

## a practical but unexciting combination of assets



THE MATADOR IS THE LEAST ORNATE AND LUXURIOUS OF THE MEDIUM-PRICED CARS TESTED BUT IT RATES WELL IN THINGS AUTOMOTIVE.

**D**ODGE'S Matador is a car of hidden values and many of its best engineering features will go unnoticed by persons who have only a haphazard knowledge of automotive design. Although most of these principles can't be seen from the outside, they are reflected in good handling and economy.

The model selected for this test, a Matador with the standard 361-cubic-inch V-8, is conclusive proof that a car can have these desirable characteristics combined in good balance without sacrificing some worthwhile features.

The springing is firm, yet it is not so stiff as to give an inferior ride in town. The Dodge will absorb the sharpest bumps and smooth out the most abrupt dips with practically no effect on the passengers. This firmness in the suspension also reduces swaying and pitching on the open road to practically nothing. In fact road or wind condition must be extreme to induce any objectionable ride characteristics at high speeds.

What this means in terms of riding comfort is that a wise selection has been made in the spring rate. A choice which is practical at all speeds and sacrifices little to gain an advantage at either fast or slow rates. Of course, torsion bars are greatly responsible and this engineering feature also contributes much to the Dodge's cornering ability.

The Matador turns easily, stays level and has little tendency to throw itself out of the track selected by the driver. It will negotiate a turn far quicker and sharper than most persons care to take them.

Steering in the test car was full-time power and has practically no ability to reveal anything through the steering wheel about the condition of the road underneath. This lack of road sensing is not a virtue but it does not keep the Dodge from steering precisely and accurately. The turning diameter is large and most corners must be taken with a wide swing. Parking gymnastics are somewhat awkward, too. Although the driver must depend upon what he sees rather than what he feels, driving the Dodge is helped by a quickening of the steering to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  turns

lock-to-lock. All but abrupt changes in direction can be mastered with less than a turn of the wheel.

The test car's powerplant was the standard Matador V-8, smallest engine in the Dodge line. (Only Darts have a six-cylinder option.) Coupled with an automatic transmission and a 3.31 axle ratio it is more than just adequate. The Matador has good acceleration, plenty of passing reserve and is economical to operate for a V-8.

The 10.5 seconds 0-60 mph acceleration time will not cause many gasps on the drag strips, but the Matador does better than hold its own with equivalent powerplants. It is equipped with a two-throat carburetor, an item long considered taboo in performance circles, but it shows up very well in low and middle rpm ranges. Unless one has a hankering to go racing, this is the wisest choice in carburetion since it is much easier to service and is more economical than the popular four-barrel.

In speaking of ease of service, a high rating must be given to the whole engine area. The distributor is up front and easily reached and valve lifters can be changed without even removing the intake manifold. The whole design has a deceiving simplicity that speaks of greater engineering skill than many of the complex machines that are produced today.

Unit construction is really the big news from Dodge this year and is another concealed virtue. It is really important, too, and about the only thing that accurately reveals its worth when driving is the soundness of the Matador's body. Its freedom from rattles is almost absolute. Something else that can't be seen is the complicated procedure used to protect the body from rusting. Actually the whole body is dipped in preventative solutions several times. It should pay off in longer life for the Matador in wet climates or in areas near the ocean.

Power train, running gear, suspension and body construction all show intelligent engineering thought and are a good combination of components that work well together. It is disappointing then, that the Dodge's interior design must be described as

**DODGE'S STANDARD** 361-cubic-inch V-8 checks out as a mighty trouble-free powerplant. The single two-barrel carburetor is today's most practical choice for normal, economical driving, and, as the test shows, it doesn't really do much harm to performance.

average and in some cases a little below.

