

SUNBEAM ALPINE IV

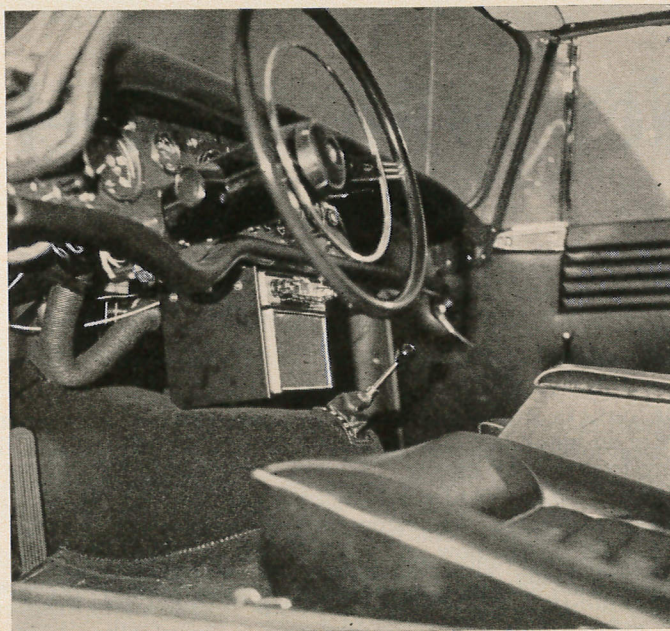
Further refinements for an old favorite

THE SUNBEAM ALPINE Series IV reflects Rootes Motors' traditional practice of bringing out a basic model and then developing and improving it over a period of several years. The "modern" Alpine, introduced in 1959, has established a good reputation in this country as a lively and competitive production category racing car as well as a comfortable, durable and well built sports/touring model. This latest version, the Series IV, promises to continue that tradition.

In outward appearance, the Series IV Alpine is distinguishable by two major changes. First, the rear fender line has been lowered and squared off to do away with the high-pointed, swept-back fenders of the earlier versions. And the air intake at the front of the car has been restyled, with a simple crossbar across the grille opening. There are also minor changes in appearance, such as the new snap-top fuel filler cap, but these are the subtle sort of dress-up improvements that only an Alpine buff would be aware of.

The other changes made in the Series IV are of the non-visible variety. Most important, the 90-bhp engine is now used in the hardtop "gran turismo" as well as in the roadster "sports tourer." The 90-bhp (instead of 83) engine can now be used in the hardtop because the new cast iron exhaust manifold (light gauge sheet metal earlier) accomplishes sufficient sound damping to make it suitable for the more genteel version. Other refinements include the adoption of the long-term-lubrication program popularized by the American manufacturers (rubber and/or nylon bushings at those points which formerly required periodic lubrication) and extended interval oil changes. In addition, the mechanical tachometer of previous models has been replaced by an electric model and the warning lamps now have openings that can be adjusted to suit the driver's preference.

Most interesting of the mechanical changes is that the Alpine IV is now available with a 3-speed automatic transmission. This is obviously a concession to the increasing number of drivers who have never mastered the intricacies of a manually




operated transmission or would rather not work so hard in heavy traffic. It is also available with the traditional 4-speed manual transmission, with or without overdrive, for those drivers who prefer to select their own shift points.

The automatic used in the Alpine IV is the Borg-Warner Type 35, the same as that used in the Hillman Super Minx also made by Rootes. It is a 3-speed unit that will not puzzle any American driver who is familiar with automatic transmissions, except that the control stem is mounted on the driveshaft tunnel. The stalk of this control appears a bit anemic at first glance, little resembling the beefy shift levers usually found on driveshaft tunnels. On operating the control handle, however, the driver soon learns that a light touch is best for gear selection if an unwanted slot is not to be engaged.

