

**S**ELECTING A TEST CAR from the Dart line-up offers a choice of three series and seven different body styles — or (with the various engine options) a total of 23 individual versions. We decided on the hottest, most luxurious model — to test the ultimate in the Dart's styling, convenience and performance departments.

Our Phoenix two-door hardtop, glamour car of the Dart line, was equipped with the king-sized, 383-cubic-inch, ram-induction engine, six-way power seat, power steering, power brakes, power windows, three-speed Torqueflite transmission, white-wall tires, tinted glass, Astrophonic radio, full interior accessory pack (filling *all* the blank spots in the dash panel), rubber bumper guards, closed crankcase vent, deluxe steering wheel and a fire-engine red paint job.

The power and torque supplied by the 330-hp, ram-tuned engine is a revelation. *It wants to go.* It shoves its big muscles at you the instant you flip the starting key. We soon discovered that if you don't have your foot on the brake before pushing the DRIVE button, the car will move right out at idling speed, without the benefit of the throttle. You have to *learn* to live with this 383-cubic-inch bear. If winning traffic light drags has been a secret ambition, this machine will place you in contention. Zero to 30 mph is 3.1 seconds, 0-45 is 5.1, 0-60 is 7.9, and the standing quarter-mile is gobbled up in 16 seconds flat, at 86 mph.

The Dart has become famous for its rattle-free ride and soundproofing, but when the ram-tuned engine is floored, the roar of those two four-barrel carburetors comes through the soundproofing like a lead hound in full bay. At each shift of the Torqueflite transmission, the tires tweak, and the passengers are shoved back into their seats. Along with this exhilarating performance comes the price. Not only the basic purchasing price, but the cost per mile. This finely tuned mill digests only premium fuel, and drinks it

