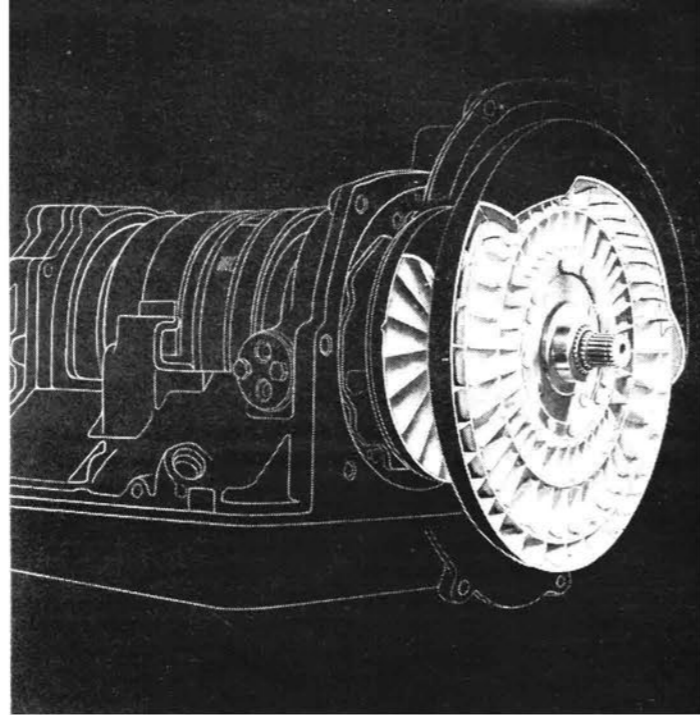
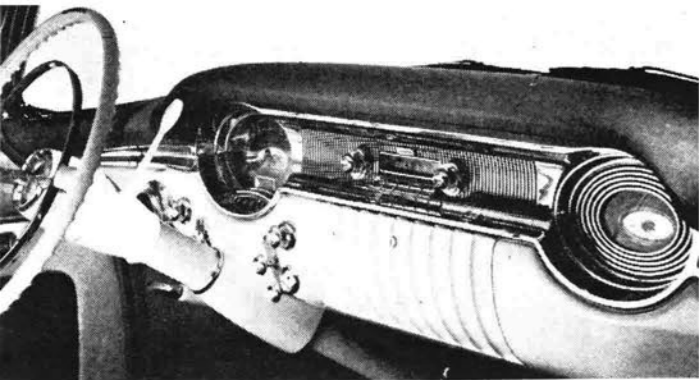


Heart of improved Hydra-Matic transmission is small fluid coupling (behind larger one) which fills and empties with fluid for amazingly smooth shifts. New 2nd fluid coupling and sprag clutch replace former front friction clutch and bank in unit. Power is transmitted to transmission thru a set of planetary gears located in 1st coupling. In 1st and 3rd gear, front unit is in reduction and new 2nd coupling is empty. When 2nd fluid coupling is filled or emptied it gives a smooth transition thru all the possible ratio changes



New instrument panel with protective overhanging pad consists basically of 2 ovals. Speedometer, fuel gauge, H-M indicator, and warning lights are included in one in front of driver

**E**VER SINCE THE ADVENT of the now famous Rocket engine, Oldsmobile has been justifiably known as a hot car. It still is, but in '56 luxury will be a close running mate to performance in what appears to be a strong Lansing bid for the fine-car trade. The luxury comes from several sources, and quite naturally will find its epitome in the 98 series. While the 98 is still typically Oldsmobile, it is apparently directed this year to stand in distinction at the head of the Olds line.

Much of the luxury will come from "feel"—or rather lack of it. And this does not say that the Olds has become wishy-washy in any sense. When we got on the open road with a new 98 (a '55 shell with '56 running gear) it felt the way it always has—crisp and lively. In other words, it felt like an Oldsmobile. But this year everything is much

smoother, quieter and softer than before.

The biggest engineering feature is the entirely new Jetaway Hydra-Matic transmission on 98s and Super 88s. This new unit retains the desirable flexibility of last year's Dual-Range H-M but with almost unheard-of smoothness. Basically the new Hydra-Matic differs from the '55 version in that front bands and clutches have been replaced with a 2nd small fluid coupling and 2 sprag clutches (one-way clutches that permit free-wheeling at speeds of from 5 to 14 mph, depending on the range). This new 2nd coupling fills and empties with fluid to literally blend ratio changes.

It was raining during our test drive and we had to turn off the windshield wipers to help feel or hear (it was hard to tell which) the ultra-smooth upshifts. Downshifts (pick the speed) are com-

pletely without the familiar automatic lurch of previous models.

In addition the transmission is designed to improve fuel economy and performance. Gear ratios are: 1st, 3.96; 2nd, 2.55; 3rd, 1.55; 4th, 1.0.

We noticed that the new lower 3rd gear ratio in particular gives added go thru use of part-throttle 4th to 3rd downshifts at low speeds. Altho we were unable to make any timed runs, it is safe to say that the new Hydra-Matic is contributing considerably to added Olds punch.

You'll find a new PARK position on the quadrant which now uses a positive mechanical indicator instead of the electrically actuated needle that has been criticized by MT testers in the past. Service problems should be reduced since the new transmission eliminates the formerly necessary

band adjustments and is designed to be generally more durable.

