



The 300-L's front silhouette is low and flat, an effect that is enhanced by repeating the grille shape in the unusual safety glass covers over the quad headlights.

transported at just about any speed the driver chooses. Standard engine is the 413-cubic inch V8, with 10.1-to-1 compression ratio, high-lift cam, four-barrel carburetor and dual exhausts. It develops a healthy 360 horsepower at 4800 rpm, along with 470 lbs-ft of torque at 3200 rpm. The combination is more than sufficient for anything short of winning the Daytona 500. (As a matter of fact, a 300-L with the engine properly blueprinted might be competitive in the Daytona 500.)

The first point considered by most drivers is how the car feels behind the wheel. Until the day when adjustable pedals and steering wheel are commonplace we'll have to go along with the multi-position power seat as the best alternative. The driver's seat on the 300-L can be raised, lowered and adjusted fore and aft through a wide range that should permit a comfortable position for most

**ROAD
TEST:**

CHRYSLER 300-L



**A HIGH-PERFORMANCE
LUXURY GRAN TURISIMO**

**WITH FEW EQUALS
ON ANY HIGHWAY**



If Chrysler's "beautiful brute," the 300-L, were being imported from Europe with a fancy Italian nameplate affixed, the stampede to buy the car would be heard from coast to coast, especially if the basic factory retail price tag of \$4153 were to apply. As it is, Chrysler dealers have no trouble selling the car to those knowledgeable enthusiasts who want an impressive combination of luxury, performance and style — not to mention reliability.

If it sounds as though we checked out the 300-L and came away enthused, you are right; we are. This has to be one of the finest cars of its type in the world.

However, the 300-L is not for everyone. It has a character that is definitely masculine. This is not to say that a woman would not enjoy driving it. It has, for all its virility, all the recognized creature

comforts. Our test car included a list of extras that wouldn't quit: automatic transmission (floor controlled), air conditioning, power seats (individual leather buckets), power windows, power vent windows, auto pilot, power trunk lid, AM/FM radio with reverberator speaker in the rear, power antenna, front and rear seat belts, head rests, reclining passenger seat, special bumper guards, limited-slip differential, a special paint job, and 9.00 x 14-inch tires. In other words it was loaded. The price was boosted to a suggested retail \$5851 in Detroit, and we consider the car a reasonably good bargain at that figure.

The 300-L is available only as a two-door hardtop or a convertible, which automatically limits its practical carrying capacity to four persons. But these are four persons who are going to be

potential drivers. We liked the firm support of the buckets not too soft, and dished enough for reasonable holding power. Of course, the best driver holding element is still the seat belt; there's no substitute for it.

The 300-L has a set of adjustable head rests, and we found that we could take them or leave them alone. On the passenger side the rest was convenient when the seat was reclined and a nap was in order. But for the driver, the head rest does not project far enough forward to offer any support while driving. The theory is that it prevents whiplash injuries in rear-end collisions. It also inhibits rear vision just enough to be somewhat annoying.

On the plus side, we found plenty of room for four with a handy lockable center console that included a lighter for

rear seat passengers. Head room front and rear is 38.1 inches, leg room is 41.3 front and 35.7 rear. The hip room figure that Chrysler specifies really isn't applicable because of the bucket seats.

Although styling is largely in the eye of the beholder, we'd like to offer an opinion. It's excellent. The rectangular front end, emphasized by enclosing the headlights behind safety glass rectangles, blends well with a low-silhouette body line and a roof that is light in scale. The car drew favorable comment from many lookers, and we really couldn't unearth any negative statements about styling. It is unquestionably one of the better looking Chryslers in recent years.

How about handling? For all its size (and it is big at 124 inches in wheelbase, 218.2 overall length) it has an ease of handling that surprised everyone on the test crew who drove it. One staff member complained that the power steering

lock easily in a panic stop — just when a cautious driver would want to maintain maximum braking without skidding. They are big enough to keep fade down to a safe minimum. Lining size on front wheels is 11 x 3 inches; on the rear it is 11 x 2.5. Total lining area is 263.3 square inches.

