



CAR LIFE  
ROAD TEST

# Imperial

## CROWN

**Comfort Competitor  
In the Luxury League**

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It is clear that Chrysler, after running a poor third to Cadillac and Continental for longer than Chrysler management cares to remember, is aiming for a larger slice of the booming luxury market. And it might just earn that bigger piece of the action, provided Imperial can overcome its rich-little-old-lady's-car image.

One comparison that came to mind during several days of living with the car was that it would be quite interesting to blindfold a series of subjects and drive them in one example each of the Luxury Three. Though it wasn't practical to conduct this experiment, there was little doubt that test subjects would have been unable to distinguish Imperial from Cadillac or Continental by virtue of shortcomings in any of the sensory areas—ride, noise level, seating comfort, acceleration or cornering sway.

The Imperial which is receiving the most play in the popular press this year is the Crown Coupe with the Cruiser Lounge option, which incorporates a revolving front passenger seat, folding table and reading lamp. Though the Cruiser Lounge is a big attention-getter, it is available only with the 2-door hardtop and is found in very limited quantities. What *CL*'s test crew received was a well-proportioned 4-door hardtop sedan that is bigger than it looks.

The Imperial's bigness doesn't show up during a casual walk-around inspection and there may be factors in the car's favor here: Styling is in unity with the remainder of the corporate fleet. Relatively clean lines weren't objectionable—or particularly exciting. The Imperial's size is far more apparent



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CHAN BUSH PHOTOS

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from inside, where leg, hip and head room are in abundance. The driver learns size during the first tight parking maneuver. An overall 224.7 in. makes a very large amount of car to herd around and when its 44.9-ft.

curb-to-curb turning circle—it seemed twice that—is applied to sharp, narrow driveways, there comes an immediate awareness of the vehicle's bulk.

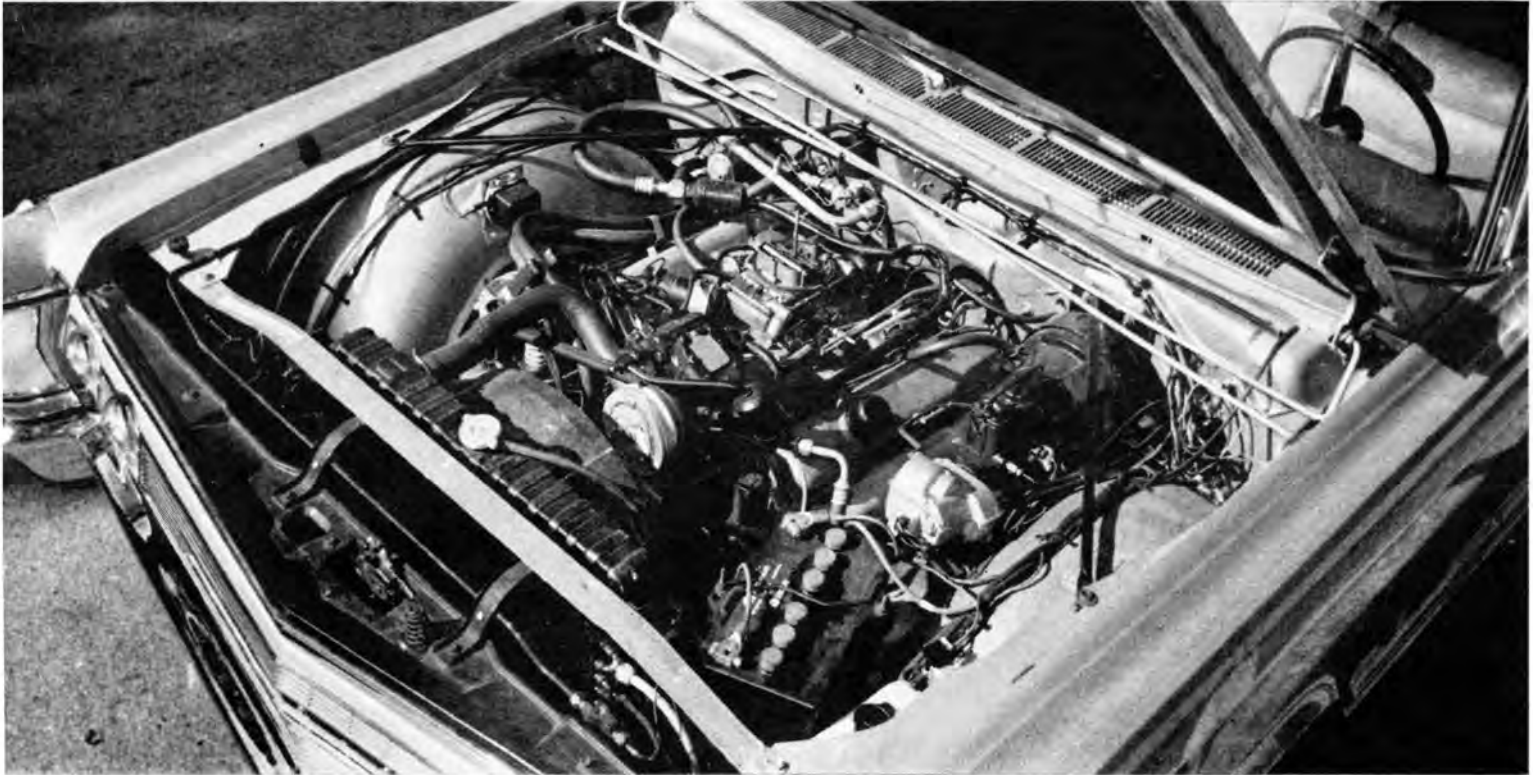
As this car was one of the first of *CAR LIFE's* '67s, with its attendant

