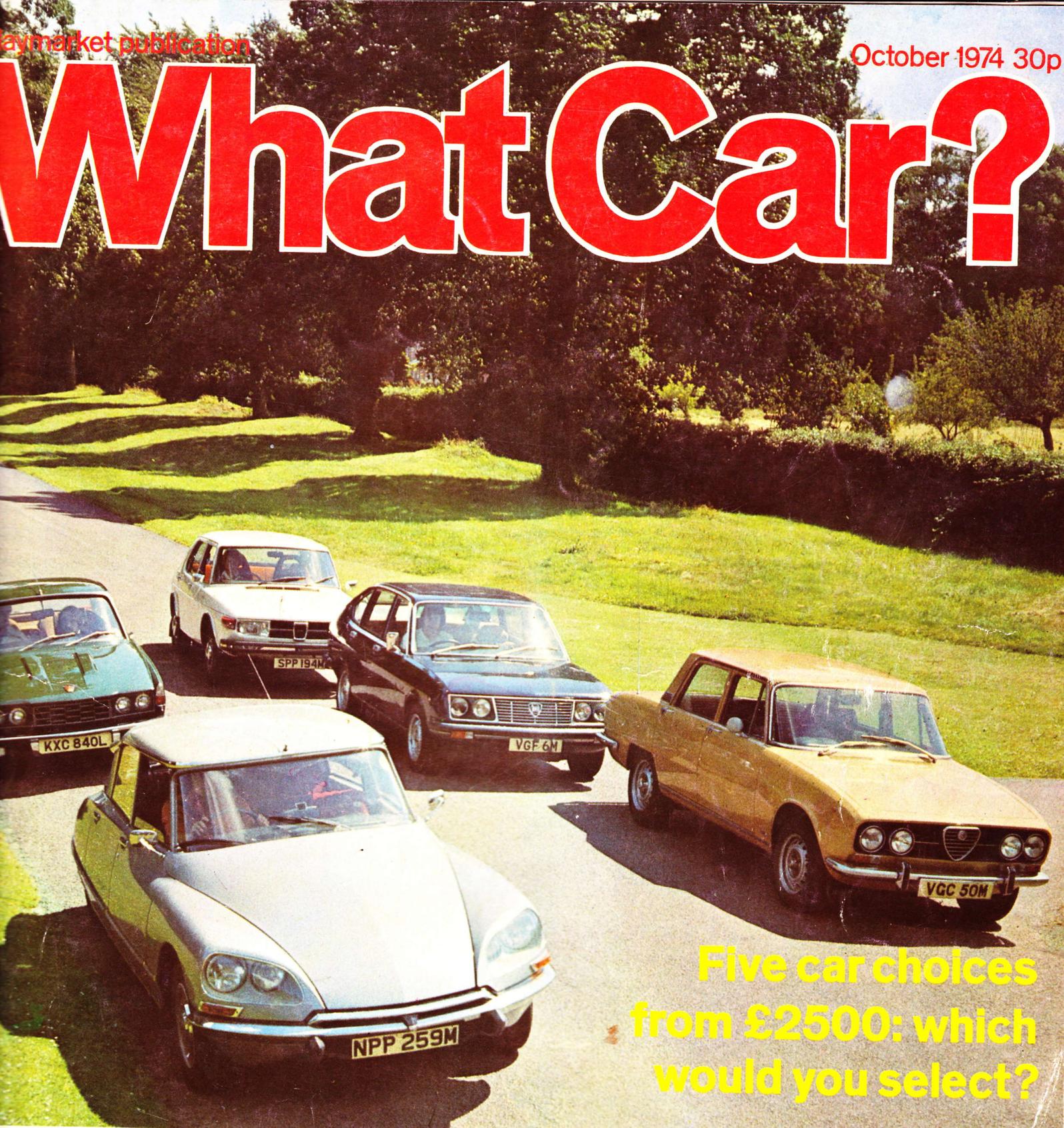


What Car?



Five car choices from £2500: which would you select?



quiet revolution

Every month:
all new cars
and used
car prices



Cheap and cheerful

What Car? compares/£2500 contenders



Arriving in £

Every manufacturer tries to entice his customers with a product that differs from his rivals'. Nowhere is this more true than in the executive class where quality comes in very different ways.

much the same as before, with a four-speed all-synchromesh gearbox, using the same gearing as on the 2000.

The **Saab 99EMS** is the top-of-the-range version of the now familiar Saab 99 which is gradually usurping the 96 from the Saab range. It is powered by a development of the Triumph Dolomite engine, which with fuel injection gives 110 bhp. The engine is placed longitudinally in the chassis, driving the front wheels via a four speed all-synchromesh gearbox. The Saab sells for £2524.

The **Lancia Beta** is the latest model from the old established Italian factory and has only been available in Britain since late last year. The 1800ES version we tested is the costliest Beta, being equipped with electric windows, attractive Cromadora alloy wheels and a steel sliding roof as standard. It was kindly loaned by

Portman Garage of London W1.

Now under the wing of Fiat, Lancia use several of their parts, notably the engine, which is basically the Fiat twin cam unit set transversely across the chassis, driving the front wheels via a five speed gearbox. It is available in 1400, 1600 and 1800 cc sizes, the 1800 version producing 110 bhp.

Braking is by front discs and rear drums with servo assistance, and steering is by rack and pinion. The Lancia Beta 1800ES costs £2397.

The **Alfa Romeo 2000** saloon has been on the market since 1968. This angular four-door car lacks the aesthetic appeal of the attractive coupé Alfas but offers the sort of interior room that many owners need. In its latest guise it is powered by the 1962 cc version of the well known twin overhead camshaft four-cylinder unit which

gives 150 bhp. It is mated to a five speed all synchromesh gearbox which drives to a lightweight rigid rear axle, located by trailing arms and an A bracket, together with an anti-roll bar, and suspended on coil spring/damper units. Braking is by four wheel servo-assisted discs and steering is by recirculating ball. It costs £2650.

The **Citroën DS23** dates back to the mid-1950s but the design which was revolutionary then is still advanced today. Its oleo-pneumatic self-levelling suspension has still not been copied and its futuristic wind-cheating shape is still unequalled. In Bosch fuel-injected form the four cylinder 2347 cc engine gives 130 bhp, and drive is taken to the front wheels via a five speed all synchromesh gearbox. Steering is by power assisted rack and pinion, and braking is by servo assisted disc brakes on all four wheels. The DS23 EFI sells for £3190.

Performance

Perhaps an unspoken pre-requisite of this type of executive machine is that it should exceed 100 mph and be capable of cruising comfortably at high speed. If this is so, then all our five qualify with flying colours, but their various characters stand out clearly once

What Car?

Beta 1800ES - DS23 - Saab EMS - Rover - Alfa Romeo



the five are on the move.

It is somewhat surprising to note that all these quality cars have large four-cylinder engines, which are often associated with imbalance and roughness, but they disguise this fundamental fact with varying degrees of success.

