

TOO OFTEN when cars are compared, one suffers because the rule by which they are being measured is not the same. In the case of the Big Three cars of '58 road tested by MT this year, we have tried to apply the same measurements to each, but it is doubtful that all readers will agree with us.

When you select one car of any one make as its representative you are subject to error, for any one car of any one make can at best be only the norm; others may be better or worse. Then when you try to compare three different cars against the other and derive from this conclusions that apply to all cars of each of those makes, you are on dangerous ground.

On top of this, three cars of different makes are no longer similar enough in all respects to make the comparison infallible. For example, though all three cars tested here are two-door hardtops on 118-inch chassis, and each has the top-available-horsepower engine, one has only (?) 280, another has 300, and the third has 305.

Though manifold other differences exist, these are the basic ones. Nevertheless, we feel that it is to your benefit to lay down comparisons between these three top-performing models of the three top-selling cars. It's up to you to draw your own conclusions.

—The Editors

CHEVROLET The pattern of the Detroit sell process sometimes evidences itself in the name first applied to a show model: the show model disappears and the name reappears later on a production model. This is the case of the Chevrolet Impala—a fast, maneuverable, personal sport coupe that seems to possess all the attributes of the European Gran Turismo car. As an addition to the Bel Air line, it has much in common with its less speedy partner, but like a good drink, it's sometimes not so much the ingredients as the combination that counts.

FORD Unfortunately, production was at a low level when we picked up our Fairlane 500 fresh off the line in Detroit. We did, however, put on a good 712 miles in Michigan and on the Ford Motor Co. Proving Ground, which was enough to tell us that Chevrolet is going to have trouble in this newly developing "Gran Turismo" (grand touring) class of Detroit machinery.

PLYMOUTH The Fury is Plymouth's attempt to effect a compromise between a sports-type car and a family automobile. The '58 version is a great improvement over the '57, for with the new Golden Commando engine, performance is terrific. Construction, assembly and finish are also greatly improved. It is truly a high-performance, safe, sports-type family car that should not only hold its own at the dragstrip, but is also well suited for city and highway driving.

Q. What type of car was tested?

CHEVROLET Two-door hardtop in the Bel Air series, with largest engine in line—new 348-cubic-inch V8, rated at 280 hp at 4800 rpm. Had three dual-throat carburetors with progressive-type linkage, and dual exhausts. Had 9.5 to 1 heads, Turboglide two-speed transmission with "grade" gear, and rear axle ratio of 3.55 to 1. Only extras were radio and heater.

FORD Two-door hardtop in Fairlane Series, with largest engine in line, 352-cubic-inch V8 rated at 300 hp. Had one four-barrel carburetor, 10.2 to 1 heads. Driveline was Cruise-O-Matic three-speed transmission, rear axle ratio of 2.91 to 1. Extras included power steering, power brakes, power windows, seat belts, radio and heater.

PLYMOUTH Two-door hardtop in Belvedere series, with largest engine in line—new 350-cubic-inch V8, rated at 305 hp at 5000 rpm. Had two four-barrel carburetors, dual-breaker distributor, dual exhausts, 10 to 1 compression heads. Driveline was TorqueFlite, three-speed pushbutton transmission, rear axle ratio of 3.31 to 1 (not Sure-Grip). Suspension different from stock in larger front torsion bars, six-leaf rear springs instead of five-leaf as on other V8s. Extras included power steering, power brakes, radio, and heater.

continued

PLYMOUTH...

CHEVROLET... FORD...

TOP MODELS OF THE POPULAR BIG THREE DRIFT AROUND ONE OF THE SWEEPING TURNS AT RIVERSIDE (CALIF.) INTERNATIONAL

RACEWAY WHERE MT WILL DRIVE ALL 1958 CARS ON THE TURN-FILLED COURSE UNDER IDEAL, CONTROLLED TESTING CONDITIONS



THE FIRST FEEL

Q. Is exit or entry convenient, or difficult?

CHEVROLET The front seat is well placed in relation to the door opening, though the clearance between the seat and wheel is slight enough to cause you to slide under it. If you're around 5'10" you'll consciously avoid the wrap-around with your left knee until you get used to it. You'll also avoid the roof. Entry to the rear seat is awkward because of the lack of room between the rear of the front seat and the door opening.

FORD No particular inconveniences about wrap-around noted; seat belt was bothersome upon getting out, for left half always fell to doorsill and then had to be laid on seat. Entry to rear seat somewhat awkward because of limited space between back of front seat and rear of door opening.

PLYMOUTH The slantback windshield post makes entry into the Fury easy without fear of banging your knee. A movement that later becomes an unconscious one is the avoidance of the top of the door opening with your head. Entry to the rear seat is also difficult because of the low roof.

Q. Are instruments and controls convenient?

CHEVROLET Instruments and controls are well placed and adequately lighted. It is a relief to find an instrument panel laid out for the driver's convenience. Everything, including ashtray, radio controls, and glove box is within arm's reach.

FORD Instruments all easy to read, except rheostat dimmer for all instruments also dimmed clock light, making it hard to see. Instrument lights also reflected in left vent window and in left door window, though there were no reflections in the windshield. The glove box is too far right to be convenient to driver; it also had no light.



PLYMOUTH All instruments are easy to read both day and night. Controls are easy to reach, except for the cigarette lighter. The glove compartment is too far to the right to be convenient to the driver; it used to be in the middle—why did they change? Foot-operated fresh-air vent control under cowl was awkward to use.

