

FORD



*Fewer inches on the outside but more under the hood
(390, in fact) are Ford's new dimensions for 1961*

by Bob Russo

BILLING THE 1961 FORD as the car that takes care of itself—with self-adjusting brakes, 4000 miles between oil changes and 30,000 miles without a lube job—has already given the Ford Motor Co. a good chunk of the low-price market and will continue to do so during the current car year. But, make no mistake about it, when all is said and done, *performance* will be the big factor in 1961 Ford sales.

The latter isn't to imply that grandmothers will be buying the hot options and blasting away from stop signs in a trail of smoke and rubber. It means, simply, that performance—such as Ford is making available with its 390-cubic-inch engine option—will be important to the Ford exponent whether he owns the hot mill or the smaller 292-cubic-inch job. And the plum in the pudding is that Ford need not shout about it. Drag strip enthusiasts across the nation will do

the job—far better, perhaps, than even the highest-powered publicity agent.

To begin at the beginning—and not to overlook the many engineering and styling features of the new Ford before elaborating more fully on performance and performance options—there is this to say about the '61: Many design features from 1960 have been retained, but with sufficient changes to make this Ford's most attractive car in two years.

Front and rear end treatment is distinctive and different, and gives the car more of a "Ford look" than its predecessor. From the indented horizontal grille, massive wrap-around bumper and dual headlights to the subdued rear fins and circular tail lights, the car is clean, sleek, and crisp. Narrower by two inches and shorter by four inches than the



Ford Galaxie Road Test

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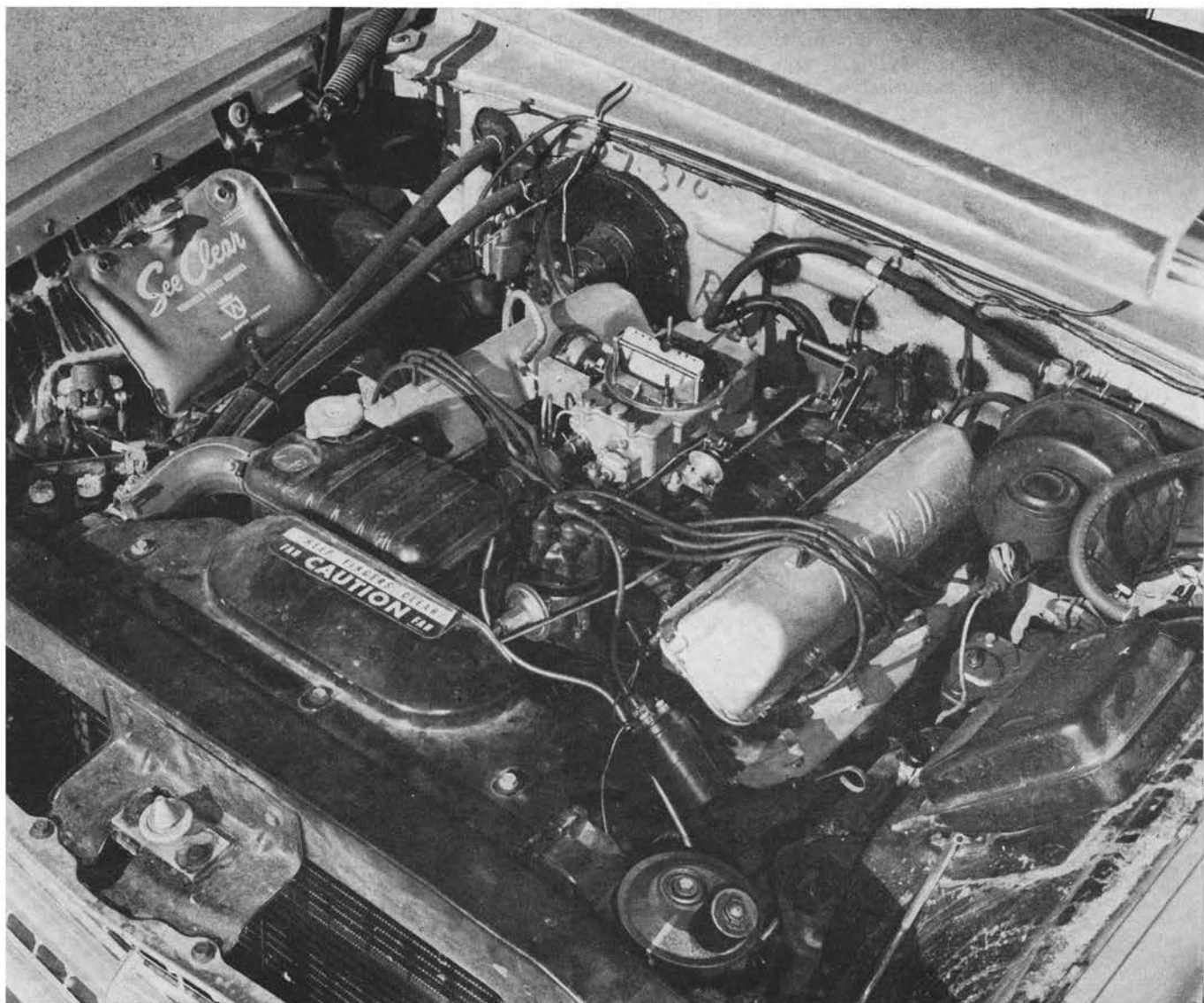
1960, the entire car is better proportioned. Wheelbase and interior dimensions remain unchanged, and the latter still offers wide and roomy comfort.