The Alfa Romeo is an unashamed sports saloon and its engine, gearbox and suspension are all designed with the enthusiastic driver in mind — it is first and foremost a driver's car. It proved this point by being the fastest of the five both in top speed (115 mph), and from 0-60 mph, which it reached in an impressive 9.9 seconds. The twin-cam unit is not particularly high revving, being red lined at 5700 rpm, and it needs to be kept near this figure for optimum performance. But an Alfa driver should not object to some energetic work with the left hand. He will also be happy listening to the very audible whirr of the timing chains and the deep-throated bark from the exhaust.

In complete contrast to the Alfa is the DS Citroën. Its old, pushrod engine feels and sounds distinctly agricultural, being very unhappy at high revs in the indirect gears. However, once at cruising speed the charm of the Citroën reveals itself, for with the stress of

acceleration removed, engine noise dies away and it will bowl along endlessly at near its maximum speed of 114 mph. This is not to imply that the Citroën is a complete slouch from the traffic lights, the fuel injected version that we tested reaching 60 mph in 11.5 secs from rest even though it was suffering from a slight misfire (which prevented us taking standing quarter mile figures).

Like the Alfa, the Lancia fits easily into the mould of the Italian sporting car heritage, but these characteristics have been cleverly disguised under the cloak of a luxury saloon, so its progress is deceptively quick. While the twin-cam engine thrives on revs, it is also tremendously flexible, being quite capable of pulling away from 30 mph in fifth gear. The buzzy engine note is sometimes intrusive, but all through the rev range the impression is of delightful smoothness. With a noticeably smaller engine than all of the others, yet still a similar five seater body, it gives nothing away in terms of pure performance, its 0-60 time being 11.1 secs and maximum speed 107 mph.

The Rover's engine has never been noted for its smoothness, although this is compensated for to some extent by the large amounts of sound deadening. Last

year's capacity increase has resulted chiefly in some very welcome extra torque, so that respectable performance can be achieved with less of a struggle. Ten years ago the Rover set new standards in the 2-litre executive class; today it is the slowcoach of our group — a sign of the way changing times have caught up with it. But in the TC form, with twin SU carburettors replacing the single carburettor of the SC, it is not by any means outclassed. It will cruise happily at the legal limit with an all-out maximum of 107 mph. It reaches 60 mph from zero in 12.2 secs.

The Saab is surprisingly quick. Its acceleration figures (0-60 mph in 10.1 secs) put it almost on a par with the Alfa Romeo, although its top speed of 103 mph is much lower. The engine proved smooth and relatively quiet, feeling altogether much more pleasant than that in the Dolomite. There is plenty of low speed torque, making quick getaways a simple matter. Clearly a lot of effort has been spent in reducing vibration and harshness from the passenger cell, and this pays off handsomely in the upper speed ranges.

The five speed gearboxes on the two Italian cars are there to be used and there is a gear available for every conceivable road condition. The Alfa's gearchange is admirable, with short, positive movements through the gate. The problems associated with gearchanges on front wheel drive cars are legion and the Lancia's is among the best of this type, but the gate is rather vague.

The Citroën's high gearing means that one does not get into fifth all that often and it amounts to an overdrive gear. The change is column mounted and is good by the standards of this type. The clutch is light but the pedal has a long travel.

Both the Saab and the Rover have four speed gearboxes. The Rover's change is slightly notchy, but quite pleasant with very short movements across the gate. The Saab's change is also notchy and slower than the Rover's. The long clutch pedal travel proved irritating, since it had to be pushed right to the floor before disengaging the clutch. Although these two cars have four speed boxes their ratios have been sensibly chosen to enable them to keep up with their five speed competitors.

Road holding

With such widely varying

specifications it is not surprising that the handling characteristics also vary considerably. The Citroën's suspension is very soft, allowing large amounts of wheel travel, so the worst bumps are soaked up incredibly easily with very little disturbance being transmitted to the interior of the car. Despite the anti-roll bars there is a great deal of roll and some floating when cornering hard on undulating surfaces, so it is not a car for those prone to car sickness. Being a front wheel drive device the Citroën understeers quite strongly. The steering is still surprisingly heavy at parking speeds despite the hydraulic power assistance which keeps steering effort to an otherwise low level and allows some road feel to be retained.

In very distinct contrast to the Citroën is the Alfa Romeo, which has much firmer suspension in conjunction with a rigid rear axle and limited slip differential. The 2000 does, in fact, have slightly softer suspension than its predecessors so it does cover bumpy roads better, at the expense of some roll, but its sporting inclinations are noticeable in the way the wheels follow road contours, giving a slightly jiggly feel when cornering quickly.

The 2000 oversteers quite strongly, but the keener type of driver who normally buys an Alfa will no doubt be fully aware of the techniques available to him to overcome this problem — if he regards it as a problem. However in the wet even the keen driver will be unnerved by the Alfa's tendency to go instantly sideways at the slightest provocation. Despite having a lock of nearly four turns, the Alfa Romeo recirculating ball steering is decidedly heavy at most speeds and is rather tiring when parking or when cornering hard on twisty roads, for the strong self centring action takes its toll of the arm muscles.

The Lancia Beta has all the advantages and few of the disadvantages of front wheel drive; there is quite a high proportion of the overall weight over the front wheels, so the steering is rather heavy at parking speeds even though it is low geared at 4 turns lock to lock. Just as on the Alfa Romeo the steering is quite tiring when cornering hard because the self centring action is even stronger than the Alfa's. The Beta can be cornered very fast, rating highly even amongst front wheel drive cars, but there is some reac-

What Car? compares/£2500 contenders

through the steering, as the wheels hit bumps. Understeer is predominant but as the Citroën, easing off the throttle will reduce this tendency, it takes some skill to 'throw' the car at a corner in the same way that can be done with a Mini.

The Saab 99 has not matched the excellent handling of the two-wheeled Saab models, which were legendary. There is a noticeable amount of roll and strong signs of a typical front wheel drive understeer tendency which is difficult to counteract. The car tends to pull outwards on a bend and although easing off the throttle the car does get the nose pointing back into the apex, it is not a pleasant car to corner fast. The steering is also on the heavy side, yet requires nearly four turns lock to lock.

The Rover 2000 range has always been a safe handling breed and the 2200 is no exception. It can be cornered quite quickly in an understeering attitude, and to all intents and purposes it will corner as fast as any sane driver is likely to require on the road. There is some noticeable roll when cornering hard but the tyres stick well under all circumstances; the driver may well be discouraged from cornering too fast for too long because of the rather heavy steering; it is one of the few BLMC cars not to have a rack and pinion

mechanism, and it shows. But with $3\frac{1}{2}$ turns lock to lock it is reasonably high geared if a little woolly around the straight ahead position.

