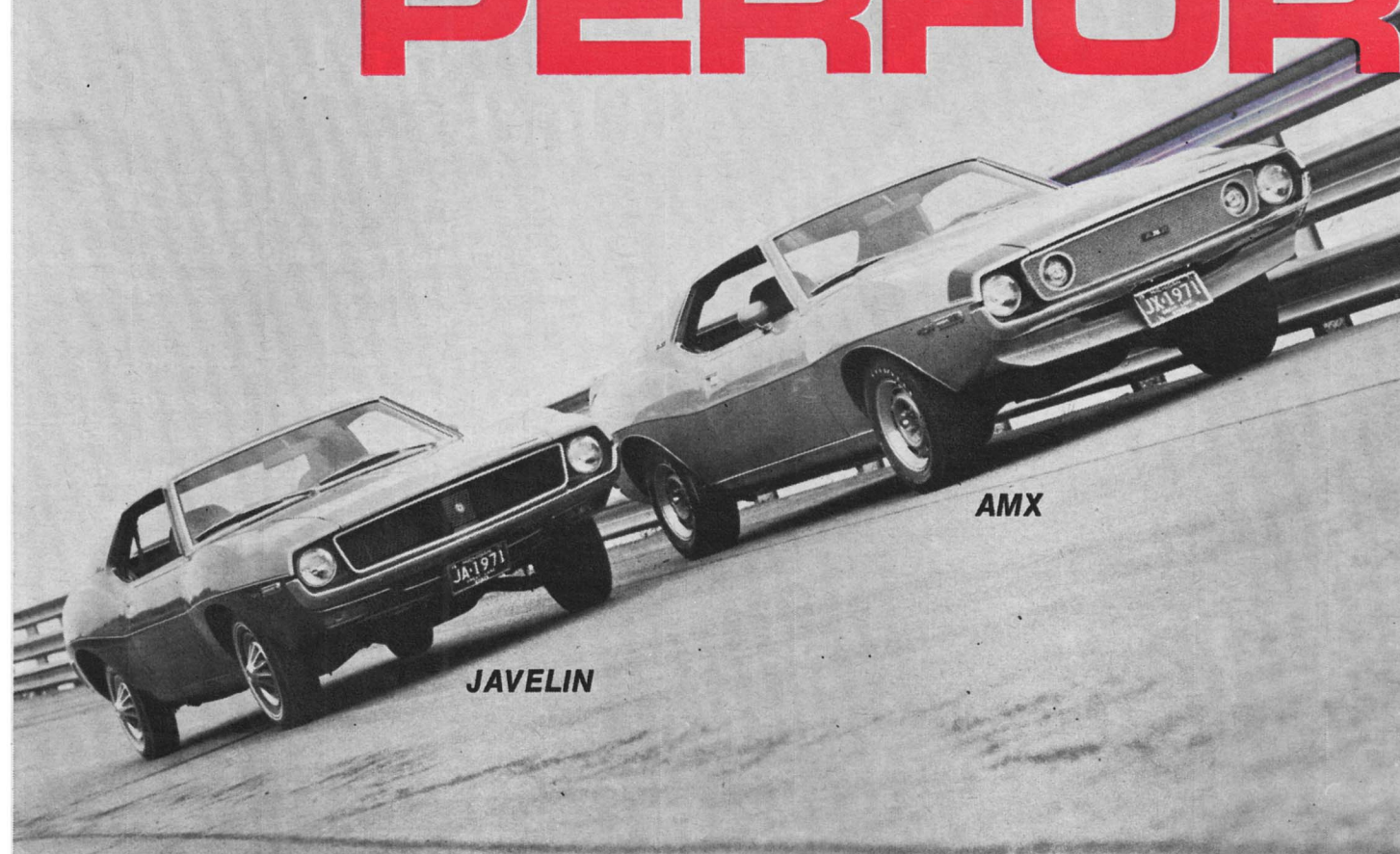


Seventy-one PERFORMERS



JAVELIN

AMX

By STEVE KELLY ■ No, they're not totally new this year. In fact, there's probably more carryover of models and features than in the recent history of Detroit's annual model changeover. While the product planners have been able to produce new innovations on their wares, this past year has seen a tremendous effort by nearly everyone directly connected with automotive design to keep the internal combustion engine from emitting more hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen than federally instituted laws will allow. And this is a good thing. There is only so much air that can be polluted before we all choke, and there is only so much green landscape that can be blighted before we all find ourselves staring out over parched fields, only to return to a city lined with brown-tinted homes and buildings to find we have desecrated what was not ours to damage.

