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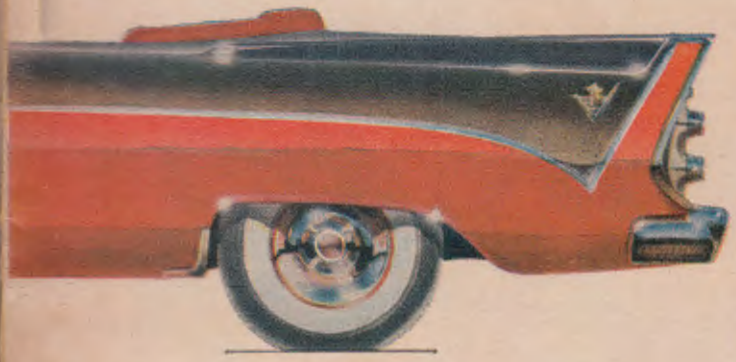
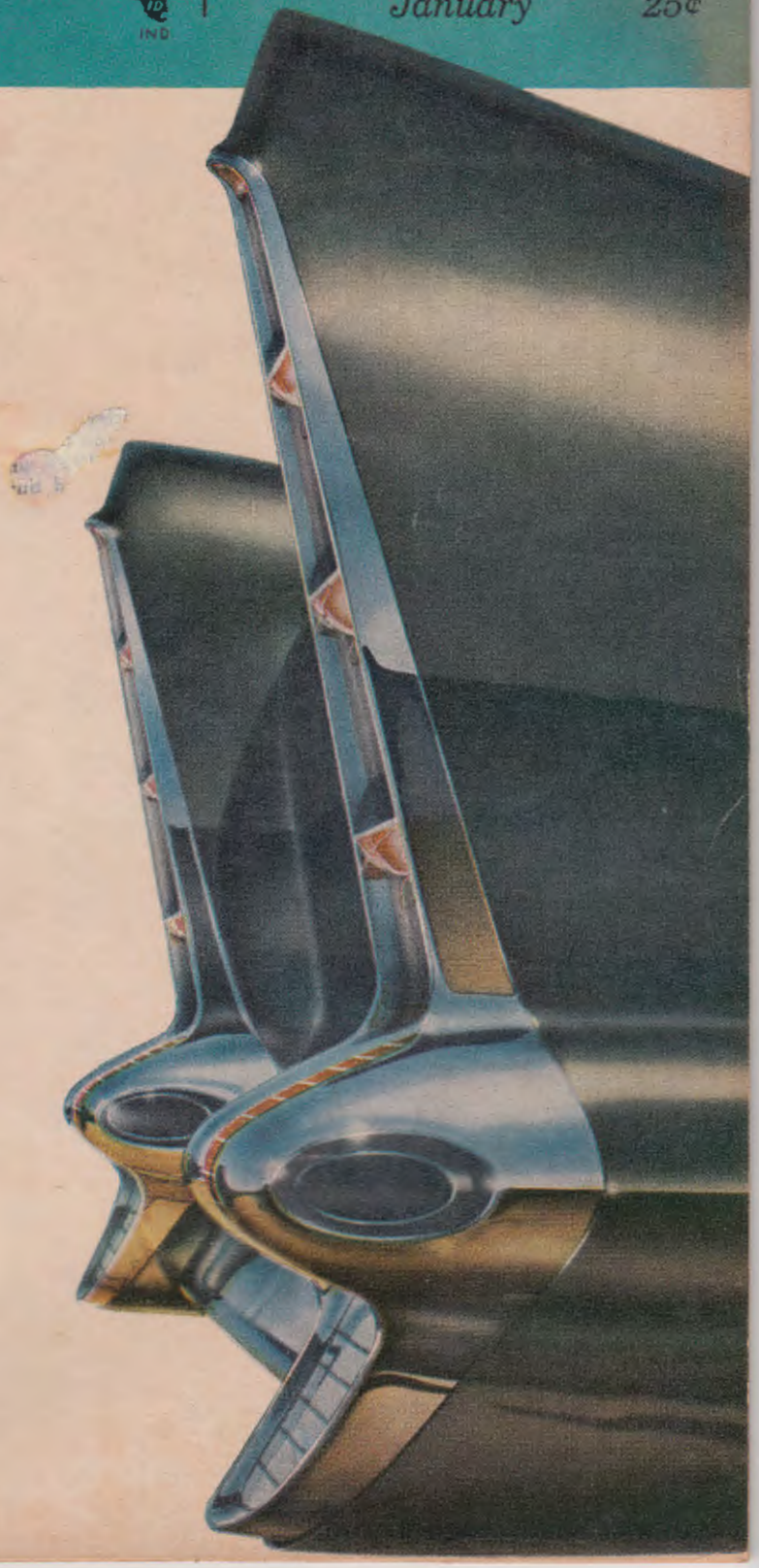
1956 DODGE Road Test

