



"Get ready, America, we're on our way!" How many times have we heard that warning, felt it in the singular porosity of our bank books and the blood of our turnip hides as we've submitted to the machinations of auto row. That warning from across the Atlantic and then the Pacific. The feeling as we've looked around at the minute bugs and boxes darting through traffic. Those subliminal messages imprinted on our subconscious — "24 miles per gallon," "\$1795," "easy to park" — the messages keep coming back as we lumber in for an \$8 gas fill-up or a \$120 tune-up. "Get ready, America, we're here!" First it was the German, British, Italian, French and Swedish tide. Then it was the Japanese tide. The Japanese were trying to outdo the outdoers. How can you believe the Subaru? But then, who could believe the three wheelers: Messerschmidt, BMW, Isetta?

Those were only symptoms. Like modern Conquistadores, the Toyotas, Datsuns, Volkswagens, Renaults, BMW's, et al, have colonized the colonies at such an alarming rate that Detroit is once again rushing to fill the breach. Reminiscent of the early sixties when American "compacts" suddenly made the scene, Detroit is ready again. The

pom-pom girls and cheer leaders at the ad agencies for American Motors, Plymouth, and Ford have thrown down the gauntlet. They're returning the warning: "We're ready!"

Card tricks and "Potato Chips, Potato Chips, Crunch, Crunch, Crunch." Top it off with a few pointers from Marshall McLuhan and we're in business. Only in this case the message is the medium. Because the message has four wheels and a wheelbase that's not much over 100 inches long, and it's driving out of showrooms all over your country. It's called a Maverick, a Hornet, or a Duster, and about the only thing they have in common right now is the fact that they're the first economic line of defense against the foreign aggressors.

WHAT'S THE PITCH, ECONOMY?  
YEH, YEH, YEH!

There are no Marquis of Queensberry rules when it comes to gas mileage for compact cars, or, economy cars as they are so poignantly referred to. Just top the other guy's claim and get it on, baby. Like 66 miles to the gallon for Subaru. That's pretty far outta sight. For the new wave Detroit compact, economy is essential, but it's not the only consideration, so gas mileage is just one of

many features. After all, a Detroit set of wheels with a long stroke, unsophisticated six is going to take more juice than some short stroke, overhead cam machine. Different strokes for different folks. If you consider 200 inches small, and around these parts it has got to be, considering that 400 inches is just a nominal size now, then Maverick's biggest engine is small, especially when it's next to the 225 Duster six and the 232 Hornet six. As logic would insist, the smallest was the best in the economy race. Although each of the test cars only had a couple of hundred miles on their odometers when we picked them up, mileage figures were relatively good and were getting better as mileage increased. The best mileage figure for the Maverick topped the Hornet by a mile, which topped the Duster by a mile. That extra mile per gallon could be an important factor if you plan to get a lot of miles under your belt. But, mileage, while an important aspect, is only an extension of the total vehicle. You've also got to live with it.

THE NITTY GRITTY: COMFORT,  
CONVENIENCE, AND SPACE

When you get inside, comparison becomes more acute. Both the Maverick  
*continued*

Maverick—  
Hornet—  
Duster—

# Three Small Voices in the Wilderness

Are you listening, America?

By Bill Sanders

Photography: Fred Enke





*continued*

and Duster are available only as two-door models. The Hornet also has a four-door version so we latched onto that for our test. Subjectively, comfort is an empirical evaluation, whether you're on a short hop or a long haul. In either case, the Hornet fills the bill exquisitely. With the SST model you get individually adjustable front lounge seats that have perfect contouring in both the seat and seat-back for firm support, yet the seats are softly padded for sink-in comfort. Even the Hornet head restraints are the softest and in the best height location for head protection. American Motors' popular adjustable seat back is part of the SST package and is a great aid to driving on long trips, when you can drop the seat back down one notch for a semi-reclining driving attitude. Both the Duster and Maverick had front bench seats. The Duster seats are rather high, and although there is adequate front seat headroom, the feeling is uncomfortable. The Maverick front seat is lower, but the seat back seems unusually contoured or padded and makes for an uncomfortable ride. On the other hand, the front bench seats of the Maverick and Duster easily accommodate three riding in front without any discomfort for the center passenger. Only in the Duster, when three ride in front, is there

some discomfort to the driver and right-side passenger from the inward curvature of the side glass at the top, which puts your head too close to the top of the door and restricts visibility through the windshield.

