

Cougar-p-p-p-p...

"Top Cat of the Year!"



MOTOR TREND MAGAZINE'S "CAR OF THE YEAR" AWARD GOES TO '67 MERCURY COUGAR

POP! ZOOM! DAZZLE! It takes a zoom lens to give a camera, even our \$1500 Nikon outfit, imagination enough to picture what we see in the new Cougar — what made it our unanimous choice for MOTOR TREND magazine's 1967 "Car of the Year" Award.

Remember the rules. The winner "must have that multiplex combination of engineering, styling and market timing that when perfectly enjoined do together create progress sufficient to set an industry trend."

The Cougar's trend-setting capabilities are already indicated by early sales totals. To start with, Cougar got caught with a not-unusual marketing situation with an all-new car. The long-planned introductory date of September 30 of necessity became inflexible, but manufacturing wasn't quite ready. So, in lieu of adequate stocks at each of the 2500 or so Mercury dealerships, Principal Motors of Monterey, Calif. was chosen to be given an "unlimited" stock to test the market. Out of the initial delivery of 30, it sold 29 the first month, a rate which if projected nationally would have given Cougar an 8% market penetration.

The Monterey area was picked because it indulges itself in fancy cars. Rolls-Royces per capita are high there and so too are Mustangs. Nationally, due to Cougar stocks averaging less than one per dealer on introduction day, a penetration of 0.7% was achieved. The ultimate pace will certainly be closer to the Monterey figure, indicating that Cougar is setting a trend its first time out. Eleven of Principal's sales were "conquests" and 10 were "clean." The other trade-ins were Mercury and English Ford products.

The trend, specifically, is that there is a market for a high-ticket, intermediate sporty car. Sporty, yes, but sporty luxury. Eight out of 10 are being sold with automatics, six out of 10 with power steering, and two out of 10 have air conditioning.

As to engineering, Cougar variety is great enough to be confusing even to its maker at this early stage. There's the basic 2-barrel 289 V-8 and this grows and grows until at the dealer level (but factory engineered) you can take your pick between two 4-barrels (Group Two) or four Webers. Really the hot street car, though, will be the 4-barrel 390 option. Any of these may be had in XR-7 trim which involves an entirely new instrument panel and exterior identification. Then, finally, if all goes well, at least 500 XR-7S's will be built to qualify Cougar for Group Three endurance racing. These will have FoMoCo's hefty 428 engine and their own special trim.

Styling, of course, is a matter of personal preference. You might say that the Cougar remains "safe," yet distinctive and exciting. Certainly, though, the 3-inch-longer wheelbase was put to practical use with the added rear legroom. But it added more than just this. To see what we mean, turn the page to illustrator Coby Whitmore's interpretation of the Cougar, "Car of the Year."



**Motor Trend
Magazine's
"Car of the Year"
as seen by
Coby Whitmore**

Ed. Note: As you can see, famed illustrator Coby Whitmore likes girls. He also likes cars and has a chronically overstocked garage nearby the Lime Rock (Conn.) racecourse that usually includes at least one Ferrari. Yet, except for designing the Fitch Phoenix (Dec. '66 MT), he has never drawn cars. His svelte girls are regularly featured in magazines such as the SatEvePost and McCall's, and he's done ads for such diverse customers as Arrow Shirts and United Airlines. We picked him to interpret the mood of the Cougar for just these reasons, and we jotted down his comments while he worked. The girl? Neat. It's a "man's car," isn't it?

"I love the wheel-to-body relationship."

"This cat has a beautiful fender line."

"Don't excite it too much . . . like a lady it will tremble a bit."

"The Cougar looks ready to pounce."

"The interior is 'bachelor modern.'"

Coby Whitmore