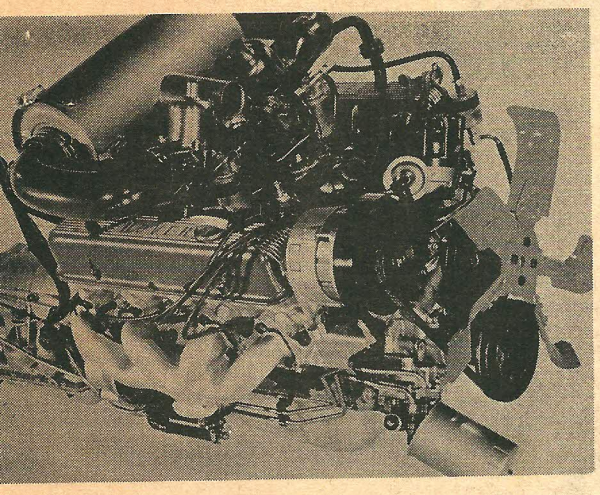

BIG V8, 3500 badges and heftier tyres are few outward changes. LEFT: The big change—Rover's GM-based alloy V8 motor.

Even longer legs for Modern Motor readers' favorite luxury compact. Harold Dvoretsky reports from deepest Brittany

ROVER'S 2000 GOES V8

ROVER'S long-awaited, much-rumored 3.5-litre V8-powered "2000" came on the roads of Britain on April 17.

Called—somewhat oddly—the Three Thousand Five, it should make the car voted Australia's most desired luxury compact for two years running by **Modern Motor** readers an odds-on favorite for even bigger laurels next year.

For with an 85 per cent increase in power over the single carb. model and 47 per cent increase in power over the twin carburettor TC version, the new car has performance to match the Jaguar 3.8S without losing any of its quietness of ride and smoothness of performance and handling.

The 2000 series has been noted as being the longest-legged car in its range and price class. Few in any price bracket can touch it. Now it has even longer legs. Combined with a Borg-Warner three-speed automatic it can top 118 mph, get to 60 mph in nine seconds or 100 mph in a little over half a minute.

Cruising speeds are well over the ton, yet it has lost none of its quality of being the most forgiving car in the business.

In this form the virtually unworked V8 (the same basic unit which led to the original Repco-Brabham Formula One racing engine) produces 184 bhp at 5200 rpm. Power-to-weight ratio is 144 bhp per ton which makes it an extremely lively performer. If Rover should ever decide to open it up a bit, this could be a 150 mph sports limousine.

Strangely enough the weight of the cast aluminium engine (almost identical with that used in the 3.5-litre sedan and coupe) is about the same as the four-cylinder ohc unit in the 2000.

The new wide section (5½-J) Avon radials were specially produced for the car.

Internally, the speedo goes up to 140 mph and there's a new fuel gauge to cope with the 15-gallon (instead of 12) fuel tank. The remaining instruments are identical.

Mechanical changes include modifications to the engine mountings and a special rubber-mounted cross member. Suspension now has revised bottom links at the front, mainly to accommodate the V8, and 170 lb./in. rate coil springs instead of the 150 lb./in. in the normal 2000.

Shock absorbers are bigger and the front hubs are offset slightly to accommodate the new wide-based rims.

At the rear the final drive mountings have been strengthened and there are modified top links to clear the tyres. The final drive has been raised from 3.54:1 to 3.08:1 and has been strengthened with a four-pinion differential to transmit the increased power and torque. It says a lot for the transmission that so little had to be changed to take the extra load.

Top gear peak speed rpm is 24 mph per 1000 rpm, so the V8 isn't working too hard at speed.

Because of the increased tyre size, Rover have gone over to a Burman F3 recirculating ball type steering with a variable ratio of 21.5:1 straight ahead and full lock of 26:1 (the 2000 is 20.3:1).

Brakes, too, have been modified to cope with the higher speeds. Discs are 10.82in. diameter front and 10.69in. at the rear. Total swept area is 372 square inches.

Pre-release test

A month before release Rover took us—by "Queen Elizabeth"—to Brittany to put the new car through its paces.

As a 2000 owner, I'd been a little afraid that the new section tyres and the slightly weightier engine might make the car heavier to steer. But with the new Burman steering, I hardly noticed the difference.

In a 250-mile drive through Brittany, my first thought was that the new car wasn't as fast as I'd imagined it would be. Then we put the clock on it and —surprise, surprise!

The acceleration figures tell the story. From 0-30 mph came up in 3.5 sec.; 0-40, 5.0; 0-50, 7.0; 0-60, 9.2; 0-70, 13.5; 0-80, 18.3; 0-90, 23.1; 0-100, 32.5. Standing quarter time was 17.5 sec.

On the short twisty roads of Brittany our best top speed recorded was 105 mph, but there was plenty left and 118 claimed maximum would seem accurate. Fuel consumption worked out about 20 mpg.

First impressions can be misleading. You need to get to know a car of this type over a few weeks and thousands of miles—and that's just what I intend doing before passing final judgment.

To my mind, Rover now have a car with the right sort of power, the right sort of potential and the right sort of comfort.

For the Australian buyer—it won't reach Australia at least until late in the year—it would seem to be the perfect concept—loads of comfort and just built for our long distances.

The price? Not out of this world. It leaves the factory with a price tag of £1400 sterling—should sell in Australia for about $5800.