DRIVING STUDE'S NEW GOLDEN HAWK

January 25¢





SPECIAL SECTION

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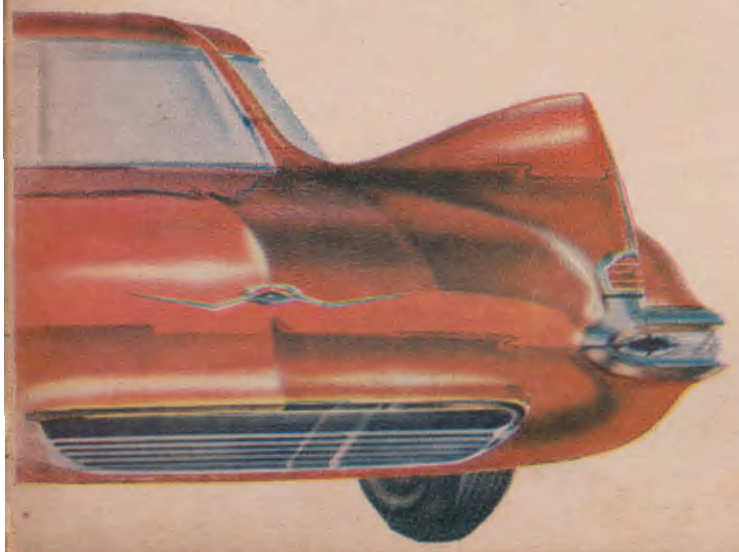
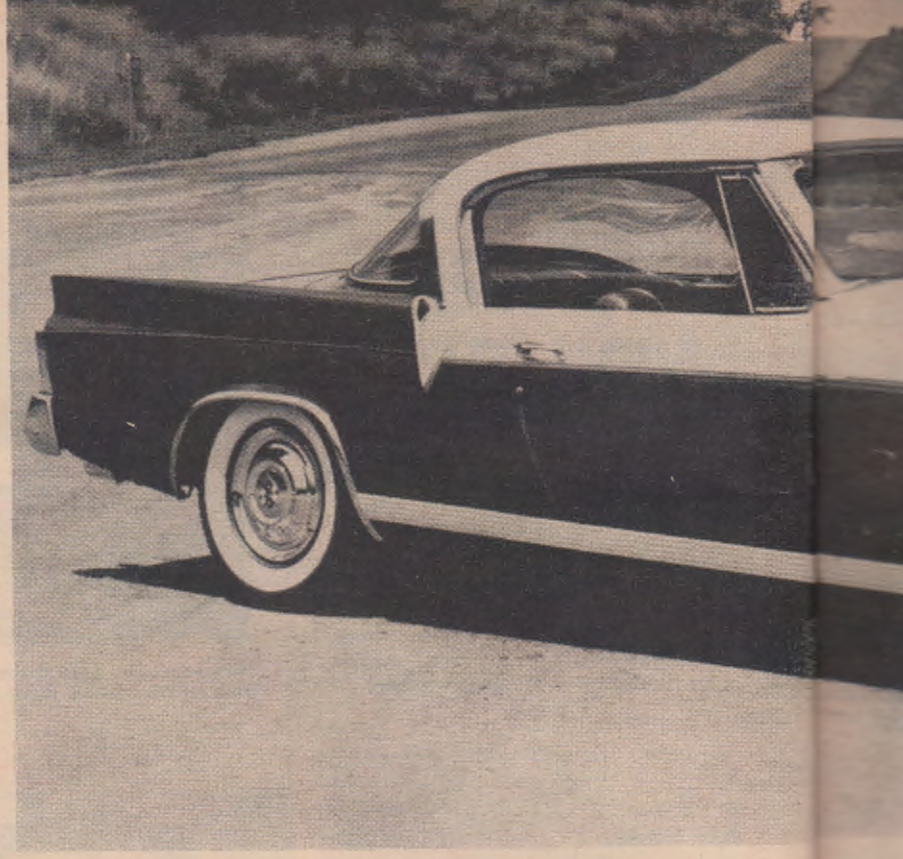


