

THE LARK is an uncomplicated approach to the compact concept and adequately solves the major problems of smaller car design with an excellent basic layout. Unfortunately, the development of some details has not been entirely successful.

Many of these details are found in the passenger compartment and their inconvenience will be a constant source of annoyance. A good example is the lack of an interior dome light. Although listed as a Lark accessory, dome lights are as much a necessity as instrument cluster lights. Cars without them as standard equipment are rare.

The dash controls will be trouble makers too, since they attach by means of a spring which can weaken and allow them to come off if the controls are not handled gently. One accessory, the padded dash, has practically no other function than to reduce sun glare. As a safety feature it is useless since the padding is barely a quarter of an inch thick. Another potential source of trouble is the thin, and somewhat moisture absorbent, material used to construct the glove compartment. It will not stand up under hard use and heavy objects will undoubtedly cause it to sag.

From the outside the car has a boxy appearance and creates an "off the road" feeling. This sensation of sitting higher is multiplied inside since the driver sits higher off the floorboard than in most compact cars. The front seat has been redesigned this year, mostly to gain more legroom in back. This change, however, did not make getting into and out of the back seat any easier and it is extremely awkward. Rear seat entry is difficult mostly because the door, a holdover from earlier Studebakers, is not wide enough. Both the front and rear compartment show an intelligent relation of exterior dimensions to interior space and promote passenger comfort even on long trips.

The Lark handles well at slow speeds and parking maneuverability is marvelous. Shorter length and a fairly short radius turning circle are responsible for these characteristics but extremely stiff steering takes the ease out of the advantages. When stopped or barely rolling it takes far too much muscle to turn the wheels. Power steering would solve this, but a better ratio

would have the same effect without making necessary any added expense.

At highway speeds the steering becomes easier and the stiffness is helpful in reducing over and under correction. The Lark corners reasonably well, but tight turns or too high a speed will induce tire squeal and leaning.

Studebaker's compact has highway roadability features and a

soft ride which equals that found in many bigger American cars. There is very little feel of rough road conditions which combined with passenger compartment dimensions give the car a low fatigue level on long trips.

One area in which Studebaker engineers have given more than adequate thought to finish details is in reducing the passenger compartment noise level. Windows and doors fit well and seal tightly, reducing wind whistle. The engine mounting has been improved by the use of butyl and vibration is negligible. A common complaint last year, the noisy air intake, has been almost entirely eliminated by a new air cleaner on the engine.

Since very few engineering changes have been made in the engine it is interesting to compare the 1960 model with a similar Lark tested last year.

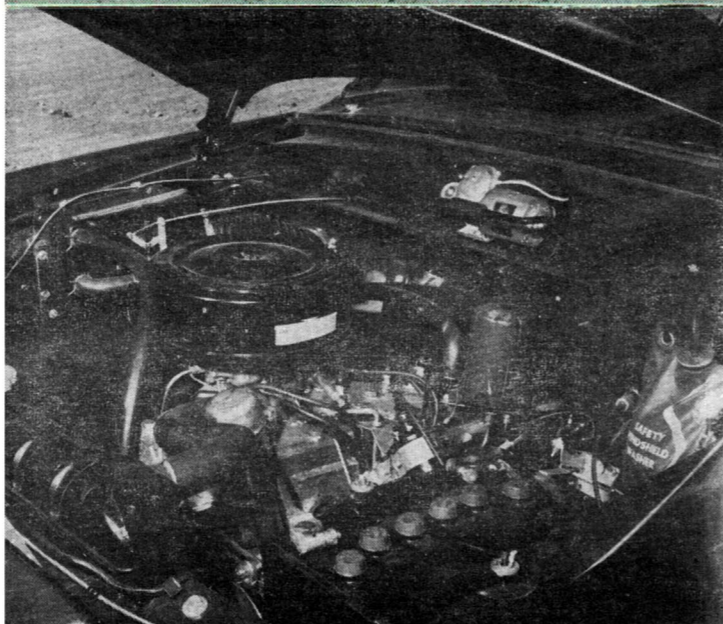
This year the total weight was 70 lbs. more, raising the power-weight ratio to 30.5 lbs. per horsepower. The earlier model had

SIX-CYLINDER power is supplied the Lark by the old Champion L-head engine. Its economy rating is average but it is below par for performance. A more modern unit is overdue for the Lark.

STUDEBAKER LARK



using some old features to produce a fresh form of economy transportation



a regular transmission and this year's was equipped with overdrive. Axle ratios have been changed and the ratio jumped from 3.54 to 4.1.

