

# Olds F-85

**Mighty 4-4-2, a real driver's machine, fuses lightning-fast**

by Bob McVay, Assistant Technical Editor



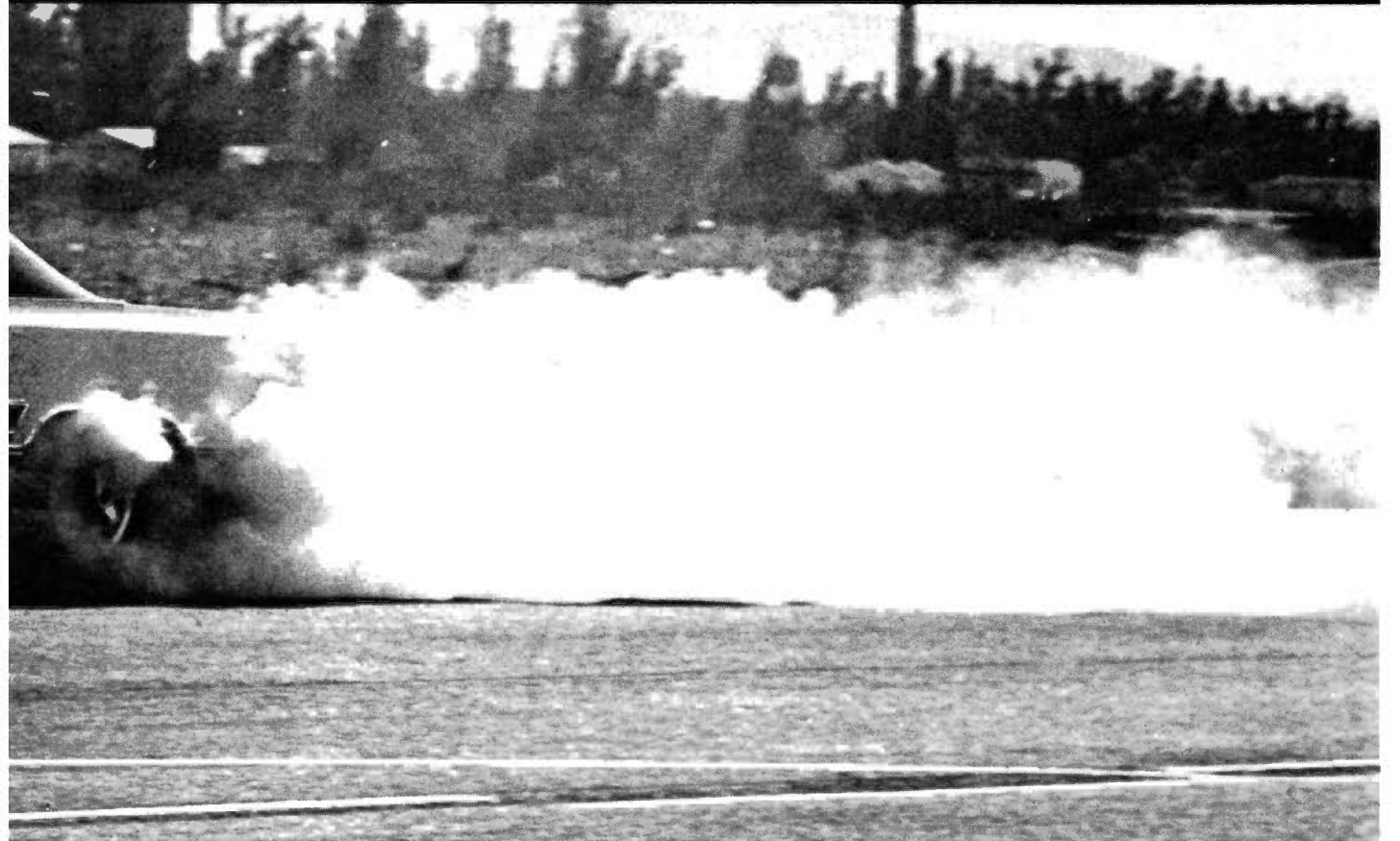
**B**ACK IN THE EARLY 1950s, Oldsmobile's Rocket 88s built up an enviable performance image that still remains in the minds of many avid Olds fans. On race tracks and on drag strips, Oldsmobiles were almost unbeatable. But by the late '50s, Oldsmobile's performance image had faded into the past. ■ A new model introduced in mid-1964, called the 4-4-2 Cutlass, began to revive Olds' performance image. With a hot 330-inch V-8 and heavy-duty suspension package, it turned out to be a strong performer. ■ The 1965 version boasts an even more powerful engine, with a 30-hp increase. At 400 cubic inches, the 4-4-2's V-8 is an underbored version of the big 425-inch engine that powers larger Oldsmobiles. Originally, 4-4-2