Q. Does it start quickly?

CHEVROLET Starts, whether hot or cold, were generally of the instantaneous variety. There was no evidence of early morning reluctance; the engine would start and run reliably and quietly from cold. The ignition switch location could be improved; at present the gearshift quadrant when in neutral position makes it hard to insert the key.

FORD Ignition key on left still causes us to fumble from right hand to left hand after unlocking the driver's door; the lack of a light in the keyway was bothersome at night. Starts were quick when engine was cold, but hesitated for several cranks when it was warm. Starting noise and engine idle sounds were somewhat louder than other V8s.

PLYMOUTH Starting was instantaneous on hot starts, but some trouble was encountered on cold starts. The engine ran quietly and warmed up *very* quickly.

DRIVING IN TOWN

Q. Is driving position comfortable?

CHEVROLET The steering column is almost horizontal and the wheel position is of the arms-almost-straightforward type that inspires confidence in the driver. The seat is firm, comfortable, and adjustable fore and aft on the driver's side only. Unlike some other cars, seatback does not rake back at an awkward angle when it's moved to its rearward position.

FORD Driving position is quite good, though some will prefer more legroom. A complaint common to many other '58s is the thin-rimmed steering wheel. The seat-to-wheel relationship is fair, though a 5'2" femme felt she was too close to the wheel when she adjusted the four-way power seat to where she could reach the pedals.

PLYMOUTH The location of the steering wheel and the arm-rest is good. The wheel does not interfere with visibility of the instruments or of the road. The seat cushion is not the most comfortable after a few hours of driving because it's not thick enough. A long-legged driver will suffer a fatigued right leg after prolonged driving due to the lack of support under the thigh; a rolled pleat on the front edge would help, and a throttle suspended from the top instead of from the bottom would increase legroom.

Q. What is general feel in traffic?

CHEVROLET The steering, not power assisted and with too many (five) turns, but with a short turning radius, seemed at first to be impossibly heavy. A quick stop at the wheel aligners for a minor adjustment and increase in tire pressure from 26 to 32 psi effected a miraculous change in ease of handling. Parking, however, on a highly cambered street could be considered heavy without the assistance of power steering. Maneuverability is quite excellent and judgment of parking spots is easy because of the good vision and little overhang. No dragging on driveway ramps was encountered. The door height is sufficient to clear most curbs,

but the chrome rub rail under the door takes a beating unless the curb is very low.

The absence of pitch under traffic braking—mark one up for the new suspension—and the progressive characteristic of the transmission that does not snatch gear changes offers a cross-town ride that once was the exclusive property of chauffeur-driven gray-haired ladies. The fairly high-g geared steering allows the driver to take full advantage of these properties with a high degree of safety.

FORD Steering is light, yet retains a fair feel of road irregularities. It's easy to park, though it takes too much time to turn the car through its 4½ turns lock-to-lock. Getting it up against a particularly high curbing, you're liable to scrape the rocker panels, but it's better that you do that instead of scraping the side of the car. Average driveway ramps won't cause you to drag unless, as with almost all cars today, you have on a heavy Continental kit.

The Fairlane 500 is quite agile in traffic, considering its overall length. Streetcar tracks caused only a slight pull to one side that was easily corrected—almost without notice. The overall acceleration and braking feel is good except for the dive on braking—this could stand improvement, for it felt to us that there was more than on comparable '56 and '57 models.

PLYMOUTH Steering ease with the power assist and only 3½ turns lock-to-lock is as effortless as touted by Plymouth ad copywriters. Parking is simple, with the rear fin offering a good guide. High curbs interfere with the doors. The large turning radius (45 feet) caused some trouble in parking lots. Though the Plymouth has considerable overhang, at no time did it hang up on any driveway.

In traffic, the Plymouth is quite agile. The wide cross-section tires cause the car to be pulled aside by streetcar tracks and road edges, but it is easy to recover. The lowness of the car is one drawback in that it makes visibility through the car ahead difficult unless it is also a late-model Chrysler product. You'll have to take it easy on the throttle foot to hold the car back,

but when you brake, you'll note an absence of front-end dip.

Q. How is vision?

CHEVROLET Visibility is excellent. The windshield rake is such that intersection approaches are never blinded. The location of the auxiliary mirror on the driver's door offered a rearward look that included part of the left rear fender, which proved invaluable on freeways where another car is often on your left fender. The location of the inside rear view mirror could be improved or should have some means of adjusting to various heights. Windshield wipers offered the usual coverage of the windshield with unswept spots at the top center, left, and right sides—a complaint common to wrap-arounds.

