

HATS OFF TO SAAB



the rear seat. The 'B' pillars themselves are also strengthened by secondary upright members, behind which are mounted the seat belt retracting gear and the motor gear for the hydraulically operated soft top. Should these motors fail, then the top can be operated manually.

The roof can only be electrically operated when the handbrake is on, while the heated rear screen is de-activated by means of a mercury switch, to prevent it cooking the fabric top when stowed in its cavity behind the rear seat.

When the top is stowed, a three-piece plastic cover trims off the car's lines, hiding the folded roof fabric, and protecting it from the weather. It's a neat system, and operation is so much more acceptable than the usual brute force and broken nail sessions experienced with tonneau-type, popstud affairs. The trim plastic is finished in the same way as the average plastic bumper and is aesthetically quite acceptable.

With the roof up, the lines of the car are not so pretty, and one might assume that ASC had more than a hand in the design stage. Not so says Hautala, who is satisfied that the lines are the responsibility of Mr Envall.

The assumption of American involvement is due in no small part to the distinctly 30s feel of this soft top, with a characteristically small rear window pane. There's a peculiar spoiler running round the rearmost join between lid and boot too, which because of US legislation houses a hideous third light, creating a cyclops-like appearance and which is reminiscent of the sort of thing one sees in rear windows next to a brightly coloured football scarf.

The other upsetting thing about the US model, which hopefully we will not have to endure, is a loud and unpleasant buzzer which sounds when doors are opened, broadly speaking, but which seemed happy to continue producing a veritable cacophony even when they were not.

In fairness, the roofline of the Cabriolet does grow on you, and we left it feeling much happier than at the first encounter.

That light will have to go though. Operation of the roof is simple but not

