

FOR US, the 1966 Buick Electra 225 turned out to be something of a surprise. We haven't spent much time with Buick's luxury offering the past couple of years, concentrating instead on the performance line-up (*Skylark Gran Sport, May '65, and Riviera Gran Sport, December '64*). We've been missing something.

But apparently the buying public hasn't been overlooking the Electra — we understand the series accounts for a substantial portion of yearly Buick sales. After spending hundreds of miles behind the tilt-adjustment steering wheel, we can understand why. MT's managing editor, Erv Rosen, supplied the proper description when he called the 225 "spirited." Not strong, or agile, or straining at the bit — just spirited. Like a thoroughbred — full of poise, and grace, and dignity.

Our first surprise came during the ac-

celeration tests. We have become accustomed to luxury cars being typically sedate — powerful enough but in a sort of veteran statesman manner. Since the Super Turbine transmission is programmed for initial acceleration, the Electra gets off the mark comparable to most advertised high-performance street automobiles. The 225 comes equipped with a 3-speed automatic transmission and 3.07 rear-axle ratio as standard, and it would be entirely unfair to expect the 401-cubic-inch V-8 to move more than 4500 pounds as quickly as a drag racer. So don't. It won't. Our test car, however, was fitted with the optional 425-cubic-inch engine, which makes lots of difference in the muscle department.

All acceleration tests proved the car can get up and go with its lighter counterparts. And it can pass in the vital 50-75-mph range with ease, too. This is something Buick has been lacking in their big cars for a long time — long enough to have become something of a tradition. But that tradition, or image as it were, is rapidly changing.

Buick has been very proud of their finned aluminum drum brakes these past several years, and rightly so. We found that under virtually all normal and reasonably abnormal conditions, the brakes worked beautifully. Through hot deserts and up over Alpine snowy

passes, down and around rugged hairpin switchbacks, all was well. However, when subjected to continued severe heat, the brakes will fade slightly, as in repeated high-speed panic stops. But if given even the slightest time to cool during use, they work better than average.

During our cross-country runs, gasoline mileage averaged about 11 mpg, which is good for such a big car considering we were winding over 8000-foot peaks at wide throttle settings and dashing across desert valleys at . . . eh, substantial speeds. It's apparent that judicious use of the throttle (and special cruise control on open highways) would raise this mileage figure a full point or so. In Los Angeles traffic (which is really just a big race going somewhere to happen), mileage was between 11 and 12 mpg consistently.

We were not surprised at the absolute comfort of Buick's elite transportation rig. The seats, each fitted with a center fold-down arm rest, fit the sensitive back superbly and 6-way power adjustment cuts driver fatigue to the minimum. Wind noise and effect were almost nil, under very trying conditions, which helps keep long trips untiring. However, as with so many air-conditioned cars, the Electra makes little provision for minor fresh-air ventilation, a little nicety sometimes sorely needed when out-



ELECTRA 225

"A spirited thoroughbred . . . with poise, grace and dignity"



AT QUICK GLANCE, THE ELECTRA BEARS A STRONG SIMILARITY TO THE CADILLAC. DRIVING IMPRESSION IS THAT OF MEDIUM-SIZED VEHICLE.

side temperature is in that neither hot-neither cold stage.

And we found another little surprise when we tried to check the oil at our first gas stop. For this, you'd better take up another notch in your truss, because that great big slab of a hood is heavy. There may be some kind of counterbalancing somewhere, but you won't know where as you groan under the load.

If we could pass along a helpful hint to Buick engineers, we'd say that the hood and doors need to be worked with. For the little old lady from Pasadena, the doors are just too heavy to open, especially if the car is on an adverse incline.

And our final surprise came when we wheeled up in front of the offices following our mountain sojourn. Spotting a likely parking place, we zipped up and back in — only to find half the car still out in the street! The car had handled so well through the mountain curves, we had actually forgotten its overall length was 18 feet.

If you're looking for a car in the definite luxury category, but still admire spirit, you'll do well to consider the Electra.

—LeRoi Smith



Massive grille implies rugged quality; the hood is not counterbalanced for easy opening.

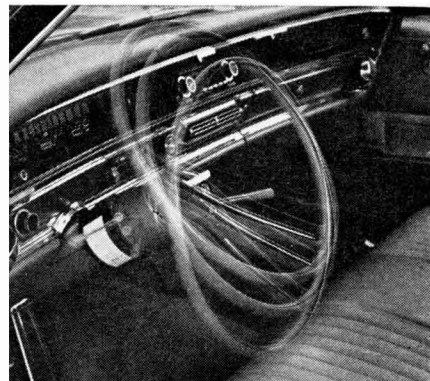


Refreshing is the return to basic simplicity in the dash treatment. Upholstery is finest.

