

The new Rover 3500 and the Citroen CX 2400 — see facing page — have much in common.

Both are in the luxury class of car, both low-drag body styles are similar, they exhibit unconventional features, many of safety value, they have self-levelling suspension systems, and they are in the same price bracket.

However, the Rover has the larger and more powerful V8 engine and weighs about 2½ cwt more.

In its standard form, as tested, the Rover is equipped with automatic transmission, integrated air conditioning, radio and cassette player, and a central electric locking system.

**BODY STYLE:** The five-door hatchback styling has a purposeful, almost aggressive look. There is an impression of lack of headroom, but the low set of the seats belies this. Lamp treatment blends well with the bodywork at the front and is relatively unobtrusive at the rear, where the cover glasses are designed to be self-cleaning.

The large glass areas give good visibility to the front and to the side, but this is restricted to the rear by the hatchback style. External driving mirrors on both sides, internally controlled, help to overcome this disability. The excellent halogen headlamps provide ample night-time illumination.

The inner layer of the Triplex Ten Twenty laminated windscreen is of toughened glass, greatly reducing the danger of serious injury in accidents.

Both front seats are fully adjustable and well and firmly padded, and the nylon velour upholstery adds to the overall comfort. With the front seats in normal position, there is ample room at the rear, where even a centre third seat is reasonably comfortable. With a considerable area of glazing and the almost horizontal rear window, the heat input is high in summer weather.

Flow-through ventilation, permanently fan assisted, is adequate for warm weather, but the simple and practical air conditioner is

# Safety features boost Rover 3500's appeal



necessary for summer heat. Two centre vents, and face-level outlets for driver and front passenger ensure good distribution.

The carpeted boot has sufficient capacity for most needs, but can be extended when necessary by lowering the squab of the rear seat. The high sill makes loading heavy items difficult. An upper parcel shelf, which raises automatically with the hatchback cover, hides the interior of the boot as a security precaution.

An unusual anti-corrosion precaution is the bleeding of warm air from the ventilating system through each sill panel to keep them free from moisture and to prevent rusting in these vital areas.

**INSTRUMENTS AND CONTROLS:** The speedometer (very optimistic) and tachometer are centrally positioned with clear dials, but are somewhat hard to read due to angling of the dials to avoid reflections.

Four similar gauges — battery volts, oil pressure, engine temperature and fuel — are largely obscured by the rim of the steering wheel. The fuel gauge, in particular, should be better positioned.

A useful array of warning lights to the left of these gauges is matched by a panel of clearly marked switches to the right of the instrument console. These switches are not illuminated at night, making accurate control difficult.

One stalk switch on the steering column controls the turn signal lights and headlamp dipping and has the horn button on its extreme end. The latter would have been better positioned in the central pad of the steering wheel. A second stalk switch controls windscreen wipers and washers.

Windows are electrically operated by four switches on the centre console, and also by individual switches on each rear door. There is an over-ride switch on the dash panel to prevent accidental opening of the rear windows by small children.

A key or switch controlled central locking system helps to ensure security after the rather complicated instructions have been mastered. Child-proof locks are fitted to each rear door.

**STEERING:** Both the length and the angle of the steering column are adjustable to suit all tastes. The square wheel seems therefore unnecessary, though this may be a sop to the ample girths of affluent potential purchasers.

Rack and pinion power steering is a new departure for Rover. It is one of the best so far experienced, being precise with low effort at low speed, but with exactly the right amount of feel at other times. At just under three turns from lock to lock, it is direct in action with a turning circle of 10 metres.

**ENGINE:** The V8 aluminium-head 3.5-litre engine is fed by twin Solex 175 CD carburetors, and is now equipped with a Lucas electronic ignition. The latter permits the revs to be extended to 6000 r/min, but power output has been

reduced by emission controls to 137 bhp as against the European version's 155 bhp.

Torque has not been affected quite as much, and pulling power in high gear is still notable. Great attention has been paid to the noise level, remarkably low even at peak revs, aided by the viscous coupling which limits fan rotation.

