BRIEF TEST

ROVER 2200 AUTOMATIC

FOR : comfortable ride and seats ; good detail design ; quiet relaxed cruising ; smooth gearbox and engine

AGAINST : poor performance ; restricted rear seat room ; ill-chosen gear ratios ; ugly instruments

The Rover P6, more familiar to all as the 2000 or 2200SC and TC, is a firm favourite of *Motor* staff. There are competitors which are faster—some considerably—and at the same time use less fuel. Many also have higher standards of roadholding and handling. Almost all have more accommodation, especially in the rear and boot. In some respects, too, the design is beginning to show its age. But few competitors have the restrained air of opulence and luxury (those that do cost considerably more) plus the quietness, comfort, and attention to detail.

When it was introduced some 11 years ago the 2000 was considered advanced, for apart from the engine there was the unusual suspension (wishbones and rocking levers operating horizontal coil springs at the front, sliding-tube de Dion at the rear) tuned specifically for radial-ply tyres, the safety-orientated body structure with bolt-on panels for cheaper repairs (it is ironic now that the 2200 is not sold in the USA as it would cost too much to meet their exacting regulations), disc brakes all round (inboard at the rear) and shape-coded minor controls. Modification over the years—notably the bigger engine, introduced last October, uprated transmission and rear suspension, a bigger fuel tank and re-shaped front seats to improve rear seat legroom—have kept the model reasonably up-to-date, and in general terms the 2200 is as good as any of the rivals.

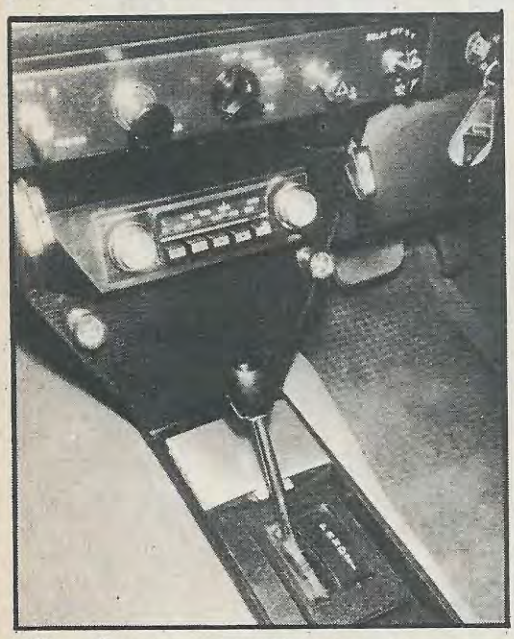
In the automatic transmission form in which we tried it, however, the car is not quite so admirable in one respect. If anything, the Borg-Warner Model 35 automatic gearbox enhances the refinement, but it also has a very adverse effect on the performance. Moreover automatic transmission is only available with the less powerful SC (Single Carburetter) version of the sohc engine which produces 98 (DIN) bhp at 5000 rpm and 126 lb ft of torque at 2500 rpm.

As our comparison table shows, therefore, the performance can at best be described as sluggish if not downright poor. Around MIRA's banked circuit the 2200 managed only 98.3 mph (Rover claim 98.8 mph, so we were not far off) and struggled up to 100.0 mph for the fastest quarters. The 0-60 mph time from a standing start (15.5 sec) is over three seconds slower than any other rival that we have tested. To put it in perspective this is the sort of time that manual versions of the Citroen GS Club, the Fiat 127, the Fiat 128, the Mazda 818

and the Renault 12TL can achieve —and all have much smaller engines; the Alfasud can beat it by over a second, as can the Hillman Avenger 1600 and the Morris Marina 1.8, the latter pair also with automatic transmission systems. This mediocre performance is nevertheless an improvement over the 2000, though, for that model took 20.8 sec for the same time, albeit with a similar top speed—98.9 mph.

But the real weakness lies in an almost disastrous lack of acceleration for open-road overtaking which is quite out of keeping with a car of this price and class. The 30-50 mph acceleration time of 6.0 seconds—distinctly poor for a 2-litre automatic—tells the story to some extent. In combination the engine and transmission don't seem to get on song until about 55 mph in second—which makes it a struggle to get past lorries—and about 75 mph in top. Once wound up to this speed, however, it is certainly delightfully relaxed and will cruise comfortably at 85-90 mph.