Braking

The only car with anything unusual about its braking is the Citroën. It merely has a little button on the floor in the normal brake pedal position which actuates the hydraulic pressurised braking system. Most people new to the car feverishly stamp about on the floor looking for the button, and when they do, the car suddenly stands on its nose. With acquaintance one learns to press the button smoothly and progressively, although there is virtually no feel transmitted through the 'pedal', as on other cars. There is no possibility of making heel and toe gear changes and we found the system rather too sensitive to be likeable. But the car certainly stops once that button is pressed and that's what counts.

The Alfa Romeo, with its four wheel discs, has excellent brakes which are progressive and powerful at all times, together with a light pedal pressure. But the pedal was too over centre for comfortable use. The Rover also stops incredibly well in return for light pedal pressures. The Saab and Lancia, with a good proportion of

their weight in the front, tend to nose-dive under heavy braking, but again they stop pretty well. The Saab has a rather high pedal pressure.

Ride comfort

With its ultra soft ride and suspension which copes with virtually every type of surface the Citroën offers a superb ride. The Citroën is occasionally caught out on bad bumps such as hump-backed bridges, for the suspension reaches the bump stops with a terrific crash before the system has had time to react to the situation. Owners soon recognise this and learn to take such sharp undulations a little more slowly than some other cars. With its three-position ride height the Citroën can traverse almost any type of ground, and as an added bonus, it can jack itself up for a wheelchange.

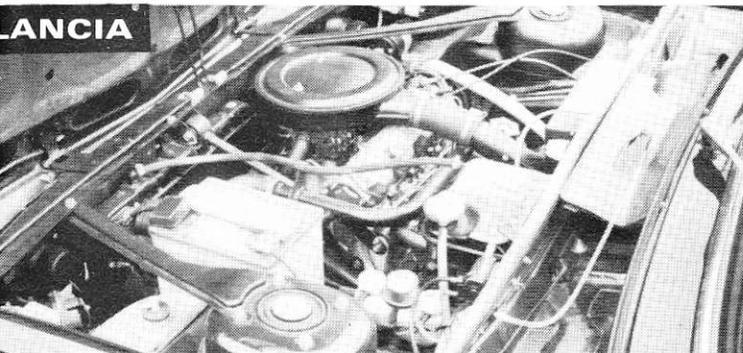
The Saab rides well in a sporting fashion, with just enough firmness to keep the enthusiast happy, yet not harsh enough to deter the family man who likes some comfort. There is some pitching, thanks to the relatively short wheelbase, and bumps are audibly noticed through the suspension.

The gradual development of the Alfa Romeo's suspension has left it with a pretty good ride for a live-

axled car. It still has a tendency towards sporting firmness but it soaks up most bumps pretty well, and the rear axle is only displaced by really harsh bumps. It rides better when well laden, at which time the suspension seems very well damped.

Lancia cars have always been noted for good ride and handling characteristics and the Beta is no exception despite the necessity to use a number of components from the Fiat parts bin. The ride is well damped; bumps are traversed in great comfort yet low speed firmness is much in evidence. Again, like the Alfa it travels best when loaded. The soft yet well damped suspension of the Rover has always given an excellent ride, and although what was outstanding seven years ago is now commonplace, the Rover is still a comfortable car in which to ride. Its softness may not be looked at kindly by sporting drivers, but it does soak up bumpy roads extremely well, at the expense of some road induced roar.

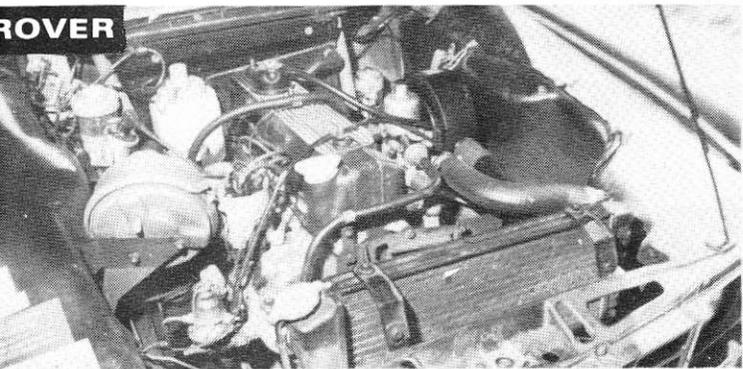
All the cars have been designed with high speed cruising in mind so it is not surprising that wind noise is kept to a minimal level on all. We can make few criticisms of any, but the Lancia was outstanding, the Alfa surprisingly good in view of its boxy shape and the Citroën disappointing in view of its aerodynamic shape.



Accessibility to engine is good but components are somewhat cluttered and masked



Handling is precise with hard cornering producing understeer and only minimal roll



Engine sits up high in compartment with ample room to reach all the important parts



Although the heavy body will roll when really pressed, cornering is generally stable

Accommodation

Perhaps it is in the matter of interior accommodation and appointments where this group differs more than most. The Rover is designed very much as a four-seater with accommodation which can really only be described as rather cramped. Four adults of modest proportions can travel in supreme comfort but those approaching 6 ft in height can find the car claustrophobic. The front bucket seats have excellent cushions and the reclining backrests are well shaped to give lateral location. Cloth trimming is normally supplied but leather can also be specified. The rear bench is designed as a two seater with a drop down centre armrest; leg room is at a premium but otherwise the accommodation is very comfortable. Interior stowage for oddments is provided by two drop down lockers below the facia and a parcels shelf. The boot is not very large as the spare wheel takes up one corner and the battery the other. However, Rover do supply a fitting for mounting the spare wheel on the boot lid.

In complete contrast to the Rover is the Lancia Beta which offers a modern solution to problems of space utilisation largely attributable to its compact transverse mechanical layout. It is 12 inches shorter than the Rover, yet from the inside it seems as though it could be 12 inches longer. The front seats are well

shaped and trimmed in nylon cloth with headrests as standard fitments. The seatbacks partially recline and provide good lateral location. Although the rear seat is slightly shaped for two passengers and has a central armrest, it can accommodate three in perfect comfort. Leg room both front and rear is excellent.

Interior accommodation for bits and pieces is provided by a facia locker, small bins at foot level in the front, elasticated pockets behind the front seats and a large rear parcels' shelf. The boot is excellent for this class of car, the spare wheel being tucked away in the wing, leaving a voluminous, unobstructed space with no sill to lift luggage over.

The Citroën offers the largest amount of interior room of our five cars by far. The luxuriant rear bench will happily carry three adults although a centre armrest is provided. The heavily padded front seats are spacious, yet offer reasonable lateral location, while the backrests recline to form an acceptable if rather undulating bed. The squabs also adjust to three different angles. Interior stowage is not over-generous on the Citroën, being restricted to one small locker and various small pockets, but the boot is more than generous, partly because the spare wheel is up front ahead of the engine.

