



Cornering behavior may be spectacular but was nevertheless found to be perfectly predictable throughout our test. Stronger resistance to roll would be desirable.

CAR and DRIVER ROAD TEST

Oldsmobile F-85 Jetfire

Typically Oldsmobile in luxury and comfort, the Jetfire now adds spirited performance

On a power-weight ratio basis the Oldsmobile F-85 Jetfire is a real winner—and no cheating about carrying capacity either. It's a genuine five-seater of generous interior dimensions, above-average comfort for all, and a sizable, if somewhat shallow, trunk.

As an all-round medium-sized high-performance car in the American idiom, it comes remarkably close to the European concept of a big car. But the Jetfire has an unusual power surplus which makes it comparable with cars of considerably larger engine displacement.

Thanks to the Turbocharger, fuel economy is as good as or better than that of the four-barrel 215-cubic-inch all-aluminum V-8 of the F-85

Cutlass. During our time with the Jetfire, the car got an over-all average of 15.6 mpg, and this includes a 250-mile towing job.

On the road, the Jetfire impresses as much by its silence at speed as by its stunning top-gear performance. At an initial speed of 50 mph or over, there is very little to be gained by shifting down to overtake. This is, admittedly, partly because there is rather a long step between third and fourth, but the mid-range torque is so high as to discourage gear-shifting unless the utmost acceleration is called for. All the Oldsmobile 215-cubic-inch engines, incidentally, develop their maximum torque at 3,200 rpm, whether it is the 8.75-to-one-compression, 155-

bhp standard engine, the 10.25-to-one-compression 185-bhp Cutlass engine, the optional (on both) 10.75-to-one-compression 195-bhp unit, or the Jetfire. But it is interesting that the turbocharged version develops peak power at 4,600 rpm, while the others peak at 4,800 rpm.

Oldsmobile has a wide range of F-85s this year, with power units from 155 to 215 bhp. The span in performance between the standard F-85 and the Jetfire is considerable, and it is surprising that there are no chassis alterations at all according to power teams.

As a result, the standard F-85 may have a fully adequate chassis, but the Jetfire does not have steering, suspension or brakes in keeping with its guise as a sporting sedan.

Regardless of the big-car feeling, which you now get in the once-compact F-85, the sporting appeal of the four-speed floor-shift Jetfire hard-top is undeniable.

If you wish to drive the Jetfire as you would a sports car, you will find that corners come up terribly quickly. Since it's impossible to corner the car at sports-car speeds, your transmission and brakes will have to work hard to maintain an impressive average.

On a long-radius turn, the Jetfire corners in a well-balanced tilt, and will stay on course at very high speeds. But on tight turns the front wheels will plow until you pour the power on to bring the tail out, and after a brief four-wheel-drift, the front wheels will regain their grip. Meanwhile the tail tends to swing wider and wider unless you ease off on the throttle as soon as steering response returns to normal.

Long-travel low-friction suspension is a characteristic of the all-coil system of the Oldsmobile. The ride, even on the worst surfaces, is soft enough to keep elderly housewives from getting alarmed, and the technically-minded agree that rough roads seemed to offer no unreasonable treatment of springs and suspension members.

A .875-inch anti-roll bar permits body lean to an extent that sporting drivers find objectionable, and if it's a good choice for the standard F-85, it's rather too weak for the Jetfire.

This leads us to some comments on the spring rates. The front springs have a rate of 240 pounds per inch (78 at the wheel) while the rear ones have a rate of only 172 pounds per inch (but 100 at the wheel). This combination provides for large variations in load and weight distribution with admirable effect, so it is hard to envisage any improve-



Driving position is sensibly low with no offset on steering wheel or pedals, the driver facing exact direction of travel.



Front-seat backrests tilt forward to give easy access to the spacious rear seat. The entire interior is very well appointed.

