



CHEV 315

STEVE WILDER'S VIVID TEST REPORT on the 4.9 Ferrari Superfast in SCI's September issue drew lots of mail. What much of it had to say is typified by reader C. S. Earnshaw's comment: "... being able to drop a sports car into low at 45 mph could be duplicated in an American product (Corvette) at much lower cost. In fact, you could buy a 300SL roadster with the difference."

We even had a number of phone calls in response to the 4.9 report. One came from long-standing reader Ron Steiner of Beverly Hills. "Look," he said. "That Ferrari is lots car . . . for lots money. I'd like to show you something I got recently for \$2600. I warn you; you're in for a real shock. It's a stock Chev but it's downright fantastic."

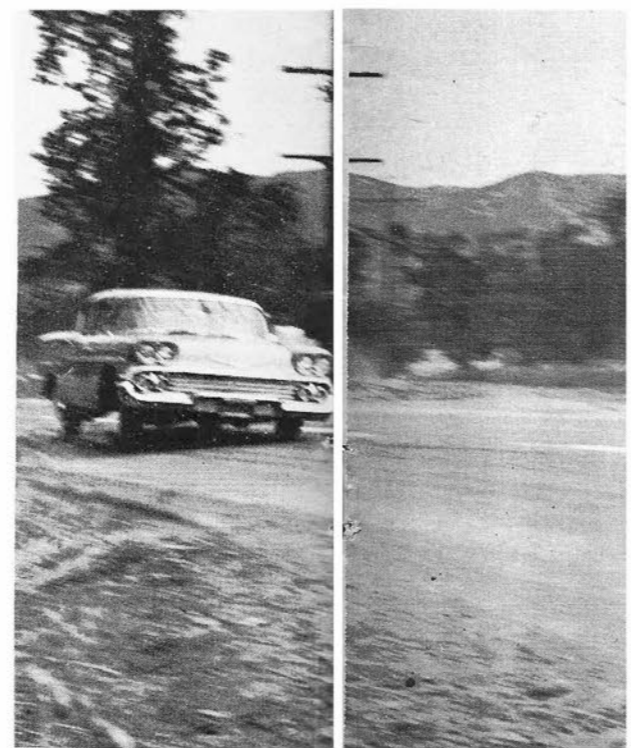
The more we heard the more intrigued we became. About four months previously Chevrolet had introduced its "315" power package. This consists of a 348 cu. in. engine, Duntov cam, solid tappets, a trio of dual-throat carbs, heavy-duty clutch and Corvette close-ratio three-speed transmission. Cost of the 315 combination in Los Angeles is \$229 over the standard engine and transmission assembly. The hot package is available in any Chev body style, including station wagon, and this availability will continue during the '59 model year. Delivery has been taking about four weeks and, at this writing, there are very few 315's in circulation. Steiner had ordered his, as you might expect, with the lightest body in the Chev line — the Del Ray two-door. This plainly added up to one of the hottest cars in America or in the world and we lost no time in accepting Steiner's offer to put his two-month old car through its paces. Remember, now, this is a stocker, exactly like your grandmother can buy across the counter in any Chev agency in the nation.

Steiner rolled up to our test headquarters in the desert, a very muscular rumble coming from his stock pipes. The blue-gray two-door appeared to be a perfectly innocuous business coupe; it even had a back seat. Its 1100 rpm idle smoothed out the cam's low-speed lobe and a bystander might have attributed the fast tickover to a jammed automatic choke. The sole modification that had been made to the car was a set of plugged straight pipes that were totally concealed between the frame rails. "Shall we open them?" Steiner asked, licking his chops. In the interest of duplicating drag strip conditions, under which this car generally is opened up, we gave the nod. Also, we wanted to hear the music.

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By Griff Borgeson

On a mile per hour per dollar basis you just can't beat this six-passenger missile.



PERFORMANCE

TOP SPEED:
Two-way average 107 mph

ACCELERATION:
From zero to seconds
30 mph 2.5
40 mph 3.8
50 mph 5.6
60 mph 7.2
70 mph 8.8
80 mph 10.9
90 mph 13.6
100 mph 16.8
Standing 1/4 mile 15.2
Speed at end of quarter 96 mph

SPEED RANGES IN GEARS:
I 0-43
II 0-72
III 5-top

SPEEDOMETER CORRECTION:

Indicated Speed	Timed Speed
30	28
40	38
50	47
60	57
70	67
80	77
90	87
100	96

FUEL CONSUMPTION:
Hard driving 6 to 9 mpg
Average driving
(Under 60 mph) 10 to 13 mpg

