Rover Maestro 2.0 Clubman D (Diesel)

FAR FROM BEING KILLED OFF THE minute Rover's extremely successful 214/216 hit the streets, the Maestro continues as a value-for-money, although admittedly less stylish, model in its own right.

It can't survive the axe forever, of course, but in the meantime the range has been rationalised to offer a pair of 1.3s, a 1.6 (with optional automatic transmission), two MG versions – a 2.0i and a turbo – and, most recently, a pair of diesels.

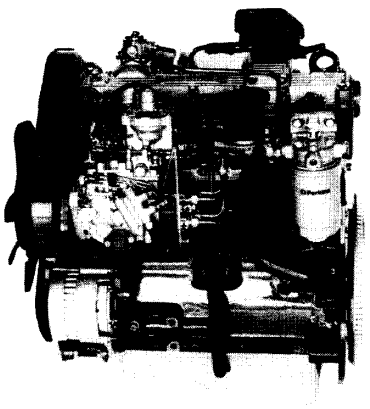
These latest additions to the line-up are powered by the 2-litre Perkins direct injection oil-burner previously used in Maestro vans. Between them, however, Rover and Perkins have refined the installation for use in the car, not least by the use of two-stage injectors, designed to reduce the direct-injection diesel's characteristic 'death rattle'.

The Maestro diesel comes in two trim levels, Clubman D and DLX, with value-for-money price tags to match.

Although it lacks the central locking, electric windows and body-colour plastic bumpers provided on the DLX, the cheaper Clubman D nevertheless provides a five-speed gearbox, four-speaker stereo radio/cassette player, 60/40 split-fold back seats and a tilt and slide glass sunroof, all as standard. Additional items on the DLX include a rear centre armrest, map pockets in the front seatbacks, a load-space lamp and side rubbing

DIRECT INJECTION IN BRIEF

Instead of creating ignition in a pre-chamber which then spreads to the main combustion chamber, direct injection (as its name implies) squirts the fuel directly into a conventional combustion chamber within the piston crown. This arrangement promises significantly improved efficiency over the more common *indirect* injection, although the more abrupt bang that results gives direct injection diesels their characteristic underbonnet cackle. By starting a small fire first, then adding further fuel once the 'bonfire' is well ablaze, two-stage injectors should cut the cackle without sacrificing the intrinsic efficiency of direct injection.



strips. Disappointingly, though, power steering costs extra on both models.

Having experienced the impressive economy, if not terribly racy performance, of this power unit in turbocharged form on the Montego Turbo-diesel, we were keen to see how the normally aspirated Maestro compared.

On the road

We came to the Maestro straight from a Sierra Turbo-diesel and immediately thought that this engine felt quite refined. It feeds far less noise and vibration through to the cabin than does the singularly un-impressive Ford, although there are certainly quieter and smoother diesels to be had. Despite being well muted, the direct-injection rattle is, nevertheless, still quite apparent, yet once the car is into its stride on the open road, sedate cruising is really rather relaxed.

Performance isn't one of the Maestro's strengths, however, 62bhp doesn't go very far in a relatively blunt, heavy car, and despite using significantly shorter gearing than the Montego, progress tends to be pretty sedate no matter how hard you drive. That said, the Maestro feels almost eager in the mid-range band, and provided you don't mind taking a little longer to get there, its comparatively pedestrian performance isn't too great a hardship in normal day to day motoring.

Unfortunately, a prolonged bout of wet and windy weather persisted throughout the test period – just what we needed when testing a low-powered diesel! So, although we've reluctantly included all the performance figures, these could undoubtedly be bettered on a calm, dry day. Even making some allowance for adverse conditions, the figures still underline the Maestro's generally tardy performance.

Because the Maestro has to be driven fairly hard to make anything other than gentle progress, fuel consumption tends to suffer. Not surprisingly, then, it didn't quite match the excellent 53mpg overall we obtained from the larger four-door Montego, but at almost 50mpg overall, it still makes a fair showing in the mpg stakes.

The petrol-powered Maestro has a compliant ride, even though its handling is far from sporty, and to its credit, the diesel version is little affected by the additional underbonnet weight. Although the ponderous, uncommunicative steering discourages spirited bend-swinging, the Maestro copes reasonably well, provided the driver doesn't make excessive demands on it. That said, we rate the optional (£280 extra) power steering as highly desirable, if not absolutely essential, given the non-assisted set-up's weighty, long-winded 4.3 turns between locks.

