



**ROAD  
TEST**

# LAGO AMERICA

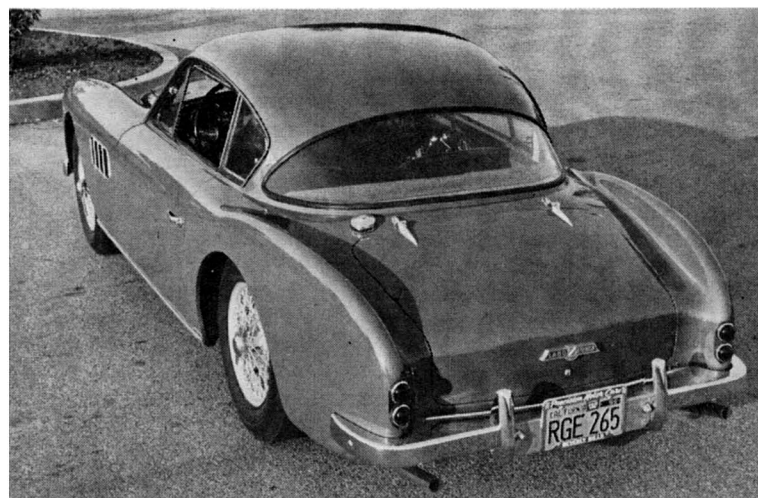
*Once a Talbot, it is still in transition*

**B**ECAUSE of international trademark agreements, the French-made Talbot has been called a Darracq in England, to avoid confusion with the totally unrelated British car of the same name. Now, however, the new trade name for sales outside France will be that of the firm's guiding genius.

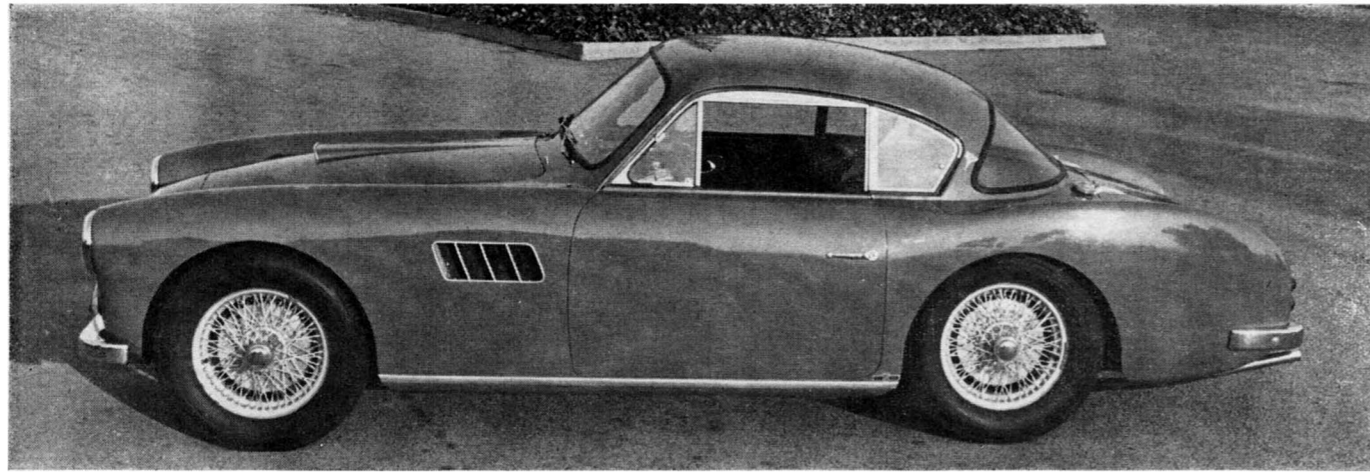
We say genius advisedly, for Tony Lago, aside from being an engineer, has managed almost single-handedly to survive the terrible Thirties, the occupation, and postwar attrition. In 30 years, all French quality cars except Talbot have ceased production, the list including Bugatti, Delage, Delahaye, Hispano-Suiza and Hotchkiss.

