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Popular Science

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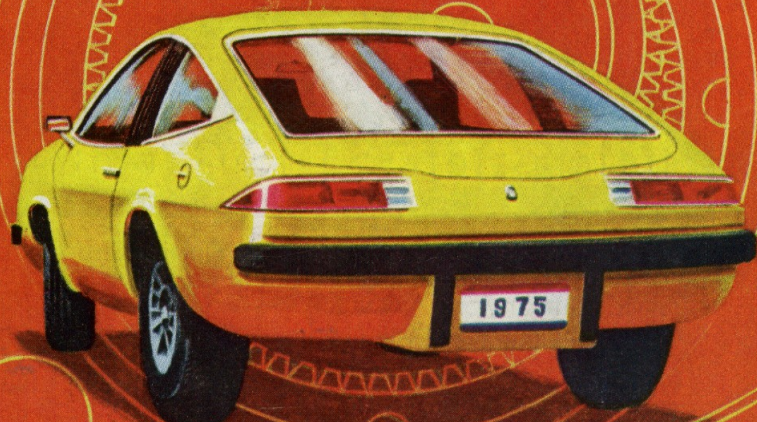
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PERSONAL-USE REPORT



A "second-generation" electric, author calls new eight-hp, 36-in.-cut Elec-Trak.

New electric rider

Agile, stable— and three kwh a charge

All the electric riders I've tested so far have performed reasonably well. And all, it seemed to me, cut about the same amount of grass per charge—so there's no novelty there. But now, after testing General Electric's new ER 8-36 (eight hp, 36-in. cut), I'm convinced the second generation of electrics is here: safer, easier to drive, better cutting. GE also has some interesting figures on mower economics and energy.

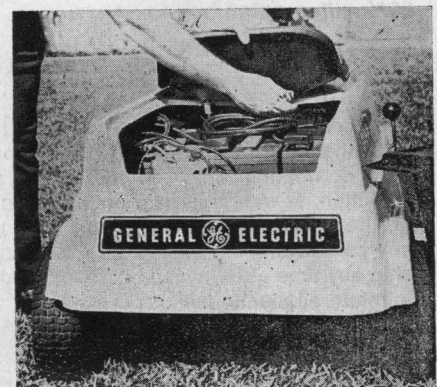
I intentionally overdrove the ER 8-36—wide open—slammed the shift through all five speeds forward without clutching (poor practice); racked it from forward to reverse and back; charged up a bank and dropped the clutch out and in, hard. My main complaint is common to all electrics with deck-top motors. You can't raise the deck as high as you might need to crest a rise. Also, I had to duck down to use the lift lever, losing sight, momentarily, of my heading.

But these are minor problems. The ER 8-36 turned very tightly, and steering gave a sense of agility. Even trying hard on the upslopes, I couldn't induce this one to rear back and dump me over. The center of gravity (batteries) is well ahead of the rear axle—vital for safety.

The seat has an interlock switch to cut all power if you're thrown off. You have to go back to neutral to start. This is safer, but if you're accustomed to hitching over the high side for side-hill cutting, everything shuts down until you again center up in the saddle.

The ER 8-36 needs 3.0 kw-hrs from your wall outlet to recharge—an eighth of what it takes to run a home refrigerator for a week. Using the high-cost power of the Mid-Atlantic states, you'll spend about nine cents to recharge the rider's three batteries. If your utility is using petroleum for power generation, this is about 0.22 gals. back at the power house.

Compared to two gallons of 50-cent gas for an engine-powered rider, the electric economics look good even if first cost is higher. And the price of the ER 8-36, \$695, is the lowest I've seen.—E. F. Lindsley



Under the rear deck, all handy, are charge cord, batteries, and traction motor. Drive belt is under rear skirt.