CAR and DRIVER ROAD TEST

ROVER 2000 TC

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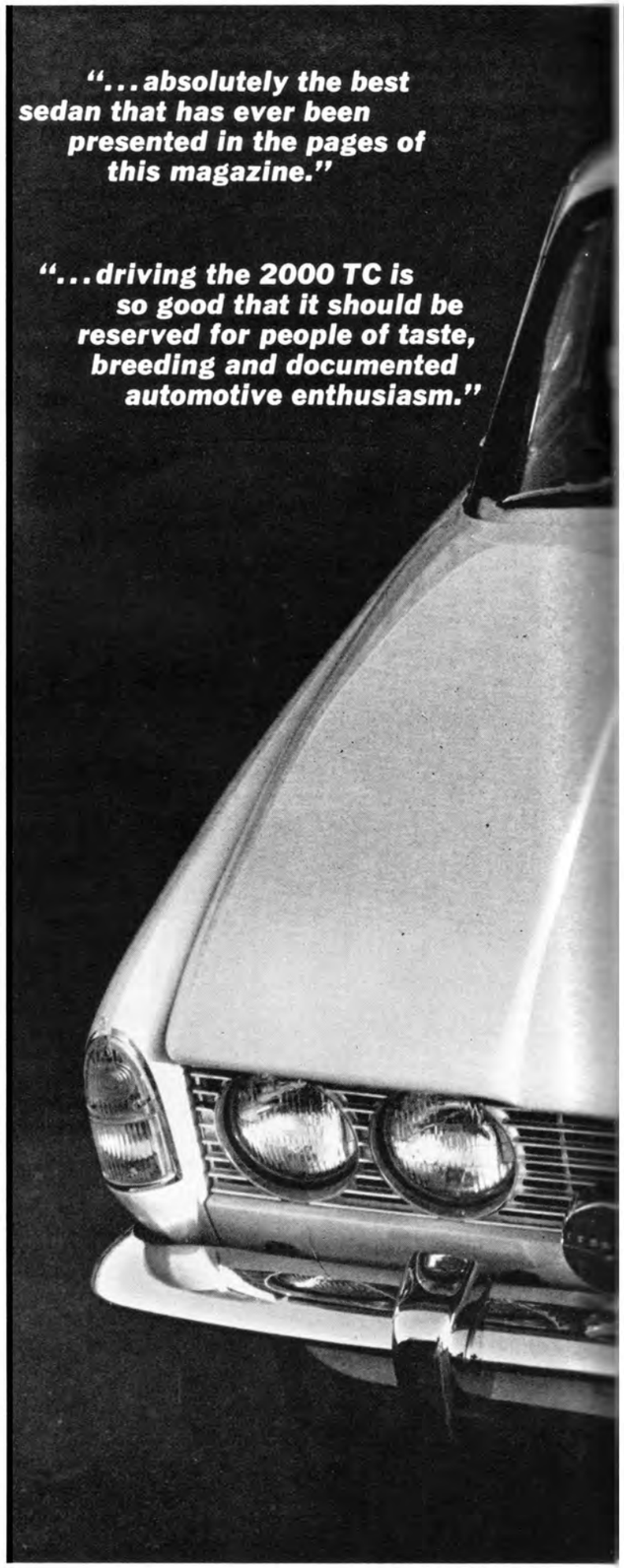
One way and another, we've attempted to repair our original blunder by making editorial reference to the Rover 2000 as often as we could, calling attention wherever possible to its unique engineering, phenomenal handling, and great luxury. Now, the arrival of the 2000 TC has given us a chance to rectify things once and for all, and we're going to feel a lot better once we've gotten this off our collective editorial chest. . .

We have driven a Rover 2000 TC for nearly 3000 miles, on all kinds of roads and in every kind of weather, and we believe that it is absolutely the best sedan that has ever been presented in the pages of this magazine. We think it's an automotive milestone.

We'll go so far as to say that our experience with this newest version of the Rover 2000 leads us to believe that there is a potential North American market for at least 75,000 of these cars per year—if the Rover Company can build enough, and if the thoughtful, discriminating automobile buyers of this country can be made aware of its enormous advantages over most of its competition. We are convinced that *every* man who might