"safety package," each test driver was asked to determine whether or not he felt any safer in the Imperial over a comparable '66 model. To a man, they answered, "No," though they were perfectly aware that interior padding, energy-absorbing steering column, turning lights and the like have produced a car that is, on paper, safer.

Drivers were more inclined to rate driver convenience as a visible indication of safety: Comfortable driver equals safe (potentially) driver. To elaborate, the 6-way power seat, though nothing new, has a sufficient range of adjustment to please any size of human behind the wheel. Coupled with a steering wheel that was adjustable for column length and rake, there was no question that anyone could set up an optimum driving position. The next logical step is adjustable pedals.

What does one say about the interi-

**THE IMPERIAL'S** massive 440-cu. in. engine, with improved carburetion and redesigned intake ports to accommodate an increased fuel/air charge at higher rpm, is rated 350 bhp at 4400 rpm and 480 lb.-ft. of torque at 2800 rpm.



**OVERALL LENGTH OF 224.7 in.** and a curb-to-curb turning circle of 44.9 ft. make the Imperial Crown seem a very large automobile indeed in narrow streets and crowded parking lots. Clean lines tend to minimize the sedan's bulk, however.



or of a luxury car? It is luxurious, of course. Quality blends of leather, wood and fabric were tastefully applied. Comfortable seats offer good thigh and back support, and incorporate pull-down armrests. Fine instrumentation and an outstanding heating/cooling system were packaged with a mixture that said, "This is the best we can offer on all fronts."

A changed dash, presumably safety-oriented, invites some discussion. Aside from highly-readable gauges, a light warns the driver to "check gauges" (fuel low) while another light is designed to inform him that one-half of the 2-circuit hydraulic brake system has failed. The dash itself is recessed under a padded brow. Control switches (except for recessed ignition) are primarily toggles and rolling wheels. Arrangement of controls was such that night adjustments could be made easily

without breaking road concentration.

The Imperial carried a pair of options—air conditioning and Auto Pilot—which were applauded, not so much because they are new or unique, but for their function as applied to the luxury car. The air conditioner operates thermostatically to blend dehumidified warmed air with cold to maintain a chosen temperature, though the Imperial had no direct reading temperature gauge, such as Cadillac offers. The air conditioner proved its effectiveness in an unseasonal rainstorm, keeping all windows free of condensation, which was noted to be a condition that plagued almost every other car on that day.

**A**S FOR THE Auto Pilot, it proved to have several advantages, not the least of which was fuel economy. During one 250-mile test leg, mainly in

medium-traffic on an interstate highway, the unit was set on the 65-mph legal maximum. Because it wasn't necessary to alter speed more than a dozen times (a light tap on the brake disengages the control) fuel mileage improved to just over 14 mpg. On a subjective level, few drivers realize how fatiguing it is to hold a car exactly at the speed limit, especially a car that is just as comfortable at 90 as at 65. Constant jockeying of the throttle, watching the speedometer and minding the road are old-fashioned. The faithful Auto Pilot minds the throttle, permits relaxation which can be transformed into better road alertness. On hills, the unit maintains the set speed within 2-3 mph, up or down. Test crewmen regarded the Auto Pilot as an accessory which could be used to advantage anywhere traffic flows at a constant rate. ▶

