



CHEVELLE



by Bob McVay, Assistant Technical Editor

ONE OF THE FEW all-new cars offered for 1964 is Chevrolet's Chevelle. We got our first chance to drive a production version at a press preview two weeks before the car was officially introduced. After that initial drive, we asked for a test car as soon as possible, and we got one of the first ones available in the Los Angeles area.

Our Chevelle Malibu Super Sport test car came with the biggest engine option (220-hp V-8), a four-speed all-synchromesh floor-mounted gearshift with a 3.08 rear axle, and loaded with accessories. After putting a few hundred easy break-in miles on the car, we picked up our test gear and our photographer and took off for Riverside International Raceway to see how it would perform. With our test equipment and two MOTOR TREND staff members aboard, the Chevelle tipped the scales at just under 3500 pounds.

We got lots of wheelspin on hard acceleration, but each run to 60 mph was under the 10-second mark — 9.7 was our best time. Zero to 30 and 45 mph took 3.6 and 6.2 seconds. The Malibu crossed the end of our measured quarter-mile test strip hitting an honest 80 mph and freezing our battery of stop watches at 17.4 seconds. Although the Chevelle's easy-to-read speedometer proved from two to three mph on the optimistic side, our Weston electric speedometer showed the car's top speed was 109 mph. (We

Dimensions and handling of all-new Chevelle Malibu reminded us of an old friend, the 1955 Chevy. Chevelle fills the gap between full-sized Chevrolets and Chevy II.

ROAD TEST

recalled that one of the preview Chevelles had the optional 3.36-to-1 "mountain" rear axle and felt quite a bit stronger off the line, since it allowed the 283-incher to reach its peak revs more quickly.)

Our test car's engine was the tried and proven 283-cubic-inch V-8, which hot rodders and racing mechanics have used to power practically anything on four wheels since its introduction. In its 220-hp Chevelle form, it was quiet, willing, and reliable during our test period. It's an engine that lends itself well to the owner who wants more than the 220 hp offered by Chevrolet.

We used 5500 rpm as our red line and for shift points for best acceleration. Third gear proved handy for any quick passing in normal cruising ranges of 45 to 75 and would wind right on up to 91 mph before a shift into fourth was necessary. Second-gear starts were easily possible.

For the performance-minded buyer, the combination of the top V-8 and a four-speed transmission is a good one (the gearbox goes as an option for \$188.30). The shift lever is a man-sized unit, with a fist-filling chrome ball on top. A finger-operated lock-out gate prevents unwanted shifts into reverse, but it was quite easy to go from third into second unwittingly, unless we consciously applied side pressure on the shift lever.

Ride and handling were what we've come to expect from Chevrolet. Our Chevelle had a soft boulevard ride and showed considerable body lean in faster-than-usual corners. Fast cornering also caused the carburetor to flood and the car to lose power right in the middle of a bend, just when

we needed it most to keep the car under control. Cornering power was about average, with the front end usually the first to lose adhesion. A wet track showed up the car's understeering characteristics even more strongly. It's handling struck us as being about average for an American passenger car — certainly not one that lends itself to overly fast driving.

We could feel small bumps and tar strips in the road transmitted to our hands through the steering gear. The suspension bottomed on moderate dips and bumps. When cruising at legal highway speeds of 65 mph, small bumps would cause the front suspension to oscillate up and down two or three times before settling down to level riding. A desirable option (at just \$4.85) would be the heavier springs and shock absorbers offered as heavy- or special-duty equipment.

Our acceleration and top-speed runs gave the Chevelle's brakes a good workout. Six high-speed stops found them faded almost completely. They needed about 10 minutes to recover their stopping power. Our braking tests found the car giving reasonably good stops from 30 mph in 24 feet, but our maximum-effort stops from 60 mph required a longer-than-usual 162.5 feet. Wheel lock-up and swerving made straight-line stops difficult, and here's where we would've appreciated fewer turns of the power-steering unit.

