

ROAD TEST—

Jensen C-V8

A Big Brute with Bags of Performance

EFFORTLESS HIGH-SPEED RUNNING, and phenomenal acceleration, are the outstanding impressions left after testing the Jensen C-V8 for more than 1,600 miles.



IN MOTOR SPORT last September we reported on a visit to the Jensen factory and it is now possible to give impressions of how this powerful Chrysler-powered car behaves on the road, after a test of some 1,600 miles.

At first sight, the life of the Jensen's passengers, like that of Gilbert and Sullivan's policeman, would appear to be an unhappy one, because there is not overmuch leg-room in the back compartment of this two-door saloon and as the rear seats are entirely separate, rather more so than those in a Rover 2000, a single passenger cannot sit sideways to secure more leg stowage. On the other hand, foot space below the front seats is provided and unless the driver has his seat at full arms-stretch position or the squabs are reclining, persons of small stature contrive to make do with this rear compartment.

Continuing with the seating arrangements, the owner of a Jensen C-V8 will be accepted as a man of high moral principals, for not only is the back seat of his car no place on which to recline but the lower extremities of his front-seat passenger are effectively isolated from him because the transmission tunnel is topped by a tall stowage box, with padded hinged lid. The fact is, of course, that the latest Jensen is a car for motoring in, not for parking. . . .

The seats themselves are extremely comfortable, although the close proximity of the back seat precludes horizontal reclining of the front squabs, which have Widney Lyback action.

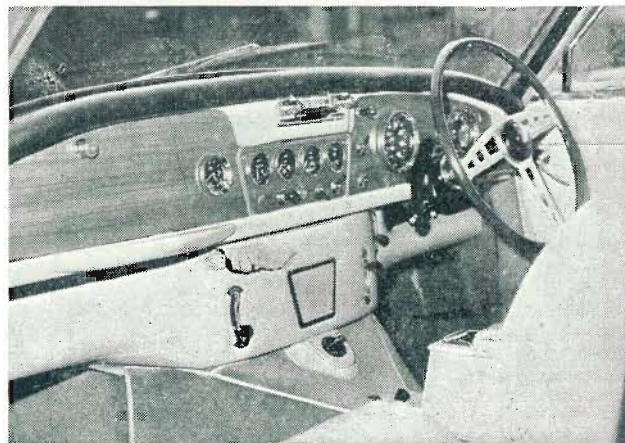
In external appearance the Jensen is well balanced and imposing, if rather aggressive when viewed head on, while I feel that in winter it is likely to suffer from snow in its eye-brows. The doors and boot-lid of the fibre-glass body shut very nicely but the doors lack "keeps." The interior is tastefully upholstered, largely in good-quality hide, with carpeting on the floor, transmission tunnel and along the lower part of the doors. The fascia is of unpolished wood, with a central panel picked out by plated beading.

There is a really commodious cubby hole on the left, with lockable wooden lid. The centre panel contains four small dials—ammeter, oil gauge, fuel gauge and thermometer—with cigar-lighter, ignition key, panel-lighting switch and flick-switch for the 2-speed heater-fan below them. A clock occupies a place to the left, and to the right of the panel, convenient to the driver's left hand in vertical array, are the 2-speed wipers-cum-washers knob, flick-switch for the lamps (the foot-dimmer is a treadle-pedal with pleasantly light action) and the map-light button. Before the driver are the matching Jaeger 160-m.p.h. speedometer and 6,000-r.p.m. tachometer. The former has trip and total mileometers, the latter incorporates a fuel low-level light which comes on with petrol for some 65 miles still in the tank. On the extreme right of the fascia another flick-switch (they all have labels) releases the petrol-filler flap on the n/s rear wing.

Heating and ventilation are dealt with by two controls on the upright wall of the console that depends from the fascia, and on its horizontal surface are found a swivelling knob for rear window de-misting and the 4-position knob for setting the Armstrong "Selectaride" rear shock-absorbers. There is an ash-tray ahead of the aforesaid stowage box between the front seats, another for back-seat smokers.