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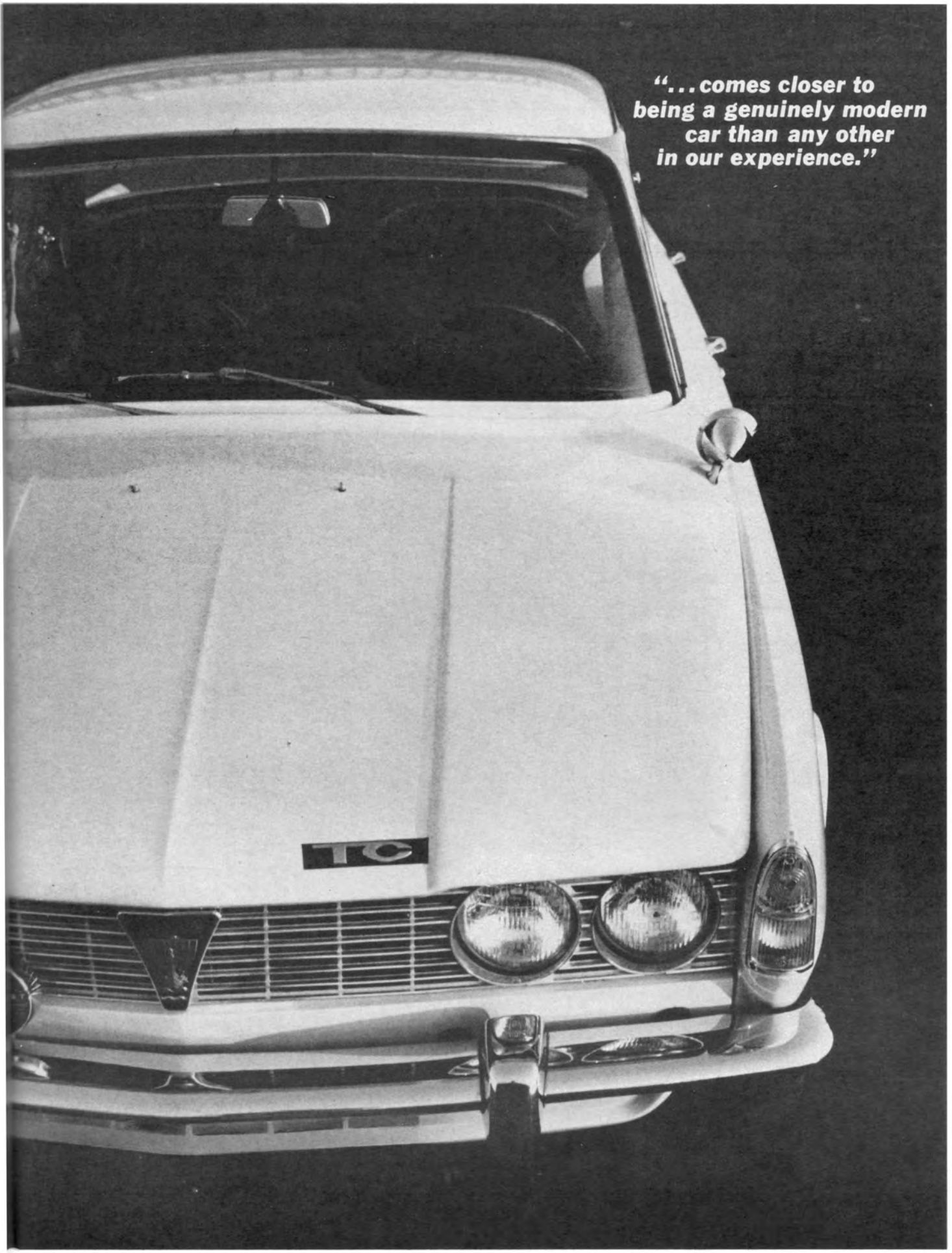
"...comes closer to
being a genuinely modern
car than any other
in our experience."
TC

