

# CHRYSLER 300-L ROAD TEST



Designed by people who like cars for people who like cars

by John Ethridge, *Technical Editor*

**C**HRYSLER'S 300-L stands 11th in a series of personal/performance cars which, dating back over a decade, is one of the undisputed pioneers in this category.

The original 300 was introduced in 1955 with the announcement that it "... was designed to the specifications of motor sports enthusiasts who ... have been asking Chrysler to build an automobile with many sports car characteristics." Just how many sports car characteristics would be incorporated was decided then. Chrysler hasn't strayed far from the original plan this year.

Compared with its immediate predecessor, the 300-K, there are several significant changes for 1965. Wheelbase is up two inches, and overall length has grown three inches. Along with the increase in size, weight's up approximately 200 pounds. The 300-L's new styling includes thinner rear roof pillars for improved visibility. Exclusive to this car

are full-length belt-line moldings with red paint inserts. These and the 300-L medallions front and rear give external distinction from the plain 300 series. The 300-L's available as a two-door hardtop or as a convertible, same as last year.

No doubt the biggest news is that they've dropped the 390-hp, 413-inch, dual-four-barrel-carb V-8 from the option list. The 360-hp "413" with single four-barrel is all that's being offered in the engine compartment. It's probably that too many people (not many of our well informed readers, we trust) ordered the more powerful engine, then turned around and complained about gas mileage.

Chief variation between the 11 members of the 300-letter series has been their states of engine tune, which has ranged from brisk to wild. The 300-L's tuning is in the brisk category. It has a smooth idle and absolutely no temperament. It's a big engine with a big job to do, which reflects in its gas mileage.

The variation in fuel consumption between stop-and-go and open-road driving was remarkably small. Our lowest

figure was 10.2 mpg, with the highest at 13.1 mpg. Average for our 741-mile test was 10.5 mpg. These figures have been corrected for odometer error, as are all figures we publish.

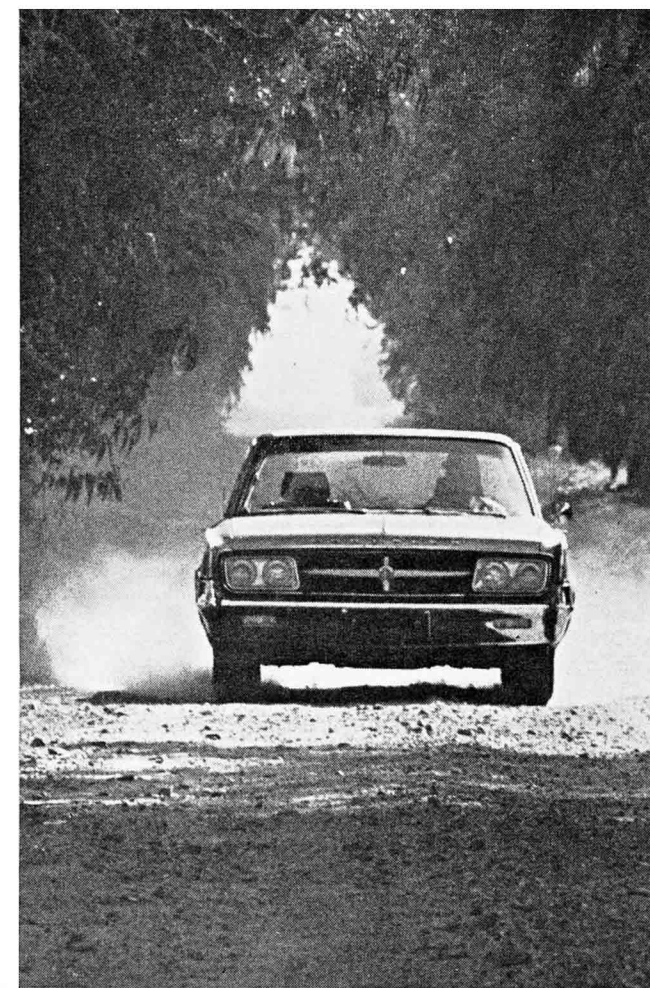
We had immense pleasure testing the 300-L. The car feels more in its element out on the road than driving around town. This is due chiefly to its size rather than any lack of agility. With its good suspension and quick steering, it's surprisingly adequate in this respect.

Much of what goes into making a superior automobile is hidden. There's no better example than Chrysler's bodies. They put a lot of emphasis on the quality of their bodies, both from engineering and manufacturing standpoints.