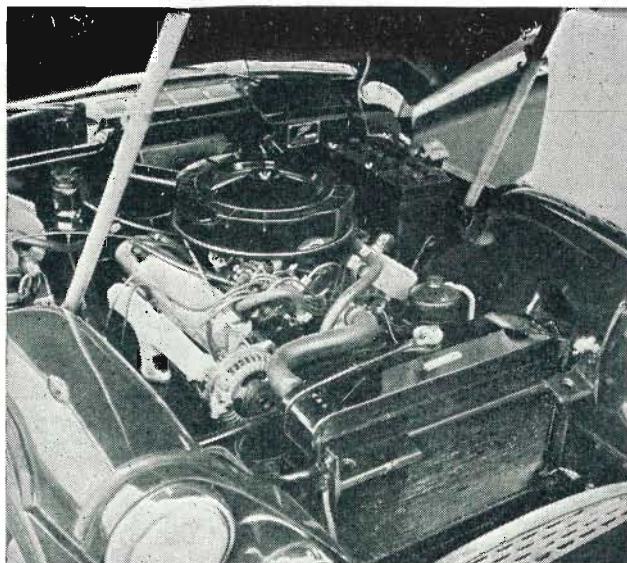
The wide doors are neatly recessed at the front to accommodate the interior handles, which go up to open them, and the window winders, which ask only 1¼-turns to lower the glasses. A small detail of styling thoroughness is the presence of tiny glass triangles ahead of the 4-lights, while the rear-side windows open as extractor vents on firm toggles.

The carpeted luggage boot is of moderate capacity, has rather half-hearted automatic illumination of the interior, and its lid is self-propping. The bonnet is opened by first unlocking a flap which conceals the big locking handle, turning this, and pulling on the safety-catch cable. There are self-releasing dual struts to hold the bonnet lid up but on one occasion, just after I had told an admiring garage attendant the price of the car, these contrived to jam.



THE JENSEN fascia is in unpolished wood, with neatly grouped dials. The lid of the very commodious cubby-hole, the ride-control-knob on the console, and the forward end of the useful oddments stowage box which divides the front compartment, can be seen in this picture. Note, too, the drilled steering-wheel spokes and tiny glass panel ahead of the quarter-lights.





WHERE THE POWER COMES FROM.—The 330-b.h.p. 6½-litre Chrysler engine of the Jensen C-V8. Note the alternator on the front o/s.

Under-bonnet electrical equipment is a combination of Lucas and Autolite, the dip-stick in its tube on the n/s is extremely accessible, and the Lucas battery, charged by an alternator, is well isolated on this side of the engine.

The driving position is rather low but the wood-rimmed wheel with its wide, drilled spokes, is out of one's line of vision, which is somewhat cut off, however, by the big air-intake hump on the bonnet top, although the n/s wing is visible. The steering column is adjustable. The hand brake lever is set close to the driver's seat squab and transmission tunnel but is easy to apply, the wide rear-view mirror has an anti-dazzle setting, and there are soft vizors, with a vanity mirror. The front-seat passenger has a grab bar, and plated vertical struts behind the doors serve to anchor the seat-belts. There is courtesy action for the single roof lamp (that on the n/s door was inoperative) and the door-pulls-cum-arm-rests incorporate shallow pockets. Further stowage is provided by lidded wells each side of the back seats and the deep shelf behind them.


The Jensen In Action

I have said that the Jensen C-V8 is a car to go motoring in. And how it motors! The test car had the 108 × 86 mm. (6,276 c.c.) Chrysler vee-eight power unit which replaced the former 5.9-litre engine after chassis No. 104/2119. It develops 330 b.h.p. (S.A.E.) at 4,800 r.p.m. on a c.r. of 10 to 1, and is mated to a fully-automatic gearbox having ratios of 7.5, 4.4 and 3.07 to 1. There is provision for selecting and holding the two lower gears and this produces some of the most vivid acceleration it is possible to extract from a production four-seater saloon, the Jensen being half way to becoming a dragster! Due to the non-availability of certain MOTOR SPORT test equipment and the worn state of the tyres on the test car, we did not take performance figures but as the 5.9-litre version would do 0-50 m.p.h. in under six seconds and the s.s. ¼-mile in 16 seconds, and could exceed 136 m.p.h., the potential of the bigger-engined car needs no embellishment.

