



ROVER 3500S

AT LAST, I've found a car which I consider good value for money, AND is fun to drive. There are a few cars which are good value for money, but mostly not much fun to drive.

The 3500S originated as the Rover 2000. The 2000 handled well, was comfortable and reliable, but needed a bit of winding up to get it going. In 1967, Rover fitted an all aluminium 3.5-litre V8 motor into the body, but unfortunately offered only an automatic gearbox.

Now, the car is available with a manual gearbox and to differentiate it from the 3500 Automatic it is given an "S" suffix.

The first thing that strikes you when you drive the 3500S is the tremendous reserve of smooth power. I don't know if Rover really intended this, as their policy has always been to produce cars which create a first impression of solidarity and comfort. With the 3500S all the traditional Rover feelings are there, but I noticed the power before I luxuriated in all its other virtues.

With the tremendous lightweight V8 engine, the car can be left in top gear around town, while you are crawling along at 10 mph, and when the traffic clears, it will pull away smoothly, as if it had an automatic gearbox attached. On the other hand, the gearbox can be used to give a

It's the "S" that makes all the difference, says Justin Scott.

little more punch to the car. In practice the automatic gearbox has virtually no advantages over the manual, the engine is so tractable.

The V8 weighs little more than the four cylinder engine, so it hasn't changed the car's balance noticeably. The car understeers when pushed into corners, but with all that power you can go through, balancing on the throttle.

The test car, supplied by Regent Motors, was beautifully appointed and was fitted with the optional air conditioning. The infinitely adjustable front bucket seats provided ideal support and in the rear Rover have achieved bucket seat comfort with their nicely contoured back seat.

Once seated perfectly, ahead of you is a complete set of instruments, perfectly laid out. The gear lever, located on the central console, falls nicely to hand. The throw is very small, and the lever itself very short.

The ratios are very well chosen, as at no time did I feel that I would have preferred a particular ratio to be a little higher or lower. The one criticism I did have was the

syncromesh. It functioned perfectly at all times, but did slow down changes if you wanted to change rapidly. To move through the gears quickly, it was a lot faster to double-de-clutch. Under normal circumstances this would present no real problem, but for the driver who did want the use the gears to their best advantage, this little quirk would be annoying if he didn't wish to use a double clutch action.

When driving, the car is supremely quiet. With the air conditioning, I was able to drive with all windows closed, and this was really appreciated in Friday afternoon traffic. On the highway, it allows you to travel in silence, although this can be deceptive and I found myself exceeding the speed limit when I didn't watch the speedo carefully.

The engine allowed you to overtake quickly and safely on the highway, and this could be achieved even more swiftly with a change down to third.

The suspension of the Rover 2000 has been retained, and wisely so.

The most outstanding part of the suspension is the De Dion rear axle. A lot has been said about its wonders in the past,

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and theoretically there are better suspension designs now available. However in practice is is hard to fault; it keeps the full power of the V8 on the road at all times. Suspension travel is fairly long, which provides a very comfortable ride without sacrificing handling. It is possible however to occasionally catch the suspension 'off-balance' as it doesn't have time to neutralise from the last corner. In practice this problem rarely presents itself — and even if it does, you have the consolation that the Rover is handling the situation better than the majority of other cars.

In side winds the car is extremely stable. There is no wander or buffeting, another virtue of the well designed body shape being the ability to pass heavy transports and not be knocked around by the mass of air being pushed ahead of it.

The car covers a lot of miles at deceptively high average speeds.

When driven at 70 mph and observing all speed restrictions I was surprised how quickly the miles could be put away. This was achieved without any spectacular feats of driving, and into the bargain, after four hours at the wheel I didn't feel as though I was glad to get out of the car.

The original Rover 2000, in my opinion suffered from poor instrumentation which mainly consisted of a strip type speedo that seemed to have been put on the parcel shelf as an afterthought. This has been changed on the present models. Ahead of the driver is a large circular tachometer and speedometer. To the left is the ammeter and below it the oil pressure gauge. On the other side is the water temperature and fuel gauge. There is a clock in the centre of the dash, and I found that when placed in an easily visible position it is surprising how often it is looked at.

The heating cooling controls are easily

reached with a seat belt on, as are all the other switches. Heating is more than adequate on the coldest night, and face level cooling supplies a constant stream of fresh air which helps to keep the driver alert.

The body design is timeless. The car looks as smart today as when first introduced. This has been achieved by clean panels and constant adherence to function. While many other cars are currently tucking the side panels under the car, Rover keep theirs as vertical as possible, which helps prevent stone chips to the lower body.

