

EXPLOSION IN BUDGET SUPERCARS

FAMILY FEUDS are the fiercest kind. When relatives have at it, the stranger is well advised to stand clear. When divisions of the same corporation compete, though, the buyer is the winner.

Dodge and Plymouth occupy different positions on the parent corporation's chart, but in the marketplace, they compete. The Road Runner's feathers were barely dry when Super Bee arrived. The Formula "S" Barracuda competes with the Dart GTS. This year, Plymouth has the 'Cuda 340, a pocket Road Runner, and Dodge has countered with the Swinger.

Swinger is a budget-semi-Supercar, a compact with a factory-tweaked mid-range engine, four-speed transmission and stiffened suspension as standard equipment, but without the usual accessories that run the price up. The buyer can have the options, but he doesn't have to take them to get the performance equipment. The package doesn't come in a plain wrapper. With the Swinger-only red paint, the appearance-only hood vents, the stripes around the rear deck, and low-restriction dual exhausts, Swinger can be identified from blocks away.

The buyer will still have the advantage enjoyed by the guys who ordered big engines in plain cars before the factory caught on: Swinger

PHOTOS BY GORDON CHITTENDEN



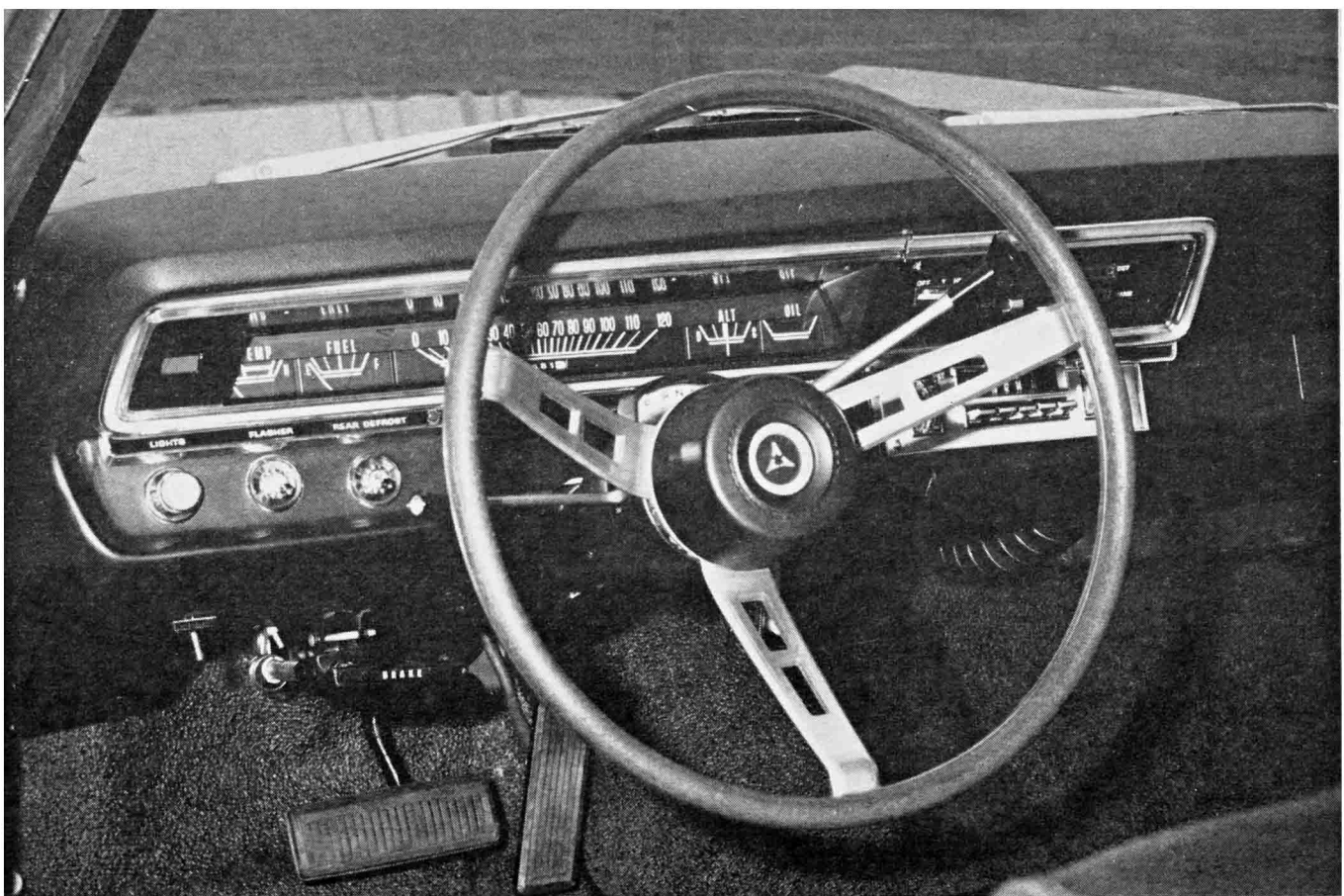
CAR LIFE
ROAD TEST

SWINGER

BALANCED suspension makes the Swinger swing, literally, through high-speed turns. At left, the car drifts into the turn with a touch of understeer. Above and below, with power on and negative lock, the Swinger comes through in a beautiful, controlled, dirt-track slide.

*For once, the
ad men
picked the
right name.
The Swinger
does.*





SPARTAN INTERIOR is the only way the Swinger shows signs of cost-cutting. Floor covering is nubby rubber and the gearshift is on the steering column. Accelerator pedal is too close to the seat, and makes for cramped ankles.