We're getting there, and we have to remember that *we* is important. No one person can save our ecology and health. If you decide that just *one* car not properly equipped and/or maintained isn't going to make much difference, remember that there is a population of over 200 million breathing this country's air, and you are not likely to be the only car owner who decides to shirk his responsibility. The auto manufacturers, despite critical attacks by legislators and concerned members of society, have accepted the responsibility of cleaning up automobile engines, and have

done it in a fairly short period of time. Consider where we might be if the world's car builders, when confronted with the issue of emission controls and reduction, had simply said, "We can't do it," and given up the whole ulcer-developing business. We might all be standing in a bread-line somewhere, a line we would've had to reach by walking. So don't forget that freedom extends only to the tip of your neighbor's nose, through which he would like to breath clean air.

Performance hasn't suffered to the extent we all thought it would when additional smog controls and non-leaded fuels were made the big issue for 1971 cars. Judicious applications of steeper axle ratios, revised cam timing and better induction methods have been used to maintain past performance levels, while still allowing current-generation engines to register cleaner exhausts.

AMERICAN MOTORS

We still group AMC as a single product, primarily because their cars are all marketed under one banner. The Hornet SC/360 is a small-scale muscle-flexer that was once destined for a '70 introduction and then shelved amid "The Machine" and Gremlin projects. The Hornet is a pretty decent package in any form, and the 360-cubic-inch, V8-powered, two-door SC displays the car at its best. An

(Continued on following page)

THE DEGREE OF PERFORMANCE IS UP TO YOU



HORNET SC360



BUICK GS-X STAGE I



CORVETTE



VEGA

out-the-door, full-figure price should easily be quite a bit shy of \$3000, even with a few niceties included. The standard 360 V8 is a two-barrel model with 245 horsepower; but a four-barrel carbureted version, with hood-scooped fresh-air induction, 8.5:1 compression (allowing it to run on regular fuel) and hydraulic lifters, is optional. All '71 AMC engines are built with reduced-back-pressure exhaust systems, and California-destined cars have a Transmission Controlled Spark feature that prevents ignition vacuum advance below 30 mph on automatic-transmission cars, and in first and second gears with manual-transmission cars. Models with 304 V8s will all have this, no matter where they are sold. American Motors has enlarged their 390 V8 to 401 cubic inches by lengthening the stroke of its forged crank from 3.574 inches to 3.68 inches, yet leaving the bore at 4.17 inches. The 401 with four-barrel carburetion is rated at 330 hp.

The agile SC/360 has a three-speed floor-shifted gearbox and may be ordered with a four-speed or automatic trans. Standard rear gearing is 3.15:1, and 3.54:1 is factory optional, as is limited-slip. Appearancewise, the SC Hornet is bedecked with a belt-line stripe, 14- x 6-inch slot-type wheels, SST Hornet trim details and fully reclining front seats. A heavy-duty clutch is included, and the ultimate suspension package should be ordered.

The Javelin and AMX have suffered in relation to what they were. They share the same body, which means the AMX definitely doesn't fit the sports car category now. Height is down slightly, the car is longer in both wheelbase (110 inches vs. '70's 109 inches) and length (191.8 inches vs. 191.04 in '70), and it has widened out a noticeable three inches. Front tread is the same at 59.7 inches, but the rear tread has been pushed out three inches to 60 inches.

The AMX is discernible from its sis-

ter Javelin only by add-on spoilers, emblems and trim. It is not really an AMX; it's the Javelin AMX, taking over the top of the line in this series. It starts life with the 245-horse 360 V8, which is optional for all other Javelin models. The 360-inch, 285-horsepower engine and 401-cubic-inch V8 top off the Javelin and AMX engine list, and a 210-horsepower 304 V8 is the bottom of the line and can be had in anything but the AMX. Automatics, three-speed manuals and four-speed transmissions are listed for customer's choice. A 3.91:1 rear gear can be ordered on the AMX.

The '71 Gremlin comes with a 232-cubic-inch six, instead of last year's standard 199-incher. There is little else to differentiate the '71 mini-car from its '70 counterpart, and this year's model is selling the same as last season's — about two months ahead of production. AMC has a new 258-cubic-inch six, with a .40-inch longer stroke crank. It is rated with 15 horsepower more

than the 232 in-line, and the larger throw crank is an easy substitute. From what we know, Randall Rambler, in Mesa, Arizona, is still able to supply performance-building parts for the AMC 6-holer; the result is astounding, and the price is easy to take.