**LUXURY-SAFETY** interior was marred by highly reflective chromium plated mouldings at windshield perimeter.



**ABUNDANT PASSENGER** space is a strong point of the Crown. Rear seat hip, head and leg room are more than adequate.



**SPACIOUSNESS MARKS** the Imperial's cargo compartment, but spare location makes wheel change operation difficult.



**IMPERIAL eagle** graces distinctive hood ornament.



**ARMREST** toggle switches control window lifts.



Interior comfort on the road was rated in keeping with the car's luxury image. Theoretically, it is a great deal more difficult to damp noise and vibration out of unit construction than out of separate frame/separate body cars, but Chrysler engineers have done a very creditable job with the Imperial.

A ride that is soft and pleasant, without being mushy, is what luxury car customers desire and the Imperial offers it, along with excellent handling for such a large car. It should be pointed out that any car with its weight in the Imperial's range—5230 lb. curb weight—generates a lot of inertial energy, especially in side forces while cornering. It's hardly the ideal car to bend through a road race circuit, though the 9.15-15 Goodyear Power Cushions, at normal 24/24 psi inflation, did a quite acceptable job of sticking to the turns. The tires are rated for 6720 lb. total capacity at that inflation pressure, which provides a wide safety margin. Actually, with the cavernous trunk stuffed with luggage, a family aboard and a full tank of fuel (25 gal.) the tires would still provide a 335-lb. safety factor. A summer vacation group, driving rapidly across a hot desert highway in this Imperial could do so without fear of tire failure.

Imperial's mammoth 440-cu. in. engine is said to be improved this year with a new carburetor which provides 25% more cross-sectional area in the intake manifold runners, and reshaped head intake ports that accommodate an increased fuel/air mixture at higher engine speeds. The seat-of-the-pants judgment is that 350 bhp at 4400 rpm and 480 lb.-ft. of torque at 2800 are plenty. Indeed, during acceleration tests it was no trick to hold the brake, wind the engine and leave great streaks of rear tire rubber despite the 2.94:1 rear axle. The trick was to feather off the line without breaking the tires loose.

WITH SMOG a point of concern nationally, *CL* became curious about the 440 engine's emissions. Though all new cars sold in California must have an exhaust control device (Chrysler's is the Cleaner Air Package), this Imperial turned out not to be so equipped, which wasn't illegal because the car was not officially registered, apparently destined for ultimate delivery out of the state. Subjecting the car to an official state of California air pollution control test, the engine (at 1100 miles and in good tune) emitted 444 parts per million of unburned

gasoline (containing the hydrocarbons that create photochemical smog) and 2.82% CO (carbon monoxide). California's standard for unburned gasoline is 275 ppm, and for CO, 1.5%. Big engine, big problem without some sort of exhaust control.

In analysis of the car's performance, *CL* arrived at only one significant point of exception to the Imperial's function. This was inefficient braking. With power discs in front, it would seem that Imperial should approach the ultimate. Certainly there was nothing wrong with deceleration at 19 ft./sec. /sec. from 80 mph. However, it could have been much better, and would have been had not the rear end hopped upward, permitting the rear brakes to lock. With rear tires sliding, there was a moderate loss of directional stability. And, it was very difficult to prevent the rears from locking under panic-stop conditions. In the latter condition, the deceleration rate dropped to an unacceptable level. The 54/46 front/rear weight distribution offers a clue as to why; certainly a few heavy suitcases in the trunk would have helped. But what would truly be more effective would be some form of proportional braking, or an anti-locking device. It was disappointing to see this

## 1967 IMPERIAL CROWN 4-DOOR HARDTOP



### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.....	127.0
Track, f/r, in.....	62.4/61.1
Overall length, in.....	224.7
width.....	79.6
height.....	56.2
Front seat hip room, in.....	63.2
shoulder room.....	58.9
head room.....	39.0
pedal-seatback, max.....	51.2
Rear seat hip room, in.....	62.4
shoulder room.....	59.2
leg room.....	38.9
head room.....	37.3
Door opening width, in.....	29.6/29.4
Floor to ground height, in.....	11.9
Ground clearance, in.....	5.5

### PRICES

List, fob factory.....	\$5836
Equipped as tested.....	7243
Options included: Air conditioning, automatic speed control, tilt/telescope steering wheel, tinted glass, whitewall tires, power door locks, seats and windows.	

