

ROAD TEST

WILLYS BERMUDA

The famed F-head is gone and in its place is a bigger engine, along with refinements in both style and steering

WILLYS BERMUDA for 1955 is a staunch and lively car that, despite its virtues, may be the last of its line. This trim little rig excited many automobile enthusiasts when it first appeared three years ago. Basically, it is the same as 1954, with some alterations in styling, steering and engine options. An important change is in the pricing, which has been reduced rather drastically, but apparently not enough to bring the public response that the manufacturer was hoping for. Had this policy been introduced from the first (some felt the car was overpriced at the time), the story might have been very different. At some points the testers felt that quality control could be better, but for those who feel that many other cars are "too big" the Willys is a splendid answer in compactness.

ENGINE in the Willys Bermuda for the 1955 models is the Kaiser L-head, of 226 cubic inches displacement. It is the only choice this year, although in 1954 buyers had the option of choosing between it and the rugged and economical F-head that was a Willys feature for so long. The Kaiser engine is of conventional inline design and, generally, has given satisfactory service. Its greater power has improved the acceleration of the current Willys model, but its 90 pounds more in weight apparently has had some effect upon the car's handling qualities. The power plant is coupled to dual-range Hydra-Matic. It is natural to speculate upon the possibility of Willys making available the supercharger equipment that has been offered on the Kaiser for weight/power ratio of about 20-to-1.

PERFORMANCE of the 1955 Willys, as compared with last year's model, apparently was influenced to some degree by the fact that the 1954 car had a lower rear axle ratio than the automatic transmission-equipped current version. Thus, zero to 60 mph times averaged out at 14.5 seconds, just over one-half of a second more than last year. The same differential was noted in zero to 30 mph, which averaged out at 4.6 seconds. The standing quarter-mile was covered in 20 elapsed seconds with a speed of 72 mph being attained at the end of the test strip. Top speed averaged out at 89.7 mph, which was several miles per hour faster than last year's car was able to turn. Speedometer error was less than average, never being more than 10 per cent at low speeds, five per cent at high speeds.

SPECIFICATIONS	
Engine type	L-HEAD 6
Displacement	226.2 cubic inches
BHP	115 @ 3650 rpm
Compression ratio	7.3:1
Bore	3.312
Stroke	4.375
Torque	190 ft.-lbs. @ 1800 rpm
Transmission	HYDRA-MATIC
Rear axle ratio	3.31
Wheelbase	108 inches
Dry weight	2905 lbs.
Turning circle	38 feet
Steering lock-to-lock	4.8 turns

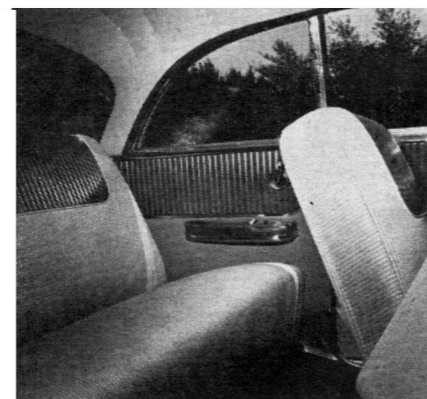
PRICES	
Car	\$1795
Transmission	\$178
Radio	\$86
Heater	\$77
Power Steering	*
Brakes	*
Air Conditioning	*
* NOT AVAILABLE	



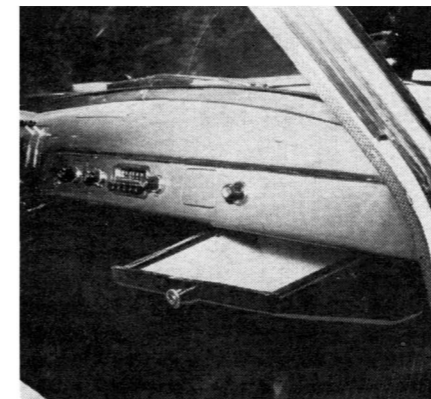
RIDE is surprisingly good, with far less pitching than would be expected in a car with a 108-inch wheelbase. This is true of the rear seat, as well as the front. The ride isn't necessarily soft and cushiony, but has a feeling of solidity and control on the road, as compensation for the slightly harder qualities. The security is transferred to the passengers since body roll, even through corners at abnormal speeds, is relatively slight and adds to riding comfort. Heavier engine is responsible for much of the change in feel.



HANDLING qualities have been improved and one of the reasons is the switch to worm and roller steering from the cam and lever system formerly used. Although this results in a slightly higher steering ratio, it still leaves the Willys as one of the quickest steering cars on the market (number of turns from lock-to-lock are just over four). Although steering is stiff, the short wheelbase and tight turning radius (40 feet) make the car easy to park and to maneuver in heavy city traffic conditions.



INTERIOR of the Willys Bermuda, despite its smaller exterior dimensions, is quite adequate for an average family, since extremely intelligent arrangement has made the most of every inch of space. The seats could be lower than they are to provide more head and leg room, but seat width, surprisingly, is on a par with many much more expensive cars. Back of the front seat (above photo) folds further forward than is customary in most two-doors and makes rear-seat entry easy, even for the portly passengers.



STYLING of the 1955 Willys has received limited but rather favorable attention. Approval has not been greater primarily because the car has appeared in such reduced numbers. Actually, the styling changes have been minor, but they accent the car's good points to such a degree that they may seem to be more fundamental than they really are. As a matter of fact, the testers were surprised by the interest the car drew from bystanders, many of whom were unable to identify it from the front end (where most of the



alterations have taken place). Practically every fixture is simple but rather functional. For instance, the package drawer under the dash (see photo left above) is deep and spill-proof. The trunk (photo at the right) is modest in size but probably adequate for the passenger load. Most important, of course, is the fact that the Bermuda is a true hardtop that carries the lowest price tag in the business. And it probably ranks as one of the most functional-looking passenger cars in the American market.

CAR TESTED: WILLYS	
BERMUDA HARDTOP	
TEST CONDITIONS	
Altitude	APPROX. 575 feet
Temperature	62 degrees
Wind	9-10 mph
Gasoline STANDARD REGULAR	
ACCELERATION AND TOP SPEED	
MPH	0-30 0-45 0-60 30-50 40-60
Seconds	4.6 8.1 14.5 7.0 8.0
Standing 1/4 mile	20.0 seconds
Fastest one-way run	91.2 mph
Top speed avg. 4 runs	89.7 mph

SPEEDOMETER CORRECTIONS		BRAKING DISTANCE	
Car		MPH	Stopping Distance
Speedometer	Actual Speeds	30	39.6 feet
20	19.4	45	103 feet
30	28.9	60	206.7 feet
40	37.6		
50	48.1	FUEL CONSUMPTION	
60	59.5	MPH	Average
70	67.6	30	28.7 mpg
80	77.25	45	25.2 mpg
90	88.23	60	22.1 mpg
100	-		