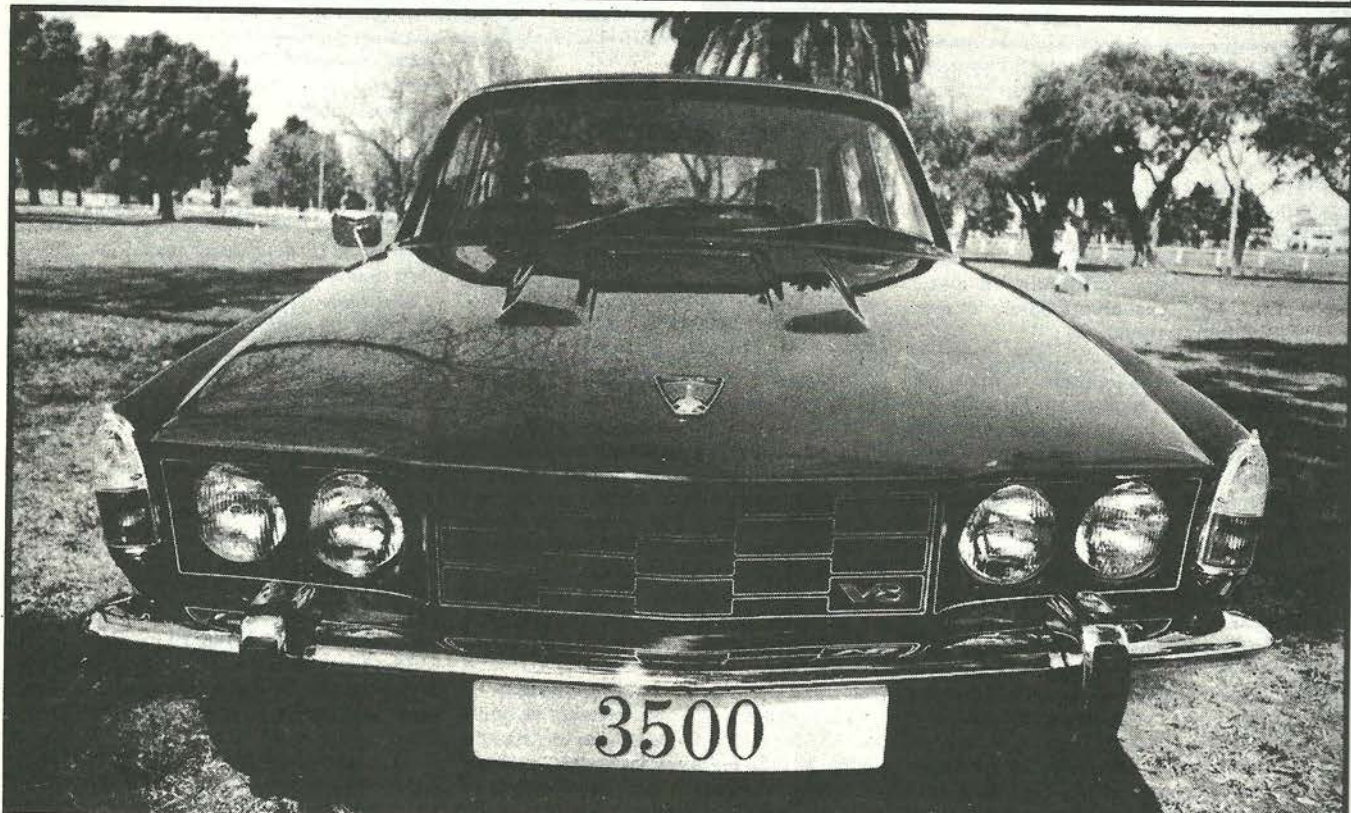
Unfortunately the front of the car detracts from the overall simplicity of line. The bonnet now has two parallel bulges to suggest they are needed to allow room for the V8 rocker covers. On opening the bonnet it becomes obvious that this is not so.

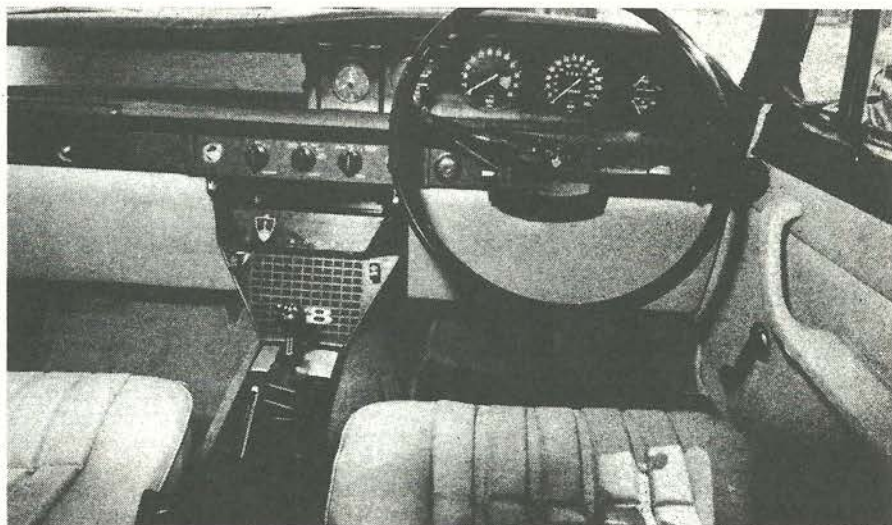
The grille is of plastic, which doesn't damage as the old aluminium one did, and is also far cheaper to replace. Again styling rather than design has been used and a large under-the-bumper grille differentiates the V8 from the four cylinder, even though the radiator matrix is the same depth in both cars.