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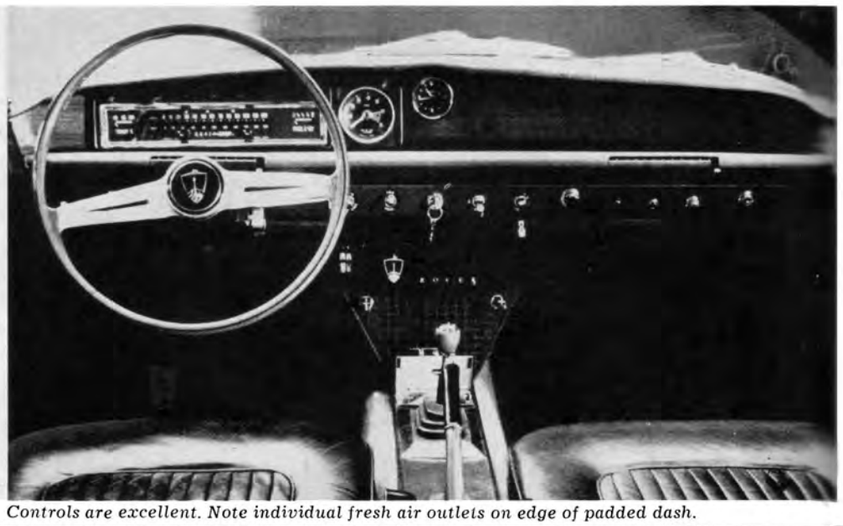
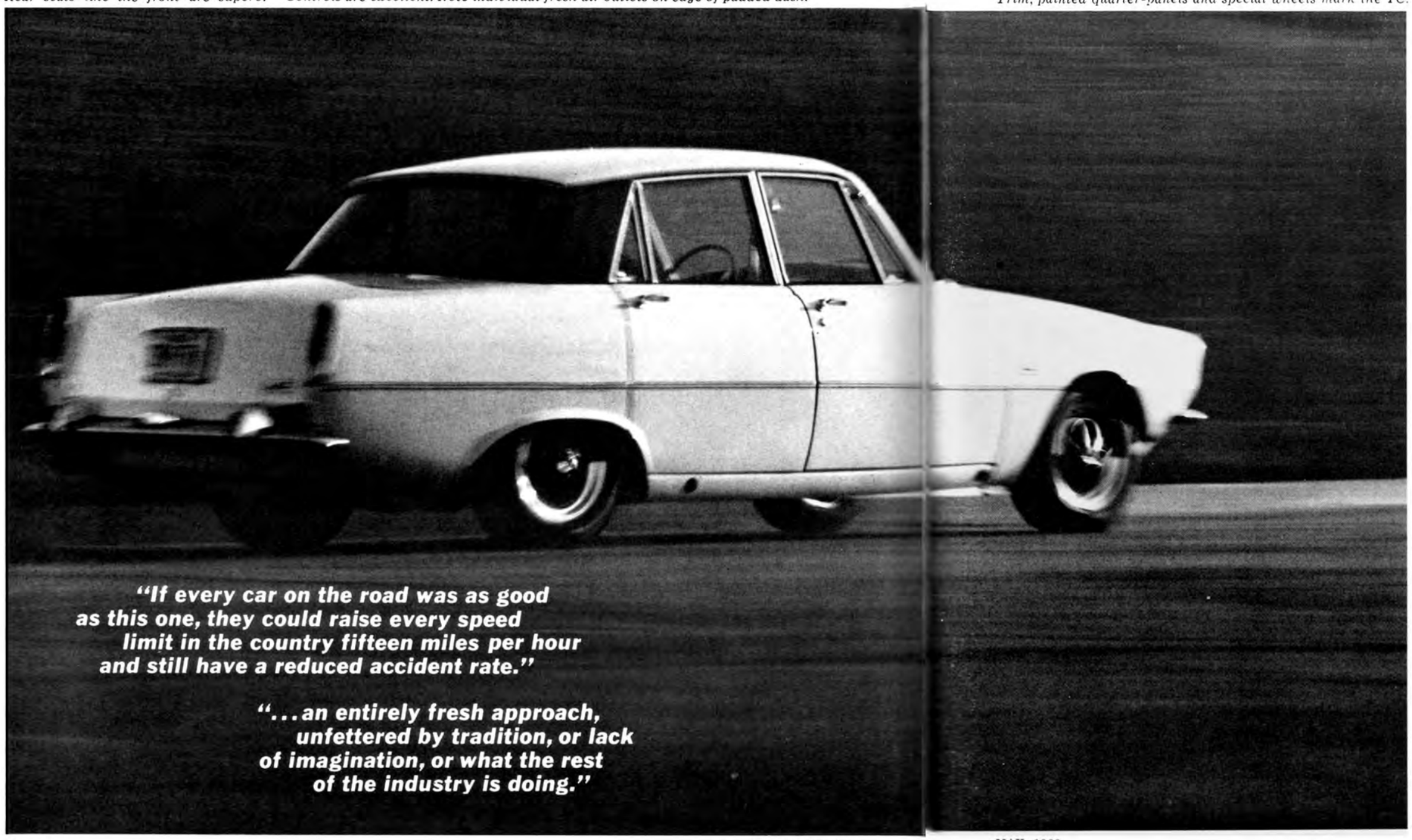
PHOTOGRAPHY ALFRED FISHER

Rear seats–like the front–are superb.



Controls are excellent. Note individual fresh air outlets on edge of padded dash.

Trim, painted quarter-panels and special wheels mark the TC.



"If every car on the road was as good as this one, they could raise every speed limit in the country fifteen miles per hour and still have a reduced accident rate."

"...an entirely fresh approach, unfettered by tradition, or lack of imagination, or what the rest of the industry is doing."

be considering the purchase of a car in the $4000 bracket should at least try to get a test drive in the 2000 before he makes a final decision.

