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With the arrival of the Custom Royal, the Royal became Dodge's midrange series in 1955. 1, 2. During the year, the Royal Sierra station wagon was joined by a Custom variant with the dipped beltline trim and chrome tailfins normally found on Custom Royal Lancers. (Owners; Bob Riggs and Joel Johnson) 3-5. At \$2310 to start, the four-door sedan was the most affordable Royal—and the most popular with 45,323 made. The basic two-tone paint scheme covered less of the upper body than did the Lancer style. (Owner; O'Ceola Sloan)

percent." Meanwhile, Clymer averaged 17.2 mpg while driving from Phoenix to San Diego.

The same *PM* issue contained an "Owners Report" on all 1955 Dodge V-8 models in which buyers described their likes and dislikes. Seventy-six percent of responding owners rated their Dodges as "excellent."

A Pennsylvania store owner remarked, "Even after I have owned the car for three months, people still stop, stare and admire it and ask questions about it."

A minister in Oregon complained, "Get rid of push-button door latches. Hard to open with groceries in hands."

A Washington prison guard contemplated the new Flite Control shifter for PowerFlite. He said, "Selector lever on the dashboard is the hardest thing to get used to."

A housewife in Virginia said, "A good woman's car. Easy to handle and easily parked."

Her voice was not an isolated one. General Motors Vice President of Design Harley Earl estimated that women influenced 65 percent of all car sales. In 1954 he said, "In recent years women have become more and more dominant in the selection of the family automobile. This trend has made it necessary to become more and more cognizant of the feminine taste in both the interior and exterior design of the car."

Dodge answered the trend with the La Femme, a Custom Royal Lancer painted Heather Rose over Sapphire White. The La Femme option package featured rose-patterned upholstery. A coordinated rain cap, rain coat, and umbrella were stored in a compartment behind the driver's seat. Similar accommodations were made behind the front passenger seat for a shoulder bag that contained a lighter, cigarette case, change purse, lipstick, comb, and a compact.

La Femme literature pitched the vehicle not as a "mom-mobile" but as a sanctuary. "By appointment to her majesty the American Woman," said Dodge to women, "a car glamorously, personally yours."

Lawrence Welk's ratings and Dodge production climbed in 1955. Dodge built 273,286 cars for the model year. At 89,304 assemblies, the Custom Royal proved more popular than the 1954 Royal it replaced at the top of the Dodge heap. Even the newly "demoted" Royal outsold its immediate predecessor. Meanwhile, Welk had a Nielsen rating of 32.5. Hollywood