BUICK

Stage I-equipped GS455 Buicks accounted for better than 25% of that model's sales in 1970, which probably can be traced to its being one of the few potent performance options that are tractable in all kinds of driving and that can be ordered with air conditioning. The GS Buick still comes with either a 350- or 455-cubic-inch V8, and the 350 four-barrel version carries a 260-horsepower gross rating and an SAE net horsepower figure of 195. The SAE net horsepower rating is one of the two ways all GM Divisions will list their engines for 1971. The other is the gross horsepower figure that reflects a

reading without accessories. The SAE method is known as the "installed" output, which is the final output figure of an engine within a car and carrying all necessary operating accessories.

The GS 455 V8, still one of the best-kept secrets around drag strips, is a 330-gross-horsepower V8, with an installed rate of 265. Now if the insurance companies will only reevaluate their charts according to the net horsepower number, performance cars will arise again. The Stage I 455 engine has a 275 SAE horsepower rate, with 345 being the gross output. All the Buick powerplants have received a reduction in horsepower (around 10% on the average), with a corresponding compression-ratio drop to 8.5:1 on all powerplants. Both the 350 and 455 displacement V8s use valve spring dampeners to improve (reduce) valve spring surging, and exhaust lobe profiles are longer now, which reduces valve opening acceleration and increases valve opening overlap (25% more on 455; 30% on 350). All exhaust valves have been nickel-plated, due to GM's requirement for all '71 engines to be able to run on no-lead fuel. The 350 V8 compression was lowered by using a .045-inch-thicker head gasket, and the 455 c/r got reduced with depressed-top pistons. The primary side of the Quadrajet venturi is 1/8-inch larger now on 455 engines, and when this is coupled to lower (higher-number) axle ratios installed across the board, mileage often suffers.

Buick has developed a Stage II package which has little or no chance of ever being mass-produced, and which was discussed in detail in our May '70 issue. However, the large-intake, round-exhaust-port cylinder heads will probably see limited production around the first of the year and be offered as a service package through dealers. It is something else, and in test runs has shown itself worth a half-second quarter-mile time difference over a comparably prepared Stage I. We drove it and loved every second.

There are only subtle changes in exterior wrappings for the '71 GS and Skylark, which is just as well, because there was nothing wrong in this department in '70. Wide-pattern tires and 6.0-inch-wide wheels are GS standard items; but while the "big" Buicks now have front disc brakes in all cases, they're still optional on the intermediate cars. Suspension has received no distinct changes.

CHEVROLET

The multitude of speed equipment manufacturers who have been pumping out Chevy V8 speed equipment for as long as there's been such an animal might just reap a banner crop this year. Reduced compression ratios and high liability rates on "super" Chevys should see an upsurge in sales of tamed-down

versions of this make, with many purchasers predestined to "improve" their cars via the speed shop catalog. Long-term warranty restrictions aren't always enough to discourage a young man from attaining his performance goal.

Chevelle models are still an all-around good vehicle in any form, although SS versions offer the most attraction for those of us who appreciate good performance manners. The SS 454 V8 is continued with a 365-horsepower rating and termed LS5 on the option sheet. There is also a solid-lifter 454 V8 that develops a gross output of 425 horsepower and goes by the title of LS6, although it sports 9.0:1 compression ratio. Both engines are only available with the Z15 SS option, which is the way it should be, but the SS package (good suspension, wide tires and wheels, front and rear sway bars, etc.) can be added to smaller-engined Chevelles, such as the 240- and 270-horse 350-inch V8s and the 300-horsepower 400-cubic-inch V8s. The combination of good handling, disc brakes and a small-block Chevy offers interesting possibilities.

Visual changes to the car are in the front end, which now has Monte Carlo-like single headlights, and the back side, which has a slightly smoother look and round taillamps. Suspension characteristics and options are the same as in 1970, but the car (coupe) is .3-inch longer and 1 inch lower, and front and rear tread have been widened a little bit, which means less than .2-inch.

One of the truly notable accomplishments for any auto-conscious person this coming year is accurately spotting a '71-model-year Camaro from one produced before the full '71 line introduction. The taillights have a different lens and the backup light is larger. But Z/28s have larger front and rear spoilers, so there's no sport here. Camaro engines are all in the 8.5:1 compression bracket, but the Z/28 optional 350 engine is way up there at 9.0:1. Additions to the option list are a 300-horse V8 (which, as you probably know, is really a 402-cubic-inch engine), a 4.10 rear gear option for the Z/28, and a sport steering wheel which should really turn the tide for Camaro lovers.