Our only reservation about the original Rover 2000 was that it lacked sufficient power for acceleration and passing in typical American driving situations —beyond that, we loved it. On the 2000 TC (Twin Carburetor), the Rover people have increased the horsepower from 100 to 124, and the performance is more than adequate to the U.S. driver's normal requirements. We recorded acceleration times for the 2000 TC that are better—up to about 70 mph—than those of the Porsche 912, for instance. And even more impressive was an impromptu marathon run staged by the editor and the publisher, who drove nearly 900 miles from Chicago to New York City at an average speed of 66-plus mph—averaging a little more than 25 miles per gallon in the process.

An acquaintance of ours, an expert in imported car marketing and promotion in the United States, recently made the sardonic observation that, "The English never research a market beforehand and then develop an automobile to suit that market's needs. Instead, they build whatever the hell they feel like building, and expect their overseas distributors to unload the result on the consumers."

Well folks, if he's right—and in many prominent cases, he is—the Rover Company has upset the tradition. The Rover 2000 TC is not only eminently suited to the average American consumer's needs . . . it was developed specifically with the American consumer in mind! Good Lord! India lost forever, the Beatles get the O.B.E., and now this—Rover builds Britain's answer to the Pontiac GTO!

Because, in a way, that's what the 2000 TC is . . . a standard sedan with more horsepower and a lot of keen little cosmetic touches to set it apart from its bread-and-butter brethren. Working very closely with the head of the U.S. Rover organization, Rover's engineers have developed a pocket Super Car. The $200 TC option consists of the hotter engine, special TC exterior paint and hardware trim, a racing-type outside mirror, Pirelli Cinturato tires with a gold stripe, a very nice fake-woodrim steering wheel of the hero-driver *genre*, and a properly located and easily read tachometer. Mag-type wheels with 5.5-in. rims are also available as an option for just over a hundred bucks a set, and they're well worth the price.

Pirellis have gold stripe.

Of course, in this case, the term "standard sedan" may be a bit of a misnomer. The "standard" Rover 2000 is about as typical of the rest of the world's standard sedans as the Lear Jet is typical of privately-owned, puddle-jumping airplanes.

Some automotive critics have delivered themselves of the opinion that the Rover 2000 is over-engineered, that the engine, suspension and chassis could have been more conventional in design and worked out just as well. The point is that all the Rover's pieces work together beautifully, and the fact that they're unconventional may very well have a lot to do with it.

(Text continued on page 104; Specifications overleaf)

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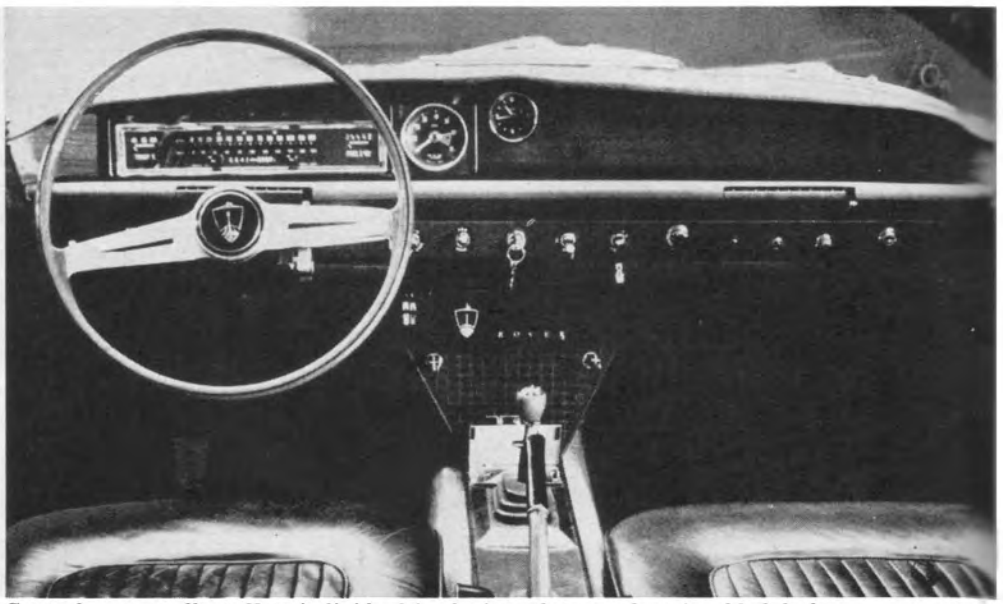