To begin with, they've instituted one of the most comprehensive rust-proofing programs ever. They protect body sheet metal with a coating of phosphate, three of primer, and two of acrylic enamel. The lower portion of the body, which hides many hard-to-get-at places, is *dipped* in phosphate and primer to ensure coverage. Splash shields and full front wheelhouses protect vital body parts from moisture and stone nicks. Chrysler backs up this program during manufacture with in-process salt-spray tests, etc., to check the quality and effectiveness of the protective coatings.

The 300-L shares unitized body construction with other Chryslers. The Imperial is the only remaining Chrysler Corporation passenger car with separate body and frame. This unitized concept does everything it's supposed to in the way of giving a stiff, rattle-free platform on which to mount the power unit, drive line, and suspension.

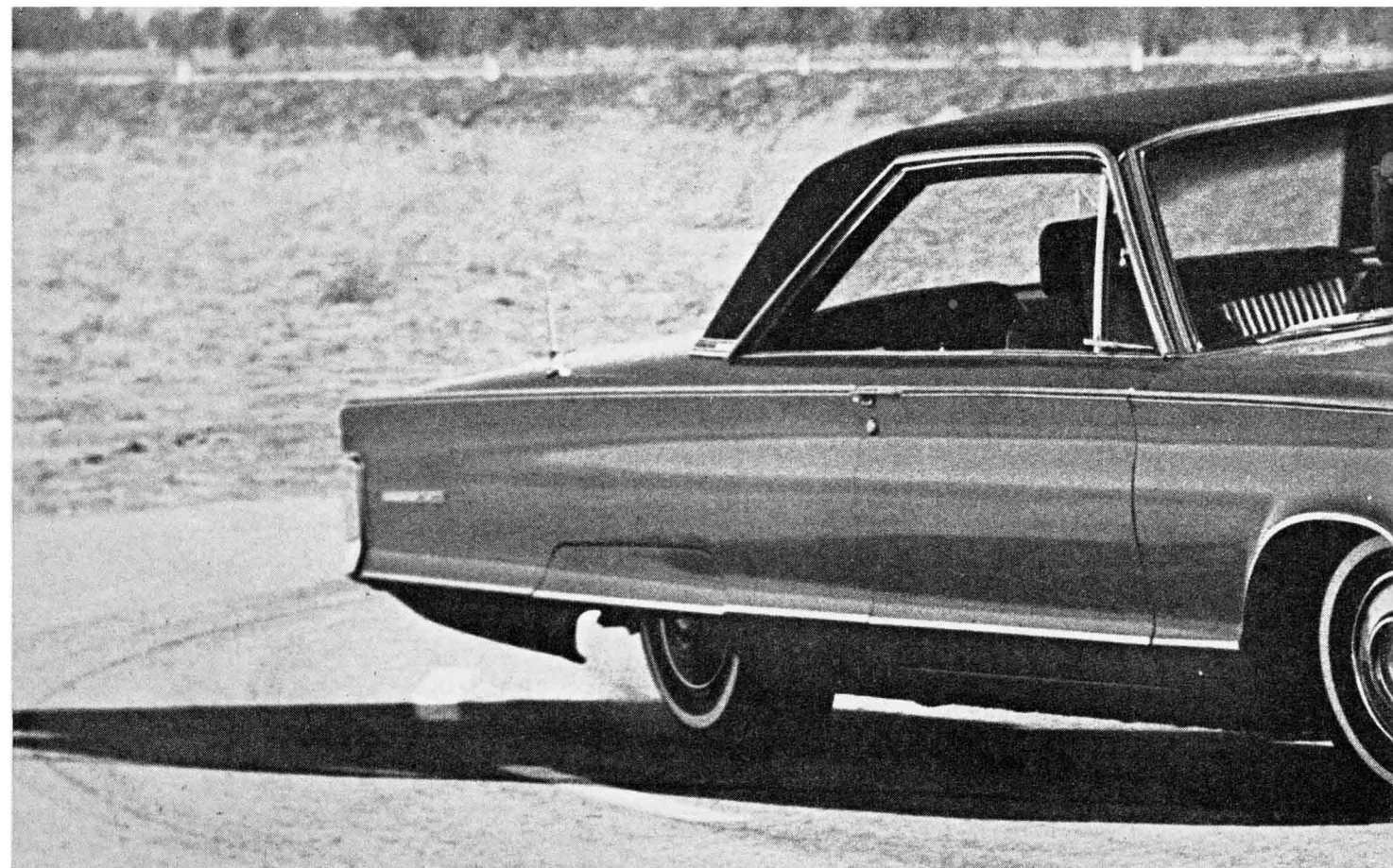
Chrysler engineers have made a massive assault on one problem that's plagued unitized bodies — panel vibration and sound transmission of road noises. They started with electronic sound-tracing equipment — a sort of electronic stethoscope — and ferreted out the sources and resonances of body sounds. Wherever necessary, they applied asphalt-impregnated pads, wood-fiber blankets, and mastic coatings to deaden sounds and dampen vibrations throughout the



Road noise from gravel surfaces doesn't penetrate the interior. Well sealed doors and body keep dust out of passenger space.