Indeed, it is possible to spin the wheels on a dry road without using kick-down, and so potent is the take-off when using full throttle in low gear that the instruction book contains a warning to the effect that caution must then be observed, "in view of the sudden surge of power engendered." Because such acceleration is enjoyed without any fuss or sound from the engine, it is the most impressive aspect of the Jensen C-V8.

The gear lever extends on the left of the steering column and its quadrant has 1, 2, D, N and R positions, with no parking slot. A button on the lever's tip has to be depressed before it can be moved, and the quadrant is illuminated when the panel lighting is on. With the lower gear hold in use the engine can be taken to between 5,000 and 6,000 r.p.m., modern big vee-eights being notably high-revving. The lever moves delightfully smoothly and is matched by a convenient r.h. turn indicator and lamps flasher stalk.

THE JENSEN C-V8 GT SALOON



Engine : Eight cylinders in 90 deg. vee formation, 108 × 86 mm. (6,276 c.c.). Push-rod-operated overhead valves. 10-to-1 compression ratio. 330 b.h.p. (S.A.E.) at 4,800 r.p.m.

Gear ratios : Automatic transmission. Low, 7.5 to 1; Middle, 4.4 to 1; Top, 3.07 to 1.

Tyres : Dunlop 6.70 × 15 Road Speed RS5 on bolt-on steel disc wheels.

Weight : 29 cwt. 1 qr. 28 lb. (dry).

Steering ratio : 3½ turns, lock-to-lock.

Fuel capacity : 16 gallons (maker's figure). Range : 277 miles.

Wheelbase : 8 ft. 9 in.

Track : Front, 4 ft. 7½ in.; Rear, 4 ft. 8½ in.

Dimensions : 15 ft. 4½ in. × 5 ft. 7½ in. × 4 ft. 7 in. (high).

Price : £2,888 (£3,490 inclusive of purchase tax).

Makers : Jensen Motors Ltd., West Bromwich, England.

Normally, full automation suffices, kick-down giving maxima of 48 and 82 m.p.h. in the lower gears; the Chrysler transmission functions very smoothly, changing up at 11 and 15 m.p.h. respectively, at light throttle openings.

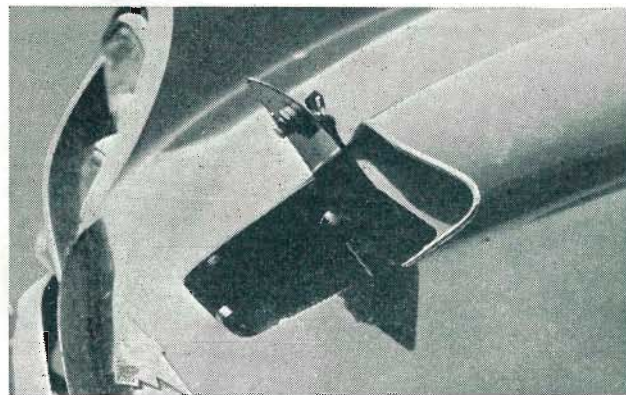
This outstanding acceleration is maintained to 100 m.p.h. and beyond. The engine turns at 1,000 r.p.m. at 26 m.p.h. in top, so there is little need to consult the tachometer in ordinary driving.

This C-V8 is a splendid Motorway car, cruising at 130 m.p.h. with very little wind noise, although I could have done with more cool air in the interior when the windows were shut. Road noise, too, is low and the body free from rattles except for a drumming glass in the n/s door when the window was partly open. There is some whine while running in Low gear. The very high performance, achieved with no more sound than the slight hiss of air passing through the big air cleaner above the Carter carburetter, renders the Jensen, to borrow someone else's slogan, an excellent "businessman's express."

But he needs to be a fairly muscular businessman, because the steering is heavy and, in spite of servo assistance, the Dunlop disc brakes require heavy pedal pressures to stop the Jensen effectively from high speeds, when one is conscious of having to retard a heavy and very fast car.

Certainly, this Jensen wants power-steering. As it is, the wheel calls for 3½-turns, lock-to-lock, transmits some pretty severe shocks when the big front wheels hit bad pot-holes, but had

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BEFORE the Jensen bonnet can be opened, this flap covering its release handle has to be unlocked. The idea is that a garage-hand can drive the car but cannot tamper with the engine, and also, as the flap will not drop until the lever is in the locked position, and it can be seen from the driving seat, there is little likelihood of driving off with the bonnet unsecured.



engine went back on to six cylinders. Bonnier began to find his car handling slightly oddly and then it lost its brakes. When it was examined in the pits the stub axle was found to be cracked, and the car was retired.

