

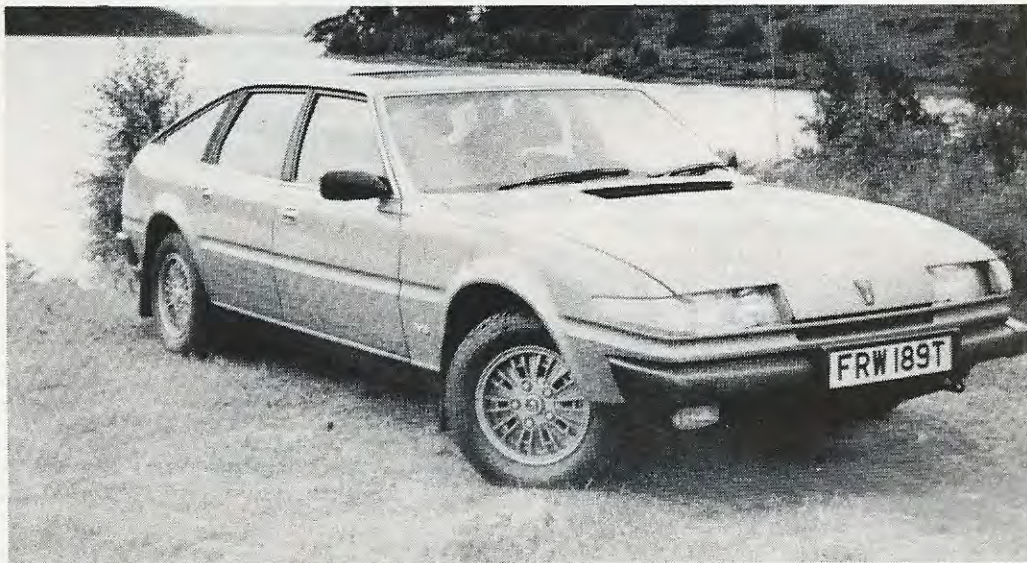
consternation of my front seat passenger water discharged itself from the heater outlet on that side — not just a splash but a steady stream. Soon the rubber mat, so thoughtfully provided, became a baling-out implement. Whenever the fan was used this expensive douche would come into play — so we had to put-up with steamed-up windows and cold/wet feet. Next day I called into Rover's fine modern agents, Heron in Stirling, to see whether they could stem the flow of what I at first took to be coolant from the air-conditioning system. They proved thoroughly disinterested in the whole thing, eventually suggesting I could leave the car for an indefinite period until they might find time to look at it. I carried on with the journey without the aid of Rover's fine new SU-Butec air conditioning or heating. At Oban the story was different. Wilson's of Oban is a typical old-fashioned Scottish garage, operating on a friendly, personal basis, with the genial and helpful Mr. Wilson firmly in charge. It was early evening when I called, after the garage staff had gone home, but I was told that I could bring it in first thing in the morning for them to look at. They spent a whole morning rectifying the problem — it seemed that rainwater was entering the air intake vents, passing where it shouldn't into the plenum chamber and then being drawn out by the fan. They could only offer a temporary remedy but this held up until the return journey. How different was their attitude to the garage in Stirling. Otherwise this large, capable motor car impressed. It has fine power steering with strong self-centring action and excellent directional stability, and

smooth and efficient brakes. Its engine is a fine unit with useful extra power for overtaking, even when travelling quickly anyway. It is very subdued, especially as the manual gearbox has a tremendously high fifth gear (27mph per 1000rpm) so that the engine is no more than a subdued hum at seventy and barely louder at its maximum of something over 120mph. Even in fourth the car will pull 23mph per 1000rpm so one would expect this high gearing to help fuel economy. It does — and I achieved a thoroughly creditable overall average of 22.71mpg in view of the high speeds attained on the test. A return journey from the Highlands of Scotland to the Midlands, some 400 miles in poor weather and with heavy end of holiday season traffic in six hours is creditable but it is the ease, comfort and silence with which this is achieved which makes the Rover V8S special. It is therefore no great surprise to me that Rover have reached 100,000 sales in four years which compares with a P4 total production of 130,000 in fifteen years. At £10,929 it is not without rivals, and for me the car is just a shade bulky to exploit its performance and handling to the full on British roads. Even so its virtues are many, including the vast carrying capacity. And it's British! ● **B.P.**

Rover V8S

It was entirely appropriate, in Rover's 75th Anniversary Year, for us to test the latest model to emerge from Solihull. The V8S is the reply to criticism that the 3500 needed an uprated interior to match its stylish body and a higher level of equipment. Whether the results will stem that criticism is open to debate, but for me the car fails to be visibly different enough to the standard model — and that is what prospective owners will want for their extra £2185. Nonetheless it is a very fine motor car with some useful additions and it provided excellent and untiring performance during a test around the Highlands of Scotland, completing well over 1000 miles in six days.

The car was delivered to me in manual 5-speed form in a not very subtle Green called Triton about which everyone except me raved. New-style gold painted alloy wheels, double coachlines and a V8 motif on the front wings help identification and it is nice to record the return of the traditional enamel Rover badge on the bonnet. The car has been given black painted bumpers, which used to be a cost-saving feature but apparently symbolises status these days — even so it's surprising that they are not nudge-proof rubber. I'm told that chrome plated door handles and exhaust tail pipe have added distinction, but I was not moved to paroxysms of joy. The headlamp wash/wipe equipment is neatly installed and helpful for long distance travellers, and a five litre water bottle copes with this extra demand. Inside a quick glance may reveal nothing new — the controversial instrument box atop the parcel is still there unaltered, the non-round steering wheel with heavy centre crash pad remains, the handbrake too far over on the passenger side of the transmission tunnel persists. The large areas of plastic have gone it is true to be replaced with acres of felt in varying shades of brown — I must say that I found this interior slightly claustrophobic. The view out is a bit beetle-browed from the driving seat and again the shade-banded windscreen (marvellous, no doubt in sunny export climes) only tended to emphasise this feeling of gloom and of being smothered. It was therefore with some relief that I could open the roof to admit light and air. The excellent sun-roof is manually operated but this is no chore for it has a simple all-in-one action. A lip rises automatically with the roof open and this reduces buffeting. A good stereo radio was provided but surely in this class of car there should be an automatic aerial? Great play has been made by Rover of the new SU-Butec air-conditioning system found as standard on this model. We are told that it has been tested thoroughly in tropical conditions. Alas in far from tropical Scotland it developed a most distressing fault. On the journey up the weather became progressively worse, rain poured and the temperature dropped, so the heater was tried. To the great



Clockwise from above, enamel badge, black bumpers and V8 motif on wings identify the Rover V8S from the front; there are new gold painted alloy wheels, and "Euroscipt" rear badging; cloth trim, sun roof, and neatly installed heater/air conditioning unit are features of the upmarket V8S.

