CAR LIFE ROAD TEST

PLYMOUTH SAVOY V-8

Plymouth unveils some surprises for 1962 with its lightened, re-styled series. Not only is the performance exceptional, the economy is good and the concept refreshing.

ONCE A YEAR we get a chance to test one or two cars without fear of getting a citation for bravery in line of duty. In this case the Plymouth Division of Chrysler Corp. turned up a 1962 V-8 and let us have it for a day. There was a catch to it, of course: "Don't go off the proving grounds—announcement day is more than a month away."

This is the all-new-for-'62 body, on a reasonable and sensible wheelbase of 116 in., and when we first saw it we thought it was a close-coupled coupe, but the stylists had fooled us completely. The interiors are even roomier than before, especially in the important matter of leg and head room for 6-footers.

Mechanically the car is much the same as last year, with the 145 bhp, 225-cu. in. 6-cyl. engine as standard equipment. Our test car had the lowest priced V-8 engine option and nothing else. In brief, this was a standard Plymouth with stick shift, and the 318-cu. in. V-8 engine having a single dual-barrel carburetor. However, we must point out, also, that the transmission was a 1961 model, not a 1962; for 1962 there will be a slight change in transmission ratios. This will not affect the acceleration data by more than a tenth of a second or so. (See data

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panel for ratios—the 1962 first gear will be 2.12 and 2nd gear will be 1.43:1.)

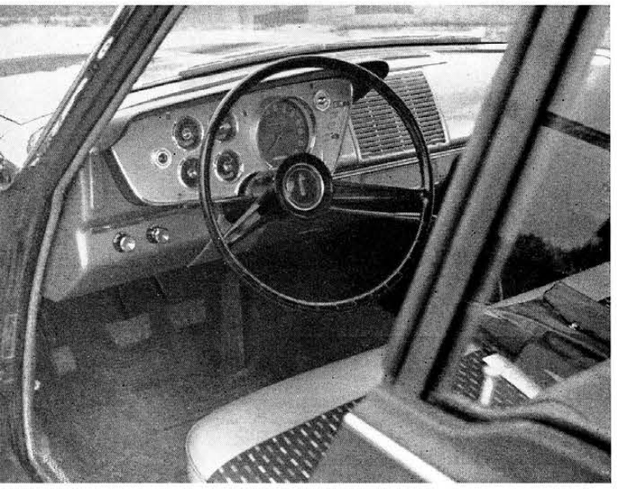
Driving a stick-shift car again was really fun, mostly because it turned out to be a bomb—the most performance for the least money that we know of. The new concentric column shift works beautifully and the way the car rips up to over 40 in low, or 75 in 2nd, has to be experienced to be believed.

Everything about the car feels right. The controls are light; the clutch (and wheelspin) is easy to control; the steering is very light, though a little slow for winding roads. The engine is smooth and quiet, yet when you stomp on the throttle the car takes off with a mild power roar and a rush so quick that 0 to 60 mph (corrected) can be had in a consistent 10.5 sec. Perhaps more impressive, 0 to 100 honest mph (103 indicated) takes less than 30 sec. This is excellent time for a mild 230-bhp powerplant. The recipe is, however, relatively simple; use a big displacement engine for high torque, turn it slowly (2510 revolutions/mile), mix in well-chosen gear ratios and a lightweight chassis.

forward there is, theoretically at least, more understeer than before. We can't say that it was noticeably different but there is too much of it and on winding roads without the much quicker power-steering, driving can get to be a chore. On the other hand, there is very little roll in a corner and 56% of the car's weight on the front tires at least insures excellent high speed straight-ahead stability, and without tailfins, too.

The 1962 brakes are new and have 1-in. smaller drums. They feel about the same as last year and pulled us up after two successive 0–103 mph tests (in opposite directions on a 2-mile straight) with no sign of requiring a higher pedal pressure (and fade).

Fuel economy should turn out to be exceptional, but we didn't measure this. With the small carburetor and lower weight of the 1962 car, Plymouth engineers tell us fuel consumption is reduced by as much as 10%. We would say that a careful driver could get 20 mpg on the road but most owners should expect 16 to 18 mpg—which is remarkable enough for a car of this performance potential. Economy-minded buyers can specify the 2.93 axle ratio and lose only a little in high-gear crawling ability; but if you want to try for super-economy, there is a ratio of 2.76:1 available.



Our seat-of-the-pants substitute, the Tapley meter, spun right off its rocker in low gear, and even in high it hit 315 lb./ton at 51 mph—indicative of very brisk acceleration even at low speeds. Now, we know that you can order a Plymouth with the 305-bhp, 361-cu.-in. engine, but when do you need to get from 0 to 60 mph in 3 sec. less time? One of our crew (obviously a 4-barrel man) looked at the tiny carburetor and said it was impossible—"No car can perform that well with so little carburetor area." But it does, and as a matter of fact we strongly suspect that it's the small carburetor that is responsible for the terrific torque, even at 10 mph in high gear. Actually this combination would even be ideal for a lazy never-shift-till-it-stalls type of driver. You can start in 2nd with no strain, pop it into high at 10 or 15 mph and drive it like an automatic (well, almost).