The Chevy II... oops, Nova... is another auto-expert model: The taillight lens is changed, backup lights are bigger, and there's even a new-look standard hubcap. A sport suspension package is now available on the Nova that includes — among other things — a rear stabilizer bar, larger-diameter front bar and higher-rate shocks. This suspension can be had only with the Nova SS, which also brings along the largest engine to be had in the compact Chevy, the 270-horsepower, four-barrel-carbed, 350-inch V8. Below that is a 240-horsepower, two-barrel 307 V8 and a 250-

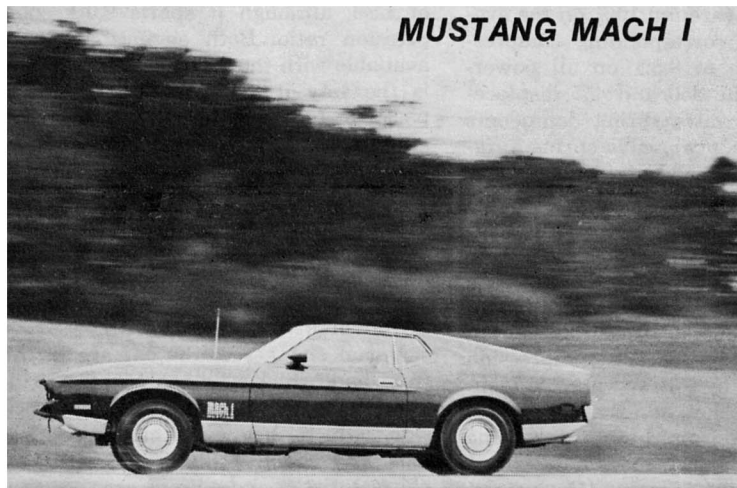
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Seventy-ones



PINTO



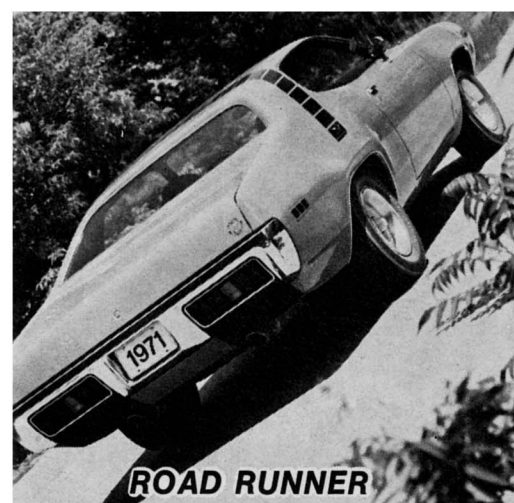
MUSTANG MACH 1



MAVERICK MAVI GT



DUSTER



ROAD RUNNER



'CUDA

cubic-inch six-banger. And that's that.

There are only two features accompanying the Corvette into its 19th year of existence: a low-profile resin process used in forming the body panels to ensure greater surface smoothness and the availability of that 425-horsepower, 454-cubic-inch V8. The taillight lens isn't changed, and the backup lights are the same size as before. Another case of "don't tamper with a good thing."

Now we bring up the Vega. Believe it or not, this one's all new, and it represents hundreds of millions of dollars to General Motors and Chevrolet. After driving it, we think it was worth the price and effort. It has a die-cast 140-cubic-inch, four-cylinder OHC; choice of three-speed or four-speed manual, or a two-speed Powerglide; a standard engine with 90 horses or a "super" model with 110; four different body shapes, including a hatch-back model that allows full body access; 97.0-inch wheelbase; 169.7-inch overall length and a curb weight right around 2200 pounds. With a little work, it would make a tremendous Pro Stocker, yet the as-sold car is something better than we ever expected. Acceleration is below the 1-G level on takeoff, but it will get moving relatively quick, and top speed of the L11-engined (110-hp) Vega is right around 100 mph. Not to be left without sales appeal for all types of buyers, Chevrolet has packaged a GT coupe option and a special ride and handling

option. These bring trim and comfort additions, wide tires, sway bars and stiffer springing. The coil spring suspension is very good in the tight corners, and the highly compact rear suspension with short-length control arms got so much attention during the planning of this car that it's close to impossible to put the rear end out of shape. The front end exhibits some tire curling, yet overall steering is almost neutral. Front disc brakes are standard, and braking tests have shown that 22-feet-per-second-per second (1 G) deceleration is quite easy to realize. It stops straight, too. A 9.12-inch-diameter diaphragm clutch fits ahead of the optional 3.43:1 low-geared four-speed, which is a rail-type box with very short overall length.