If you are interested in obtaining maximum gasoline mileage in your automobile, then you'd best forget the 300-L. It is anything but a gas miser. But then, it comes with a built-in handicap. The 413-inch engine offers a temptation that is difficult to resist; the car wants to go and most drivers will punch the accelerator accordingly. As a consequence, fuel economy will be down around 10 miles per gallon average; a little better on the highway, a shade less in city traffic.



didn't offer enough road feel, was too easy, but that has been a Chrysler Corp. characteristic for some time, and is not really objectionable when one becomes accustomed to it. At a rated 3.5 turns, lock to lock, the steering is quick, something it couldn't be without power.

We found the general roadability to be excellent. Body lean on turns was minimal, and the fat tires took a sure bite of the road, kept traction to a maximum. Although there was no opportunity to put the Sure Grip limited-slip differential to any sort of test, we know from previous experience that it is well worth the \$51.70 charged for it. In mud, sand or ice it can make the difference between getting through and not making it.

As for brakes, well they are about as good as can be expected but nothing to rave about for extreme use. They will

This year Chrysler eliminated the push buttons for the automatic transmission. The L's gear selector is on the floor, a well positioned lever that feels solid and permits easy choice of gears on the TorqueFlite trans. The trans is one of the best in the business. It makes its upshifts smoother than ever before, can be shifted down for positive deceleration, a feature sorely needed on several other automatics.

Instruments generally are laid out in an efficient manner. However, the vacuum gauge down at the forward part of the center console is, we feel, a waste of time. In the first place, it is poorly positioned. The driver must take his eyes off the road to examine it. Secondly, it is unnecessary. For the first few miles it is interesting to watch the needle fall back into the "power" segment on accelera-

tion. But we found ourselves quickly tiring of it, and practically never referring to it.

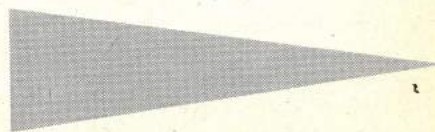
We must offer a comment on the heating and air conditioning system, both of which were used during the test. They are first-rate, provide a flexible heating and cooling system that would have been considered impossible a few years ago.

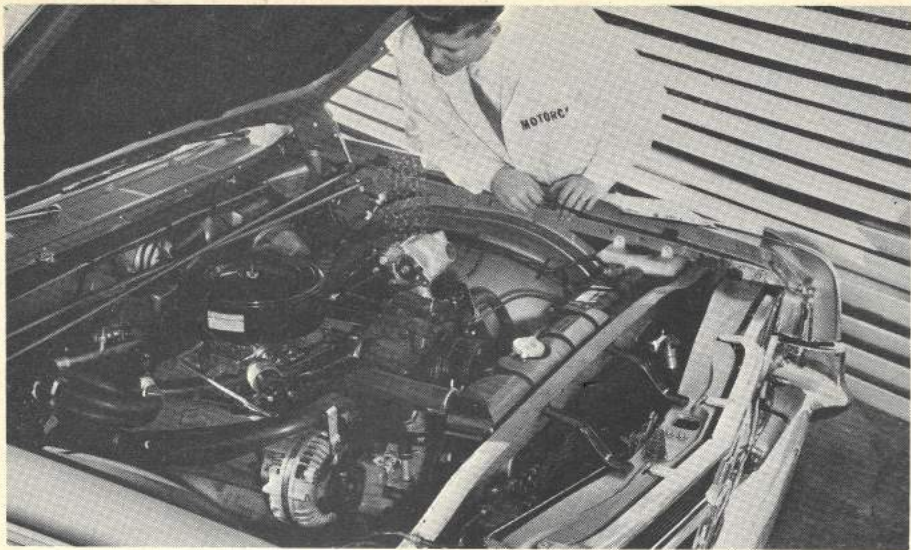
Chrysler has long been proud of its mechanical quality, but we have seen quality control as it pertains to fit and finish of exterior and interior come out less than perfect. The 300-L need make no apologies on this score. Panels fit well, doors close, the hood aligns, there are no annoying drafts, and quality of the interior is what one would expect on a car in its price class.