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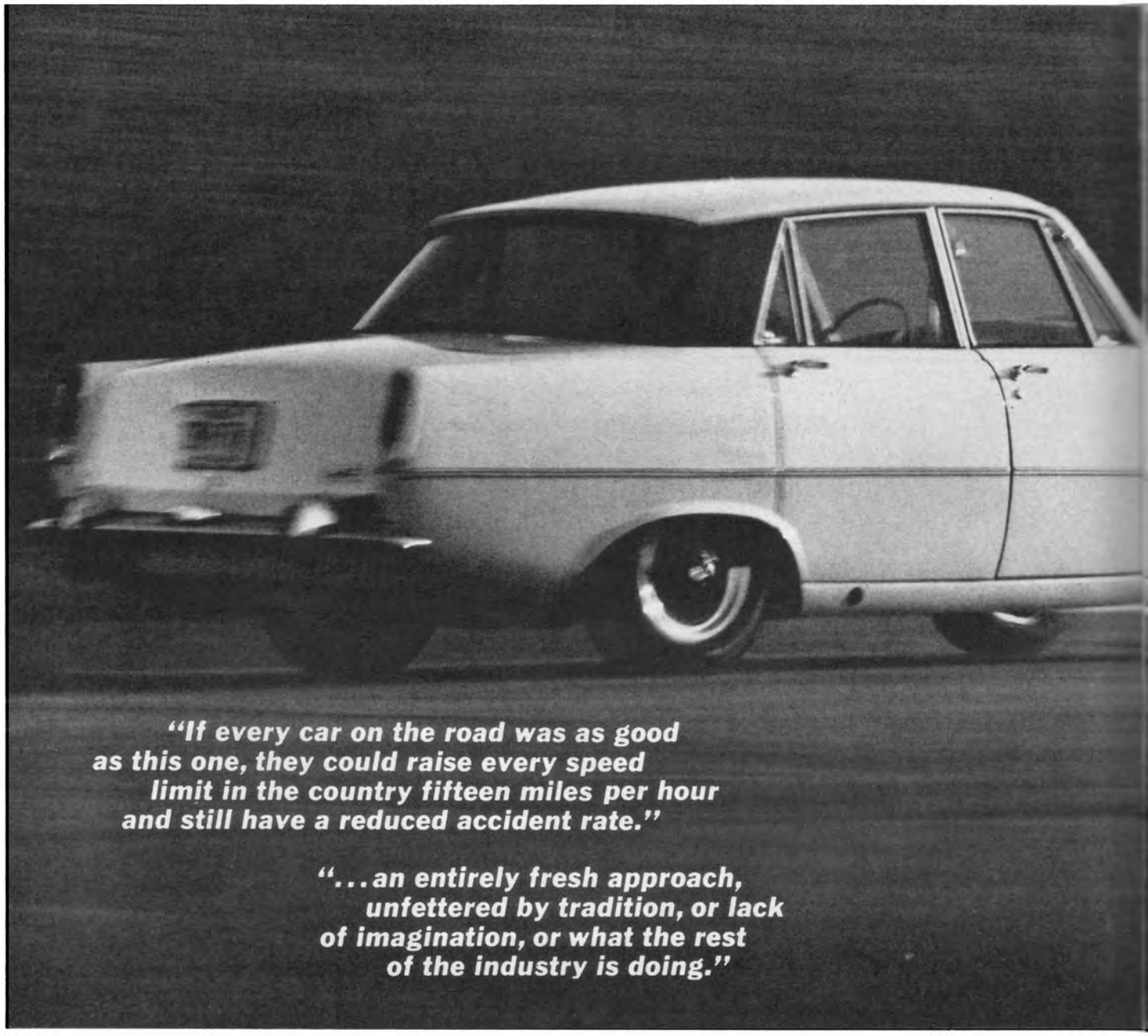

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(Text continued on page 104; Specifications overleaf)

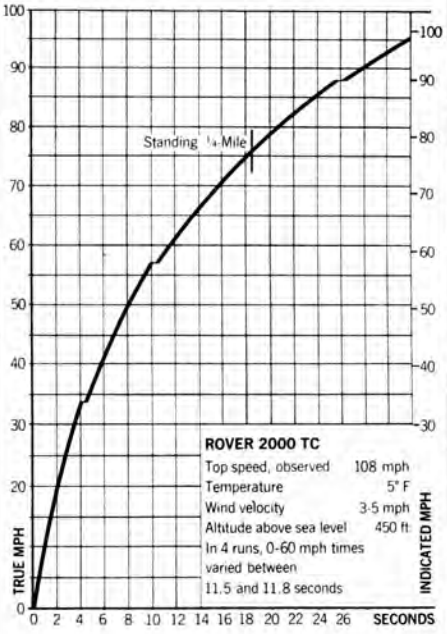
ROVER 2000 TC

Importer: Rover Motor Company
of North America
405 Lexington Avenue
New York, N.Y.