Because the torque of the 1.6-liter Alpine engine is modest (93 lb-ft at 3500 rpm), the 3-speed automatic adds absolutely nothing to the performance of the car. With the accelerator pressed to the floor, the Alpine shifts at about 5000 rpm. At the shift, there is a noticeable change in engine note and a conclusive drop in revs. Then it climbs back up to 5000 and shifts again. The acceleration is adequate but hardly neck-snapping and an Alpine with a 4-speed manual transmission should be about a second faster through a quarter-mile drag. Going up, or down, through the gears, the changes are made smoothly and quickly and the only annoyance we found was a tendency to lurch back, then forward, when the lever was moved from "Park" down through "R," "N" and into "D." This was especially irksome when the engine was warming up on fast idle and may be one of the things you have to get used to with this type of transmission.

Except for the automatic transmission, the driving of the Alpine is much the same as we remembered from the Series III. There was one change made that we didn't like, however, and that resulted from a softening of the suspension. The earlier car had an excellent ride, we thought, and the new, softer springs simply emphasize the tendency of the car to "float" at fast touring speeds when slightly undulating or "wavy" road surfaces are encountered.

Other than these changes, the Series IV Alpine remains basically the same as the Series III. The driving position is still one of the best in the business, the servo-assisted disc/drum (front/rear) brakes are fully up to their job, the trunk is roomy and uncluttered and everything about the car reflects the builder's conscientious attempt to produce a sports/touring car that will be appreciated by the discriminating driver. 

ROAD TEST RESULTS

PRICE

List price.....	\$2749
Price as tested.....	\$3148

SPECIFICATIONS

Engine, no. cyl., type.....	4-ohv
Bore & stroke, in.....	3.21 x 3.00
Displacement, cc.....	1592
Equivalent cu in.....	97.1
Compression ratio.....	9.1:1
Bhp @ rpm.....	90 @ 5000
Equivalent mph.....	88
Torque @ rpm, lb.-ft.....	93 @ 3500
Equivalent mph.....	61
Transmission type.....	automatic
No. forward speeds.....	3
Final drive ratio.....	3.89:1

GENERAL

Curb weight, lb.....	2280
Weight distribution (with driver), front/rear, %.....	49/51
Wheelbase, in.....	86.0
Track, front/rear.....	51.0/48.5
Overall length.....	155.0
Width.....	60.5
Height.....	51.5
Frontal area, sq. ft.....	17.3
Steering type.....	recirculating ball
Turns, lock to lock.....	3.5
Turning circle, ft.....	34
Brake type.....	disc/drum
Swept area, sq. in.....	295
Tire size.....	6.00 x 13

FUEL

Type fuel required.....	premium
Fuel tank size, gal.....	13.5
Normal mi per gal.....	18-22

PERFORMANCE

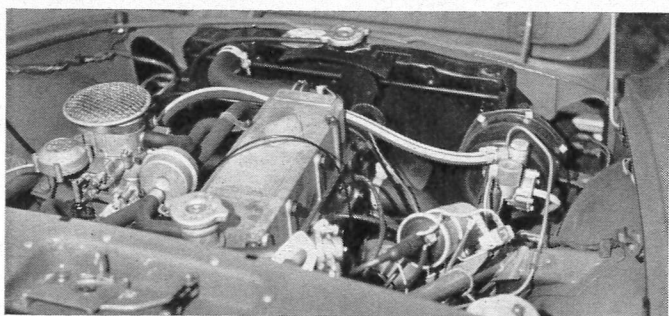
Top speed, high gear, mph.....	90
Acceleration, 0-30 mph, sec.....	6.2
0-40 mph.....	8.9
0-50 mph.....	12.3
0-60 mph.....	16.5
0-80 mph.....	35.0
Passing test, 50-70 mph.....	11.2
Standing ¼-mi.....	21.0
Speed at end, mph.....	67

ACCOMMODATION

Normal capacity, persons.....	2
Seat width, in.....	2 x 19.5
Head room, in.....	39
Seat back adjustment, degrees.....	30
Entrance height, in.....	48
Stepover height, in.....	16.5
Door width, in.....	40.5
Driver comfort rating:	
For driver 69 in. tall.....	90
For driver 72 in. tall.....	90
For driver 75 in. tall.....	85
(85-100, good; 70-85, fair; under 70, poor)	

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated.....	actual 28.4
60 mph.....	57.2



ACCELERATION & COASTING

