not a radical design, substitutes ball-joints for kingpins with a resultant sureness of aiming, though it takes 4³/₈ turns to move the low-mounted, sunken-center wheel from lock to lock. Road feel is comfortingly present. Power, of course, makes parking a cinch, but the wheel can be turned without super-human strength even when the ignition is off. No exhausting vibration reaches the driver through the wheel.

On first sight the instrument panel appears impressively opulent; some testers didn't care for the welter of chrome, which can be dangerous when the sun is at the wrong angle. Minor novelties are many: the "cold" and "hot" lights, excellent as an

adjunct to a thermometer, but ill chosen as a substitute; the night-lighted, vacuum-operated pushbuttons to control heating and ventilation, so clever in concept but mediocre in operation; and the engineered-looking wiper control (why can't Detroit realize that machinery can be beautiful, as this is, instead of trying to camouflage it?). The glove compartment and the ash-trays, with their green running lights at night, are strategically placed. A light-colored shirt or blouse reflects on the panel but the warning lights gleam through effectively.

The dash itself, of course, is a structural member adapted from Oldsmobile's experimental "Delta"; but it seems to be the work of a good designer fallen among stylists. Conclusive studies

proved that small items can be either a) lost if they fall into the catch-all near the center or b) coated with grease if they fall all the way through, on the right side. Radio music floats mysteriously from the aperture and is said to benefit from this enlarged sound chamber. A polyurethane foam pad is standard on the Super 88 and 98.

Too narrow for comfort, the armrests are truly only ledges at the sides of the seat, and should be enlarged. Furthermore, bright but hard trim cuts into your arm if you rest it there.

GM has managed to eliminate nearly all distortion, even in this latest version of the wrap-around. The wipers, however, are simply not up to the job and leave a large triangle uncleaned.

Out on the road, we predict that you'll feel confident in the '57 Rocket. The ride will surprise you, being much smoother than you may associate with Olds; handling is responsive and firm up to 80 and 90, with no correction needed on a straight, flat road. A crowned road demands a persistent tug to prevent wander. Wind has practically no effect on stability. Whip the wheel to see how it would react in an emergency and you'll be rewarded with an example of excellent homing instinct.

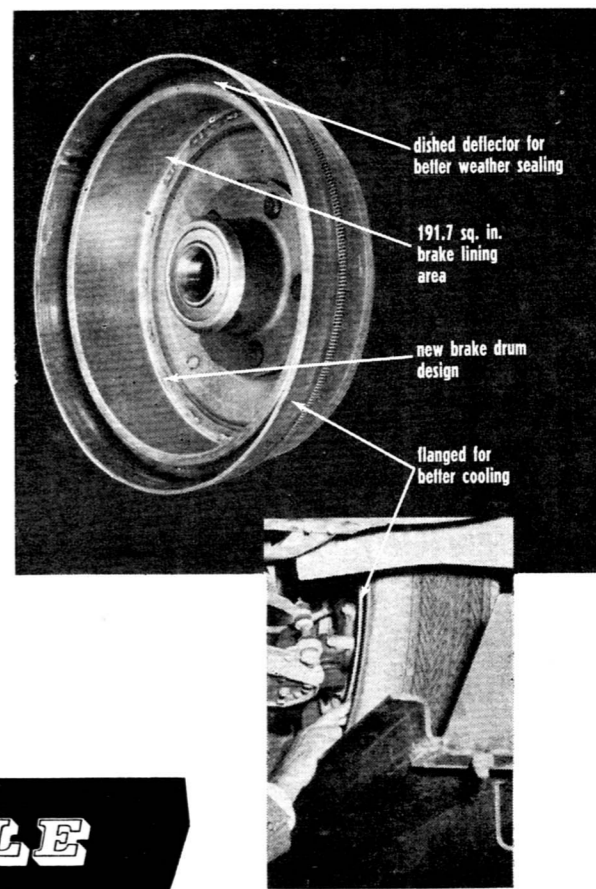
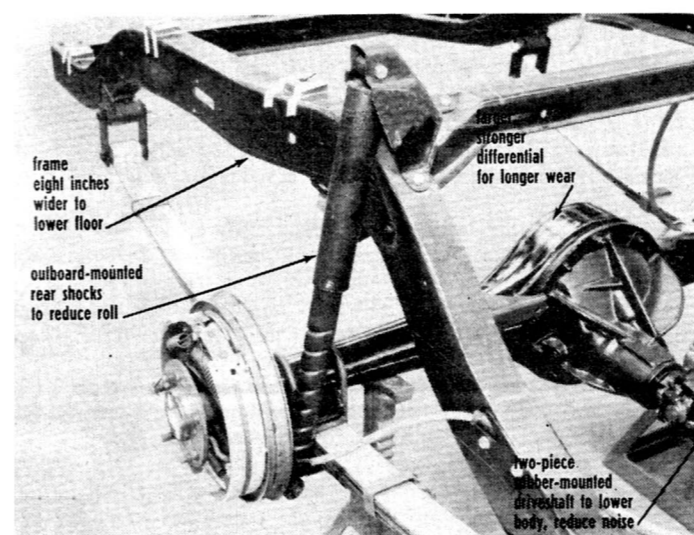
Olds has merrily followed the mad trend to more and more length, so it will be harder and harder to find a parking place. Last year's car was only about an inch longer than the neat 88 of 1950, but five inches shorter than the new version. How long, O Lord?