PHOTOS BY DARRYL NORENBURG

QUICK POWER STEERING AND OPTIONAL STIFF SUSPENSION ALLOW FULL-SIZED 300-L TO BE THROWN AROUND TIGHT TURNS WITH GOOD CONTROL.







*The 300-L is one of few large cars that have adequate brakes. Panic stops were short, considering the 2.5-ton test weight.*

body. While they were at it, they used thick fiberglass blankets and other materials (that have thermal as well as acoustical properties) to keep heat in or out of the passenger compartment. Roof bows and hood and trunk lid substructures are bonded in place with a semi-hardening adhesive to provide noise control through structural damping. Suspension arm attachments, anti-roll bar brackets, spring mounts, etc., are rubber-bushed to complete the sound isolation. All this adds up to a body that'll keep its looks, structural integrity, and quietness for a very long time. This is the exact opposite of planned obsolescence.

Perhaps they felt they overdid the silencing job in the case of the 300-L, because they specified an unsilenced air cleaner for the big four-barrel carb. You can readily distinguish the eager gulping of air from all other noises when you accelerate. The dual exhausts, though, are well silenced — in keeping with the car's general quietness.

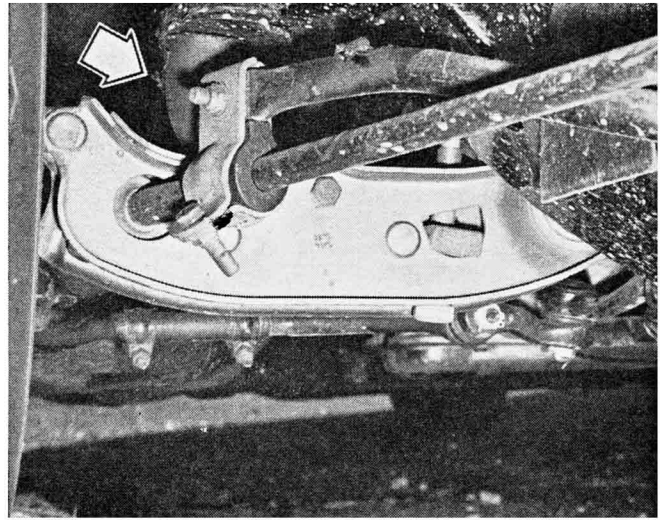
We ordered our test car with the heavy-duty suspension and brake package (Order Code 607; \$35.95) which, even

**MODERATE UNDERSTEER AT POINT OF MAXIMUM BODY ROLL IS CHARACTERISTIC. RAISING TIRE PRESSURES MADE CAR MORE FUN IN TURNS.**





*Well located selector and vacuum gauge are standard with automatic trans. Tach replaces gauge with optional four-speed box.*



*Rubber stop (arrow) contacts lower member early in upward travel, gives variable rate and good snubbing to front suspension.*

**REAL LEATHER INTERIOR IS EVERY BIT AS LUXURIOUS AND COMFORTABLE AS IT LOOKS. RECLINING SEATS/HEAD RESTS PROVED BONUSES.**





on the 300-L, is an optional extra. It's also available on the 300 with the "413" engine and the New Yorker. As far as we're concerned, Chrysler could make this package standard equipment. We doubt if the stiffer suspension components and flared front drums would add much to manufacturing costs. Of course, Chrysler planners have their reasons for doing what they do. They know most buyers put more emphasis on a soft ride than on turning and stopping. Nevertheless, the fact that the option's offered at a modest price shows there's an increased number of buyers who *are* concerned with such things.