The '56 Rocket engine (called the T-350 this year) puts out 240 horsepower on 98s and Super 88s and 230 in 88s, this compared with a 202 maximum last year. These horses have been gained without any increase in '55's 324-cubic-inch piston displacement. The combustion chamber contour has been lowered and a thinner gasket used to up compression ratio (in both engines) from 8.5 to 9.25. A new intake manifold is of the T-intersection type with nearly square sections. Exhaust valves are 1/8-inch larger and a new camshaft keeps all of the valves open longer. Ignition is improved with the use of a new distributor (in a handier location) and new sparkplugs.

The 88 mounts a redesigned Rochester 2-barrel carburetor with increased bore. The bigger engine uses a new 4-barrel carburetor with bore and venturi size increased. In addition the new 4-barrel carb has an air valve to control venturi size on the secondary barrels (on engine demand rather than sheer mechanical control) hereby making more use of the rear barrels at lower speeds.

With roadability holding its own (revised front and rear stabilizer bars make for improved handling) the '56 has pretty much the same moderately firm Oldsmobile feel of the past. The ride, in addition to being smoother and quieter, is also noticeably softer.

Olds chassis changes show further consideration in the luxury car direction. Front shocks (still carried within the springs) are now trunion-mounted for better wheel control. New valving in the shocks plus newly located body mounts complete the move to a softer ride.

For the 1st time Olds will offer optional dual exhausts (with oblong chrome extensions that mold into depressions in the rear bumper). It is expected that this desirable option will increase horsepower as much as 7 per cent and torque about 6 per cent.

Olds will use a new power steering unit (with a faster 19 to 1 ratio) which still

has road feel but requires only about a 2-pound effort to get the power assist. The same efficient brakes used in '55 will be retained but a new foot-engaged (dash knob release) parking brake—a much-liked feature on Buicks—will replace the pull-type brake.

There will be 13 body styles in the 3-series Olds line with 2- and 4-door Holiday hardtops offered across the board. Olds is keeping pace with the color race with 19 new exterior finishes (only black and gray held over from '55). Optional 2-toning can be had in 3 different types and 155 combinations.

Stylewise, the new Italian-flavored grille is easily the outstanding feature and is representative of a very tasteful facelift. This year distinctive trim on the 98 series (entirely different side moldings in particular) make it easily recognizable as the top-of-the-line Olds. Super 88 and 88 moldings are slightly different from one another. Elsewhere the body has some new lines added to the basic '55 shell along with all-new bumpers, trim and ornaments. All fender cutouts are tear-drop shaped with no skirts being used.

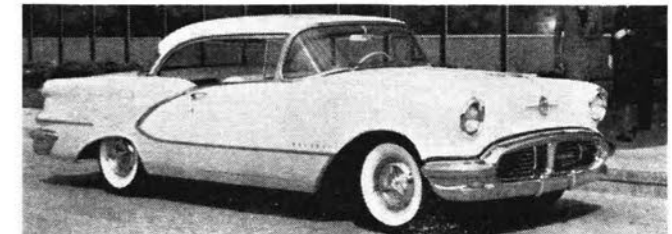
As it did with the grille, Olds has put an all-new instrument panel in the '55 cutout. The speedometer is easy enough to read but what seems like an excess of chrome on the dash may result in disturbing highlights or glare.

Interior dimensions are not changed but the front seat has been moved back to give 1 1/4 more inches of front legroom. Interiors will be in leather, Moroccan and 7 types of fabric in various weaves. Considerable use will be made of metallic plastic material on doorpanels and other interior trim.

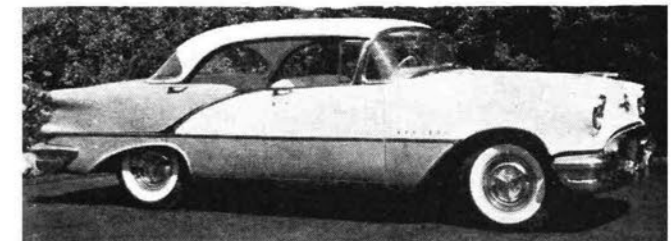
Among the options, Olds will offer an improved air conditioner with greater capacity and reduced cool-down time and, for the start of the selling season, a heating system with better output.

A 6-way power seat (forward and back, up and down, degree of tilt backwards and forwards) will be available and in the 98 Holiday and Starfire models the front seat will automatically slide forward for easy entry and exit to the rear when the front door is opened—it slides forward when the front seatback is tilted.

—Al Kidd



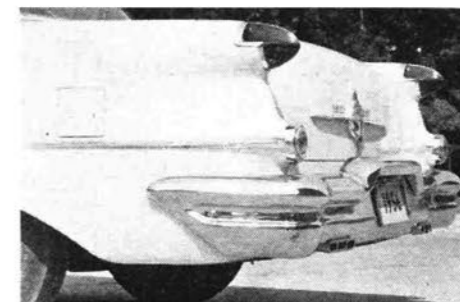
New 98 Deluxe Holiday hardtop shows distinctive and exclusive trim.



All Holiday models will have designation on right fender

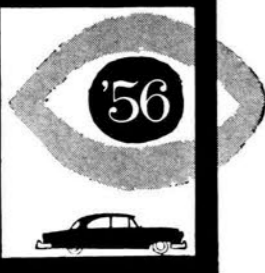


Super 88 4-door sedan has its own distinctive side trim and sports same 240-horsepower Rocket engine as 98. Note stylish tear-shaped fender cutouts



Olds has taken the evolutionary path for '56 with its newly trimmed tail lights, dual exhausts in bumper

drivescription



**OLDSMOBILE**