Does It Still Stick to the Road?

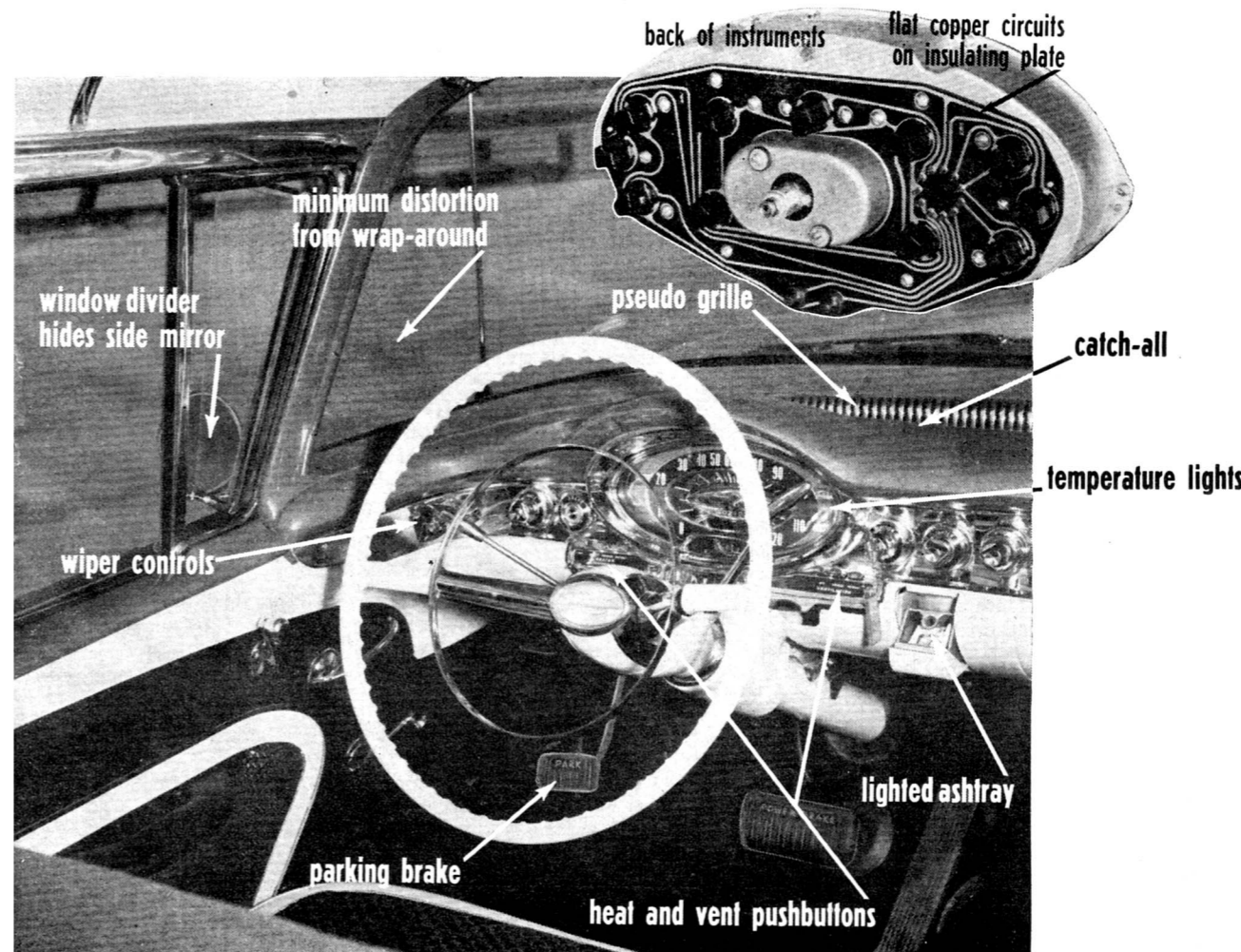
You pay no penalty for the slightly softer (but still firm) ride. The heavy front end of this 2¹/₄-ton bomb won't betray you so far as control goes, though you may have a moment of apprehension if you zoom too fast over a rise. The car will bottom then, as it will on bad highway dips taken too fast, but you'll lose only composure, not control.

