

EUROPEAN REPORT

by Gordon Wilkins

Renault R-8

Before Renault's new R-8 was announced, motoring writers from many different countries tried it out secretly in Spain. Their comments were analyzed by the company's quality control organization and circulated to everyone concerned, from the president of Renault on down. One result: The first 300 cars off the line were held back for a modification to prevent a possible rattle in the rods connecting front door handles to the locks.

Comments varied widely according to nationality, demonstrating just how difficult it is to please everyone. French and Germans drove flat out, decided they would like more low-speed torque and lower fuel consumption (it varies considerably with speed). All approved the design and position of steering wheels and controls. French and Spaniards thought the steering a little too light at high speeds; British and German liked it, though some noted some sensitivity to cross-winds.

French and Swedes voted for still more powerful horns (there are both town and country intensities selected by a switch

on the steering column); Germans, whose noise limits are prescribed by law, and the British, who have to put up with rather feeble horns through an informal agreement between government and industry, had no criticism.

Most people thought the interior finish plain, but the British applauded the neat, black, legible instrument panel, while the French voted for more decoration and color. The Swedes, used to wearing heavy snow boots, wanted pedals farther apart. They and myself checked accessibility of controls when wearing safety harness, found them well placed except that the lever is a little far away in third gear, on left-hand-drive cars.

Everyone liked the ride over the rough Spanish roads and the four-wheel disc brakes. The lighting system produced a variety of comments, but Renault engineers tell me 92 permutations are needed to suit different regulations and sources of supply in export markets.

The 956cc, five-bearing engine is the same as that used in the new Caravelle and Floride S, and is quite different from that used in the Dauphine. It has a lower

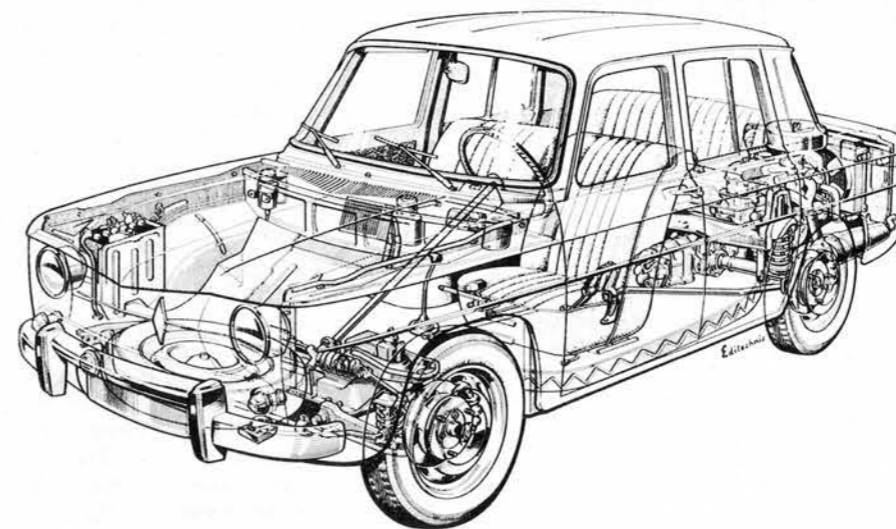
compression than the version used in the coupes and convertibles (8.5 to 1) and gives 48 bhp at 5200 rpm, instead of 51.

Engine size is limited to 956cc to keep within the French 5-CV tax limit, but an 1108cc version is already in production for the Estafette light commercial vehicle, and there seems to be no reason why this should not go into cars exported to countries where there is no tax on engine size. It would certainly give a welcome boost in torque at low speeds.

The camshaft is driven by chain (the Dauphine has timing gears), and there is a new clutch with diaphragm spring and a separate casing bolted between engine and gearbox for greater rigidity. The diaphragm spring takes the place of conventional coil springs and operating fingers. It is unaffected by centrifugal force and requires less pressure for full disengagement. The gearbox is a strengthened version of that used in the Dauphine. It has four speeds, the top three being synchronized.

