



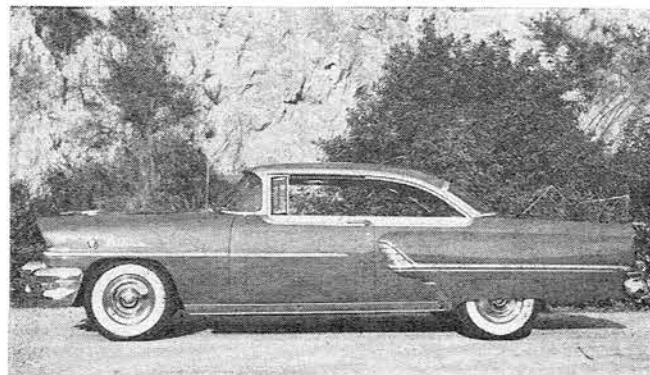
Montclair is a fast car, but its most outstanding features are smart styling and honestly surprising handling qualities.

ROAD TEST

MERCURY'S NEW MONTCLAIR

There's a bright new name in the Mercury family—and the good looks you see are only part of what it offers

Silhouette of the Montclair is low, only 58 inches. Part of this has been achieved by dropping frame an inch closer to the road. Its lines are an evolution of basic Mercury styling.



In addition to the hardtop, which was road tested, the Montclair series consists of a convertible (shown here) and a four-door sedan. The girl is Sheree North, of 20th Century-Fox.



STYLING is the new Montclair's strongest point, but it's not the whole story. To this outstanding feature should be added performance (especially in the lower speed ranges) plus something that was unexpected—better steering ease than ever before.

More than a year ago, while visiting Mercury's styling studio in Dearborn, we had an opportunity to make a close inspection of a Montclair still in the plaster model stage. Even in this crude form it was pretty obvious that the car was going to keep Mercury at the top of the styling list, a factor which, since 1952, has caused the car to have unusually good resale value. The body design seems to have lasting appeal with the public, probably because of the good taste expressed in the advanced lines.

Demand for the 1955 Montclair is high and production apparently is lagging far behind orders. However, Mercury made available an official car which already had seen nearly 5,000 miles of use in the field. It was equipped with almost every item of optional accessories and powered equipment for easy driving.

The Montclair, of course, is completely new to the Mercury line and was introduced in hardtop (the subject of this test report) and convertible body styles. A four-door sedan has recently been added, which Mercury claims has the lowest overall height of any produced in Detroit.

Mercury follows the theory of evolution in styling, rather than drastic change. Thus, although the car is new, it retains the flavor of previous Mercurys, with enough improvements to make it clearly distinctive. The brilliant red exterior, matched inside by red and white vinyl, drew more than average attention wherever the test car was driven. Its newness was pointed up when one station attendant asked, "What is it, a new Lincoln?"

The overhead valve V-8 engine, introduced in 1954, has been so extensively re-engineered the basic Montclair specifications should be noted here. Horsepower

is up to 198 at 4400 rpm from 161, while torque is 286 ft.-lbs. at 2500 rpm, against 238 at 2800 last year. Displacement has been increased 36 cubic inches to 292, through wider bore of 3.75 inches and longer stroke of 3.30 inches. Compression ratio is 8.5-to-1, while last year's was 7.5-to-1 on Customs and Montereys.

What these figures mean in performance improvement can only be evaluated against those obtained with the Monterey in previous years. The initial Montclair tests in top speed and acceleration put it in the top bracket. It's in the middle ranges, however, where punch is needed most for passing, that the car shines brightest. Note the 30-50 mph and 40-60 mph results in the performance box.

Mercury's carburetion troubles in 1954 have been eliminated by redesigning the four-barrel carburetor with larger barrels and locating the choke plates above the throttle body. Other refinements include dual exhausts as standard equipment, enlarging the intake ports, eliminating the kidney section of the combustion chamber, and going to a higher lift cam.

Most surprising to test drivers was the improved steering on the Montclair. Mercury's ball-joint front has been good in the past, but the 1955 handling had not been anticipated. The Montclair went through winding roads, cornered and parked with a degree of control that may cause it to be classed as tops for the year in this department. Factors which contribute to this apparently are the lower center of gravity, wider tread and mounting of the shocks at a horizontal angle to reduce body sway.