Another interesting option on our test car was the Auto-Pilot speed control. Chrysler's offered it for several years now, but we feel a rundown of its characteristics is in order. You can use it as a speed reminder or as an automatic speed regulator. When using it as a speed reminder, you feel an increased resistance on your throttle foot when you reach the pre-set speed. For regulating speed, you pull a button on the speed-setting knob, bring the car up to speed, and the Auto-Pilot takes over. Without the need of your foot on the accelerator, the device applies more throttle for hills and less when descending grades. The slightest touch on the brake pedal cuts out the regulator, letting you slow down normally. It automatically takes over again when you resume speed. Long cross-country superhighways would be the best place for the Auto-Pilot. The speed reminder feature can be used under much broader conditions, however. You can use it to improve economy as well as to stay within speed limits.

One of the low-cost options on the test car was the inside trunk-lid release. We felt it very useful and got so used to leaning over from the driver's seat and reaching inside the glovebox to open the trunk that we don't know how we ever did without it. It sure beats fumbling through keys and looking for a keyhole, especially at night.

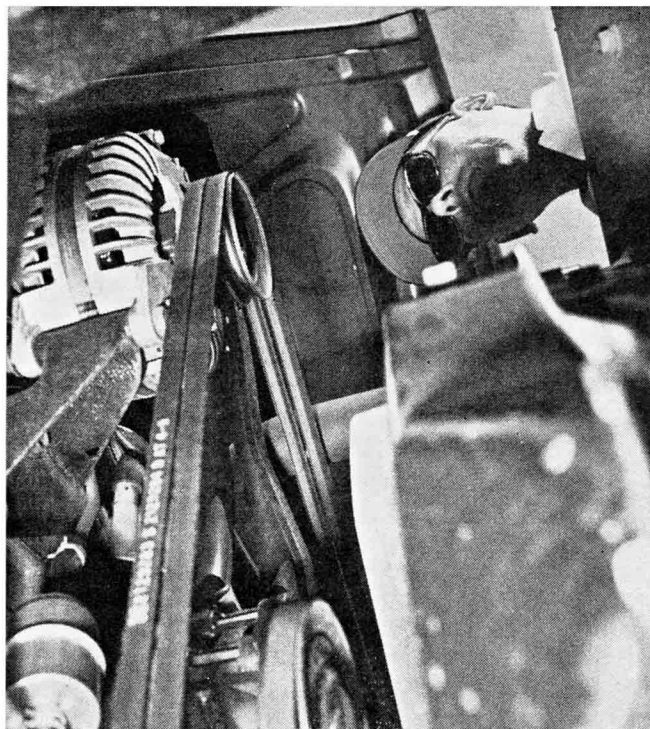
Now let's get back to seeing how close the 300-L comes to matching those original purposes of the series. To give an idea just how the series has hewn to the original line, let's take a backward glance at the first 300. The 1955 model 300 (named for its horsepower) was a two-door hardtop on a 126-inch wheelbase, weighing 4350 pounds. The 331-cubic-inch V-8 produced 300 hp at 5200 rpm. Stiff springs all around and leather upholstery were standard. It'd do 0-60 in approximately 10.5 seconds with the standard 3.54 axle ratio and two-speed automatic.

At the 1955 Daytona Speed Weeks, a 300 turned in a two-way average of 127.58 mph using a 3.36 axle ratio. This car was a veritable wolf among sheep. None of its contemporaries could come near its performance. In fact, it took sports/racing cars with five-figure price tags to beat it at Daytona. The original 300 and the 300-B also carved names for themselves on the stock car circuits in 1955 and 1956.

Some readers may recall the wail that went up from some 300-letter followers when Chrysler abandoned the famed hemispherical combustion chamber design in favor of the wedge with the 300-E. (Virtually all will recall how they recently reactivated the principle so the Plymouths could give stock car competitors their come-uppance.) The "E" was equipped with the 413-cubic-inch engine that's been the basic powerplant for all subsequent 300-letter cars, including the "L."

From the above account and brief history, you can see that, although the 300-letter powerplants underwent some changes, the cars themselves have held to the original theme: A personal luxury car with more than adequate performance, improved handling without a sacrifice in ride, and no attempt to reduce size or weight. For a larger-than-average passenger car, it comes remarkably close to equaling some of the European sports jobs in the area of handling and beats most in sheer speed.

/MT



## CHRYSLER 300-L

2-door, 4-passenger hardtop

**OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED:** Air conditioning, AM-FM radio with reverberator, leather upholstery, power seats/windows & vents/antenna/trunk release, head rests, vinyl roof, Auto-Pilot, tinted glass, seat belts, 9.00 x 14 whitewalls, H-D brakes & suspension, misc.