stood for four on the floor, a four-barrel carb, and dual exhausts. Its current interpretation is 400 cubic inches, a four-barrel carb, and dual exhausts. But there's more here than meets the eye. ■ The entire drive train and suspension have been beefed up with heavy-duty components designed to make the 4-4-2 an honest-to-goodness driver's car. And it's most certainly an automobile any good driver can thoroughly enjoy, appreciate, and fall in love with. ■ Wheels and tires, shocks and springs, rear axle and propeller shaft, suspension arms and bushings, engine mounts, steering, frame, and stabilizer bars (front and rear) all come under the heading of heavy-duty. ■ The 4-4-2 package isn't expensive either — at least, not for

# 4-4-2



**performance, excellent handling with family comfort and utility**



what you get. Special exterior and interior trim, a 70-amp battery, and heavy-duty, 11-inch clutch on manual-shift models are included in the price of \$156.02 with a standard three-speed manual transmission. Even this gearbox is new, since it's all-synchromesh. Putting the three-speed on the floor costs \$43.04 extra. Adding a four-speed, close-ratio box with floorshift adds \$188.30 to the bill, while the Special Duty Jetaway two-speed automatic transmission costs \$209.82. This can be ordered with column shift or T-Bar console lever. ■ We had the pleasure of trying out two 4-4-2 models. When first introduced, the 4-4-2 option was available only in the more expensive Cutlass. Now it can be ordered on a plain-

Jane club coupe — just the ticket for the buyer who heads for the strip every weekend and demands the utmost performance for his dollar. Our two test cars were a fully equipped Cutlass convertible (with automatic) and a completely stripped, four-speed club coupe. ■ We logged most of our test time in the convertible, because it more closely resembled what the average buyer would want in an automobile. We found it a comfortable car to drive and live with — equally at home at high freeway cruising speeds or wheeling around the neighborhood to the supermarket. Neither caused any undue fuss, proving the car's tremendous flexibility for family use. ■ Equipped with power accessories, this car is easy enough for



any member of the fairer sex to handle in traffic. Once the male member of the family gets behind the wheel, it becomes a high-speed charger whose handling takes seconds to only the very best sports cars. It's one of the most neutral-handling cars we've had the pleasure of driving. The 4-4-2 shows excellent road manners on tight, winding roads, and it's in its element on high-speed trips.

Acceleration from standstill showed impressive times from the automatic-equipped car and outstanding performance from the four-speed coupe. Standard axle ratio with Jetaway is 3.23—a fine combination for all-around driving. Our convertible was capable of recording 0-60-mph times of 7.4 seconds, yet it spun the needle of our electric, fifth-wheel speedometer right off the peg while recording a top speed of 125 mph.

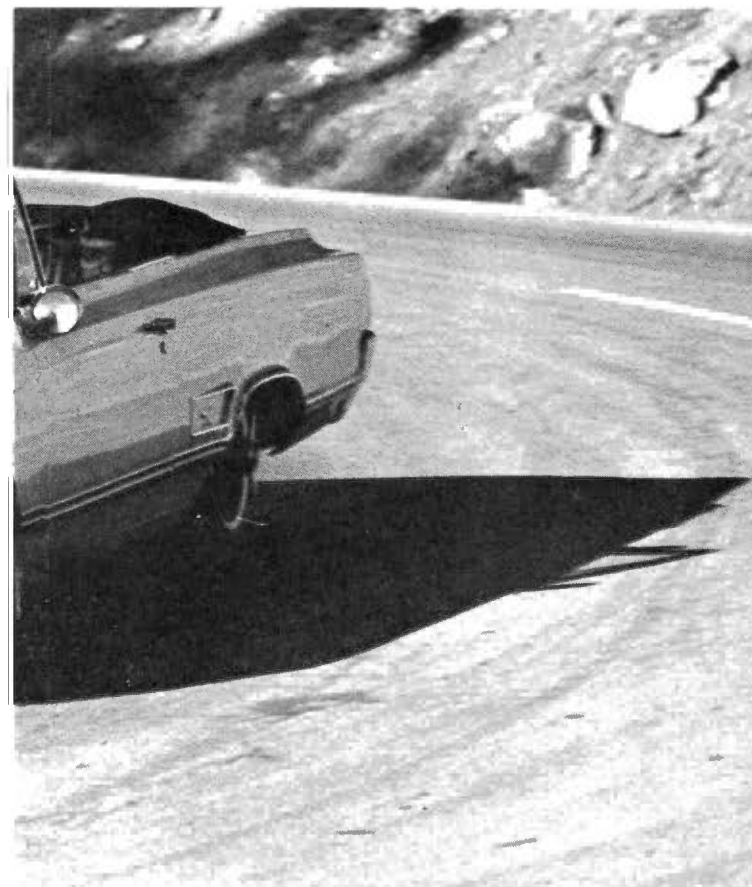
Stopping from this speed was another matter, though. With the exception of the Corvette, none of GM's cars — not even the super-hot intermediates like the 4-4-2 — is equipped with disc brakes. The 9.5-inch-diameter finned brake drums are adequate for stopping under normal conditions. But our distances weren't overly impressive. We got some wheel lock-up on panic stops, but we held nose dive and swerving to a minimum, thanks to the car's fine suspension system.

