

Series 62 coupe is lowest-priced Cadillac, but shows "Florentine" roof line to best advantage. 60 Special features elongated rear end of same dimensions as convertibles and hardtops. Rear fender flair is chrome plated on this model only. Convertibles are available in 62 series (above) or in most expensive Eldorado

CADILLAC SALES MANAGER Jim Roche is a happy man these days. His company produced a record 141,000 cars during the 1955 model run, and by introduction day for the '56s, hardly a dealer in the country will have any left-over stocks. The new year production schedules call for 156,000 units, 2½ times greater than Cadillac's best pre-war performance. Well over half of this schedule already has firm customer orders to back it up, and most will be cash.

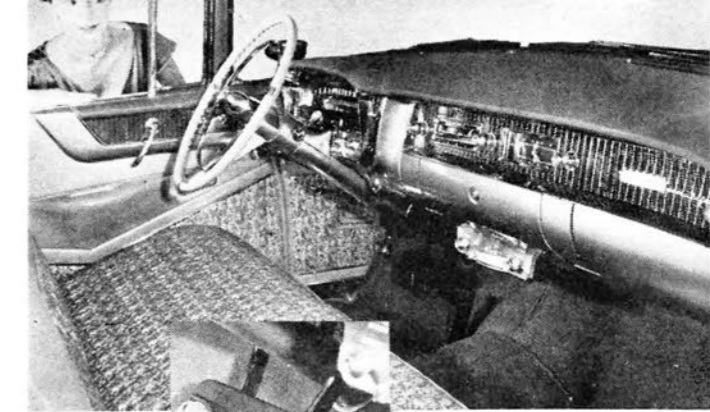
Part of his optimism stems from a look at Cadillac's investment in the new models, a fantastic \$29 million in a facelift year. For the sake of comparison, we might mention that Hudson spent only \$18 million to create its all-new "step-down" design for 1948. In addition there is the \$35-million tooling cost for the new Hydra-Matic, of which Cadillac undoubtedly underwrote a large chunk.

The styling story is sparked by the addition of 2 new body models, a 4-door hardtop called the sedan de ville and a cloth-covered (Vicodec) hardtop version of the Eldorado called the Seville. Besides these, there are Series 62 and 60 Special sedans, 2 varieties of coupes, the long 75

limousine, and the Eldorado convertible, now called Biarritz.

We talked to Jim Roche about the current status of the Eldorado brougham (featured in April MT) and how he felt about the Continental as competition. Roche said that production planning for the brougham is "progressing at a favorable rate" and that the car is "scheduled to be presented during 1956." Rather than build a new plant, the car will be assembled in existing Fleetwood facilities. He estimates the price at about \$8500, based on a production of approximately 1000 units a year. Unlike the makers of the Continental, Cadillac will talk up the engineering features of the brougham (many will be unusual). Roche feels that the brougham is strictly modern, not just "modern formal" and left unsaid the implication that therefore the 2 cars do not directly compete.

Performance of the more-ordinary models has not jumped as much as you would think, primarily because Cadillac, like the rest of the industry, is reaching the point of diminishing return: from added horsepower. We are familiar with an engineering prototype



Many models feature brocaded interiors. All have newly revamped instrument panel with more legible gauges, center glove compartment, dual lighters

('56 component: in a '55 shell) equipped with the optional 3.36 axle that will do 0 to 60 mph in about 11 seconds. As this was in drive range, with a full 6-passenger load, it means that you can expect a substantial but not striking improvement over last year's quite excellent (MT's award winner in this category) performance.

Cadillac is no longer the horsepower leader, claiming "only" 285 for regular models and 305 for Eldorados equipped with dual, 4-barrel carburetors. Displacement is up from 331 to 365 cubic inches, accounting for much of the horsepower

increase. Compression ratio is 9.75 to 1 across the board, representing a steady climb keyed to general availability of higher-octane premium fuels.

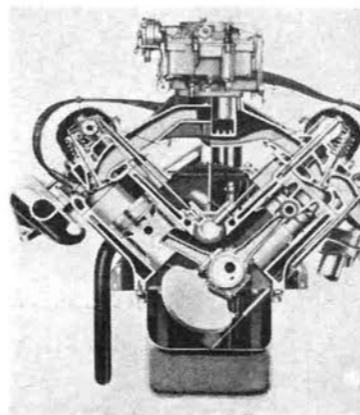
Driving the new Cadillac, you literally cannot feel (only sense) the upshift from 1st to 2nd and 3rd to 4th. The shift from 2nd to 3rd is slightly rougher only by comparison. Cadillac's Hydra-Matic is somewhat smoother than either Olds or Pontiac versions that we have driven, primarily because it is the highest-priced car in the GM lineup, and therefore has the budget to be fussier about details in the control mechanism. Connection between throttle valve and transmission is the only basic difference between the 3 units. Other than this, the outer casting and 90 per cent of the pieces are the same and interchangeable among the 3 cars.

