

► When a car costs \$10,000 or more, buyers expect something pretty special. Besides BMW, there are only eight other makes in this category: Aston Martin, Cadillac, Dual Ghia, Facel Vega, Ferrari, Maserati, and Mercedes-Benz. They differ widely in character, ranging the spectrum from sybaritic luxury to racing performance.

The people who buy them differ too, but this they have in common: considerable money, for which they want as perfect an automobile as they can find. When economy of purchase is neglected, there must be a minimum of compromises elsewhere. There will be some, of course, because luxury means weight, which is the enemy of performance.

How or where to compromise? In the 507, Bayerische Motoren Werke set out to build a car which "combines sporting performance with luxury, comfort and stylish appearance," placing themselves squarely in the middle of the competition.

The 507's strongest appeal is its beauty. No other car has such animal grace or more justifies the old expression, "it looks like it's going a hundred when it's standing still." It's startling to hear that the rakish 507 is the product of American talent, but though he's been here since the thirties, Albrecht Goertz is actually German-born. Why no one has beaten a path to his door is beyond us. The 507 is that rare car which causes perfect strangers to stop and tell you how beautiful it is.

Since so few 507s are built, it is feasible for the bodies to be literally hand-made, the panels being hammered individually from aluminum sheet by devoted Bavarian craftsmen. That may sound like a weary cliché, but members of our staff who have seen them at their work sincerely attest to it.

There is still talk of vastly increased production using dies and steel bodies to achieve a much lower price, though it will certainly not be the \$5000 figure touted by the former importer's press agent. Whether or not is unimportant to the purchasers, for body quality has always been a feature BMW pride themselves on, unashamedly and deservedly so.

Much of the joy of owning such a car lies in appreciating its unusual technical features. While at first glance the car appears to be extraordinarily American with its V8 engine and rigid rear axle, actually there is much besides quality of construction to tantalize. (See SCI, May 1957, for full technical details.)

Torsion bars are used at each wheel and aluminum is used so extensively that the car might have been an aluminum company's exercise. In the engine, for instance, the crankcase, heads, manifold, valve covers, side plates, sump, and

the water pump and other casings are of this light alloy.

Inside and out, the 3.2 liter wet liner engine carries delightful features: an oil/water heat exchanger, drip pans under the carburetors, neatly arranged electrical components and nearby, an extravagant set of beautifully polished tools in a special case (aluminum, naturally). Dipstick, plugs and distributor are easily reached and worked on. The battery is high on the firewall; while not the coolest spot, it's one that's hard to overlook.

The arcuate shape of the steering gear box belies its mechanism, a pinion and sector which provides the same precision as the more familiar rack and pinion arrangement without the attendant limitations to steering lock or geometry. BMW uses a three-piece track rod to suit the unequal-wishbone front suspension.

A spline on the steering column promises an adjustment. There is one, released from under the dash, and it enables a choice between the lean back, arms straight out style for twisting through curves and the more relaxed touring position with the wheel closer to your chest. Steering forces are moderate by sports car standards while the precision is top-notch. For gentle cruising on parkways, it is near-perfect, but pressing on through winding lanes can become an exercise.

Despite its extreme low build, the 507 rolls noticeably but unobjectionably on its long, limber torsion bars. Equally unobjectionable is the throaty murmur from the V8's dual exhausts. At full throttle and high revs it becomes a heady roar.

Cutting loose in the safer confines of our smooth-surfaced test track, the 507 exhibited a remarkable degree of stability. The steering feel is a reliable indicator of the front wheel's grip and it would seem that the rigid rear axle contributes to its consistency of behavior. On the other hand, on rough, irregular surfaces, that ponderous axle unsettles things, as it is then not as able to keep its wheels firmly on the ground.

Credit is due the Metzeler Super Record tires which we haven't seen before. Their tread is very flat, as on racing tires. Though there is some squeal on slick surfaces even at modest cornering forces, the collaboration between the two Munich firms seems worthwhile, for after our wringing out, there was little sign of wear on the treads.

Our most serious complaint about driving hard is not the fault of the chassis at all. It's that old problem of compromising ease of entry or exit with lateral location in the leather seats. On hard fast turns, one must hold on to the wheel firmly to avoid ending up in the door pockets. The latter, four of them, have stiffly spring-loaded flaps.

