



CAR and DRIVER ROAD TEST

# BMW 1600

The BMW 1600 is to 1967 what the 85-horsepower Volvo was to 1958—the best small sedan we ever drove



*It would appear that Mr. Maximilian Hoffman, who has probably made more money from the imported car business than any other individual in our time, is at last about to realize his dream. He has pioneered the American market for just about every European nameplate worth mentioning, only to find himself ousted (always with a handsome financial settlement) as each marque began to make a place for itself. Now, with the BMW 1600, he has the best economy car ever offered to an undeserving American public, and he seems to be firmly and permanently established as its distributor. Mr. Hoffman will no doubt get much richer, and America will be a better place for it.—Car and Driver*

Max Hoffman was upset when he called last Spring about our road test of the Rover 2000 TC, but Max Hoffman is a realist. He is also the ex-distributor for just about every imported car worth mentioning, the present distributor for BMW, an architecture buff, and an Austrian (which is to say a wheeler-dealer). It was in his multiple capacity as realist, BMW distributor, and wheeler-dealer that he called us on the telephone that day.

Why, he wondered, had we called the Rover 2000 TC the best sedan we had ever tested (he seemed to have the impression that the Rover peo-

ple utilized some means more foul than fair to gain our praise). What, he conjectured, might he do to induce us to announce some similar revelation regarding his beloved BMW. Terms were not discussed, but subsequent intrastaff reflection led to a general feeling that a discreetly Austrian attempt had been made to compromise our integrity. *Quelle horreur!* Following the initial conversation with the Ex-Distributor For Practically Everything, we met him for lunch and determined that our earlier suspicions were probably unfounded—that Mr. Hoffman had merely wished to make

known to us the marked superiority of the BMW, as compared to the Rover, and perhaps to lend us a 2000 TI for some indeterminate period of time so that we might satisfy ourselves as to the validity of his claims. Although the negotiations were not fruitful, the luncheon (provided by Mr. Hoffman) was outstanding. His chauffeur returned us to our office in a sparkling BMW 2000 coupe, and we thought no more about the matter.

Months passed. Mr. Hoffman, now in his dual capacity as BMW distributor and architecture buff, completed a fantastic house that overlooks a picture-book lake near Munich, in Bavaria. Later, we heard that Mr. Hoffman, in his capacity as BMW distributor only, had elected to vacate his sumptuous showrooms in Manhattan and Beverly Hills—that he had, in fact, elected to abandon the retail end of the car business altogether, retiring to a spartan little suite of offices in the Seagram Building, and erecting a great new warehouse facility in the city of South Hackensack, New Jersey. Why, we asked. Because, we were told, BMW was at last going to get serious about the American market. New models were on the way! BMW's technological advancement and manufacturing know-how had combined with Mr. Hoffman's universally-known commercial acumen to ensure America's participation in the miracle of the BMW 1600!

Certain members of the imported car industry in this country (evidently unfamiliar with America's libel and slander laws), have allowed as how the Rover people "bought" our rave review of their product. To those who questioned us openly, as did Mr. Hoffman, we simply said that we would sing the praises of their products to the skies—if and when they managed to import something as good as the Rover, or better. Little did we know

PHOTOGRAPHY: GENE BUTERA



The same basic sohc engine and independent rear suspension, the same robust reliability and performance as the BMW 2000—for an incredibly low \$2477

that Max Hoffman intended to do exactly that. He has begun to import the BMW 1600, and it *does* merit all the praise we can lavish upon it.

The BMW 1600 is the best small sedan we have ever driven, and probably the most spectacular bargain in the entire spectrum of imported cars currently being sold in the United States. We drove one for ten days, for every possible kind of usage, and we're convinced. If the BMW 1600 isn't comfortably established in the top ten imports by this time next year, either (1) America has no soul, (2) BMW has grossly underestimated the potential

of this market, or (3) Max Hoffman has no talent for the car business. The first alternative is almost a lead pipe cinch, the second is a possibility, but the third is utterly unthinkable.