Fuel consumption tends to



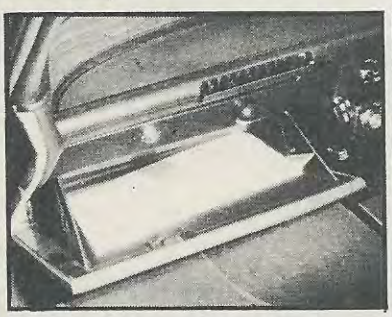
Seats in the 2200 are among the most comfortable available, and attractively finished as well. But the rear seats are really for two only. The fire extinguisher is an optional extra

The selector lever was floppily mounted, while some of the shape coded knobs would be better as column-mounted stalks

The square instrument binacle creates a jarring note on an otherwise attractive facia ; the deep shin bins are an excellent feature

suffer when an automatic transmission is fitted, and with an overall figure of 20.4 mpg the 2200 is no exception. Surprisingly the 2000 Automatic had a worse touring consumption—only 23.6 mpg—but as might be expected gave a better overall (21.1 mpg) consumption. In comparison to its rivals the 2200 is rather below average.

The Borg-Warner transmission fitted to the Rover was good in most respects, but we feel that something more could be done with the ratios and the torque converter to overcome the weight of the car and poor low-speed torque from the engine and thus improve the performance. Holding the car in D on the brakes when idling pulled engine speed down to the point where the alternator warning light came on strongly, and at the same time the engine shook noticeably. Full throttle changes took place at an indicated 38 and 69 mph in D, changing manually increased the change speeds to 45 and 75 mph as indicated by little red lines on the speedometer—but it was reluctant to kick-down to first at speeds much above 25 mph, or second above about 55 mph, both speeds where a quick spurt comes



in useful for overtaking.

In other ways, though, the box was exemplary, with smooth and neat changes, up or down, automatically or using manual hold; only the occasional kick-down change was rather thumpy, while kick-down otherwise gave willing if not over-eager changes. The gear-lever was floppy, with an ill-defined gate which rather spoilt the quality image, but the detent to prevent accidental selection of neutral is a feature we recommend. Noise is notable more by its absence than presence. In normal use, the box was unobtrusive and smooth—what an automatic gearbox should be, in fact.

The big steering wheel feels cumbersome at first to those used to more normal sized wheels, and at parking speeds or in tight slow corners the effort required for the non-assisted steering is high; this, coupled with strong understeer at low speeds can make the car quite tiring to drive. Once the car is moving briskly, though, the steering becomes lighter and the understeer can be changed to oversteer by keeping the power on.

Handling is usually safe, predictable, and even surprisingly wieldy, but there is a considerable amount of roll (which could make some passengers feel uncomfortable) and for this reason it can be untidy through an S-bend. Grip from the Dunlop SP Sports fitted to the test car was high, but in the damp—or even on a tight corner in the dry—the tail can come out quickly if too much throttle is used.

But performance and sports-car handling are not the reasons for which many people buy the 2200. Ride instead probably comes high up on their list of priorities, along with other more comfort-oriented features. Here the Rover scores heavily, for the ride is pretty good. The suspension can cope with the extremes of road surface, from minor corrugations to potholes or long-wave undulations, while on a smooth motorway type road it is very good indeed, allowing relaxed high-speed cruising. The seats add to the superb comfort, for the comments by our Road Test staff ranged from "good" through "excellent" to "superbly comfortable"—although one dissenter felt that the seat cushion was excessively flat. Rake, however, can be adjusted by altering the distance pieces on which the seat runners are mounted.

The 2000 was never intended to be more than a four-seater, so the rear seat is not really spacious, although alterations to the front seat backrest have improved matters in this respect. But the shape of the individual back seats effectively prevents the carrying of a fifth passenger —or at least only with some discomfort. Luggage accommodation, too, is a mixture of the good and the bad, for the smallish boot has an awkward shape, while the spare wheel intrudes unless the boot lid mounting option is specified, but on the other hand there are the excellent shin-bins in front of both driver and passenger, and a useful coarse-textured shelf on top of the facia, plus a further shelf below the back

window.