At the rear, the swing axle suspension is supplemented by radius arms running diagonally forward. They take driving and braking loads, which no longer have to be resisted by the engine mountings. In theory, this should reduce free movement in the gear lever; in practice it can still be stirred about a good deal, although the gears are not difficult to find.

Front suspension is new, with ball joint steering pivots and an anti-roll bar. The radiator, filled with anti-freeze and sealed to need no topping up, is placed behind the engine. This increases passenger and luggage space, but makes the engine a



INTERESTING ENGINEERING INCLUDES FOUR-WHEEL DISC BRAKES, NEW FRONT SUSPENSION.

little less easy to reach than on the Dauphine.

The body style is a breakaway from the rounded style of the Dauphine and 4-CV. The angular lines give better vision and more space for passengers and luggage, but wind resistance must be higher. There is really good space for four adults and room for five in a pinch, with elbow room of 50 inches at front and rear, and a rear seat 52 inches wide. With the roomy front seats in the midway spot, there is 28½ inches between front seat and rear backrest. This can be increased to 30 inches.

The wide doors are not cut away to clear the wheel arches. They have easy-acting, non-slam locks and child-proof safety catches. Interior latches are particularly neat, recessed for safety above flexible grab handles. The luggage trunk at the front (8¼ cubic feet) holds several suitcases, and there is 2¼ cubic feet of stowage space for small bags in another

compartment behind the rear seat. This is quite an achievement in a car only 13 feet, 1 inch long.

There are no engine air intakes on the sides of the car, a point which will be noted by anyone who has driven a Dauphine through a flooded road. The first time I tried it, the whole car was filled with steam. Water flowed in through the side intakes, hit the exhaust pipe and was converted to steam, which was distributed by the heater system. On the R-8, air for the engine goes in through louvers in the engine cover, and hot air comes out under the rear bumper.

The heater-ventilation system is quite sophisticated. Fresh air entering at the base of the windshield, away from dust and exhaust fumes, can go direct to the interior or be passed through a front-mounted heater fed with hot water piped from the engine before going to the floor or windshield. In addition, cool, fresh

continued on page 84



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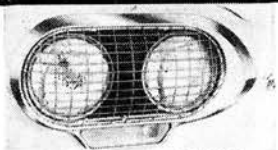
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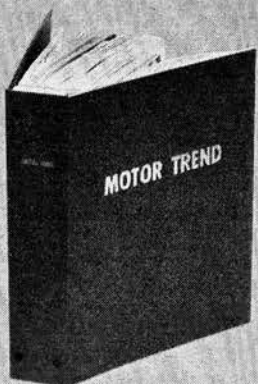
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continued

air comes through adjustable louvers on each side of the instrument panel, which can direct a refreshing flow to the face or may be used to defrost the side windows. Warm weather driving is possible with all windows shut, or with the rear sliding windows open an inch or two. The R-8 is one of the few cars at any price which offers the cold-weather ideal — warm air to the feet and cool, fresh air to the face to prevent drowsiness.

The same care for detail is shown in the rest of the equipment — town and country horns, headlight flasher, parking lights and a lock on the engine compartment which also protects the fuel filler.

The interior is plain and practical. Seats are upholstered in a combination of cloth, foam and plastic, and are carefully matched to the car's springing system.

I drove the R-8 for several hundred miles in Spain, going out from Madrid over the bumpy Navacerrada Pass to Avila and Segovia and on over rocky mountain tracks where one can drive for half an hour without seeing another vehicle or a human being. I thought the ride was good, but did not realize just how good until I tried several other cars over the same roads.

The R-8 will corner a good deal faster than the Dauphine before giving any sign of sliding its tail. Breakaway comes only when cornering very fast indeed, and there is less warning when it arrives. Steering is quicker than on the Dauphine (3½ turns lock-to-lock), and the turning circle is a compact 30 feet. Steering is light and shock-free. There is little oversteer — in most conditions handling is about neutral — but strong cross-winds can be felt.