The ride is very satisfactory: not as soft as some of the bigger cars but one that seems to hold the car firmly to the road when traveling fast over difficult terrain. Most drivers would prefer this car for cross-country driving to one of those which feature a marshmallow ride and seem to float most of the time. With the engine 4 in. farther

We estimate the top speed at 110 mph. This is undoubtedly accurate because that velocity requires 4600 rpm from the engine—the engine won't run any faster because of hydraulic lifter pump-up.

Our crew praised the sensible reduction in glass area (it was a very hot, sunny day) and the lack of distortion in the new windshield which doesn't "wrap" nearly as much as formerly. One adverse comment was that the waistline of the body was too high for comfortable arm-resting and gave a feeling of sitting down too low. This kind of criticism depends a lot on what each individual is used to, in his own car.

One tremendous improvement noted inside the car was the new, functional-looking instrument panel. The speedometer is a mammoth round dial with easy-to-read markings and there are no less than four smaller gauges: water temp, fuel, clock and ammeter. This last is labeled "Alternator," and though the needle seldom moves, it gives a quantitative indication of what is going on.

Summed up, it seems to us that Plymouth has done an outstanding job of improving its breadwinner. Particularly commendable is the very worthwhile weight reduc-

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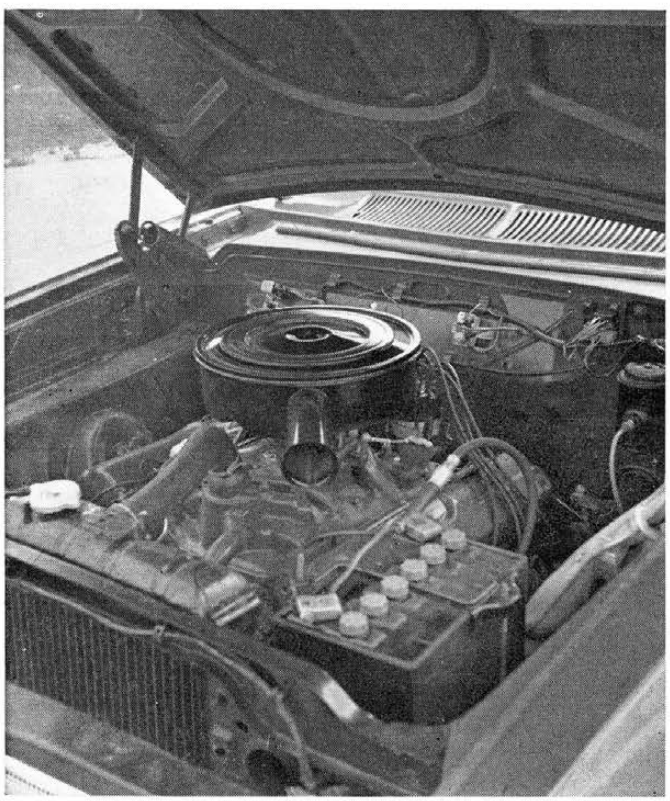
tion, of more than 250 lb., achieved with absolutely no sacrifice in ride or roadability, but with improved performance and economy. In effect, one might say that the weight saving has been split down the middle, half of it for better performance, the other half for improved economy.

All automotive design is supposed to be a compromise but we find no minus factors and many pluses in the new Plymouth. And if you want all that weight-saving to apply toward better mpg, order the economy 2.76:1 axle; if you want performance, order a 3.55 axle ratio. In brief, we think Plymouth has made the right changes, the right compromises, for 1962. ■



CAR LIFE ROAD TEST

PLYMOUTH V-8

SPECIFICATIONS

List price	n.a.
Price, as tested	n.a.
Curb weight, lb	3335
Test weight	3640
distribution, %	56/44
Tire size	7.00-14
Tire capacity, lb	4280
Brake lining area	194.2
Engine type	V-8, ohv
Bore & stroke	3.91 x 3.31
Displacement, cc	5213
cu in	318
Compression ratio	9.00
Bhp @ rpm	230 @ 4400
equivalent mph	105
Torque, lb-ft	340 @ 2400
equivalent mph	57.4

GEAR RATIOS

4th ( ), overall	
3rd (1.00)	3.23
2nd (1.49)	4.81
1st (2.55)	8.24

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in	116.0
Tread, f and r	59.4/57.5
Over-all length, in	202
width	75.4
height	54.0
equivalent vol, cu ft	475
Frontal area, sq ft	22.6
Ground clearance, in	5.0
Steering ratio, o/a	29.0
turns, lock to lock	5.3
turning circle, ft	40.3
Hip room, front	60.8
Hip room, rear	61.0
Pedal to seat back, max	41.0
Floor to ground	n.a.
Luggage vol, cu ft	27.2

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (est), mph	110
best timed run	n.a.
3rd ( )	
2nd (4600)	74
1st (4600)	43

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range, mpg	n.a.

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec	3.6
0-40	5.1
0-50	7.7
0-60	10.5
0-70	14.1
0-80	18.5
0-100	29.0
Standing ¼ mile	17.2
speed at end	77

PULLING POWER

3rd, lb/ton @ mph	315 @ 51
2nd	480 @ 39
1st	off scale
Total drag at 60 mph, lb	147

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual	31.0
60 mph	58.5
90 mph	86.0

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/hp (test wt)	15.8
Cu ft/ton mile	127
Mph/1000 rpm	23.9
Engine revs/mile	2510
Piston travel, ft/mile	1385
Car Life wear index	34.8

ACCELERATION & COASTING