

THE ELECTRIC ORANGE

Wheelin' Mercury's turned-on 'rock group on wheels' is boss, but keeping out of trouble is something else!

BY THE CARS STAFF

SOUNDING more like the name of an acid rock group than a supercar, the Electric Orange Mercury Cyclone 428 CJ has the unique distinction of being one of the most "in" cars on the supercar scene, yet one of the least desirable to own from the standpoint of

the street rodder. In other words, it's a boss buggy to wail in but oh so easy to get nailed in! It looks like it's breaking the speed limit, when it's idling.

When we asked Lincoln-Mercury for a jazzy Cyclone CJ road test car we

had no idea that they would lay something like an Electric Orange (Calypso Coral) rig on us. Driving around suburban New York in this job was like setting up street eliminations at each traffic light. After a while we accepted the ritual of nailing it at every green



and then explaining it to THE MAN at the next intersection. It was almost like the test car had a homing device that zeroed us in for every *fuzzmobile* in the area. Everyone wanted to run us, even if they were in Grandma Gotz's six-cylinder grocery getter. The Electric Orange CJ is that kind of machine.

For the second time since 1964 when we street-tested the Ramchargers' candy-striped Stage III wedge car, we were forced to do almost all our testing under closed, controlled conditions. In

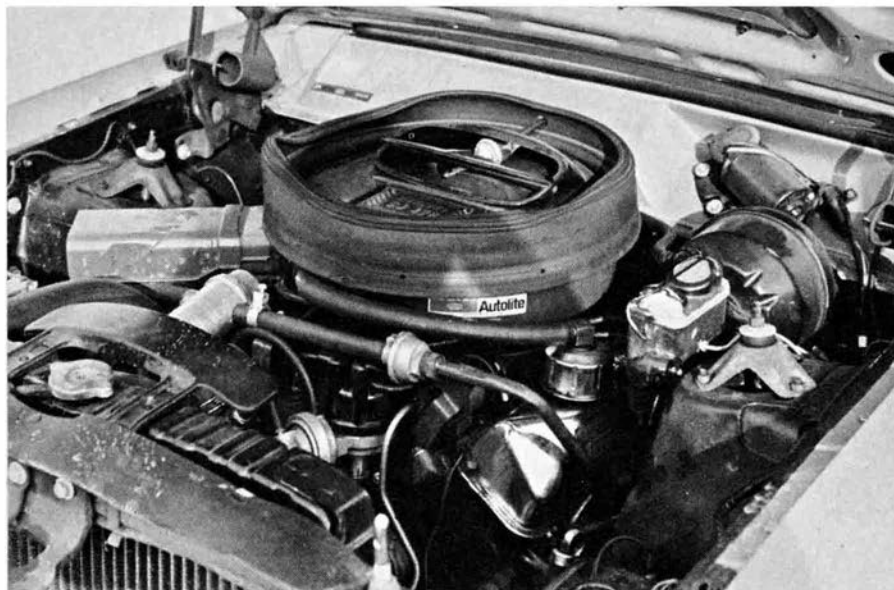
1965 we also ran into a similar situation when we street-tested the Summers Brothers' Bonneville record-holding Plymouth Hemi! We were able to cut loose a couple of times on the street, but for the most part we felt as though Big Brother (the man) was watching our every move. Now you can understand what we mean by being super "in" yet not desirable for the street rodder.

Our test car proved to be a groove to drive, both on the street and the strip. Although loaded with just about

everything you can pack into a Cyclone CJ, it didn't suffer from a thyroid condition as do many supercars when they're optioned out to the hilt. What started out as a budget priced \$3000 supercar ended up listing out at almost \$4400 thanks to such options as Ram Air, bucket seats, AM/FM Stereo, auto trans, Traction Lok, power windows, steering and disc brakes, styled steel wheels, tach and a host of minor accessory groups.

