

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST

ALTHOUGH IT HARDLY seems possible, it has been seven years since General Motors decided to test the U.S. small-car market by introducing its two best European sellers into this country. These were the Vauxhall Victor from England and the Opel Rekord from Germany—both subsidiaries of the parent company.

Opel's best year in the U.S. was

1959 when 39,320 Rekords were sold and before importation was discontinued (in 1961) a total of 77,000 were sold.

Now, GM is going to try it again with an even smaller car, the Opel Kadett. As before, Buick dealers will have the option of selling these cars in areas where there is a good market for imported cars. However, the total number of retail outlets will be limited to 400.

The latest Opel Kadett project took five years to develop and one million test miles were involved before its announcement in Germany on August 21, 1962. Two new factories were erected at Bochum, designed solely for production of the car. At full capacity,

13,600 employees on two shifts can produce 1000 units per day.

The car itself is slightly smaller than a Volkswagen. It has a 4-cyl., water-cooled engine in front, it seats four adults comfortably and its power-to-weight ratio gives lively performance, at least by European standards. Its price, in Germany, is only \$24 more than the VW so it is obviously designed to compete squarely with the Rounded One. And, in comparison, it offers more interior room, better performance and at least equal fuel economy.

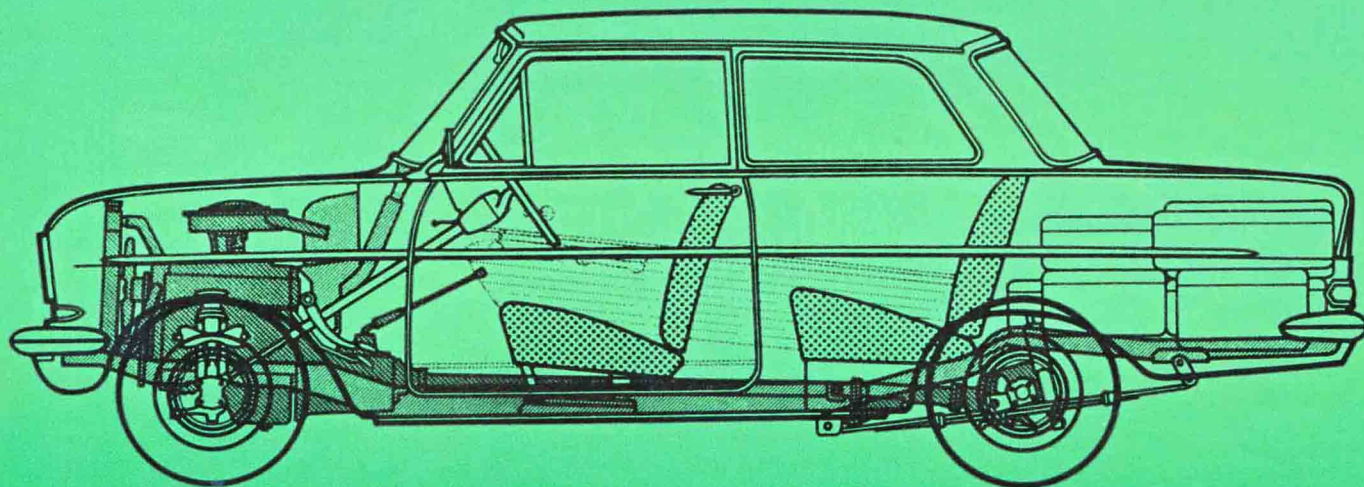
The Kadett will be marketed in three versions: the 2-door sedan, which we've tested here and which lists (at West Coast port of entry) for \$1741, a

1964 OPEL KADETT

An Opel a Day Keeps the Gas Bill at Bay



SMALL KADETT utilizes its diminutive volume well, as body diagram shows. With small 4-cyl. engine up front, large luggage space is available in rear. Seats are ample, comfortable, but without excess padding.



similar 2-door station wagon (\$1877) and the Sports Coupe (\$1901) which has more horsepower and a sort of fastback styling.

Whether the Kadett will make much of a dent in VW sales in this country is another question. *Car Life* editors, after driving the Kadett for two weeks, think not. It's a very good little car, but its bland, squarish appearance alone almost precludes mass appeal.

