

## Rover Maestro Clubman Turbo-diesel

“I DIDN'T KNOW THEY STILL MADE IT”, said the driver as he came to collect the Maestro at the end of the test. True, the arrival of the glamorous new 600 has put the old 'uns well and truly in the shade. It's reduced the Montego range to estate cars only – with 2-litre petrol or turbo-diesel engine options under the bonnet. However, the Maestro's continued presence is in 1.3-litre petrol guise, or the same 81bhp turbo-diesel option that the Montego sports. This has answered our criticism (expressed in R9068A) about the lethargy of the former Maestro diesel – offered minus the turbo and 20bhp.

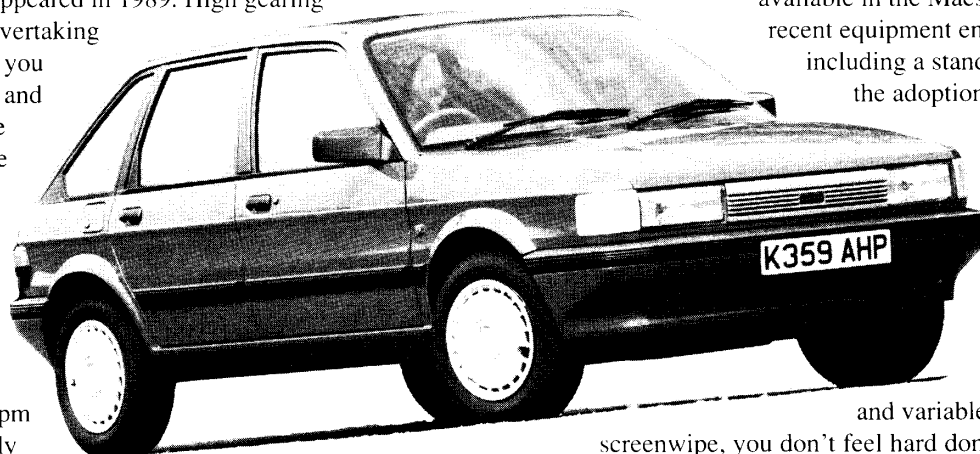
In fact, this is the sprightliest application of the Rover/Perkins direct-injection diesel we've sampled since it first appeared in 1989. High gearing means little overtaking ability unless you change down and get the engine revving above 2500rpm, but once you've done so, it really gets steam up and stays with it to almost 5000rpm – a remarkably high speed for a direct injection diesel.

The other good news is that general smoothness and noise control are significantly better in this latest installation. We remember how the facia and seatbelt clasps vibrated in sympathy at idle in our first Montego turbo-diesel test. There was also a prominent mechanical rattling on cold starting. These have been quelled to the level where this engine is now comparable with a Vauxhall indirect injection turbo-diesel and superior to those powering the current VW Golf and Renault 19. The Peugeot/Citroën unit – also found in the Rover 218,

of course – still feels smoother and quieter but, as our table shows, all the statistics (except for top and fourth gear acceleration) stack up in the Maestro's favour. In terms of fuel economy (surely the prime reason for choosing diesel), the Maestro's advantage is considerable.

Actually, it needs to be, because there are now a couple of petrol-powered cars in this market sector that can give 45mpg overall: the Vauxhall Astra E-Drive and the Honda Civic VEi. Because the fuels show little price difference at present, we wonder if some diesel buyers are fooling themselves. You can't say this about Maestro buyers, however.

The reduced range means only Clubman trim is now available in the Maestro, but with recent equipment enhancements, including a standard sunroof,



the adoption of the tidier Montego controls and displays, and the addition of details such as a boot lamp

and variable intermittent screenwipe, you don't feel hard done by. In fact, this old stager has aged well in terms of accommodation features and its ride and handling prowess; you can't appreciate aspects like back seat comfort and bump absorption by looking at brochures.

The Maestro can show the youngsters a thing or two when it comes to aspects like this. The (optional) power steering makes a world of difference, particularly in this diesel version – we wouldn't consider the car without it, from new. Unlike the 1.3 petrol version, the diesel's five-speed gearbox is standard. It's a pleasant gear-change, and superior to that of the 1.3's VW-inspired 'box. The clutch effort is moderate.

*Verdict overleaf*

HOW THEY COMPARE	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Max speed (mph)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (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 Turbo-diesel	1994/81	102	13.6	40.8/24.0	54	97/47	40 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	39 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> /27	3.5/34 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> (p)	157 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>
VW Golf 1.9 Umwelt Turbo-diesel	1896/75	101	15.8	31.2/22.0	48 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	99/45	42 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	38/28	3.2/33 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> (p)	158 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub>
Vauxhall Astra 1.7 Turbo-diesel (5 door)	1686/82	100	14.6	31.7/21.0	50	97/37	42 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	39 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> /28	3.5/32 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> (p)	159 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>
Renault 19 1.9 Turbo-diesel (5 door)	1870/93	113	12.2	26.4/17.0	49	79/37	41	39/28 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	3.5/34 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> (p)	164
Rover 218SLD Turbo	1769/87	104	14.7	31.4/19.6	45	86/40	42 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	38 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> /27 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	3.4/34 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> (p)	166 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>