The shape-coding of the minor controls was hailed as a minor advance when they first appeared, and they are still very good in this respect: but time has overtaken them, for, unlike those on some more modern cars, both the light switch and wipe/wash switch are facia mounted and thus not too easy to find in an emergency, the stalks on the column simply controlling the dip and flash (left-hand) and indicators plus horn (right-hand).

Whereas the comprehensive round-dialled instruments on the 2200 TC were praised for their attractiveness, most of our drivers disliked the SC's combined strip speedometer plus temperature and fuel gauges contained in a square box on the facia shelf, feeling that it looked too much like an afterthought, and was not at all integrated into the facia. On the other hand the cluster is very clear and well located, being easily visible through the steering wheel.

We know from experience that the Rover heating and ventilation system is very good, but that in the test car seemed to have some fault, for to get either heat or fresh air it was necessary to have the quiet two-speed fan in operation except at high speed, since ram effect was otherwise negligible. But the face-level vents—slots directly in front of the driver or passenger—are in just the right place, and can be easily and finely controlled for both direction and flow—an excellent set-up, and another indication of the sort of thoughtful detail that went into the design of the car.

Noise insulation is another pointer to the quality of the car. There was some harshness from the engine when it was extended, wind noise builds up only slightly with speed, the tyres thump over Cats-Eyes, and there is some roar on rough surfaces, but none of these noises are really obtrusive and on the whole the 2200 is well ahead in this respect.

Over the years subtle cost-cutting exercises have been carried out (plastic instead of metal grille and badges, for example, or cloth—which we prefer—instead of leather seats, and ordinary round knobs instead of the curved hooks for choke and petrol reserve) but the excellent array of fittings is still there. Such features as the petrol reserve, the hazard warning lights, the adjustable steering column, the windscreen wiper delay, and three-position interior light switch are still rarities nowadays. The finish, though, was a little disappointing, with one or two minor quality faults such as cloth patches peeling off and ill-fitting trim strips.

All told the 2200 Automatic is a solid, comfortable, quiet, smooth car enhanced in refinement by the addition of an equally smooth gearbox but diminished in performance. Attention to detail design put it at the top of its class when it was introduced, and after all these years it's still not far off.

MOTOR ROAD TEST No. 33/74 • Rover 2200 Automatic

PERFORMANCE

CONDITIONS

Weather	Overcast: Wind 8-20 mph
Temperature	65-70° F
Barometer	29.55 in Hg
Surface	Dry tarmac

MAXIMUM SPEEDS

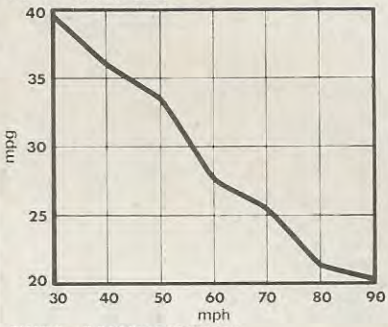
	mph	kph
Banked circuit	98.3	158.2
Best ¼ mile	100.0	160.9
Terminal speeds:		
at ¼ mile	70	113
at kilometer	83	133
Speed in gears (at 6000 rpm):		
1st	50	80
2nd	82	132

ACCELERATION FROM REST

mph	sec	kph	sec
0-30	5.3	0-40	4.3
0-40	7.7	0-60	7.0
0-50	11.3	0-80	11.2
0-60	15.5	0-100	16.7
0-70	20.8	0-120	23.5
0-80	28.5	0-140	36.9
0-90	41.8		
Stand'g ¼	20.6	Stand'g km	37.8

ACCELERATION IN TOP

mph	sec	kph	sec
20-40	4.4	40-60	2.7
30-50	6.0	60-80	4.2
40-60	7.8	80-100	5.5
50-70	9.5	100-120	6.8
60-80	13.0	120-140	13.4
70-90	21.0		



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Touring*	25.2 mpg
	11.2 litres/100 km
Overall	20.4 mpg
	13.8 litres/100 km
Fuel grade	97 octane (RM)
	4 star rating
Tank capacity	15.0 galls
	68.0 litres
Max range	378 miles
	608 km
Test distance	813 miles
	1308 km

* Consumption midway between 30 mph and maximum less 5 per cent for acceleration.