The comparison table (page 75) shows that price must have been the principal factor in General Motors' decision to import the Kadett. It is also obvious that the Rekord is slightly bigger than the parent firm's Corvair. Not so obvious is the fact that the Rekord will probably out-perform even the standard Corvair Six.

Once used to driving the Kadett, it becomes a very likeable little creature. It keeps up with normal traffic nicely, it rides well, it is easy to park and fuel consumption is most moderate. All the controls are neatly arranged and well labelled by the international code system—which American cars could adopt to good advantage.

Maximum recommended speeds for each gear are plainly marked by red dots at 19, 36 and 58 mph on the speedometer. This instrument was remarkably accurate, being only 1 mph fast at 30, 40, 50 and 60 mph.

Annoyances in the control area included a cold-running engine that took a lot of choking (manual type) and a gas tank that holds only 8.7 gal., yet would take only 6.7 gal. when at E.

The engine feels very sturdy and is quite smooth at all times, if not very quiet. One can hear the tappets rattling

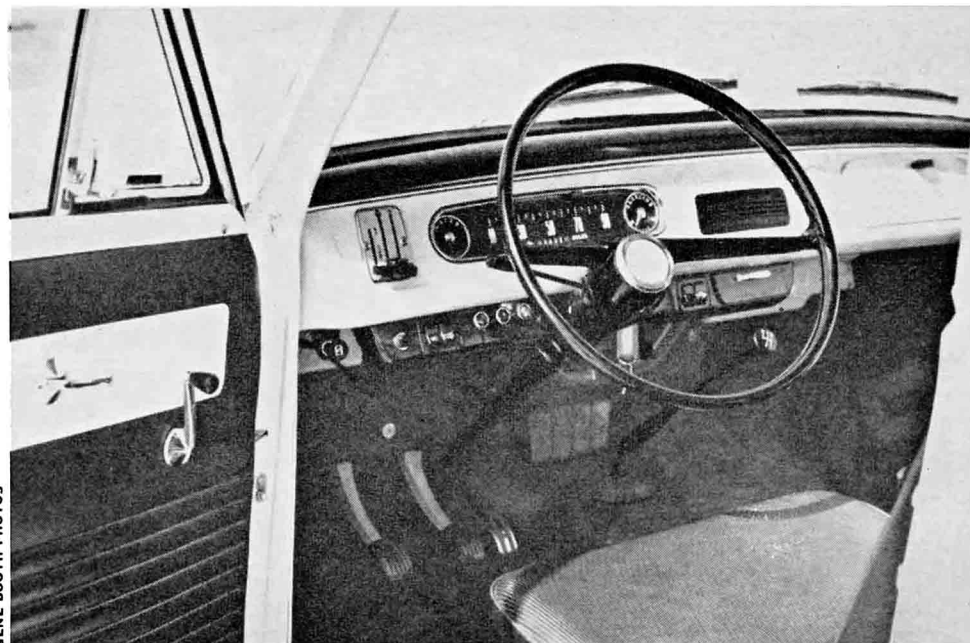
and if one pushes the engine to the red marks in each gear, it really screams in protest. Actually, these speed limits correspond to 4400 rpm in 1st, 4700 rpm in 2nd and 5000 rpm in 3rd—which seems a little odd.

The old-style wobble-stick for picking off the four gears isn't too bad and the synchromesh is very good, even on 1st gear. The spacing of the gear ratios is also excellent and gear noise is moderate—3rd in particular is very quiet. We gave this unit a fairly rough time of it when getting the acceleration figures and everything stood up very well. Many of these small cars have clutches

that invariably start to slip, engines that tend to overheat, or tappets that loosen up during this part of the test. Not here, as the Kadett is obviously very solid.

