



PLYMOUTH SAVOY ROAD TEST

Frill-free Savoy offers a lot for the money, but the average buyer usually demands (and pays) more

THIS ROAD TEST is in answer to several letters we've received lately taking us to task for testing some of the cars we do. These readers feel that the average MT reader and car buyer isn't interested in top-of-the-line models or those close to them. Neither are they interested in power accessories or performance engines. What they're interested in, they say, are good, low-cost economy cars that offer only basic transportation. In other words, these readers feel we should limit our tests to only the basic models offered by each manufacturer. This reasoning sounds valid enough on the surface, but in going a little deeper, we see some very good reasons for *not* limiting our tests.

First and most important are the results of several reader surveys that told us quite a few things about Average Reader. The most important thing about him is that he's primarily an enthusiast. He's interested in all cars and everything about them. He doesn't limit himself to reading only about the cars he might buy.

Average Reader is also a pretty intelligent guy. He knows that basically the only differences between the least and most expensive models in a given line are in the amount of trim and appointments on each. In the important areas of chassis, body construction, suspension, and power trains, there aren't any differences. So regardless of whether a test car's equipped with all available power accessories or not, it's still put together the same way, rides, handles, and performs very nearly the same as lower-priced models.

Other things that determine our choice of test cars are the sales reports and surveys released by the various factories. These are also very good indications of what Average Reader is really interested in. A good example is the latest release from Plymouth. The low-cost Savoy is accounting for 24.8 per cent of total Plymouth sales. The slightly higher-priced Belvedere gets 32.4 per cent. The

(OPPOSITE) Handling attributes remain the same whether the Plymouth is a low-priced model or top-line. All chassis are same. **(TOP)** Basic suspension has a high degree of roll stiffness, which allows very little lean in corners, gives excellent control. **(LEFT)** Test car was pleasure to drive on tight, twisty mountain roads like these. It was light, responsive, stable, and quick.





Fury, which is the next-to-highest-priced model, has grabbed a 32.2 per cent share, while the top-rated Sport Fury accounts for the remaining 10.6 per cent chunk.

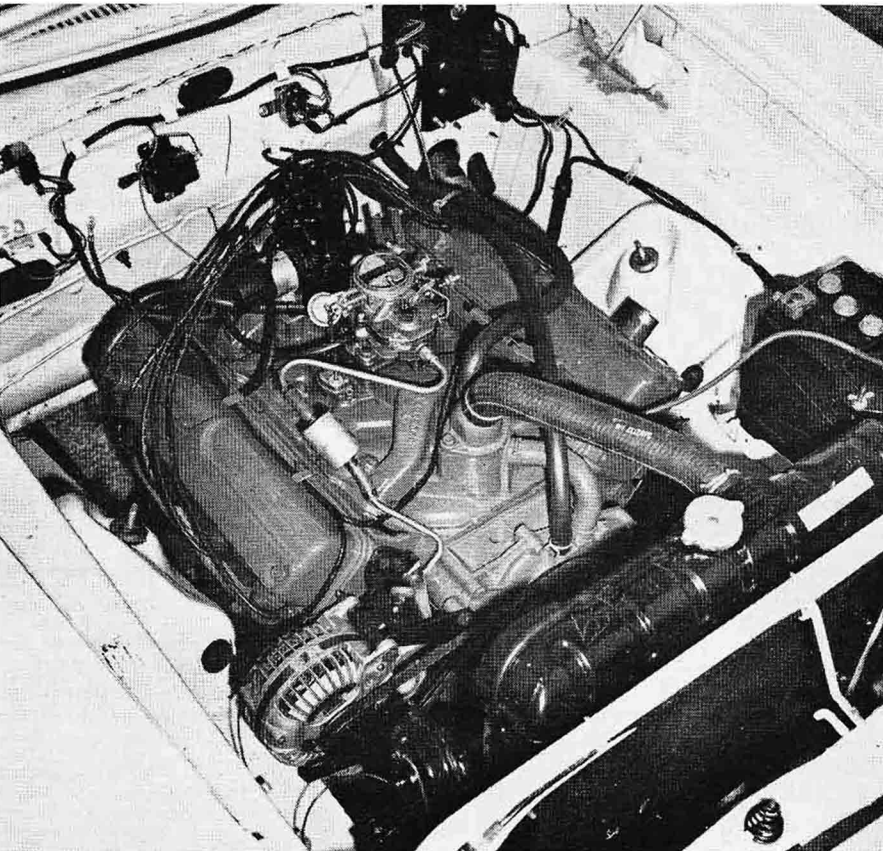
As you can see, almost half of all Plymouth sales are in their highest-priced models (the scam sheets from other manufacturers tell the same story). When you stop and consider that a large share of all Savoy and Belvederes are bought in fleets (taxis, police cars, sales departments, etc.), the resulting figures lean even more heavily in favor of the jazzed-up models as being Average Reader's choice.

Let's take a look at our plain-Jane Savoy test car. Is it a good buy, and will it give the buyer the kind of service and satisfaction he expects?