1969 SWINGER

DODGE DART



DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.	111
Track, f/r, in.	57.4/55.6
Overall length, in.	195.4
width	69.6
height	54.4
Front seat hip room, in.	53
shoulder room	55.4
head room	38.3
pedal-seatback, max.	42
Rear seat hip room, in.	56
shoulder room	55.4
leg room	34.5
head room	37.3
Door opening width, in.	42
Trunk liftover height, in.	24

PRICES

List, FOB factory	\$2857
Equipped as tested	\$3470
Options included: disc front brakes, \$50.15; power brakes, \$42.95; automatic transmission, \$29.35; radio group (includes radio, power steering, variable-speed wipers, remote control mirror), \$196.85; vinyl roof, \$77.25; and Polyglas tires, \$31.60.	

CAPACITIES

No. of passengers	6
Luggage space, cu. ft.	14.1
Fuel tank, gal.	18
Crankcase, qt.	4
Transmission/dif., pt.	16/4
Radiator coolant, qt.	17

CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Frame type: Unitized.
 Front suspension type: Independent by s.l.a., torsion springs, telescopic shock absorbers.
 ride rate at wheel, lb./in. 100
 antiroll bar dia., in. 0.88
 Rear suspension type: Hotchkiss live axle, multileaf springs, telescopic shock absorbers.
 ride rate at wheel, lb./in. 132
 Steering system: Integral assist, recirculating ball gear, parallelogram linkage behind front wheels.
 overall ratio 18.8:1
 turns, lock to lock 3.5
 turning circle, ft. curb-to-curb 37.8
 Curb weight, lb. 3310
 Test weight 3605
 Distribution (driver),
 % f/r 55.6/44.4

BRAKES

Type: Ventilated disc front, drum rear; proportioning valve.
 Front rotor, dia. x width, in. 10.79 x 1.84
 Rear drum, dia. x width 10 x 1.75
 total swept area, sq. in. 314.7
 Power assist
 line psi at 100 lb. pedal 800

WHEELS/TIRES

Wheel rim size 14 x 5.55
 optional size N.A.
 bolt no./circle dia. in. 5/4
 Tires: Goodyear Polyglas Wide Ovals size D70-14
 normal inflation, psi f/r 28/28
 Capacity, lb., @ psi 5280 @ 32