VERDICT

Now that Rover has the impressive 200/400 range on its books, one could be forgiven for asking why it soldiers on with the Maestro. The answer is that, despite its rather dated looks, there's life in the old dog yet!

Racy GTis and ever-more sophisticated cars are fine for the well-heeled, many of whom never have to pick up the tab anyway, but there's clearly a place in the market for keenly priced, no-nonsense family cars, especially economical ones, and that's just where this Maestro comes in.

OK, so the Clubman can't boast central locking, electric windows and the like, and power steering really ought to be part of the standard inventory. But there's a lot of roomy, comfortable and practical car for the money – £8000 doesn't buy much nowadays – and similarly sized diesel rivals generally cost from £1200 to £1500 more than the Maestro. Modest parts prices and insurance costs are further incentives to the economy-minded buyer.

Our biggest reservation concerns the distinctly 'when I'm good and ready' performance; a meagre power output, lower gearing and the need for a firm right foot to make reasonable progress, undermine the potential rewards of direct injection. And, although it could hardly be described as wasteful of fuel, several of the Maestro's rivals can not only muster similar economy, but also provide livelier performance, albeit with a dearer price tag.

Ultimately, it rather depends on who's writing the cheque – if someone else is footing the bill, the Peugeot 309 takes a lot of beating, particularly in turbo-diesel form. If, on the other hand, the money is coming out of your own pocket and you're not too bothered about having the very latest in automotive style parked on the driveway, the Maestro looks a tempting proposition.

HOW IT COMPARES	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Max speed (mph)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel overall (mpg)	Brakes best stop (%g/lb)	Maximum legroom – front (in)	Typical leg/ kneeroom – rear (in)	Steering turns/ circle (ft)	Overall length (in)
Rover Maestro Clubman D (Diesel)	**1994/62**	**89***	**21.2***	**42.1/28.3***	**49½**	**97/48**	**40½**	**39¼/27½**	**4.3/34½**	**157½**
Fiat Tipo 1.7 Diesel	1697/58	91	23.2	38.6/28.2	49	87/50	42¼	40/29	4.3/34¾	156
Peugeot 309 1.9GLD (Diesel)	1905/65	96	18.0	27.2/21.2	48½	93/35	41	39/29	3.5/33½	159½
Vauxhall Astra 1.7L Diesel (†)	1699/57	96	19.1	43.4/29.3	57½	92/40	42	38½/28½	4.5/33½	157½
VW Golf 1.6CL Umwelt (Diesel)	1588/60	96	18.5	33.8/25.7	54	95/55	42	38/28	3.8/33¾	157
Rover Maestro 1.3 Clubman (Petrol – 5-speed)	1275/69	94	15.4	44.6/25.9	39	97/37	40½	39¼/27½	4.3/34½	157½

(†) performance figures for 4-door Astra Belmont

* see text

PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

STANDING START	0-30mph	0-60mph	¼ mile
	4.8	17.4	21.0

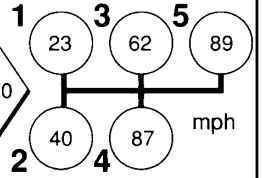
mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS	3.1	7.3	12.6		21.2
IN 5TH GEAR	9.5	19.0	28.9		42.1
IN 4TH GEAR	6.2	12.3	19.2		28.3

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES	23.7/14.5		19.4/13.0		
		19.0/12.3			23.1/16.0

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
	4600 *			4800	3870

*for best acceleration



FUEL CONSUMPTION

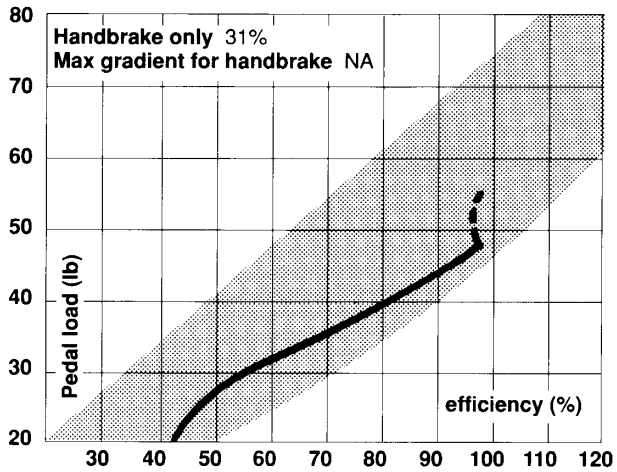
Fuel grade for tests: Diesel

Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	39
Short journeys in the suburbs	44
Motorway – 70mph cruising	45
Brisk driving, mixed roads	51
Gentle driving – rural roads	60
Typical mpg overall	**49½**
Realistic tank range*	40 litres/435 miles