This magazine's penchant for comparisons is well known, and the BMW 1600 is a car that begs to be compared. It is in the same class as the Volkswagen 1600, yet it is faster, roomier, more comfortable, better appointed, infinitely more sophisticated in design, and *cheaper*. It goes, sounds, and handles like a 1300cc Alfa Veloce, yet it has the practicality of a well laid-out two-door sedan body. It has the same basic single

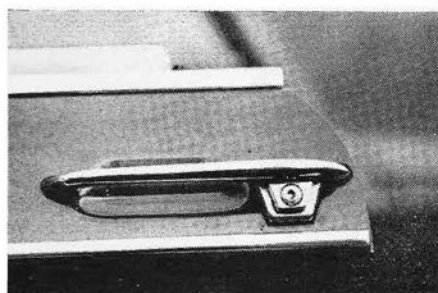
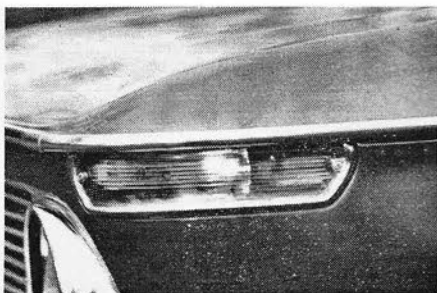
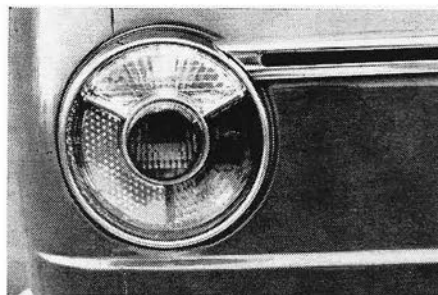
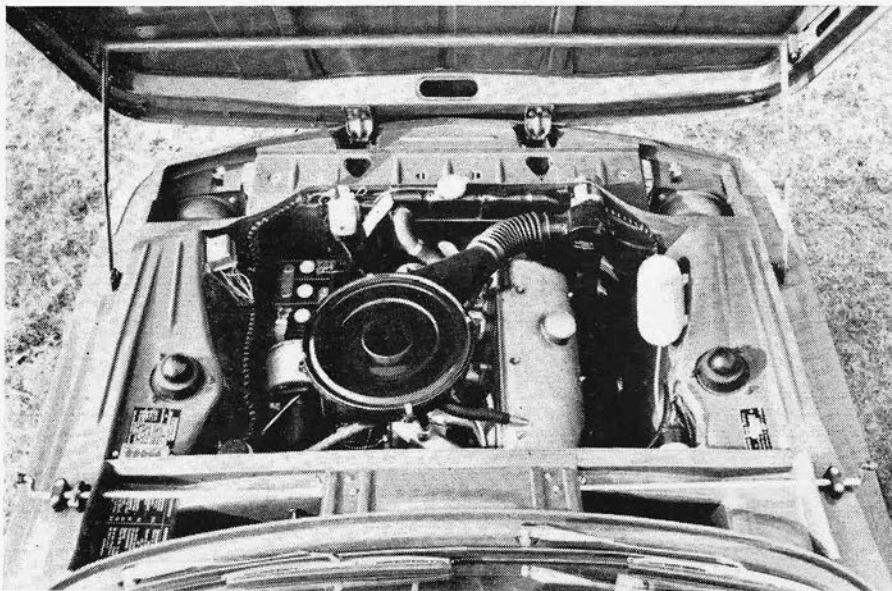
overhead cam engine, the same basic suspension layout, the finish, and all the robust reliability of the larger BMW 1800 and 2000 series sedans, *but it only costs \$2477!* (Try to be blasé about a car like this, old Champion of Understatement.)

To continue with comparisons for a moment: remember the impact of the first 85-horsepower, four-speed Volvos to appear in this country? They were faster than similarly-priced American sedans, they had the economy and quality of the Volkswagen, and the handling and brisk response of a two-seater sports car. You could buy one for less than \$3000, and a lot of MGs and other sports cars were traded in for the Swedish giant killer. Now Volvos have gotten bigger and more expensive, and they don't keep up so well anymore.

