

BY BOB AMES

THE BRITISH-MADE Land Rover has about as much chance of winning a beauty prize as I do. Yet, after driving one of these boxy-looking four-wheel-drive imports, I came away with a lot of respect for the car. And I found out just enough about it to realize that its homeliness is almost a virtue.

To be honest, I'll put the record straight and say that I didn't drive it over very rugged country nor for very long. I did get a chance to drive a Land Rover across a steep section of some fire trails in Pasadena, California and believe me, this is about as rugged as the country in Pasadena gets.

Standing alongside the Rover, the first impression I got was one of size. It was hard for me to believe the actual dimensions when I compared them with my visual impression. The Rover's specifications are: Length: 142 3/8 inches; Width: 64 inches; Height: 77 1/2 inches and Wheelbase: 88 inches. With a tread of 51 1/2 inches, it can follow almost any trail left by other bobtail jeeps.

To get to the fire trail I drove on one of Los Angeles' busiest freeways and got one of my first surprises. I pushed the throttle until the car hit the legal limit (65 mph) and then engaged the four-wheel drive lever. Without so much as a quiver or even the slightest change in speed, the transmission switched from two to four-wheel drive. Of course, this was in the high range of gearing, but changing to four-wheel drive instantly would be a big help if one suddenly encountered an icy, snowy or muddy strip of road.

At the mountain over which the fire trail wound, I stopped and put the Land Rover into compound low and driving it as I would any other four-wheel-drive vehicle, I started up the hill.

The trail angled upwards at about thirty to forty degrees and, of course, had several gentler slopes. The biggest surprise was that on several of the sharper grades I could shift up. Most of the hills could be taken in second and on some that were not too long, I went through the gears all the way to fourth.

BRITISH MADE Land Rover looks big, but dimensions of this four-wheel drive car put it well within the bobtail jeep size, several unusual features make it a remarkable car.

Of course, this trip can not be compared with a more detailed test, but a few things I discovered were quite impressive. One thing stands out—the gummy little engine that powers the car. A four-cylinder rated at 77 hp at 4,250 rpm, it has a maximum torque figure of 124 lb.-ft. at 2500 rpm. Coupled with the low gearing in the transmission, 40.7 overall ratio in compound low for example, it is practically impossible to stall a normally loaded Land Rover.

On hills around fifty degrees the fuel pump konks out. This is about average for any mechanical fuel pump and I would have liked to test a car with an electric fuel pump to see exactly how steep a hill it could climb.

A little earlier I said something about the Land Rover's homely appearance being a virtue. This is most evident in front where it resembled three boxes stacked together. Those big square fenders are just right for batting down brush, although most jeeps I know would have had the parking- and turn-signal lights smashed in short order. The radiator and headlights are recessed about a foot, giving additional protection in brush country. This is also a good feature when fording streams since it keeps water off the engine.

There were several Land Rovers to choose from for the trip and I picked one that was as British as the factory representative's accent. The spare tire was mounted on the hood, although the fac-

tory man insisted on calling it a bonnet. My reason for picking this particular model was to see just how good the vision over the spare tire would be.

Actually, it is not as bad as I had imagined. The seats inside the Rover are higher and put the driver well up over the usual sight line. But don't get me wrong. It is still practically impossible to see directly in front of you and a lot of back country driving will have to be done by intuition, especially when trying to go over a rock to get more ground clearance.

Inside, the seats were actually comfortable and three people can sit abreast in the front without too much discomfort. In the back there is a lot of room and two seats facing sideways will accommodate four more people. This gives the Land Rover a passenger capacity better than many standard-size automobiles.

The interior was Spartan and I wouldn't have liked it any other way. In case you don't want to carry the spare tire British style on the hood, it fits neatly behind the front seat.

The model I drove was a bobtail and had an aluminum cab. In fact, nearly every metal part of the Rover is either aluminum or galvanized, no small advantage in wet climates or near the ocean. I liked this cab particularly well. When the weather is cold it adequately seals the car so that the heater does a good job of keeping the riders warm. The windows, and they really are windows, not canvas curtains, are the foreign type which only open half way making it impossible to ride with your arm out the window. But they also unscrew and detach. The front windshield folds down and the Land Rover can be used as an open air jeep, which is the best way to use any four-wheel-drive car in the summer.

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Dollie Lee and her husband, who live



in Los Angeles, California, are a couple who like to travel. They also prefer to build their own equipment and their camping outfit is one of the best owner-built rigs I have seen in a long time.

It consists of a car-top tent with additional sleeping quarters and a kitchen inside the station wagon. The complete outfit cost the Lees \$300, which is less than the price of a factory-made car-top tent. Biggest expense in the project was the car-



THE LEES built their outdoor rig on weekends. Outfit consists of a car tent with sleeping arrangements on roof. Slide-out kitchen gives room for more sleeping bags.

top tent for which the Lees used 10-ounce duck and had form fitted by a tent and awning company. The price could undoubtedly be cut down by someone who could fit and sew his own tent.

When not in use, the kitchen slides back into the wagon, and extra luggage and gear can be stored on top of it. The tent folds up into a rectangular car-top arrangement and can be set up or taken down in a matter of minutes.

The Lees spent several weekends in building their gear and the time was well worth it. They have a camping outfit that

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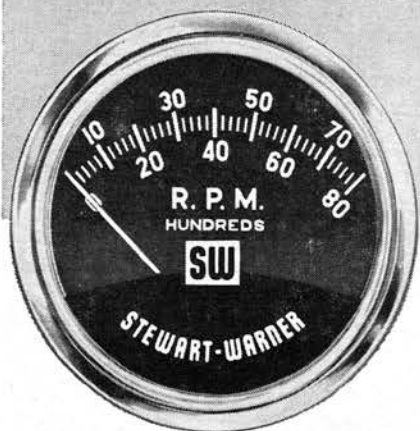
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Those who prefer the compact size for pickup trucks will also be able to have a camper. At the recent unveiling of Ford's compact Ranchero, the Jaclen Trailer Mfg., Co., 1901 Potrero Street, El Monte, California, introduced their new size camper designed especially for compact trucks. A letter to the Jaclen Company will bring information on this new size Turnpike.