Almost four turns (3.98) lock to lock are required by Chevelle's integral power steering. In our opinion, panic stops and winding roads, as well as tight parking spaces, needed too many wheel turns for reasonable safety. Any tight bend took at least one full turn, sometimes more.

It's hard to talk about steering without mentioning the steering wheel itself. Our test car was equipped with the optional sport wheel, a nice, two-spoke, plastic wheel that looks just like the wooden ones seen on some expensive sports cars. It adds a touch of glamor to the car for an extra \$32.30.

Our test car had quite a long cruising range. With its 20-gallon gasoline tank and our top mileage figure of 18.4 mpg, we could drive well over 300 miles before looking for a service station. Extremely hard driving gave us a low figure of 9.6 mpg, but our overall average for 900 test miles was a high 16 mpg — quite good for the top performance car in the Chevelle line-up. Moderate driving would give even better mileage, especially on the six-cylinder models equipped with overdrive. It was refreshing to find a powerful hardtop that would still give such good gas mileage.

Somehow, we couldn't help feeling we'd driven the Chevelle before, about eight years ago. It's basically very similar to the popular 1955 Chevrolet — a shade shorter in overall length and height, but with the same basic engine-chassis combination. The Chevelle is a little faster, lighter, and costs more.

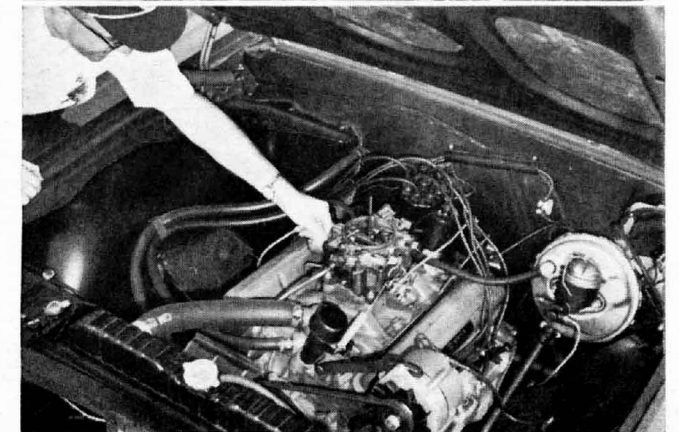
Chevilles come in three series; Chevelle 300, Malibu, and Malibu Super Sport, plus the regular and deluxe El Camino three-passenger pickup (probably the most interesting of the line). A full range of body styles is offered, in-

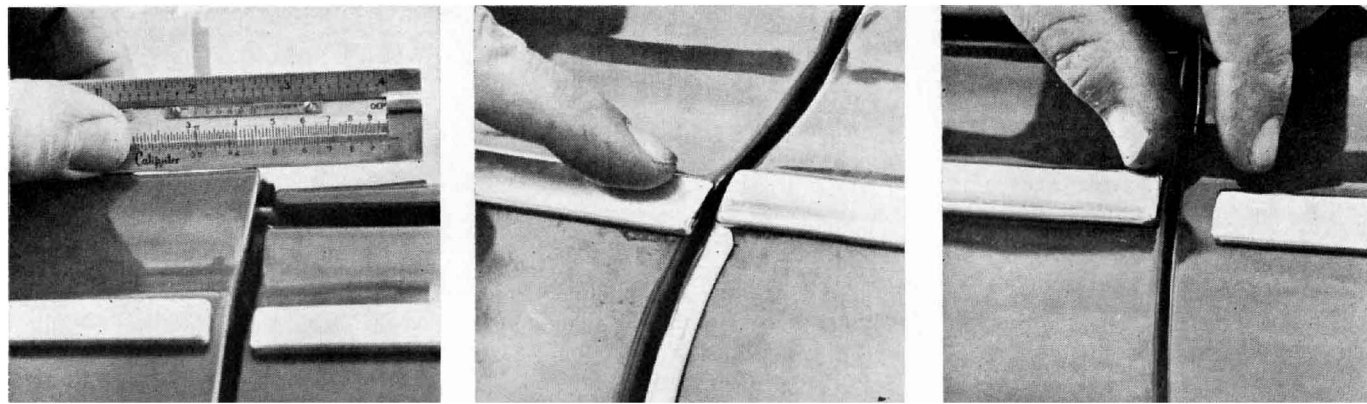
1) Well known for power and reliability, Chevelle's 283-cubic-inch V-8 uses hydraulic lifters, five main bearings, and has a good torque supply. It lends itself well to power increases.