The revamped Hydra-Matic transmission is the biggest mechanical difference, and is a feature shared with top-line Oldsmobiles and Pontiacs. The new drive now has a 2nd fluid coupling and 2 sprag clutches, replacing the former front friction clutch and bands. This 2nd coupling blends the changes between the gear ratios into an almost continuous flow of power but without the power losses common to a true torque converter.

There is not much change in handling to be expected from the '56 models. A few minor running gear changes have been made and of course power steering and brakes are still standard equipment. We were particularly impressed with a new side mirror conveniently adjustable from inside the car. Instrument layout remains fundamentally the same; addition of a medallion designating the car as a 1956 model has one advantage in moving the clock closer to the driver. The glove compartment is now centrally located, and instruments have been relettered for better visibility. (Continued on page 66)

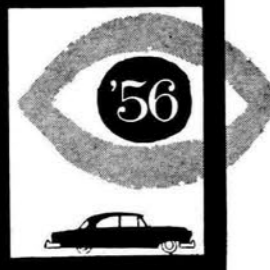
Having been both flat and round, dual exhaust ports are oval for '56. Bumper is more massive, vertical bars are gone from new models

Engine cutaway shows enlarged manifold and ports, massive 4-inch bore. Cam has higher lift, slightly more overlap than in '55 engine



Eldorado Seville hardtop, in \$6500 class, is new addition to line. Characteristic Cadillac tail end treatment is unchanged, except for extending bumper to cover trunk ledge, and oval shape of dual exhaust ports. At front is sleek, highly fashionable sedan de ville, which we'll bet will replace the 4-door sedan

drivescription



CADILLAC

'56 Cadillac

Early '56 Cadillacs came off the line with steering wheels that had a real lethal-looking hub, but which has now been changed on all cars to an innocuously flat plastic crest. A dash pad like

last year's stops glare before it starts.

Cadillac is practically going into the custom car business, as far as paint and trim combinations go with almost 500 solid and 2-tone options possible. With no comment, we report that air-conditioning is now available in the convertible.

—Walt Woron and Don MacDonald

'56 Packard and Clipper

Altho I didn't get a chance to drive a Packard equipped with one of these new differentials, I have had experience with Don MacDonald's car, which has a similar setup. A unit like this is admittedly non-essential (except, perhaps, for rural mail carriers), but at least once a year most of us get stuck in mud or snow, and that is where it pays off. In normal driving, it adds that little extra in satisfactory performance which makes it more than worth its additional cost (neighborhood of \$100).

Packard demonstrated this dramatically on their proving ground by slipping a pan of ice under the right rear wheel of a Caribbean not equipped with the new differential. A man stood behind it holding onto a rope attached to the car. The driver got nowhere, despite the whine of the slipping right rear wheel. Then this Caribbean was replaced by another equipped with the new differential. The pan of ice was put in place, the car was hooked chain-gang fashion to 5 other Packards (with engines off), and the driver easily towed the whole entourage off the cake of ice and down the road.

Good transmission of power is coupled to plenty of it under the hood thruout the whole Packard and Clipper line for '56. Deluxe and Super Clippers offer 240 horsepower (at 4600 rpm) and 350 pounds-feet torque (2800 rpm), while the Custom ups this to 275 and 380, respectively, at the same rpms. Packard tops the industry with 290 horsepower and, more important, 405 pounds-feet of torque available within the vital passing speed range. If you want a powerpack on top of this, you can have it; Caribbeans come equipped with a dual (4-barrel) carburetored V8 claiming 310 horsepower, a convenient 5 above Cadillac's current peak. Much of this increase can be credited to a 10 to 1 compression, an all-time publicly available high.

About the only change in body models is the addition to the Caribbean line of a 2-door hardtop, complete with a Derham-like fabric-covered steel top. Neither Packard nor Clipper offers a 4-door hardtop as yet, a fact which will probably adversely affect some sales but can't economically be remedied until 1957's new tooling.

Clippers offer you a choice of 3-speed, overdrive, or Ultramatic transmissions, whereas Packard uses the automatic as standard equipment. Every power assist in the book can be had at extra cost, except on the Caribbeans where everything except air-conditioning is standard. It would seem as tho Packard and its newly divorced mate, Clipper, are out to solidify their substantial 1955 inroads into Cadillac's previously private bailiwick. One can't help but applaud such an endeavor.

—Don MacDonald

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