The Alfa Romeo is pretty well provided with interior space. The rear seat passengers come off worst, as usual, but still have

adequate leg room. The firm front seats are trimmed in cloth, offer fair lateral location and recline fully. Headrests are fitted as standard but their laminated wooden mountings seem rather fragile. The rear seat is well shaped and comfortable, although it too is really designed for two passengers. The centre armrest has an oddments box below the lid. Perhaps the Alfa's most serious fault for non-Italians is its driving position, which requires the driver to splay the legs and stretch the arms, a problem to be coped with in many Italian cars but especially so in this one. There is an excellent rest for the driver's left foot beside the clutch pedal.

Interior stowage is provided by a deep, lockable glove-box with a storage shelf under it, elasticated map pockets in the backs of the front seats and a rear parcels shelf. The boot is large, but has a high sill and the spare is stowed under the floor.

Unlike all the other cars in this group, the Saab is only a two door but entry to the rear seats is not too difficult. It does not look particularly large from the outside but its clever interior layout allows five passengers to be carried without too much discomfort. The firm front seats have a fine range of adjustment and can also be raised. Head restraints are built into the backrests and restrict rear vision somewhat. The rear seat backrest folds forward so that the boot space can be extended into the interior. The Saab also has the uni-

que feature of automatic heating for the driver's seat — a trifle superfluous in Britain except on the coldest winter days. Stowage for oddments is modest, but the boot is deceptively large for it extends well forward and is unobstructed.

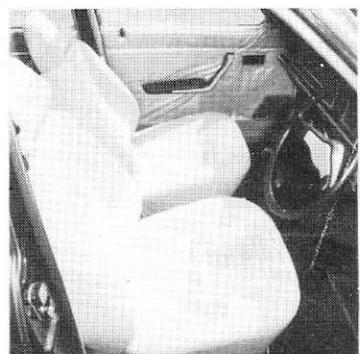
Equipment

Naturally in cars costing around £2500, equipment tends to be more lavish than on the majority of family cars. The Alfa Romeo has comprehensive vintage-style Veglia instruments set into a wood-capped facia. The minor controls are rather haphazardly positioned, the two speed wipers being operated by a toggle switch on the centre console, and of course there is a headlamp flasher. The washers are foot-operated.

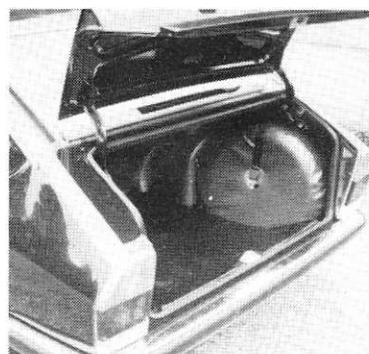
Increasing the vintage aura is the steering wheel, which is large and wood-rimmed. It looks pretty but becomes slippery to hold in hot weather. The heater controls are operated by sliding levers on the centre console and there are adjustable eyeball vents at the edges of the facia, as well as a vent in the front passenger footwell. The fan is very noisy on its faster speed.

The car is fully carpeted and the doors are trimmed in the same nylon cloth material as the seats. All four doors have armrests, those in the rear being fitted with ashtrays. Grab handles are provided all round.

The overall effect of the Citroën

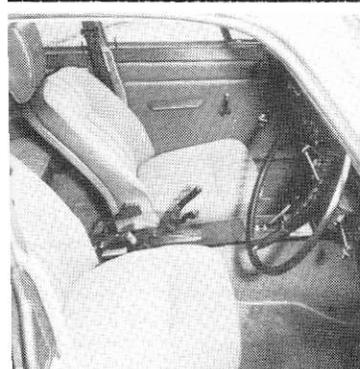
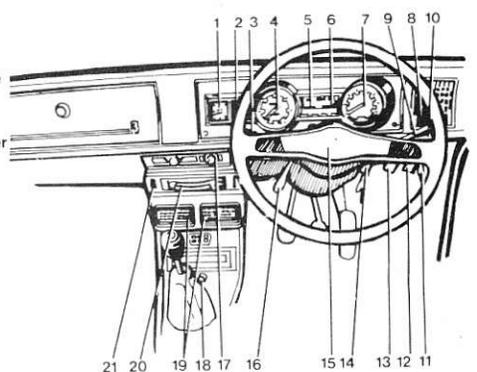


Seats are excellent giving good support

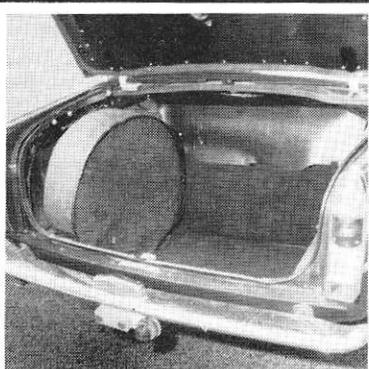


Boot has low sill for unrestricted entry

- 1 Clock
- 2 Fuel gauge
- 3 Wipers/screenwashers
- 4 Speedometer
- 5 Coolant temperature gauge
- 6 Oil pressure gauge
- 7 Tachometer
- 8 Vent
- 9 Dipswitch/headlamp flasher
- 10 Indicators
- 11 Bonnet release
- 12 Heated rear window
- 13 Choke
- 14 Hand throttle
- 15 Horn
- 16 Steering column adjuster
- 17 Cigar lighter
- 18 Hazard warning
- 19 Vents
- 20 Heater controls
- 21 Fan

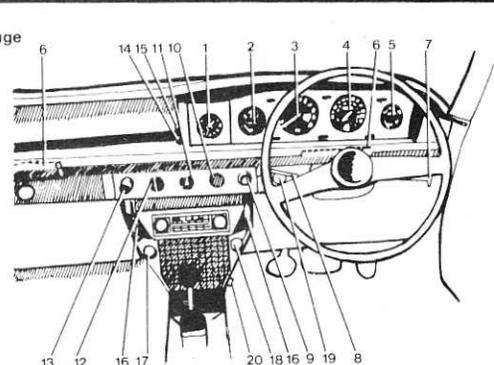


Front seats have good adjustment



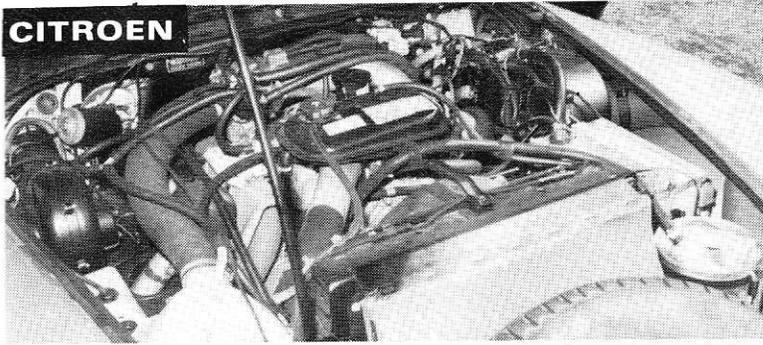
Boot is capacious and easy for loading

- 1 Clock
- 2 Ammeter/oil pressure gauge
- 3 Tachometer
- 4 Speedometer
- 5 Fuel/coolant temperature gauge
- 6 Vents
- 7 Indicators/horn
- 8 Dipswitch/headlamp flasher
- 9 Hazard flashers
- 10 Wipers/screenwashers
- 11 Lights master switch
- 12 Interior light
- 13 Cigar lighter
- 14 Panel rheostat
- 15 Clock reset
- 16 Heater controls
- 17 Fuel reserve
- 18 Choke
- 19 Ignition
- 20 Speaker balance