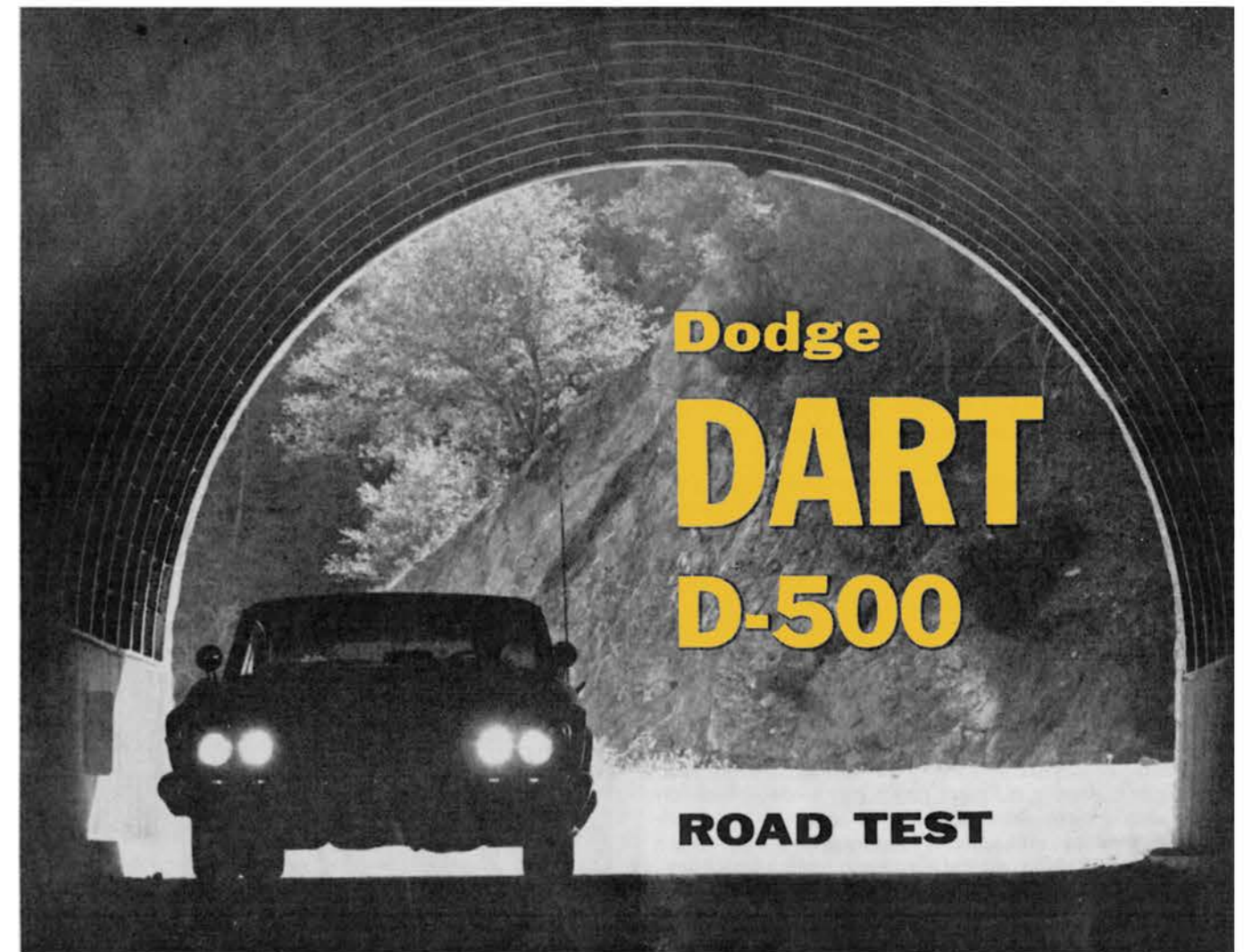
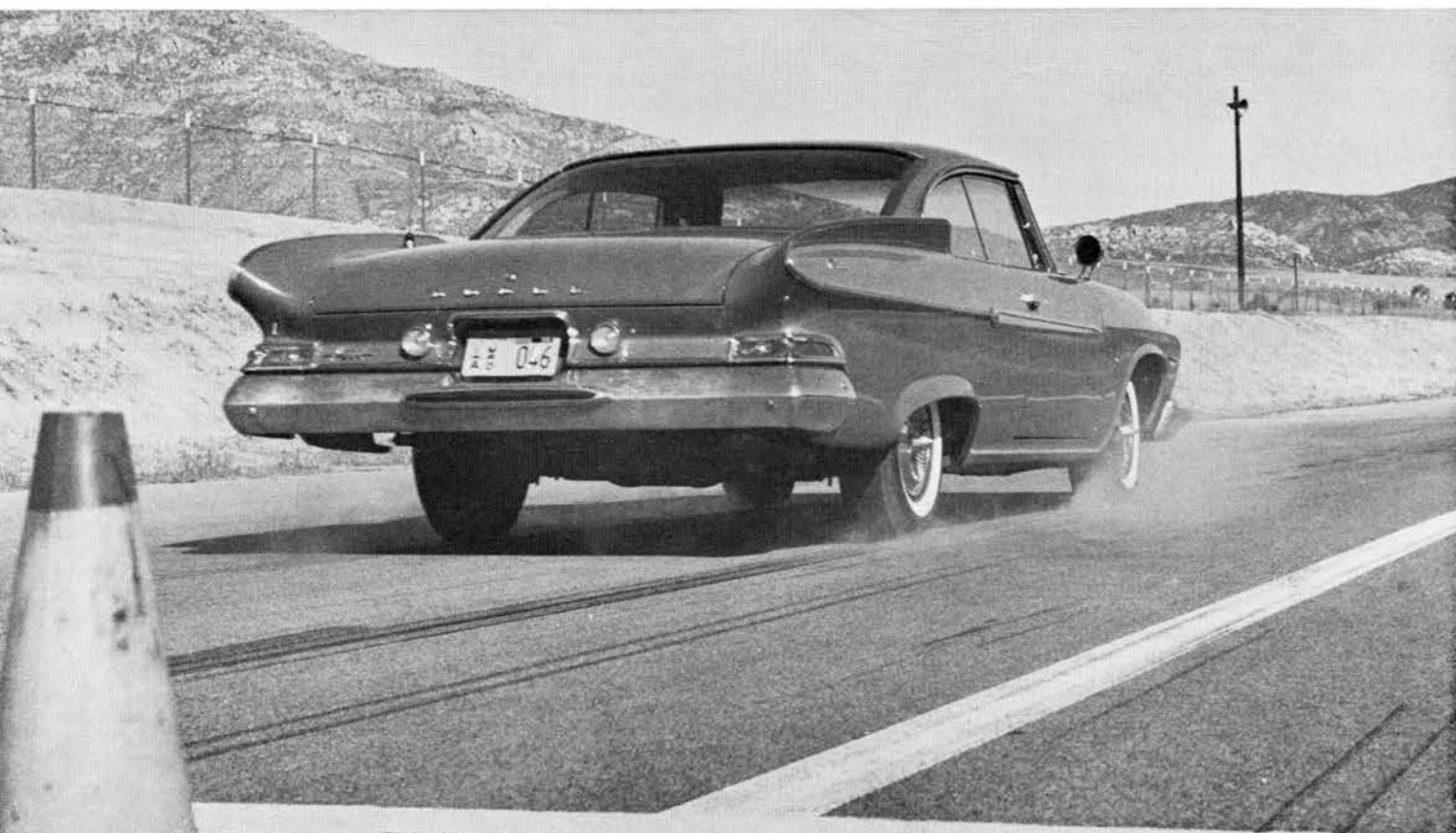
in direct proportion to the weight of the driver's foot. *If* you can stay off the loud pedal, the car can be cruised in normal freeway traffic at legal speeds and can deliver from 13 to 14 mpg. In 376.4 miles of Los Angeles traffic, we averaged 10.3 mpg. Along with the ram induction, which uses long, "tuned" manifold branches to force the fuel mixture into the engine under acceleration, is a 10:1 compression ratio, dual exhausts, special camshaft and valve spring dampers.