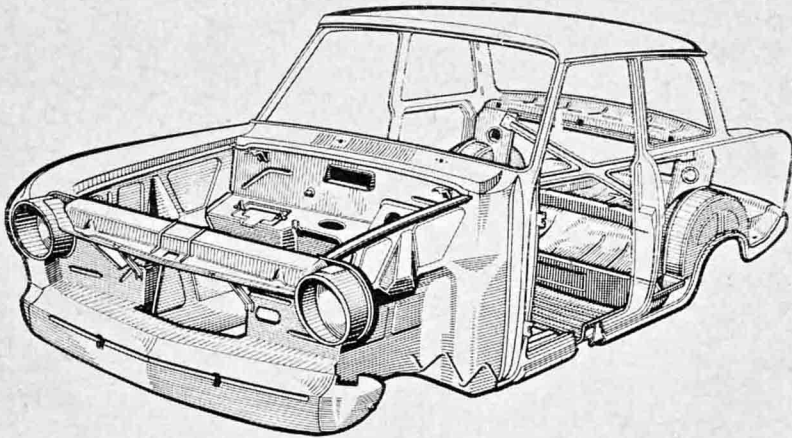
The actual acceleration figures (corrected of course) were much better than we expected. The 0-60 mph time, for example, averaged 23.0 sec. which is about 5 sec. better than the current Volkswagen time. Nevertheless it would have been nice if Opel had chosen to supply the "hot" engine it uses as standard in the Kadett sport coupe. This unit has a higher compression ratio (8.8:1), develops 54 bhp

SIMPLE, well-organized instrument panel has water temperature and fuel gauges, and warning light for generator, oil pressure. Control operation is completely conventional.

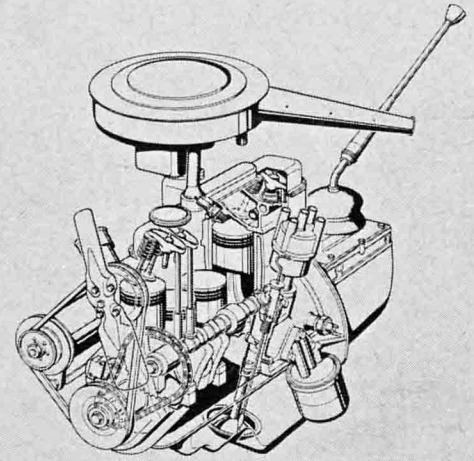


GENE BOOTH PHOTOS

UNIT BODY construction of Kadett is light, strong and extremely rigid. Good handling and performance are adjuncts of this construction.



OVERHEAD VALVE 4-cyl. engine produces 46 bhp from 60.59 cu. in. (993 cc.) It boasts fully machined combustion chamber, hollow push rods, ball-stud rocker arms, single barrel carburetor.



OPEL KADETT

(17% more) and would give a little more reserve of power for cruising with a full load on the highway.

The rack-and-pinion steering is first class, has a good positive feel and is quick, yet not sensitive at high speed.

The brakes, too, were quite good. The car won't turn a true 80 mph, but two successive stops from over 70 mph showed no tendency to lock up and no swerving, and the deceleration rates

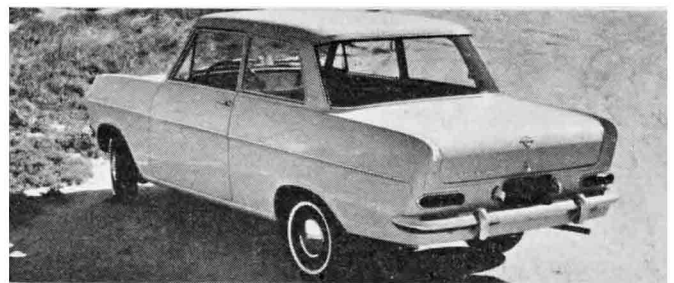
were 30 and 28 ft./sec./sec., which is exceptionally good. The brake and clutch pedal pads could be a little larger, we thought.

No attempt at economy-run driving during the test period was made—we just batted it around—and the fuel consumption always topped 30 mpg.

The driving position and seats also deserve special praise. Unlike some domestic products of the same origin, the Opel steering wheel is situated well

forward and the driver doesn't have to bend his elbows at a right angle or have the steering wheel rim rubbing his chest. The individual front seats have longitudinal ribs rather like corduroy. These ribs seem to help a great deal and reduce the passengers' tendency to slide off when cornering. It should also be mentioned that, despite the small overall size of the vehicle, rear-seat passengers get a good break and have some knee room even with the front seats pushed all the way back. The 48-in. seat width allows three adults to fit in with a moderate amount of squeeze.