Price as Tested: $4300.00

ACCELERATION

Zero To	Seconds
30 mph	3.4
40 mph	5.7
50 mph	8.1
60 mph	11.5
70 mph	15.6
80 mph	20.5
90 mph	25.7
Standing ¼ mile	76 mph in 18.3



ENGINE

Water-cooled four-in-line, cast iron block, aluminum head, 5 main bearings
Bore x stroke 3.375 x 3.375 in, 85.7 x 85.7 mm
Displacement 120.8 cu. in, 1978 cc
Compression ratio 10.0 to one
Carburetion Two SU HS6 sidedraft
Valve gear Chain-driven single overhead camshaft
Power (SAE) 124 bhp @ 5500 rpm
Torque 132 lbs-ft @ 4000 rpm
Specific power output 0.94 bhp per cu. in, 57.4 bhp per liter
Usable range of engine speeds 800-6300 rpm
Electrical system 12-volt, 60 amp-hr battery
Fuel recommended Premium
Mileage 20-26 mpg
Range on 14.2-gallon tank 240-369 miles

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch 8.5-inch single dry plate
Transmission 4-speed, all-synchromesh

Gear	Ratio	Overall	mph/1000 rpm	Max mph
Rev	3.43	12.14	—5.7	—36
1st	3.63	12.83	5.4	34
2nd	2.13	7.85	9.1	57
3rd	1.39	4.92	14.0	88
4th	1.00	3.54	19.5	108

Final drive ratio 3.54 to one

CHASSIS

Monocoque steel skeleton with detachable exterior panels
Wheelbase 103.4 in
Track F: 53.4 R: 52.5 in
Length 178.5 in
Width 66.5 in
Height 54.8 in
Ground Clearance 7.9 in
Curb Weight 2867 lbs
Test Weight 3341 lbs
Weight distribution front/rear 54/46%
Pounds per bhp (test weight) 29.4
Suspension F: Ind., lower transverse link and leading strut, MacPherson strut operating horizontal coil springs by cantilever arm
R: De Dion., splined tube, longitudinal Watt linkage, Panhard rod, coil springs
Brakes F: 10.8-in Dunlop disc, R: 10.3-in Dunlop disc, 436 sq in swept area
Steering Worm and roller
Turns, lock to lock 3.75
Turning circle 32 ft
Tires and wheels 165 x 14 Pirelli "Gold Stripe" Cinturato on 5.5J rim

CHECK LIST

ENGINE

Starting	Good
Response	Good
Noise	Good
Vibration	Good

DRIVE TRAIN

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

BRAKES

Response	Excellent
Pedal pressure	Excellent
Fade resistance	Excellent
Smoothness	Excellent
Directional stability	Excellent

STEERING

Response	Good
Accuracy	Good
Feedback	Excellent
Road feel	Excellent

SUSPENSION

Harshness control	Excellent
Roll stiffness	Excellent
Tracking	Excellent
Pitch control	Excellent
Shock damping	Excellent

CONTROLS

Location	Good
Relationship	Good
Small controls	Good

INTERIOR

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

WEATHER PROTECTION

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

QUALITY CONTROL

Materials, exterior	Excellent
Materials, interior	Excellent
Exterior finish	Excellent
Interior finish	Excellent
Hardware and trim	Excellent

GENERAL

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

ROVER 2000 TC (Continued from page 32)

The engine, for instance, is a two-liter (121 cu. in.) single overhead cam four-cylinder, which isn't unusual. However, the combustion chambers are in the pistons rather than in the head—common diesel engine practice, but a comparative novelty in automobile engines. The actual chamber is formed by a concave "crater" in the crown of the piston. This configuration avoids the shrouding effect the walls of the normal combustion chamber have on gas flow; when the 2000's valves are open, the combustion chamber has moved conveniently out of the way. Therefore, the chamber can be close to the ideal hemispherical shape, and still get excellent gas flow characteristics (and high specific output) from a single overhead cam with the valves all lined up like a row of nails. Moreover, quality control can be held to closer tolerances because finishing off the cylinder head consists merely of planing it perfectly smooth.

The suspension is wildly complicated, which may be necessary to achieve the degree of roadholding and ride comfort that *only* the Rover—in our experience with passenger cars—has.

The front suspension is similar in geometry to a normal, unequal-length wishbone system, but with the loads being fed aft to the cowl structure instead of upward and inward to suspension pillars that tend to flex toward each other like a lean-to. The loads in the Rover are taken out by the rigid bulkhead that forms the firewall. Various details of the front suspension give it anti-dive qualities under braking and permit the steering box to be bolted to the cowl—an extremely important safety feature.

The rear suspension is a de Dion set-up . . . with variations by Rover. Usually, the half-shafts are splined to accommodate small changes in track under jounce and rebound conditions. Rover split the de Dion tube instead. Since it isn't transmitting acceleration or braking torque, the ride quality is far superior to any other layout. The rear brakes, big Dunlop discs like those up front, are located inboard, alongside the chassis-mounted differential, to reduce unsprung weight. True, the same ride quality could have been obtained with an independent rear suspension, perhaps with even less unsprung weight, but roadholding ability would have suffered—if for no other reason than for the camber changes that are common to articulated suspensions. With Rover's "sliding tube" de Dion axle there just aren't any camber changes; the rear wheels remain parallel throughout their range of vertical movement. The Rover's suspension, like a very select few others (the 230 SL, for instance) was designed expressly to take advantage of the unique characteristics of radial ply tires, which are standard equipment on both the 2000 and the TC.