So what happens? Along comes Germany's 1967 version of the original Volvo revolution. The BMW 1600 combines exactly those qualities that made us love the Volvo—and made the Volvo a roaring success today, in spite of the fact that some of its most memorable advantages don't even exist anymore. The 1600 will out-accelerate virtually every six-cylinder intermediate sedan we can think of except for the Jaguar, the 250SE Mercedes, and the Pontiac Tempest Sprint. It is strong as an ox and unbelievably well-made. It looks like a winner.

The BMW 1800 series is an excellent car, with much to recommend it, but it never really *grabbed* the rank and file enthusiasts of this country. The 1600 is different. By blending all the important ingredients of the larger, more expensive 1800/2000 lines in this VW-sized package, the BMW people have come up with a car that has genuine Star quality. This little beastie can make it big in any market in the world. It sets a whole new standard for economy cars.

Naturally, the first impression one gets will be visual—and just looking at the car should be enough to convince most readers that we're not blowing smoke when we praise its quality. The 1600's appearance is quite pleasant from every angle—except possibly at the rear end, where they've substituted a less-expensive round tail light for the



Just like driving a 1300cc  
Alfa Veloce built  
by Germans: 0-60 in 11.4  
and 102 mph top speed

better-integrated unit used on their bigger cars. The glass area is enormous, and gives the car a very distinctive look, in spite of an extremely conservative styling job on the sheet metal and trim. It looks like a BMW, in spite of its size. They've made no attempt to disguise the fact that this is a little car, and they pleased us mightily by avoiding any temptation to make it "charming" or off-beat via the deliberate, designed-in ugliness route.

The paint on our test car (and on a half-dozen display cars we saw) was smooth and clear without any trace of orange peel or thin spots. The bright metal is tastefully laid

on, and it looks like it'll last. Every piece is straight, every piece fits, and the quality of the finish is uniformly excellent.

Doors, hood, and trunk-lid all convey a substantial, Mercedes-ish feeling of heft, durability, and perfect fit. It's a definite tactile pleasure to open and close anything from a door to an ashtray. They all click, snap, thump, latch, and lock with the same reassuring mechanical precision that one gets from a Leica, or a custom-made shotgun. Every edge is properly finished, or trimmed with some kind of bright-metal molding—even the inside edges of the flock-lined glove box. It's almost

impossible to uncover anything that looks like an obvious economy measure.

Unless you park a BMW 2000 side-by-side with the 1600, you're hard-pressed to note any important difference in interior quality. All switches and controls, all the materials used, seem to be equal to similar components in the more expensive model. Close, item-by-item comparison will reveal differences—but only in quantity, not quality. By the same token, a similar side-by-side comparison between the 1600 and *any* European sedan costing up  
*(Text continued on page 82;  
Specifications overleaf)*



## BMW 1600

**Importer:** Hoffman Motors Corp.  
375 Park Ave.  
New York, N.Y.  
Hoffman Motors Corp.  
1862 S. La Cienega Blvd.  
Los Angeles, Calif.

**Number of dealers in U.S.:** 150

**Vehicle type:** Front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 5-passenger compact sedan, all-steel integral body/chassis

**Price as tested:** \$2512.00  
(Manufacturer's suggested retail price, plus Federal excise tax, dealer preparation and delivery charges; does not include state and local taxes, license or freight charges)

**Options on test car:** None

### ENGINE

Type: Water-cooled 4-in-line, cast iron block, aluminum head, 5 main bearings  
Bore x stroke: 3.30 x 2.80 in, 83.9 x 71.1 mm  
Displacement: 96.0 cu in, 1573 cc  
Compression ratio: 8.6 to one  
Carburetion: 1 x 1-bbl Solex 38 PDSI  
Valve gear: Chain-driven single overhead camshaft, hemispherical combustion chambers  
Power (SAE): 96 bhp @ 5800 rpm  
Torque (SAE): 105.6 lbs/ft @ 3000 rpm  
Specific power output: 1.0 bhp/cu in, 61.0 bhp/liter  
Max. recommended engine speed: 6200 rpm

### DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission: 4-speed manual, all-synchromesh  
Clutch diameter: 7.88 in  
Final drive ratio: 4.11 to one  
Gear Ratio Mph/1000 rpm Max. test speed  
I 3.84 4.2 26 mph (6200 rpm)  
II 2.05 8.0 49 mph (6200 rpm)  
III 1.35 12.1 75 mph (6200 rpm)  
IV 1.00 16.4 102 mph (6200 rpm)

### DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase: 98.5 in  
Track: F: 52.0 in, R: 52.0 in  
Length: 166.5 in  
Width: 62.4 in  
Height: 53.5 in  
Ground clearance: 6.3 in  
Curb weight: 2010 lbs  
Test weight: 2270 lbs  
Weight distribution, F/R: 57.2/48.2%  
Lbs/bhp (test weight): 23.2  
Battery capacity: 6 volts, 77 amp/hr  
Generator capacity: 360 watts  
Fuel capacity: 10.1 gal  
Oil capacity: 3.7 qts  
Water capacity: 6.1 qts

### SUSPENSION

F: Ind., MacPherson strut, coil springs  
R: Ind., semi-trailing arms, coil springs

### STEERING

Type: Worm and roller  
Turns lock-to-lock: 3.75  
Turning circle: 33 ft

### BRAKES

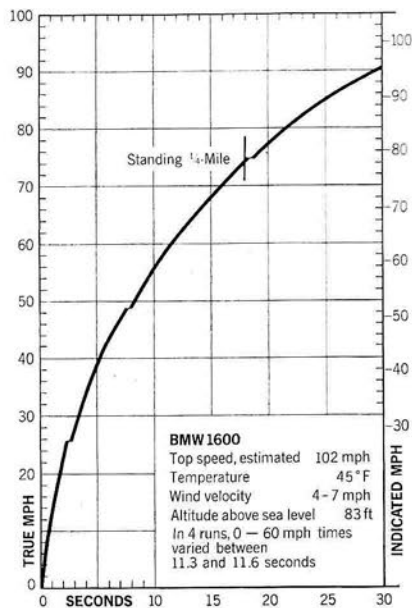
F: 9.45-in discs  
R: 7.9 x 1.6-in. cast iron drums  
Swept area: 242.76 sq in

### WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size and type: 4J x 13-in, steel disc, 4-bolt  
Tire make, size and type: Continental Record 6.00-13, 2-ply nylon tubeless  
Test inflation pressures: F: 24 psi, R: 24 psi  
Tire load rating: 860 lbs per tire @ 24 psi

### PERFORMANCE

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	3.5
40 mph	5.3
50 mph	8.2
60 mph	11.4
70 mph	15.7
80 mph	21.6
90 mph	29.4
Standing 1/4-mile	18.0 sec @ 74 mph
80-0 mph	248 ft (.83 G)
Fuel mileage	22-28 mpg on premium fuel
Cruising range	1222-283 mi



## CHECK LIST

### ENGINE

Starting: Excellent  
Response: Very Good  
Vibration: Very Good  
Noise: Fair

### DRIVE TRAIN

Shift linkage: Excellent  
Synchro action: Very Good  
Clutch smoothness: Excellent  
Drive train noise: Excellent

### STEERING

Effort: Very Good  
Response: Very Good  
Road feel: Very Good  
Kickback: Excellent

### SUSPENSION

Ride comfort: Very Good  
Roll resistance: Fair  
Pitch control: Very Good  
Harshness control: Good

### HANDLING

Directional control: Very Good  
Predictability: Very Good  
Evasive maneuverability: Excellent  
Resistance to sidewinds: Very Good

### BRAKES

Pedal pressure: Excellent  
Response: Very Good  
Fade resistance: Very Good  
Directional stability: Very Good

