

CAR AND DRIVER ROAD TEST

CITROËN DS-21

Op-pop art nouveau (whirrr!) on a 123-inch wheelbase

We've always felt that certain cars were purchased for their "protest value," and we'd hazard a guess that the downfall of the American independent auto manufacturer was in large part due to the fact that imported cars were a much more effective protest than any American car—regardless of how off-beat or unknown it might be. A foreign car was a protest against everything—sort of burning your automotive draft card.

Well, Charley, if any old imported car is a form of social protest, the Citroën is the ultimate. Because the Citroën is a protest against automobiles, period. It is as unlike the common herd as Jeanne Moreau is unlike Bronco Nagurski. It is an automobile, in that it will carry four or five people from one place to another and it uses roads to do it, but that's about where the comparison ends. Aw, it has an engine and wheels and a transmission and instruments and a steering wheel like other cars, but after that it's in a class by itself.

The last Citroën we road tested was a 1964 DS-19 *Grand Route*, a sort of sports version of the normal (if that's the word) DS-19. It had a little more power, four-speed manual instead of automatic transmission, and we went quite ape over it. We drove that particular car for over a thousand miles and came to know it and love it like a member of the family.

We were prepared, then, to fall victim to this new DS-21, just as we did to its predecessor. The Citroën people first showed the car on this side of the pond on the Monday after the U.S. Grand Prix, at Watkins Glen. Jack Brabham was there, taking journalists for near-silent, awe-

inspiring rides around the Glen circuit in one car, while a Citroën technical man, obviously a suicidal maniac, was doing roughly the same thing—but with a lot less silence and a lot more awe.

Brabham whistled us around the race track and showed us the right line to take in a Formula One car, where the shift points were, et cetera. While all this education was being fed us, the Citroën was plunging into and around the corners without a sign of strain, and we were going pretty damned fast. The Michelin X's were humming along, and the engine note was rising and falling, but there was no physical sensation of speed, only the visual inputs as trees and fences rushed by.

As Brabham demonstrated the car's smoothness, stability, and comfort at very high speeds, the other chap was proving its durability, stamina, and incredible patience. He finally missed the corner coming onto the pit straight, in full view of his boss, and slowed down forthwith. The festivities were capped with a champagne lunch at the Seneca Lodge, where anybody that might have had any complaints promptly forgot them. If DeGaulle had any sense, he'd let Citroën's U.S. representatives handle his public relations over here.

As soon as possible, we promoted a new DS-21 for a road test, and devoted a couple of weeks to getting it wrung out. Our test car was the super-deluxe "Pallas" model, and it nearly smothered us with luxury. The engine is a little noisy, but the seats are so unusually comfortable, and the car is so smooth and free of harshness and vibration, that you tend to forget the sounds from up front.

The major change in this newest Citroën is a vastly-improved version of their vintage four-cylinder engine. Now oversquare by virtue of a bore increase from 3.386 in. to 3.543 in., it also sports a new five-main-bearing crankshaft that does much to eliminate the traditional four-banger lumpiness. It features an aluminum "hemi" cylinder head, with 60° inclined valves and a pretty conservative compression ratio of 8.75:1. It has more horsepower and torque, and acceleration times were substantially improved over the DS-19 we tested two years ago. A top speed of 115 mph is claimed for the car, but we took a long, long time getting to an indicated 103, and finally decided to take their word for it. The performance, however, is now roughly on a par with the latest Volvo 122-S.

Their four-speed automatic



transmission is called "Citromatic-Drive" and is really more like an automatic clutch—in the practical sense. You still have to move the lever, but that's all, since there's no clutch pedal in the car. The quadrant seems a little strange at first, and does take a bit of learning, but it's great fun to use.

The normal drill is to lift your foot for each change, but you don't really need to for conservative driving—just hold the throttle open and flick the lever. This technique won't work for maximum performance though; when we tried full-throttle upshifts with the pedal on the floor, we got skyrocketing revs and long delays between shifts. After some practice, we got fast shifts and crisp clutch engagement by lifting the throttle foot all the way, and grasping the little, column-mounted lever instead of using fingertips. There's a neutral slot between each position on the shift quadrant, and being too casual gets you missed shifts.

Driving the DS-21 around the rotten, broken streets of New York

can be a little trying. Hitting large bumps and deep holes at very low speeds is not the car's long suit. It much prefers speeds of forty-five or more, where it seems to come into its own, and no surface, nor bump, nor hole, is beyond its fantastic sus-

pension's capability. It has to be the smoothest chassis—exclusive of engine behavior—in the whole cotton-picking world. The ride is almost dream-like at any normal cruising speed, and although 109 bhp isn't really very much, the Citroën seems to make the most efficient possible use of it. In top gear, at fifty or sixty, it feels like a turbine, and it gives the impression that there just isn't any limit to how fast or how long it will go.

With predictable Gallic perversity, the designers have covered the instrument panel with switches and controls—twenty-eight, if memory serves us—and they've gone to quite a lot of trouble to keep their various functions a secret. After awhile, one begins to remember where things are, but even with a week's training we were still grabbing for the choke and yanking the cigar lighter out instead. The interior boasts some of the plastic so dear to the hearts of all French car builders, but there's more metal than in the past, happily. The very complicated fresh/air heater outlets at either end of

the dash had a tendency to buzz at certain ride-frequencies, but all told, the car was a delight in a majority of traffic driving situations.