*based on gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience

SAFETY

Brakes How pedal loads affect braking



Braking efficiency shown as a percentage of gravity (ie 100% = 1.0g)

Ideally the braking curve should fall within the shaded zone of this graph. If it's above, the brakes are too heavy; if it's below, they are too light. When the curve becomes broken, the wheels are skidding.

Fade test

How hard use or water affects braking. (Ideal brakes show no change.)

Pedal load needed for 75% stop (lb)

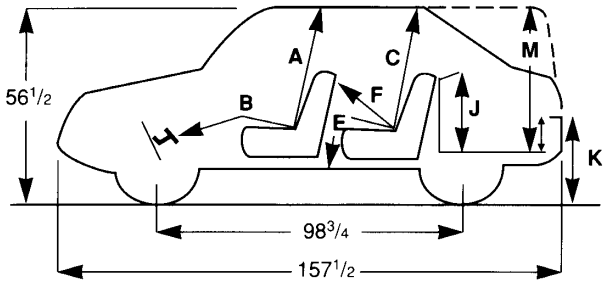
38	At start of test
41	After constant use
45	After severe use
NA	After watersplash
NA	Number of stops to recover

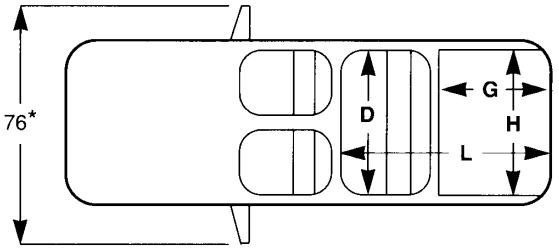
Safety check list

Steering true 'feel' of the road?	✘
Brakes powerful?	✔
sensible effort?	✔
fade resistant?	✔
Seatbelts front – effective?	✔
convenient?	✔
rears – effective?	✔
convenient?	✘
Head restraints front– effective?	✔
rear – effective?	–
Interior thoroughly padded?	✔
Fuel shielded filler?	✔
protected tank?	✔

MEASUREMENTS

Dimensions (inches)