Curves are a pleasure to the driver at most speeds; passengers won't be as comfortable if you take them fast, and indeed it's a good idea to be extra cautious if you're tempted to hurl the 88 around beyond its limits: this is not a sports machine, but its feel could fool you into thinking it is. If pressed too far, it will slide and you can power out, but we don't advise taking the unnecessary chance.

On a washboard surface, GM's heavy, bludgeon-it-out tendency comes to the aid of your passengers. Occasional violent



OLDSMOBILE



ROAD TEST

continued from preceding page

bounding may make you think you're coming about, but not so.

Is It Still Hotter?

Yes, you'll get to 60 in about a second less than last year (our electric speedometer showed that we were only a trifle over-enthusiastic with our prophesy of 9.5 seconds in last month's issue). Quarter-mile times are slightly better, too, and speed in the quarter up about 2.5 seconds. The Olds puts out its 37-horsepower increase at 400 more rpms than last year. As can be expected from a higher-revving engine, passing-speed acceleration showed more obvious improvement. You can jump from 30 to 50, and that slowpoke on the highway will watch

OLDSMOBILE

ROAD TEST

you vanish into the distance as you cut nearly two seconds from last year's 50-to-80 time. All you have to worry about now is where you could possibly carry out this maneuver in safety.

We tried various combinations on the Hydra-Matic and eventually concluded that it was best to let this superior brain think for itself, though infinitesimally better times were possible—not every time—when we took over the shifting. By the way, we don't know that it proves much but did you ever stop to consider that Hydra-Matic has one more position than a stick shift?

Is It Thirstier?

Considerably so in the steady speed tests, made without variation in true speed while the engine burns a tenth of a gallon of gas. The horsepower increase reduced mileage by as much as four mpg. The more realistic tank mileage figures were a different story. We got much better mileage both in traffic and on trips than last year's car could produce, though it's still nothing to shout about.

Will It Stop as Well as Go?

Not quite, but it stood up better to our tests than the Big Three cars reported on last month. That flange (see photo, page 35) seems to solve at least a part of the problem of cooling a big brake drum tucked into a 14-inch wheel: fade occurred, but it wasn't as bad as on the previous cars tested. It lasted a while. Here's the full story: Deceleration rate of 15 feet per second per second through first four stops with no symptoms of malfunction and up through eighth stop with these effects: Right rear wheel grabbed slightly on fifth stop; slight pull to left on sixth stop; slight pull in other direction at beginning of seventh stop soon ceased and remainder of stop was straight (odor was first noticed here); right rear grabbed again on eighth stop. It was difficult to maintain the 15 feet per second per second deceleration rate on the ninth stop because of the first sign of a hard pedal, and the car pulled to the left as well. Fade got considerably worse on the 10th stop, and on the 11th stop 12 to 13 feet was the highest deceleration rate obtainable with very high pressure; an average woman would have had a tough time stopping the car. The last stop, No. 12, showed a little more fade but was free of wandering tendencies. When we climbed over, we noticed some smoke.

