

## NEW CARS

TWO NEW cars were announced last month both from the British Leyland Motor Corporation, but from different divisions therein, and it would appear that Lord Stokes is keeping his promise made almost two years ago to produce a new British Leyland model every six months. Standard Triumph have announced Stag, a 2+2 sports/GT car, and the Rover Co. Ltd. the Range Rover, which is the first completely new model to be introduced by the Rover Company since it became a part of the British Leyland complex. The Range Rover is a combination of the ruggedness and durability of the ever-popular Land-Rover, together with many characteristics found in the range of Rover saloon cars.

We have not been able to drive these cars for any appreciable length of time, but initial impressions gained from both are given in this issue, and we hope to publish full road tests in full at a later date.

### The Triumph Stag

The announcement of the new Triumph Stag is a significant and most welcome addition to the current range of sports and GT cars at present produced by British manufacturers which are still so very popular the world over. As can be seen from recent MOTOR SPORT editorials, and indeed the wealth of readers' letters received, it is obvious there is still an incredible amount of enthusiasts who prefer the joys of fresh-air motoring, and Stag will do much to stimulate further interest and fill a gap which previously was dominated by foreign manufacturers.

Stag is a two-door, genuine 2+2 sports car, having capacity for accommodating four adults in relative comfort, whereas a great many so-called 2+2s have only room for two persons occupying the front seats and either children or one adult sitting sideways-fashion in the rear. Obviously the amount of room for rear passengers is dependent upon the position adopted by the driver, but there is still more leg room than most other counterparts can boast. Styled by the Italian designer Giovanni Michelotti, the bodywork features an integral padded roll-bar, *a la* Targa Porsche, which runs between the door pillars, with a further arm to the windscreen header rail. Hard and soft-tops are available or a combination of both, the hard-top having a heated rear screen fitted as standard. Prices range from £1,955 17s. 6d. for the soft-top version, to £2,093 15s. 10d. for the hard and soft-top variant, which makes Stag a very competitive car indeed, cutting into the market at present occupied by the Elan +2, the Alfa Romeo Spyder and to a degree the highly-priced Mercedes 280 SL.

The power comes from a 2,997-c.c. 90-degree V8 aluminium alloy-headed engine, with a chain-driven single-overhead camshaft for each bank, delivering a reputed 145 b.h.p. at 5,500 r.p.m., and is a direct development of the 1.7 engine as supplied for the Saab 99. The short-stroke engine features a five-bearing two-plane crankshaft which offers torque at 2,040 lb. in. at 3,500 r.p.m. and as is usual with most V8s, the flexibility of this new engine is superb. Both manual and automatic versions are available, the manual having Laycock overdrive in 3rd and top gears with the Borg Warner system featured in the automatic. The gearbox is a strengthened version of the 2.5 P.I saloon box with larger bearings and different ratios.



MICHELLOTTI STYLING.—The Triumph Stag features an attractive and safe padded roll-bar.

The interior is well appointed, having all the usual instrumentation one would expect to find in a high-performance car, although the omission of an oil pressure gauge was somewhat surprising. However, there is a combination "all-go" dial similar to that first seen on the Triumph 1300 saloon, which does give a warning of low oil pressure together with separate warning lights for main beam, direction indicators, ignition, choke, hand-brake, fuel level and water temperature. Reclining seats are fitted as standard equipment, with ample adjustment to meet the needs of even the most demanding type, and so a comfortable driving position is available.

As well as having Triumph's "thru-flow" ventilation system, air conditioning is available as an optional extra which will obviously be a boon in hot climates, and is the first time that such equipment has been offered by Standard Triumph. Electric side windows are also standard equipment and are operated by rocker switches located on the centre console.

From our very short time spent with the Stag in Belgium earlier this year it was not possible to assess the full potential of this car which performed admirably during the time we drove it and, although the pre-production models we drove had barely 200 miles clocked up, they stood up remarkably well to the demands imposed on them by members of the British motoring press. Acceleration is smooth, using maximum revs in all gears, and the gearshift itself is a delight to operate, being light with no notchy action; 0-60 is reached in some nine seconds, which could have been improved on had a smooth change from 1st to 2nd gear been made, and 30 miles per hour over the legal limit is reached in less than 30 seconds.

The handling is superb, with the power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering being light yet very precise without that feeling of "which way are the wheels facing" when cornering. Front suspension is by way of independent struts with coil springs controlled by telescopic dampers, with an anti-roll bar fitted, whilst the rear is also fully independent with semi-trailing arms and coil spring damper units. Belgian *pavé* encountered during the drive was taken at high speed with no adverse reaction from either driver or passenger proving the suspension was doing its job properly, and there was no noticeable roll when cornering at high speed. Having an idiotic Belgian reverse a tatty VW into the path of a Stag travelling at 90 m.p.h. was an excellent opportunity to test the brakes to the full, and thankfully enough they halted the new car before an embarrassing moment occurred. The brakes are servo-assisted, with discs front and self-adjusting rear drums, and, whilst being extremely powerful, careful use is necessary as it is quite easy to lock up the rear wheels, which is not at all desirable.

On a fast stretch of open road an indicated 121 m.p.h. was reached, but the tachometer ran wild at 5,000 r.p.m., a fault common to the manual and automatic versions driven. Wind noise at this speed was not unduly unbearable, most of it emanating from the quarter-lights, which were slightly ill-fitting, as was the hood cover which started to shift around in its recess behind the rear seats.

The great feature of most V8 engines is the inherent flexibility, and the Triumph engine is no exception, pulling from less than 20 m.p.h. in overdrive top with no shudder or transmission grab. There may be minor faults we will find when testing this car thoroughly, but I doubt it. It is not intended to replace the TR6, which will still be produced, but is an attempt to enter the highly competitive luxury grand touring class of motoring. We hope it succeeds.

### The Range Rover

The second of the new cars introduced last month is the Range Rover, manufactured by the Rover Company after four years of design and development which has brought forth a model combining the ruggedness and versatility of the Land-Rover, together with handling and acceleration normally associated with high-performance saloons. This is an interesting combination which makes the Range Rover on the one hand a powerful work horse at home on a farm or a fast, comfortable station wagon cruising at speeds in excess of 90 m.p.h. on the open road.

As a hard-working, cross-country-type vehicle it is excellent, as a recent test-day in Cornwall proved.

Driving the Range Rover over terrain usually associated with motorcycle trials, it fairly ate up the rough ground it was fed with and was most impressive indeed; although conditions were dry this did not detract from its capabilities which were put to the test in a series of "special stages" organised by the Rover PR people. On a disused