Wavy road surfaces and even rough back roads failed to bottom the car's heavy-duty shocks and springs, although rebound was a bit harsh over big bumps. Our convertible suffered from the normal squeaks and rattles, but the club coupe was as tight as a drum.

Although we'd prefer a bit more padding in the car's



EXCELLENT STABILITY, VERY LITTLE BODY LEAN, GOOD TRACTION THROUGH LIMITED-SLIP AXLE, AND QUICK STEERING ARE 4-4-2 VIRTUES.



FRONT AND REAR ANTI-ROLL BARS PLUS HEAVY-DUTY SUSPENSION MAKE 4-4-2 REAL DRIVER'S CAR. BUCKET SEATS HELD US FIRMLY IN PLACE.

PHOTOS BY DARRYL NOREBERG

front bucket seats, we found the convertible comfortable and roomy. We especially enjoyed the car's well padded back seat, which proved comfortable for two (or three in a pinch).

The convertible top fit tight, proved leakproof, and is one of the easiest systems to operate — no pulling, pushing, or standing up on the seat to raise or lower it. But getting the boot fastened properly took careful top folding, plus a generous amount of muscle.

Our major complaints lie with the design of the instrument panel. Whoever came up with this one must have had long arms. It's a long reach for the driver to get to the radio and top-control button. That top button, set right in front of the passenger, could be a tempting plaything for children.

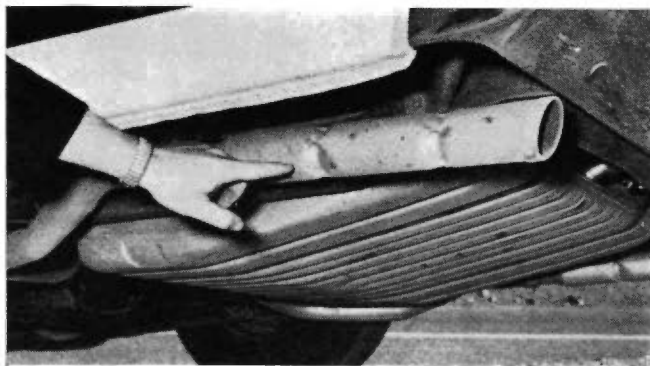
Vision front and rear is good, as is the driving position. A lighted quadrant makes gear-changing easy, and a handle-mounted button prevents unwanted shifts into reverse. We also appreciated the automatic transmission's ability, when pulled into LOW, to retard speed on long downgrades.

Gas mileage on the convertible ranged from 10 to 17 mpg on high-test fuel. We will admit that when the horsepower's there, we tend to use it more often, thus lowering our fuel-consumption figures. A real loafer, the 4-4-2, with its 3.23 gears, was turning only 2900 rpm at 65 mph and 4400 rpm at 100 mph — a good indication of long engine life from a powerhouse that's never working hard.

Our test coupe was one of the most responsive passenger cars we've driven. Completely stripped except for the four-speed, close-ratio gearbox, it did have a tinted windshield, deluxe steering wheel, heavy-duty manual steering, and a parking brake signal light — that was all. A listing of *Performance Axle* gave us more than a hint that this wasn't the 3.55 unit standard on manual-transmissioned cars.

# Olds 4-4-2

continued



*Dimpled dual exhaust pipes give off a delightful rumble, and 20-gallon tank lets car go nearly 350 miles before a refill.*



*There's 20.1 cubic feet of space for luggage, more than enough room for test gear. Lid opens wide and spare is easy to remove.*



*Husky 345-hp powerhouse gets extra cooling from heavy-duty radiator. V-8 purrs on two throats — really charges on four.*



*Tach remains only a handsome ornament, since its location made it almost impossible to see. T-bar shift and console are options.*



*Cockpit is roomy and comfortable. Ash tray disappears into dash, but it's a long, long reach for the radio and top switch.*



Once we put on the fifth wheel and hooked up our electric tachometer, we recorded 17.5 mph per 1000 rpm, a strong indication that our test car was pulling 3.90 cogs, the ideal setup for drag action. Our times through the quarter-mile showed the car's potential as a top contender. Given proper cheater slicks and a sharp tuning job (with modifications to bring it up to NHRA specifications), it should be a top class challenger at the strip.