MOTOR TREND'S fade tests are obviously severe, but they are a fair indication of the demands that can be put on brakes during a mountain vacation, or even on a highway grade that nobody thinks twice about any more. The Olds brakes were better than most, with their 192 square inches of lining area, but this is a

sad commentary. U.S. brakes aren't up to European standards, and we hope that they soon will be.

The foot-operated parking brake is great, but needs its release handle redesigned to look less as though that were the way to apply the brake.

How's the Ride?

A good compromise, much firmer than the Buick but smoother than that of previous Olds cars, it frees passengers from those constant frame-to-spine messages and yet roadability doesn't suffer much.

You're aware of irregularities in the road surface, but they won't make you uncomfortable unless you insist on being utterly protected from even the sounds of the outside world. It's a Ford-type ride raised to the highest power.

There is no question that it is too easy to bottom the Olds, as it has been for some years. We'd go for more firmness rather than less, if it spelled the end to this. But frankly we think many buyers—or at least their riders—wouldn't. One thing those riders might like, though, is still flatter cornering that would keep them in their seats on sharp curves.

Wheels will clatter on sudden rough patches, or when crossing streetcar tracks, and this doesn't help the passengers either.

Blessedly absent from the Olds were various vibrations and hums that seem to have become more prevalent in the test cars—and not only the rough-idling ones with hot cams—of this year. Not only the driver, but his passengers of whatever ages, will arrive at journey's end feeling much younger than in many a contemporary car. It's solid and all the testers liked trips in it, driving or riding.

Is It Good for Home Tinkerers?

Hardly. The big V8 is in what has come to be a normally cramped compartment, and in any case is pretty much of a job for backyard mechanics.

The touch system alone is sufficient to release the hood latch. Far back on the right side are the engine and transmission oil dipsticks, side by side in case you or your gas station attendant are the forgetful type. Plugs (possibly excepting No. 1) and battery are reachable without fuss. The power steering pump and the heater blower will have to come off if you want to get under the valve covers, which shouldn't be necessary for a long, long time. This Rocket has a long range.

What's Different About an Olds?

Justified prestige, even in the lesser models. This springs partly from the eight-year engineering resemblance to Cadillac, which has lessened this year with the coming of Cadillac's new frame.

The roadability-ride-handling combination is as good as you're likely to experience as long as conventional suspensions are with us. Driving an Olds is fun without any serious deprivation of luxury feel. Instead of remarkable individual features, it has instead a synthesis of likeable qualities that make it a star boarder even after the novelty of a new car has worn off. Many Olds owners now come back for more, always a good sign.

Are They Putting Them Together Right?

Yes, not only do the doors emit a reassuring thud, but nothing fell off or failed to operate with the exception of the fancy new heating-ventilating system, which still had some bugs in it.

Fisher bodies, like the Olds engine and chassis, have a reputation to uphold, so this is a good choice if you're not a yearly trader. But follow MT's constant warning to check the individual car you want for any defects before you accept it. It's better to delay delivery by a day or two than it is to spend years with a car that was never quite right.

Olds is not the best car for you if you drive under 30 all the time. If you want the shortest and least tiring method of traveling between two distant points, this may be your next car.

continued on page 56

Performance



'57 (277-bhp engine)

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

Read 31 at true 30, 47 at 45, 52 at 50, 62 at 60, 77 at 75, 82 at 80

ACCELERATION

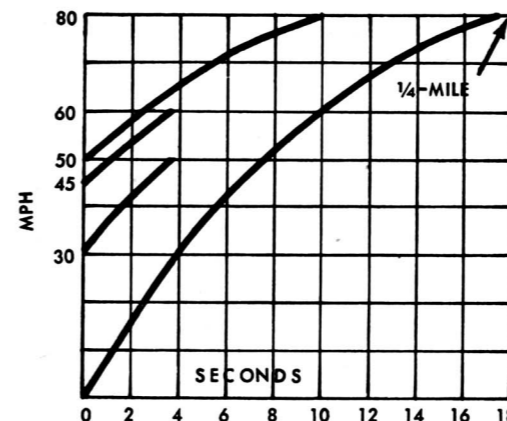
From Standing Start
0-45 mph 6.1 0-60 mph 9.7
Quarter-mile 17.4 and 79.4 mph
Passing Speeds
30-50 mph 3.9 45-60 mph 3.6
50-80 mph 10.0