Visibility is also a factor with a psychological bearing on comfort. The size and rake of the Hornet windshield gives the driver excellent, almost supreme, visibility of everything in front and partially to the sides. With the hood and front fenders one flat, integral plane, judging distances with the Hornet is also a simple matter, especially for women. Smaller windshields with less rake give the Duster and Maverick a more confining feeling, which affects driving comfort. To illustrate, the Hornet windshield slope angle is 57.5° and it has a surface area of 1264 sq. in. The Maverick windshield slope angle is a rather vertical 53.5° with an exposed surface of 1125 sq. in. The Duster comes up with a slope angle of 54.4° and a surface area of only 1034 sq. in.

Judging convenience features may be a little more subjective, but some of those features appeal to all. Take the under-dash package tray that the Europeans gave us, with its big capacity for stowing things. Ford has made a big point of the fact that the Maverick has one. But, the Maverick doesn't have a locking glove box. The Duster has a

locking glove box but no package tray. The Hornet has both. All three cars have dashboards that have been kept simple in layout, with good instrumentation. The Hornet and Maverick have small diameter steering wheels, which are easier to manipulate than the rather large wheel on the Duster, especially with power steering, which is a good option for these cars. The Hornet, incidentally, has variable ratio power steering for 1970. Interior door handles are rather difficult to operate on all cars, due to safety placement. Door armrests are well placed and comfortable on all three cars, but are somewhat flimsily attached on the Hornet and may begin to pull away from the door panel after a time. The Maverick has heater controls on the left of the steering column, where they can be reached only by the driver. Fuel and temperature gauges on the Duster are quite small compared to the Hornet and Maverick. Also, the windshield wiper switch is mounted on the dash behind the shift lever on the Duster and is difficult to reach. Both the Hornet and Maverick had carpeting, but our Duster had a rubberized floor covering in the same color as interior trim. That type of floor cover is a good idea in a compact, especially one used as a second car to haul kids and pets. The car can be hosed out with no danger of soaking a carpet.

Space utilization and application become painfully clear when comparing these cars that have an unusual similarity in wheelbase and overall length. The Hornet and Duster are equal in wheelbase, at 108 inches, and five inches longer than the Maverick which has a wheelbase of 103 inches. But the Duster has a long overall length of 188 inches while the Hornet matches the Maverick at 179 inches. American Motors designers have succeeded in putting a good sized wheelbase in a short overall body. The Hornet has a great amount of front seat legroom with the seat in a full aft position. The Duster and Maverick are adequate. Rear seat legroom in the Hornet four door, even with the front seats all the way back, is as good as many intermediate and full-sized cars. Rear seat legroom in the Duster and Maverick is almost nothing by comparison. Headroom, front and rear, is adequate in all three cars. Usable luggage space makes a pretty

good scene in all three cars: Hornet claims 11.2 cu. ft., Maverick 10.4, and Duster, which is the longest car, has 15 cu. ft. All three cars have a fairly high lift-over into the trunk, especially the Duster. The Duster has the best space utilization though, because the spare is located in a well under the trunk floor giving full room in the trunk. Like some other cars in the Ford line, the Maverick uses the top of the gas tank as the floor of the trunk, with only a thin rubber mat as protection. That's especially dangerous if you carry any sharp steel items such as a tool box or kids' ice skates.