There can be little doubt that the BMW 507 is just about the most beautiful thing to come down the pike in a long while. Under the hood, unexpectedly, nestles a 193 cu. in. V-8. Exhaust rap of the BMW, consequently, is very Detroit-like in tonal quality. For 1960 507s have been fitted with discs on the front wheels.

ROAD TEST

Disc-Braked

BMW

507



Interior finish is of the highest quality, with little heed paid to cost control. Seats could offer more lateral support, however.



Spare is concealed under a light, rug-covered deck. Most of the luggage would have to be decanted in order to change a flat tire.



Sports Cars Illustrated Road Test



BMW 507 CABRIOLET



Price\$10,500
 Importer..Fadex Commercial Corp.
 487 Park Ave.
 New York 22, N. Y.

ACCELERATION:

Zero to	seconds
30	3.2
40	5.4
50	7.4
60	10.2
70	14.5
80	19.7

Standing 1/4 mile.....17.8 @ 77 mph

SPEED RANGES IN GEARS:

(5750 rpm max.)

I	0-37
II	9-61
III	13-93
IV	20-top

FUEL CONSUMPTION:

14-24 mpg

POWER UNIT:

TypeWater-cooled V8
 Valve Operation.....pushrod ohv
 Bore & Stroke.....3.23x2.96 in
 (82x75 mm)
 Stroke/Bore Ratio1.09/1
 Displacement 193 cu in (3168 cc)
 Compression Ratio7.8/1
 Carburetion.....Two Solex 32NDIX
 twin-chokes
 Power.....150 DIN, 173 SAE bhp
 @ 5000 rpm
 Torque.....174 lbs-ft @ 2000-
 4000 rpm
 Idle Speed800 rpm

DRIVE TRAIN:

Transmission Ratios	Overall
I—3.39	12.54
II—2.07	7.66
III—1.36	5.05
IV—1.00	3.70
Final Drive Ratio.....	3.70
options	3.42, 3.90
Axle torque taken by.....	locating wishbone

CHASSIS:

Ladder-type tubular frame
 Wheelbase97.6 in
 Tread, front and rear.....57, 56 in
 Front Suspension.....Ind., dual
 wishbone torsion bars,
 anti-roll bar

Rear Suspension.....Rigid axle,
 torsion bars, Panhard rod,
 central upper wishbone
 Shock absorbers.....Koni or F&S
 Steering.....pinion and sector
 Turns, lock to lock.....3 1/2
 Turning diameter, curb.....33 ft
 Brakes.....11.2 in Al-Fin drums
 on rear wheels
 Dunlop discs on front wheels

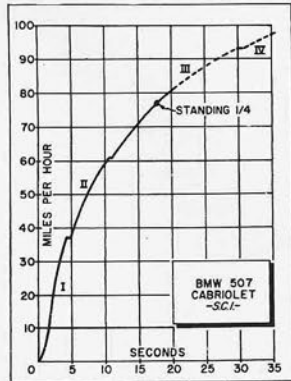
Brake lining area.....202 sq in
 Tire size6.00 x 16

GENERAL:

Length173 in
 Width65 in
 Height49 1/2 in
 Weight, curb (full tank)...2840 lbs
 Weight, as tested.....3160 lbs
 Distribution, as tested....48.4/51.6
 Fuel Capacity.....18.5 U.S. gallons

RATING FACTORS:

Specific Power
 (DIN)0.78 bhp/cu in
 (SAE)0.90 bhp/cu in
 Test Weight/Power
 (DIN)21.1 lbs/hp
 (SAE)18.3 lbs/hp
 Speed @ 1000 rpm in top
 22.0 mph
 Piston speed at 60 mph
 1345 ft/min
 Braking Area as tested
 128 sq in/ton



The interior abounds in niceties. The starter button doubles as a release for the key when the ignition is turned off, simultaneously engaging the steering wheel lock. The seat-backs are adjustable (three positions) but you must be out of the seat to do this. On the X-spoked steering wheel, the central button blows the horns, but the ring flashes the high beam headlights. This flasher, found on most all fast German cars, is used for overtaking on the Autobahnen, day or night. It would seem useful for Americans too, for it quietly serves as a highly directional, long-range "horn." If other manufacturers won't copy, perhaps the accessory people will.

The heater is up to usual American standards, providing ample fresh air at outside temperatures or warmer with straightforward controls located below the center of the dashboard. The stubby shift lever with its nice large knob is properly located where it can be used comfortably and enthusiastically. The ZF gearbox has synchromesh on all four forward speeds but on one of our acceleration runs it was badly beaten going into second. A very slight pause at each shift enables the synchros to function, preventing such unpleasant noises. The linkage has an excellent feel, being precise yet not stiff. The ratios are nicely spaced and we understand this gearbox is identical to that in the Maserati 3500GT tested in SCI, November 1958.