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Using Mobilgas Special
Steady Speeds
19.4 mpg @ 30 16.6 mpg @ 45
14.9 mpg @ 60 13.5 mpg @ 75
Stop-and-Go Driving
13.4 mpg tank average for 331 miles
Highway Driving
14.0 mpg tank average for 589 miles

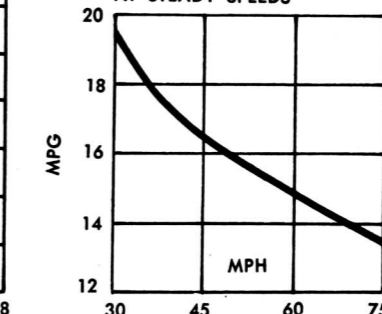
OIL CONSUMPTION

Two quarts added in 1392 miles



ACCELERATION

FUEL CONSUMPTION AT STEADY SPEEDS



Specifications

ENGINE: OHV V8. Bore 4.0 in. Stroke 3.69 in. Stroke/bore ratio 0.92:1. Compression ratio 9.5:1. Displacement 370.71 cu. in. Advertised bhp 277 @ 4400 rpm. Bhp per cu. in. 0.747. Piston speed @ max. bhp 2704 ft. per min. Max. bmep 162.7 psi. Max. torque 400 lbs.-ft. @ 2800 rpm.

TRANSMISSION: Standard transmission is three-speed synchromesh with helical gears. Automatic transmission is Hydra-Matic, four-speed planetary gearbox with fluid coupling; ratios: 3.97:1, 2.55:1, 1.55:1 1.00:1. Overdrive transmission is not available.

REAR-AXLE RATIOS: Synchromesh 3.64:1. Automatic 3.42:1 (88, 3.23:1).

STEERING: Turning diameter 42 ft. Turns lock to lock 4%. Overall ratios: mechanical 27.3:1, power 22.7:1. Type: mechanical, ball nut; power, ball nut (Saginaw).

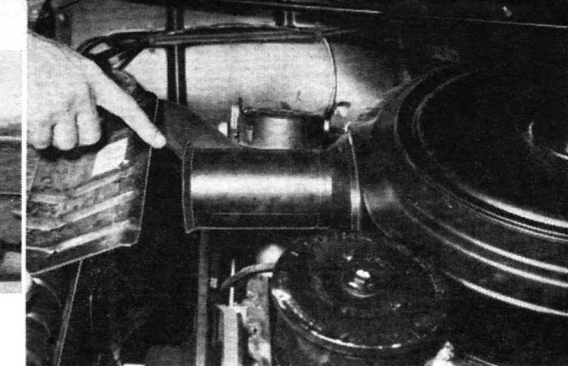
WEIGHT: Test car with gas, oil and water, 4480 lbs.

(55% front, 45% rear); car weight/bhp ratio 16.2:1.

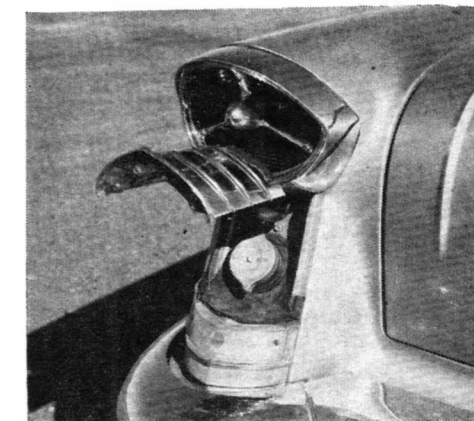
DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase 122 in., overall length 208.2 in., overall height 58.2 in., overall width 76.4 in., front tread 59.0 in., rear tread 58.0 in., rear overhang 51.9 in.

Tires 8.50 x 14 tubeless.