What Car? compares/£2500 contenders

CITROEN

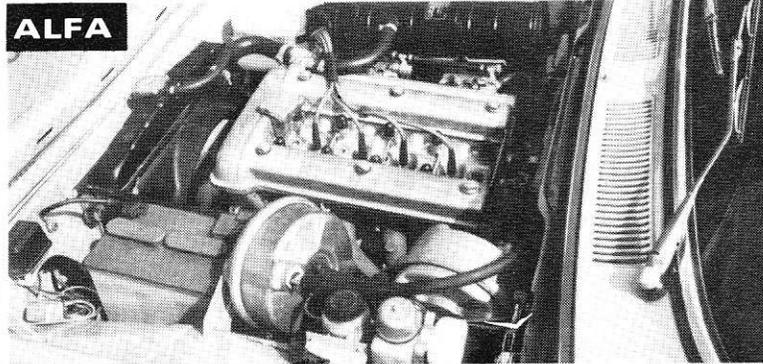


Fuel injection and hydraulics apparatus contribute to the daunting underbonnet view



Strong understeer, roll, and some float in hard corners initially deter the driver

ALFA

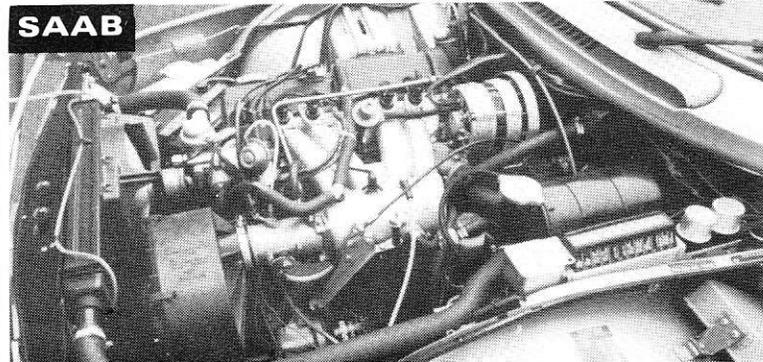


Under bonnet layout is very neat and familiar twin cam engine is a joy to behold



Handling in the dry is delightfully responsive but steering is heavy at low speeds

SAAB



Slant four cylinder Leyland derived engine is buried under fuel injection equipment



Individual and neat styling has pronounced screen curvature. Note headlamp wipers

facia is rather messy, but once one finds one's way around the stalks and switches a certain Gallic logic becomes apparent. A dial full of warning lights contains a central "stop" sign which glows red if something goes seriously wrong with the hydraulics and also functions as an ignition light.

The interior has an almost period piece atmosphere with its thick foam underlaid carpets, padded door cappings and ornamental, chrome door handles. The headlining is also heavily padded to deaden interior noise. A unique feature of this extraordinary car is the swivelling inner set of headlamps which, linked to the steering gear, point round corners with the front wheels. Two overtaking mirrors were fitted to our test car which to some extent alleviated the visibility problem inherent in the streamlined design of

the rear end.

All Betas are well equipped and the ES especially so. The Jaeger instrument panel is neat and uncluttered, and good use is made of stalks which control wipers, indicators and lights. Heating and ventilation is both comprehensive and effective and rear passengers can control their own supply of air through separate vents. The interior is full of thoughtful touches such as the recessed door handles and door locks that fit flush with the top of the cappings when depressed. The sun visors are recessed into the padded roof lining and there are grab handles all round. Electric window lifts are mounted on a console behind the handbrake within easy reach of everyone in the car. There is even a re-chargeable hand torch which stows under the facia. The sliding roof is well engineered and easy to

use, as is the mechanism for adjusting the height of the steering column.

The Rover's instrumentation is much more modern and impressive than in the SC versions, for the driver is now confronted with clear, circular dials having white numbering. The minor controls are distributed a trifle haphazardly and we would like to see more use made of column controls. The heating and ventilation are entirely satisfactory and both front and rear windows have quarterlights, those at the front being operated by a knurled wheel on the doors. The interior is trimmed to a high standard in a traditional British manner. A comfortable driving position is easily obtainable thanks to a steering column which is adjustable for rake.

The Saab's instruments are

clear and modern and the standard of interior equipment generally is high. Needless to say, coming from a country with great climatic variations, the heating and ventilation system has an exhaustive range of settings. A feature now gaining acceptance is the Saab pioneered wipe/wash system for keeping the headlights clean — and it really works. The EMS is instantly recognisable from the exterior by its attractive alloy wheels and metallic silver paintwork. (It should be said here that when our front cover picture was taken, we were only able to obtain a four door L model). The door handles are sensibly recessed and there is side impact protection within the doors themselves. The no-nonsense modern design philosophy is again seen in the moulded door trims. The front seat passenger has a footrest and dash mounted

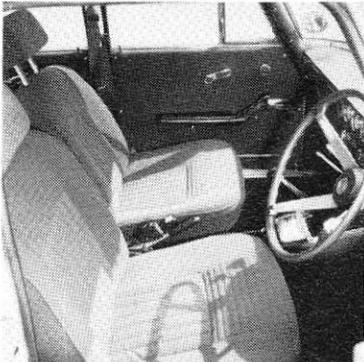
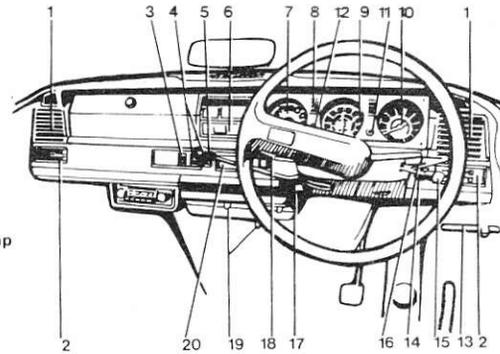


Both seat backrests and squabs adjust

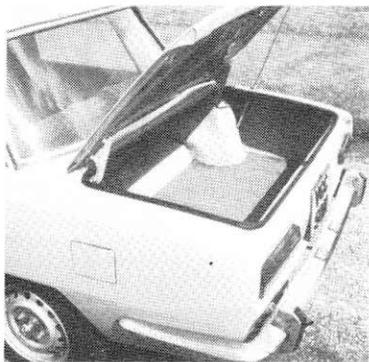


Luggage space is not reduced by spare

- 1 Vent
- 2 Vent controls
- 3 Heated rear windows
- 4 Fans
- 5 Gearlever
- 6 Ashtray
- 7 Warning lights
- 8 Fuel gauge
- 9 Speedometer
- 10 Tachometer
- 11 Trip reset
- 12 Rheostat
- 13 Handbrake
- 14 Ignition
- 15 Indicators/horn/headlamp flasher
- 16 Wipers
- 17 Gearlever
- 18 Lights
- 19 Heater controls
- 20 Clock