SPECIFICATIONS

POWER UNIT:
Type W-348 V-8, water cooled
Valve Operation Pushrod ohv, solid tappets
Bore & Stroke 4.125 x 3.25 in. (105 x 82.8 mm)
Stroke/Bore Ratio 0.79/1
Displacement 348 cu. in. (570/cc)
Compression Ratio 11.0/1
Carburetion by Three Rochester dual-choke
Max. Power 315 (SAE) bhp @ 5600 rpm
Idle Speed 1100 rpm

DRIVE TRAIN:

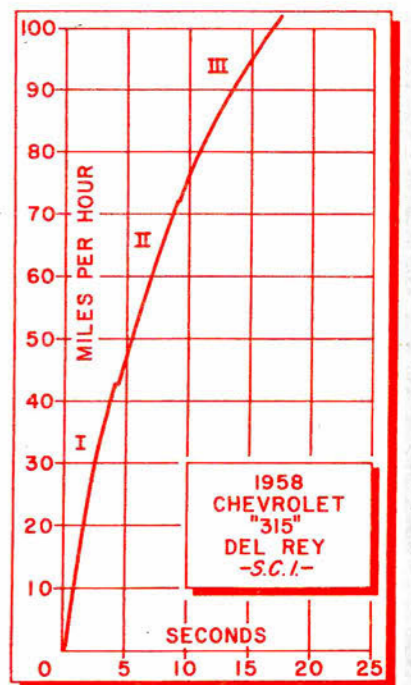
Transmission ratios	optional ratios
I	2.21 (2.20)
II	1.31 (1.66)
III	1.00 (1.31)
IV	— (1.00)
Final drive ratio	4.11 (3.36, 3.50, 370, 4.56)

Axle torque taken by upper A-frame.

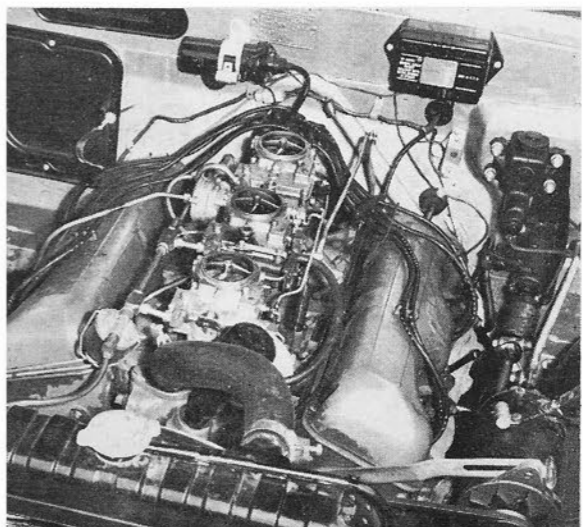
CHASSIS:
Wheelbase 117 1/2 in.
Tread, front and rear 59 in.
Front Suspension Coil springs, wishbones, anti-roll bar
Rear Suspension Rigid rear axle, coil springs, Triangulated A-frame connecting to differential case.
Shock absorbers Telescopic
Steering type Semi-reversible recirculating ball
Steering wheel turns L to L 4 1/2
Brakes Two leading shoe, organic linings std., inorganic optional
Brake lining area 157
Tire size 8.00 x 14
Weight, as tested 3920 lbs.

Weight distribution,
F/R as tested 56/44
Fuel capacity 18 U.S. gallons

RATING FACTORS:
Specific Power Output 0.91 bhp/cu. in.
Power to Weight Ratio 12.4 lbs./hp.
Piston speed @ 60 mph 1820 ft./min/
Braking Area 80 (1) sq. in./ton
Speed @ 1000 rpm in top gear 18.9 mph



Left, the looks may be last year's but the performance certainly isn't. Below, Good Griff, Charlie Borgeson, you compare this with a Ferrari?



348 cu in "Law Enforcement" engine features 10:1 CR, domed pistons with "eyebrow" cutouts for valve clearance, solid cam followers for the Duntov cam, plus three twin-choke Rochester carburetors.

50

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"do-it-yourselfers"



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Chev 315

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Our test car's acceleration was helped, of course, by its 4.11 axle ratio. But even quicker times can be obtained with the optional 4.56 rear end gears. The test car was *not* fitted with a limited slip differential and this, too, would make for quicker times. Also, our speed runs were made with open windows, it being far too hot a day to run with them closed; this extra drag made up for the open header plugs, no doubt. With the 4.11 ratio the thrust is extremely constant and powerful out to about 95 mph. Then it begins to fall off and becomes much weaker at about 100. At 56 or 5700 rpm it is absolutely all done and cannot be revved beyond that in any gear. Steiner does all his speed shifting at 5000.