A feature of the Montclair which can be measured against Mercurys of previous years is the Merc-O-Matic transmission. Starts in first gear can be made while the selector lever is in drive position. This is accomplished by floorboarding the accelerator pedal and the shift into intermediate is withheld until 33 mph. And shifts from any gear into the next higher one

(Continued on page 52)

Overhead view from rear shows massive tail lamp treatment and dual exhaust. Latter items are standard on Montclair.



Canted headlights give a forward rake to lower, wider front end of Montclair, with bumper and grille as single unit.



Fifth-wheel checks under acceleration indicated reworking of automatic transmission has smoothed out gear changes.

MOTOR LIFE ROAD TEST

CAR TESTED: 1955 MERCURY
MONTCLAIR

TEST CONDITIONS

Altitude 200 feet
Temperature 58 degrees
Wind 8 mph
Gasoline MOBIL GAS PREMIUM

ACCELERATION AND TOP SPEED

MPH	Seconds
0-30	4.3
0-45	7.9
0-60	11.7
30-50	5.3
40-60	6
Standing 1/4 mile	19.5 seconds
Fastest one-way run	107.9 mph
Top speed avg. 4 runs	103.1 mph

BRAKING DISTANCE

MPH	Stopping distance
30	50.8 feet
45	87 feet
60	149 feet

FUEL CONSUMPTION

MPH	Average
30	21 mpg
45	22 mpg
60	15 mpg

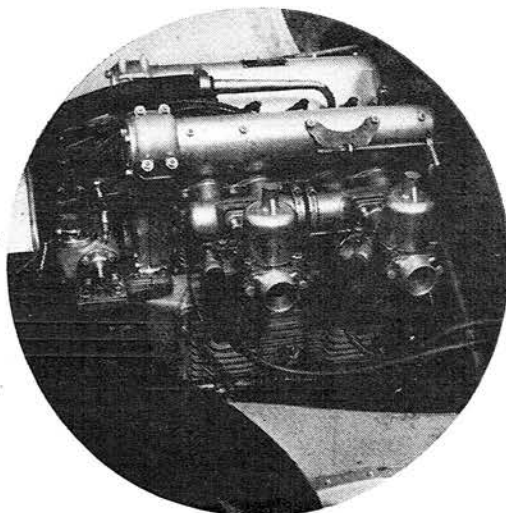
SPEEDOMETER CORRECTIONS

Car speedometer	Actual speeds
20	19
30	27
40	36
50	44
60	53
70	61
80	70
90	79
100	—

REMARKS: PAVEMENT WAS
DRY ASPHALT. ALL
SPEEDS ACTUAL.

OFFY CHALLENGES THE LIGHTWEIGHTS

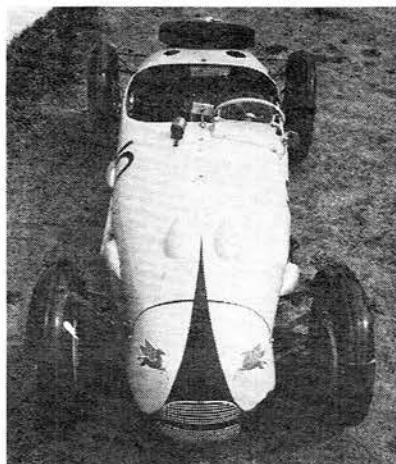
*What America needs
in sports car
road racing is
a good engine
with fewer
cubic inches.
Maybe this is it*



WHILE stock American engines have been highly successful in the unlimited categories of sports car racing, nothing made in Detroit is suitable for the very competitive under 1500 cc classes. Thus, in recent months, more and more attention has been focused upon the Myer-Drake Offenhauser. As a matter of fact, in the near future the firm will market a 91 cubic inch version designed to challenge the lightweight imports.

An experimental Offy of such dimensions has been running on road circuits since October 1953. With it, George Beavis of Los Angeles has been victorious at Torrey Pines, Palm Springs and Willow Springs. He estimates the Offy, in his 1300-pound special, has turned 122 mph.

