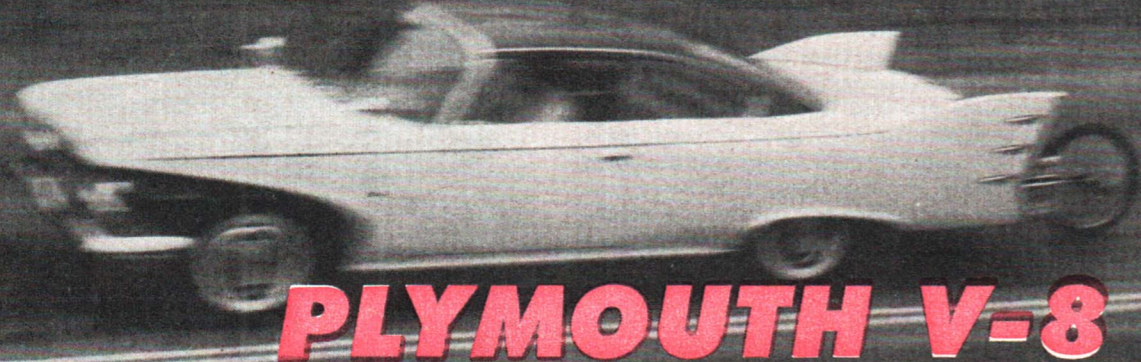


TESTING THE 60'S



**even without frills and assists
there's performance to spare**

PLYMOUTH has forged a whole new reputation in recent years as one of America's top road cars, pacing the low-priced field in performance and handling.

Road testing a 1960 Fury convertible for the December issue, *MOTOR LIFE* found the car had furthered its fine engineering with much improved bodywork. Featuring unit construction, it was far better finished than its immediate predecessors.

But some questions were still unanswered. How much of Plymouth's appeal was based on the most expensive, most lavishly equipped model? Would the same high standards be found within easier reach of the average budget? To find out, a Belvedere two-door hardtop, with a minimum of special options, was tested.

The hardtop revealed the soundness of the new body design even more than the convertible.

Entry and exit were far easier than on most cars built as low. None of the Chrysler products has ever had the problems caused by a severely curved front post but what interference did exist has been completely eliminated this year. The pillar sloped gradually from floor to roof in an unbroken line.

Rear seat access was good, too. On the right side, two-thirds of the front seat back folded out of the way.

Interior comfort, while generally adequate, had some limitations. Four adult passengers were the maximum. A fifth or sixth would have to straddle huge transmission and driveshaft bulges. On hot days, the ventilation system was inefficient and the sun baked through the glass extending into the roof.

A completely new dash was highlighted by a separate, elevated speedometer housing within easier view. It was not as impressive

as the stylists had intended, though, as the area just below it was quite a dust catcher and a bright metal frame around the instrument face had warped.

Definitely not an improvement was the new speedometer itself. A horizontal red bar, it could be read quickly but not at all precisely.

Other dash details showed intelligent planning. Instruments and controls were conveniently arranged, metal surfaces had a brushed finish for less glare and fewer smears than shiny chrome, and none of the dash lights reflected into the windshield at night.

Both the radio and rear-view mirror were offset to the driver's side. A ball-jointed attachment to the dash permitted the mirror to be adjusted in any direction.

The steering wheel was not quite round but had been flattened slightly at the top and bottom. However, the effect was subtle and nothing like the square-shaped wheel offered as an option.

At first, the driving feel seemed sluggish, especially in comparison with the Fury. The Belvedere had no power accessories and the engine-transmission combination was one of Plymouth's most modest.

Further acquaintance proved it to be a thoroughly sound automobile, however, fully competitive with equivalent models of other makes.

The engine was the standard 318-cubic-inch V-8 developing 230 hp, a full 100 hp less than the big Fury. With a single two-barrel carburetor and 9-to-1 compression ratio, it would perform satisfactorily on regular gas.

The transmission, Powerflite, was a two-speed, pushbutton automatic that has received very little attention in the last few years because Chrysler Corporation has placed such a strong emphasis on its costlier Torqueflite. Powerflite proved to have the virtues of low cost, simple design and smooth operation and was outclassed less by its competitors than by Torqueflite itself.

Considering the engine was the cheapest eight available from Plymouth and the transmission the cheapest automatic, performance was quite good. The 0-to-60 figure was 11.3 seconds while 0-to-30 and 0-to-45 took 4.4 and 7.5 seconds, respectively. Fuel consumption was 14.2 mpg overall but most of the driving was heavy footed. Proof that a more careful touch would produce better mileage is the consistent success this particular engine has had in economy runs.