**RIDE AND HANDLING WON'T MAKE 'H' PRODUCTION**

No one has ever accused an American compact of fecundity in the handling department, and the new crop won't bear the burden either. Besides, it's necessary to maintain some sort of sedate decorum when your control is the brute power of a roaring six. The Hornet

proved to have good stability, with a slight trace of oversteer — it had great control, even when pushed hard in tight turns. Cornering was flat, with the four corners planted firmly at all times. Power steering had a solid road feel, yet was light to the touch with sensitive response. Ride was flat and firm, though always comfortable. It had the feel and ride of a much heavier car and only on rough roads did it bounce or shift. Wind or road noise were never a factor with the Hornet, even at high speed, freeway driving. Window glass had no loose feeling, despite the absence of vent windows. The Duster goes through turns fairly flat at normal cruising speeds. When pushed hard in the corners, it has a noticeable high roll steer that is uncomfortable and somewhat difficult to control. It understeers, and although the rear end gets tricky, it comes back to a straight attitude quickly when coming out of a turn. It's

*continued on page 97*

The view from behind can often be revealing. The Hornet has the widest rear track, by a full inch, and the least body overhang. A sporty car heritage, good handling traits.



Hornet SST, 4-dr. sedan		Duster 6, 2-dr. sport coupe		Maverick 2-dr. sedan	
Base price	\$2214.00	Base price	\$2175.00	Base price	\$1995.00
Includes 6 cylinder, 1V, 145-hp-232-c.i.d.		Special trim group	51.70	200-c.i.d. 1V 6-cylinder engine	39.00
Shift-Command column shift	189.60	Torqueflite transmission	216.20	Blazer stripe seat trim	52.00
878x14 whitewall Polyglas tires	31.75	225-c.i.d. 6-cyl. engine	24.65	Fuel evap emission control system	37.00
Decor group	58.30	Day-and-night mirror, inside	7.10	Select-Shift Cruise-O-Matic	201.00
Radio, AM push button	61.20	Evap. emission control	37.85	6.45x14 whitewall tires	30.00
Heavy duty cooling system	16.05	Radio, AM	61.55	Accent group	52.00
Fuel evap. emission control system	45.35	Power steering	85.15	Radio, AM	61.00
Power steering	95.85	Deluxe wheel covers	21.30	Tinted glass, complete	32.00
		6.95x14 whitewall tires	26.45	Power steering	95.00



MOTOR TREND SPECIFICATION DATA

SPECIFICATIONS	HORNET	DUSTER	MAVERICK
Engine	In-line six, OHV	In-line six, OHV	In-line six, OHV
Bore & Stroke — ins.	3.75 x 3.50	3.4 x 4.12	3.68 x 3.13
Displacement — cu. in.	232	225	200
HP @ RPM	145 @ 4300	145 @ 4000	120 @ 4000
Torque: lbs.-ft. @ rpm	215 @ 1600	215 @ 2400	190 @ 2200
Compression Ratio	8.5:1	8.4:1	8.7:1
Carburetion	1 1-bbl	1 1-bbl	1 1-bbl
Transmission	Auto.	Auto.	Auto.
Final Drive Ratio	2.37:1	2.76:1	2.83:1
Steering Type	Power, variable ratio	Power	Power
Steering Ratio (gear)	16:1 to 12.2:1	15.7:1	16.0:1
Turning Diameter (curb-to-curb-ft.)	36	37.8	36.8
Wheel Turns (lock-to-lock)	3.2	3.5	3.7
Tire Size	6.45x14	6.95x14	6.00x13
Brakes	4 wheel drum, 9-in. diam	4 wheel drum, 10-in. diam	4 wheel drum, 9-in. diam
Front Suspension	Indep twin ball joint, coil springs	Indep, torsion bars	Indep, ball joints, coil springs
Rear Suspension	Hotchkiss, semi-elliptic springs	Semi-elliptic leaf springs	Hotchkiss, semi-elliptic springs
Body/Frame Construction	Unit	Unit	Unitized
Wheelbase — ins.	108.0	108.0	103.0
Overall Length — ins.	179.3	188.4	179.4
Width — ins.	71.1	71.6	70.6
Height — ins.	52.6	52.6	52.3
Front Track — ins.	57.2	57.4	55.5
Rear Track — ins.	56.6	55.6	55.5
Curb Weight — lbs.	2870	3260	2497
Fuel Capacity — gals.	19 (Calif. 16)	18	16 (Calif. 14)
Oil Capacity — qts.	4	4	3.5
PERFORMANCE			
Acceleration			
0-30 mph	5.5 secs.	4.6 secs.	4.6 secs.
0-45 mph	8.9 secs.	8.3 secs.	8.2 secs.
0-60 mph	14.3 secs.	13.6 secs.	13.8 secs.
0-75 mph	23.1 secs.	20.9 secs.	23.3 secs.
Standing Start 1/4-Mile	69.0 mph/19.5 secs.	71 mph/19.2 secs.	71.3 mph/19.1 secs.
Passing Speeds			
40-60 mph	8.6 secs.	8.5	7.5
50-70 mph	10.7 secs.	8.2	10.0
Speeds in Gears*			
1st ... mph @ rpm	54 @ 4300	44 @ 4000	42 @ 4000
2nd ... mph @ rpm	86 @ 4300	72 @ 4000	70 @ 4000
3rd ... mph @ rpm	84 @ 3000	78 @ 3000	86 @ 3500
MPH Per 1000 rpm (in top gear)	28.0	26.0	24.5
Stopping Distances			
From 30 mph	29.3	32.4	32.7
From 60 mph	179.0	159.8	136.2
GAS MILEAGE RANGE:	18.3 to 22.2 mpg	18.9 to 21.1 mpg	20.3 to 23.1 mpg