Aluminum body of Beavis Offy is mounted on tubular steel frame which the builder thinks is the best.

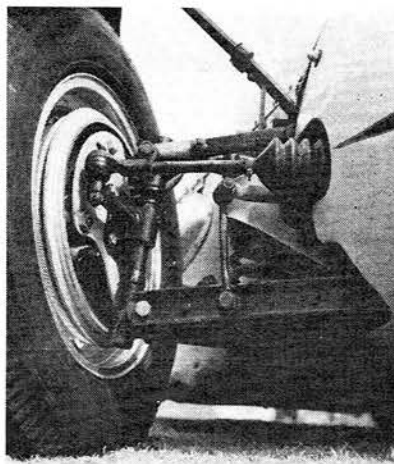


Beavis feels that 200 pounds will have to be cut from the total weight before the car can match formidable opponents, such as the Italian Osca. On the basis of his experience, this reduction must come in the running gear through lighter brakes, suspension and axle. This means costly engineering from the ground up, with original castings.

As it now stands, the Beavis Offy, of 112 hp, is mounted on an 86-inch wheelbase with a 48-inch tread. The frame is steel tubing which carries the aluminum body on MG TD suspension in front and Morris Minor torsion bars in the rear.

The transmission is MG TC, coupled to the Offy by a special adapter. Brakes are 1950 DeSoto. •

Front suspension is MG TD, with brakes adapted from 1950 DeSoto. Car handles well on road race course.



MERCURY ROAD TEST

(Continued from page 29)

come with smoothness not present in earlier versions of the gearbox.

The 198 hp engine, incidentally, is standard in the Montclair only with Merc-O-Matic. For those who choose conventional or overdrive, the 188 hp "second" Mercury engine is standard.

BIGGER, BETTER BRAKES

The Montclair, along with the rest of the 1955 Mercury models, have 30 square inches more of brake lining area. The increase is reflected in the shorter stopping distances recorded in "panic" stop tests from 30, 45 and 60 mph. It's nice to know that greater power and speed have been accompanied by attention to such vital safety points.

From behind the wheel, the Montclair, with a shorter hood contour than most cars, is an easy and pleasant car for either long or short trips. Mercury, unfortunately, has not chosen to cover the highly polished dash with non-reflecting material, although hot spots did not seem to be present. At night, the instrument cluster light reflects from the upper left corner of the wrap-around windshield and is distracting.

Interior of the Montclair is both colorful and highly functional. The white vinyl upholstery is susceptible to soiling and buyers who make this choice should consult their dealers promptly for advice on how to keep it in original condition. Elsewhere, the appointments are handsome, durable and modern.

To put it briefly, the Montclair is a top choice for a car buyer in any price field. Its range is not far above the deluxe versions of the low-priced class, yet has the luxury looks and features to make it attractive to those who consider only the costly models.

It has what most drivers want: smartness in its fresh styling, grade A performance, the dependability of tested design, universal service facilities, and what surely will become one of the brightest names in American cars. •

SPECIFICATIONS

TEST CAR: 1955 Mercury Montclair hardtop.

ENGINE: ohv V-8. Bore 3.75 inches, stroke 3.30. Displacement 292 cubic inches. Compression ratio 8.5-to-1. Bhp 198 at 4400 rpm. Torque 286 ft. lbs. at 2500 rpm. Crankcase capacity (with filter) 6 quarts. Fuel tank capacity 18 gallons. Cooling system capacity (with heater) 20 quarts. Electrical system 6 volts.

TRANSMISSION: Merc-O-Matic torque converter with planetary gears. Rear axle ratio 3.15 (3.73 with conventional and 4.09 with overdrive).

OVERALL DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase 119 inches. Tread 58 inches front, 59 inches rear. Length 206.3, width 76.4, height 58.6. Dry weight 3480 lbs. Turning circle 42.37 feet. Tire size 7.10 x 15 tubeless.

PRICES: Hardtop coupe \$2631, Sun Valley glass-top \$2711, convertible \$2712. Merc-O-Matic \$189. Power steering \$100. Power brakes \$38. Radio \$90. Electric window lifts \$95.