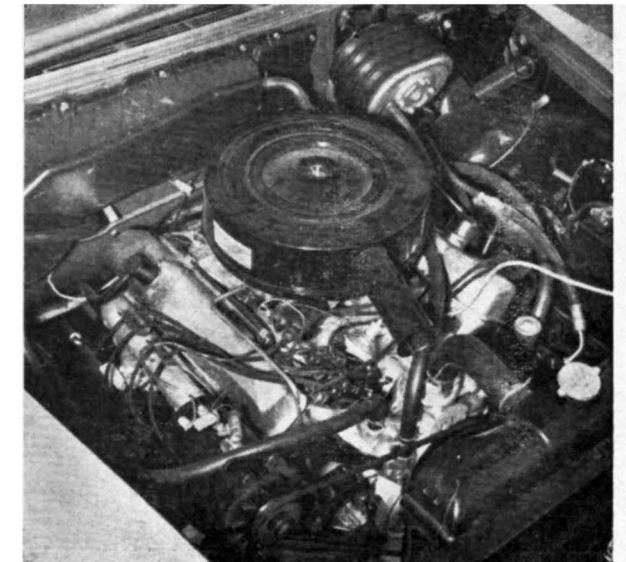
Entry and exit into the passenger compartment are not bad and far better than last year. The seating arrangement was the subject of much thought and money this year but actual comfort while sitting is not remarkable. On both short and long rides the car is comfortable but this is due more to the Dodge's exceptional roadability and handling characteristics than seat design. In some places the padding is thin, especially over the transmission hump in back.

The choice of materials for the interior is only average and in some cases seems too Spartan for a car in this semi-luxury classification. Too often the trim, plastic, and upholstery are actually cheap by comparison and fit poorly.

Instrumentation is better than in past years but is still based more on fashion than practicality. One notable improvement is the return to the sweep needle type of speedometer which is easy to read. Another device which is remarkable in its simplicity and value is an oval shaped rubber insert directly beneath the ignition switch. Almost everyone has more than one key on a ring and this gives the dash panel protection from scratching.

One source of inconvenience and irritation inside the passenger compartment are the manual cranks on the windows. They work excessively hard and in some cases are too difficult to operate without actually straining. Many women drivers would find it impossible to control them.

In back the trunk has depth and length with very little lip



over which to lift heavy items. The spare tire is placed well forward and makes loading a little simpler. Getting it out will be difficult, however, especially if the trunk has a full load.

Although the interior of the Dodge seems to belittle its stature as a medium-priced luxury car, the major engineering features are a well-developed concept. It handles well, has excellent roadability and comfort, and, considering its price range and weight, will be fairly economical to operate. The Matador is a maturely thought-out design which emphasizes doing well the things any automobile should. •



Test Car

### 1960 DODGE

**TEST CAR:** Dodge Matador  
**BODY TYPE:** Two-door hardtop  
**BASE PRICE:** \$3001

Maneuverability Factors

**OVERALL LENGTH:** 212.6 inches  
**OVERALL WIDTH:** 78 inches  
**OVERALL HEIGHT:** 54.9 inches  
**WHEELBASE:** 122 inches  
**TREAD, FRONT/REAR:** 61.5 and 60.2 inches  
**TEST WEIGHT:** 3960 lbs.  
**STEERING:** 3.5 turns lock-to-lock  
**TURNING CIRCLE:** 46.6 feet curb-to-curb  
**GROUND CLEARANCE:** 5.0 inches

## MOTOR LIFE TEST DATA

**SEATING CAPACITY:** six  
**FRONT SEAT—**  
**HEADROOM:** 33.7 inches  
**WIDTH:** 63 inches  
**LEGROOM:** 46.3 inches  
**TRUNK CAPACITY:** 29.7 cubic feet

Interior Room

**TYPE:** ohv V-8  
**DISPLACEMENT:** 361 cubic inches  
**BORE & STROKE:** 4.12 x 3.38 inches  
**COMPRESSION RATIO:** 10-to-1  
**CARBURETION:** single two-barrel  
**HORSEPOWER:** 295@4600 rpm  
**TORQUE:** 390 lb.-ft. @ 2400 rpm  
**TRANSMISSION:** three-speed automatic  
**REAR AXLE RATIO:** 3.31

Engine & Drive Train

**GAS MILEAGE:** 12 to 17 mpg  
**ACCELERATION:** 0-30 mph in 4.1 seconds,  
0-45 mph in 7.0 seconds and  
0-60 mph in 10.5 seconds  
**SPEEDOMETER ERROR:** indicated 30, 45 and 60 mph  
are actual 27, 42.5 and 57 mph respectively  
**POWER-WEIGHT RATIO:** 13.4 lbs. per horsepower  
**HORSEPOWER PER CUBIC INCH:** .817

Performance