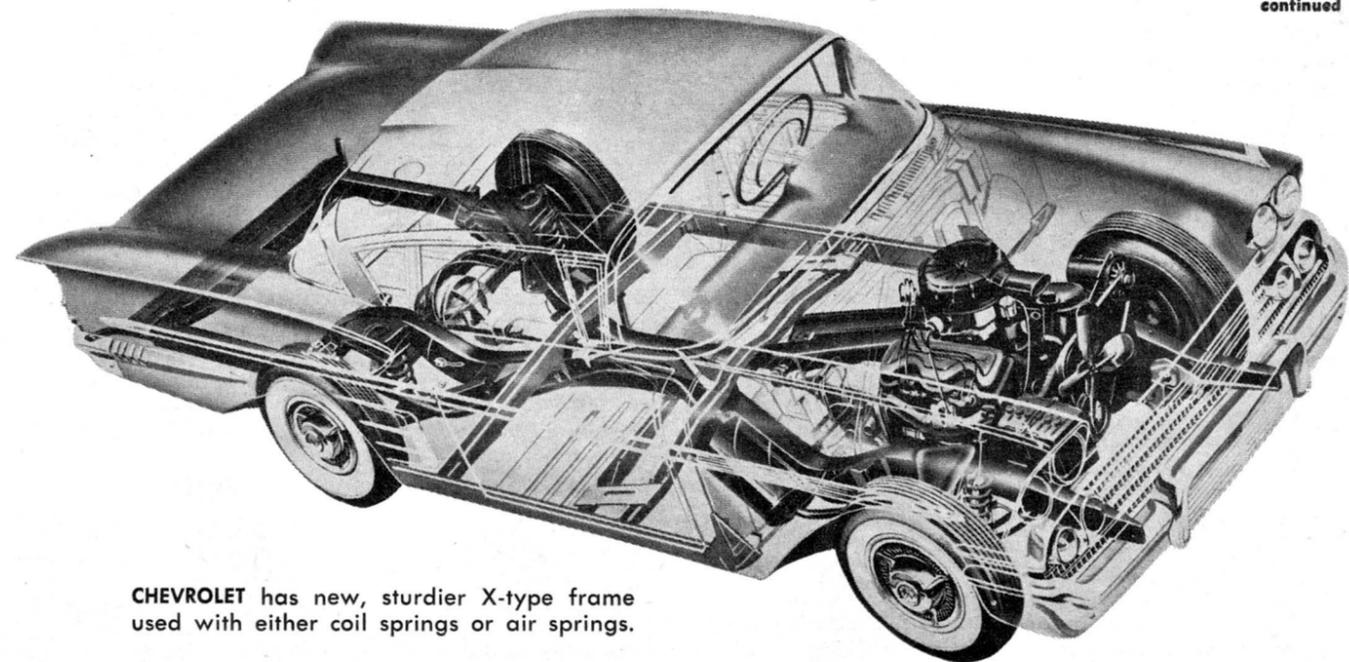
FORD Vision in traffic is good all around. There is slight windshield distortion at the extreme lower corners, but it's too low to be of any bother. Mirror-wise the Ford could stand improvement: the inside rear view one is too narrow and the outside one is too far back. The windshield wipers are quiet, give better-than-average coverage, and don't even skip the glass at high speeds as do some others.

PLYMOUTH Vision through the front windshield is good for city driving, though some distortion is still evident at the extreme ends. The new location of the inside rear view mirror (closer to the driver) gives improved rear vision; its width, encompassing the entire rear window, is also commendable. Outside rear view mirrors are too far from the driver for the adjustment they constantly need to be of much use. There are few blind spots in the entire 360-degree circle. The electric wipers offer better-than-average coverage of the windshield.

Q. How do the brakes feel?

CHEVROLET The brakes on the Impala, not power-assisted, are pleasantly progressive. Pedal pressure necessary to operate them could be called medium. The location of the pedal makes either right- or left-foot operation a simple matter. The emergency brake operates with a foot pedal on two rear brakes and

continued



CHEVROLET has new, sturdier X-type frame used with either coil springs or air springs.

can be used for emergency operation. Such a stop can be made in about 2½ times the normal distance with the foot brake; caution is necessary on loose or slippery surfaces to prevent accidental locking of the rear wheels. The emergency brake quickly releases with a fingertip control.

FORD The power brakes of the 500 have a moderate pedal and never once grabbed under normal usage. Keeping a foot on the pedal going through rain puddles prevented them from grabbing even then. The pedal is positioned for good heel-and-toe action. An emergency stop on dry pavement at 30 mph using the emergency brake halted the car in 40 feet.

PLYMOUTH For power-assisted brakes, those on the Fury were not too sensitive, nor too hard, eliminating the tendency to grab at slow speeds. The relationship of the throttle to the brake is excellent for heel-and-toe driving. Left-foot braking would also be easy, though experience has taught us that this causes too much unintentional dragging of the brakes. An emergency stop using the T-handle emergency control operating on the driveshaft was fairly quick, without loss of control.

Q. How is the transmission?

CHEVROLET The Turboglide transmission of the Impala is an improved version of the Powerglide, with a lower gear for starting, pulling, or slowing you down on grades. It is not advisable to use this gear (GR on the quadrant) for fast takeoffs because the action in the torque converter at this time is the creation of a turbulence in the oil to impart a drag on the rear wheels. Accidental usage of this gear for fast takeoffs will result in a sudden lurch when shifting and possible damage to the transmission or driveline.

The proximity of DRIVE (D) and REVERSE (R) on the quadrant is desirable for rocking out of sand or snow. In practice, however, some fairly frightening noises emit from the drive train. This is probably the result of backlash and could become worse with wear. In normal operation the Turboglide is unusually quiet and free of harshness.

FORD The Cruise-O-Matic automatic transmission is an improvement over Fordomatic in that with it you have a better selection of gears. With the gearshift quadrant in D-2, you always start in second gear; in D-1, you start in first gear. For extreme grade pulling or extra fast takeoffs in which you want to rev the engine higher than the transmission ordinarily allows, you can use LOW. When you start in LOW, however, the transmission stays in low gear and will not upshift until you manually move the lever. Upshifts and downshifts are ordinarily smooth; it's only when you're under full load that you get a lurching motion during shifting. You can use the transmission for slowing down by dropping down a gear or two. For example, we levered down to LOW at an indicated 80 mph. After about two seconds, the box shifted to second gear, then dropped to first at around 25 mph.