For a time it began to look as if Clark was running away from the rest of the field, and then on the 40th lap the increase in the gap was smaller instead of larger, and on lap 44 he came round in fourth place. On the next lap, the Lotus came into the pits, where it stayed while the leaders did two laps. The trouble was that the fuel injection was playing up and the car was down on power and running roughly. The three-cornered fight that had been behind Clark had been swapping places quite frequently. Hansgen was a bad baulker and as he was passed by Clark, Surtees, Hill and Gurney he was soundly cursed and fists were shaken. Surtees found it so difficult getting past that Hill's B.R.M. had slipped past both of them before Surtees could stop him. With Clark out, Surtees lead for one lap and then Hill wrested the lead from him and made sure he didn't get to grips again. Clark went out again, now in last-but-one place, but came in again after only six laps.

While this was going on Amon had a bolt from the starter come out, which caused his engine to seize up at the top of the straight, and although he managed to stop all right he was somewhat shaken. Also at this stage, Bucknum came into the pits when his high water temperature suddenly started to drop and the engine tightened. At this stage he felt sure some plugs were out as the power was well down.

After examining the Clark Lotus closely, Chapman called in Spence, now lying fourth, and handed the car to Clark while Spence went out in Clark's car, only to retire five laps later. This change of driver would not have helped Clark in his bid for Championship points, but by his superior driving it was hoped to get a good place, so pushing other contenders some points down. Bandini, who was going quite well in the flat-12, came into the pits on lap 54 and after a short while he continued for a further four laps before retiring with a "flat battery," although one side of the exhaust was smoking badly.

With Bandini's retirement on lap 59 things settled down a bit. The lead was firmly in Hill's hands, while Surtees and Gurney were scrapping behind. On lap 61 Hill lapped his team-mate for the second time, and one lap later Gurney and Surtees were still trying to get past Ginther, while Hill, using his "take ten" tactics, pulled out 50 yards. Whether Surtees was cross or not will never be known, but two laps later, when passing someone else, he spun, trying to avoid the slower car when it pulled into

his path.

Gurney's race was soon to finish and on lap 70 he came into the pits when he noticed his oil pressure go down suddenly, and found the back of the engine covered with oil. Clark, in Spence's car, was going quite well and lay third when a ball valve stuck and didn't allow the fuel to pump from one tank to the other. He made a quick pit stop but nothing could be done and after a few laps he retired, although he was placed seventh, having finished more than two-thirds of the race.

Drama was not all over yet. Hailwood, who was lying fourth, pulled up suddenly before the start-finish line to coast over after the chequered flag, with oil pouring from the bottom. A pipe had broken, pumping most of the engine oil over the circuit. On the sharp corner before the pits where the oil was very bad, the normally very efficient Communications Marshals did nothing, and Bandini and Ireland ran up to put dirt into the oil, which nearly caused a "punch-up."

Tex Hopkins, the lavender-suited starter, went through his finishing repertoire to bring an interesting race to an end. Hill and Surtees were on the same lap but that was all. Siffert, one lap behind, was third, having driven a very good race to take up positions as they fell vacant. He finished with only one gear.

There were eight cars running at the end and one of them, Hap Sharp's, had not completed two-thirds of the race. Fastest lap went to Clark in Spence's Lotus 33 at 1 min. 12.7 sec. (183.25 k.p.h.).—M. J. T.

