

Halfway between the freshness of the Corvair and the conventionality of the Falcon, the Valiant emphasizes big power and more frills

HIGHEST POWERED OF THE NEW COMPACTS THE VALIANT HANDLES WELL AND CORNERS BETTER THAN MOST STANDARD-SIZE CARS.

Road Test VALIANT

THE VALIANT looks like a big car. It appears to be longer, wider and higher than the other new compacts. It, in addition, gives the impression of being bolder and more powerful.

All these are definite features of the Valiant, which put it in some respects almost midway between a standard compact and a standard-sized low-priced car.

The Valiant is easily the quickest car in the compact class. The one tested for this report was the deluxe V-200 series four-door sedan, equipped with a manual three-speed transmission. It accelerated from zero to 60 mph in 16.7 seconds, excellent performance for a car that has a computed ratio of 29 lbs. for each rated horsepower unit.

There is a punchy first gear, a big second that winds and winds and a well-chosen final drive back axle ratio of 3.55.

The Valiant also handles very well and probably ranks as the best in its class. This should surprise no one who keeps in mind that this is a Chrysler Corporation car. It will corner as well as a good gran turismo, and when forced into a fast bend, comes out going the same way. If pushed too far, it lets the driver know soon enough to back off—and all the while it lays flat on the road as it should.

In fuel consumption, the Valiant is not an economy car. The test car was the same one used in the cross-country trip, reported on the preceding pages, and the comments there cover this factor. Gas mileage in normal driving apparently will not exceed 20 mpg, unless some major mechanical modifications are made.

For too many years the cars of Chrysler Corporation have run third in quality ratings among the Big Three auto makers. In 1959 and for 1960, there were substantial improvements in both materials and assembly in all of the corporation's big-car makes. But the Valiant, unfortunately, is not off to a good start.

Some defects in assembly are understandable in early production cars, particularly of an all-new model. And it is believed that the Valiant was rushed into production with more than normal haste. Material quality, however, is a continuing factor generally and at several points the Valiant's level is particularly low. The glove box, behind a solid and substantial lid, is little more than hard cardboard. Similarly, the cover for the spare tire well in the trunk is cardboard overlaid with a rubber mat. It probably will not support the kind of heavy loads sometimes loaded into trunks. Nor is it likely to remain serviceable if it gets wet.

Yet the design quality of the Valiant is very high. The interior is neat and functional and a comfortable place to spend long hours behind the wheel. This wheel sits up at a good angle and the floor-mounted manual gear lever, deeply curved, comes to a good, convenient righthand level. Second gear is a fairly long reach, especially when the seat is tracked fully back, but the complete transmission is very smooth and firm feeling.

Two passengers up front with the manual unit are the comfortable limit, but three men manage in an automatic-transmission car where no lever interferes. In the rear seat, three is the maximum in riders, with two being the more enjoyable capacity. The footroom in both the front and rear is adequate, but there is a power-train hump that does take space.

The instrument layout is functional and, appropriately, compact. Viewing is good through the deeply dished 16-inch steering wheel. Entry and exit from the car are as good as any compact vehicle, one reason being the fact the car is 54 inches high.

The engine compartment layout is simple and spacious. Inclining the six-cylinder takes up more room than if it were vertical, but the area is large enough so there's no crowding. All servicing operations should be easy. The hood is so well braced that it cannot be passed up without comment. It is sturdier than many on cars at twice the cost.

The engine itself is quiet and well balanced for the weight of the car and the gearing involved. It is responsive for its 170 cubic inches and propels the car in a fashion that belies its size. The top end potential is probably 100 mph. The manual transmission, incidentally, is tilted along with the engine.

The Valiant is obviously more car than any of the other compacts, except Rambler. Its size, weight and features bring it closer to the standard-sized vehicles. Yet, and this is perhaps an explanation for many things about the car, it is priced at approximately the same level as the rest of the compacts. There were no cost-saving shortcuts in designing the Valiant. Only, evidently, in manufacturing it.

Very probably many of the defects in the Valiant will be remedied rapidly. Then it may very well rank as one of the most excellent motor cars made in America. And it will be particularly well suited to those who like some of the larger car features, without getting with them the faults of the standard size units. For the Valiant is unsurpassed in providing capacity without a feeling of bulkiness.

Like the Corvair, the Valiant is unique—there is nothing else quite like it anywhere in the world. And if it is to be compared with anything, it would be a European vehicle, rather than a domestic one. If it is sucessful, and the prospects are good, then it may become the first of a whole new trend in automobiles. •



ENGINE COMPARTMENT layout is simple and spacious. Component accessibility is quite good even though the inclined six-cylinder powerplant takes up more width space than is commonly needed.