PLYMOUTH The three-speed TorqueFlite transmission is "finger-tip operated" with your left hand; despite the fact that this gets it out of the reach of tiny tots' mischievous fingers, it's more awkward to use than a lever you can reach without removing your hand from the steering wheel. Of course, the only time you need use the controls is when you want to use engine braking for slowdown and you punch the 2 button, or when you are backing in and out of a parking spot. The fact that they're mechanically operated is a distinct advantage over electrically-operated controls such as on the Edsel. Gearshifts both up and down can be felt, but are not annoying except under extreme acceleration or deceleration conditions.

AT THE DRAGSTRIP

Q. How does it go?

CHEVROLET The Impala betters last year's test car, a 270-hp Bel Air four-door hardtop, by a considerable margin in most categories. With a Powerglide transmission that could utilize the advantage of a low-gear start instead of the second-gear start necessary with Turboglide, the times could have been improved. The fact that the car was equipped with Positraction, Chevy's version of a limited-slip differential, made it difficult to provoke wheelspin. Therefore, to get the best possible times all that was necessary was to rev up the engine, hold a foot on the brake, then simultaneously mash the throttle and release the brake. Here's how the average times compared to the '57 Chevy:

'57 with 270-bhp engine		'58 with 280-bhp engine	
From Standing Start			
0-45 mph 6.8	0-60 mph 9.9	0-45 mph 6.4	0-60 mph 9.1
Quarter-mile 17.5 and 77.5 mph		Quarter-mile 16.5 and 83.5 mph	
Passing Speeds			
30-50 mph 3.6	45-60 mph 2.9	30-50 mph 3.6	45-60 mph 3.2
50-80 mph 9.9		50-80 mph 8.0	

FORD There's no question about this 300-bhp Ford Fairlane 500 outperforming last year's 500 counterpart—with 55 more horses under its hood it should. The '58 lays rubber easily if it's punched hard on the start in either D-1 or LOW. In fact, you can even provoke wheelspin with a conventional rear axle on slow corners in town if you're too lead-footed. Maximum acceleration was gained by making all starts from standstill in D-1 (which starts you in first gear); D-2 was used for all passing speed runs. There was a slight flat spot noticed in the engine around 80 to 90 mph, then it picks up again. In times, here's how the '58 compares to the '57:

'57 with 245-bhp engine		'58 with 300-bhp engine	
From Standing Start			
0-45 mph 6.9	0-60 mph 11.1	0-45 mph 6.5	0-60 mph 10.2
Quarter-mile 18.2 and 77 mph		Half-mile 104.0 mph*	
Passing Speeds			
30-50 mph 4.3	45-60 mph 4.3	30-50 mph 4.2	45-60 mph 4.7
50-80 mph 12.4		50-80 mph 11.3	

*Quarter-mile time not available; this figure will be published later

PLYMOUTH This year's Fury is really blowing up a storm, bettering the performance of all Plymouths tested by MT last year; this it should do with a 305-bhp engine. On the smooth blacktop surface of the San Fernando dragstrip, it was hard to keep from laying a black strip of rubber with the driving wheel. The use of the Sure-Grip differential and a 3.73 gear would be advisable for steady dragstrip operation, though highway driving and gas mileage would suffer. Maximum acceleration was obtained by starting with the transmission in low gear (1), and shifting to second gear (2) at 45-50 mph. The transmission completed its shift to third automatically at about 60 mph. There was no valve float or clatter, though a slight flat spot was noted at the beginning of acceleration—around 15-20 mph. Here's how the times compare to our test car of '57, a Belvedere four-door sedan with 235-bhp engine:

'57 with 235-bhp engine		'58 with 305-bhp engine	
From Standing Start			
0-45 mph 6.7	0-60 mph 10.7	0-45 mph 5.2	0-60 mph 7.7
Quarter-mile 17.9 and 77 mph		Quarter-mile 16.1 and 86.5 mph	
Passing Speeds			
30-50 mph 4.2	45-60 mph 4.2	30-50 mph 2.9	45-60 mph 2.6
50-80 mph 11.5		50-80 mph 7.2	

(Editor's note: And who's not in what horsepower race?)

USING IT FOR TRIPS

Q. What kind of ride does it have?

CHEVROLET The ride could be classed as medium hard, but the car has very little body roll. Road noise is of a very low level. On trips up to 200 miles, front seat comfort was good. The lack of legroom in the rear seat is not conducive to comfort for rear seat passengers.

FORD The ride is fairly soft and so on hard corners, body lean is considerable, though the use of seat belts minimized this feel to the driver. It's a comfortable, durable, long-trip car. The front seat was very comfortable, and the rear seat has been improved, though it's still not up to the standard of the front seat. Most road noises were not imparted to driver or passengers because the test car was undercoated, well assembled, and tight.

PLYMOUTH The ride is firm, with roll being noticeable to passengers, though overall it could be classed as good for long trips. Seat comfort is fair except in the center of both front and rear seats where the padding is entirely inadequate. Rear seat passengers complain about lack of legroom. The stiff suspension, though it imparts a feeling of security to the driver, transmits annoying sounds from road cracks, small bumps and holes.

Q. Is it tiring to drive?

CHEVROLET Although a certain amount of road "feel" gets through to the driver, fatigue-provoking vibration of the steering wheel or column is very low. One complaint about distance driving can be leveled at the spoke layout of the wheel. The two spokes are located in such a way that they cannot be used as a relief from the normal rim position of the hands when a slightly different grip on the wheel would be restful.

FORD There is only a slight vibration in the steering wheel—hardly enough to bother mentioning. If you're used to a straight-

out arm position, holding on to the Ford's wheel may become a bit tiring for long stretches.