### CAPACITIES

No. of passengers.....	6
Luggage space, cu. ft.....	16.8
Fuel tank, gal.....	25.0
Crankcase, qt.....	4.0
Transmission/diff., pt.....	18.5/4.0
Radiator coolant, qt.....	19.0

### CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Frame type.....	unit
Front suspension type: Independent, non parallel control arms, torsion bars, telescopic shock absorbers.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.....	118
anti-roll bar dia., in.....	0.9
Rear suspension type: Live axle with longitudinal asymmetrical, semi-elliptic leaf springs, telescopic shock absorbers.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.....	124
Steering system: Power assisted recirculating ball, parallelogram, trailing, parallel Pitman and idler arms, equal length tie rods.	
gear ratio.....	15.7
overall ratio.....	19.1
turns, lock to lock.....	3.5
turning circle, ft. curb-curb.....	44.9
Curb weight, lb.....	5230
Test weight.....	5625
Weight distribution, % f/r.....	54/46

### BRAKES

Type: Two circuit hydraulic, ventilated cast iron discs, fixed calipers, front; cast iron drums, duo-servo shoes, rear.	
Front disc, dia., in.....	11.76
Rear drum, dia. x width.....	11 x 2.5
total swept area, sq. in.....	471.6
Power assist.....	integral vacuum line psi @ 100 lb. pedal.....1155

### WHEELS/TIRES

Wheel size.....	15 x 6.0JK
optional size available.....	none
bolt no./circle dia., in.....	5/5.5
Tires: Goodyear Power Cushion size.....	9.15-15
recommended inflation, psi.....	24/24
capacity rating, total lb.....	6720

### ENGINE

Type, no. cyl.....	ohv, 90° V-8
Bore x stroke, in.....	4.32 x 3.75
Displacement, cu. in.....	439.497
Compression ratio.....	10.1
Rated bhp @ rpm.....	350 @ 4400
equivalent mph.....	122
Rated torque @ rpm.....	480 @ 2800
equivalent mph.....	78
Carburetion.....	1x4 barrel dia., pri./sec.....1.44/1.69
Valve operation: Hydraulic lifters, pushrods and rocker arms.	
valve dia., int./exh.....	2.08/1.60
lift, int./exh.....	0.425/0.437
timing, deg.....	18-60, 64-16
duration, int./exh.....	.256/260
opening overlap.....	34
Exhaust system: Single, reverse flow muffler, resonator.	
pipe dia., exh./tail.....	2.50/2.00
Lubrication pump type.....	rotary
normal press. @ rpm.....	.45 @ 2000
Electrical supply.....	alternator
ampere rating.....	46
Battery, plates/amp. rating.....	78/70

### DRIVE-TRAIN

Transmission type: Automatic, with torque converter and 3-speed planetary gearset.	
Gear ratio 4th ( ) overall.....	
3rd (1.00).....	2.04
2nd (1.45).....	4.65
1st (2.45).....	7.20
1st x t.c. stall (2.00).....	14.40
synchronous meshing?.....	planetary
Shift lever location.....	steering column
Differential type: Hypoid, limited slip axle ratio.....	2.94

kind of stopping performance from what is an outstanding automobile in other details.

Chrysler emphasizes that one of the Imperial's safety features is a set of non-reflective wipers. Great. The wipers didn't reflect. But the bright chromium plated molding on the inside perimeter of the windshield did. The reflection was noted while evaluating an annoying distortion in the glass near the extreme edge which, admittedly, is not an area of frequent use. At these prices it would have been nicer to have had better optics.

**O**THER PETTY gripes center around small items. The turn signals' control lever is so sensitive that it tended to flick off with just a minor steering correction while approaching a turn. This simple lapse could buy a driver a traffic citation in some locales. The next problem is the signal indicator. To preclude a driver's having to glance at the dash to check the indicator flasher, rearward facing amber repeaters have been set in the front fender tips. This is a good idea, especially at night when they are fully visible, but in the sunlight, particularly with the sun behind the car, these tiny lamps were difficult to discern unless one was willing to di-



**SMOOTH STYLING** and the strength of the 440-cu. in. engine may soon destroy Imperial's image as a car for wealthy little old ladies.