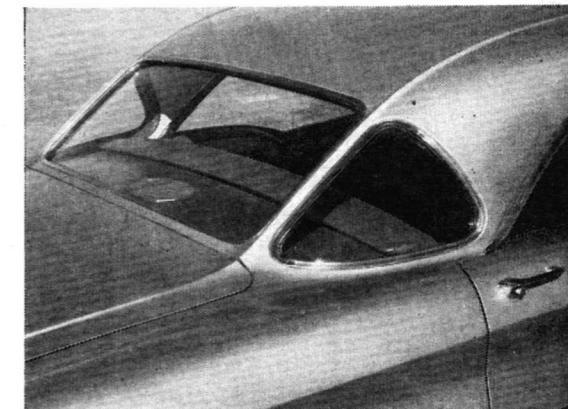
PRICES (Including suggested retail price at main factory, federal tax, and delivery and handling charges, but not freight): 88 two-door sedan \$2691, four-door sedan \$2756, two-door hardtop \$2812, four-door hardtop \$2890, convertible \$3140, four-door station wagon \$3160, four-door hardtop station wagon \$3271. SUPER 88 two-door sedan \$2926, four-door sedan \$2988, two-door hardtop \$3138, four-door hardtop \$3215, convertible \$3405, four-door hardtop station wagon \$3499. 98 four-door sedan \$3691, two-door hardtop \$3887, four-door hardtop \$3963, convertible \$4167. (Hydra-Matic, power brakes and power steering standard on 98.)



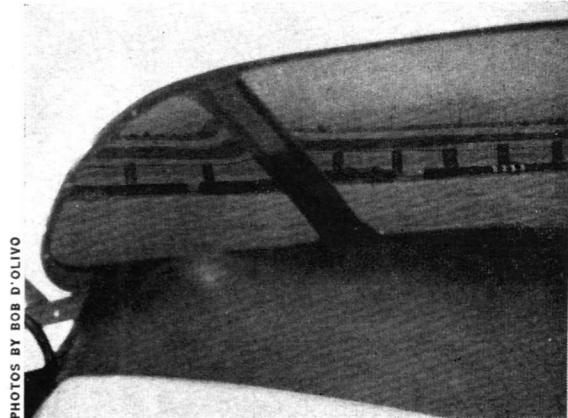
AIR HORN takes cooled air from radiator for efficient operation.



GAS FILLER looks neat, yet door can be bothersome and neighboring backup light is vulnerable.



"ARMORED CAR" look shocks some at first, is broad hint of bolder sculpturing to come. Corner windows are more handsome than practical, as inside view makes obvious.



PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO

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BUICK

continued from page 28

Is There Confusion Under the Hood?

Yes, if you want to do much more than check the battery or your oil level. Only an expert will be able to remove even the spark plugs without clearing away a maze of plumbing from the power steering and power brake pumps, tubing, etc. The heater blower also obstructs No. 4 plug on the right bank. In case you lose the coil and distributor, remove the air cleaner. And don't forget, if you need a quart, to have the attendant put a pint in the right and a pint in the left filler.

What's Different About a Buick?

A great feeling of weight and size, both understandable in light of the facts. Wonderful smoothness from Dynaflo, especially pleasant when accelerating. One of the softest rides available today. Small features like the step-on parking brake (you'll especially like it if your hydraulic system should ever fail and you have to drive for some distance), and the keyless ignition switch that makes it possible to

leave your car in a parking lot while you keep the key to the locked trunk or glove compartment.

You may want one of the buzzers that you can set to go off—and keep buzzing—at any speed you like.

Will It Stay New?

Look around you and you may be surprised by the age of some of the clean-looking Buicks you see. Owners tend to stick with the make, so must like the service they get. Watch out for a hum from the rear end in the car you pick; the test car had this familiar feature before 1000 miles showed on its odometer. If you buy a hardtop, particularly a four-door like the test car, check all doors and door windows for fit and smooth operation: the right rear window on ours hung up occasionally.

The Other Buicks

The Buick line begins (pricewise) with the popular Special, whose three-holed hardtop is in the bottom photo. A comparatively low compression ratio of 9.5 to 1 with Dynaflo still demands premium fuel; a stick-shift version, recommended

DODGE

continued from page 32

The two Dodges shown are both Custom Royal Lancers, a two-door (above) and a four-door below. Either body shell can be bought in less luxurious trim as a Royal or a Coronet; both have the Red Ram V8, with powerpack at extra cost. Since the D-500 engine and suspension are only \$72 extra, they're a good buy.