PLYMOUTH There is very little vibration in the wheel or column. When you get tired of holding both hands on the wheel, you'll find that if you want to rest your left arm on the windowsill it's quite high to be too comfortable.

Q. How is it on rough roads?

CHEVROLET The Impala's firm suspension, surprisingly enough, makes light work of rough roads or those with loose surfaces. Dips can be negotiated without wallowing, bottoming, or swerving. Positraction, smooth throttle response, and a sensible weight distribution give the Impala a high degree of controllability on surfaces that would ordinarily be treacherous.

FORD On moderate washboard roads the test car did not feel skittish, but on loose dirt and gravel, it had a tendency to waltz—the degree depending on the speed and whether or not the road had a high camber. A non-slip rear axle and a bit more tail-end weight would help. Dips and bumps would cause wallowing only if taken at foolish speeds; the same is true of railroad crossings. The car could be made to bottom, but not as easily as previous models. Deep chuckholes will cause the affected wheel to "talk back" through the steering gear, but correction is easy.

PLYMOUTH The stiff suspension of the Fury does not give a pleasant ride on rough roads. It has fine control on loose dirt and gravel. There is no bottoming on sharp dips taken at average speeds, though there is some at higher-speeds. The Fury does not wallow coming out of dips.

Q. Is luggage space adequate?

CHEVROLET The trunk is large with a fairly low entry. Whether the trunk is loaded or empty the spare is readily accessible because of its stand-up position on the curbside near the rear.

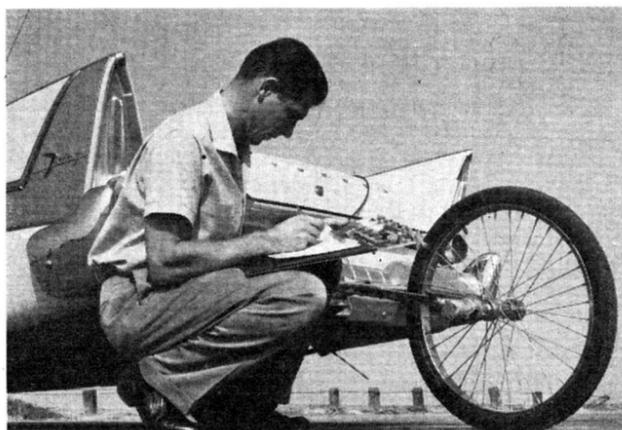
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PRACTICE FORD is photographed at Riverside International Raceway for appearance on General Petroleum TV show.

FORD The luggage space is excellent and is more than is generally needed. It's easy to load and the stand-up spare and jack are easily reached. No problems would be encountered on this score, though long arms will help.

PLYMOUTH Luggage space is quite adequate and though there is a sill, loading or unloading is not too difficult. The spare would be difficult to remove for a woman, for she would have to first lift it from its flat position before it could be rolled or lifted out.



Q. Is there much wind noise or any air leaks?

CHEVROLET Doors and windows are draft-free. Wind noise was always present with partially opened windows. Although it was possible to vary the intensity and level of the noise by adjustment of the windows, it seemed impossible to eliminate the wind noise entirely. One particularly irritating draft that was capable of turning the driver's right foot to a lump of ice was caused by poor valving in the air vent system—it directed a cold stream of air on the throttle foot.

FORD Any speed above 40 mph with the wind vents open produced annoying wind whistles, varying with the speed. Ventilation was therefore obtained with the right front window cracked open from two to four inches. All doors, weatherstripping, and seals were properly tight. There were no serious drafts under cruising conditions. Through bucketsful of rain no leaks became apparent.

PLYMOUTH Wind noise was not excessive or irritating under any conditions of windows open or partially open. With all windows closed no air leaks were evident.

Q. How is the heat and vent system?

CHEVROLET The temperature controls are conveniently located and adequately lighted. Blower noise is not obtrusive. Heating is satisfactory and available almost immediately upon starting—even from cold engine condition.

FORD The heater controls take an average stretch of the arm. They're lit for night operation and dim with the panel light rheostat. They are easy to operate, but getting the exact amount of heat wanted was a bit difficult. The use of the blower was not required down to a temperature of 45° F; when it was used it

PLYMOUTH—a real stormer

was more quiet than average. The defroster worked very good, giving a fairly wide spread on the windshield.

PLYMOUTH The heater control is easily operated. The fresh air vent is located under the cowl and is foot-operated. The blower is not noisy and in conjunction with the heater supplies plenty of heat. The defrosters are quite adequate. There are, however, no lights to make night operation of the controls easier.

Q. What is it like to drive on straight roads?

CHEVROLET The car at all times proved to be commendably stable. The steering is positive at all speeds and at normal speeds variations in wind intensity had little effect. Even at speeds in the vicinity of 100 mph there was no inclination to wander. At no time did it feel unsafe solely because of high speed. At low speeds, road camber had little effect.

FORD The road feel at all times is unusually good for a power-steered car. Corrective action on straight roads is not often required, for the car tracks well. Our standard test of whipping the wheel to one side and noting its straightline recovery proved this. The steering can be considered slow, but light. Wind gusts affect the steering only moderately, even in extreme side gusts. The car feels safe up to speeds of 90 mph, but at higher speeds the tail end gets light, then the front end.

PLYMOUTH Very little corrective action is required to keep the Fury on a straight line, though the steering is not positive enough for such a fast car. It has a very light feeling and is affected by wind gusts. Its straightline recovery is not satisfactory in that it does not return to a straight course if the wheel is tugged to one side; crown roads tend to pull it to the lower side. It does, however, feel safe at average highway speeds.

