



The Singer Gazelle



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When the Rootes Group took control of Singer Motors shortly after Christmas 1955, they undertook to bring out a new Singer model within a year. The basis was to be the recently-launched Hillman Minx in the 'Audax' range, which also included the Sunbeam Rapier. Rootes made the Gazelle stand out with a distinctive frontal treatment incorporating an oval grille that would grace the range for ten years, a handsome interior with walnut-grained dashboard and door trims, distinctive colour schemes, and a higher compression ratio version of the ohc 1497cc engine from the soon to be discontinued Singer Hunter. This may have been designed to appeal to traditional Singer customers by providing something different from the Rootes power-plant found in the Minx and Rapier, but it also enabled the company to run down their stocks of the Hunter engine. Rootes launched the new car in September 1956, emphatically making good on their promise to inject new life into Singer.

This model, known as Series I, consisted of four-door saloon and stylish two-door convertible and boasted 49 bhp, with steering-column gearchange and synchromesh on the top three ratios. It was priced at £898, compared with £774 for the Minx De Luxe and £1044 for the Rapier. Only a year later Series II was launched, the front styling revised with horizontal chrome-edged side grilles. Two-tone paint schemes and optional Laycock overdrive were also introduced, and an estate car joined the range. Incidentally, Rootes were not consistent in their use of 'Series' to denote successive models, and some sources describe these cars by using 'Mark' numbers.

Rootes believed in regularly having something new in the showroom, and in February 1958 came the Series IIA, visually almost identical but with the installation of the more modern ohv Minx engine of 1494cc which offered 56 bhp and improved performance figures. This was followed in September the same year by Series III,



Singer Gazelle Series 1, showing oval grille, with 'cow-horn' chrome air vents, vertical chrome strips and single side-stripe



Singer Gazelle Series IIA showing side-flash widening downwards over the rear quarter. The IIA is outwardly similar to the Series II.



Singer Gazelle Series III showing narrow side-flash which extends around over the rear and lower boot area

featuring minor trim changes, different paint treatment in the rear quarters and a reduced price for the estate car.

This version lasted one year before being superseded by Series IIIA in September 1959. External changes included the introduction of 'roll-over' rear fins, three separate rear lights in place of a single cluster, and another redesign of the side-flash. A floor-mounted gearchange

became standard and, notably, it now also had twin carburettors which endowed this model with 60 bhp and the best performance of all Gazelles until the Series VI; the company's own Easidrive automatic transmission also became available.

Indeed, the improved acceleration figures of this twin-carb model possibly contributed to its lasting only one year, in that Rootes may have felt that it was encroaching on the 'sporty'



Singer Gazelle IIIA showing revised side-flash

territory reserved for the Sunbeam Rapier. In addition, a few owners say that it was not easy to keep the two carburettors in tune. For ease of service, therefore, Series IIIB of autumn 1960 reverted to a single carburettor, with no styling changes.

Only a year later Series IIIC heralded the introduction of an enlarged engine - now 1592cc

- and showed off this increase by a '1600' badge on each of the front doors, though there were no other changes in appearance. The saloon lasted a full two years, though the convertible and estate car versions were dropped early in 1962.

For reasons best known to Rootes, there was no Series IV Gazelle; it seems the slightly



Singer Gazelle Series IIIC - outwardly identical to Series IIIA and IIIB models but with '1600' badges on the front doors