**BASE PRICE:** \$4153

**PRICE AS TESTED:** \$5931.15 (plus tax and license)

**ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST:** 2275 miles

**RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE:** 5500 rpm

## PERFORMANCE

### ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph .....	3.2 secs.
0-45 mph .....	5.5
0-60 mph .....	8.8

### PASSING TIMES AND DISTANCES

40-60 mph .....	4.2 secs., 380 ft.
50-70 mph .....	4.8 secs., 422 ft.

Standing start 1/4-mile 17.3 secs. and 82 mph

Speeds in gears @ 4400 rpm

1st .....	42 mph	3rd .....	106 mph (observed)
2nd .....	76 mph		

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading .....	34	51	57	69	80	91
Weston electric speedometer .....	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear ..... 24 mph |

Stopping Distances—from 30 mph, 25.5 ft.; from 60 mph, 176 ft.

## SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

### Engine

Ohv V 8  
Bore: 4.19 ins.  
Stroke: 3.75 ins.  
Displacement: 413 cu. ins.  
Compression ratio: 10.1:1  
Horsepower: 360 @ 4800 rpm  
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.87  
Torque: 470 lbs.-ft. @ 3200 rpm  
Carburetion: 1 4-bbl.  
Ignition: 12-volt coil

### Gearbox

TorqueFlite 3-speed automatic

### Differential

Hypoid  
Sure-Grip limited-slip  
Standard ratio: 3.23:1

### Suspension

Front: Independent, with upper & lower control arms, torsion bars, direct-acting tubular shocks  
Rear: Solid axle, asymmetrical leaf springs, direct-acting tubular shocks

### Driveshaft

1-piece, exposed

### Steering

Rack & sector, power assist  
Turning diameter: 44.0 ft.  
Turns lock to lock: 3.5

### Wheels & Tires

5-lug steel disc wheels  
9.00 x 14 rayon whitewalls

### Brakes

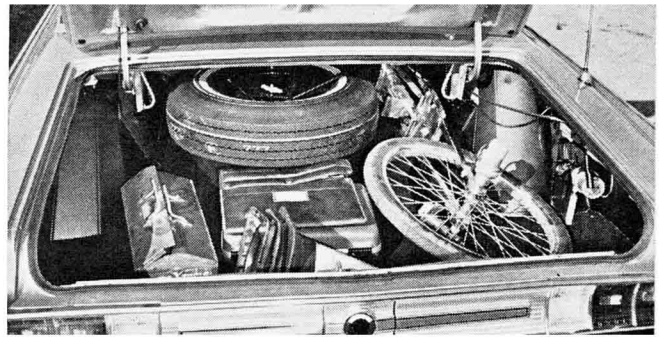
Duo-servo hydraulic, cast-iron composite drums  
Front: 11-in. dia. x 3 ins. wide  
Rear: 11-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide  
Effective lining area: 263.3 sq. ins.  
Swept drum area: 380.1 sq. ins.

### Body and Frame

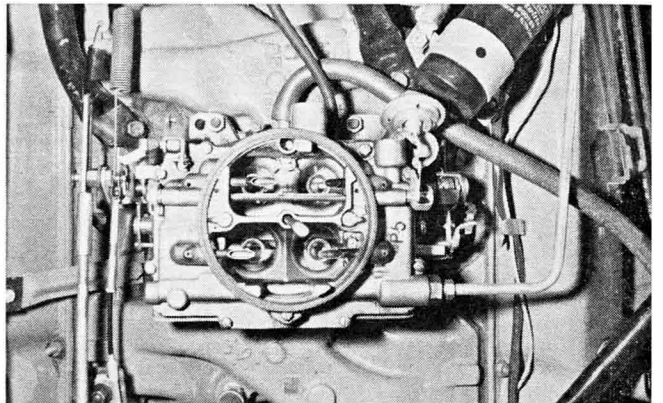
Unitized, welded & bonded  
Wheelbase: 124 ins.  
Track: front, 62 ins.; rear, 60.7 ins.  
Overall length: 218.2 ins.  
Overall width: 79.5 ins.  
Overall height: 55.3 ins.  
Curb weight: 4660 lbs.



*She flies through the air with the greatest of ease — and she doesn't bottom on impact; another benefit of stiff springing.*



*Cavernous trunk takes all our test gear with room to spare. Optional trunk-lid release is hidden inside glove compartment.*



*Single, large four-barrel carburetor dominates engine room. This setup proved best compromise between power and economy.*

**WITH SURE-GRIP DIFFERENTIAL, HEAVY-DUTY BRAKES AND SUSPENSION, WE HAD NO TROUBLE EXPLORING ROUGH, LONELY MOUNTAIN ROADS.**