Driving Stude's new Golden Hawk

BY KEN FERMOYLE

South Bend comes up with a new combination of power and styling. From behind the wheel, it feels like a car that will go places



WATCHING Bill Holland drive Studebaker's new Golden Hawk around the 2½-mile Packard test track at average speeds of more than 120 mph during the Studebaker-Packard press preview convinced me that here was a car the public would want to hear about—in detail—at first opportunity!

What is the Golden Hawk? Actually it's the successor to last year's Speedster hardtop coupe, but it's been drastically restyled—and uses the big 352-cubic-inch engine which powered the 1955 Packard. This engine develops 275 hp and puts out 380 foot-pounds of torque at 2800 rpm. This is a combination you would expect to go, and it does!

After spending some time driving it at Studebaker's South Bend proving ground I'm sure this will certainly be one of the top performing cars of 1956. The Golden Hawk I drove turned in 0 to 60 mph times of between 9.2 and 9.6 seconds; 50 to 80 mph averaged about 9.5 seconds, and the car jumped from a dead stop to 30 mph in 3.5 seconds. From 30 to 60 mph takes about six seconds.

As for top speed, few 1956 cars will be able to match it. I already mentioned Holland *averaging* over 120 mph on the Packard track. I had it up over 115 (indicated) on the eight-tenths of a mile straights on the Studebaker track; with more room to wind up it will probably nudge 125 mph.

The car I drove was a pre-production model, practically a hand-made prototype, and weighed about 3600 pounds. Production models will probably run some 150-200 pounds lighter, which should make performance even better. Another thing about the excess weight is that much of it was concentrated at the front of the car—the hand-made hood was so heavy it took a real effort to raise it. This undoubtedly hurt handling slightly.

In fact, the Golden Hawk's handling characteristics were among the things I was most interested in checking. I wondered if the heavier Packard V-8 would have much effect, although I knew the weight difference would not be too great since the Studebaker V-8 at 685 pounds is no lightweight.

Briefly, here's what I found. Although it is definitely nose-heavy, the car doesn't handle too badly. After a few runs to familiarize myself with the car and the track, I was able to get around the not-too-steeply banked corners at close to an indicated 90 mph. The car felt solid at those speeds, gave no indication that it was near the point of breaking loose.

Over the various paved road courses at the proving ground, the Golden Hawk maintained it's footing quite well, although we didn't attempt any really drastic cornering maneuvers. The ride was comfortable at all times.