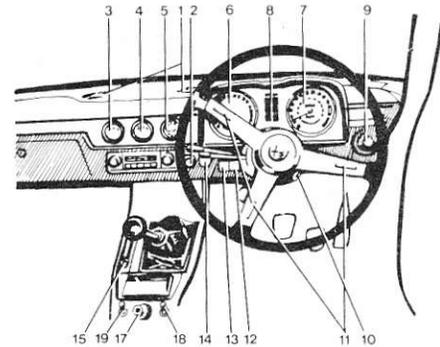


Good driving position is difficult to get



Boot is roomy but there is a high sill

- 1 Vents
- 2 Heated rear window
- 3 Coolant temperature gauge
- 4 Fuel gauge
- 5 Clock
- 6 Tachometer
- 7 Speedometer
- 8 Warning lights
- 9 Vents
- 10 Ignition
- 11 Horn
- 12 Hand throttle
- 13 Choke
- 14 Panel rheostat
- 15 Heater controls
- 17 Cigar lighter
- 18 Fan
- 19 Wipers

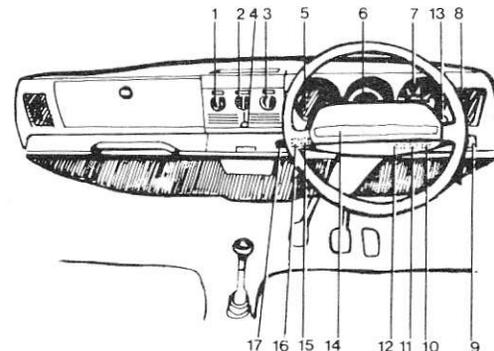


The interior is modern and functional



Space can be increased by dropping seat

- 1 Defroster
- 2 Temperature control
- 3 Vents control
- 4 Air direction control
- 5 Fuel gauge/coolant temperature gauge
- 6 Speedometer
- 7 Tachometer
- 8 Vent
- 9 Lights master switch
- 10 Choke
- 11 Panel rheostat
- 12 Hazard flashers
- 13 Wipers/screenwashers
- 14 Horn
- 15 Cigar lighter
- 16 Fan
- 17 Flasher/dipswitch/indicators



grab handle. Special impact-absorbing bumpers are now a standard feature on all 99s.

The costs

The major costs on this group apart from the relatively high initial layout will be in insurance and servicing, while spare parts will be very expensive, especially on the foreign cars. Naturally, the Citroën's complicated hydraulic system is expensive to work on, but does not normally require much maintenance until a high mileage has been covered. The others will have less costly maintenance bills, but any owner of one of these cars must be prepared for some big bills if anything major goes wrong out of the warranty period.

The fuel consumption of the cars is not horrific, except perhaps

for the fuel-injected Citroën which would easily slip below 20 mpg if the performance was used to the full. We achieved 19.7 mpg but the private owner ought to do better with less use of the excellent acceleration. The other four cars all put in fuel consumption figures around the 22 to 25 mpg mark under hard driving conditions so most owners will improve on this by between 10 and 20 per cent, which is not really bad for cars which can exceed 100 mph.

Verdict

This is a very interesting group because the cars have such widely differing characters. The Citroën is so different that a newcomer will spend the first hour or two wondering whether he is really in a motor car at all, but some of the quirks turn out to be sensible

features upon acquaintance. Intending purchasers are advised to take as long a drive as possible as first impressions of the Citroën are often poor ones. Having said all that, it is still a car that you love to hate or hate to love — there are no half measures.

The Saab is very much a connoisseur's car, but it is no longer as outstanding in its way as the two stroke models were. Its steering is heavy and handling only average, but accommodation is good, it feels solid and is built to last.

Despite its age the Rover still looks pleasant and dignified. It represents the strong resistance to change inherent in the British motor industry, but is none the worse for this. It rides and corners well, but still has its original design drawbacks; lack of space for luggage and passengers, and only

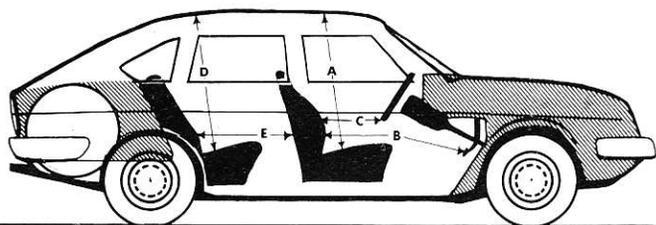
mediocre performance.

Italy may lurch from economic crisis to crisis, but its motor industry can still produce the kind cars that set the standards of Europe. The Alfa Romeo is essentially an enthusiast's car, its ride firm and its handling sporty, but still comes up to scratch in terms of interior style and space. The Lancia is the most recently designed model of the group and represents a design compromise between cost effectiveness, performance and comfort which appears to have succeeded remarkably well.

All the cars here sell on their very individual and diverse reputations, but if we had to make a choice in value for money then we would plump for the Lancia especially as a Beta 1800 with the ES extras can be bought over £300 less.

What Car? compares

LANCIA BETA 1800 ES



Dimensions

Length: 168.08 ins
 Wheelbase: 99.9 ins
 Track: 55.3 ins
 Width: 66.5 ins
 Height: 55.1 ins
 Interior width: 53 ins
 A: 34.0 ins
 B: 36.0-42.0 ins
 C: 15.0-22.0 ins
 D: 30.5 ins
 E: 26.0-33.0 ins

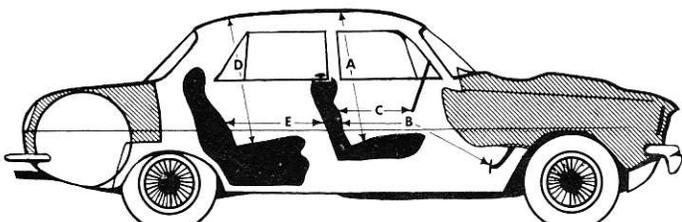
Performance

Speeds in gears
 Maximum speed: 107 mph
 Maximum in 4th: 93 mph
 Maximum in 3rd: 71 mph
 Maximum in 2nd: 49 mph
 Maximum in 1st: 31 mph
 Speedometer error:
 Accurate at 60 mph

Acceleration
 0-30: 3.9 secs
 0-40: 6.1 secs
 0-50: 8.1 secs
 0-60: 11.1 secs
 0-70: 14.5 secs
 0-80: 20.1 secs
 Standing $\frac{1}{4}$ mile:
 17.1 secs