Seating arrangements for driver and passengers have been changed slightly for a more comfortable ride. These improvements include tilting the seats back at 23 degrees and cushioning them with padding that is even throughout, instead of spreading it thin in places. In addition, trunk space has been increased to go along with 1961 car trends. The new Ford offers a wide (four-foot) trunk opening with up to 30.5 cubic feet of space. To augment this, the trunk lock has been placed atop the lid within easy reach, rather than hiding it down under the lid somewhere. One minor drawback here is the spring-loaded lock cover. For a person loaded down with parcels, sliding the cover back to insert the key is something of a problem.

Suspension has been improved for a smoother, quieter ride, and steering (manual) is a bit easier than it was on the '60 models. Ford's ball-joint front suspension is still used but with this important refinement: bushings and seals are made from teflon and nylon, both newly developed wonder materials for this sort of usage, and the ball-joints are packed at the factory with a special molybdenum-disulfide compounded grease. This is the story behind those Ford commercials you've been hearing about 30,000 miles without a chassis lube.

Brakes should be mentioned here briefly and a bit more extensively later on. The Ford has an increased lining area this year, from 191 square inches to 212. Cast iron drums are again used, without change from the 1960 size.

The car we tested was a Galaxie hardtop with 2615 miles on it when the runs began. The engine is one of Ford's big options for '61 — the 390-cubic-inch, 300-hp V-8. Five other options are available — the 135-hp Mileage Maker Six; the 292-cubic-inch V-8, rated at 175 hp; the 352-cubic-inch V-8 touting 220 hp; the 390 Police Special rated at 330 hp; and the hot one, a 390-cubic-inch V-8 similar to the