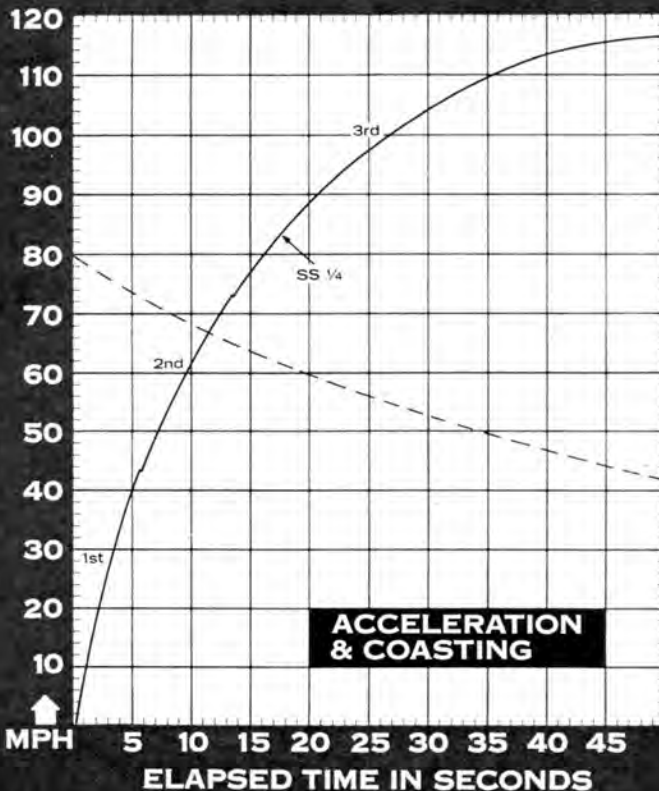
vert his attention from the road and focus on the fender tip for three or four flashes. They should be brighter, perhaps larger, and an audible click in the driver's compartment would not be amiss.

One comment repeated by several new car tire-kickers was the apparent vulnerability of the cornering lights. They form the front blade edge of the fenders and thus would seem to offer little resistance to, say, the very firm tail-

gate of a carelessly backed pickup truck.

Taken as a package, and relating it to its two traditional luxury competitors, the Imperial is well worth the consideration of anyone ready to purchase in this price range. Does it have the indefinable quality of prestige which equates closely with the appeal inherent in Continental and Cadillac? Who can say? The sales figures a year from now will be the only positive indicator. ■

## CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



### CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test weight)	16.1
Cu. ft./ton mile	102
Mph/1000 rpm (high gear)	275
Engine revs./mile (60 mph)	2180
Piston travel, ft./mile	1350
Car Life wear index	34.3
Frontal area, sq. ft.	24.9
Box volume, cu. ft.	583.5

### SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual	29.3
40 mph	38.5
50 mph	48.0
60 mph	58.1
70 mph	67.1
80 mph	77.6
90 mph	89.1

### MAINTENANCE INTERVALS

Oil change, engine, miles	4000
trans./diff.	12,000/6 mo.
Oil filter change	8000
Air cleaner service, mo.	6
Chassis lubrication	36,000
Wheelbearing re-packing	12,000
Universal joint service	36,000
Coolant change, mo.	12

### TUNE-UP DATA

Spark plugs	MoPar P-3-5P
gap, in.	0.035
Spark setting, deg./idle rpm	0/620
cent. max. adv., deg./rpm	19/4600
vac. max. adv., deg./in. Hg.	21/16
Breaker gap, in.	0.014-0.019
cam dwell angle	28-32
arm tension, oz.	17-20
Tappet clearance, int./exh.	0/0
Fuel pump pressure, psi.	3-5
Radiator cap relief press., psi.	16

### PERFORMANCE

Top speed (4200), mph	117
Shifts (rpm) @ mph	
2nd to 3rd (4200)	73
1st to 2nd (3900)	44

### ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.	3.4
0-40 mph	5.2
0-50 mph	7.3
0-60 mph	9.6
0-70 mph	12.7
0-80 mph	16.4
0-90 mph	20.6
0-100 mph	27.1
Standing 1/4-mile, sec.	17.4
speed at end, mph	82.8
Passing, 30-70 mph, sec.	9.3

### BRAKING

(Maximum deceleration rate achieved from 80 mph)	
1st stop, ft./sec./sec.	19
fade evident?	no
2nd stop, ft./sec./sec.	19
fade evident?	moderate

### FUEL CONSUMPTION

Test conditions, mpg	11.75
Est. normal range, mpg	9.8-14.1
Cruising range, miles	245-352

### GRADABILITY

4th, % grade @ mph	
3rd	13 @ 60
2nd	19 @ 40
1st	34 @ 22

### DRAG FACTOR

Total drag @ 60 mph, lb.	169
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