

How hot is the CHRYSLER 300-D?

Truly "a man's car"--with brute horsepower, firm ride, precision quality

by William Carroll

HOW HOT IS THE 300-D? It isn't—if you have to impress curbsitters with rubber-burning wheelspin.

No showoff, the big "D" is a true sportsman's car, built with the velvet precision of a fine gun and loaded with a V8 powerhouse designed for one purpose—to go, and go, and keep right on going until you run out of road. For example: During 1957's Daytona Speedweeks a 300-C set top time in the Flying Mile on Wednesday at 134.128 miles an hour. The next day another 300-C tapped fastest time of the day in Measured Mile Drags (on sand) with 86.873 miles an hour.

Our MOTOR TREND test car was a brand-new Tahitian Coral 300-D convertible, the 250th "D" built for 1958. It had only six miles on the odometer. With power seats, brakes, windows, antenna, heater, radio, tinted glass and valuable Sure-Grip differential, weight totaled 4523 pounds.

It was two days later in a rainstorm (the 300's fins were throwing feathers like a Gold Cup racer) before I began thinking about "feel behind the wheel." It's a man-size 17-inch steering wheel, which with power steering (3½ turns lock-to-lock) flips the Caddy-sized 300 around like a Corvette. The dash layout is filled with instruments and gauges (no tach); Torque-Flite buttons are easy to reach. Both pedals fall naturally underfoot. The accelerator has a mushy feel compared to other hot cars; but once you begin opening the second carburetor, intakes sound like you're moving a hundred miles an hour. Hold the button down for 25 seconds and you will be.

Once moving, the 300's huge 9.00 x 14 nylons slap at tar strips with solid authority. The low-speed ride is rough on city streets, solid on highways up to 85 or so, and just right at anything you can run over that. There's no body or chassis vibration from either engine or suspension. Dirt or rough pavement, when traveled fast enough to keep tires out of chuckholes, feels as secure as pavement. Belting over grade crossings at 70 caused as much steering disturbance as a bug smacking the windshield. The car *can* be broken loose on corners but the driver would be way over his head when it happens. The entire package is an impressively-engineered, confident automobile that knows it's good—and soon lets you know it too.

By the time we reached Los Angeles the log totaled 2577.1 miles and gas stubs 189.2 gallons of Mobilgas Special. Mileage figured to 13.6 mpg at our average cross-country speed of 58.9 miles an hour. Best was 17.6 mpg on an Illinois turnpike, lowest 11.9 crossing New Mexico. In comparison, the big Edsel with 345 hp and 410 cubic inches (the "D" has 380 hp and 392 cubic inches) turned 11.7 mpg at an average cross-country

speed of 48.65 mph. A short cross-country test of a 300-hp (370-cubic inch) Pontiac Tri-Power tallied 17.3 mpg at an average speed of 58.25 mph.

In dragging from a standstill our 300-D stands near the head of the class, but is certainly no trophy thief. Here's how it stacked up with two cars recently tested:

IN DRIVE: Automatic upshift at full throttle	
Pontiac Tri-Power	¼-mile in 17.1 seconds @ 87.6 mph
Chrysler 300-D	¼-mile in 17.9 seconds @ 85.3 mph
Edsel Corsair	¼-mile in 18.4 seconds @ 80.7 mph