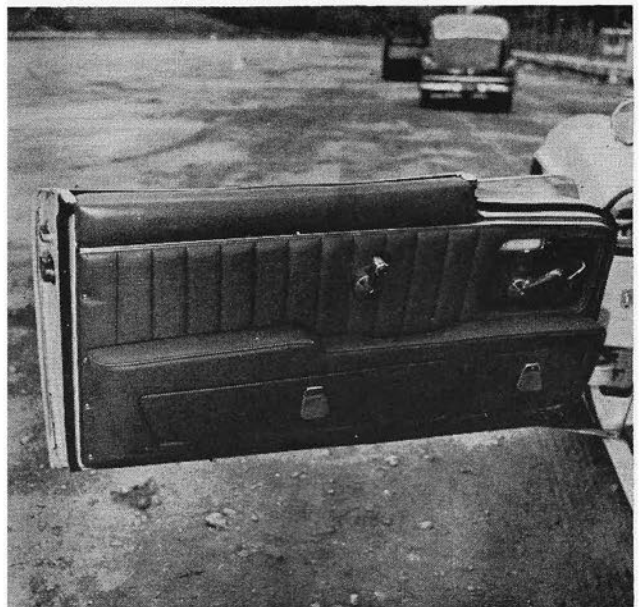
The pedals seemed strangely located. All are rather high and the pendant accelerator is so short that heel and toe operation is impossible. Since performing the road test, we have been informed that for 1960 they have been rearranged to encourage more sporting driving.

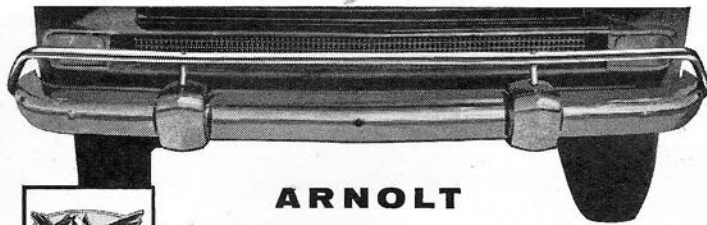
The 507 is termed a touring-sport cabriolet; it has roll-up windows but an unlined folding top. It is literally convertible, into a coupe, a removable hard-top being optional at extra cost. Though we haven't seen it, the pertinent section in the 80-page instruction manual makes its removal and installation sound a bit tedious. This cannot be said of the soft-top. Flip-top, it should be called. All you do is unfasten the two latches above the windshield and literally toss the top up and back. With its precise linkage it drops neatly into its place without any pushing or prodding.

It is in details of this sort, which probably are never explained in technical colleges, that the BMW set a standard hard to match. These luxurious details cost weight as well as

(Continued on page 104)

Hefty BMW door is done in pleated leather with thickly-chromed hardware. Flaps on all four large locker doors are spring loaded.





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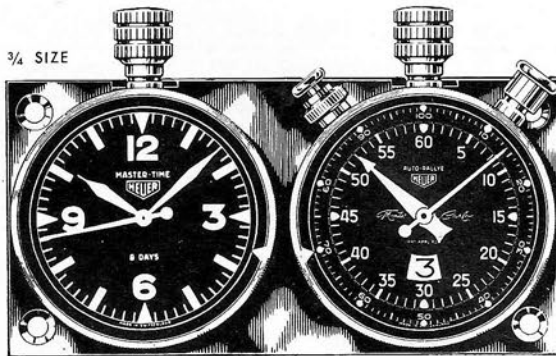
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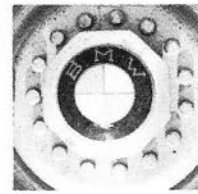
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Disc-Braked

BMW 507

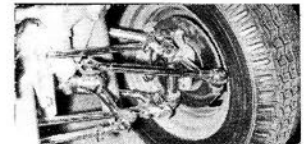
from page 51

money. The BMW, despite so much aluminum and the tubular ladder-type frame, weighs but 125 pounds less than a standard Corvette. With only 3.2 liters, one's definition of sporting performance must be rather generous. Wheelspin can be achieved from a standstill, but it doesn't make the starts any faster. The figures and graph speak for themselves; the 507 is no dog, but it's no tiger either. Sporting, perhaps, but not racing.