### CONTROLS

Wheel position: Excellent  
Pedal position: Excellent  
Gearshift position: Very Good  
Relationship: Excellent  
Small controls: Good

### INTERIOR

Ease of entry/exit: Very Good  
Noise level (cruising): Good  
Front seating comfort: Excellent  
Front leg room: Excellent  
Front head room: Excellent  
Front hip/shoulder room: Very Good  
Rear seating comfort: Good  
Rear leg room: Fair  
Rear head room: Poor  
Rear hip/shoulder room: Good  
Instrument comprehensiveness: Good  
Instrument legibility: Excellent

### VISION

Forward: Excellent  
Front quarter: Excellent  
Side: Excellent  
Rear quarter: Excellent  
Rear: Excellent

### WEATHER PROTECTION

Heater/defroster: Very Good  
Ventilation: Very Good  
Weather sealing: Excellent

### CONSTRUCTION QUALITY

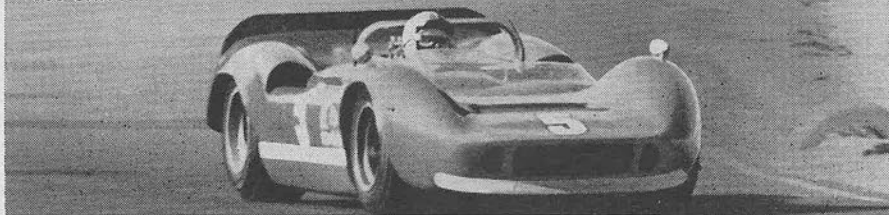
Sheet metal: Excellent  
Paint: Excellent  
Chrome: Excellent  
Upholstery: Very Good  
Padding: Very Good  
Hardware: Excellent

### GENERAL

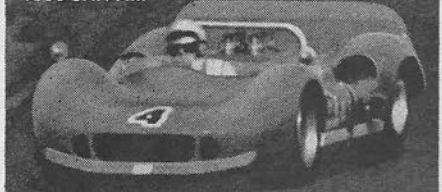
Headlight illumination: Very Good  
Parking and signal lights: Good  
Wiper effectiveness: Fair  
Service accessibility: Excellent  
Trunk space: Good  
Interior storage space: Very Good  
Bumper protection: Fair



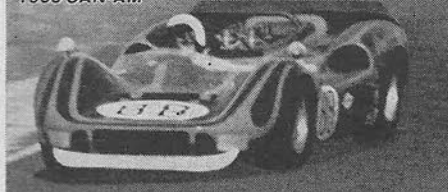
CHRIS AMON  
1966 CAN-AM



BRUCE McLAREN  
1966 CAN-AM



MASTEN GREGORY  
1966 CAN-AM



CHUCK PARSONS  
1966 CAN-AM



## BMW 1600

(continued from page 45)

to a thousand dollars more will show the little BMW to be superior in this all-important area.

Its list of standard-equipment extras includes whitewall tires, two-speed wipers, windshield washers, three-way courtesy lamp, an excellent heater/defroster, four-way safety flasher, draft-free ventilation, trunk light, trip odometer, panic handles (unnecessary) for the rear-seat passengers, cigarette lighter, rear-seat ash tray, front and rear towing sockets, and the ubiquitous console, to name a few.

Sitting in the car is as natural as falling into a barber's chair. The front seats have a lot of fore-and-aft adjustment, and the backs have a three-position cam adjustment for rake. Front leg room is excellent. Our test car was upholstered in a light gray, basket-weave vinyl that was good-looking and comfortable, but promised to show dirt as time wore on. The rear seat is pretty typical of rear seats in little two-door sedans, but it does have the advantage of almost full depth and a decent backrest angle, which helps to make it more comfortable than most—taking into consideration variations in leg room, depending on how far back you've pushed the two front seats.