In France the Talbot coupe has been available for several years, powered by a 4-cylinder version of the firm's famous big 6. With 2491 cubic centimeters it is large for a 4 (it has a 3.52-inch cylinder bore) and would undoubtedly be too much of a "thumper" for any great acceptance by delicate Americans raised on a steady diet of 6's and 8's. Also in France, Talbot recently announced a strange (to us) engine option—the flat-head Simca V-8 of Ford 60 ancestry. This wouldn't have much appeal in America, even at \$5000.

For his "America" export model, Lago has wisely chosen the German BMW V-8 engine—a very good 2.5-liter, all-aluminum powerplant—and a beautiful, well executed Gran



*Very much like its predecessor, the Talbot 2500, Tony Lago's improved sports coupe shows various detail changes. Bumpers are now less handsome but stronger, and roll-up windows are a wise addition. The hood's air scoop shows a pleasing simplicity.*



Turismo coupe body made by the Talbot company itself. With 2476 cc, the BMW engine develops 125 D.I.N. horsepower, or about 138 bhp (10% more) determined by the American SAE test procedure. While this powerplant has no particularly glamorous features (for sports car enthusiasts) its extensive use of light alloys makes it a definite preview of things to come from Detroit—when they get around to it.

In driving this car, an immediate first impression is that depressing the clutch pedal takes an awful lot of push. The impression lasts, and we respectfully suggest a slight adjustment of hydraulic cylinder sizes so that the clutch pedal will have a longer stroke but lighter action. The steering wheel is a beautiful piece of work (especially the laminated leaf spring spokes) but the placement is too high. This will be corrected on all subsequent deliveries.

The steering ratio is just about perfect (2.5 turns): neither too sensitive at high speeds nor too heavy at low speeds. Cornering power is among the world's best, and the accuracy, lightness and responsiveness of the steering coupled with a chassis which neither under- nor oversteers makes this one of the most enjoyable cars to handle we have ever experienced.

In this respect the "traditional" ride comes into prominence. At first we felt the test car's ride was harsh on choppy roads at low speeds. Here, again, a change will be made with slightly softer springs and revised dampers. As for the test car itself, after three hours we altered our opinion to some extent. At high speeds it held the road as if glued, and cornering was as nearly flat as anything we've ever tried

A thumbscrew on the sill locks each door's vent window.



PHOTOGRAPHY: POOLE



Luxurious but not effete, the car is German in feeling.

short of an out and out road-racing-only type of machine.

A very good gearbox (a German ZF) has synchromesh on all 4 forward ratios. Both 1st and 2nd gears are a little too low, to our way of thinking, but a tachometer red-lined at 5800 revolutions per minute gives respectable speeds nevertheless (see data panel, based on 5500 rpm). The short, stubby control lever moves quite a bit more easily than it would on a typical British sports car with the same mileage (in this case 3500 miles).

Acceleration through the gears is very good indeed, but 138 bhp is not so much as to make for tricky handling in the lower gears. There is wheelspin in 1st gear if you want it, but you have to be pretty rough on the clutch to find it. First gear produces Tapley readings to the scale limit (600 pounds per ton). A 0 to 60 time of 10.6 seconds speaks for itself and takes no special practice or trick shifts to accomplish. In this connection, the engine is usually very smooth, quiet and docile. However, when really pressed the unit takes on a new character and there is a very satisfying "power roar" as the revs soar after each successive upshift.

Deceleration is just as good. The brakes are quite powerful, yet unobtrusive. Their light, progressive action is unassisted by any booster device. With 176 square inches of lining area we have 120 sq in. per ton of test weight, a most satisfactory figure since it is a close equivalent to what is generally required of production sports cars.

Conditions were not favorable during the high-speed runs, nor is a gear ratio that gives 104 miles per hour at the bhp peak conducive to the best possible top. Nevertheless our best timed run was at 115 mph, with the needle at 116-117 mph



Luggage space appears to be ample and is easy to get to.