Trunk space is surprising, helped a



KADETT'S SQUARISH rear encloses a generous, for its size, trunk space. Vertically mounted spare and fuel tank help get usable space. Below, Kadett's more handsome big brother, Rekord.



great deal by tucking the spare tire vertically alongside and under the left rear fender. Under the front hood all-around accessibility of the engine is excellent, though we were a little shaken to find only a 6-volt battery. We were also shaken by the use of 12-in. wheels—not physically but mentally: Where do you buy a tire if one blows out in the middle of Arkansas?

In all, it's too bad one of our crew had a ride last fall in the bigger and more desirable Rekord model. Now, there's a car that could sell in the U.S.—if the price was right. ■

COMPARING THE KADETT

	Kadett	VW 1200	Rekord	Corvair 6
Size, box volume.....	287	332	378	360
Wheelbase.....	91.5	94.5	104.0	108.0
Length, overall.....	154.5	160.0	178.0	180.0
Engine size, cu. in.....	60.6	72.7	102.5	164.0
Bhp, advertised.....	46	40	69	95
Engine revs/mile.....	3650	3190	3030	2800
Tire size.....	6.00-12	5.60-15	5.90-13	6.50-13
Curb weight, lb.....	1475	1675	2140	2500
Price, f.o.b.....	\$1269	\$1245	\$1726	\$1990
Price, U.S. (p.o.e.).....	\$1741	\$1725	\$2150*	\$1990

*Estimated on basis of 6.5% duty (+10% excise tax), overseas freight, etc.

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST

1964 OPEL Kadett 2-door Sedan

SPECIFICATIONS

List price.....	\$1741
Price, as tested.....	1741
Curb weight, lb.....	1480
Test weight.....	1820
distribution, %.....	51/49
Tire size.....	6.00-12
Tire capacity, lb.....	n.a.
Brake swept area.....	n.a.
Engine type.....	IL-4, ohv
Bore & stroke.....	2.84 x 2.40
Displacement, cu. in.....	60.2
Compression ratio.....	7.80
Carburetion.....	1 x 1
Bhp @ rpm.....	46 @ 5200
equivalent mph.....	85.5
Torque, lb-ft.....	54 @ 2600
equivalent mph.....	42.7

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.....	91.5
Tread, f & r.....	47.2/47.4
Overall length, in.....	154.5
width.....	57.9
height.....	55.5
equivalent vol, cu. ft.....	287
Frontal area, sq. ft.....	17.8
Ground clearance, in.....	5.75
Steering ratio, o/a.....	n.s.
turns, lock to lock.....	3.25
turning circle, ft.....	32.2
Hip room, front.....	2 x 20
Hip room, rear.....	48.0
Pedal to seat back, max.....	41.0
Floor to ground.....	9.2
Luggage vol, cu. ft.....	n.s.
Fuel tank capacity, gal.....	8.7

EXTRA-COST OPTIONS

None.

GEAR RATIOS

4th (1.000) overall.....	3.89
3rd (1.406).....	5.47
2nd (2.156).....	8.39
1st (3.764).....	14.6



CALCULATED DATA

Lb/hp (test wt).....	39.6
Cu. ft/ton mile.....	70.0
Mph/1000 rpm.....	16.4
Engine revs/mile.....	3650
Piston travel, ft/mile.....	1460
Car Life wear index.....	53.2

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (4650), mph.....	76.0
Shifts, @ mph (manual).....	
3rd (5150).....	60
2nd (5250).....	40
1st (5300).....	23

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.....	5.3
0-40.....	8.9
0-50.....	14.0
0-60.....	23.0
0-70.....	38.0
0-80.....	
0-100.....	
Standing 1/4 mile, sec.....	22.0
speed at end, mph.....	59

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual.....	29.2
60 mph.....	59.2
80 mph.....	76.0

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range, mpg..... 30-34