For sheer straightaway performance the car is exhilarating, thrilling and amazing to drive. How about the other vital qualities?

The sound of this machine, as we took off, was astonishing. You may remember the sounds of various V8-engined Allards of a few years back. Even at peak revs they just burbled along, sounding lazy and effortless. Not the Chev 315. It comes on right now with that booming, hard-slaming thunder that we've learned to associate with wild, full-race V8's at the drags and at Bonneville. It sounds precisely like what it is: a legitimate racing engine.

Its acceleration, for what some people will call a big barge, is appalling. It hauls its freight with a continuous swift surge that is altered only when the high-speed carbs cut in. When they do the thrust is markedly increased and the carbs moan like a Roots blower in rut. It's a most unprecedented feeling to be in a big, soft-sprung Detroit that rushes out to 100 mph like Col. Stapp's rocket sled.

Later I called Frank Milne, racing expert of Harry Mann Chevrolet, the big Southern California Corvette specialist. "What did you get for zero to 60?" he asked. "Seven point two," I told him. Milne intoned, "My God!" and was silent for a long moment.

I read off the rest of our times to him. "Now I begin to understand," he said. "There are darned few of those 315's around yet and the one that I was hoping to run tests on was bought right out from under me. Since then the owner keeps telling me about waxing stock Corvettes consistently at the drag strips and turning elapsed times in the high fourteens. I didn't believe him. Now I guess I'd better."

I checked with Los Angeles' Courtesy Chevrolet, where Steiner had bought his car, to verify what was in it and what it cost. "Is it the same as Chevrolet's Police Special?" I asked. Courtesy's Charles McClure replied, "The Police Special has everything Ron's car has, plus an even heavier clutch, stiffer suspension, ceramic brakes and a bigger gas tank. I drove one recently and it really made me a believer. Lord help anybody who tries to run from a cop in a Chev these days."

Its handling is about as good as it has to be for a touring machine. On the straight it tracks very true with the power turned on. At cruise, under neutral acceleration, it wanders slightly and some jiggling of the wheel is necessary to keep it on course.

In cornering it is incomparably better than the '57 Chev while still retaining a very buoyant ride. It understeers just a little and must be warped into the turns—56 per cent of its weight is on the front wheels. The rear lets go very slowly and only does so under hard provocation. Steiner did the cornering for our test-curve photos and, although I doubt that Dick Tracy would have been brave enough to do it one mph faster, the car hewed to a tight line with almost no sliding . . . and with only 26 psi in the tires. This is stock Chev suspension and, good as it is, it does not represent Detroit's best. Both front and rear wheels hop unpleasantly when bumps are encountered on a curve.

The recirculating ball steering is on the heavy side but its responsiveness and lack of backlash are good. The heavy duty clutch has a competition feel. It requires more pedal pressure than most Detroit-conditioned drivers will want to put up with but the smoothness and positiveness of its bite are very satisfying. The column shift on our test car worked very smoothly but it was essential when at a standstill to engage a synchronized gear before attempting to engage low gear to avoid a fierce clashing.

The engine is surprisingly smooth and quiet but is the worst in my experience for running-on, meaning for it to continue "running" after being switched off, due to hot spots in the combustion chamber. To keep it from igniting spontaneously for long periods one of several techniques may be used. One is to put it in gear, say in high, and let the clutch out for an instant as the switch is turned off; this snubs the flywheel to a stop. The other is to open the throttle at the instant of switching off. The dousing of raw fuel seems to cool off the hot spots. As for gas mileage Steiner says, "If you play around with it, which is why you buy such a car, you get about six mpg. If you drive very conservatively you can get around 12." There are high-performance European cars of smaller displacement that are about as thirsty.

Its stock Chev brakes are miserable. One hard stop from 80 or so and you're all through or, as Steiner puts it ominously, "You're dead!" But anyone who is seriously concerned with brakes can do a lot to a Chev. Says Milne, "If I had such a car I'd do what Duntov advised us to recommend to owners of Super Sports Corvettes who plan to run them on the streets. That is, switch to 15 in. wheels with Chev racing drums. Use Chev linings on the rear but substitute the wider Pontiac or Olds shoes at the front. It's a really effective combination."

This car is an absolute ball to drive. Like any very hot car, it should be handled with respect, caution and one's very best judgment at all times. Maybe it isn't a Ferrari Superfast. With 4.11 gears it peaks at only 107 mph (in 21 seconds) and with the highest cogs available will only do about 130. But think of the \$13,400 you save.

Griff Borgeson