Instant response describes the coupe's performance. Pressure on the accelerator made the car fairly leap ahead in any gear from any normal speed. We clocked the coupe, which wasn't fully broken in, through Fontana's quarter-mile in 15.7 seconds and 95 mph. At 96 mph, the engine was turning 5200 rpm in fourth gear — just under its 5500-rpm red line. Top speed should be slightly over 100 mph with this axle. Potential uses of this engine/axle combination would make it a strong tow car or a good mountain car where pulling power is more important than a high cruising speed.

In any of its many forms, Oldsmobile's new 4-4-2 is a real driver's car that can and will double as the family's daily transportation. As a stripped club coupe, it lists at \$2734.15 with a three-speed transmission or \$2922.45 with the four-speed. We found the 4-4-2, plain or fancy, one of the best performance/handling packages on the market, with a price anyone can afford. Here's proof positive that Detroit manufacturers can build cars that perform, handle, and stop, without sacrificing riding comfort. /MT



We clocked an honest 125 mph, and amazingly the top didn't billow much. Car felt rock-steady and safe at highest speeds.



Panic stops caused left rear wheel to lock up first, but under normal conditions, it took lots of abuse to bring out brake fade.



Optional wire wheel covers may look sharp, but they add weight and when fitted make it impossible to check tires or add air.

## OLDS F-85 CUTLASS 4-4-2

2-door, 5-passenger convertible coupe

**OPTIONS ON TEST CAR:** 4-4-2 package, Jetaway 2-speed automatic, power brakes/steering/top, radio, bucket seats, console, whitewalls, seat belts, misc. access.

**BASE PRICE:** \$2983

**PRICE AS TESTED:** \$3899.97 (plus tax and license)

**ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST:** 3027 miles

**RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE:** 5500 rpm

### PERFORMANCE

#### ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph.....	3.2 secs.
0-45 mph.....	4.8
0-60 mph.....	7.4

#### PASSING TIMES AND DISTANCES

40-60 mph.....	3.3 secs., 241 ft.
50-70 mph.....	3.8 secs., 335 ft.

Standing start ¼-mile 16.9 secs. and 84 mph

Speeds in gears @ shift points

1st .....	63 mph	2nd .....	125 mph
	@ 5200 rpm		@ 5500 rpm

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading .....	30	45	50	62	72	83
Weston electric speedometer .....	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed mph per 1000 rpm in top gear .....

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 23 ft.; from 60 mph, 176 ft.

### SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

#### Engine

Ohv V-8  
Bore: 4.00 ins.  
Stroke: 3.975 ins.  
Displacement: 400 cu ins.  
Compression ratio: 10.25:1  
Horsepower: 345 @ 4800 rpm  
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.86  
Torque: 440 lbs.-ft. @ 3200 rpm  
Carburetion: 1 4-bbl.  
Ignition: 12-volt coil

#### Gearbox

2-speed heavy-duty Jetaway automatic; console shift

#### Driveshaft

1-piece, open tube

#### Differential

Hypoid, semi-floating  
Standard ratio: 3.23:1

#### Suspension

Front: Independent, H-D coil springs, double-acting tubular shocks, anti-roll bar  
Rear: Solid axle; H-D coil springs, double-acting tubular shocks, control arms, anti-roll bar

#### Steering

Ball nut with integral power  
Turning diameter: 41 ft.  
Turns lock to lock: 4.06

#### Wheels and Tires

H-D welded steel disc wheels,  
5-lug, with 6-inch rims  
7.75 x 14, Red-line nylon,  
4-ply, tubeless tires

#### Brakes

Hydraulic, duo-servo, self-adjusting, with cast-iron drums and power assist  
Front: 9.5-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide  
Rear: 9.5-in. dia. x 2.0 ins. wide  
Effective lining area: 156.3 sq. ins.  
Swept drum area: 267.8 sq. ins.

#### Body and Frame

H-D C-section steel frame with torque boxes; welded steel body  
Wheelbase: 115.0 ins.  
Track: front, 58.0 ins. rear, 58.0 ins.  
Overall length: 204.4 ins.  
Overall width: 74.4 ins.  
Overall height: 54.0 ins.  
Curb weight: 3640 lbs.