DODGE

Last year's Dart came perilously close to receiving the name "Beaver" for '71, and since it didn't, there's no telling now how the new title might've worked. Call it that if you like, but the official name on the Dodge low-price entry is "Demon," and it shares major body panels with the Brand X Duster, except for the front end, which is the same as on the Dart model, still offered in four-door and Swinger versions. The 108-inch-wheelbase Demon can be outfitted with a variety of comfort and/or performance pieces, including the Corporation's venerable 340 V8, which ba-

sically is unchanged from its ancestors, including the 275-horsepower rate. A 318-cubic-inch, 230-horsepower V8 is the next smallest engine available, and there are a pair of sixes for those who care to travel that route. The Scat Pack is most certainly impressed with the reception given to Plymouth's Duster in its first year, and since Dodge had a record sales year in 1970 with their Dart, the obvious conclusion is that things are going to get better. The Demon is their tool to keep up the pace.

The Coronet and Charger have always shared most components; but it's less so now, with each having a new shape, size and look. The wedge-shaped intermediate body is even more prominent on the Charger than on the Coronet. In a wise move, Dodge has elected to reduce in-house competition, and the Coronet is now built in four-door and wagon models only, on a 118-inch wheelbase. The 115-inch-wheelbase Charger is built on a different floor plan than the Coronet, and the Super Bee outfit is now based on the Charger. Engine offerings are nearly the same as on previous Chargers, which takes in the 318 V8, two- and four-barrel-carb versions of the 383, the twin-carbed 426 Hemi, and the 440 V8 in either single four- or triple two-barrel fuel induction systems. Styling is the major departure from the familiar on the Charger, with a loop bumper forward and a trimmed-down shape everywhere else. Exterior di-

mensions have been reduced from the '70 edition Charger, though rear tread width is greater by more than two inches. At the same time, the interior dimensions haven't been significantly altered, and in quite a few areas, they've been improved.

The only improvement needed on Dodge's Challenger was better attention to quality construction. Front and rear end styling has been given a touch-up job, and almost everything else remains unchanged from its successful first-season run. Rear track is wider, but all other major dimensions are identical to last year. Engine availability is the same as on the Charger except for the 340 V8. There is still no factory-installed rear stabilizer for anything but 340 and 383 V8-powered Challengers, and if this were rectified and assembly techniques improved, there'd be little left to request.

FORD

This newest Mustang has taken on a new size and shape, with the fastback showing strains of the "Breadwagon" look reminiscent of the Le Mans "J car" project a few years back. The windshield is sloped more, the fastback top is kicked higher, height is reduced .5-inch, length is more by 2.1 inches, wheelbase is longer by 1 inch and front tread has been widened a full 3 inches, while the rear is more than in 1970 by 2.5

inches — which all serves to say the car is growing. Looks are different in all areas, though chances of seeing another Mustang through the rear view mirror have been made difficult by the sharp slope of the fastback top. The '71 Mustang is heavier than earlier models, although the increased track and lower height contribute to a better-handling car in base form. For additional agility, the rear shocks are staggered on all cars with a 351-4V engine or larger, and the competition suspension package is merely a matter of checking the right order form square. Mach 1 and Boss 351 versions (the Boss 302 is no more) have all the sturdy underpinnings, front disc brakes, fat tires and wheels; and there's a new type of power steering. Both units are integral design, replacing the linkage-assist design used until now. One version is a constant-ratio system geared 17.5:1; and the new variable-ratio system, used with competition suspension, has a range from 16:1 at the center to 13:1 at each end. All '71 Fords have an integral return spring in the throttle cable. A 302-cubic-inch, two-barrel V8 is the base Mustang V8, and the jump from there is to a 351 two-throat-fed, 240-horsepower V8, with a 285-horsepower, four-barrel model also on the list. The 330-horsepower Boss 351 engine is a limited-production powerplant based on the 351-Cleveland block, and all equipment used on it can be adapted to all other 351-C Ford engines. It has a mechanical cam, 11.7:1 compression, 370 lb.-ft. torque at 4000 rpm, and traditional "Boss" heads. Incidentally, Ford has introduced a 4-inch x 4-inch small-block V8 based on the Cleveland engine, for use in full-size Fords, that offers some very good possibilities. The 429 CJ engine on the Mustang list of engines and a drag-pack equipment package may be added to either.

Torino's claim to fame for '71 consists of increased rear spring rates, competition suspension on GTs and Cobras with 429 V8s, mechanically retained front door glass, and very moderate changes to front end styling. For the most part, the '71 is a carryover from '70, and V8 engines offered are a two-barrel 302, a two- and a four-barrel 351 V8, and a pair of 429 CJs (one with Ram Air, the other without). Interestingly enough, the 429 churners can be ordered in Torino wagons. That ought to improve car pool service.