On a car of this type, a Grand Turismo in every sense of the word, there must be luggage space. There is in the 300-L. The only possible objection in

the neatly carpeted trunk is spare tire accessibility — far forward and up high. It is a situation faced by most car makers, and one without easy solution.

The best way to summarize the 300-L is to say that if you are a motorist looking for luxury and performance, and if you can stand a bite that will come close to \$6000, then you'd better check into the 300-L. It's a limited edition, and you can be reasonably certain that you'll be the only one on your block with this beautiful hunk of automobile.





The standard powerplant for the 300-L is Chrysler's proven 413-cubic-inch V-8. This year it features 10.1:1 compression, high-lift camshaft and single four-barrel carb. Power output is 360 horses.



Staff member holds Chrysler's auto pilot, a useful constant speed device for open road travel.



Instruments are easily visible, controls close at hand. Vent at end of dash is air conditioner.



The 300-L, called the "beautiful brute" by its fans, is a big car that is so scaled that it doesn't look big. Of more importance, it has the light handling qualities of a much smaller automobile.

As the latest of Chrysler's famed letter series, the 'L' is one of the few American automobiles that can be classified a luxury gran turismo in the best tradition established by European imports.

Trunk is carpeted, has jack stowed at side. Antenna is raised with electric motor just visible.





Spare tire location is awkward, requires muscle power to remove the unit. The answer: don't have a flat.



Interior spells comfort. Passenger seat reclines, has electric adjustments. Buckets are real leather.

Rear seat is comfortable but limited to two persons. Center console features lighter for rear passengers.



ROAD TEST DATA PANEL: CHRYSLER 300-L

Base Price: \$4,153

Test Car Price (manufacturer's suggested retail): \$5,851 (F.O.B. Detroit)

Options on test car: Automatic trans., leather buckets, air conditioning, power seats and windows, auto pilot, AM/FM radio, head rests, Sure Grip differential, Solex glass, special paint, 9.00 x 14 tires, bumper guards.

CHASSIS

Wheelbase: 124.0 inches

Tread: F-62.0; R-60.7

Length: 218.2

Width: 79.5

Height: 55.7

Tire Size: 9.00 x 14

Suspension, front and rear: F—Independent with torsion bars. R—Non-independent with semi-elliptic leaf springs.

Steering turns lock-to-lock: 3.5

Frame type: Unitized body-frame

Shipping weight: 4101 lbs.

ENGINE

Type: OHV V-8

Bore and Stroke: 4.19 x 3.75

Displacement: 413 cu. in.

Horsepower: 360 @ 4800 rpm

Torque: 470 @ 3200 rpm

Compression ratio: 10.1:1

Carburetion: Single four-barrel

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission: TorqueFlite automatic

Rear axle ratio: 3.23:1

ROAD TEST: CHRYSLER 300-L VALUE RATING CONSENSUS

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
RIDE	XX	XXX		
HANDLING	XXXX	X		
ACCELERATION	XXXX	X		
PASSING ABILITY	XXXX	X		
BRAKING	XX	XX	X	
SEATING COMFORT: Front	XX	XXX		
Rear	X	XX	XX	
VISIBILITY: Front	XXX	XX		
Rear	XXX	XX		
NOISE LEVEL: Wind	XXXX	X		
Road	XXXX	X		
INSTRUMENTATION	XX	XXX		
CONTROL ACCESSIBILITY				
PAIN'T QUALITY	XXX	XX		
PANEL AND TRIM FIT: Exterior	XXX	XX		
Interior	XXXX	X		
FUEL ECONOMY			XXX	XX
LUGGAGE SPACE	XX	XXX		
STYLING	XXX	XX		

TEST AT A GLANCE

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
PERFORMANCE	XXXX	X		
ECONOMY			XXXX	X
VALUE	XXX	XX		