SPEEDOMETER (mph)

Speedo	30	40	50	60	70	80	90
True mph	28	38	48	58	67.5	77	87

Distance recorder: 1 per cent fast

WEIGHT

	cwt	kg
Unladen weight*	25.6	1300.5
Weight as tested	29.3	1488.4
Distribution front/rear	51/49	

*with fuel for approx 50 miles.

Performance tests carried out by Motor's staff at the Motor Industry Research Association proving ground, Lindley.

GENERAL SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Cylinders	4 in line
Capacity	2204.4 cc (134.6 cu in)
Bore/stroke	90.5/85.7 mm (3.562/3.375 in)
Cooling	Water
Block	Cast iron
Head	Light alloy
Valves	Sohc
Valve timing	
inlet opens	18° btdc
inlet closes	42° abdc
ex opens	48° bbdc
ex closes	12° atdc
Compression	9:1
Carburetter	Single SU HIF 6
Bearings	5
Fuel pump	AC mechanical
Max power	98 bhp (DIN) at 5000 rpm
Max torque	126 lb ft (DIN) at 2500 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type	Borg-Warner Type 35 3-speed Automatic
Internal ratios and mph/100 rpm	
Top	1.00:1/19.8
2nd	1.45:1/13.7
1st	2.39:1/8.3
Rev	2.09:1
Final drive	Hypoid 3.54:1

BODY/CHASSIS

Construction	Unitary with detachable body panels
Protection	Phosphate treatment, electrophoretic primer, underbody sealing, box sections sprayed internally with wax

SUSPENSION

Front	Independent by horizontal coils, leading top links, transverse bottom links, anti-roll bar, telescopic dampers
Rear	de Dion sliding tube, fixed length driveshafts Watt lingages, coils, telescopic dampers.

STEERING

Type	Worm and roller
Assistance	No
Toe-in	⅛ in ± 1/16 in
Camber	0°
Castor	+ 0° 45′
King pin	8°

BRAKES

Type	Discs (inboard at rear)
Servo	Yes
Circuit	Single
Rear valve	No
Adjustment	Automatic

WHEELS

Type	Steel 14 x 5J
Tyres	Dunlop CB 73 165 SR 14
Pressures	26 psi front, 28 psi rear; 32 psi rear when laden

ELECTRICAL

Battery	12v 60 Ah
Polarity	Negative
Generator	Lucas 18 ACR Alternator
Fuses	12
Headlights	4, outer 60W, inner 75W

COMPARISONS

	Capacity cc	Price £	Max mph	0-60 sec	30-50* sec	Overall mpg	Touring mpg	Length ft in	Width ft in	Weight cwt	Boot cu ft
Rover 2200	2204	2546	98.3	15.5	6.0	20.4	25.2	15 0.5	5 7.5	25.6	10.3
Audi 100LS	1760	2416	103.6	12.1	4.5	25.2	28.7	15 2.5	5 8.8	20.2	13.4†
Chrysler 2-litre	1981	2356	102.6	11.7	4.9	23.5	24.8	14 7.5	5 7	21.7	9.4
Ford Granada 3000	2994	2526	108.1	11.3	4.2	19.0	23.5	15 3	5 10.5	27.3	13.0
Peugeot 504 FI	1971	2413	100.0‡	11.9	5.5	22.9	—	14 9	4 7.8	24.3	11.9†
Toyota Crown 2600	2563	2326	100.0	12.7	4.7	17.2	20.6	15 4.3	5 6.5	27.2	—

*in kickdown †measured with boxes, not cases ‡estimated

Make : Rover
Model : 2200 Automatic
Makers : Rover-Triumph, British Leyland (UK) Ltd, Meteor Works, Lode Lane, Solihull, Warwickshire D92 8NW
Price : £2137 plus £178.08 car tax plus £231.51 VAT equals £2546.59