There are a few factors which immediately distinguish the Cyclone CJ from basic competitors such as the GTO, Buick Skylark, etc. One is performance—both on the street and in modified form for Super/Stock competition on the strip. It's a natural record holder and probably the most impressive wedge-chambered engine ever released for street use. The car also has a certain feeling of solidity and massiveness, yet it only spans a 116-inch wheelbase. But, we must not forget that GM builds its image supercars on a 112-inch chassis, reserving its larger chassis for four-door consumer models. But, unfortunately, there's little more if any interior space in the CJ over the GM models because of the backlight configuration that makes room for a super-wasteful package shelf, but not for passengers.

Because of our experience in other Cobra Jet 428 cars we tended to take the Cyclone's engine and its tractability



Hidden under the huge air cleaner, smog controls and PCV rests a 428 monster mill.



It doesn't take much throttle pressure to light up the Polyglas shoes. New beefy Traction Lok rear is ideal for street or strip.

for granted. The CJ is a strong-running, good-breathing, well-cammed super-wedge engine that has Super/Stock record-breaking potential. Yet, it's super docile around town, reasonably economical and idles right down there with consumer stockers. The idle speed is especially appreciated with an auto trans car. All it ever required was a flick of the switch to turn on and once it was on it stayed that way until it was turned off. No stalling via loading up at low speeds and no bucking because of a rough idle or wild cam timing.

At normal throttle speeds the 735 cfm Holley takes in warmed (stale) air for combustion. The fresh air set-up is throttle/vacuum-controlled so when you punch the throttle for more dig, a flap in the air cleaner assembly opens up to take cool fresh air in through the wide functional hood scoop. The scoop is a business-like affair that's finished off in matte black and trimmed with CJ ornamentation.

It works in very well with the wide narrow black grille treatment and raised center portion of the hood.

Performance-wise the Cyclone CJ is extremely surprising. It not only looks big and heavy for its class, but it is big and heavy. With a 116-inch wheelbase and a ready-to-go weight of 3900 pounds, you wouldn't think it would be able to cut 13.90-14.20/100-102-mph quarters with closed stock exhausts and stock tires. And, these times were recorded with 3.91 gears. With 4.30 cogs, low-pressure ripple-wall slicks and a good set of headers, the 428 CJ is capable of low 13's.

While it's impossible to utilize full throttle on acceleration with stock F-70-14 Goodyear Polyglas tires, we managed to come off the line with a minimum of wheel spin and hop. The Polyglas is the closest performance tire to an actual cheater slick and as long as you don't pump them up too hard, you have a biting pair of shoes. And, they stick damn well in the corners,

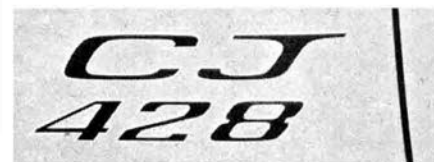
too. The Cyclone suffers from a basic understeer condition which means that you have to really let it all hang out before you can put it through the esses the way you would like to. You also have to be extremely careful of the power steering, as the wheel tends to stay in the turn position and doesn't return unless you guide it through the motions. We discovered this condition on some '67 FoMoCo products and have noticed that a majority of the big-engined power steering cars react in a similar manner. When you hang a really wild one, the steering wheel tends to stay put.

Where the Cyclone CJ really excels is on the open road. It's more of a cruising GT than a street rat supercar even though it was designed for the youth image street market. The bucket seating position is comfortable, there's luggage room to spare, and with 3.91 gears and Select Shift you have a solid compromise ride and handling car that doesn't want to quit. It's good for a

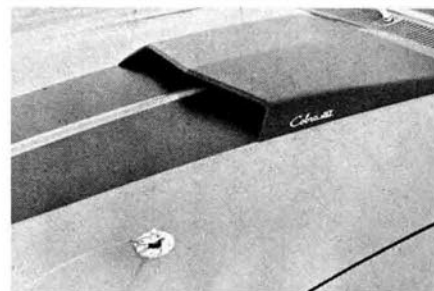
... a natural record-holder and one of the most impressive wedge-chambered engines ...



Hot Cyclone CJ is stable at high speeds and tracks well considering compromise suspension.



The factory uses bright decal lettering fore and aft to tell it like it is.



Matte-finished hood scoop is functional. Option adds \$140 to the basic 428 package.