Our test car was a two-door sedan, V-8 model (68 per cent of all Plymouth buyers choose the V-8). Standard equipment consisted of the 318-cubic-inch, 230-hp V-8 engine, three-speed manual transmission, and 2.93-to-1 economy rear axle. Also included as standard equipment were oil filter, turn signals, sun visors, electric wipers, front arm rests, cigarette lighter, and glove-box lock. Optional equipment was at a bare minimum — heater-defroster, crankcase vent, whitewalls, and seat belts. The as-tested price came to \$2590.80, plus tax and license.

Equipped as it was, the Savoy offers some very strong arguments in its own favor. On the other hand, there are some very good arguments against it. One big thing *in* its favor is the amount of overall performance it offers. The test car was exceptionally light, weighing only 3440 pounds with a full tank of gas. The standard V-8 doesn't have any trouble coping with this kind of weight, and it's capable of giving very quick acceleration (even with the economy axle) as well as a high top speed.

Fuel economy is also very good. We logged over 1000 miles on the test car (in original factory tune) through a wide variety of road and weather conditions. When we totaled up mileage figures, we were very surprised to find that our overall average was 14.8 mpg. The lowest reading we saw was on one tankful



(OPPOSITE) Performance factors like acceleration and top speed are above average for price field, equal to cars costing more. **(TOP)** Dash, except for trim or padding, is same for entire line. Savoy has roomy interior with sturdy seat, floor covering. **(LEFT)** Lack of clutter makes Plymouth a favorite with service and maintenance men. Engine offers good blend of economy, go.



that gave 12.1 mpg for straight city driving. This was early in the test, and as we put more miles on the engine, this city figure climbed into the 14-15-mpg range. Out on the highway, 65-70-mph cruising gave averages of not less than 17.4 and not more than 18.8 mpg.

Mileage figures like this, coupled with a low initial cost, *would* make this car a favorite with salesmen and company reps who do a lot of traveling. Adding a few creature comforts to the interior plus one or two power accessories isn't going to hurt mileage much, either. If you want to sacrifice a little economy for a bit more performance, you could order (at no extra cost) the 3.23-to-1 performance axle. This would probably make the Savoy break 10 seconds for 0-60 mph. Real performance at low overall cost.

We don't think the three-speed manual transmission would satisfy anyone. The column-mounted shift lever and attendant linkage are sloppy and noisy. The fact that low gear isn't synchromesh is a real drawback in a car that has such a numerically low rear axle. Unless you're very adept at double-clutching, you'll have to come to a complete stop before changing to low gear — and low gear *should* be used if car speed drops much below 20 mph to prevent lugging the engine. Personally, we'd take the optional TorqueFlite automatic transmission, even at its \$210.70 cost (it'll add to the resale value, a point you shouldn't overlook).

Chassis and suspension on our Savoy were identical to what you get on the higher-priced models, including the Sport Fury. Unless you order heavy-duty parts, you can't improve ride or handling characteristics just by buying a more expensive model — and this is true of all American automobiles.

Plymouth suspension is firmer than

that offered by their competition. Some buyers might think it's too firm, but we don't. The boulevard ride can't be likened to riding on a cloud, but it doesn't jar or jolt you, either. At high cruising speeds (normal ones, too), the suspension is most appreciated.

Handling characteristics range from slight initial understeer (accompanied by minimum tire scrub) through a wide latitude of neutral steer to final oversteer. Steering's fairly light and responsive, considering the 5.3 turns lock to lock. If we were buying the car, we'd run the price up a bit (\$76.60) by ordering power steering just to get the 3.5 lock-to-lock turns it offers.

The standard brakes on all Plymouths have 195.2 square inches of effective lining area. This is more than the competition offers, and it's also one of the best ratios of car weight to lining area (17.6 psi) found in *any* car. Brake fade doesn't occur easily, and when it does, the cool-down rate's about normal. On the minus side, the factory still hasn't done anything about eliminating rear-wheel judder during hard stops. This occurs at the point where the wheels lock up when hard pedal's applied. Of course, if you don't lock them up, it won't happen, but when that line of high-speed traffic in front of you suddenly comes to a halt, you can't always apply just the right amount of brake.

Up to this point, we've pretty well covered the critical overall performance areas, and so far the low-cost Savoy looks like a pretty good buy. Up to this point, it's equal to the top-of-the-mark Sport Fury. But now come the differences. At first glance, the Savoy interior isn't too bad. Upholstery and floor covering look (and are) sturdy and durable. The colors are light and pleasant, and the dash, except for padding and minor trim, is exactly like the dash of higher-priced models. So what's wrong with it?

Well, long trips can get lonely, so we'd order a radio (\$58.50). We like the

extra comfort of foam seats, so we'd either order them at \$10.70 or else we'd forget the Savoy and get the Belvedere (\$2453 base) because, in addition to what comes as standard equipment on the Savoy, the Belvedere also offers foam-cushion seats front and rear, rear arm rests, *and* carpeting. This last item is important to us because, while the Savoy's rubberized floor covering might wear a long time, after the newness quickly wears off it'll always look dirty. Carpeting, if properly taken care of, will wear just as long and keep its good looks even longer. This is important for our own satisfaction and will also have an effect on the car's resale value.