One very interesting question the test car answered was how much Plymouth's excellent handling depends on power accessories.

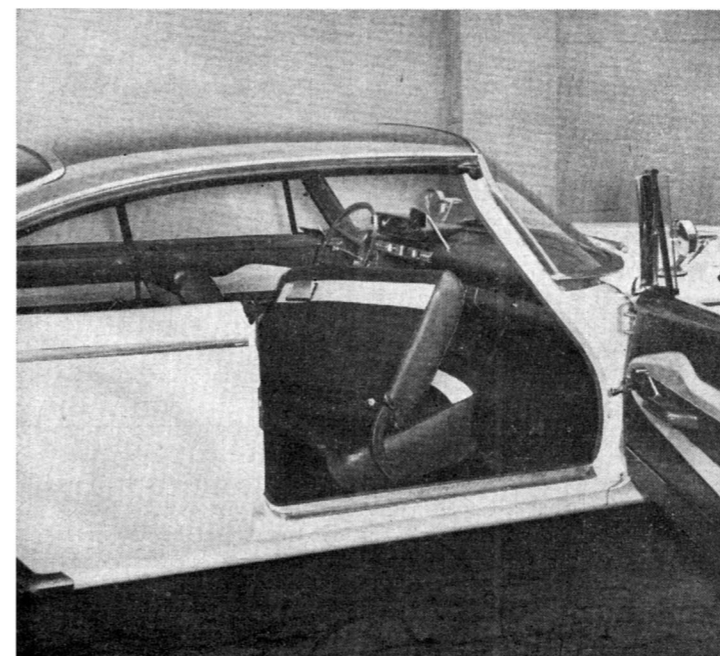
The manual steering was heavier and slower, 5.5 turns lock-to-lock, than the power system, so the immediate feeling of control was not as great. In its favor, it did have a more pronounced road feel and was just as quick as many power units offered by other manufacturers. Stiffness was not noticed except at parking speeds.

The brakes, too, lacked power assistance and required harder pedal pressure.

But once the driver realized he had to exert a little more muscle than usual, the car was no problem to handle. This is not to say power equipment would not be worth the added cost to those who can afford it, but it must be considered a luxury, not a necessity.

Finally, there was one outstanding engineering feature that was unaffected by the cost of the particular model, Plymouth's excellent suspension system. Combining a comfortable ride with secure handling, it continued to be among the best on any American car.

The Belvedere proved itself thoroughly practical for the kind of driving most people actually do. While not as spectacular as the Fury, it was certainly as well engineered for its own price and purpose. ●



EASY ENTRY and exit are plus factors with the fine all-unit construction. New design completely eliminates interference from curved front posts. Interior does have some space limitations.

MOTOR LIFE TEST DATA



1960 PLYMOUTH V-8

Test Car

TEST CAR: Plymouth Belvedere
BODY TYPE: Two-door hardtop
BASE PRICE: \$2461

Maneuverability Factors

OVERALL LENGTH: 209.4 inches
OVERALL WIDTH: 78.6 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT: 54.8 inches
WHEELBASE: 118 inches
TREAD, FRONT/REAR: 60.9 and 59.6 inches
TEST WEIGHT: 3840 lbs.
STEERING: 5.5 turns lock-to-lock
TURNING CIRCLE: 42.3 feet curb-to-curb
GROUND CLEARANCE: 5.0 inches

Interior Room

SEATING CAPACITY: four to six
FRONT SEAT—
HEADROOM: 33.7 inches
WIDTH: 63 inches
LEGROOM: 45.4 inches

Engine & Drive Train

TYPE: ohv V-8
DISPLACEMENT: 318 cubic inches
BORE & STROKE: 3.91 x 3.31 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO: 9-to-1
CARBURETION: Single two-barrel
HORSEPOWER: 230 @ 4400 rpm
TORQUE: 340 lbs.-ft. @ 2400 rpm
TRANSMISSION: Powerflite two-speed automatic
REAR AXLE RATIO: 3.31

Performance

GAS MILEAGE: 12 to 17 mpg
ACCELERATION: 0-30 mph in 4.4 seconds, 0-45 mph in 7.5 seconds and 0-60 mph in 11.3 seconds
SPEEDOMETER ERROR: Indicated 30, 45 and 60 mph are actual 34, 48.5 and 65 mph respectively.
POWER-WEIGHT RATIO: 16.7 lbs. per horsepower
HORSEPOWER PER CUBIC INCH: .676