Q. What happens in turns?

CHEVROLET Through gentle radius turns at average speeds the steering of the car is absolutely neutral with little inclination by the front wheels to return to a straight-ahead position. At faster speeds in gentle turns it is possible to set up and maintain a soft, unresponsive drift. At high speeds through sharp turns understeer, with lack of response to the angle of the front wheels in relation to the road, becomes a problem. The front end becomes heavy, noses down at a steep angle and then pushes the front wheels toward the outside of the turn. Here engine torque and a limited-slip differential can be used to advantage. By careful use of the throttle, rear wheel adhesion can be lowered by breaking the rear wheels loose, allowing centrifugal force to carry the rear end out toward the outside of the turn. By this method of rear end steering it is possible to get out of trouble, but under normal conditions the car behaves and is quite stable.

FORD The 500 stays put with moderate lean in gentle turns at average speeds, while at a faster clip there is considerable lean. This is where the driver is happy to have a moderate amount of understeer. In sharp turns, an unladen 500 tends to get a bit light in the rear and if it's pushed faster it will break loose—but only after fair warning. At this time the front end also tends to get heavy and there is liable to be some wheel fight, though the combination of power steering, the use of LOW gear, and a generous use of the throttle make for easy correction. Through a long curve, it is possible to drift the car through. Most generally, if the car is pushed hard it will slide before drifting. After coming out of a turn the wheel centers itself nicely. If the car is given its head at this time, it will tend to

with sports car characteristics in a family type car

straighten itself out without the need for frantic unwinding. On slick surfaces the rear end easily becomes unstuck and the front end becomes heavy more quickly.

PLYMOUTH Through gentle radius turns at average speeds the feel is excellent with practically no lean. Taking the Fury on up to much faster speeds you still have a feeling of control. Rubber bumpers on the suspension limit the amount of wheel travel and as a result the car sets quickly in turns, with an apparently small amount of lean. The front end tends to get somewhat heavy in hard turns, but there is no wheel fight. The wheel does not return to a dead ahead position. With full power on, a four-wheel drift can easily be induced; otherwise the back end can be made to come around. In both situations, there is a feeling of mastery over the car.

Q. How are the brakes?

CHEVROLET Braking is even on all four wheels under most conditions; however, fade is a real problem—as with all manufacturers. One crash stop from over 100 mph will render the brakes inoperative until they have cooled. Two successive stops from a corrected 80 mph also finds the pedal on the floor. Although in normal use the brakes are adequate and reliable, it isn't being unduly critical to question a manufacturer who builds a car capable of speeds over 100 mph that will not stop on demand.

FORD Normally, no ill effects were encountered with the

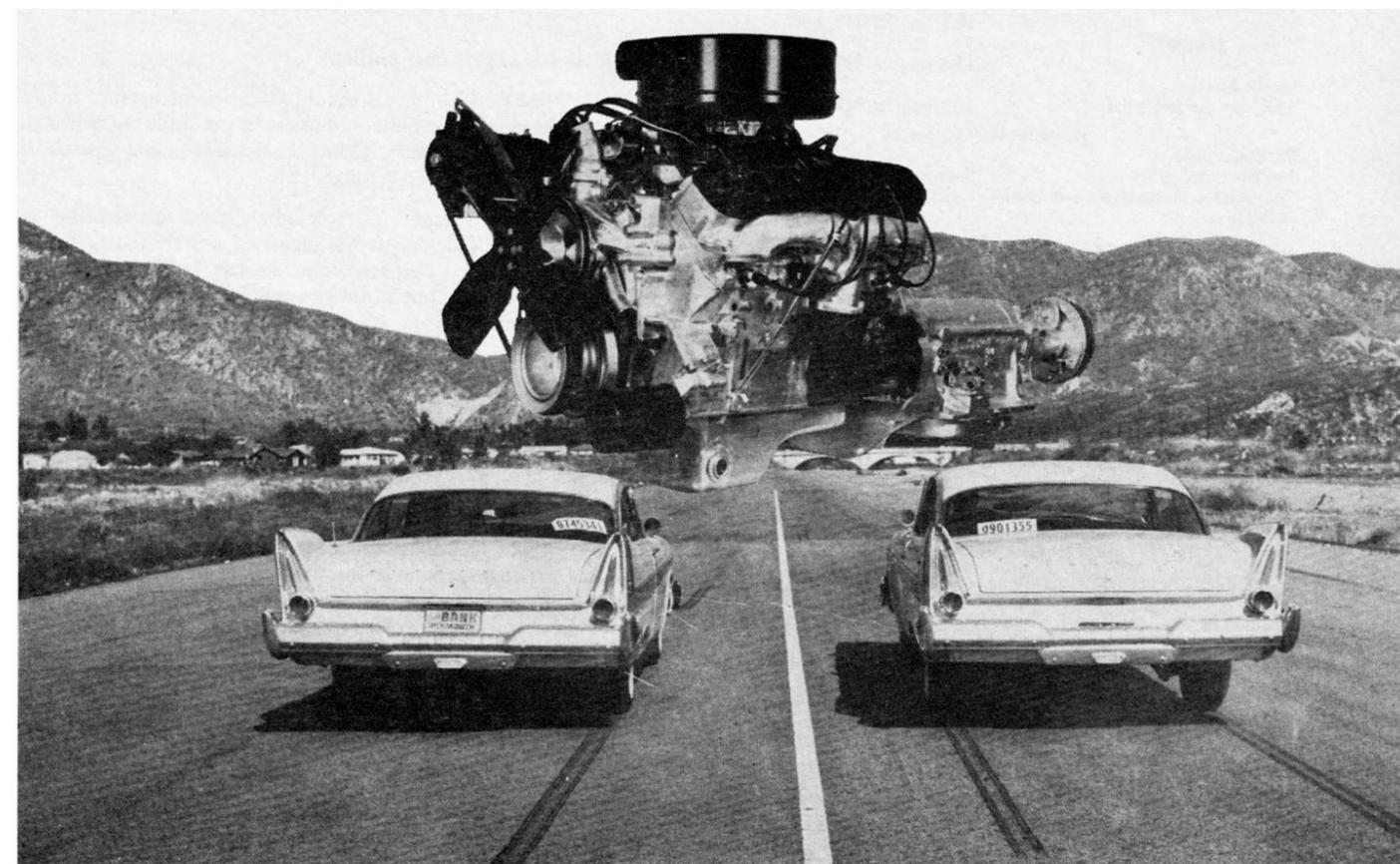
500's brakes, though brake dive seemed excessive. Under hard usage it took six hard stops from 60 mph down to 20 mph to induce fade, and by the ninth stop the pedal was hard enough to constitute a dangerous condition. The brakes recovered after a couple minutes of running at highway speeds. Though there was no serious swerving, these brakes are no improvement over last year's car, which they certainly should be with more horsepower.