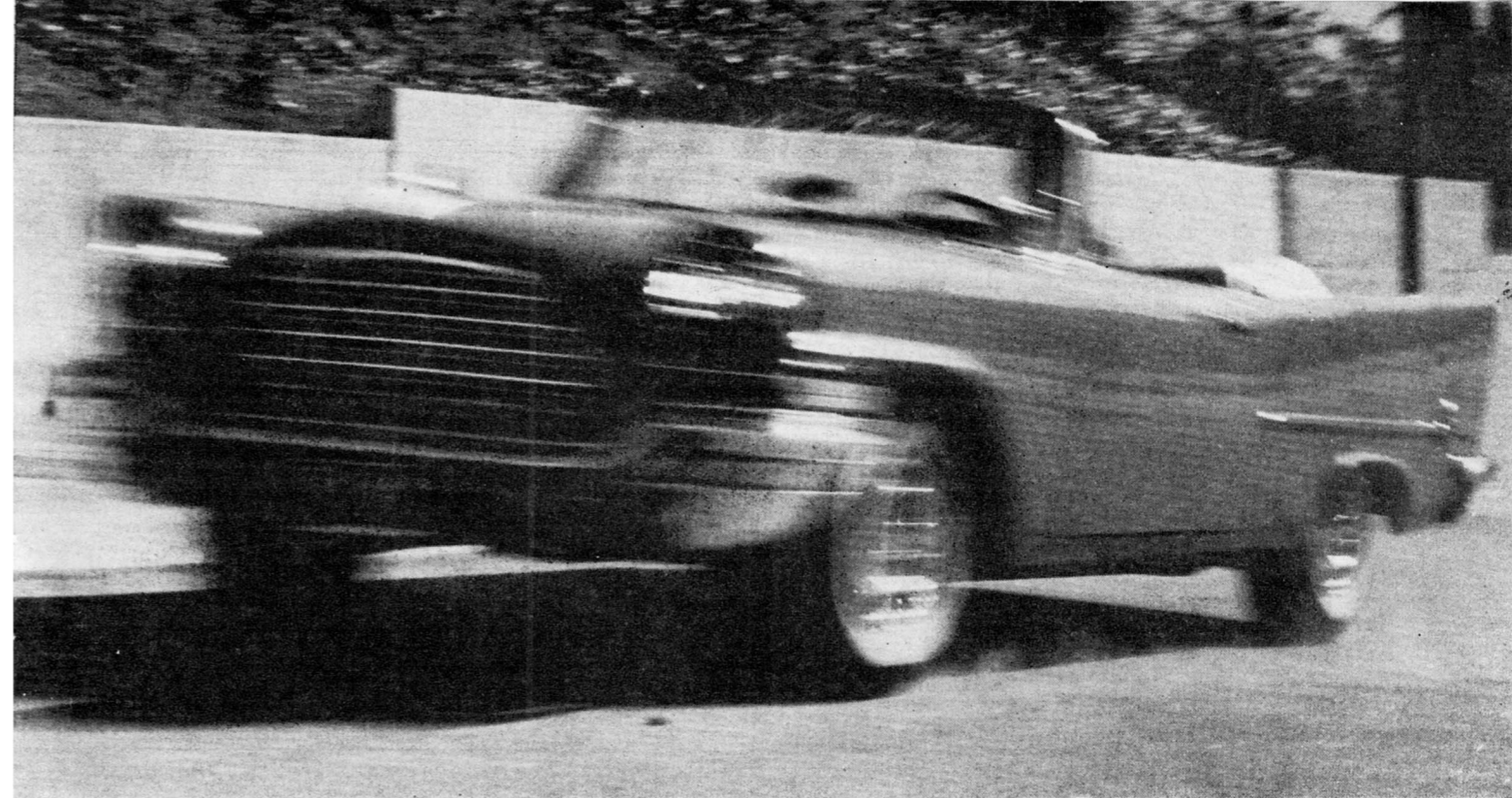
What's sensational about a \$5600 car that neither flies nor swims might be decided through comparison with its brother, the Chrysler New Yorker convertible (\$4760). Both are identical as to physical dimensions, body, chassis metal and quality of finish. Built on the Imperial assembly line, 300s are lavished all the attention given a well-finished car.

Front wheel suspension ties to 1.11-inch-diameter high-rate torsion bars (1.04-inch under the New Yorker) and heavy duty shocks. Rear axle members are the same as on the New Yorker except for springs and a bushelbasket of ratios. Optional at no extra cost are: 2.93, 3.18, 3.54 and 3.73 to 1. Unless you specify, the factory sticks 3.31 to 1 under both hardtops and convertibles. Rear springs have the standard number of leaves but each 300 leaf is thicker.

Power brakes are standard, with 12-inch drums and 2½-inch-wide lining both front and rear. The 251 square inches of 300-D brakes is second only to Lincoln's 297. Chrysler's Center-plane brakes are exceptionally smooth as shoes contact the drums evenly, resulting in a well-braked stop. Sad part of the action is that 14 x 6½ wheels and rims so thoroughly cover the brake drum that cooling is just about non-existent.