\*Speeds in gears are at shift points (limited by length of track) and do not represent maximum speeds



### THREE SMALL VOICES

continued

comfortable, but doesn't have the big car feeling of the Hornet. Ride is stiffer in the Duster. A more noticeable understeer is evident in the Maverick than either the Hornet or Duster, but it doesn't have the high roll of the Duster. When the Hornet will drift nicely, the Maverick scrubs the front tires and grinds out a turn. The feeling of a hard suspension and light body that prevails in the Duster is also true in the Maverick. Choppiness is more noticeable. The Hornet rides more like an Olds 98 and handles like a Mach 1.

#### GETTING THEM GOING AND GETTING THEM STOPPED

No symbolic relationship can ever be implemented with an AA/FD or the likes of Steve Carbone by a compact prospect, especially if economy is a basic motivation. But, the cars do have a certain amount of inert pep that can be summoned forth with a little coaxing. Like, who among us would be heard to say, "At the drag strip my Maverick ran consistent e.t.'s. in the low nine-teens!" Wow! They're tearing down the walls. Turn elsewhere for your "Road-runnerGEETO4-2-Chevelle" syndrome if you need the masculinity of the rugged quarter-mile. Our trio did their darndest and disappeared into the dust with a "Ours is not to reason why..."

If you haven't learned to shift for yourself, or even if you have and you don't like it, an automatic transmission is the option for you. Our test cars had the big sixes and an automatic works in harmony. Prices vary from the Duster automatic at \$216 to the Hornet for \$189. In either of the three, an automatic will put a dent in your plans if you're thinking \$1995.

For cars with small drum brakes, all three had good stability and average stopping distances, except the Maverick, which stopped unusually quickly from 60 mph. The AMC Hornet was the most stable in panic stops. An unusual amount of wheel hop occurred when stopping the Duster from 30 mph at full lock, but it wasn't present when stopping from 60 mph. None of the cars showed any unusual fade after repeated hard use.

Base prices vary and the Hornet is the most expensive at the bottom. But, the 232 engine is included in the Hornet base price, whereas the step-up 225 in the Duster and the 200 in the Maverick are extra-cost options. So, the total prices, with options, turn out to be quite close.

Each of these cars has its merits and its inhibitions. Maverick was out first and has sold a bundle. The Duster is a pretender: a Valiant masquerading as a sub-compact. The Hornet embodies most of the good ideas of what a compact is all about and seriously challenges the imports, who've had a lot more time and experience to cope with the problems. American Motors was on the verge of going under a few years ago. Then they popped with the Javelin and AMX in succession. They're looking better. The Hornet has yet to be reckoned with.

/MT

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