ENGINE

Type, no. of cyl. V-8
 Bore x stroke, in. 4.04 x 3.31
 Displacement, cu. in. 340
 Compression ratio 10.5:1
 Fuel required Premium
 Rated bhp @ rpm 275 @ 5900
 equivalent mph 111.5
 Rated torque @ rpm 340 @ 3200
 equivalent mph 71.4
 Carburetion: Carter AVS 4612S.
 throttle dia., pri./sec. 1.44/1.69
 Valve train: Hydraulic lifters, push-rods and overhead rocker arms.
 cam timing.
 deg., int./exh. 22-66/74-22
 duration, int./exh. 266°/276°
 Exhaust system: Dual, reverse flow mufflers.
 pipe dia., exh./tail 2.25/1.88
 Normal oil press @
 rpm 45-65 @ 2000
 Electrical supply, v./amp 12/37
 Battery, plates/amp. hr. 54/48

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission type: 3-speed auto, torque converter.
 Gear ratio overall 3.23:1
 3rd (1.00) 3.23:1
 2nd (1.45) 4.69:1
 1st (2.45) 7.91:1
 1st x t.c. stall (2.10:1) 16.61
 Shift lever location: Column
 Differential type: Hypoid
 axle ratio 3.23:1

SWINGER

continued

is faster than a surprising number of bigger, and more expensive, and fancier competitors.

Responsive is the usual term for a high-performance engine. The 340 is more than responsive, it's eager. Tap the long, thin pedal, and good things happen in a hurry. The 340 was designed to be a high-performance engine. Unlike some, the 340 isn't an economy engine with a hot cam and four-barrel carburetor tacked on as an afterthought. The 340 came that way from the start.

The 383-cid engine isn't offered with the Swinger, and it's just as well. A big car might be able to use the extra torque, and tolerate the extra 100 lb., but the Swinger doesn't need the one, and is a much better car without the other. (The 383 is an option with the Dart GTS. Those who opt for the big engine are warned: Don't write us later and ask what you can do to make the car handle well. You'll get a

reply advising, in polite terms, what you can do with the heavy engine.)

The test car had one very important option—Polyglas tires. The Dodge representative on the West Coast ordered them with the test car. The computer misread the order, and the car came with polyester tires. Not the same thing at all. To satisfy our curiosity, we ran a few tests on the original tires, then switched to the belted tires for the full test.

Braking results were about the same. The standard tires developed about as much cornering grip as did the belted, but the Polyglas set made for better handling. They were more responsive to the steering wheel and accelerator, and raised the Swinger's rating as a road car about one point on a 10-point scale.

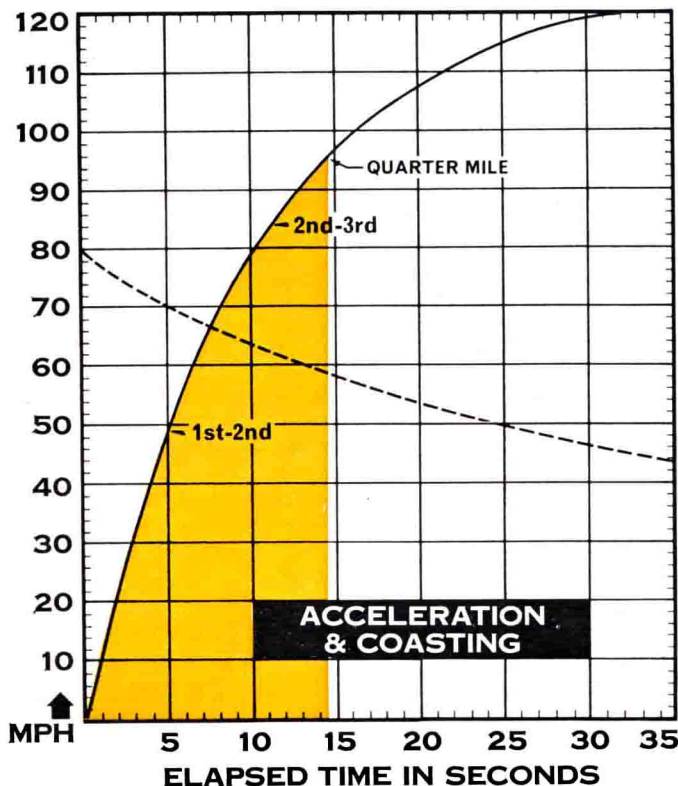
We're working on ways to put handling capabilities into figures, but we're not ready yet. Acceleration times are a good illustration of the traction