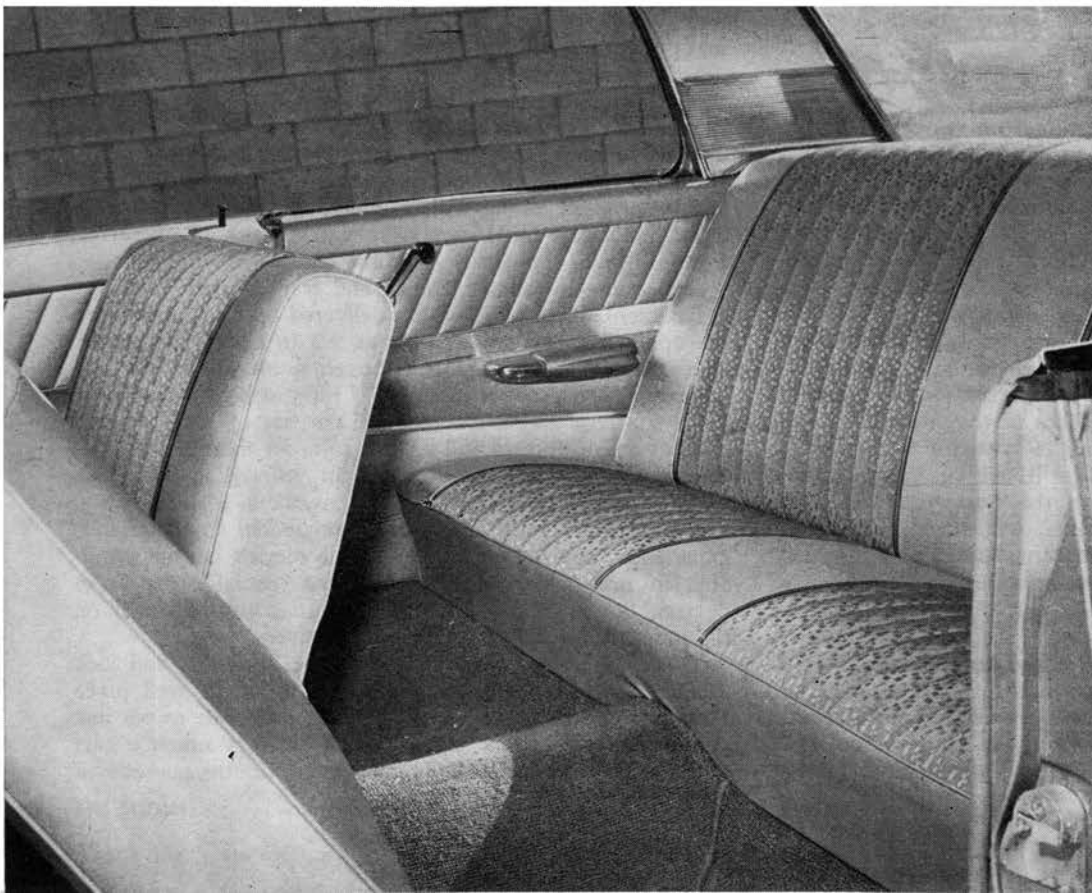
BIG 390-CUBIC-INCH ENGINE, RATED AT 300 HORSEPOWER, EMPLOYS FOUR-BARREL CARBURETOR — SHOWN HERE WITH AIR CLEANER OFF.

engine in our test car but rated at a sizzling 375 hp. A larger bore and slightly longer stroke, the crank, pistons, rods, heads, intake and ignition system make this goer an entirely different mill, and *the one* that will be battling the hot Chevys and Plymouths at the drag strips this year.

Undoubtedly, the 375-hp mill will represent only a small percentage of overall Ford sales for '61, but its capabilities — and the performance of the 300-hp engine we tested — will have a stimulating effect on final sales figures.

