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Editorial

Step Right Up!

WITH this, the December, 1954 issue of *MOTOR Life*, we begin a long, slow look at a score of American production automobiles, all models—plus some timely side-glances at the sports and dream cars turned out for American motorists. We say "look" but visual impact plays but a very small part in the complicated procedure which we call road testing. One automobile company, after reading a *MOTOR Life* report on its products, called us vivisectionists. In some ways, they were right. Our "look" is conducted with plenty of scientific aid and our weekly road test party looks like a well-equipped safari heading for undisclosed ruins on the Yucatan Peninsula. In addition to slide rules, stop watches, and specification sheets on the "subject," our testers use a fifth wheel and electric speedometer, a fuel flow meter, brake detonation and measuring equipment, tapes, yardsticks, extra spark plugs, points, a portable tire inflater, safety belts and crash helmets. Notes and performance figures are made on a confidential and complicated six-page chart and, as sometimes happens, when slide rules or manufacturer's claims don't match performance, tests are continued indefinitely until the missing factor is found or explained. A full road test averages 200 man-hours. In that time, our crew learns more about your future automobile than you may ever discover in years of driving. Testers take cars into corners at speeds you wouldn't attempt, over roads you would shun, over a variety of trails and highways, hills and valleys, and through driving conditions which your car might not encounter in its entire lifetime. At trail's end, we know your future car and can, with experience behind us, speak authoritatively of it.

Three of the '55s are road tested in this issue (road tested at the factory in order to bring you this material early) and from our look at the remainder of the '55s, the test crew is going to have its most interesting year yet. We think you'll find their conclusions—good and bad—interesting, too.

Quite a large group in the automobile industry is currently worrying about the stuff of which dreams are made. According to our Detroit correspondent, the biggest parade of dream cars to ever be shown will be hitting the road pretty soon. Destination: your town. Object: a little publicity and a lot of market research; a fancy title for wanting to find out what you like. The "dream car" influence is more heavily embodied in many of the new cars than the traditional nameplates. Manufacturers of these combination dream-production models indicate that, last year, that's what you wanted. They also say that they counted noses to prove it. So if you're not one of those noses who completely agrees with the design of your favorite '55, the call is out and it's time for pleasantries to be put aside. We're a well-mannered nation, brought up to agree with our hosts, in most cases. Right now, however, the hosts are looking for real opinions and have the soap box all dusted and polished. Your turn. Step right up. •

—I. T. Galanoy