Padded dashes look nice, but we can live without them — and we mean that literally, because they're all so poorly designed. We can get along without fancies like horn rings, too.

Steering wheel location is good, and the seat offers plenty of adjustment. The bench seat doesn't have the same degree of comfort as the buckets in the Sport Fury, but they aren't uncomfortable. All-around visibility is good, but we wouldn't order our car without an optional outside rear-view mirror (\$6.45).

After carefully considering everything, we can't help feeling that those letter writers were putting us on. Nobody buys these stripped models, and the only people who could possibly live with them are those who *have* to drive them (the police, salesmen, and drivers of company cars).

A car represents a big investment — therefore you deserve a package (we feel) that's going to give you not only satisfactory service but also personal satisfaction and pride of ownership. If you're interested in a car only as a piece of machinery that gets you from here to there, then the Savoy will fill your needs. We think Average Reader and Average Driver demand more. After all, you're primarily enthusiasts, and enthusiasts don't only own cars — they have affairs with them. /MT

PLYMOUTH SAVOY

2-door, 6-passenger sedan

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: Heater, crankcase vent, whitewalls, seat belts

BASIC PRICE: \$2332

PRICE AS TESTED: \$2590.80 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 7.5 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5200 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph.....	3.5 secs.
0-45 mph.....	6.7
0-60 mph.....	10.9

Standing start 1/4-mile 17.8 secs. and 75 mph

Speeds in gears @ 5200 rpm

1st	43 mph	3rd	107
2nd80	speed) @ 4100 rpm	

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	31	47	52	64	75	86
Weston electric speedometer	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 34 ft.; from 60 mph, 156 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv V-8
Bore: 3.91 ins.
Stroke: 3.31 ins.
Displacement: 318 cu. ins.
Compression ratio: 9.0:1
Horsepower: 230 @ 4400 rpm
Torque: 340 lbs.-ft. @ 2400 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.72
Carburetion: 1 2-bbl.
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Gearbox

3-speed manual (synchromesh on top 2 gears); column shift

Driveshaft

1-piece, open tube

Differential

Hypoid, semi-floating
Standard ratio: 2.93:1

Suspension

Front: Independent, non-parallel control arms, with lateral torsion bars, direct-acting tubular shocks
Rear: Rigid axle, with 5-leaf, semi-elliptic springs and direct-acting tubular shocks

Steering

Worm and ball nut
Turning diameter: 40.8 ft.
Turns lock to lock: 5.3

Wheels and Tires

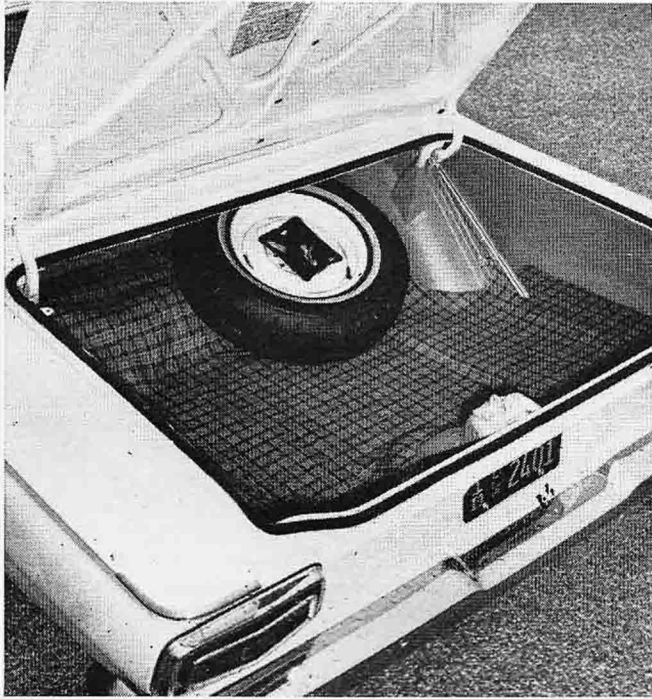
5-lug, steel disc wheels
7.00 x 14, 2-ply, rayon, tubeless whitewalls

Brakes

Hydraulic, duo-servo; self-adjusting; cast-iron drums
Front and rear: 10-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide
Effective lining area: 195.2 sq. ins.

Body and Frame

Unit construction
Wheelbase: 116.0 ins.
Track: front, 59.5 ins.; rear, 59.6 ins.
Overall length: 206.5 ins.
Overall width: 75.6 ins.
Curb weight: 3440 lbs.



Trunk lip isn't excessively high and doesn't impede loading or unloading too much. The flat floor gives a big, usable trunk.



In critical styling area, Savoy has lean, clean, and tasteful lines. The higher-priced versions offer only more chrome and trim.

PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO



SAVOY BRAKE LINING AREA IS SAME AS HIGHER-PRICED VERSIONS, BIGGER THAN ANY IN THIS PRICE CLASS, GIVES GOOD STOPPING POWER.