Last year's Dart styling was perhaps the best since Chrysler Corporation began its fin movement in 1955. The 1961 Dart marks the beginning of something new in fin treatments, with the fins tapering rearward, ending in a sharp reverse curve — creating a reverse fin effect on the rear quarter panels. Front-end styling can be described as a study in concave surfaces enclosing a nicely designed grille. The dual headlights have been lowered and recessed into the grille, with the parking lights carried in nacelles built into the bumper.

The only jarring notes in the new design come when the car is viewed from directly behind, where the sculptured fins thicken and lose their interest, and over the front wheels, where the hard highlight crease dissolves into humps, making the car look higher and wider than it actually is. Retained from last year are the airy, sweeping cabin and roof lines.

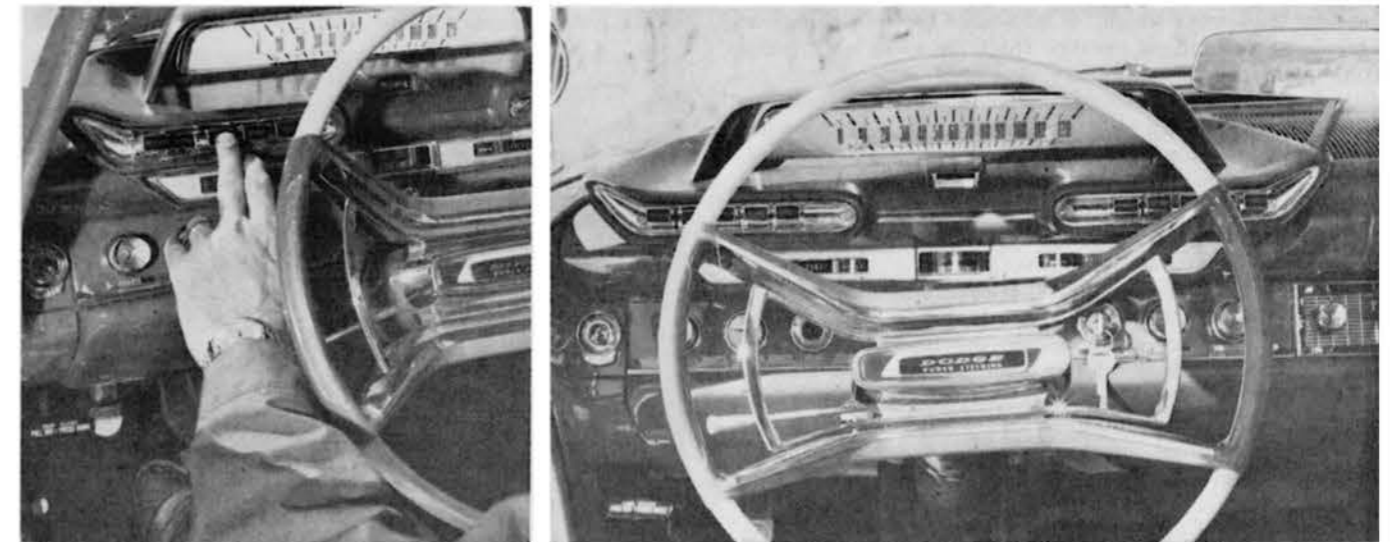
Interior styling has also been completely redone, but the basic location of all components is the same. Instrumentation has been arranged in rows, all within the view and reach of the driver. Rising from the top of the dash panel is an accurate, easy-to-read horizontal speedometer. In the daytime it is backlit by the sun, and at night is illuminated from below with soft, glare-free light. To the right of this is a wide rearview mirror, which is dash-mounted alongside