The Falcon is no more, but Ford is loading up on little cars. The already established Maverick now has a four-door version that's seven inches longer than the coupe; the Grabber has a pair of dummy hood scoops; bucket seats are optional, as is a floor shift with either transmission, and all models have wheel-hop-reducing staggered rear shocks. Before the year is out, Ford will make available a full kit of performance parts

for the in-line six, including triple carburetion, high-rpm valve train and cam, exhaust headers (maybe), high-compression pistons, a 3.50 rear axle, premium main bearings and an improved-capacity oil pump. The 200- and 250-cubic-inch sixes will accept the small-block Ford bellhousing and four-speed, and the package en route from Ford's Muscle Parts planners will have all the trimmings to complete the job, plus suggestions for further modifications. We've driven the prototype Mavi GT, and it screams. It also gets 24 miles per gallon while in the same condition in which it runs the quarter in 15.38 seconds.

The infant mini-car in Ford's stable is their Pinto, and it comes standard with an English-built OHC 1600cc (97.6-cubic-inch) engine, tied to a single-rail-shifted four-speed. The optional 2000cc (122-cubic-inch) OHC German-built engine will wear a three-speed automatic until sometime after December 1, when a four-speed will be offered. To generate interest in the right corners, Ford has developed a few Muscle Parts for the Pinto. The 1600cc engine boosters will be out within the next month or so; and John Holman related to us that he's in the Pinto parts business now too, as a result of his recent involvement in Formula Ford racing, wherein the 1600cc four-cylinder is used. The 2000cc engine is fairly new, and performance parts work has had to wait; but there will be Ford-developed hardware ready for it by early spring of '71.

The Pinto is a pretty straightforward car, and its styling shows traces of Ford designs from the '46 two-door sedan all the way up to the Maverick. Steering is rack and pinion; it has a unitized body, independent front coil spring suspension, leaf-spring Hotchkiss-type rear, optional front disc brakes, and a pretty long option list, with everything from air conditioning to a full-length roof rack.

MERCURY

The once-sporty Cougar is putting on weight, length and width; and despite the fact that two Cobra Jet 429 V8s are shown for Cougar use, this breed of cat is leaving the fold. Lincoln-Mercury, with encouragement from corporation heads, is on a preset course with the Cougar, to spot it where the Thunderbird presently nests. It doesn't look as sophisticated as it once did, so while the L-M cat enters a period of growing pains, forgive us while we content ourselves with the memory of a once-logical car and let the Cougar pass into another zone.

Mercury has been given the Maverick body shell to revive the Comet. Whether this is needed in the spread-out auto market is hard to determine, but had

(Continued on following page)

it not been for the Comet, Maverick would undoubtedly sport a small-block V8 this year. The Comet has all the six-cylinder engines used in Maverick, plus a 220-horsepower, two-barrel-carbureted, 302-cubic-inch V8. All but the 250-inch six can be bolted to the standard three-speed, while the base 170-inch six is the only available powerplant not able to go with the automatic. Almost every feature and option common to the Maverick is common to this latest Comet. Overall length is more by about two inches, a result of the center-thrust-design front end which complements a current Lincoln-Mercury styling trend. The Comet has deluxe trim, and one welcome difference is 14-inch wheels.

Since there was nothing wrong with the '70 Montego Cyclone, the same holds true for the '71. It really hasn't changed, except that the Spoiler rendition has a very noticeable paint stripe running along the fender edge line. There is an integral hood scoop, made functional by the use of the 429 CJ Ram Air engine. The Cyclone GT gets the 220-horsepower 302 V8 in standard form, the Cyclone gets a four-barrel-equipped, 300-horsepower 351 engine, while the non-Ram Air 429 CJ, a 370-horsepower V8, goes into the Spoiler. The lowest rear cog coming off the Cyclone assembly line is a 3.50:1 ratio, with or without limited slip.

OLDSMOBILE

The "W" stands alone now in the '71 line-up. The W-31, 350-cubic-inch Cutlass just couldn't pass its emission control tests and had to be scratched from the charts. W-30 4-4-2 models are still very much alive, in spite of an 8.5:1 compression ratio, accomplished by dish-ing out the top of the piston. The 455-cubic-inch engine in the 4-4-2 has a net SAE brake horsepower rating of 260, and nobody has been quick to volunteer what the "W" machine is capable of when installed. Valve rotators are fitted to exhaust valves on 4-4-2 and "W" engines, in addition to the ones on the intake side; and special-alloy exhaust valve seats are installed in these heads, while the valves themselves have aluminized seats and hardened tips. To ensure that the calibrated carb settings stay the way they should, plastic caps are snapped over idle mixture screws. Low-compression engines tend to generate more heat than high-compression types, and while it's easy to increase fan speed, noise becomes a problem. Olds has set up their fans to increase speed faster from idle, but the new clutch design releases it before the objectionable noise level is reached. The rear ends on Cutlasses have been given larger pinion bearings and stronger pinion shafts, and the clutches in limited-slip differentials now develop higher maximum-friction torque. Optional on "W" cars is a dual-disc, dual-plate



