

WHAT THE CAR IS LIKE TO LIVE WITH

Passengers should find this car comfortable and relaxing under most conditions, the twisting or mountain roads will produce enough body roll for discomfort.

Hiding in the front seat: Plenty of legroom, shoulder space and headroom. Firm upholstery with seat placed at chair height. Controls are easily reached and can be operated without visual attention. Excellent armrests, convenient ashtray placement, and absence of reflections from the dash panel go a long way toward creating all-around comfort.

Hiding in the rear seat: Under most conditions, very comfortable. Visibility is good and the rather firm seat is wide enough to accommodate 3 average size people without discomfort. Legroom is adequate although not noticeably less in the 2-door hardtop, especially if the front seat is all the way back. Plenty of headroom helps here; you have a tendency to sit in a more upright position. The rear door sill sweeps back farther than usual, giving you more head and shoulder clearance when entering or leaving the car.

ECONOMY AND EASE OF MAINTENANCE

Fuel economy: It does not surprise us that this year's substantial rise in horsepower has been accomplished at some expense in economy. You can't always add cubic inches onto a basic design without adversely affecting economy. The surprising thing is the performance increment gained at so little cost in economy. MT's simulated traffic course, using Mobilgas Special, produced an average of 13.4 mpg, an increase of about 1 mpg over last year's model. Consumption at steady speeds was up slightly (see table). The smaller V8 should be considerably better at steady speeds and the 6 still better.

Is the car well put together? Workmanship both inside and out is above average. Panels fit well and the paint is smooth and glossy. Upholstery, which was the typical jacquard-type with metallic thread, was excellently tailored as was the headliner. Close-fitting windowills, instrument panel trim, and floor mats add up to an A-for-workmanship. The rather spacious trunk was well-lined and dustproof.

How did it hold up? We drove our test car 673 grueling miles in 2 of the more strenuous days of testing without developing trouble, mechanical or otherwise. Body tightness and engine responsiveness seemed to be unchanged except for a slight rattle in the steering. (Continued on page 55)

bellow, transferring the resultant force first a lever arrangement to the master brake cylinder. This produces a power assist of 2.5 times the pedal's mechanical advantage. A reserve vacuum tank takes over when the engine is stalled. In the event of complete vacuum failure, brakes can be operated by mechanical means alone, but we braked hard from 60 mph with ignition off and had power all the way.

Using MT's standard brake test consisting of 12 consecutive stops from 60 mph at a deceleration rate of 1.5 feet per second per second (results shown in table), a slight fade was noticed after the 11th stop. On the 5th stop, pedal travel increased to an alarming degree, and during the 6th we ran out of brake. No grab or swerve was noticed. Brakes returned to usefulness in 3 minutes. Complete recovery required 5 minutes of 50 to 60 mph driving. During this "cooling off" period, a slight tendency to pull right or left was noticed until brakes had completely returned to normal.

Roadability: Characteristically, Dodge has retained its soft ride and with no important chassis changes, it inherits the same basic roadability that was evidenced in the '55 model.

Despite very flexible springs, at practically any speed road dips are taken in stride and without oscillation, thanks to a set of fine Orflow shock absorbers. Potholes and rough surfaces are ironed out by this same combination and directional stability is exceptionally good on both flat and high-crowned roads. Hard cornering will produce substantial body lean, but the car has no wild tendency to take off into the brush. It can be made to break loose but in most cases a quick twist of the wheel or rapid increase of power is all that is needed to put it back in the groove.

High speed gives one a feeling of overall lightness. Response to the slightest wheel correction is instantaneous. Although some vibration was noticed from 80 mph up, the car seemed willing to obey our every command. Characteristic of soft springs, a definite nose dip or rear-end squat is noticeable during hard braking or fast acceleration. However, this has no noticeable effect on the steering geometry.

Ride: Acoustically, this car has good control. You will feel tar strips and other road irregularities (in spite of soft springs) but you won't hear them. Proper use of rubber-mounted components and body panel soundproofing is responsible for this low sound level compared to that of last year's model.