PLYMOUTH Under normal usage, no ill effects were found in the Fury's brakes. After five or six quick slow-downs, from 60 mph down to 20 mph, the first sign of fade was encountered and there was a slight pull to one side. After allowing a few minutes for the brakes to cool full stopping ability was again achieved. This is hardly adequate, however, for a car capable of speeds well over 100 mph.

Q. How well does it climb hills? Descend them?

CHEVROLET The V8 engine has a surplus of torque that will handle any grade. Turboglide also offers a certain amount of engine braking that is indeed welcome, since the threat of brake fade is always present.

FORD The Fairlane 500 should be able to handle the steepest grade with no difficulty. Unfortunately, there is too little engine braking with the Cruise-O-Matic transmission. You can drop the lever into LOW, but in either D-2 or D-1 you virtually "coast" in third gear. continued



THE 305 HORSEPOWER of the new Golden Commando engine is better harnessed by a limited-slip differential, as indicated here by the twin tire marks of the Fury on right, in contrast to the single tire mark of Fury on the left.

Chevy, Ford, Plymouth

PLYMOUTH The power of the Fury is adequate for the steepest hill in the country. For engine braking downhill second gear (2 on the pushbutton of TorqueFlite) is quite adequate. For the steepest grades, low gear can be used.

FUEL ECONOMY

CHEVROLET The sad part about all U.S. high-powered cars is that fuel economy is no longer a part of the scene; fuel consumption would be a better phrase. Take a look at how the Impala compares against the 270-bhp Bel Air tested last year:

'57 Bel Air	'58 Bel Air Impala
Stop-and-Go Driving 13.6 mpg for 136 miles	12.7 mpg for 260 miles
Highway Average 15.0 mpg for 312 miles	14.6 mpg for 803 miles
Overall Average 14.5 mpg for 448 miles	14.2 mpg for 1063 miles
Fuel used: Mobilgas Special	
Oil Consumption One quart added in 974 miles	One quart added in 1063 miles

FORD Comparing the '58 Fairlane 500 to the '57 makes you wonder if the power is any real gain. As a couple of service station attendants noted, "This economy pitch is eye-wash," and "Bet it eats gas like a bus." Here's the sad story of how much gas such a powerhouse uses:

'57 Ford Fairlane	'58 Ford Fairlane 500
Stop-and-Go Driving 10.3 mpg for 215 miles	10.3 mpg for 215 miles
Highway Average 13.4 mpg for 497 miles	13.4 mpg for 497 miles
Overall Average 15.6 mpg for 569 miles	12.5 mpg for 712 miles
Fuel used: Mobilgas Special	
Oil Consumption Two quarts in 569 miles	None in 712 miles
*All mileage shown together in overall average.	

PLYMOUTH The sacrifice you must make to get and use much power is in proportion to the amount you lay out for gasoline; for a Plymouth Fury, the price is quite high. Here's how the '58 compares to the 235-bhp Belvedere tested in '57:

'57 Belvedere	'58 Fury
Stop-and-Go Driving 12.0 mpg for 80 miles	8.4 mpg for 133 miles
Highway Average 15.0 mpg for 806 miles	10.6 mpg for 315 miles
Overall Average 14.7 mpg for 886 miles	10.0 mpg for 448 miles
Fuel used: Mobilgas Special	
Oil Consumption No oil added in 886 miles	One quart added in 448 miles

SERVICING

Q. How is it to service?

CHEVROLET The gas filler cap is conveniently located in the center and can be filled rapidly. The oil filler neck is located well, as is the battery for quick servicing. Other items like the fuses and the oil filter can also be quickly serviced.

FORD All servicing points are easy to get to, such as the oil dipstick, fuel tank filler neck, battery, brake master cylinder and oil filter.

PLYMOUTH Service station attendants have no complaint about filling the Fury with gas, oil or water, nor do they see any cause for concern in lubricating the chassis. The battery is where it can easily be checked, as is the oil filter (changed from below). A circuit breaker system eliminates the concern of changing fuses. Checking the brake fluid is difficult on power brake models.

Q. How easy is it to work on the engine?

CHEVROLET The distributor would be easy to work on, as would the fuel pump, but tuning three carburetors with complicated linkage is work for an expert. Mechanics should welcome the new location of the spark plugs, for now they are highly accessible.