In the engine house, changes from the 300-C of 1957 include a new cam that improves low speed characteristics, altered valve lift and heavier pistons. High intensity camming gives 435 pounds-feet of torque at 3600 rpm (New Yorker has 450 at 2800) and 380 horsepower at 5200 (New Yorker has 345 at 4600).

Carburetion of the 300-D has only calibration changes from the successful "C" of 1957. High-speed calibrations were improved to match the new 10 to 1 compression ratio (up from 9.25 to 1) and camshaft. Part-throttle changes were made on the basis of road tests providing a lively car and good gas mileage. The accelerator first opens both primary throats of the rear carburetor. As pressure increases, primaries of the front



carburetor open. When the engine reaches 2000 rpm, velocity blades and secondary throats of both Carters start to open. Fully open at 3000 rpm, they are pitching gas from all eight throats. Eighty-five miles an hour can be maintained easily on *only* the two primary throats of the rear carburetor, which accounts for the excellent gas mileage obtained during our test.

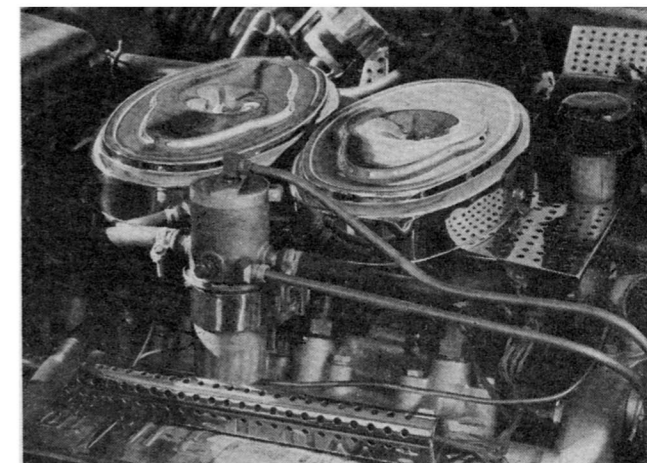
The 300-D exhaust manifold has a larger cross section (2½ vs. two inches) than others in the Chrysler line, with 2¼-inch piping to the muffler and a two-inch-diameter tailpipe under the hardtop. Convertibles use the New Yorker exhaust system—1¾ inches all the way—because of interference with the "X" frame.

The Bendix Electrojector (390 horsepower and 40-amp generator) is an extra-cost option available only on the 300-D at about \$500. Bendix system is unique in being electrically operated with electronic control of the quantity of fuel metered to the engine. In general it is a system wherein fuel is supplied at constant pressure and metered into the manifold by electrically-operated injector valves.

TorqueFlites used in 300-Ds are modified to provide five mph higher shift points. Capacity of the rear clutch is increased by stiffening the return spring and altering the kick-down servo. The driveline is identical to the New Yorker except for a high-speed rubber boot over the universal joint to keep grease in place at high rpms. Goodyear Blue Streak Nylon racing tires (9.00 x 14) are standard equipment.

In the option department there's little to buy, as nearly everything is included in the base price, though for \$100 extra you can arrange to shift your own gears. With the same option (?) you lose power brakes and power steering which were on the car.

What Chrysler offers usually astounds many a first-time 300-D driver. One of the two (Corvette's the other) honest-to-goodness sports cars built in Detroit, this Chrysler is a hard-riding and handsome high-performance traveler. For don't kid yourself, this is a specialist's car. Few drivers will ever exhaust its ability and even fewer know for sure what to do with dual four-throats or an Electrojector. You may be unhappy with speedometer reflections in daytime and turn indicators that blind you at night, but it's a rare demand you can make of a 300-D that will not be fulfilled. /MT



FLASHY CHROME identifies Bendix Electrojector fuel injection Firepower engine with 390-horsepower rating.



TINY AIR FILTERS on the 300-D dual Carters are designed to produce throaty power throb at full throttle.