One measure of the Citroën's charm is the fact that every time any staff member would start to talk about it, the rest would burst into sunny smiles and start relating their own experiences and adventures with it. The typical American housewife seems to be utterly intimidated by the car, but any man with an ounce of enthusiasm in his veins will quickly start to talk himself into buying one after a test-drive of a half-hour or more. It's the ultimate anti-car car. And think of the look on the traffic cop's face when he's leaning against your DS-21 writing you a ticket, and you flick the lever and lower it out from under him. Oh, yes—that's another trick. There's this inconspicuous lever down by the driver's left foot, and it's used to raise and lower the car on its oil-and-air struts. It's also self-leveling and so well balanced that the car can run with one of its rear wheels removed. Zut! **cjd**



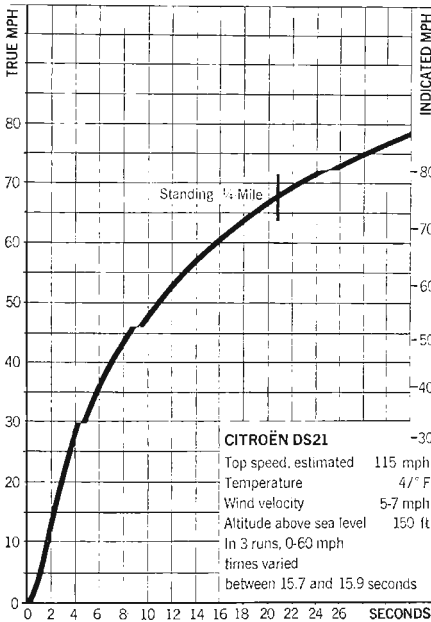
CITROËN DS-21

Importer: Citroën Cars Corporation
641 Lexington Avenue
New York, N.Y.

Price as Tested: \$3674 POE East Coast

ACCELERATION

	Seconds
Zero To	4.2
30 mph	7.0
40 mph	10.9
50 mph	15.7
60 mph	22.5
70 mph	34.8
80 mph	68 mph in 20.8
Standing ¼-mile	



ENGINE

Water-cooled four-in-line, cast iron block, aluminum head, hemispherical combustion chambers, 5 main bearings
Bore x stroke.....3.54 x 3.36 in, 90 x 85.5 mm
Displacement.....132.7 cu.in, 2175 cc
Compression ratio.....8.75 to one
Carburetion.....Single Weber 2-bbl
Valve gear.....Single chain-driven overhead camshaft
Power (SAE).....109 bhp @ 5550 rpm
Torque.....128 lbs.-ft @ 3000 rpm
Specific power output.....82 bhp per cu in, 49.5 bhp per liter
Usable range of engine speeds, 550-5000 rpm
Electrical system...12-volt, 55 amp-hr battery, 400W generator
Fuel recommended.....Premium
Mileage.....20-25 mpg
Range on 17-gallon tank.....340-425 miles

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission.....4-speed manual, automatic clutch
mph/1000 Max

Gear	Ratio	Overall	rpm	Max
Rev	3.15	13.80	5.95	31
1st	3.24	14.21	5.78	30
2nd	1.93	8.49	9.68	48
3rd	1.27	5.58	14.73	73
4th	0.85	4.38	18.76	115

Final drive ratio.....4.38 to one

CHASSIS

Wheel base.....123.0 in
Track.....F 59.3, R 51.5 in
Length.....190.5 in
Width.....70.5 in
Height.....57.5 in
Ground Clearance.....6.0 in
Curb Weight.....2855 lbs
Test Weight.....3222 lbs
Weight distribution front/rear.....66/34%
Pounds per bhp (test weight).....29.5
Suspension F: Ind., double transverse arms and oleo-pneumatic struts, anti-roll bar
R: Ind., single trailing arms and oleo-pneumatic struts, anti-roll bar
Brakes.....11.5-in discs F, 10-in drums R, 338 sq in swept area
Steering.....Rack and pinion
Turns, lock to lock.....3.3
Turning circle.....36 ft
Tires and wheels.....180 x 380 on 4.5-in rim

CHECK LIST

ENGINE

Starting.....Excellent
Response.....Fair
Noise.....Poor
Vibration.....Fair

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch action.....Good
Transmission linkage.....Fair
Synchromesh action.....Excellent
Power-to-ground transmission.....Excellent

BRAKES

Response.....Good
Pedal pressure.....Weird
Fade resistance.....Good
Smoothness.....Good
Directional stability.....Fair

STEERING

Response.....Good
Accuracy.....Good
Feedback.....Very Good
Road feel.....Fair

SUSPENSION

Harshness control.....Good
Roll stiffness.....Excellent
Tracking.....Very Good
Pitch control.....Excellent
Shock damping.....Excellent

CONTROLS

Location.....Fair
Relationship.....Good
Small controls.....Poor

INTERIOR

Visibility.....Excellent
Instrumentation.....Good
Lighting.....Good
Entry/exit.....Fair
Front seating comfort.....Excellent
Front seating room.....Fair
Rear seating comfort.....Excellent
Rear seating room.....Excellent
Storage space.....Good
Wind noise.....Good
Road noise.....Fair

WEATHER PROTECTION

Heater.....Fair
Defroster.....Fair
Ventilation.....Good
Weather sealing.....Good
Windshield wiper action.....Good

QUALITY CONTROL

Materials, exterior.....Fair
Materials, interior.....Good
Exterior finish.....Good
Interior finish.....Good
Hardware and trim.....Fair

GENERAL

Service accessibility.....Fair
Luggage space.....Good
Bumper protection.....Good
Exterior lighting.....Good
Resistance to crosswinds.....Excellent