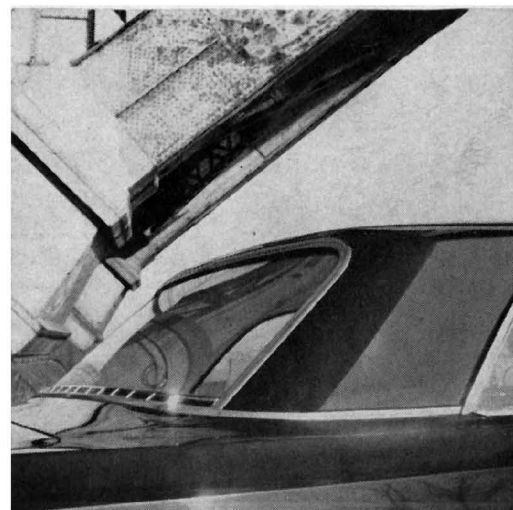
ment in the springs themselves without totally sacrificing riding comfort. But in the matter of damping there's fertile ground for improvement. The one-inch Delco telescopic shock absorbers fitted as standard on all F-85s are disappointing in that they allow excessive rebound movements and a series of gradually diminishing deflections, when a single deflection would have been proper.

We hinted at the advisability of installing disc brakes when we first tested the Turbocharged Oldsmobile prototype (with automatic transmission) last year (*June, 1962 C/D*), but no alterations have been undertaken even in the dimensions of the drums, which remain at 9½-inch diameter. The Jetfire's brakes are not fade-proof, but recover quickly from fading, and are able to cope effectively with any highway emergency unless immediately preceded by a number of hard brake applications; 57% of the braking effect is distributed to the front wheels, yet on a dry road the rear wheels lock prematurely. On a wet surface, the distribution seems more even, and a tendency for the front wheels to lock does not become troublesome until the available surface really gets slippery.

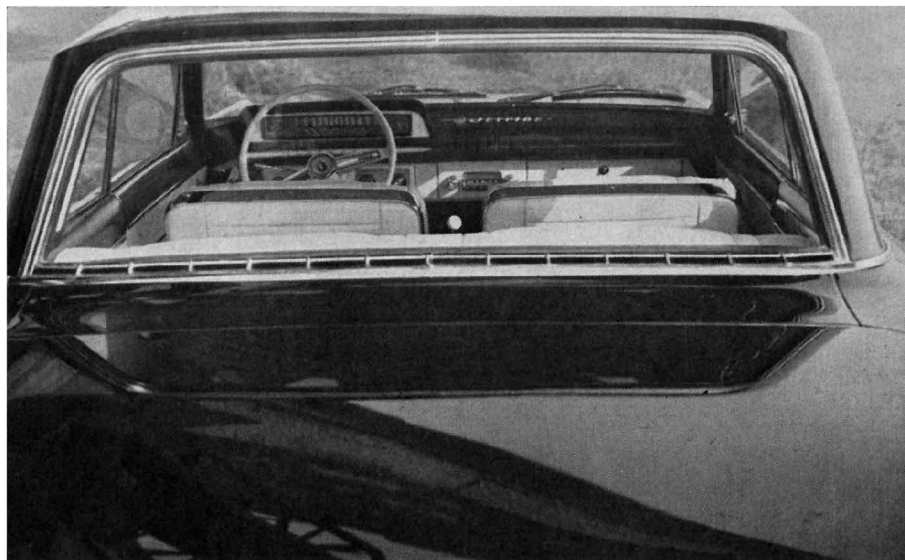
It's also questionable whether the 13-inch tire size of the F-85 is right for the Jetfire. For comparison, 15-inch tires are optional on the Buick Special and have always been standard on the Pontiac Tempest; cars that have sprung from the same origin and remain in the same weight class. On anything but a highly ab-

rasive surface, the Jetfire's maximum acceleration is defeated by wheelspin, which larger-diameter and larger-section tires would help to combat. We also know that in countries where cruising speeds in excess of 100 mph are allowed, the standard tires don't stand up—braced-tread or other special tires become necessary. But standard tires of larger diameter would have lower rotational speed at the same road speeds and consequently would provide greater durability.

Gear ratios chosen for the four-speed Warner gearbox do not take full advantage of the excellent low-rpm torque of the turbocharged V-8.



Bright, open interior is combined with crisp styling of the rear quarter panels.



F-85 JETFIRE CONTINUED

There's a hole between third and fourth and it's difficult to see why third has a 1.51-to-one ratio when a 1.31, for instance, would have increased the usefulness of third gear. By skipping second gear on leisurely acceleration, the step from first to third is not obviously too large, and this practice can actually simplify town driving. The use of second gear for starting off is also perfectly permissible with this kind of power, which dwarfs the bottom-end torque available from bolt-on superchargers as well as that of the turbocharged Chevrolet Corvair Monza Spyder.