It is the unit-construction chassis that is the Rover's *pièce de résistance*, however. It is, just as the ads claim, a skeleton with a body over it, like a human being's. The inner chassis of the double-layer construction is a self-supporting, load-carrying structure that can be driven around without the body panels and still lose nothing in the way of rigidity or structural integrity. So, when the body is bolted on, it isn't doing any work. And when it isn't working, it isn't flexing and drumming and fatiguing. Meanwhile, the chassis is carrying on, unseen, with the various strains imposed by the engine, suspension and brakes being carefully channelled to balance each other out within a tremendously rigid monocoque structure.

The car was originally conceived in the late Fifties, and grew out of countless non-stop bull sessions between a very keen and talented group of young engineers, headed by Engineering Director Peter Wilks and research and development man, Spencer King. It was a dream assignment for men who wanted to do something fresh and new, something that would brighten up the image of the stodgy old Rover Motor Company. They succeeded admirably. The 2000 had been five years in the making when it was introduced in the Fall of 1963. Such a lengthy gestation is unusual, but then, so is the Rover. It came forth fully thought out, from the tires to the window seams, and it was immediately hailed as a sound, well-executed design. More than that, the 2000's ride, handling and appearance were also faultless. The TC has to be an automotive *tour de force*.

Driving any Rover 2000 is a pretty impressive experience, but driving the 2000 TC is so good that it should be reserved for people of taste, breeding, and documented automotive enthusiasm. Well, not quite. We also think that every so-called safety expert and every member of top management in the domestic auto companies should be required to spend a month with a Rover 2000 TC, as we did. This car

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sells for $4300, as we tested it, and it is a rare combination of virtually everything one should have in an automobile.

The ride is satin-smooth and absolutely free of harshness, pitch, or roll. Below 80 mph the interior is virtually silent, save for a comforting, muffled drone from the engine compartment and a noticeable—but not unpleasant—amount of road noise from the Pirelli tires. The car accelerates very well in first and second gear, and winds to nearly 90 mph before it reaches its 6000 rpm red-line in third. It runs dead straight on any surface and in any but the most vicious crosswinds, and bending it into a high-speed corner imparts a sensation that requires erotic references for proper description. And it stops. Oh dear, does it stop! Our normal series of panic stops from eighty to zero were the fastest we've ever recorded and so smooth and stable that we were almost bored by the time we finished our third run.

The car's performance in every area imparts a feeling of security and reassurance—a feeling that is heightened and underscored by the layout and appointments of the interior. One does not sit *on* the Rover 2000, as is the case with cars like the Mercedes and BMW sedans. In fact, one hardly sits *in* it either. After a lot of discussion and debate, we've decided that the feeling is more akin to "wearing" the car—kind of opening the door and putting it on like a comfortable, old sweater.

The seats are very well shaped, firm, and almost infinitely adjustable both for rake and reach, the steering wheel can be adjusted for height (and rake), and all this adds up to a splendid driving position. The backs of the front seats are padded, which makes them both safer and more comfortable for the rear seat passengers, and each front seat has a built-in socket for a headrest. Shoulder harnesses are fitted as standard equipment for the two front seats, and harness mountings are fitted in the rear, should you want restraining devices back there as well.

The shoulder harnesses are a little complicated, in that several straps are combined and buckled together to form both an over-the-shoulder belt and a lap belt. These are adjustable at three separate points, and they take a little fiddling-with, but once they're properly adjusted, they're extremely comfortable and effective. We'd have liked them bet-

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caused by the somewhat unnatural position of our right foot on the car's loud pedal.

The 5-main-bearing engine in our test TC was a little rough at idle, as all four-cylinder engines must be, but it was smooth and responsive under any other conditions. Even at peak revs, it never sounded busy or out-of-breath; amazing when you realize how small two liters is. Even though the standard 2000 seems to work pretty well with a single 1.75-in. SU carburetor, and the TC sports a pair of monster 2-inchers, it never seemed fussy or over-carbureted. It started easily when hot, and when cold it would come to life right away with the hand choke pulled out and a light tap on the throttle.

It's one of the few cars we've known in which the passengers could enjoy a fast ride over a nasty little country road just as much as the driver. They can feel side loads building up as the car is driven through a fast corner, but the capsule-like security we mentioned before keeps them from sliding around or being displaced, while the smoothness and silence of the ride never betray the fact that the driver is really hurrying.