clutch that offers 10% greater torque capability, 40% less pedal effort, and a 100% increase in clutch life. We drove a dual-disc-equipped Cutlass with a 455 and four-speed gearbox, and the shifts are startlingly quick and effortless. You really have to get used to using a light foot. A heavy-duty close-ratio four-speed can be ordered on "W" machines, although it isn't recommended for sustained street driving.

"W" machines get the full complement of suspension pieces for tackling all kinds of highway outings, and disc front brakes are advisable too.

All things considered, there has been no performance sacrifice made to the 4-4-2 or W-30 Oldsmobile; and it's hard not to like a car that looks, handles and runs this good.

PLYMOUTH

If the Barracuda improves quality, then there's a chance it could overcome its homely appearance. What was once a smooth and appealing style has been handicapped by the gingerbread mouth on the '71 car, and by the insistence of some product planners to wipe out smooth panels by adorning them with yards of adhesive in the form of numbers, stripes or esoteric designs. The 1949-fashion front fender louvers don't do a thing for the 'Cuda. At least the new Barracuda has been given dual headlamps, yet the 440 and 426 V8-engined 'Cudas still aren't offered with a rear bar. You need only one journey through a quick corner to realize how much the monster-motor cars need the

aft stabilizer. Heavy-duty suspension is standard on all 'Cuda editions; and the extra-heavy-duty parts—.92-inch torsion bars, 5½-leaf bias-control rear springs and heavy-duty front stabilizer and shock absorbers—are included with 440- and 426-equipped Mayflower pony cars and optional on all others. Four-speed transmissions have been improved all across the MoPar line. Synchro action has been refined so that power shifts are a reality every time, and combined with that is better clutch release action which helps to reduce shift effort and time. A Track Pack option provides 440 and 426 'Cudas with a 9¼-inch-diameter Dana ring gear, 3.54 gearing, dual-point distributor, seven-blade fan and limited-slip differential. A Super Track Pack is almost the same, but it has a 4.10 gear, plus power steering and front disc brakes.

Engines offered for the 'Cuda haven't seen compression-ratio rework, except for the 383 four-speed which is no longer offered in its 9.5:1 Magnum form and has been replaced by a more mundane 8.7:1 four-barrel version, so the major performance capabilities are equal to 1970. Four engines fit the 'Cuda: the 275-horse 340 small-block, the 300-horsepower 383, the 425-horsepower Hemi 426 and the triple two-barrel-carbureted 440 V8 rated at 385 horsepower. The AAR 'Cuda gets its exclusive 290-hp, multiple-carbed 340.

We hate to attack a car because of its looks, but no matter how well this car is put together, and how well it



handles and drives, most owners will appreciate it more if they approach it from the rear.

Briefly, the Road Runner is just about like it was, but with a new body. A simple line-up of three engines are open for use in the Road Runner: the single four-barrel, 300-horse, 383-cubic-inch V8; the 426 Hemi and the three-carbureted 440 V8. The GTX and Road Runner are quite similar, with the GTX being a little more plush and having a higher price tag. Both get better-than-average suspensions with changes dictated by the type of engine installed. F70-14 tires are standard Road Runner items, and G60-15 tires on 7.0-inch-wide wheels come with 426 and 440 V8s. Overall length is down a whopping .5-inch this year, yet wheelbase is an inch shorter. This body is wider and lower than the '70, and rear track is greater by 3.3 inches, with no change in width at the front. No wonder it feels better—and different. Plymouth will let you spoil your Road Runner with front and rear spoilers, or you can pay for rear window slats. A wise option is their new thick-rimmed, small-diameter steering wheel. Seating position is similar to the Barracuda, and the wheel doesn't do anything but make driving a lot nicer—but you'd better put power steering at the other end of the 360° tiller.