A useful safety feature designed to avoid the risk of fire is that the electric fuel pump is automatically cut off if the engine stops.

Under-bonnet space is at a premium, but all routine maintenance items are accessible. The front-hinged bonnet, with two under-bonnet lights, is supported by two pressure struts.

**TRANSMISSION:** The Borg-Warner Type 65 automatic transmission operates smoothly and has the capacity to handle the available engine torque with ease. The spindly gear shift lever is well positioned, but the gating system is rather fussy. The gear indicator quadrant is unfortunately not illuminated at night-time.

**BRAKES:** The vacuum-assisted dual system front-disc rear-drum combination with a pressure limiting valve gives excellent fade-free braking. An unusual safety feature is that if the front half of the dual system fails, the pressure limiting valve is automatically isolated to give maximum effort on the rear wheels.

The handbrake, awkwardly positioned on the far side of the centre console is adequate for parking.

**SUSPENSION:** MacPherson struts at the front and, at the rear, trailing arms plus a Watts linkage with Boge Nivomat self-energising shock absorbers give a very firm suspension but a somewhat hard ride, in the British sports car tradition.

Roll and pitch are barely noticeable, and the rear suspension system effectively controls ac-

Rover test figures are on the facing page

Continued on page 39

# Safety a Rover feature

From page 34

celeration squat and brake dive. The self-levelling effect of the Boge shock absorbers provides added ride and handling control.

**HANDLING:** Excellent and predictable handling results from this combination, to which a useful contribution is made by the Michelin XVS tyres (made in France for the Rover unlike the

German tyres on the Citroen!), of large cross section on alloy wheels. The Dunlop Denovo run-flat tyres frequently fitted in the UK are not yet approved for use in Australia.

The four wheels do not quite achieve the limpet-like grip of those on the Citroen CX 2400, but only on deeply corrugated dirt roads is there noticeable loss of adhesion.

**PERFORMANCE** is lively, but below that published about the

models sold in Europe, apparently due to the emission controls. Standing start accelerations and overtaking in gears are satisfyingly crisp, and kept well under control by the precision of the steering and the effectiveness of the braking systems.

However, fuel consumption is disappointing, even making allowance for the continuous use of the air conditioner during the test run.

**SAFETY:** The outstanding characteristic of this car is the attention given to all safety aspects.

In addition to the many already mentioned, these include "door open" warning lights fitted to door jamba; dash-mounted safety warning lamps; compression struts as well as anti-intrusion struts in doors; fuel tank set ahead of rear axle; smooth exterior design to reduce injury to pedestrians.

**SUMMARY:** For those seeking a new dimension in motoring where silent speed, acceleration, comfort and safety are all combined in a forward-looking body style, the Rover 3500 will provide an attractive choice.

• Test car by courtesy of Leyland Australia.



# PERFORMANCE

<b>ACCELERATION:</b>	Rover
2nd gear 50-80 km/h .....	4.7 sec
2nd gear 60-100 km/h .....	8.0 sec
Through gears 0-80 km/h .....	8.4 sec
Standing 400 metres .....	18.4 sec
<b>FUEL CONSUMPTION in mpg</b> .....	15.8
In litres/100 km .....	17.9
<b>BRAKING distance from 80 km/h</b> .....	27.5 m
Handbrake stop from 60 km/h .....	58.0 m

# SPECIFICATIONS

<b>LIST PRICE without options</b> .....	\$19,995
As tested .....	\$19,995

## ENGINE:

Cylinders .....	8 OHV
Capacity in litres .....	3.528
Compression ratio to 1 .....	8.13
* Maximum net power in kilowatts .....	102
* Maximum net power in bhp .....	137
* Rover at 5000 r/min, Citroen at 5500 r/min	

## DIMENSIONS:

Mass .....	1428 kg
Length .....	4.7 m
Width .....	1.77 m
Height .....	1.35 m
Turning circle .....	10.4 m
Turns lock-to-lock .....	2.75
Fuel capacity in litres .....	66
<b>NRMA Insurance points rating (on 0 to 24 scale)</b> ..	12