

WITH BOB CAMPBELL



LIMITED edition versions of Holdens, Fords and other popular models are not uncommon, but a limited edition of a Rover 827 Si is out of the ordinary.

Only 20 of the limited edition Si have been built with spoilers, side skirts and wire spoke alloy wheels providing aerodynamic and cosmetic effect. We haven't seen too many editions more limited than that. This bespoilered sedan from Rover is quicker than the top of the line Vitesse model described in the previous issue of *The Road Patrol*, even though the name Vitesse means speed.

The difference in performance is largely due to the Si's manual transmission. Even today's electronically controlled multi-speed automatics cannot match the power transmission efficiency of the shift it yourself gearbox. The manual 827 is high geared — 110 km/h is available in 2nd gear — but the powerful V6 engine is a match for the gearing.

Too much enthusiasm from the driver when moving away from rest results in one or both of the front tyres quite literally lighting up, with clouds of evil smelling smoke issuing from the tortured tread. On wet or slippery surfaces wheel-spin, in these conditions lacking the smoke, can be all too easy to provoke. A high powered engine and front wheel drive is a combination which demands caution from the driver, particularly in adverse road conditions.

Fortunately, the engine has plenty of pulling power at the lower end of its operating range and early upchanges can be made to help prevent wheel-spin. Driven correctly, the Rover handles well in all road conditions and showed up remarkably well on our loose gravel test route.

Although the Rover shares with its sibling Honda a lack of suspension travel over poor

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ROVER 827 Si

roads, so that it is easy to bottom the suspension over severe bumps or potholes, the spring and damper rates are better sorted than most Japanese manufacturers seem to manage and the 827's handling and roadholding are excellent. The Rover sat down comfortably on a gravel road which has some locally built cars floating

A surprising feature of the test car was noticeable transmission noise, particularly in the lower gears. This, combined with a roar from the engine when working hard and wind noise at highway speeds, made the Rover noisier at times than one expects of a refined luxury sedan. The performance which accompanied the noise



uncomfortably on their springs.

The transmission in the test car was not without its faults. It was necessary to remember which gear was engaged as the car came to a halt, as the sometimes vague shift mechanism could make it difficult to work out where you had left the stick. This can be frustrating when hurrying to find 1st gear and the lever wants to go every way but where you think it ought to.

made it acceptable, however, and the car is generally quiet when not hurrying.

More pleasantly surprising was the fuel consumption figure. Despite vigorous use of the car's performance it used only 11.2 litres per 100 km. For a car as quick as the Rover, weighing 1450 kg unladen, that is an excellent figure. Any attempt to measure fuel use under more gentle treatment was prevented by the Rover's trip odometer going on strike part

way through our test.

The sedan body shape is more practical than the Vitesse fastback when carrying tall adults in the back seat. A square roofline allows more headroom. Velvet cloth trimmed seats look good and are less slippery than the leather seats of the more expensive Sterling. They are comfortable and the front seats offer good lateral support in corners.

Instrumentation is the same as the Vitesse as is the steering. At low speeds the steering is very light, too light for some drivers, but it firms up with increasing speed so that it is nicely weighted on highway or freeway.

Visibility to the rear is better than with the Vitesse, but the boot lid spoiler intrudes annoyingly on the view through the interior mirror. Shorter drivers would find it getting in the way when reversing.

The chin spoiler at the other end incorporates 2 driving lights but does hang low. It is vulnerable to high kerbs and care must be taken when parking nose in or entering steep driveways.

As a city car this Rover would not suit those who insist on getting stuck in traffic, they would find an automatic more practical. The occasional problems I had with gear selection only occurred in stop-start driving and the car is much more at home on the open road.

Instant acceleration for overtaking is available in the lower gears with restful and economical cruising in overdrive 5th gear. Handling and roadholding to make winding roads a pleasure make the Rover 827 Si an excellent touring car. All you needed to buy one of the 20 was \$54,380 plus the usual charges. Of course you can still buy the same performance in the straight 827 Si without the spoilers and fancy wheels.