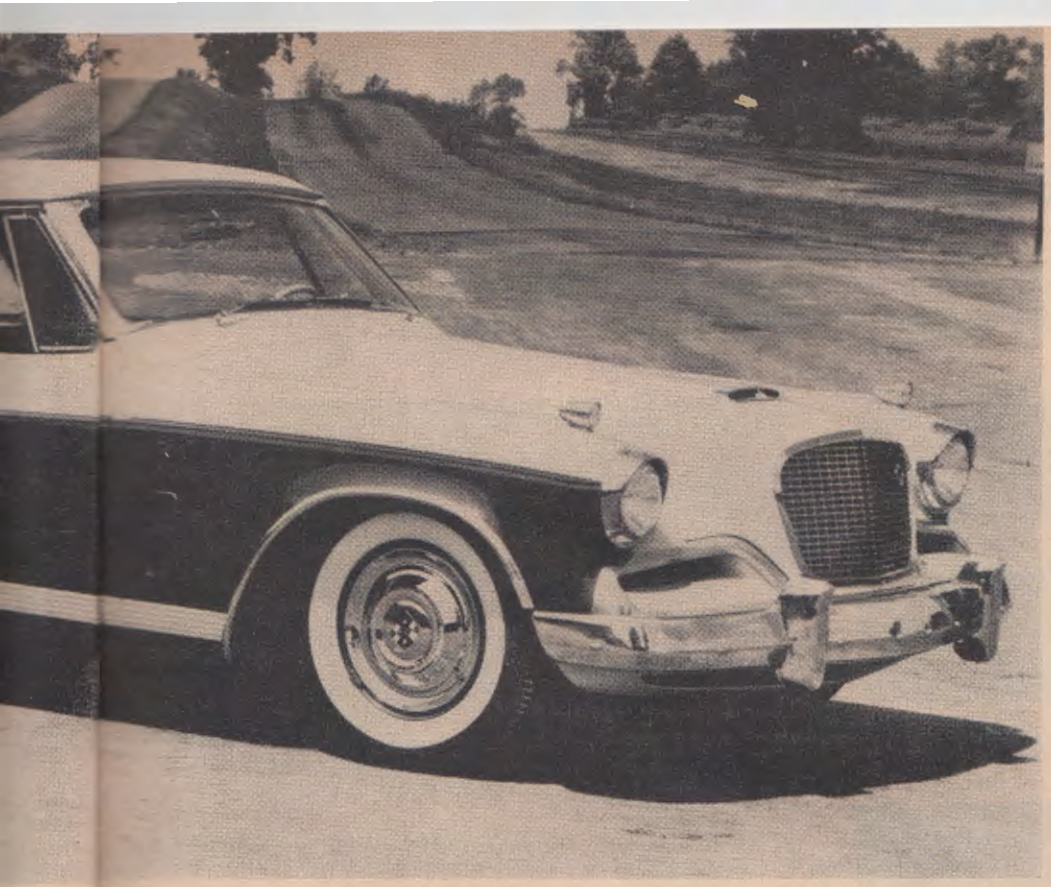
The car has obviously been set up with riding comfort foremost and Studebaker has not attempted to give it real sports car handling characteristics. In fact, they call the Hawks "sports-type cars" and let it go at that. Future Hawk owners who are willing to sacrifice a little comfort for a flatter ride will probably be able to do so by installing Air-Lifts, stiffer springs or by making similar modifications to the stock suspension.

While driving the car, I wondered what the future possibilities of adding Packard's torsion bar setup to it might be. Both Studebaker and Packard officials are very non-committal on this point, but it's not hard to foresee such a move being made in the future. That would make an extremely interesting combination!

The Golden Hawk has the new cast iron finned brake drums and they really do the job. These new brakes reduce fade to the point where it should be practically non-existent, even under severe braking conditions. My one complaint is that there is an awful lot of front end "dive" in anything but very moderate stops. Incorporation of an anti-dive arrangement similar to that used by Chevrolet would be a big improvement.

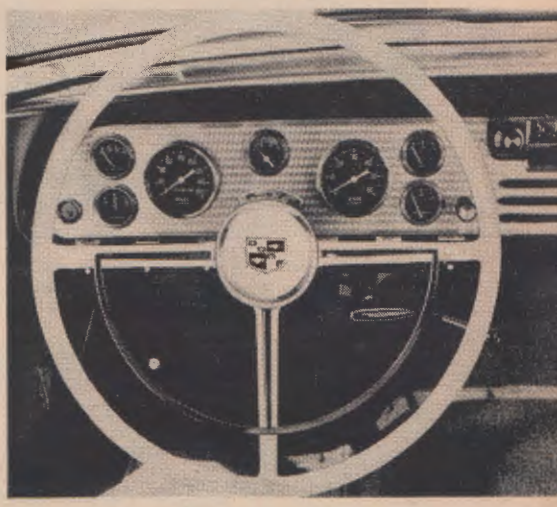
Another minor complaint I had was that the brake pedal (there was no clutch pedal since this car had the Twin-Ultramatic transmission) was in a rather awkward position. My toe repeatedly hit the steering column when I hit the brakes. A larger brake pedal which could be operated by either foot would cure this.