2) Instrument panel is simple and easy to read. Super Sport models have clock, use gauges. The others have warning lights.

3) Our test car's trunk had lots of room (16.9 feet) and a low lip for easy loading. The protruding bolt that holds the spare in place should be covered. It could damage expensive luggage.

4) High-mounted steering wheel cut right across our line of vision. Position is tiring after long stints behind the wheel.

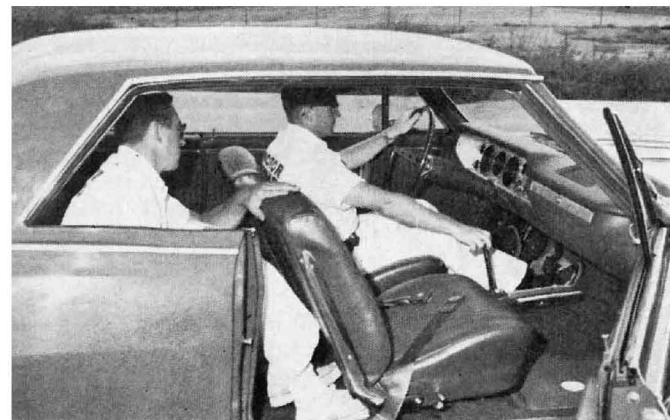




Fit and detail finish seemed below average for Chevy products. Straight-edge demonstrates front fender alignment and the gap between car's fender panel and door. Technical editor's finders point out the wide gaps and imperfect fit of Chevelle's chrome.



PHOTOS BY PAT BROLIER, BOB D'OLIVO



CHEVELLE *continued*

cluding two-door and four-door sedans and station wagons (two- and three-seat models), hardtops, and convertibles. The standard engine is a 194-cubic-inch Six, rated at 120 hp. Next comes an optional 230-inch Six with 155 horses. Both Sixes use a single-barrel carburetor, have 8.5-to-1 compression, and use regular gas. Two V-8s are offered, both 283-inchers. The standard unit is rated at 195 hp and has a two-barrel carb, while the top engine (as on our test car) boasts 220 horses and has one four-barrel carb. Both have 9.5-to-1 compression ratios.

Transmissions include the standard three-speed column shift (3.08 axle), optional overdrive (3.70 axle), Powerglide automatic (3.08 axle), and the all-synchromesh four-speed box. A "special purpose" or "mountain" axle ratio of 3.36 to 1 is optional.

Chevelle joins other GM compacts in using separate body-chassis construction. It uses the 115-inch-wheelbase perimeter frame with coil springs at each corner. The ladder-type frame has three structural crossmembers and one nonstructural crossmember for the rear engine mount.

Chevrolet is offering enough options to please almost everyone. A look down the long list reveals such interesting performance items as metallic brake linings, air-suspension system, heavy-duty suspension options (mentioned earlier for \$4.85), heavy-duty clutch, Positraction rear axle, and a host of optional tires ranging from 6.50 x 14 to 7.50 x 14-inchers of four-ply construction.

Starting from a base price of \$2635, our test car had all the available options, with the exception of air conditioning and power seats. Its price tag came to \$3462.35, plus tax and license. Air conditioning would increase this to \$3830.90 — certainly not an economy price tag.

The Chevelle lines up between the full-sized Chevys and the diminishing Chevy II series. The top-line body styles of the Chevy II, the hardtop and convertible, have been dropped for '64, so it's only natural for people who would normally buy the SS model to look to the Chevelle.

Chevelle, along with other GM products, has a 24-month/24,000-mile warranty that applies to the original purchaser. A minimum 60-day or 6000-mile service period is required to keep the warranty in force.