Now let's spend three or four lines on all the new things about the Duster, which helped Plymouth compact car sales jump 150% in 1970. All that was

good on the '70 is held over for '71, but there's a different grille (!), an optional folding center armrest for the front, a rear spoiler option (if you think your Duster needs spoiling), and the availability of that small-diameter steering wheel. Two V8s—one a 318-cubic-inch displacement, the other the 340—keep the choice to a minimum, and since the 340 hasn't yet been detuned, it still humbles giants. All 340s have Carter Thermo-Quad four-holers this year, with triple venturis, and the entire line of MoPar 383 and 440 V8s have lower-profile inlet ports to direct the combustibles more toward the cylinder bore center. One other Chrysler Corporation across-the-board feature is 185-degree Fahrenheit thermostats to improve NOx (oxides of nitrogen) control.

PONTIAC

We're glad Pontiac falls at the end of an alphabetical list of car brand names. Wrapping up a feature like this with such an easy-to-discuss subject is good for one's spirit and interest. Before you think otherwise, that Pontiac hemi on the cover isn't part of their '71 introduction. Move over to page 44 when you've completed this story and you'll find out what it is all about.

There's still prestige connected with GTO; and if you're willing to work hard, they can be made to run. The work is a bit harder, of course, on the '71 cars (particularly GM offspring) as a result of the larger open-area combustion chambers. A four-barrel-carbureted, regular-fuel-burning, 400-cubic-inch V8 is standard with GTOs, can be hooked to any of three standard or optional transmissions, and has a 3.23:1 bottom-of-the-line rear gear. In every case, Pontiac has increased their rear axle ratios to the next lowest (higher number) gear ratio to prevent the lower-horsepower engines from being noticeably lower in performance. A 455-cubic-inch, four-barrel V8 with 8.2:1 compression ratio is the first engine option up for the GTO; but the ultimate performer is the 455 HO four-barrel-carbed V8, which carries an 8.5:1 c/r and is the standard engine for all Judge models, as well as for this year's Trans-Am Firebird. The Judge features functional hood scoops; three-speed, heavy-duty, floor-shifted transmission in base form; chrome-free Rally II wheels and a rear airfoil, and this HO 455 has a number of the intake and exhaust components found on the now-extinct Ram Air IV engine. This past summer, Pontiac turned us loose with an HO-powered Judge fitted with the ultimate optional suspension pieces, identical to those found on the T-A Firebird, and this is some kind of a well-balanced handler. Lap times compared to a T-A 'Bird were almost identical, and during several bouts around a road course, we found it impossible for one car to pass the other, the leader

being the driver who happened to leave the line first. Pontiac engineers also gave us a chance at driving a tunnel-port-cylinder-head-equipped GTO which had no trouble outrunning the whole pack of Pontiacs present for this outing. These heads should soon be available over the dealer parts counters as a service package.

An intriguing low-cost performance package is the new GT-37 option for any V8-driven Le Mans coupe or hard-top, and any of the five V8s from the two-barrel 350 to the 455 HO are possible in this car. The GT-37 bit is mostly for appearance, having a three-speed floor-shifted manual, dechromed (no trim rings) Rally II wheels, G70-14 tires, hood pins, dual exhausts and some identifying marks. It isn't a GTO, and insurance men will probably rejoice at that remark.

Floor-shifted automatics all have the Rally Sports shifter with single-stage upshift feature, all the new Pontiacs combine the side marker lights into the directionals so they flash too, all have a self-regulating integrated-circuit alternator which does away with a separate regulator, all 455 engines now have valve sizes identical to earlier high-performance models (2.110-inch intake, 1.770-inch exhaust), and air-valve opening on the secondary side of Quadrajet-rigged engines has been speeded up by 11.2 seconds to preclude stumble or slow response. Because they paid for most of the development work, Pontiac has an exclusive maintenance-free lead-acid battery this year that doesn't even have sight caps, which proves maintenance-free is what they mean.

Firebird is still the kind of car you hate to park. It's always enjoyable, and if too much of a good thing is great, then that describes the Trans-Am. There's something to be said for not flaunting scoops, spoilers, stripes and honeycomb-pattern wheels everywhere you happen to travel; but then none of us is above indulging in an ego trip once in a while. The torque-laden 455 HO is standard power for the T-A, and when you couple that to a close-ratio four-speed, even high insurance rates and car payments can seem trivial. Underpinnings are totally correct for this car. Front stabilizer measures 1.25 inches in diameter, the rear is .875-inch, and spring rates are equal to those on the Formula 400. There are three Formula Firebirds now: a 350, a 400, and a 455. Each is well-prepared for handling chores, but the Formula 350 only has a two-barrel carb, so it can't be expected to dominate many battles. However, it still looks right. The 400 is a four-barrel model, the 455 is also a four-holer, and the 455 HO V8 is orderable. In any trim, they get around—skillfully. ■ ■