

1956 DODGE

Road Test

The new fin-tail is quick—with go to match its show

THERE'S nothing slow about the 1956 Dodge, either in styling or performance. In fact, sum total of the two may make it the razzle-dazzle car of the year.

The test car was a Custom Royal Lancer with just about every optional extra, except Highway Hi-Fi, including the power-kitted Super Red Ram V-8 of 230 hp. Top speed was only average (104 mph), but the built-in punch came in low-range acceleration, which really counts the most anyway. Overall gas mileage, which included the fuel-wasting acceleration tests, was a good 16.4 mpg. In fuel checks at steady speeds, the Dodge got 22 mpg at 30 mph, 19 at 45 and 17 at 60.

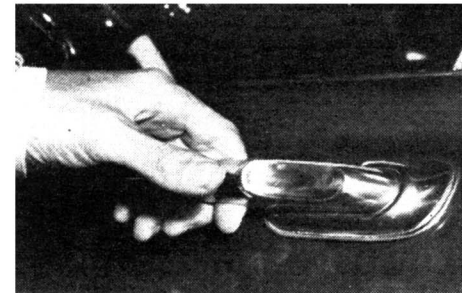
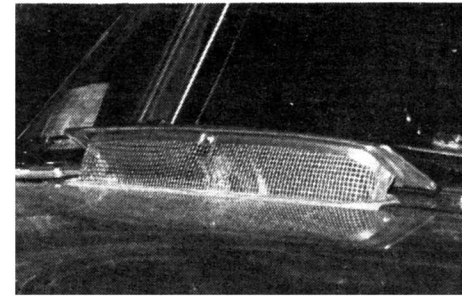
While the pushbutton transmission is not exactly an engineering milestone, it's a gigantic forward step in automatic gearbox control—one that was long overdue. Odds are it'll be a big factor in Dodge doubling its sales in 1956, which is what happened in 1955.

ACCELERATION puts Dodge right into the hot class: 0-30 mph in 3.6 seconds; 0-45 in 7; 0-60 in 11.7; standing quarter in 18.9 flat. Speedometer error is normal, with indicated 60, 45 and 30 mph being an actual 56, 42 and 29 mph, respectively. The handsome improvements over 1955 are chiefly the result of 37 more hp and no important differences in figures were obtained with either low or drive buttons. Despite the extra power, however, it is interesting to note that the Dodge did not burn rubber at any time when the throttle was suddenly floorboarded from a standing start on dry pavement.

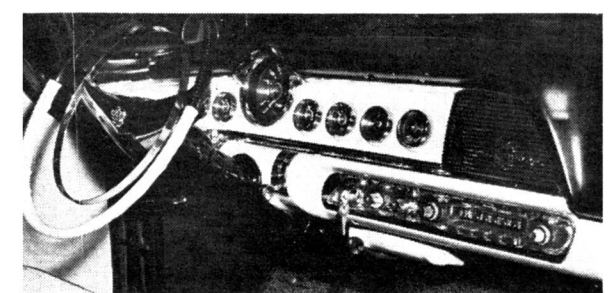
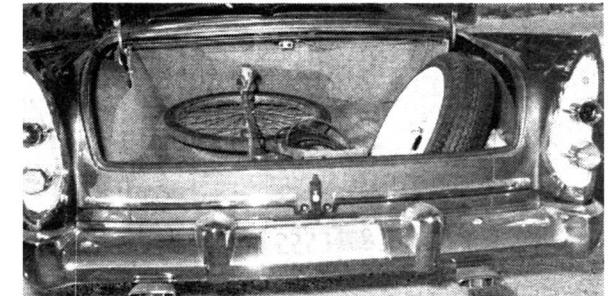


PUSHBUTTONS are the ultimate and logical system of automatic transmission control. Dodge's buttons—neutral, drive, low, reverse—seem handier at the left than the former righthand gear lever, need but a flick of a finger to operate. Driving with them took no big adjustment in habits, and the new ease is as much mental as physical. Operation actually is more precise than with the conventional quadrant.

HANDLING AND RIDE characteristics of the new Dodge are not noticeably changed from 1955. It is an ideal American traffic car, since the full-time power steering calls for only finger-tip effort to maneuver and park. The same easy control prevails at higher speeds on roads with normal bends. When the test car was put through severe corners, however, the body roll was pronounced, a concession to the soft ride, although nothing could induce the rear wheels to break loose. Similarly, the ride floated over ordinary bumps, but a deep dip was followed by a high bounce before recovery.



EXTERIOR features of note include a better door handle which actuates a lock designed for greater safety during collision. And the cowl vent is vastly more satisfactory than the common behind-the-grille type. Although an extremely early production model, the test car showed evidence of improved quality control and better finish, both inside and out.



INTERIOR, although relatively unchanged from 1955, matches the eye-catching styling outside. Instruments are recessed in circular mounts and illuminated by non-glare green light. The lavish use of chrome produces no annoying reflections except on the wide steering spokes. Top of the dash is painted in a semi-gloss black which virtually eliminates all reflections. The trunk dimensions are considerable and loading is easy.

STYLING of the 1956 Dodge is easily its most outstanding quality. If it drew attention last year, it is nothing short of spectacular now. The combination of fins with the jet theme carried out in rear light tubes blends perfectly with the profuse ornamentation on the front and sides. Showy, bold, dramatic—there's nothing conservative about the new mod-

els from the Custom Royals to the Coronets. Glitter is often tried, but rarely does it come off as well as it does on the Dodge. With such modern features as pushbutton transmission and record players, the styling complements the mechanical advances and makes the Dodge the show car of the road for 1956.