Somehow, we couldn't get too excited over the Chevelle, even though it's a brand-new offering. The 1955 Chevy was a top seller, and this one's a lot like it. It does what it was designed to do, providing good reliable transportation for five with adequate power and luggage space. General overall quality and workmanship looked good inside the car, but body panels and outside chrome trim didn't match up very well. Ours was one of the first Chevelles in this area, but we've looked at more recent ones and they didn't look much better than our test car.

If public interest in our test car is any indication, there's a good market for the Chevelle. People were constantly asking about the car wherever we stopped. Only time will tell about the future of the Chevelle. It fills a gap in Chevrolet's extensive line-up — and that's an accomplishment. /MT

- 1) Chevelle sports minimum of chrome trim, giving it a clean profile. The car has curved side glass and posts. A special adhesive cement is used to seal the windshield and rear window.
- 2) Brake fade occurred after a few high-speed stops, but brakes recovered their usefulness after they cooled for a few minutes.
- 3) Our SS hardtop had adequate leg- and head room for four, was a little tight for five. Doors open wide for easy entrance and exit. The long reach to third gear made us stretch a little.
- 4) Three-quarter-front view shows the pleasing Chevelle grille. Hood latch is outside, leaving the engine easy prey for vandals.



CHEVELLE MALIBU SS

2-door, 5-passenger hardtop

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: 220-hp V-8, power steering-brakes-windows, special steering wheel, radio, heater, whitewalls, seat belts, misc. items.

BASIC PRICE: \$2635

PRICE AS TESTED: \$3462.35 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 600 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5500 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)	
0-30 mph.....	3.6 secs.
0-45 mph.....	6.2
0-60 mph.....	9.7
Standing start 1/4-mile 17.4 secs. and 80 mph	
Speeds in gears @ 5500 rpm	
1st	51 mph
2nd	69 mph
3rd	91 mph
4th	110 mph
Speedometer Error on Test Car	
Car's speedometer reading	32 46 52 62 72 83
Weston electric speedometer	30 45 50 60 70 80
Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear	22 mph
Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 24.0 ft.; from 60 mph, 162.5 ft.	

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine	Steering
Ohv V-8	Recirculating ball nut, with integral power
Bore: 3.875 ins.	Turns lock to lock: 3.98
Stroke: 3.00 ins.	
Displacement: 283.0 cu. ins.	Wheels and Tires
Compression ratio: 9.25:1	5-lug, steel disc wheels
Horsepower: 220 @ 4800 rpm	7.00 x 14 Goodyear whitewalls
Torque: 295 lbs.-ft. @ 3200 rpm	
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.78	Brakes
Carburetion: 1 4-bbl.	Hydraulic, duo-servo, with vacuum power assist; self-adjusting; cast-iron drums
Ignition: 12-volt coil	Front: 9.5-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide
Gearbox	Rear: 9.5-in. dia. x 2.0 ins. wide
4-speed manual, all synchro; floor-mounted lever	Effective lining area: 172.7 sq. ins.
Driveshaft	
1-piece, open tube	Suspension
Differential	Front: Single lower arm, with independent coil springs, direct, double-acting, hydraulic shock absorbers and stabilizer bar; spherically-jointed steering knuckle for each wheel
Hypoid, semi-floating	Rear: 4-link system; 2 upper and 2 lower control arms, coil springs, and direct, double-acting hydraulic shock absorbers
Standard ratio: 3.08:1	Body and Frame
Suspension	Welded steel body on ladder-type welded perimeter frame, with torque box reinforced sections
Front: Single lower arm, with independent coil springs, direct, double-acting, hydraulic shock absorbers and stabilizer bar; spherically-jointed steering knuckle for each wheel	Wheelbase: 115.0 ins.
Rear: 4-link system; 2 upper and 2 lower control arms, coil springs, and direct, double-acting hydraulic shock absorbers	Track: front and rear, 58.0 ins.
	Overall length: 193.9 ins.
	Curb weight: 3060 lbs.