FORD Mechanics and service station attendants noted with glee the location of the spark plugs above the exhaust manifold and the distributor on the forward top side. Tappets are easy to get to under the rocker covers. Even the carburetor should be no more difficult to tune than any equally normally complicated mechanism.

PLYMOUTH A mechanic's ability to tune the distributor on the engine would be aided because of its location. Changing the fuel pump would also be easy. Tuning the two carburetors would be difficult, while any attempt to change spark plugs—with all that power equipment—would be a real hassle.

CONCLUSIONS

Q. What are its best points?

CHEVROLET The Impala should easily win acceptance from the sports-minded automobile enthusiast. It's a solid car, with good cornering characteristics, plenty of power, and a chassis that should hold up under a rugged life.

FORD The Fairlane 500 is definitely a car for someone who likes to use a lead foot. It has plenty of power, and is built exceptionally well. (This is despite the fact that our test car had a few minor bugs, but it did not get the Quality Control Audit Check covered on page 16, this issue.)

PLYMOUTH The Fury well meets its purpose of providing a sports-type family car. Its best points are definitely its ease of handling, good cornering, outstanding performance, good assembly and finish.

Q. What should I check before buying?

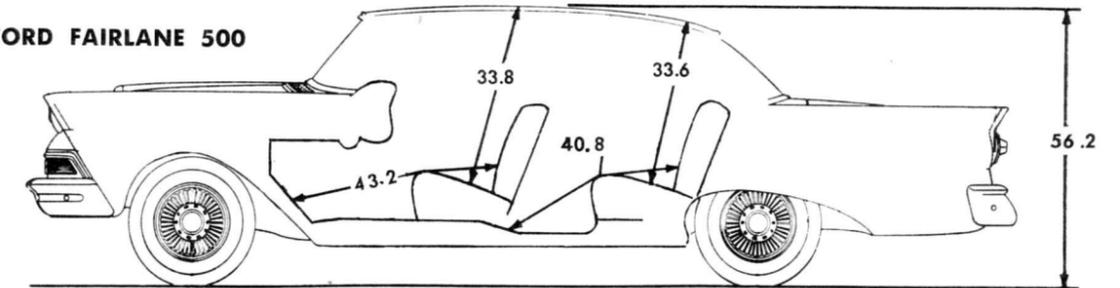
CHEVROLET Check your needs as to carrying more than one adult passenger; the rear seat is not adequate for taking adults on long trips. Check your pocketbook as regards your outlay for gasoline. Check your local traffic and highway conditions, for with the Impala you'll want to drive fast. —Russ Kelly

FORD Check your needs as to carrying rear seat passengers. Check legroom and driving position. Check your allowance for gasoline if you do much driving. Check your needs for a fast car—the Fairlane 500 is fast. —Joe H. Wherry

PLYMOUTH Check the seating position for yourself as driver. Check legroom in the rear. Check your needs as to fuel economy. Check the ride for it may be a bit stiff for the average buyer. Check out where you can drive fast—you will with the Fury. —Robert D'Olivo

SPECIFICATIONS OF TEST CARS ON TRIAL

FORD FAIRLANE 500



ENGINE: Ohv V8. Bore 4.00 in. Stroke 3.50 in. Stroke/bore ratio 0.88:1. Compression ratio 10.2:1. Displacement 352 cu. in. One 4-bbl. carburetor. Dual exhaust. Advertised bhp 300 @ 4600 rpm. Bhp per cu. in. 0.85. Piston speed @ max. bhp 2683 ft. per min. Max bmep 169.2 psi. Max torque 395 lbs.-ft. @ 2800 rpm.

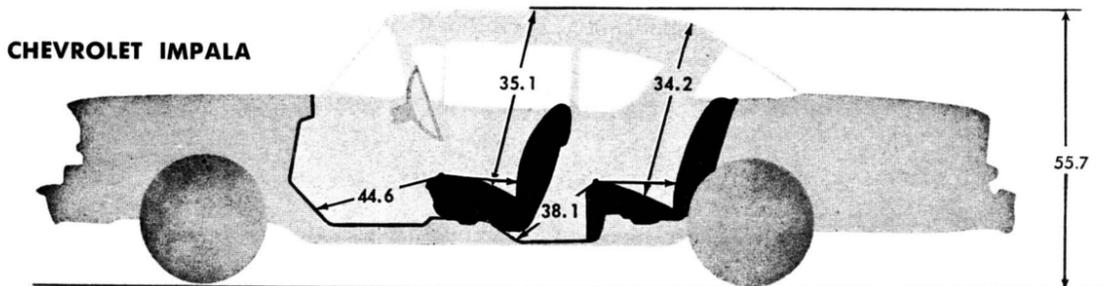
CHASSIS: Front suspension—coil spring with control arms. Rear—semi-elliptic springs. 8.00 x 14 tubeless tires. Power steering, rack and sector, recirculating ball, 5.0 turns lock-to-lock, overall ratio 27.0:1, turning diameter approx. 40 ft. Rear axle—conventional differential, ratio 2.69:1.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase 118 in., overall length 207, overall height 56.2, overall width 78, front tread 59, rear tread 56.4, rear overhang 54.

PRICE: Factory suggested retail price of test car equipped as described including federal tax but not state and local taxes, delivery and handling charges or freight \$3331.

TRANSMISSION: Cruise-O-Matic, automatic three element torque converter with planetary gears.

CHEVROLET IMPALA



ENGINE: Ohv V8. Bore 4.13 in. Stroke 3.25 in. Stroke/bore ratio 0.79:1. