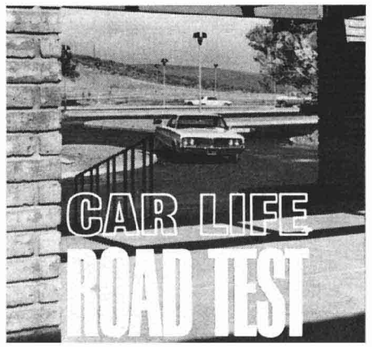
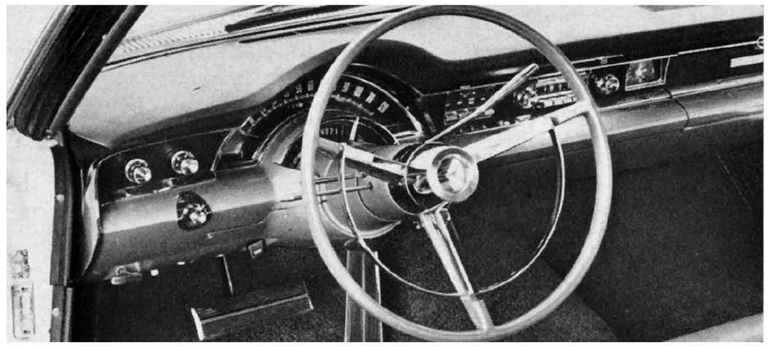




CLEANED-UP Chrysler instrument panel has new shift quadrant located just under speedometer, shift lever on the column.

FIN ON peak of front fender carries a handy turn-signal indicator.

CHRYSLER NEWPORT

Is It a 2-ton, 18-ft. Bargain?

CHRYSLER'S ADVERTISING agency would have us all believe that the 1965 Newport, at 18 ft. and 4200 lb., is some sort of heavyweight bargain in the lightweight price class. At $3009 advertised delivered price (FOB Detroit) for the lowest cost 4-door sedan, it might very well be; if nothing else, it certainly provides Chrysler dealers with a conversation piece.

This particular portion of the marketplace is rather broad in spectrum. Along with all the plushy versions of the smaller, less-expensive cars, it includes all the less-luxurious models of the larger, more-expensive cars. Every manufacturer but Cadillac, Lincoln and Imperial has a model-line or two that falls into this category. By advertising its low "price-leader," Chrysler projects its luxury name-image squarely into competition.

Taking a quick survey of the field, with the help of the National Automobile Dealers Assn. Official Used Car Guide, turns up that competition. If we use as a base the Chrysler Newport 2-door hardtop tested here, we find these comparable cars arrayed around a plus-or-minus $100 list price:

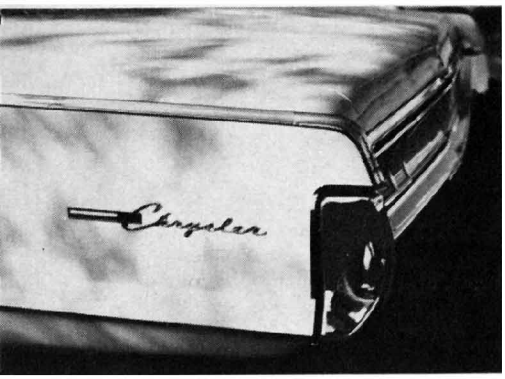
Buick LeSabre, $3030; Chevrolet Impala SS, $2947; Dodge Custom 880, $3085; Ford Galaxie 500, $3065; Mercury Montclair, $3035; Oldsmobile Jetstar 88, $2995; Oldsmobile Dynamic 88, $3065; Plymouth Sport Fury, $2960; Pontiac Catalina, $2868; Rambler Ambassador 990-H, $2930 (we included the Catalina hardtop because it definitely fits the category in format, even if it is slightly lower in price).

The list is pretty impressive and the competition exceedingly tough. However, the Chrysler name is a formidable one and the Newport is exceedingly well-suited to this market. An examination reveals why this is so.

If bigness, or sheer bulk, can be a criterion for the potential buyer, then Chrysler's Newport has to be a prime consideration. As advertised, it is a shade over 18 ft. in length, 4.5 ft. in height and 6.5 ft. in width. It occupies some 552 sq. ft. of airspace, slightly more than most other cars of this ilk, this because the Chrysler Newport is just slightly larger than those others. And, at 4310 lb. (curb) for this hardtop, it has to be among the heaviest of those offered in the quoted price range.

As are all Chrysler passenger cars but the Imperial, the Newport is a unit-body construction. That is, the body serves the function of a chassis as well as that of enclosing the passengers. Suspension systems work off it and the drive-train is mounted to it in virtually the same manner as with the conventional or, more recently popular, perimeter frame. Certain advantages are claimed for unit-body construction, and certain disadvantages are laid to it by its opponents.

One advantage is the stiffness of the resultant structure, which tends to give a solid, inflexible platform for the suspension. Another is lighter overall weight. But, the opponents say, that stiffness of structure makes it reverberate like a drum when noises are transferred to it from suspension and drive-train. And, they add, it costs more to build, even in the long run, because styling changes are far more difficult to make. They dispute the lighter-weight advantage too, and, at the weight of the Chrysler as compared to the weight of, say, an Oldsmobile ▶



CHRYSLER NEWPORT

Delta 88 Holiday (tested April CL), the Chrysler comes out the heavier car.

Chrysler has, for '65, gone one step beyond the all-unit construction with what amounts to a sub-frame for the engine and front suspension. This sub-structure acts much like a perimeter frame in becoming the anvil which absorbs road drumming and dampens engine vibrations. The sub-frame mounts to the main structure through rubber pads and extends far enough toward the rear to pick up the rear mounts for the front torsion bars, and to carry the transmission support bar.

In the test Newport, a considerably lower level of rumble and vibration was noted, although the noise level didn't seem as low as that of the Chevrolet Impala we tested concurrently.

Chrysler's suspension has differed little from the original torsion-bar layout of the mid-50s; it still uses a short-and-long A-arm style in front, and a longitudinal leaf spring Hotchkiss drive at the rear. The geometry has contributed to Chrysler's reputation as a road car. However, relatively soft spring dampening somewhat detracts from the car's innate roadworthiness. Too, there is a slight harshness from the leaf-spring area that seems incongruous with the soft ride.

The front and rear spring rates, at the wheels, are 110 and 100 lb. per in., respectively, and a 0.88-in. thick anti-roll stabilizing bar is used on the front end. Shock absorbers are only 1 in. in piston diameter so perhaps a good set of heavy-duty shock absorbers would firm up the ride to the point where it and the handling would be really good.

As base engine for the Newport, Chrysler specifies the workhorse 383-cu. in. V-8 in its mildest form: 2-barrel carburetor, 9.2:1 compression and 252° duration camshaft. This Chrysler rates at 270 bhp at 4400 rpm; torque is 390 lb.-ft. at 2800 rpm. With automatic transmission, it pulls a 2.76:1 rear axle ratio. We would suspect performance to be very mild.

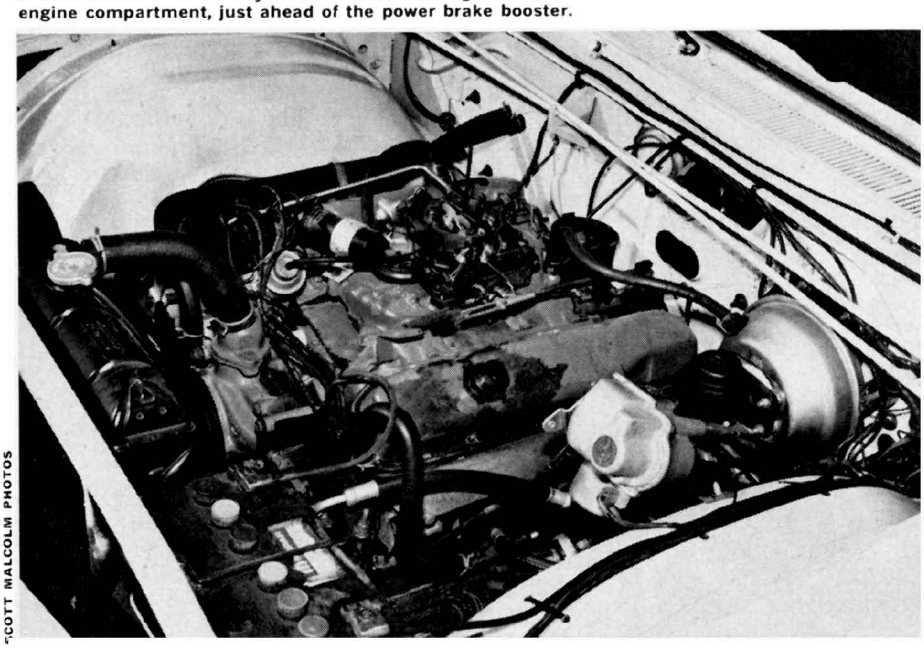
For the first option, Chrysler tops the engine with a 4-barrel carburetor and boosts compression to 10:1. This ups the power to 315 and the torque to 420, although the same camshaft is used. When this optional engine is specified with an automatic, such as in the test car, it gets a 3.23 axle. Performance with this combination, although not outstanding, is at least adequate to the needs imposed by modern freeway and highway systems. No other engine is available in the Newport series, but the 413-cu. in. variant can be ordered for the sister 300 and New Yorker series.

Well-restricted by air cleaner and single muffler, the Newport is best left to its own devices when straight-line performance is measured. The TorqueFlite automatic then shifts itself at around 3800 rpm, and no amount of gear-holding can result in better acceleration. And, a 17-sec. quarter-mile for a 4300-lb. car should be considered good performance.

Along with a change in shape for '65, the Chrysler gained slightly improved interior space. The Chrysler has always been noteworthy in this department, but spaciousness is a form of luxury, so when the wheelbase was increased 2 in., the extra room it provided was passed on to the rear-seat passengers.

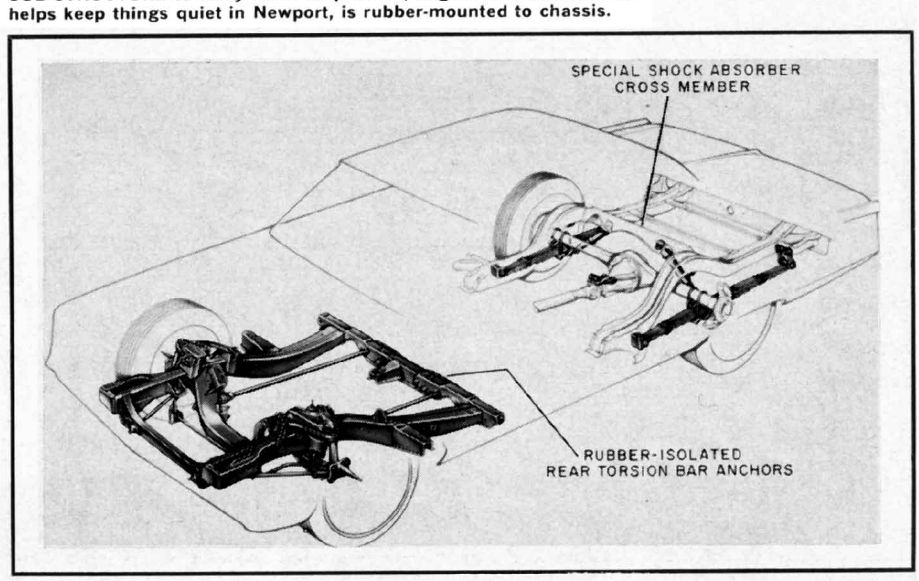
One of the unheralded changes made to the Chrysler line-up was the inclusion of a cowlside ventilating system. This required a double cowl section, which Chrysler products hadn't had previously, but it allows fresh air drawn from the inlet just ahead of the windshield to be distributed at ankle height in the kick panels. No longer must the heater fan be running to achieve fresh-air intake, just open-

SPEED-CONTROL device by Perfect Circle is on right side of engine compartment, just ahead of the power brake booster.



SCOTT MALCOLM PHOTOS

SUB-STRUCTURE to carry front suspension, engine and transmission helps keep things quiet in Newport, is rubber-mounted to chassis.



ing the vent control sends in plenty of cooling air. The older system tended to be quite inadequate in hot weather.

A more immediately noticeable change is in the shift-lever control for the automatic transmission. Where Chrysler has long had a push-button console, it now has a lever sprouting from the steering column, with an indicating quadrant flush in the dash. Do we like it better than the push-buttons? Yes—there's no more groping for the right button and there's much easier coordination of steering and shifting. The steering wheel was the tilting type, produced by GM's Saginaw Gear but an option on virtually every American luxury car.

With the modest number of options on the test car, the as-tested price was still within reach of most lower-middle-price buyers. How does it compare with the competition on a resale basis? Again we resorted to our NADA Guide (Pacific Southwest Edition) this time to check on 3-year-old cars. Where the average retail price of a 1962 Chrysler Newport is $1655, the comparable Buick LeSabre is $1850, the Olds 88 is $1815, the Pontiac Catalina $1760 and the Chevrolet Impala $1740. The '62 Ford Galaxie is $1525, the Mercury $1560 and the Dodge Polara $1490.

Obviously, if strictly resale value is the criterion, then there are better buys. There are better ones in performance, too, but the Newport's long suit is elegant comfort at low price and in this context it is a fair enough bargain. ■

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST

1965 CHRYSLER
Newport 2-door Hardtop

SPECIFICATIONS

List price	$3070
Price, as tested	4629
Curb weight, lb.	4310
Test weight	4670
distribution, %	55.7/44.3
Tire size	8.55-14
Tire capacity, lb. @ 24 psi	5280
Brake swept area	328.3
Engine type	V-8, ohv
Bore & stroke	4.25 x 3.38
Displacement, cu. in.	383
Compression ratio	10.0
Carburetion	1 x 4
Bhp @ rpm	315 @ 4400
equivalent mph	110
Torque, lb.-ft.	420 @ 2800
equivalent mph	70

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.	124.0
Tread, f & r	62/60.7
Overall length, in.	218.2
width	79.5
height	54.9
equivalent vol., cu. ft	552
Frontal area, sq. ft.	24.3
Ground clearance, in.	5.4
Steering ratio, o/a	19.2
turns, lock to lock	3.5
turning circle, ft.	44.0
Hip room, front	63.3
Hip room, rear	63.8
Pedal to seat back, max.	44.0
Floor to ground	11.0
Luggage vol., cu. ft.	16.5
Fuel tank capacity, gal.	25.0

EXTRA-COST OPTIONS

315 bhp V-8, auto. trans., speed control, smog device, power brakes, power steering, power seat, power trunk, power windows, radio, 8.55 wsw tires.

GEAR RATIOS

3rd (1.00) overall	3.23
2nd (1.45)	4.68
1st (2.45)	7.92
1st (2.45 x 2.0)	15.8

CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test wt.)	14.8
Cu. ft./ton mile	114.6
Mph/1000 rpm	24.9
Engine revs/mile	2410
Piston travel, ft./mile	1360
Car Life wear index	32.7

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual	28.1
60 mph	57.8
90 mph	85.0

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range, mpg	11-14

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (4400), mph	110
Shifts, @ mph (auto.)	
3rd ( )	
2nd (3800)	65
1st (3800)	39
Total drag at 60 mph, lb.	180

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.	3.8
0-40	5.3
0-50	7.3
0-60	9.6
0-70	12.4
0-80	16.2
0-100	31.0
Standing ¼ mile, sec	17.1
speed at end, mph	82