

MOTOR LIFE TEST DATA



1960 OLDSMOBILE

Test Car

TEST CAR: Oldsmobile Super 88
BODY TYPE: four-door hardtop
BASIC PRICE: \$3402

Maneuverability Factors

OVERALL LENGTH: 217.6 inches
OVERALL WIDTH: 80.6 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT: 54.2 inches
WHEELBASE: 123 inches
TREAD, FRONT/REAR: 61 inches each
TEST WEIGHT: 4740 lbs.
WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION: 56 per cent on front wheels
STEERING: 4 turns lock-to-lock
TURNING CIRCLE: 43.1 feet curb-to-curb
GROUND CLEARANCE: 6.2 inches

Interior Room

SEATING CAPACITY: four to six
FRONT SEAT—
HEADROOM: 32.8 inches
WIDTH: 65.4 inches
LEGROOM: 44.6 inches
TRUNK CAPACITY: 35 cubic feet

Engine & Drive Train

TYPE: ohv V-8
DISPLACEMENT: 394 cubic inches
BORE & STROKE: 4.125 x 3.688 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO: 9.75-to-1
CARBURETION: single four barrel
HORSEPOWER: 315 hp @ 4600 rpm
TORQUE: 435 lbs.-ft. @ 2800 rpm
TRANSMISSION: four-speed automatic
REAR AXLE RATIO: 3.07

Performance

GAS MILEAGE: 11 to 14 mpg
ACCELERATION: 0-30 mph in 3.9 seconds, 0-45 in 6.9 seconds and 0-60 in 11.2 seconds.
SPEEDOMETER ERROR: Indicated 30, 45 and 60 mph are actual 29, 43 and 57 mph, respectively
POWER-WEIGHT RATIO: 15 lbs. per horsepower
HORSEPOWER PER CUBIC INCH: .8

THE Rocket has slackened its pace. Oldsmobile, one of the first cars in the horsepower race, now soft-pedals performance to emphasize luxury.

Olds created a sensation in 1949 with the first ohv V-8 engine in the medium-priced field. Aptly named the Rocket, it made the car one of the hottest in America and triggered an industry-wide quest for power. It was particularly successful in a smaller series, the 88, that soon became the performance enthusiast's favorite number.

Over the years, the car grew in size and weight, becoming more luxurious with each succeeding model. While horsepower also increased steadily, bulk finally overcame it in 1959 and, for the first time, a new 88 recorded slower acceleration times than its predecessor.

The Super 88 for 1960 continues this trend. Its only mechanical change is a reduced axle ratio, 3.07 from last year's 3.23, but this one detail typifies what has happened to the Olds personality.

Again, performance has dropped slightly. From 0-to-60, the new Super 88 timed 11.2 seconds against last year's 10.3. The 0-to-30 figure of 3.9 seconds and 0-to-45 of 6.9 were slower, too, by three-tenths of a second each. The comparison is a close one because the '59 and '60 test cars were identically equipped and differed only 20 lbs. in weight.

Both were markedly slower than the '58, probably Oldsmobile's best performing model. With 10 hp and 600 lbs. less and a 3.23 axle ratio, the Super 88 of that year reached 30, 45 and 60 mph in 3.3, 6.4 and 9.4 seconds, respectively.

But, for 1960, there are compensations. One is improved fuel

lower-priced Dynamic 88 has a 371-cubic-inch version of 240 hp. With a single two-barrel carburetor and an 8.75-to-1 compression ratio, it is designed to use regular fuel. It is also available with the 9.75-to-1 ratio which adds 20 hp.

Smoother shift points are a feature of the new Hydramatic. A less obvious improvement is a paper filter in place of the wire strainer formerly used on the transmission oil pump. It keeps out the tiny metal particles that sometimes get into valve bodies and cause them to stick.

Hydramatic is a four-speed automatic. All four speeds function in each of its three driving ranges, Drive, Super and Low, but the latter two raise the shift points to higher speeds. For maximum acceleration, it was found that Super was most efficient. To control the shift from second to third by starting in Low and then moving the lever to Super proved not worth the effort. Almost a full second would be lost compared with just starting in Super.

Handling qualities are good, if not exceptional, for a car of the Super 88's size. The driving feel is smooth and solid without the hair-trigger responsiveness of an equivalent Chrysler product. General Motors power steering has a definite quality that never leaves any doubt as to which way the car will go. As a result, control is stable on either straight or curved roads. Really vigorous cornering produces considerable tire squeal, though, remind-

ing the driver that this is a car intended for sedate purposes.

The suspension is conventional, independent coil in front and semi-elliptic rear. It is fairly soft in keeping with the luxury theme.

Considering that the car's main appeal is to a somewhat dignified sort of buyer, entry and exit require undue contortions. A person entering the front seat for the first time is bound to hit either his knees on the windshield dog-leg, his head at the top of the door frame or his spine against the door post molding. Only some very awkward body English can avoid these obstacles. This is not exclusively an Oldsmobile problem, of course. It is a fault of the basic body design common to all GM cars.

Interior comfort is very good. Thanks to the optional six-way power seat, a driver of any size can find an ideal position. Headroom is two inches less in the hardtop than in the normal sedan but other dimensions are generous. Front seat footroom is improved this year by a slightly smaller transmission hump.

Though the dash has been restyled, instrumentation is similar to last year's. The speedometer is a horizontal type that changes color as speed is increased. It is green up to 35 mph, yellow from 35 to 65 mph and red above 65 mph. Below it is a series of warning lights that add still another colorful touch, red ones marked "Gen," "Oil" and "Hot" and a green one for "Cold."

At the base of the dash, flanking the steering column, are pushbutton controls for air conditioning and heating. They are

OLDSMOBILE



OLDSMOBILE'S POWER RECORD was once favored by performance enthusiasts. Recently, however, the car has undergone more than an annual styling change and has developed a new personality.

economy. Last year's test figure was 11.3 mpg while this year's was 12.7, placing the new model in an 11-14 mpg operating range.

Of more importance to the buyer in Oldsmobile's price range, the '60 is noticeably quieter and smoother. The 88 has always rated high in this respect for a medium-priced car but now it rivals the most expensive makes. Lower engine rpm at normal road speed reduces both noise and vibration. Adding to the effect of the new gearing here are larger body mounts placed at points on the frame where resonance is lowest.

The engine is a direct development of the original Rocket, making it one of the oldest V-8 designs in current passenger car use. For the Super 88 and 98, it has a displacement of 394 cubic inches and produces 315 hp at 4600 rpm. The carburetor is a single four-barrel and the compression ratio is 9.75-to-1. The

not the rocket it used to be

impressive for an accurate indication of the temperature being provided but the buttons themselves are too small and closely grouped. A driver with large fingers will find them difficult to operate.

The rear view mirror seems poorly placed. It is suspended from the top of the windshield frame and blocks the driver's view on right turns.

Oldsmobile has succeeded well in building a luxury car. What it once had in excitement has been replaced by plushness. The question remains whether this is what the public wants in a medium-priced car. The several makes offering this and little else are declining in popularity every year. The latest 88 is a fine car but it lacks the extra something that made it so interesting in the past. ●