OLDSMOBILE

continued from page 37

The non-Super, or Golden Rocket, 88 (bottom photo) is essentially a less dressy version of the Super 88. Consequently, it's 50 pounds lighter. Only important mechanical variation is in rear-axle ratios:



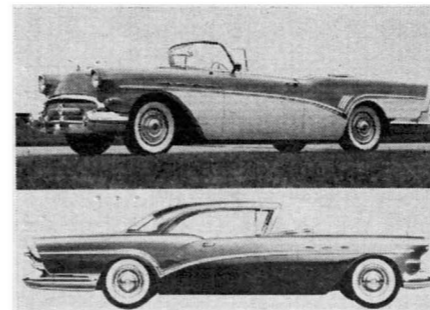
the Super's 3.42 to 1 means more feet per second in acceleration and the plain 88's 3.23 to 1 gives more miles per gallon. (Both of these are with Hydra-Matic.)

As for the bigger and ultra-ultra 98 (top), it comes equipped with Hydra-Matic, power steering, and power brakes. Using the rear axle of the Super 88 but with 300 pounds more heft to haul, it should produce slightly less performance, less gas mileage, and presumably more envious looks from your friends.

About Those New Triple Carburetors . . .

As you read in MT last month, the system consists of three dual-barrel carburetors. You use only the middle one unless you push the throttle past the ¾ mark, when the other two cut in.

Initial plans are to make the three-pot setup available on Super 88 models. We may assume they can be added to the 98 models also. Only engine change with three carburetors is a compression ratio boost to 10 to 1; this raises horsepower to 300 at



only if your car needs are unusual, thrives on regular gas with 8.0 to 1 compression. Either Special will bring smaller fuel bills and less reputation for acceleration than will the Century. Except for its engine, the Special is much like a less-luxurious Century.

The Super and the Roadmaster, shown in convertible form in the upper photo, are even more alike. Larger and heavier, they use the same engine as the Century. The Roadmaster is a more expensively trimmed car with larger tires and slightly more brake lining area. Both Super and Roadmaster include power steering in their price; economy and acceleration of both will lag behind the hot Century.

4600 rpm, torque to 415 pounds-feet at 3000. Valves, camshaft and ignition are exactly like those in stock models.

Detroit Editor Joe Wherry reports: "Top speed is up. Olds prefers not to discuss this." He continues: "Weather during test (in particular, visibility) prevented my speed run. I was able to get the following performance, using speed corrected to average errors: 0-60 9.4 seconds, 50-80 also 9.4. [Not up to our last month's prophecy.—Ed.] Factory performance data which I saw shows car will make 60 in 9.1 with one aboard on dry pavement. I'll buy this, for my check car had less than 50 miles on the odometer, was stiff, had two aboard, and the road was slippery.

"I'm told fuel mileage will suffer slightly at higher speeds. Probably it will be better than now at lower speeds before the two end carburetors are cut in. The car I ran weighed in before running at 4408 pounds."

Below is the installation, showing the new oval-shaped air cleaner that in some ways makes a handier compartment than the big round type. The equipment gives you a JATO (jet action take-off) engine, and it costs \$83.



The Chevrolet's Brakes . . .

LAST MONTH'S '57 Chevrolet road test was incomplete because of the unprecedented rush in preparing our Show Issue.

Our usual brake fade tests consist of a series of slow-downs at the deceleration rate of 15 feet per second per second. We drive the test car at a true 60 mph, as indicated previously by our fifth wheel and electric speedometer; we decelerate at the above rate until we reach a true 20 mph, then immediately accelerate at full throttle to 60 again, decelerate and so on. One man drives while the other jots down copious notes. Here are the Chevy data:

First, second and third stops O.K. Right rear wheel grabbed briefly on fourth stop, and slight odor was noticed. Slight swerve to right on fifth stop. Pedal pressure began to increase on sixth stop, continued through tenth stop. Impossible to hold 15 feet per second per second rate (12 was maximum) on eighth and ninth stops. Maximum deceleration rate decreased sharply on tenth stop to 10 at 30 mph and then to five at 20 mph; pedal very hard. Eleventh stop produced erratic pedal; 15 feet rate could again be held. Twelfth stop duplicated tenth stop; odor had become gradually severe. —P.M.

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