As I said, the Hawk I drove had an



Golden Hawk, successor to the 1955 Speedster and top car in a new sports-type series, shows modern classic style influence. Fins and deck lid are fiberglass.

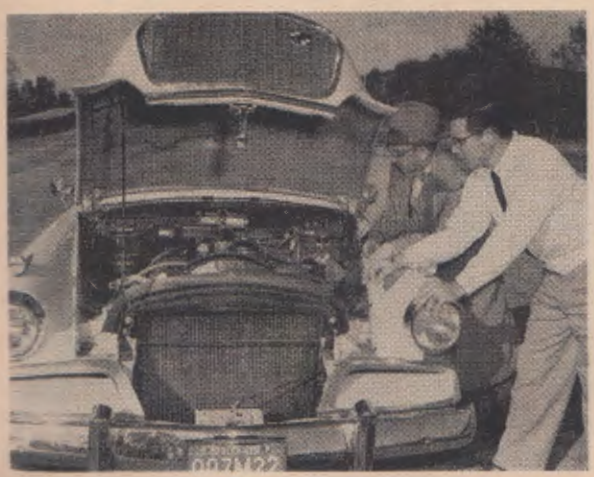
Instrument panel is exceptional, even includes a built-in vacuum gage, alongside large easy-to-read tach and speedometer.



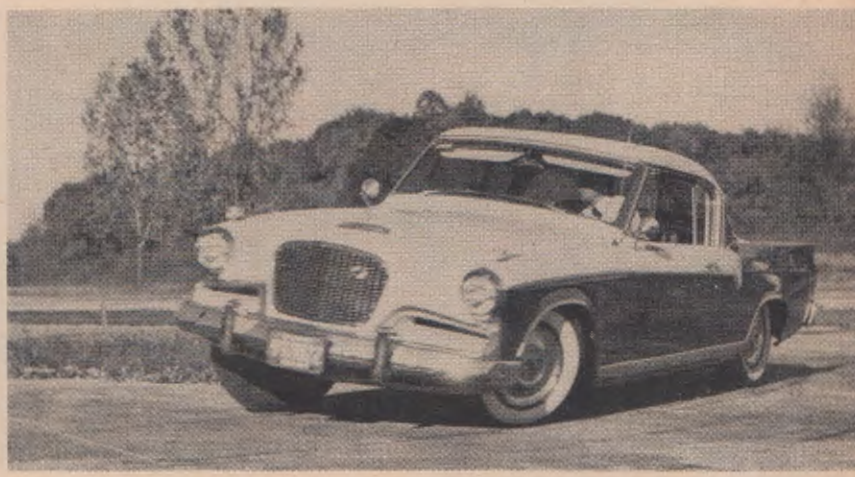
automatic transmission, but overdrive is available (no standard three-speed transmission is being offered, however). With automatic, a 3.07-to-1 rear axle ratio is used. With overdrive the ratio is 3.92-to-1, which should make the car even faster on acceleration.

The Golden Hawk is the top car in Studebaker's new Hawk series of low-slung hardtop and five-passenger coupes. The other models are the Sky Hawk, Power Hawk and Flight Hawk. The Sky Hawk is a hardtop, has a 289-cubic-inch V-8 rated at 210 hp. The Power and Flight Hawks are five-passenger coupes. The Power Hawk 259-cubic-inch V-8 delivers 170 hp, 185 with a four-barrel optional carburetor. Flight Hawk 185.6-cubic-inch Champ six is rated at 101 hp.

Compression ratio on the Golden Hawk is 9.5-to-1. A ratio of 7.8-to-1 is standard on other Hawk models but optional heads giving 8.3-to-1 can be had on the Sky and Power Hawks. •



Studebaker Engineer Ed Reynolds gives Fermoyle a briefing on the 352-cubic-inch engine. Note the novel hood-grille combination on this pre-production car.



Fermoyle bends the Golden Hawk through a tight corner. Although the suspension has been set up with comfortable ride in mind, the new sports-type of car handles well in most hard turns.