advantage the Polyglas tires give. With the regular tires, full power couldn't be used off the line. The tires spun and smoked, so the testers had to start from idle. Elapsed times for the quarter-mile were in the low 15s.

Belted up, things changed. The tires stuck to the strip, and the engine could be run up against the brakes. Green, and full power. All the power went to the pavement, and the e.t.s averaged a quick 14.8. To avoid embarrassment, this test will not contain a list of the cars tested during the past year that arrived with performance reputations and equipment, but which weren't as quick. Readers with back issues (you all *do* save them, don't you?), will find that half an hour spent comparing times is very educational.

On the road course, the Swinger did. The pictures of the Swinger at speed show just how far the driver can go. The tester came into the corner a little faster than he should have, and

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test weight)	13.1
Cu. ft./ton mile	147.0
Mph/1000 rpm (high gear)	22.3
Engine revs/mile (60 mph)	2690
Piston travel, ft./mile	1814
CAR LIFE wear index	48.7
Frontal area, sq. ft.	21.0
NHRA/AHRA class	

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual	27.6
40 mph	37.7
50 mph	47.6
60 mph	58.6
70 mph	67.87
80 mph	77.65
90 mph	86.53

MAINTENANCE

Engine oil, miles/days	4000/90
oil filter, miles/days	8000/180
Chassis lubrication, miles	36,000
Antismog servicing, type/miles	
Tune-up check and PCV valve replacement/12,000	
Air cleaner, miles	replace/24,000
Spark plugs: Champion N-9Y	
gap, (in.)	0.035
Basic timing, deg./rpm	TDC
max. cent. adv., deg./rpm	22 @ 4000
max. vac. adv., deg./in.	
Hg.	8.5 @ 10.5
Ignition point gap, in.	0.014-0.019
cam dwell angle, deg.	27-32
arm tension, oz.	17-21.5
Tappet clearance, int./exh.	0/0
Fuel pressure at idle, psi	5-7
Radiator cap relief press., psi	16

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (5400), mph	121
Test shift points (rpm) @ mph	
2nd to 3rd (5400)	83
1st to 2nd (5400)	49

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.	3.0
0-40 mph	4.2
0-50 mph	5.4
0-60 mph	6.9
0-70 mph	8.4
0-80 mph	10.5
0-90 mph	13.0
0-100 mph	16.3
Standing 1/4-mile, sec.	14.8
speed at end, mph	96
Passing, 30-70 mph, sec.	5.4

BRAKING

Max. deceleration rate from 80 mph	
ft./sec./sec.	22
No. of stops from 80 mph (60-sec. intervals) before 20% loss in deceleration rate	5
Control loss? Moderate	
Overall brake performance	Fair

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Test conditions, mpg	11
Normal cond., mpg	12-15
Cruising range, miles	216-264

SWINGER

continued

braked. The tail came out. Reverse steering lock and more power put the car into a drift, and it came around under control, pointed in the right direction, in as nice a dirt-track attitude as you'll find this side of Nazareth, Pa.