When we performed our brake tests, the passenger was belted in, and he braced his feet firmly for the great slamming stop he knew was going to come. Only it wasn't that way at all. The car hauled down from eighty to zero *in four seconds flat* just like it had run into a wall of goose-down, and there was no trace of nosedive, loss of adhesion, or directional instability. On succeeding stops, the passenger just relaxed and allowed his harness to take the load—which approached a full "g"—and it was actually quite pleasant.

The car's steer characteristic is one of light, positive understeer. Though we never approached the point of final breakaway—even when we were playing hero—we had the feeling that loss of adhesion, when it came, would occur at the front wheels first. The car sits very well in a corner, and the steering angle or throttle setting can be changed almost at will without fear of anything messy happening. This is where the car shines brightest. It has all the discreet quiet of a genuine luxury sedan, yet it'll go screaming through a corner at a rate that'll leave a lot of *pur sang* sports cars wallowing in its wake.

Summary

This road testing business can be a frustrating one. Every year we test a lot of cars—many of them very good cars—and we're always afraid that we'll exhaust the meager resources of the language and find ourselves using words we've used too many times before. Like the boy who cried, "Wolf!" we're apt to be in trouble when a car comes along that really turns us on. But that's our problem, not yours.

The Rover 2000 TC has come along, and it really has turned us on, and we'll just have to do the best we can with the words available.

The Rover 2000 TC is the best sedan we have ever tested. We believe that it comes closer to being a genuinely *modern* car than any other in our experience. It is a supremely comfortable four-passenger sedan, which makes it quite big enough for most American drivers—long-standing "big-car" prejudices notwithstanding. It has handling and stopping power equal to all but the most expensive and sophisticated sports cars. Its trim and appointments and the quality of its finish throughout are equal to any of the six luxury cars we tested last year. It will maintain effortless cruising speeds in excess of anything U.S. laws will allow—yet it offers fuel economy that would do justice to a tiny austerity sedan. With all this, it is a bona fide "safety" car—one designed specifically to avoid accidents whenever they *can* be avoided, and to provide the greatest possible protection to its occupants when they cannot.

The Rover 2000 started with a clean sheet of paper. The men who designed it spent several years refining their concepts and perfecting the design before it ever reached the hands of the consumers. It is an entirely fresh approach, unfettered by tradition, or lack of imagination, or "what the rest of the industry is doing." If the 2000 had a fault, it was either its lack of power, or a certain blandness about its exterior appearance. Now the 2000 TC has corrected both of these possible flaws. It is faster than a whole flock of cars, including the six-cylinder Chevy II, Dart, Valiant, Falcon, and Rambler, and it'll beat the MGB GT, the Triumph 2000, the Citroen DS-21, and the Volvo 122-S.

As far as its exterior appearance is concerned, the 2000 TC is a crowd-stopper. It was flown over from the factory for our test, cleaned up, checked out, and delivered to the public garage where we park our test cars. When we arrived to pick it up, the place looked like an automobile showroom on announcement day. New Yorkers are pretty blasé about everything, and they normally don't even *see* cars—unless one runs over them—but they were actually coming in off the street to admire our Rover. On the following day we even got phone calls from people who had seen it at the garage and traced us down for more information.

We have traditionally felt that Mercedes-Benz built the best cars around. Our enthusiasm for the new 250 SE and the 230 SL is boundless and in no way reduced by our statements about the Rover. It's just that this Rover *is* superior to the Mercedes in our eyes—particularly in view of its lower price. Besides, the Mercedes is so far above the automotive average that second place, in this league, is as good as the championship anywhere else. And what's wrong with having two superlative cars to choose from? Hell, we just wish they were *all* that good!

We sincerely mean it when we say that *any* prospective car purchaser with $4000 to spend should test-drive the 2000 TC before he makes his final selection. Many people will reject it on size, or because they still prefer the brute power of a hot American sedan, or because they want something a little jazzier looking—but they should try it just the same. It'll certainly make them more demanding of other manufacturers' offerings, and we guarantee that it'll broaden their automotive horizons.

We feel so strongly about the car that we have asked the Rover Motor Company to lend us one that we can take to Detroit and demonstrate to some of the enthusiastic young men who shape the country's automotive future. We figure that a strong injection of 2000 TC wouldn't hurt the domestic car industry a bit. In fact, at one point on the return trip from Chicago, the editor, who was driving, said, "We *have* to make a lot of noise about this car. It's so great that we really should try to make people understand how we feel." And he went on, "If every car on the road was as good as this one, they could raise every speed limit in the country fifteen miles per hour, and *still* have a reduced accident rate."

We're with him. The Rover 2000, and its new brother-Rover, the 2000 TC, certainly changed the face of the old Rover Motor Company, and we'd like to think that it might change the face of the entire auto industry. If it could happen in England, it might happen here, right? **C/D**