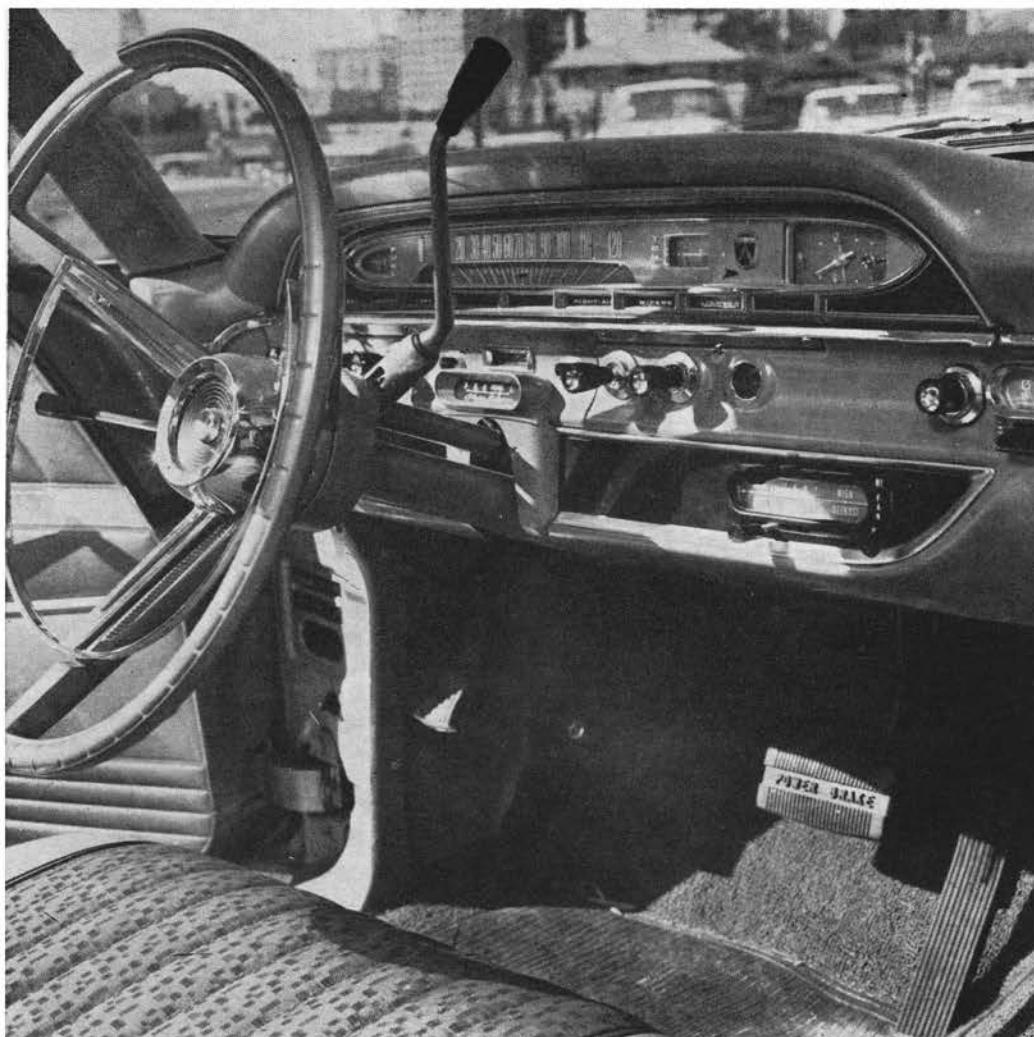
Our test car was equipped with Cruise-O-Matic drive, and pulled a 2.91 rear axle ratio which made a difference in initial take-off, but once underway the big engine came on strong. It covered the quarter-mile in 16.5 seconds at a speed of 79 mph and was still picking up rpm's *fast* when we flashed across the line. It took only 9.9 seconds to accelerate from zero to 60 mph. By way of comparison, the smaller 292-cubic-inch model takes 16.4 ticks of the watch to reach 60 mph from a standing start. *continued*

Brake test at 30 mph resulted in slight front-end dive but car remained straight. Stopping distance here was 34 feet.



Galaxie test car shows some distinctive styling changes in '61 Ford. Wheelbase is same as in '60, but car is shorter and narrower on the outside.

Roomy interior dimensions are same as in '60, seating angle has been changed for a more comfortable driving, riding position in '61 model.



Instrument and dash panel is thoughtfully designed, with contoured hood to eliminate glare. Steering wheel is well positioned to augment seating arrangement for comfort.

Ford Galaxie Road Test

continued

The fact that the 300-hp job comes on strong at the top end was evident in highway driving. Wherever there was occasion for a quick burst of speed for passing, our test car had it, with neck-snapping results. Although the high gear ratio affected low-end performance, zero to 30 mph in 3.8 seconds is not to be coughed at. It can, however, be improved still further through use of the many gear ratio options made available by Ford again this year.