4th gear
 30-50 mph: 7.4 secs
 40-60 mph: 7.8 secs

ROVER 2200 TC



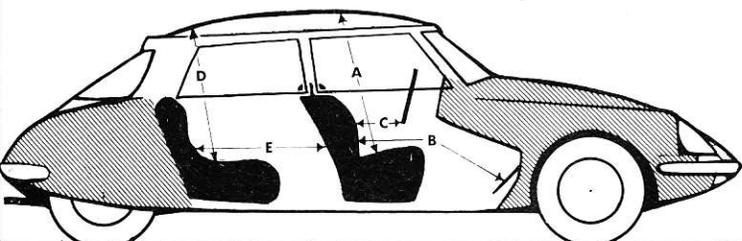
Length: 180 ins
 Wheelbase: 103.4 ins
 Track: 52.7 ins
 Width: 66 ins
 Height: 55.3 ins
 Interior width: 54 ins
 A: 34.5 ins
 B: 36.5-43.0 ins
 C: 14.5-22.0 ins
 D: 32.0 ins
 E: 24.0-30.0 ins

Speeds in gears
 Maximum speed: 107 mph
 Maximum in 3rd: 85 mph
 Maximum in 2nd: 55 mph
 Maximum in 1st: 32 mph
 Speedometer error:
 3 percent fast at 60 mph

Acceleration
 0-30: 4.0 secs
 0-40: 5.9 secs
 0-50: 8.5 secs
 0-60: 12.2 secs
 0-70: 17.9 secs
 0-80: 22.8 secs
 Standing $\frac{1}{4}$ mile:
 18.3 secs

Top gear
 30-50 mph: 11.4 secs
 40-60 mph: 11.4 secs

CITROËN DS 23



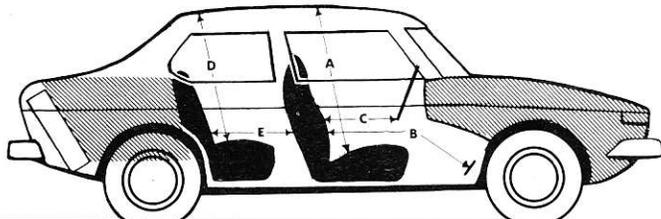
Length: 193 ins
 Wheelbase: 123 ins
 Track: (front) 59 ins
 Track: (rear) 52 ins
 Width: 71 ins
 Height: 58 ins
 Interior width: 55 ins
 A: 36 ins
 B: 36-43 ins
 C: 14-23 ins
 D: 34 ins
 E: 27-35 ins

Speeds in gears
 Maximum speed: 114 mph
 Maximum in 4th: 102 mph
 Maximum in 3rd: 81 mph
 Maximum in 2nd: 56 mph
 Maximum in 1st: 33 mph
 Speedometer error:
 5 percent fast at 60 mph

Acceleration
 0-30: 3.9 secs
 0-40: 6.1 secs
 0-50: 8.3 secs
 0-60: 11.5 secs
 0-70: 15.4 secs
 0-80: 21.0 secs

4th gear
 30-50 mph: 9.0 secs
 40-60 mph: 8.9 secs

SAAB 99 EMS



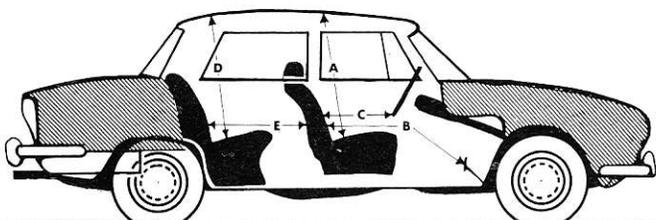
Length: 174 ins
 Wheelbase: 97.4 ins
 Track: 55.1 ins
 Width: 66 ins
 Height: 56.7 ins
 Interior width: 53 ins
 A: 38 ins
 B: 35 to 41 ins
 C: 13 to 19 ins
 D: 35 ins
 E: 25 to 31 ins

Speeds in gears
 Maximum speed: 103 mph
 Maximum in 3rd: 84 mph
 Maximum in 2nd: 56 mph
 Maximum in 1st: 34 mph
 Speedometer error:
 2 percent fast at 60 mph

Acceleration
 0-30: 3.3 secs
 0-40: 4.9 secs
 0-50: 7.0 secs
 0-60: 10.1 secs
 0-70: 13.6 secs
 0-80: 18.4 secs

Top gear
 30-50 mph: 8.5 secs
 40-60 mph: 8.9 secs

ALFA ROMEO 2000



Length: 173 ins
 Wheelbase: 101 ins
 Track: 51 ins
 Width: 62 ins
 Height: 56 ins
 Interior width: 50.5 ins
 A: 36.0 ins
 B: 37.0-41.0 ins
 C: 17.5-22.5 ins
 D: 34.0 ins
 E: 26.0-30.0 ins

Speeds in gears
 Maximum speed: 115 mph
 Maximum in 4th: 96 mph
 Maximum in 3rd: 72 mph
 Maximum in 2nd: 49 mph
 Maximum in 1st: 30 mph
 Speedometer error:
 Accurate at 60 mph

Acceleration
 0-30: 3.2 secs
 0-40: 5.4 secs
 0-50: 7.0 secs
 0-60: 9.9 secs
 0-70: 12.6 secs
 0-80: 16.7 secs
 Standing $\frac{1}{4}$ mile: 17.5 secs

4th gear
 30-50 mph: 8.2 secs
 40-60 mph: 6.8 secs

Specification

Fuel consumption
Full test: 24.3 mpg
Touring: 28 mpg
Tank holds: 11.4 galls
Range: 300 miles
Fuel grade: 4 star
Fuel for 15,000 miles: £300

Engine: Cast iron block, alloy head
No. of cylinders: 4, in line transversely
Bore and stroke: 84 mm x 79.2 mm
Capacity: 1756 cc Valve gear: Twin overhead camshaft
Compression ratio: 8.9 to 1
Carburation: Weber 34 DMTR 21 Twin choke
Maximum power: 110 bhp DIN at 6000 rpm
Maximum torque: 106 lbs/ft DIN at 3000 rpm
Cooling: Water
Main bearings: 5
Brakes: Dual circuit, servo-assisted
Front: 9.9 in discs
Rear: 9.9 in discs
Wheels: 5½J x 14

Tyres: 175/70 x 14 in
Body construction: Steel unitary

Steering: Rack and pinion
Power: No
Turns: lock to lock: 4.1
Turning circle: 37 ft

Suspension
Front: Independent with MacPherson struts, coil springs, lower wishbones and anti-roll bar
Rear: Independent with MacPherson struts, coil springs, tubular lower arms and anti-roll bar

Transmission
Clutch: Single dry plate, diaphragm spring

Gearbox: Five speed, all synchromesh
Ratios: 3.5, 2.23, 1.52, 1.15, 0.92 to 1
Final Drive: 4.071 to 1
Mph per 1000 rpm in top gear: 18.2