Driving hard, I got a fuel consumption of 25-26 miles per U.S. gallon. At touring speeds, 33-35 mpg was obtainable.

The Dauphine continues in full production. The R-8 at a higher price offers different styling, more space and performance and a big advance in both braking power and riding comfort.

Triumph Vitesse

Enthusiastic drivers can rarely be trusted to handle a car with well arranged controls and good handling qualities without speculating on ways of increasing the performance. For those who like the Herald 1200 but don't find it fast enough, Standard-Triumph have now provided the full treatment. A six-cylinder, twin-carburetor engine of 97.4 cubic inches in a strengthened chassis transforms it into the Triumph Vitesse; disc front brakes give the necessary extra stopping power, and styling is revised.

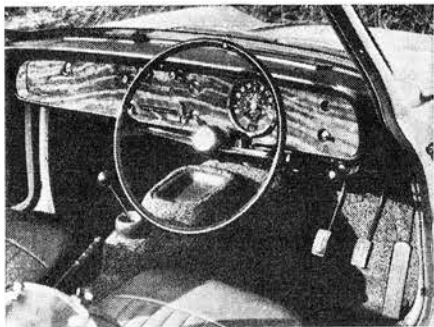
The power unit is a small-bore version of the Six already used at two-liter capacity in the Standard Vanguard six-scater. With bore and stroke of 66.75 x 76mm it has a displacement of 1596cc, and with a compression ratio of 8.75 to 1 it develops 70 bhp at 5000 rpm and peak torque of 92.5 lbs.-ft. at 2800 rpm. Transmission is the same as the Herald's, with four-speed box (top three synchronized), controlled by a short, sport-type lever, and the ratios are the same. However, tires are the oversize 5.60 x 13 used on the Herald station wagon, giving 16.4 mph per 1000 rpm in top gear. A de Normanville overdrive is optional, working on third and fourth gears.

Front-end styling is changed, with a new fender and hood unit incorporating four headlights. Another feature is the use of bumpers made from extruded light alloy sections, polished and anodized. The wheel discs are of the same material. As usual, hood and fenders tip forward, giving unrestricted access to engine, brakes, steering and front suspension. Steering is by rack and pinion.

To make space for the larger radiator required, the header tank has been separated from the matrix and mounted along-



TRIUMPH'S VITESSE IS BASICALLY A HERALD WITH INCREASED POWER AND BETTER BRAKING.



Walnut paneling of Vitesse's instrument panel adds quality to the interior.

side the engine valve cover, above the manifolds. A riser pipe leads air from the cylindrical air cleaner to the two Solex carburetors on a light alloy manifold.

Interior finish is of good quality, with walnut insert in the black-framed instrument panel, pockets in the doors, three ash trays, universally pivoted, padded sun visors, roof and instrument panel light, and lockable glove box. The separate front seats and bench rear seat are upholstered in a new synthetic material which "breathes" like leather. (Leather is optional at extra cost.) Heater-defroster and windshield washers are standard equipment. The direction indicator lever can be used to flash the headlights.

Fuel tank capacity is increased to 10 U.S. gallons. This slightly reduces the space in the trunk, but there is still a good usable volume for a car of this size.

New Aston Martin

While a fair proportion of the "prototypes" raced at LeMans are racing machines with no commercial future, Aston Martin's new car, Project 212, could well form the basis of a new and highly interesting production model. Since the factory withdrew from racing after winning the World Championship for Manufacturers in 1959, it has been apparent that the DB-14 even when fitted with the extremely light Zagato body is no match for the Ferrari Berlinetta. Aston Martin have tackled this problem in the new model by raising the power and drastically reducing the weight.

Its engine has the same dimensions as the Lagonda (96 x 92mm, 3996cc) and produces 345 bhp at 6000 rpm, which is at least 30 hp more than is produced by the modified 3.7-liter unit in the Zagato DB-4 GT. The block is aluminum, with iron liners. The head, of aluminum alloy, has valves set at 80 degrees included angle operated by two overhead camshafts. Carburetors are three double-choke 50 DCO Webers, and compression ratio is 9.5 to 1. The seven main bearings and the big ends are copper-lead. Oil is carried in a light alloy sump and cooled by a light alloy radiator.