Visibility is out of this world, although there were a couple of areas of wavy distortion in the outer edges of the windshield glass. You sit high, and you can see in all directions without any neck-craning. The inside and outside rear-view mirrors leave a little something to be desired, however, in that they both cover pretty limited areas, and they're a little touchy about adjustment. In spite of that, the BMW's visibility would have to rate about 95 on a scale of 100. It's that good.

Having sat there for awhile, absorbing all these random impressions of the car in its static state, one begins to feel a powerful urge to take it out and drive it foolishly—perhaps not wisely, but too well. The combination ignition switch/steering lock is one of those German devices that requires you to turn it all the way back to "off" each time you want to hit the starter. Fortunately the 1600 is a quick starter—it hardly ever needs its manual choke—and one twist usually gets the job done.

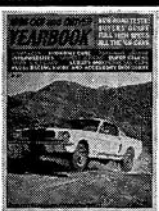
The four-cylinder engine, with five main bearings, hyper-efficient combustion chambers, and a single overhead cam, emits just enough machinery noise to make you feel good. In fact, it's the kind of engine

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noise that we'd much prefer to hear. If the car was silent, it wouldn't be half as much fun. The best way to describe the transmission is to say that it's just exactly like the one in the 1800/2000 line—a fully synchronized Porsche-type—and that tells the enthusiast all he needs to know. The ratios are well-spaced, the shift linkage is accurate and slick, and the hefty lever and shift knob encourage lots of high-spirited gearchanging.

With the city behind you, you start to push it a bit. It'll do an indicated 50 in second, 75 in third, and it handles like a real sports machine. Over and over again we found ourselves reminded of a real strong 1300cc Alfa Romeo Veloce, built by Germans. Floor the throttle and it takes off like a scalded dog. Point it into a corner—any corner—and unless you've simply lost your mind it'll track around like it was locked into a slot. Plant your big old boot on the brake pedal and all forward motion ceases instantly. You order it to halt, and it goes "YOWP!" and halts. There you were a second ago, about a hundred feet back down the road, charging along like Buster's Gang, and here you are now, stopped.

Specific driving impressions are all to the good. The brakes are

power-assisted, but they don't feel like power brakes. There's some noticeable roll in fast cornering, due to the fact that the 1600 does not use stabilizer bars at front or rear. But the handling is so much better than you'd get from anything else in this size and price class that we can understand the firm's reluctance to raise the handling from "excellent" to "incredible"—especially in view of the attendant increase in costs. The ride is not quite as good as you'd get from one of the lower-priced Mercedes, but it's considerably better than you'll find in any of the Opels, Taunuses, Volvos, or Fiats with which the BMW is competitive.

Aside from the engine noise that's apparent in the indirect gears, it's a very quiet car. We drove it along an Interstate express highway for about 60 miles—cruising at 70, driving into a headwind that was gusting up to 30-35 mph—and there was an amazing lack of engine, wind, or road noise. Opening the vent windows creates a bit of a roar, but the interior ventilation system is good enough that you never need to open the vent windows. So, we ask, why not eliminate the damned vent windows altogether? We might also mention, in this connection, that the

gearing for both vents and side windows is terribly slow—resulting in much twisting and/or cranking and very little opening. The rear windows swing outward, with the usual hinged latches, and they're fine.

At \$2477, the BMW 1600 is a fantastic bargain. Only in overall size does it seem like anything but a more expensive machine. Every time we test a car that really turns us on, the entire staff can be counted upon to zoom all over the country giving demonstration rides to friends, relatives, and the occasional complete stranger. With the 1600, the consensus of our staff, and all of our passengers, was that it looks, drives, feels, and sounds like it ought to cost at least a thousand dollars more. It also looks, drives, feels, and sounds like it ought to kick the beieezus out of the competition.

With any luck at all, Max Hoffman will sell more BMW 1600s than anyone could ever imagine in their wildest dreams. A lot of Americans will be driving around in the greatest little sedan that we've ever tested, BMW dealers will get rich, Mr. Hoffman will get richer, and countless *avant-garde* architects will find work as he covers the countryside with his gorgeous new houses. What could be better than that? **c/d**

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