(p) power-assisted

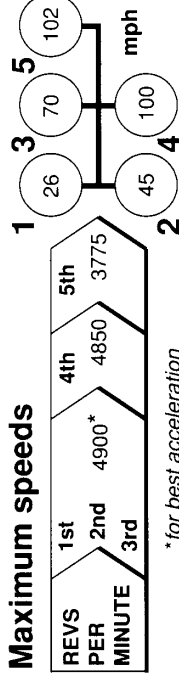
## PERFORMANCE

**Acceleration** time in seconds

<b>STANDING START</b>	0-30mph	0-60mph	1/4 mile
	3.9	12.7	19.0

mph	30	40	50	60	70
<b>THROUGH THE GEARS</b>		2.2	5.2	8.8	13.6
<b>IN 5TH GEAR</b>		11.5	23.7	32.1	40.8
<b>IN 4TH GEAR</b>		7.5	12.8	17.9	24.0

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
<b>5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES</b>		24.1/14.8	20.6/10.4		17.1/11.2



## FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade for tests: Diesel

<b>Normal range</b>	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	41
Short journeys in the suburbs	44
Motorway - 70mph cruising	50 1/2
Brisk driving, mixed roads	55
Gentle driving, rural roads	67
<b>Typical mpg overall</b>	<b>54</b>
Realistic tank range*	40 litres/475 miles

\*based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Same as for Maestro 2.0 Clubman D (see report R9068A) except for:

**ENGINE**

Fuel system direct-injection diesel, with mechanical two-stage injection pump and turbocharger. No intercooler or catalyser, but with exhaust gas recirculation control. 50-litre (11-gallon) tank with low-level warning lamp

**Maximum power** 81bhp at 4500rpm

**Maximum torque** 116 lb ft at 2500rpm

**TRANSMISSION**

Gearbox 5-speed (all synchromesh) and reverse. Ratios: first 3.25, second 1.89, third 1.22, fourth 0.85, top 0.65 and reverse 3.00:1

**Final drive** 3.94:1, to front wheels

**Mph per 1000rpm** 27.0 in top, 20.7 in 4th

**Rpm at 70mph** 2600 in top gear

**CHASSIS**

Steering optional extra power-assisted rack and pinion fitted to test car, with 3.5 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 34'2ft between kerbs, with 57'1/2ft circle for one turn of the wheel

**VERDICT**

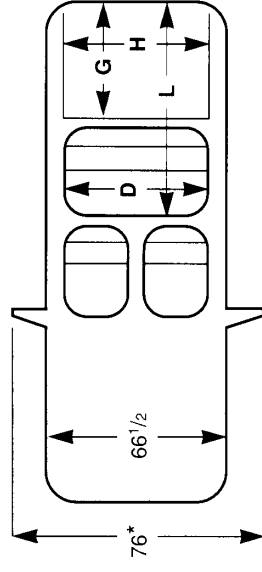
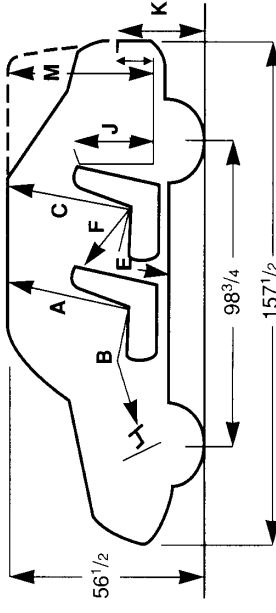
You're hardly likely to buy a Maestro diesel to improve your street cred! For turning heads, the 218/418 is a much better proposition.

However, disinterested passengers love the back seat, while the driver can relish the model's marked reluctance to visit filling stations. Here's a hatchback for buyers who are really serious about the substance rather than the image - and with a price tag that's thousands of pounds lower than most of its rivals (shown in our comparison chart), you start saving even before your first forecourt stop.

Unless you're averse to gearchanging, this unpretentious Maestro turbo-diesel, at its competitive price, can't seriously be faulted.

## MEASUREMENTS

**Dimensions** (inches)



\* mirrors don't fold readily

**Inside** (inches)

<b>A</b> Front headroom	35 1/2	<b>G</b> Load length	2450
<b>B</b> Front legroom (min - max)	32-40 1/4	<b>H</b> Load floor width (min - max)	36-55
<b>C</b> Rear headroom	35	<b>J</b> Load height	18 1/2
<b>D</b> Back seat width (between armrests)	51	<b>K</b> Sill height (inner/outer)	5/23
<b>E</b> Typical rear * legroom	39 1/2	<b>L</b> Load length	46 1/2
<b>F</b> Typical rear * kneeroom	27	<b>M</b> Load height (to tailgate hinge)	34 1/2

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