* * *

What with the vacation and fishing season in full swing I have received dozens of questions on towing. Even the fellows with a pickup camper are towing these days—and it is usually a boat.

The answers to most towing problems usually center in one place, the hitch. Hitches can be divided into two categories: the common bumper hitch and the so-called load-leveling hitch. Each class, equalizing and non-equalizing, has its own peculiar merit.

A small four-by-six-foot utility trailer can be safely handled with a short-radius bumper hitch, if the thing is bolted directly to the frame, and not left to the mercy of bumper bolts and brackets.

When the driver graduates to heavier trailers or a bigger boat, towing problems become complex. Of principal importance is the rear-end sag of the towing vehicle and road "drift" due to the combined bounce, surge and vibration of trailer and car.

This is where a stabilizing hitch comes in handy. Load leveling devices consist of attachments between car and trailer frame,

designed to equalize the weight of the trailer evenly throughout the trailer and front and rear auto axle.

Some of the designs go further and incorporate into their hitches the ability to adjust weight-tension on either the rear or the front of the towing vehicle. This practically removes the rear-end sag and many of the problems associated with it. When weight on the tongue (this can be determined by a simple platform scales) exceeds 150 lbs., serious thought should be given to an equalizing hitch.

The best test of a hitch is a road-shake-down cruise with trailer attached. No matter what type, size or design hitch is being used, the road test determines the actual value.

Any road test should try to cover varied terrain to simulate actual conditions. Smooth streets, off-trail washboard roads, up and down steep hills, and when possible, a drive through a fairly stiff breeze. Load the trailer with anything handy, just to get a close approximation of the weight normally to be carried. If the hitch seems satisfactory, yet still allows excessive rear-end sag, perhaps the problem can be solved with the addition of overload springs.

Many late model domestic cars have poor springing systems for trailer towing. Excessive overhang and springs that stretch out almost horizontally obviously yield a softer ride—but also bottom quicker, highly annoying while towing. Weight affects them immediately. Even an eight-foot sleeper, a light boat or a utility trailer can bring the bumper of these big cars down alarmingly.

Measuring the distance from the hitch to the ground, before and after hooking up the trailer, reveals the rudimentary effi-



COMPACT TRUCKS and campers designed especially to fit them were developed simultaneously. This Turnpike camper made its debut with new Falcon Ranchero. Features of larger Turnpike camper are built into this camper resulting in an economical, luxurious outfit.

ciency of the equalizer at once.

It all boils down to a choice leaning heavily on the factor of trailer weight, highway use, and the experience of the driver.

LETTERS FROM READERS

I would appreciate any information on where I could purchase the three-burner gas stove, sink with a pump, and an ice box like they use in commercial campers. Jack Mathew Shamokin, Pennsylvania

Stoves, sinks, pumps, ice boxes, electric or gas lights and other accessories for pickup campers are usually the same ones that are installed in trailers. Check a trailer supply company and they will have several to choose from.

I have a 1948 Willys four-wheel drive pickup and would like to put a bigger engine in it. I am told that a Studebaker Champion (six-cylinder) engine, 1948 to 1953, will fit my pickup. Is this true? Henry Bartos Kenai, Alaska

Probably, but jeeps usually don't consider merely jumping to a Six. The best bet for increasing power in any jeep, even a bobtail model, is installing a V-8.

Do you know of any outfit that makes a self-propelled, fully equipped car or truck for travelling—a complete camper type of truck, not a slide in? W. B. Davis Regina, Sask., Canada

Volkswagen makes a complete camper-truck version and it is becoming quite popular in this country. It has nearly all the accessories usually found in a camper.

Here is an idea I would like to see in a future issue of MOTOR LIFE.

A four-wheel drive safari to some interesting and remote area with the CJ-5 and FC-150 Jeeps, the British Land Rover, the regular and the long wheelbase station wagon, the Austin Gypsy, the Toyopet and the German DKW, just to name a few cars. I think that many readers would be interested in a comparison of these cars. Robert W. Dunn Seattle, Washington

Sounds like fun but my only objection is that I wouldn't be able to drive each car. Some of the cars you mention have already been tested by MOTOR LIFE and others will be tested in the future.

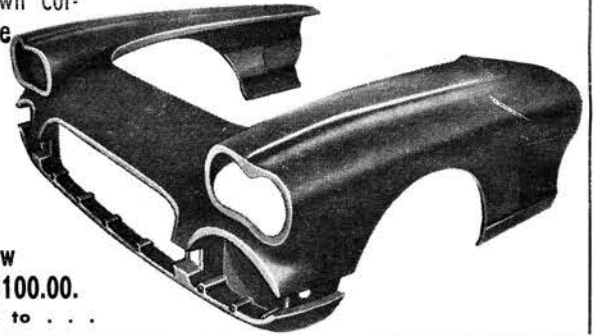
Perhaps you can answer my question. I have seen a camping trailer on the highways which I believe is called a "Ranger." This trailer is made so the plastic or fiberglass cover cranks up to make the roof of a tent arrangement, with beds built in and a built-in galley in front. Can you give me any lead as to where to obtain literature and manufacturer's name? A. C. Isham Lubbock, Texas

A trailer similar to the one you describe is manufactured by the Forlyn Mfg. Co., 210 25th S.E., Minneapolis 14, Minnesota.

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