Results :

GRAND PRIX OF THE U.S.A.—Formula One—110 Laps
407 Kilometres—Warm and Dry

1st :	G. Hill (B.R.M. V8) ..	2 hr. 16 min. 38.0 sec.—178.760 k.p.h.
2nd :	J. Surtees (Ferrari V8) ..	2 hr. 17 min. 08.5 sec.
3rd :	J. Siffert (Brabham-B.R.M.) ..	109 laps
4th :	R. Ginther (B.R.M. V8) ..	107 laps
5th :	W. Hansgen (Lotus-Climax) ..	107 laps
6th :	T. Taylor (B.R.P.-B.R.M.) ..	106 laps
*7th :	Spence/Clark (Lotus-Climax) ..	102 laps
*8th :	M. Hailwood (Lotus-B.R.M.) ..	101 laps
**H. Sharp (Brabham-B.R.M.) ..	65 laps	

Fastest lap : J. Clark (Lotus-Climax), 1 min. 12.7 sec.—183.25 k.p.h.
Retired : I. Ireland (B.R.P.-B.R.M.), broken gear-lever, lap 2; P. Hill (Cooper-Climax), ignition trouble, lap 4; J. Brabham (Brabham-Climax), broken piston, lap 14; B. McLaren (Cooper-Climax), engine trouble, lap 27; J. Bonnier (Brabham-Climax), broken stub axle, lap 37; C. Amon (Lotus-B.R.M.), seized, lap 47; R. Bucknum (Honda V12), overheating, lap 50; Clark/Spence (Lotus-Climax), fuel injection, lap 54; L. Bandini (Ferrari flat-12), engine trouble, lap 58; D. Gurney (Brabham-Climax), engine trouble, lap 69; M. Hailwood (Lotus-B.R.M.), broken oil pipe, lap 101; Spence/Clark (Lotus-Climax), fuel system, lap 102.

* Not running at the end.
** Running but not qualifying.

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subdued castor-return action transmitted somewhat jerkily, perhaps because there are three universal joints in the steering column. There is no free-play but control is inclined to be vague, and is heavy as soon as any real lock is put on.

The suspension benefits noticeably from the ride-control and is well damped, any tendency to pitching being quickly discouraged. The Jensen is a heavy car to throw round corners but it rolls very little and the ride is comfortable.

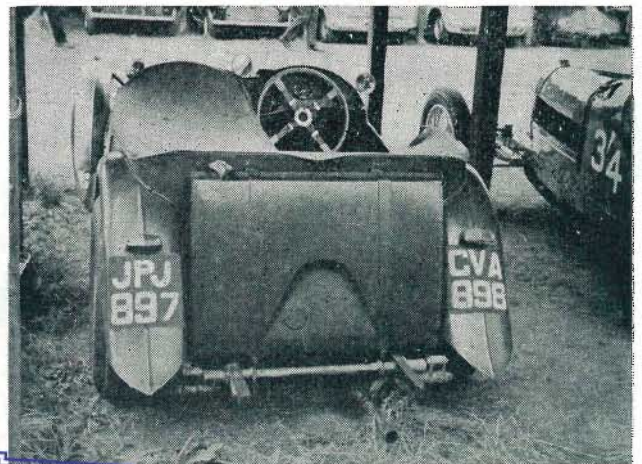
The main appeal of the C-V8 is that its American engine and transmission deliver real power effortlessly and with a sense of endurance while, if the brakes are not outstanding, they certainly function far better than those on most American automobiles. So, while the Jensen may not be such fun to own as, say, a 5-speed Alfa Romeo or a Jaguar-E type, it is the most comfortable and undemanding car imaginable for covering long distances in a minimum of elapsed time.

Nor is it heavy on fuel. The consumption, checked in very varied running which embraced high speed cruising up and down M6, pottering about the Potteries, and fast driving over normal roads, averaged 16.5 m.p.g., nor was 100-octane petrol necessary. The range, full to dry, was 277 miles, so the tank will accept rather more than the claimed 16 gallons. Petrol thirst varied hardly at all between motorway cruising at a comparatively steady throttle opening and ordinary driving with considerable employment of kick-down, suggesting that power absorbed by the gearbox is about equal to that required for "ton-plus" running in high gear. After about 1,000 miles I consulted the dip-stick and the level was at danger. Three pints of Castrolite restored it. How long the back tyres will last is a matter for conjecture. The test car had a Motorola radio which suffered from electrical interference to a mild extent; there is no visible aerial. A characteristic feature of the Jensen is the noise of the

twin cooling fans, which continue to run for a time after the engine has been switched off.

For buyers less concerned with "character" than in obtaining the most effortless and restful available form of land travel, the Jensen C-V8 is a worthwhile proposition for those with £3,490 to spend.—W. B.

IT'S A QUEER WORLD. . . .



Your guess is as good as ours. . . .!