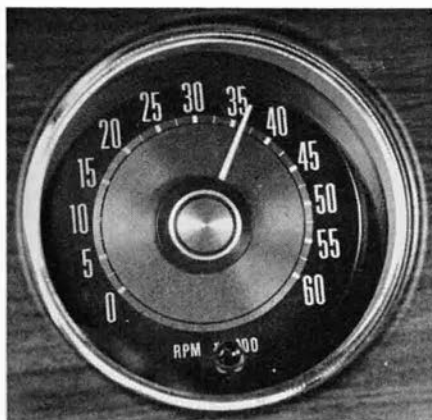
Accessory-laden Cyclone CJ proved to be a very respectable quarter-mile performer. Suspension mods are mandatory for strip blasting.

115-120 mph top-end, standing start 0 to 60 runs in the mid-6's and average fuel consumption of 12 mpg.

We found the compromise leaf spring suspension to be acceptable for all but maximum performance conditions. A stiffer set of shocks and a good set of traction bars are in order if serious running is on the plans board. For maximum performance the engine should be relieved of its air pump, PCV and other smog control hardware. In most cases the disc/drum brake combo proved to be totally adequate for the machine. When trying to panic stop it from 80 or 90 mph we experienced some rear wheel lockup which is pretty standard across the board today in disc/drum cars. However, we have never had to apply the brakes at these speeds under normal conditions, so we would rate the brakes entirely adequate.

All in all we really liked the car. We found the auto trans and 3.91 Traction Lok rear to be an almost perfect all-around powertrain combination and the Polyglas tires to be the only way to go. With the right tires and headers we feel the 4.30 gear setup to be far more ideal for serious use. Other than the steering wheel which tended to stay put on turns and some normal rattles, we really grooved on our Electric

(Continued on Page 76)



For all-around street performance, the auto trans should be shifted at 3500-4000 rpm.



Vacuum-controlled flap lets in cool fresh air for max perf when throttle is floored.

1969 MERCURY CYCLONE CJ SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Type.....	OHV V-8
Displacement.....	428 cubic inches
Compression Ratio.....	10.50-to-1
Carburetion.....	735 CFM Holley
Camshaft.....	High-lift hydraulic
Horsepower.....	335 @ 5600 rpm
Torque.....	440 foot/pounds @ 3400
Exhaust.....	Dual headers, dual pipes
Ignition.....	Stock, vacuum advance

TRANSMISSION

Type.....	Three-speed automatic
Make.....	Ford Motor Company

REAR END

Type.....	Locking differential, 9-inch ring gear
Ratio.....	3.91-to-1

BRAKES

Type.....	11-inch front discs, 10-inch rear drums, Power
Area.....	330 square inches

SUSPENSION

Front.....	GT independent high rate coil springs, HD shocks
Rear.....	GT high rate leaf springs, HD shocks
Steering.....	Power assisted
Overall Ratio.....	20-to-1

GENERAL

List Price.....	N/A
Price As Tested.....	\$4400
Weight.....	3900 pounds
Wheelbase.....	116 inches
Overall Length.....	203.2 inches
Tire Size.....	Goodyear Polyglas

PERFORMANCE

0 to 30 mph.....	2.8 seconds
0 to 60 mph.....	6.6 seconds
Standing ¼ mile.....	101 mph
Elapsed Time.....	14.05 seconds
Top Speed.....	120 mph
Fuel Consumption.....	12 mpg (Sunoco 260)

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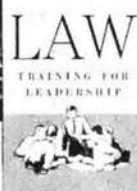
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HEAD continued

and are the keys to the unequaled flow of these heads. The valves are reshaped and the heads flow-calibrated. The average time spent on a set of "Velocitor" heads is approximately 35 hours. Chevrolet heads cost \$320.

Anyone interested in going this route should contact Warren Brownfield directly at Air Flow Research, 8217 Lankershim Unit 32-MLS, North Hollywood, California 91605

MERCURY continued

Orange monster. The hood pins, hood scoop, decal lettering, white-lettered Goodyear tires mounted on the styled steel wheels and the Mach I mirrors is all the gilding the basic model needs to give it instant status. The Electric Orange paint is definitely out of sight,

but basic black is the color to go with if you're looking for a dynamite street racer.

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