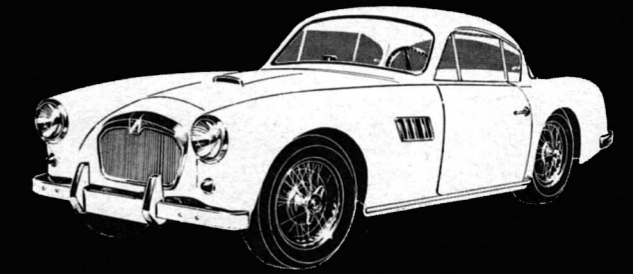
and still climbing. We rate the true top-speed potential as an honest 118 mph. French reports indicate a maximum of 200 kilometers per hour (124.2 mph) which we believe rather optimistic. It would require very nearly 6000 rpm or 1000 rpm beyond the peak power point.

The body lines are good, though somewhat short of the better Italian designs from which they are obviously derived. Furthermore, the traditional but rather awkward Talbot radiator grille rather spoils the front end, though this is a matter of taste and/or opinion.

The bodywork and interior finish are the very highest quality, both in selection of materials and in workmanship. There were no squeaks or rattles, and sound insulation seems to be well provided for.

Finally, the LAGO has an easily overlooked advantage: it is a Gran Turismo coupe which could be run in the production sports car category with considerable chance of success. It is accepted in this group, at least by the French, which means the American clubs should follow suit when proof of sufficient production has been supplied by the manufacturer. Furthermore, though the LAGO is admittedly expensive, its 2.5-liter engine puts it in a class which is becoming very popular for "low-cost" racing, i.e., under 2700 cc. In this class, the competition would be principally the ubiquitous Austin-Healey, along with an occasional Lancia Spyder. The French car should easily outperform the 2639-cc 6 from England, and it appears to have an edge in top speed over the Italian import. At any rate, the LAGO is more than a Gran Turismo machine—it is a genuine dual-purpose sports car, and a delightful one.

The test car's engine, the 2.5-liter BMW aluminum V-8.



LAGO "AMERICA"

SPECIFICATIONS		PERFORMANCE	
List price	\$6995	Top speed (4th), mph	118
Curb weight	2650	best timed run	115
Test weight	2930	3rd (5500)	84
distribution, %	47.5/52.5	2nd (5500)	56
Dimensions, length	166	1st (5500)	34
width	64.6		
height	52.4	FUEL CONSUMPTION	
Wheelbase	98.4	Normal range, mpg	15/19
Tread, f and r	51.2	ACCELERATION	
Tire size	6.00-16	0-30 mph, sec	3.8
Brake lining area	176	0-40 mph	6.4
Steering, turns	2.5	0-50 mph	7.9
turning circle	30	0-60 mph	10.6
Engine type	V-8, ohv	0-70 mph	13.1
Bore & stroke	2.85 x 2.95	0-80 mph	16.5
Displacement, cu in	151.0	0-90 mph	22.0
cc	2476	0-100 mph	31.5
Compression ratio	7.60	Standing 1/4 mile	17.4
Bhp @ rpm	138 @ 5000	speed at end, mph	82
equivalent mph	104	GEAR RATIOS	
Torque, lb-ft	156 @ 2600	O/d (n.a.), overall	
equivalent mph	54.4	4th (1.00)	3.92
		3rd (1.36)	5.34
		2nd (2.07)	8.12
		1st (3.39)	13.3
		TAPLEY DATA	
		4th, lb/ton @ mph	200 @ 54
		3rd	280 @ 48
		2nd	430 @ 38
		1st	600 @ 30
		Total drag at 60 mph, lb	110
		CALCULATED DATA	
		Lb/hp (test wt)	21.2
		Cu ft/ton mile	85.6
		Mph/1000 rpm (4th)	20.9
		Engine revs/mile	2870
		Piston travel, ft/mile	1415
		Rpm @ 2500 ft/min	5070
		equivalent mph	106
		R&T wear index	40.6
		SPEEDOMETER ERROR	
		30 mph	actual 34.1
		40 mph	42.3
		50 mph	50.0
		60 mph	59.8
		70 mph	68.9
		80 mph	77.6
		90 mph	88.8
		100 mph	99.0

