

CHRYSLER'S LETTER CAR



by Eric Dahlquist/technical editor

Hottest model in the Chrysler line, the new 413 wedge-powered 300-L is a lively, personalized sedan capable of effortlessly shrinking long distances



FAR LEFT — 300's master control characterizes elegant theme carried on throughout interior. Leather upholstery complements finely executed dashboard styling.

LEFT — Engine compartment is busy but despite accessories, power is more than sufficient for car's requirements. Convertible models are also available.

BOTTOM — On tight mountain curves, 300 evidenced slight lean and understeer tendencies, but did not become unmanageable. Car's best suit is on open road.

photography:
Eric Rickman

the single four-holer doesn't appear as impressive as last year's setup, it is adequate for the 413 engine and no doubt delivers improved gas mileage. Backing up the 10.1: compression wedge powerplant is a sure-shifting, three-speed TorqueFlite automatic, and for the rather-do-it-yourself-minded, the famous Chrysler four-speed box is offered at an extra cost. Those opting for the standard will also get a 3.23 Sure-Grip limited slip in the center section of the axle. No matter what transmission is the final choice the ratio will be the same in the rear.

With a curb weight of just a shade over two and a half tons we didn't anticipate blazing acceleration away from rest and several runs to sixty at the borderline between eight and nine seconds bore this out. However, we have heard that on some of these rigs, if the automatic transmission's throttle pressure rod or the carburetor isn't adjusted properly, the TorqueFlite doesn't pick up low gear, thereby retarding acceleration. After running one of the rod's clevises out a few turns and checking to see that the carburetor was opening to its maximum, we noted that the engine seemed to receive an injection of new life and the zero to sixties got down into eight-flat territory.

Despite this agility, the 300 is definitely more at home on the open road and here is the place where the driver really develops a strong bond of affection for the car. We scheduled in a three-hundred-mile jaunt during our test and this took us up the California Coast along Highway 101 through Santa Barbara and then inland, across the Coast Range Mountains, a more than sufficient sampling of terrain, to learn what the car is capable of. The 300 had the extra-cost, heavy-duty suspension package and we would make the judgement that anything less firm ought to allow an undesirable amount of wallow at the relatively high speeds where the car will cruise. Braking is up to the general standards of a machine this large and the effective lining area of 263.3 represents about twenty-five per cent above what can be had on the smaller Chryslers.

Aside from the creature comforts expected in something in the 300L's category, like power windows, air-conditioning and a sweet AM/FM radio, the gadget that was really appreciated was the Auto Pilot that enables the driver to select a steady speed, set it, and forget it. Up hills and down dales, the car remains at its predetermined velocity until either the brake or accelerator pedal is touched at which time the driver reassumes complete control. Along with the generally low interior noise level, the Cruise Control goes a long way toward reducing fatigue, not to mention improving gas mileage. Even with the Control however, you can't expect a machine this heavy to break economy records. Stop-and-go traffic lowered the mpg figure to 11, while over the long hauls 14.5 was about tops.

We realize that the \$5931 as-tested price is out of the reach of many enthusiasts, but there are those young-at-heart individuals who desire something slightly rare, but well-done, in their automobiles. The Chrysler 300 fits this specification to a T, or should we say "L"? ■■