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



Tail lights stretch entire width of body. Suspension is well isolated from frame, thereby reducing transmission of road noise to a minimum. Brakes proved excellent in mountains.



Driving comfort is enhanced by the multi-position steering wheel and power seats.

BUICK ELECTRA 225

4-door, 6-passenger hardtop

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

ENGINE IN TEST CAR: Ohv V-8
 Bore and stroke: 4.3125 x 3.64 ins.
 Displacement: 425 cu. ins.
 Advertised horsepower: 340 @ 4400 rpm
 Max. torque: 465 lbs.-ft. @ 2800 rpm
 Compression ratio: 10.25:1
 Carburetion: 1 4-bbl.

TRANSMISSION TYPE & FINAL DRIVE RATIO: Super Turbine 3-speed automatic, with torque converter. 3.07:1 rear-axle ratio

SUSPENSION: Coil springs with ball joints at front; coil springs on semi-floating 1-piece housing at rear. Direct-acting tubular shocks at each wheel

STEERING: Recirculating ball nut; in-line rotary valve power
 Turning diameter: 43.33 ft., curb to curb
 Turns lock to lock: 4

WHEELS: Steel disc., 15-in. dia.
 TIRES: 8.85 x 15 2-ply rayon

BRAKES: Hydraulic duo-servo; self-adjusting
 Diameter of drum: front, 12 ins.; rear, 12 ins.

SERVICE:
 Type of fuel recommended: Premium
 Fuel capacity: 25 gals.
 Oil capacity: 4 qts.; with filter: 5 qts.
 Shortest lubrication interval: 6000 mi.
 Oil- and filter-change interval: 6000 mi.

BODY & FRAME: All welded frame, perimeter design
 Wheelbase: 126.0 ins.
 Track: front, 63.4 ins.; rear, 63.0 ins.
 Overall: length, 223.5 ins.; width, 80.0 ins.; height, 55.8 ins.
 Min. ground clearance: NA
 Usable trunk capacity: NA
 Curb weight: 4519 lbs.

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)
 0-30 mph 3.7 secs.
 0-50 mph 7.0 secs.
 0-60 mph 9.8 secs.

TIME & DISTANCE TO ATTAIN PASSING SPEEDS
 40-60 mph 4.9 secs., 359 ft.
 50-70 mph 5.7 secs., 502 ft.

STANDING-START QUARTER-MILE: 17.5 secs. & 76 mph

BEST SPEEDS IN GEARS @ SHIFT POINTS
 1st 33 mph @ 4400 rpm
 2nd 63 mph @ 4400 rpm
 3rd 81 mph @ 3500 rpm

MPH PER 1000 RPM: 19.5

SPEEDOMETER ERROR AT 60 MPH: 10% fast

STOPPING DISTANCES: from 30 mph, 28 ft.; from 60 mph, 164 ft.

ACCESSORY PRICE LIST

Engine options: *340 hp \$ 47.03
 to 360 hp dealer inst.
 *Automatic transmission std

4-speed transmission —
 Overdrive —
 Limited-slip differential —
 Heavy-duty suspension —
 *Whitewall tires std
 Disc brakes —
 *Power brakes std
 *Power steering (Saginaw) std
 *Power windows 104.50
 *Power seat (6-way) 94.05
 *Radio AM (with power antenna) 113.17
 Radio AM/FM (with power antenna) 173.99
 *Air conditioning 418.00
 *Tinted glass 41.80
 Bucket seats (split seat) 36.58
 *Adjustable steering wheel 41.80
 *Clock std
 Tachometer —
 Automatic headlight dimmer —
 *Automatic speed regulator 55.39
 Vinyl roof cover 109.73
 Head rests (for bench seat) 41.80
 *On test car
 Dash (—) — not offered
 NA — Information not available at presstime

MANUFACTURER'S SUGGESTED LIST PRICE: \$4303
 (incl. taxes, safety equip't & PCV device)

PRICE OF CAR TESTED: \$5581.52 (incl. excise tax, delivery & get-ready charges, but not local tax & license)

MANUFACTURER'S WARRANTY: 24,000 miles and/or 24 months