MOTOR LIFE TEST DATA



1960 VALIANT

Test Car

TEST CAR: Valiant V-200
BODY TYPE: Four-door Sedan
BASE PRICE: $2130

Maneuverability Factors

OVERALL LENGTH: 184 inches
OVERALL WIDTH: 70.4 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT: 53.3 inches
WHEELBASE: 106.5 inches
TREAD, FRONT/REAR: 56 and 55.5 inches
TEST WEIGHT: 2759 lbs.
STEERING: 4.45 turns lock-to-lock
TURNING CIRCLE: 37.1 feet curb-to-curb
GROUND CLEARANCE: 5.4 inches

Interior Room

SEATING CAPACITY: four to six
FRONT SEAT—
HEADROOM: 33.6 inches
WIDTH: 57 inches
LEGROOM: 44.4 inches
TRUNK CAPACITY: 24.9 cubic feet

Engine & Drive Train

TYPE: inline six
DISPLACEMENT: 170 cubic inches
BORE & STROKE: 3.40 x 3.125
COMPRESSION RATIO: 8.5-to-1
CARBURETION: single barrel
HORSEPOWER: 101 @ 4400 rpm
TORQUE: 155 lb.-ft. @ 2400 rpm
TRANSMISSION: Three-speed manual
REAR AXLE RATIO: 3.55

Performance

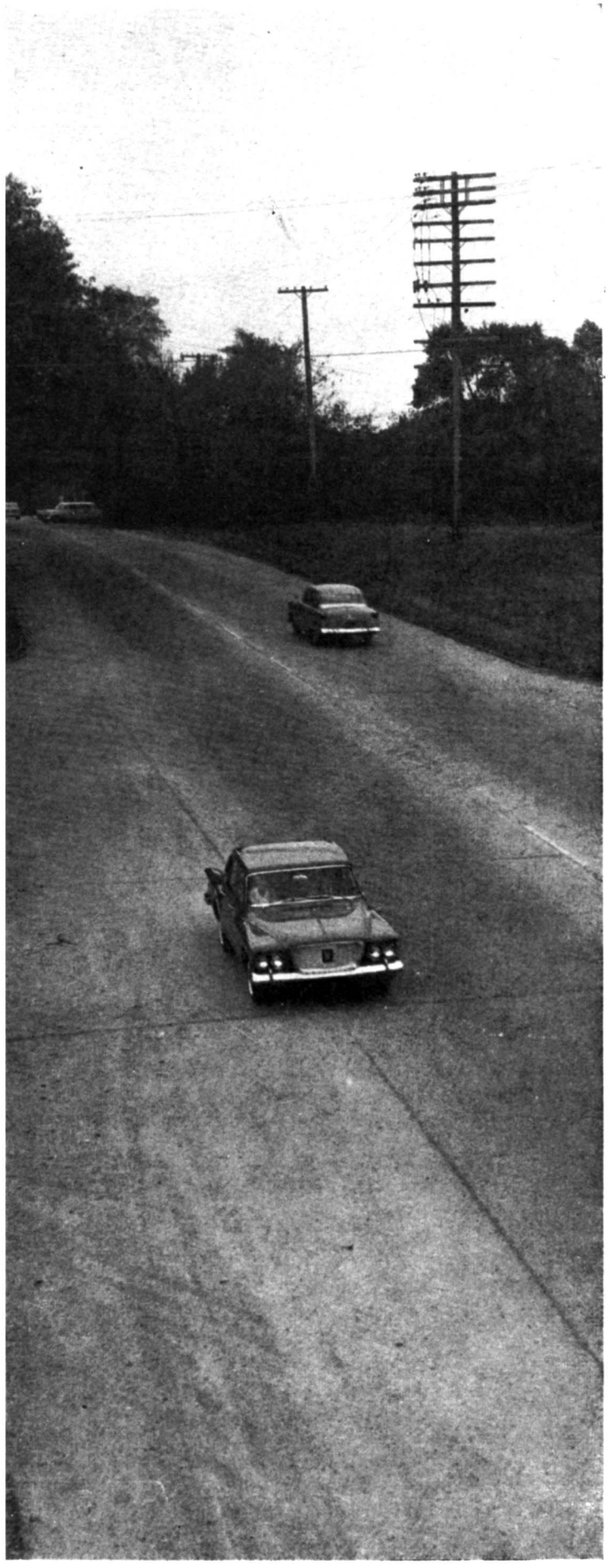
GAS MILEAGE: 20 mpg
ACCELERATION: 0-30 mph in 5 seconds, 0-45 mph in 8.9 seconds and 0-60 mph in 16.7 seconds.
SPEEDOMETER ERROR: Indicated 30, 45 and 60 mph are actual 29.5, 44 and 58 mph respectively.
POWER-WEIGHT RATIO: 27.32 lbs. per horsepower
HORSEPOWER PER CUBIC INCH: .594

COMPACT COMPARISON

The Valiant returns from a shakedown cruise revealing the plus and minus points of the biggest of the new compacts

Cross-Country VALIANT

by GEORGE CURTIS



FIRST I heard the siren, loud and clear. Then the flashing red light appeared in the rear view mirror and that sinking feeling crept up from the pit of my stomach. An Ohio State trooper was bearing down on me, but this time I couldn't imagine *what* I was being stopped for.

The trooper pulled up ahead of me, got out and began walking back. Here I was, two hours out of Toledo on the Ohio Toll Road, cruising along at 60 mph in a new Valiant V-200 sedan, ticking off the miles for a MOTOR LIFE trip test. No broken speed limits—no illegal turns—what had I done?