*Dodge Dart, with its 330-hp ram-tuned engine and luxury extras,*



*gives the "low-priced-three" hot competition*

*by Bob Rolofson*



*Familiarity with the Dart's pushbutton transmission and its matching heater control buttons leads to the "touch typing" sys-*

*tem. Both rear view mirrors are in line with the speedometer, allowing the driver a backward view in one movement of the eye.*

*Panic stop from 60 mph brings the Dodge Dart to an abrupt and straight-line halt. Front end dive is very slight — one advantage of the car's torsion bar front suspension.*

April, 1961

## Dart Road Test

*continued*

(and level with) the hooded speedometer. This arrangement lets the driver view the road ahead, the speedometer, and the road behind, in one slight movement of the eye. Added to this is an optional outside rearview mirror (adjustable from the dash), giving the driver a chance to check the left lane before pulling out to pass.

New this year is a foot pedal parking brake, with a longer, lower pedal, and a safety release lever, which must be pulled before it can be pushed down to release the brake. Driver vision is excellent through almost 360 degrees, with very little distortion in the huge front and rear windows. When driving in the rain, however, this large expanse of glass is cut to the sweep of the windshield wipers, and one may wish there were an optional set of rear window wipers to sweep that area clear.

It goes without saying that it is a convenience to push buttons instead of crawling over seats to roll up windows. But if we were forced to make a choice between power windows and Dodge's power seat, we'd take the seat. On long test drives the driving was shared with another tester of shorter stature. Usually it is bothersome to manually re-adjust the seating positions. With the power seat it takes only seconds, and requires only a flick of the wrist. Then, too, it is helpful to change the rake of the seatback occasionally, easing the strain of sitting in one position mile after mile.

Coupled with the *go* of the powerful V-8 engine are the remarkable handling characteristics provided by Chrysler's combination of adjustable torsion bar springs in front, and semi-elliptic springs in the rear. This happy wedding between a soft and a stable ride allows the driver to approach sports car handling, especially in mountainous terrain where handling counts. After testing so many foreign machines, the Dart at first appears to be *huge*, but after a few miles it seems to grow smaller because of its excellent driver vision, good suspension, quick and positive power steering (3½ turns lock-to-lock), and the urge of the engine.

All Chrysler cars now have an alternator—the compact, lightweight unit which generates high-energy alternating current and rectifies it to direct current with silicon diodes. The alternator saves weight, is lubricated for life, eliminates a regulator and circuit breaker from the electrical system, prohibits deep cycling (battery drainage), and charges the battery while the car is idling. A recent test of this unit was made under the sharp eyes of officials from USAC, when Mary Davis, two-time champion of the Mobilgas Economy Run, drove an alternator-equipped car from Los Angeles to Phoenix *without a battery in the car*. This 394-mile bit of derring-do proved the potential value and emergency possibilities of an alternator.