Handling in the '61 Ford has been greatly improved over previous models. As mentioned, steering is easier and a bit quicker, and there seems to be more stability, not only in the turns but on straight stretches of rough road. In this department, Ford definitely seems to have the nod over its biggest competitor, Chevrolet, and it will be interesting to see how handling, coupled with the husky engines both manufacturers have made available, will affect track competition at such places as Daytona Beach, Darlington, Charlotte and on the smaller, one-mile dirt tracks.

Brakes, which we mentioned earlier, were somewhat disappointing, considering the increased lining area. We experienced considerable fade. This happened under constant hard usage to be sure, but the fade seemed to come sooner and last longer than in competing makes. For stopping distances, it took 34 feet to bring the car to a halt at 30 mph, and 121 feet — mostly sliding slightly sideways — to stop it from 60

mph. These were standard brakes, and the answer might be in optional, heavy-duty units which can be ordered from dealers along with heavy-duty shocks. Most dealers will and should recommend them to those who buy bigger engines.

As usual, Ford has a wide range of accessories and other options to keep buyers happy in 1961. Axle ratios ranging from the 2.91 used on our test car to 3.10, 3.56 and 3.89 can be ordered, along with a choice of transmissions. The latter includes manual stick shift with or without overdrive, Ford-O-Matic and Cruise-O-Matic.

Depending on engine choice and transmission, economy is flexible. Our 300-hp test car delivered up to 15.5 mpg on the open highway and as little as 9.3 in heavy city traffic. The 292-cubic-inch engine, although a bit milder on performance, will produce close to 17 mpg in highway driving.

As for cost and availability of the hot options, we can say this much. Buyers will be able to order their car without the long delay that was common in years past. The 390-cubic-inch, 300-hp option is readily available at dealers, and at a cost substantially lower than anticipated from previous experience. The hotter, 375-hp engine models became available in mid-December. They require special order from dealers, but an increase in production is cutting down on the time needed between order and delivery.

There have been predictions that the high cost and lack of easy availability of these hot options might well place Ford behind in the 1961 performance race, but as we just pointed out, it appears that Ford will be very much a part of these interesting developments as the months go by. •

FORD GALAXIE

2-door hardtop

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: Radio, heater, whitewalls

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 2615 miles

PERFORMANCE

Acceleration (2 aboard)

0-30 mph	3.8 secs.
0-45 mph	6.4
0-60 mph	9.9

Standing start ¼-mile 16.6 secs. and 79 mph

Speeds in gears @ 4500 rpm

1st	28 mph	2nd	78 mph
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Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	30	45	50	60	70	80
Weston electric speedometer	30	45	49	58	68	77

Miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear (Tires 8.00 x 14)22 mph

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 34 ft.
from 60 mph, 121 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv V-8
Bore: 4.05 ins. Stroke: 3.78 ins.
Displacement: 390 cubic inches
Compression ratio: 9.6:1
Horsepower: 300 @ 4600 rpm
Ignition: 12-volt battery/coil

Gearbox

Three-speed Cruise-O-Matic

Driveshaft

Open

Differential

Hypoid with straddle-mount pinion
Standard ratio 2.91:1

Wheels and Tires

Pressed steel wheels
Tubeless tires

Suspension

Front: Ball-joint with rubber-bushed stabilizer
Rear: Gentle-rate leaf springs

Brakes

Self-adjusting
Front and rear: 11 inches

Body and Frame

Box section frame with inner channel
Wheelbase 119 ins.
Track, front 61 ins., rear 60 ins.
Overall length 210 ins.
Dry weight 3723 lbs.



Traction, under full power, is exceptionally good. For more bite, the Equa-Lock differential is offered as added option.



New Ford offers 30.5 cubic feet of trunk space, with a lid measuring four feet wide. Space is flat and unobstructed.

Panic stops from 60 mph used up 121 feet of test course. A considerable amount of brake fade was evident on test car.