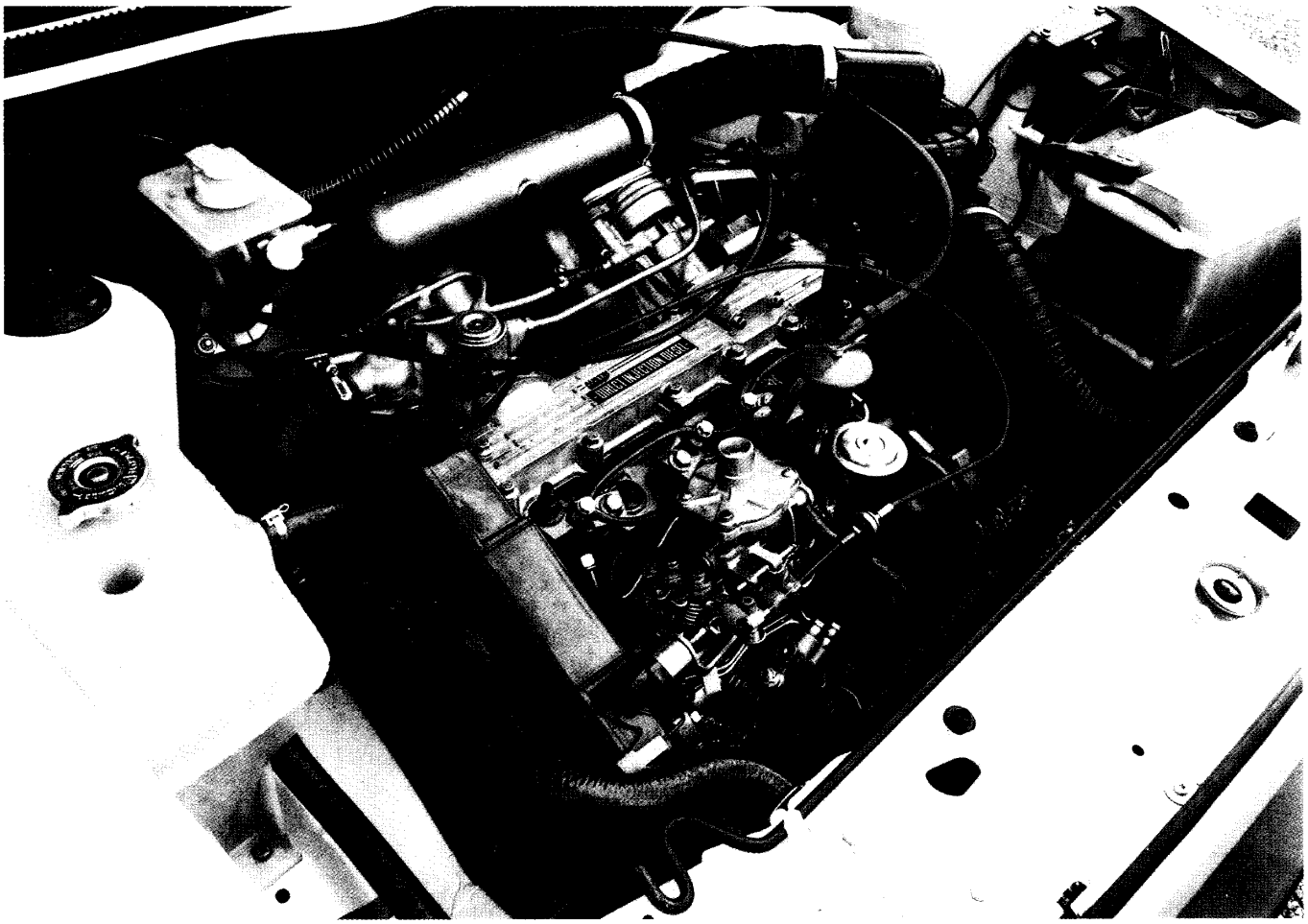
*mirrors don't fold

Kerb weight in lb (full of fuel): 2436

Inside (inches)

A Front headroom	36	**G** Load length	30
B Front legroom (min - max)	32-40½	**H** Load floor width (min - max)	36-55
C Rear headroom	35	**J** Load height	18½
D Back seat width (between armrests)	51	**K** Sill height (inner/outer)	5/23
E Typical rear * legroom †	39¼	**L** Load length	46½
F Typical rear * kneeroom	27½	**M** Load height (to tailgate hinge)	34½

*'Typical' represents the mean measurement behind the driver's seat set at 39in legroom and the passenger's seat set at 41in



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Type and size front-mounted, transverse 4 in line; water-cooled. 84.5mm bore x 88.9mm stroke = 1994cc. Iron block and aluminium alloy head; 5 main bearings

Compression ratio 18.1:1

Valve gear single belt-driven overhead camshaft actuating 2 valves per cylinder via shim-adjusted bucket tappets

Fuel system direct injection diesel. Bosch EPVE mechanical distributor pump with CAV two-stage injectors, fed by mechanical lift pump from 50-litre (11-gallon) tank; low-level warning lamp

Ignition system compression ignition, with glow-plug pre-heating for cold starts

Maximum power (DIN-net) 62bhp at 4500rpm

Maximum torque (DIN-net) 90 lb ft at 2500rpm

TRANSMISSION

Clutch 8.5in diaphragm spring, dry plate; cable-operated. Pedal load/travel: 27 lb/6in

Gearbox 5-speed (all synchromesh) and reverse. Ratios: first 3.25, second 1.89, third 1.22, fourth 0.91, fifth 0.71 and reverse 3.00:1. Automatic transmission not available

Final drive 4.20:1 to front wheels

Mph per 1000rpm 23.0 in top, 18.1 in 4th

Rpm at 70mph 3040 in top gear

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent, MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs, lower wishbones. Rear: torsion beam axle located by trailing arms; coil springs. Dampers: telescopic all round

Steering non-assisted rack and pinion (standard) with 4.3 turns between full locks (power steering optional). Turning circles average 34½ft between kerbs, with 69ft for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 5½J steel with 175/70R14 84T tyres (Goodyear GT 70 on test car)

Brakes 9.5in plain discs front, 8.0in drums rear with engine-driven vacuum servo pump