After two delightful weeks of cruising with the Dart, it was readily apparent why it is the first standard-sized car in 30 years to successfully invade the highly competitive low-priced field. Dodge sales in 1960 were up 107 percent over the previous year, and 85 percent of those 1960 sales were Darts. Our advice to buyers interested in this price and size group is to drive competitive makes around the block, then try the Dart. The difference is impressive. •

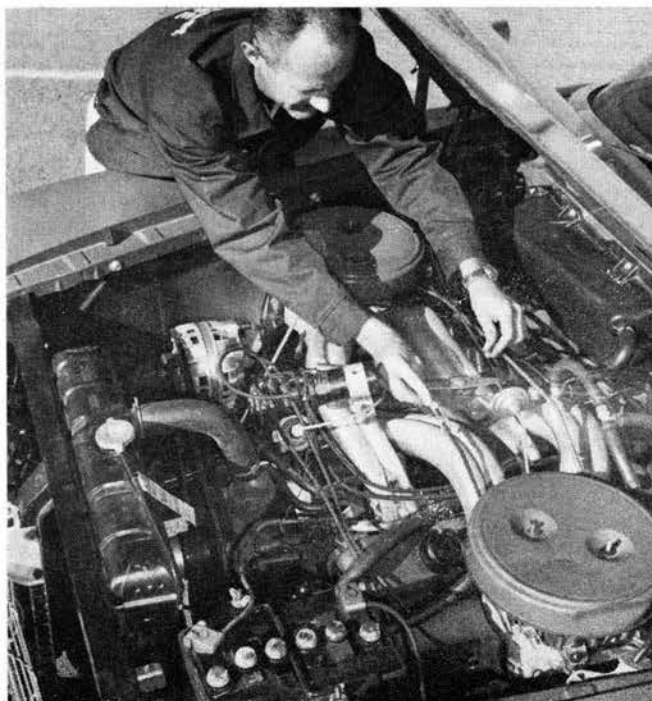
*Ram-tuned engine is a jungle of vital parts, making general accessibility poor. Spark plugs are below exhaust manifolds.*



*With a flick of a switch, the electrically powered seat tilts itself backward or forward, up or down, and adjusts for rake.*



*Maneuverability and handling come into their own when the Dart strikes out on country roads. The ride is stable and smooth.*





## DODGE DART PHOENIX

2-door hardtop

**OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED:** Radio, heater, power steering, power brakes, power windows, power seat, whitewall tires

**ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST:** 2267.6 miles

### PERFORMANCE

#### Acceleration (2 aboard)

0-30 mph .....	3.1 secs.
0-45 mph .....	5.1
0-60 mph .....	7.9

Standing start ¼-mile 16 secs. and 86 mph

#### Speeds in gears

1st .....	36 mph @ 4000 rpm
2nd .....	68 mph @ 4500 rpm

#### Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading .....	30	46	51	61	72	84
Weston electric speedometer .....	30	45	50	60	70	80

Miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear (Tires 7.50 x 14) .....

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 50 ft.; from 60 mph, 120 ft.

### SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

#### Engine

Ohv V-8, dual four-barrel carburetors with ram-tube induction  
 Bore: 4.25 ins. Stroke: 3.38 ins.  
 Displacement: 383 cubic inches  
 Compression ratio: 10:1  
 Horsepower: 330 @ 4800 rpm  
 Ignition: 12-volt, battery/coil

#### Gearbox

Three-speed Torqueflite automatic with torque converter

#### Driveshaft

Open

#### Differential

Sure-Grip differential  
 Standard ratio 3.23:1

#### Wheels and tires

Pressed steel safety rims,  
 7.50 x 14 tires

#### Suspension

Front: Independent with torsion bars, unequal A-frame and lower arm, tubular shocks

Rear: Solid axle, outboard longitudinal leaf springs, tubular shocks

#### Brakes

Drums on all 4 wheels, total-contact molded linings  
 Front and rear: 11 in. diameter with 2 in. lining width

#### Body and Frame

Unibody, integral welded construction  
 Wheelbase 118 ins.  
 Track, front 61.5 ins., rear 60.2 ins.  
 Overall length 209.4 ins.  
 Dry weight 3700 lbs.