The same goes for the brakes, and here again we can report immediate improvement. The car tested in the United States carried Al-Fin drums while an experimental model tried in Europe had Dunlop discs at the front. Both use ATE "Hydrovac" vacuum assist which is successfully unobtrusive in its action.

With the drums, it was the familiar case of the difficult compromise. Linings "soft" enough for smoothness will fade under hard use, even with the heat-dissipation ability of the Al-Fin drums. Presumably, linings hard enough to cope with racing use would not be too pleasant for calmer moments.

When the 507 is driven at eight- to nine-tenths the front brakes will fade discernably before the rear, leaving a very rearward distribution of braking effort. When the brakes are applied entering a corner under these conditions, the 507 automatically swings its tail out to assume the proper angle of drift. It's a useful effect though certainly not one intended by the designers.

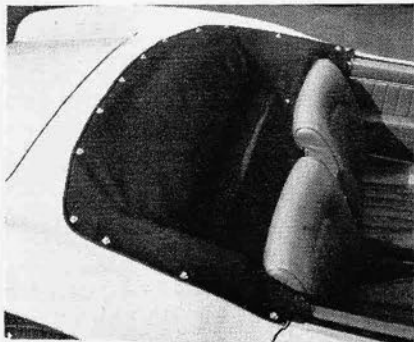


BMW have stolen a march of their German competition by offering disc brakes for 1960 editions of their V8-powered cars, a move which enhances the technical interest and market value of the 507—quite apart from the great improvement in braking. Research Director Alex von Falkenhausen (erstwhile builder of AFM cars; see page 42) liked the smooth, consistent braking of discs. He tried Dunlop Jaguar-sized units on all four wheels before deciding to fit them at the front only, easing the task of providing an effective parking brake at the rear wheels. With no self-servo provided by the discs, the Hydrovac power booster is definitely necessary, proper braking balance being restored by the use of smaller rear wheel cylinders.

With discs there's no fade at all. Braking is silent, straight and powerful enough to pull the 507's sharklike snout right down. On the pre-production car we drove, the servo was more potent than is fitted to drum-braked V8's, giving a soft, light pedal feel. The use of these brakes is a forward step for Germany of which BMW can be proud.

Disc wheels are fitted, in keeping with BMW tradition as well as current racing practice. In addition to normal bolt-on wheels, you can also have central, single nut fastening. Normally we'd call these knock-offs, but recently German legislation prohibits knock-off ears because of some painful accidents to pedestrians. BMW's answer is to remove the ears and shape the nut octagonally. A matching wrench supplements the usual hammer.

The weatherproofing seems good but it's hard to be sure since we drove the 507 only in top-down weather. We were surprised at the arc swept by the windshield wipers. The one before the driver moves through a short path, failing to intersect at all with the right hand unit. Like the pedal arrangement, this too is listed as redesigned and improved on the '60s.



Space for luggage is modest looking but since you have two choices, in the trunk and behind the seats, there is probably just enough for two. If you insist on taking more, the 503 coupe or cabriolet models

have a jump seat and large trunk as well as more traditional lines.

The trunk lid is held open appropriately by two small torsion bars. The spare tire lies beneath a false floor which makes storage simpler, yet takes up valuable space. Place alongside, the gas tank is filled through a lockable door in the right fender. The end of the filler neck is deeply recessed making it hard to see the fuel level as the tank is topped up. The twist-off cap does not seal perfectly and spillage was noticeable in hard left turns on the test track, so much so that mileage dropped to under 14 mpg, a figure which is extremely pessimistic. The handbook quotes consumption per DIN specs as 24 mpg (US). The range between these two figures should encompass most all situations. With average American traffic and using the gears frequently, 20 mpg should result.

Another factory figure we must turn to is top speed. They quote 118, 127 and 137 mph respectively for the 3.9, 3.7 and 3.42 axle ratios. These figures correspond to 5750 rpm. Unless the engine has just come away from an expert tune-up and has full use of its horses, we doubt that any but the first one could actually be achieved. Therefore, we recommend the 3.9 axle ratio for it also gives better acceleration, at the cost of more noise and less economy.

The latter should hardly concern the 507 purchaser. If he will settle for reasonable but not earth-shaking performance, he will find in the BMW 507 a most satisfactory solution to the manufacturer's aim, a quality car combining luxury, comfort and beauty, one which he could be proud to own and pleased to drive.

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