Speaking from an engineering standpoint these power and weight comparisons should contribute to poorer economy. Testing, however, got exactly opposite results, and mileage jumped from 16.1 to 21.1 mpg. Usually this could be considered due entirely to overdrive, but last year Motor Life conducted a separate mileage test on a Lark equipped with overdrive and recorded only 18.5 mpg.

Although not a hot car by any standards, the Lark improved its acceleration runs over last year by $\frac{7}{10}$ of a second. The performance gain can be credited to the numerically bigger axle ratio, but it does not seem impressive compared to the only slightly less desirable power-weight ratio.

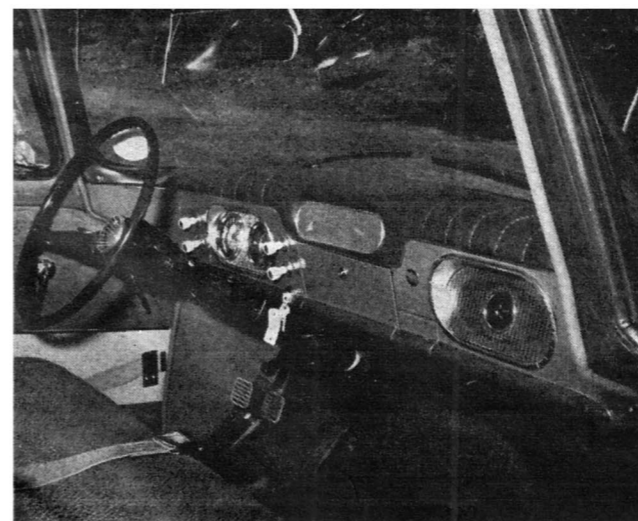
What is strange is that the same powerplant should turn in a better economy record under these conditions. The reasons are undoubtedly the minor refinements made in the engine this year, basically a new carburetor and a modified cylinder head combustion design.

This powerplant is the old Champion engine and like many other components of the Lark has been around for some years. By modern standards it is old-fashioned and not nearly so efficient as other sixes now in use. Many people would overlook this lower level of performance if the economy was tops, but the Lark's consumption of fuel is only average for the compact class. A far better solution than mere refinements would have been a totally new powerplant.

Studebaker adopted a follow-through starter this year and the Lark does start better. The automatic choke, however, revs the engine far too high when starting and is difficult to release. Another peculiarity of this powerplant occurs when accelerating normally and shifting to third gear. In overdrive the engine does not respond immediately unless the throttle is pushed all the way down.

Overall the Lark has become slightly more responsive and economical while retaining its familiar identity. The small size and simplicity of design are major features for people who find themselves a little bewildered at the many controls, power devices and ultra complicated engine compartments of bigger cars. Engine, power train and suspension are a sensible arrangement of components that function together as a well-planned package.

Yet, more thought should be given to the little things that give an automobile a craftsman-produced appearance and, most of all, to a more modern powerplant. •



DASH LAYOUT is simple and practical. Padding is more for show than for a blow since it is only fraction of an inch thick. Test car was equipped with seat belts which fastened to door.

MOTOR LIFE TEST DATA



1960 LARK SIX

TEST CAR: Studebaker Lark
BODY TYPE: 2-door sedan
BASIC PRICE: \$1976

OVERALL LENGTH: 175 inches
OVERALL WIDTH: 71.375 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT: 57.5 inches
WHEELBASE: 108.5 inches
TREAD, FRONT/REAR: 57.375 and 56.562 inches
TEST WEIGHT: 2750 lbs.
WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION: 55 per cent on front wheels
STEERING: 4.25 turns lock-to-lock
TURNING CIRCLE: 37.6 feet curb-to-curb
GROUND CLEARANCE: 6.1 inches

SEATING CAPACITY: four to six
FRONT SEAT—
HEADROOM: 36 inches
WIDTH: 59.5 inches
LEGROOM: 44 inches
TRUNK CAPACITY: 16.5 cubic feet

TYPE: 6 cylinder L-head
DISPLACEMENT: 169.6 cubic inches
BORE & STROKE: 3.0 x 4.0
COMPRESSION RATIO: 8.3-to-1
CARBURETION: single barrel, downdraft
HORSEPOWER: 90 @ 4000 rpm
TORQUE: 145 @ 2000 rpm
TRANSMISSION: 3-speed manual w/overdrive
REAR AXLE RATIO: 4.1

GAS MILEAGE: 19 to 23 miles per gallon
ACCELERATION: 0-30 mph in 5.8 seconds,
0-45 mph in 11.2 and
0-60 mph in 20.0 seconds
SPEEDOMETER ERROR: Indicated 30, 45 and 60 are
actual 27, 41 and 54½ mph, respectively
POWER-WEIGHT RATIO: 30.5 lbs. per horsepower
HORSEPOWER PER CUBIC INCH: .53

TESTING THE 60'S