Weight: 21.6 cwt
Distribution (front/rear) 59/41 percent
NCC recommended towing weight: 16.2 cwt

Payload: 930 lbs
Car: Lancia Beta 1800ES
Importer: Lancia (England) Limited, 372 Ealing Road, Alperton, Middx.
Price: £2397

Fuel consumption
Full test: 21.2 mpg
Touring: 24 mpg
Tank holds: 15 galls
Range: 360 miles
Fuel grade: 4 star
Fuel for 15,000 miles: £350

Engine: Cast iron block, alloy head
No. of cylinders: 4 in line
Bore and stroke: 90.5 mm x 85.7 mm
Capacity: 2205 cc Valve gear: single overhead camshaft
Compression ratio: 9 to 1
Carburation: twin SU HIF6
Maximum power: 115 bhp DIN at 5000 rpm
Maximum torque: 135 lbs/ft DIN at 3000 rpm
Cooling: Water
Main bearings: 5
Brakes: Servo assisted
Front: 10.4 ins discs
Rear: 10.7 ins discs

Wheels: 4½J x 14
Tyres: 165HR x 14 radial
Body construction: Steel unitary

Steering: Worm and roller
Power: Yes
Turns lock to lock: 3.8
Turning circle: 35 ft

Suspension
Front: Independent, leading top links, transverse bottom links, coil springs, anti-roll bar, telescopic dampers
Rear: De Dion tube, Watts linkage, transverse stabilisers, coil springs, telescopic dampers

Transmission
Clutch: 8½ ins diaphragm spring
Gearbox: 4-speed all synchromesh
Ratios: 3.63, 2.13, 1.39, 1.00 to 1
Final Drive: 3.54 to 1
Mph per 1000 rpm in top gear: 19.7

Weight: 24.75 cwt
Distribution (front/rear) 51/49 percent
NCC recommended towing weight: 18.6 cwt

Payload: 911 lbs
Car: Rover 2200TC
Manufacturer: Rover, British Leyland U.K. Ltd., Solihull, Warwicks.
Price: £2495

Fuel consumption
Full test: 19.7 mpg
Touring: 22 mpg
Tank holds: 14 galls
Range: 285 miles
Fuel grade: 4 star
Fuel for 15,000 miles: £360

Engine: Cast iron block, alloy head
No. of cylinders: 4 in line
Bore and stroke: 93.5 mm x 85.5 mm
Capacity: 2347 cc Valve gear: Pushrod operated overhead valves
Compression ratio: 8.75 to 1
Petrol injection: Bosch
Maximum power: 130 bhp DIN at 5250 rpm
Maximum torque: 137.9 lbs/ft DIN at 2500 rpm
Cooling: Water
Main bearings: 5
Brakes: Servo assisted dual circuit
Front: 11.8 ins discs

Rear: 10 ins drums
Wheels: 5½J x 15 ins
Tyres: 180 HR15
Body construction: Steel unitary

Steering: Rack and pinion
Power: Yes
Turning circle: 36 ft

Suspension
Independent, hydropneumatic suspension sphere, integral damper on all four wheels, anti roll bars front and rear. Height control automatic or manual

Transmission
Clutch: 8.75 ins diaphragm spring
Gearbox: Five speed all synchromesh
Ratios: 3.25, 1.94, 1.32, 0.97, 0.78 to 1
Final Drive: 4.37 to 1
Mph per 1000 rpm in top gear: 22.5

Weight: 26.4 cwt
Distribution (front/rear) 59/41 percent
NCC recommended towing weight: 19 cwt

Payload: 1012 lbs
Car: Citroën DS 23 Pallas EFI
Importer: Citroën Cars Ltd., Mill Street, Slough, Bucks.
Price: £3190

Fuel consumption
Full test: 23.5 mpg
Touring: 27.0 mpg
Tank holds: 10 galls
Range: 270 miles
Fuel grade: 3 star
Fuel for 15,000 miles: £318

Engine: Cast iron block, alloy head
No. of cylinders: 4 in line
Bore and stroke: 90 mm x 78 mm
Capacity: 1985 cc Valve gear: Single overhead camshaft
Compression ratio: 8.7 to 1
Petrol injection: Bosch
Maximum power: 110 bhp DIN at 5500 rpm
Maximum torque: 123 lbs/ft DIN at 3700 rpm
Cooling: Water
Main bearings: 5
Brakes: Servo assisted diagonal split circuit

Front: discs
Rear: discs
Wheels: 5J x 15 ins
Tyres: 165 x 15 radial ply
Body construction: Steel unitary

Steering: Rack and pinion
Power: No

Suspension
Front: Independent, wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers
Rear: Dead axle, Watts linkage, Panhard rod, coil springs, telescopic dampers

Transmission
Clutch: diaphragm spring
Gearbox: Four speed all synchromesh
Ratios: 3.44, 2.07, 1.39, 1.00 to 1
Final Drive: 3.89 to 1
Mph per 1000 rpm in top gear: 18.6

Weight: 22 cwt
NCC recommended towing weight: 16 cwt

Car: Saab 99 EMS
Importer: Saab (Gt. Britain) Ltd., Slough SL1 4AJ
Price: £2524

Fuel consumption
Full test: 25.3 mpg
Touring: 28 mpg
Tank holds: 11.6 galls
Range: 310 miles
Fuel grade: 4 star
Fuel for 15,000 miles: £310

Engine: Alloy block and head
No. of cylinders: 4 in line
Bore and stroke: 84 mm x 88.5 mm
Capacity: 1962 cc Valve gear: Twin overhead camshafts
Compression ratio: 9 to 1
Carburation: Two twin choke Weber sidedraught
Maximum power: 150 bhp DIN at 5500 rpm
Maximum torque: 165 lbs/ft DIN at 3500 rpm
Cooling: Water
Main bearings: 5

Brakes: Servo assisted dual circuit
Front: 10.7 ins discs
Rear: 10.5 ins discs
Wheels: 5½J x 14 ins
Tyres: 165 HR x 14
Body construction: Steel unitary

Steering: recirculating ball
Power: No
Turns, lock to lock: 3½
Turning circle: 35 ft

Suspension
Front: Independent, coil springs, wishbones, anti roll bar
Rear: Live axle, coil springs, 'A' bracket trailing arm location, anti roll bar

Transmission
Clutch: 8.5 ins single diaphragm spring
Gearbox: 5-speed all synchromesh
Ratios: 3.30, 1.99, 1.35, 1.00, 0.79 to 1
Final Drive: 4.3 to 1
Mph per 1000 rpm in top gear: 20.3

Weight: 21.8 cwt
Distribution (front/rear) 56/44 percent
NCC recommended towing weight: 15 cwt

Payload: 895 lbs
Car: Alfa Romeo 2000 Saloon
Importer: Alfa Romeo (G.B.) Ltd., Edgware Road, London NW2 6LX
Price: £2650