Even if the ratios could be improved, the gearbox is very pleasant to use and very smooth in operation when fully run in. Standard equipment on the Jetfire is a three-speed column shift with a non-synchromesh first, and Hydra-Matic is optional. We feel certain that the four-speed will find customer preference, and we really wouldn't be too surprised to learn that the three-speed will be discontinued for next year.

We like the new semi-integrated

instrument panel on top of the dashboard better than the previous separate unit in the same location. All instruments are large and legible, but instead of a proper vacuum-boost gauge mounted where it can be of some use to the driver, Oldsmobile has hidden it away on the center console. Instead of a dial it has segments colored red and green marked "power" and "economy." For inspiration, maybe Oldsmobile should take a look at the Corvair Monza Spyder instruments, or the panel of the Studebaker Avanti, for that matter.

Heater and ventilator controls are located on the left of the dashboard

and give the driver full control of air entry, temperature and delivery. Warm-up is very rapid even with a thoroughly cold engine, and starting proved immediate, regardless of outside temperature.

The traditional reliability of Oldsmobile as a transportation machine has been successfully worked into the high-performance Jetfire, making it a practical car for a wide variety of users. It offers driving enjoyment far beyond the average American car, yet has all its luxuries and conveniences. It's a little dodgy at times, but we'd classify it as one of the good ones—in the American sense. **cd**



Weight increase is small despite four extra inches added to last year's wheelbase.



Despite the complicated turbocharger installation, accessibility is pretty good.



Spare-wheel location is a disappointment, in that it encroaches upon trunk space.

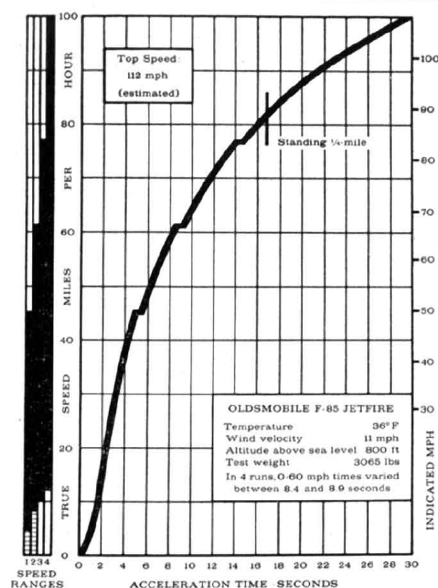
OLDSMOBILE F-85 JETFIRE

Price as tested: \$3,048

Manufacturer: Oldsmobile Division
General Motors Corporation
Lansing, Michigan

ACCELERATION:

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	3.2
60 mph	8.5
90 mph	21.2
Standing start 1/4	16.8



ENGINE:

Displacement	215 cu in, 3,532 cc
Dimensions	8 cyl, 3.50-in bore, 2.80-in stroke
Valve gear	Pushrod-operated overhead valves, hydraulic lifters
Compression ratio	10.25 to one
Power (SAE)	215 bhp @ 4,600 rpm
Torque	300 lb-ft @ 3,200 rpm
Usable range of engine speeds	600-6,000 rpm
Carburetion: Single-throat side-draft Rochester carburetor and AiResearch-Oldsmobile turbo-charger	
Fuel recommended	Premium
Mileage	12-22 mpg
Range on 16-gallon tank	190-350 miles

CHASSIS:

Wheelbase	112 in
Track	F 56 in, R 56 in
Length	192.2 in
Ground clearance	4.9 in
Suspension: F: ind., wishbones and coil springs, anti-roll bar	
R: rigid axle, four torque and thrust arms, vertical coil springs	
Steering	Saginaw ball and nut (power assisted)
Turns, lock to lock	4.1
Turning circle diameter between curbs	37 ft
Tire size	6.50 x 13
Pressures recommended	Normal F 22, R 22 psi
Ours	F 26, R 24 psi
Brakes	9.5-in drums front and rear, Kelsey-Hayes booster, 224 sq in swept area
Curb weight (full tank)	2,885 lbs
Percentage on the driving wheels	45

DRIVE TRAIN:

Clutch.....Long semi-centrifugal single dry plate					
					Mph per 1,000
Gear	Synchro	Ratio	Step	Over-all	rpm
Rev	No	2.61		8.80	7.4
1st	Yes	2.54	32%	8.55	7.6
2nd	Yes	1.92	27%	6.46	10.1
3rd	Yes	1.51	51%	5.06	12.9
4th	Yes	1.00		3.36	19.4
Final drive ratio.....				3.36 to one	