The chassis seems to follow the Superleggera principles, with a sheet steel box-

continued on page 86



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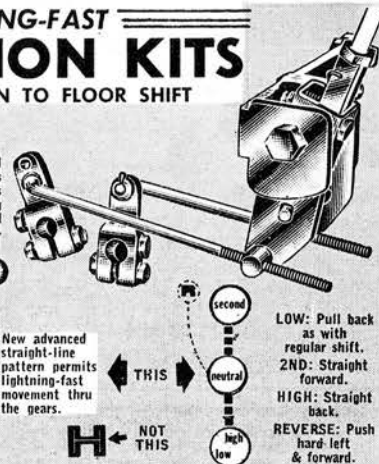
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| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
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| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
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| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
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| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-bolt side cover 601 183 |
| 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 57-61 Std. Tr. exc. Lenc. w/o OD 602 181 | 57-61 Std. Tr. w/OD 603 182 | 49-51 Std. Tr. w/Lge. Circ. Bell Hsq. exc. '51 w/OD 609 189 | 58-61 Std. Tr. 9-b |

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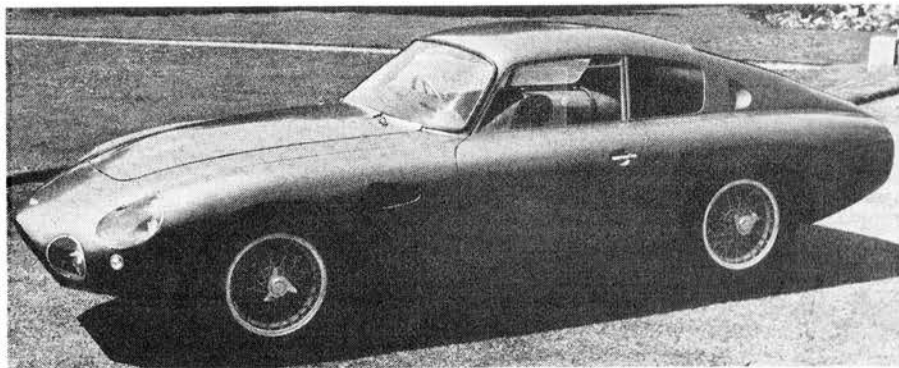
European Report *continued*

section understructure and a light tubular frame to support the aluminum-magnesium body panels. The floor is aluminum. Front suspension is by coil springs and wishbones, with David Brown ball joints as the steering pivots. At the rear is a de Dion axle with torsion bars. Dampers are Armstrong telescopic.

The five-speed gearbox (with top four synchronized) and the differential are both made by David Brown and both have light alloy casings. Steering is by rack and pin-

ion, and the brakes are Girling discs; 12-inch front, 11⁷/₁₆-inch rear.

Wheelbase is 94 inches (one inch longer than that of the DB-4 GT) and the streamlined body, developed in the wind tunnel, has a longer tail, increasing overall length by six inches. Height is 50 inches, same as that of the Zagato body. Dry weight is quoted as only 2150 pounds, which represents a cut of about 430 pounds compared with the Zagato DB-4, and the new car is said to do about 170 mph. /MT



Preview of the future Aston Martin? Most knowledgeable observers are certain that this prototype, Project 212, is a forerunner of a new production model. The car is extremely light, has a 345-hp aluminum engine, a light tubular frame and body panels of aluminum and magnesium. The gearbox is five-speed.



Just entering production is the new BMW 1500. Powered by a new, inclined four-cylinder engine with a 90-hp output, the 1500 has a four-speed gearbox with Porsche synchronization. Braking system is discs in front and drums in the rear. Following the current Detroit trend, the 1500 is service-free, with no points requiring lubrication.