Relative to the overall merits of the car these minor criticisms pale into insignificance.

For six and a half thousand dollars what else can you buy with safety designed body, luxury appointments comparable to any car in the world, 185 hp V8 motor and handling that would do justice to a sports car through the use of advanced suspension design?

The price of a locally produced so-called luxury car with all the options to bring it up to Rover class would cost just about the same — and all the options in the world don't make a basically utility vehicle into a luxury sophisticated sports saloon like the Rover 3500S.





SPECIFICATIONS

CAR FROM: Regent Motors.

PRICE AS TESTED: \$7650.

OPTIONS FITTED: Airconditioning (\$595), 13 transistor radio (\$135).

ENGINE

TypeAlloy V8
 Bore and stroke 88.9 mm x 71.12 mm
 Capacity3528cc
 Comp. ratio10.5:1
 Power184 bhp at 5200 rpm
 Torque226 ft. lbs. at 3000 rpm

TRANSMISSION:

Type: 4 speed manual gearbox, central floor mounting.
 Ratios:
 1st3.63:1
 2nd2.13:1
 3rd1.39:1
 4th1.00:1
 Final drive3.08:1

CHASSIS

Wheelbase103.4"
 Length180"
 Track F53"
 Track R51.7"
 Width66"
 Height55.7"
 Clearance (minimum)6"
 Weight2862 lbs.
 Fuel capacity15 gals.

SUSPENSION:

Front: Independent, McPherson strut type, with horizontal coil springs; telescopic shock absorbers.
 Rear: Independent, De Dion tube with coil springs and telescopic shock absorbers.

BRAKES:

Front: Disc.
 Rear: Disc (inboard).

STEERING:

TypeWorm & Roller
 Turning circle31.5 ft.
 Turns lock to lock4.5

WHEELS/TYRES:

Ventilated steel wheels.
 185HR x 14. Radial ply tyres.

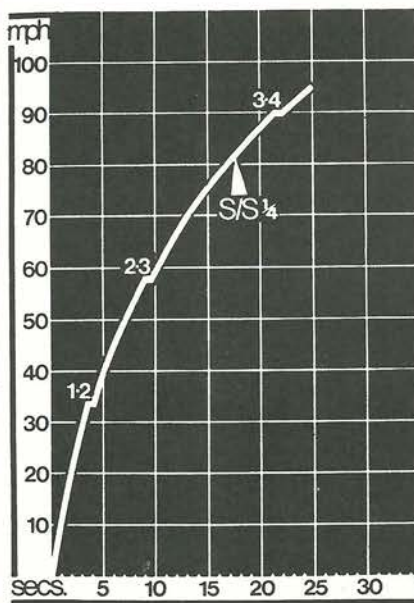
PERFORMANCE

PERFORMANCE:

Zero to
 30 mph3.2
 40 mph5.2
 50 mph7.3
 60 mph10.0
 70 mph13.2
 80 mphNA
 90 mphNA
 100 mphNA
 Standing quarter mile 17.7 seconds.
 Fuel consumption on test 19-20 mpg on super fuel.
 Fuel consumption (expected) 20-22 mpg.
 Cruising range 350 miles.
 Speedometer error:
 Indicated 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
 Actual 30 40 50 58 68 76 NA NA

MAXIMUM SPEEDS IN GEARS:

1st34 mph
 2nd58 mph
 3rd90 mph
 4th125 mph



COMMENTS

ENGINE:

ResponseGood
 VibrationNil
 NoiseLow

DRIVE TRAIN:

Shift linkageGood, but balky
 Synchro actionExcellent

STEERING:

EffortModerate
 Road feelVery good
 KickbackSlight

SUSPENSION:

Ride comfortFirm but comfortable
 Roll resistanceGood
 Pitch controlVery good

HANDLING:

Directional controlGood
 PredictabilityGood

BRAKES:

Pedal pressureModerate
 ResponseExcellent
 Fade resistanceVery good
 Directional stabilityExcellent

CONTROLS:

Wheel positionExcellent
 Pedal positionVery good
 Gearshift positionVery good

INTERIOR:

Front seat comfortExcellent
 Front leg roomVery good
 Front head roomVery good
 Rear seat comfortVery good
 Rear leg roomGood
 Rear head roomGood
 Instrument legibilityExcellent

VISION:

ForwardExcellent
 Front quarterExcellent
 RearExcellent

CONSTRUCTION QUALITY:

PaintVery good
 ChromeVery good
 TrimExcellent

GENERAL:

Headlights — highbeamExcellent
 Headlights — lowbeamExcellent
 Parking/signal lightsExcellent
 Wiper coverageGood
 Wipers at speedVery good
 Maintenance accessibilityGood