The suspension is excellent. The stiffened springs and bigger shock absorbers have been chosen well, and they make the Swinger handle without making it harsh. The Polyglas tires are firmer than the standard tires, but the combination still works on all but the roughest of roads, where jolts are both heard and felt, and which shook the hood on the test car. It was an early model. This may have been a flaw in the one car, and not the design. Wives rode in the Swinger without discomfort, something that doesn't happen with every test car, and without making more than the standard wifely comment that, "You're not at the test track now."

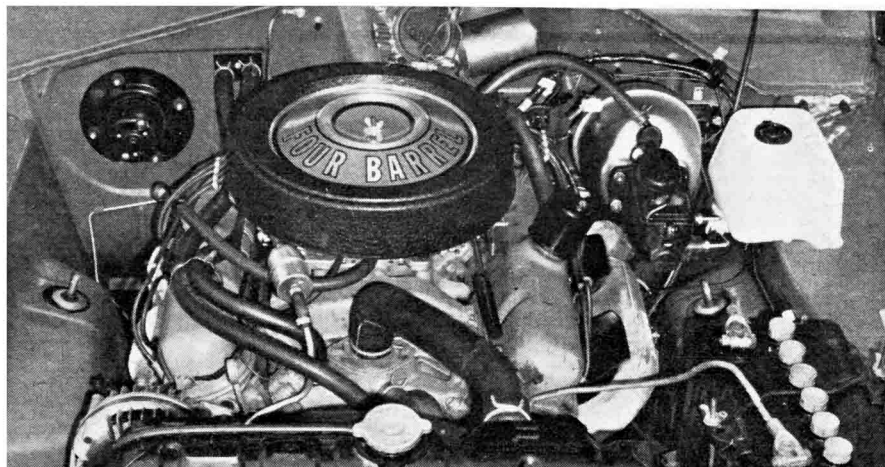
The power-assisted steering (another option) worked well, but it could be better. Road feel comes through only with practice, but it's there. The Swinger is agile, using the suspension to its limit requires lots of action with the wheel. Quicker steering would be welcome, even if more driver effort came with it.

The brakes were a disappointment, especially since the same system was so impressive last year. The deceleration rate was only fair, and the rear wheels locked easily, forcing the driver to ease up so he could control the resulting swerve. The Swinger's brakes are more than adequate for highway driving, but all-out stops take skill and concentration.

The Swinger's spartan beginnings show only on the inside. Standard interiors have rubber floor covering, bench front seat and the economy Dart instrument panel. Minor drawbacks. The bench is comfortable, and makes the car usable by families, although the tires hold the road more firmly than the seat holds the driver. The only missing instrument was a tachometer. It's not needed with the automatic transmission, once the enthusiast owner has worked out shift points on the speedometer. It might be well to mention here that the driver must shift for himself if he wants maximum performance. The factory



BENCH FRONT seat should suit families and bachelors who think two can ride as closely as one. As in most compacts, the rear seat is comfortable only for kids.



EAGER 340-CID engine is standard in the Swinger. The light, strong 340 keeps the Swinger in balance, and it's nearly as powerful as the heavier 383.

sets the transmission to shift up before the engine is at peak power, in the interest of smoothness and quietness.

The only complaint the testers had about the interior was that the accelerator is too close to the seat, or the seat too close to the steering wheel. With the wheel and seat properly positioned, the driver is forced to bend his foot back, or pivot his heel well in front of the pedal, which puts his right leg in the air. It's not too bad for driving around town, but it's a pain in the leg during long trips.

As tested, the Swinger wasn't cheap, but it's still a good buy. The tires,

brakes, steering and transmission are worth having. Gas mileage ranged from 11 mpg at the test track, when the engine was being used, to 15 on the highway, when it was loafing. The Swinger has room for a growing family, fine handling and road manners, and good performance.

One CAR LIFE staffer, a believer in cubic inches, decided he liked the Swinger, but that it wasn't a Supercar. No thundering bellow, no intimidating bulk, no high-torque boot in the back.

Okay, said a small car fan, the Swinger isn't a Supercar. It's just faster than a Supercar. ■