I dug for my license and was holding it out the window when he arrived. He smiled, waved away my hand and said, "You haven't done anything wrong, I just want a good look at the Valiant!"

For the next twenty minutes, my two passengers and I repeated the same answers we'd been giving since we picked up the car the day before in Detroit.

"Yes, it is good looking!"

"No, there's plenty of room inside!"

"The gas mileage? Well, we haven't finished the test yet!"

And so forth, until he tipped his hat, took one more look, and left.

After repeated experiences such as this with the car, I feel certain that Valiant drivers all across the country are acting out this little vignette daily. People are interested in the car, interested enough to wave you down on busy streets, corral you in gas stations and corner you in parking lots. They want to know all about it—what it's like to drive—how big (or small) it is inside and what kind of gasoline mileage it delivers.

As far as I am concerned, this is the most refreshing sort of



FRONT SEAT adjusts on a curved track and, when the seat is slid to the rear, tilts backward. Manual shift lever is placed in center and could interfere with third passenger's comfort.



SPARE TIRE is placed underneath trunk floorboard and does not interfere with the usable luggage space. Floorboard, however, is not sturdy and will deteriorate under hard use.

interest I've ever encountered in all my years of driving and writing about automobiles. A super-fast Ferrari will entice an occasional buff and a Berkeley or a Sprite may get you a catcall or two, but to have average Americans (who've been subjected to years and years of domestic ballyhoo) display such concern for a new American car is a pretty conclusive answer to the industry's persistent question, "Do Americans really want smaller cars?"

But is this interest justified? Is the Valiant really good enough to warrant so much attention. And if it is a smaller car, is it satisfactory for long-distance highway travel. It was to answer these questions that I drove the Valiant over 600 miles of midwestern roads.

The Valiant is the biggest of the new compacts. Although it has a wheelbase two to three inches shorter, it is up to four inches longer overall. And by U.S. standards, its general body design is unconventional. There is a relatively long hood and a short rear deck. These are mostly exterior effects, however; inside the Valiant is conventional in layout. Among the compacts, it rates tops in luggage space and has the further advantage of a spare tire well beneath the rear trunk floor, where it does not interfere with the useable space. I found the trunk big enough for at least a two-week wardrobe for four. And the passenger compartment also has surprisingly adequate room and comfort, both for the passengers and for the driver.

Also, if you like to tour briskly, as I did on this trip test, you'll enjoy the Valiant. Although it does not share all of its characteristics with other Chrysler Corporation cars, one that it does, fortunately, is its magnificent handling.

It has torsion bars, of course, and these with the fine suspension geometry hold the car tight and flat on the road and never once allowed, in my experience, any indication of wavering. Side winds don't bother the car a great deal and corners, easy or sharp, come and go with ease.

The ride is firm. That I like. But those who are used to, or prefer, the ultimate in Detroit featherbed softness probably would consider the car's reaction to rough road surfaces as too harsh. The manually-adjustable front seat is on a curved track and, as the seat is slid to the rear, the back tilts for more riding comfort.

For fast touring, it's also good to know that there's stopping power on call. And the Valiant has it better than any other car in its new class. There are 153.5 square inches. Linings in front are 9 by 2½ inches, rear 9 by 2.

I had a chance to discover just how well the car braked in an emergency when a small child darted out in front of me on a road in central Indiana. Pulling down from 60 mph to zero in a panic stop is a convincing, if a frightening, way to learn the car's ability, but it did demonstrate to me just how well it held on.

As for fuel consumption, the Valiant was not up to expectations. In 607 miles of highway and city driving, we averaged 20.2 mpg.

The Valiant started on this test trip with less than 1,000 miles on the odometer. It was equipped with the three-speed manual transmission and a 3.55 rear-axle ratio. The weight, including luggage and fuel, but not myself or the two passengers, was 2841 lbs. Traveling speeds were all legal and the traffic encountered during the trip was light. Road conditions were good—no snow or rain and all pavement hard and dry. This gas mileage figure would be improved with the optional 3.23 rear axle ratio. But it still scarcely could put the Valiant into the top economy class.

It may very well be the car wasn't designed for that category. It is the biggest and the heaviest of the new compacts, and also undoubtedly is the fastest. Its engine displaces 170 cubic inches. The rated power output is an advertised 101 hp—but it is generally believed that the rating is low and the true figure is 10 to 15 hp higher.

The Valiant also has more deluxe features, particular in options. Among the available extras are power steering, power brakes, pushbutton radio, electric windshield wipers and so on. Most of these are exclusive with the Valiant in the new compact field now.

Some of these facts help establish the character of the Valiant. It is, apparently, a car intended to offer everything that comes with a standard low-priced big car. It handles well, parks easily, looks impressive, if not handsome, and has a capacity that compares favorably with a Plymouth or Dart—or Chevrolet or Ford.

Yet it is compact, more economical and costs less. And, as I found, it is perfectly suited to travel. That's the Valiant. •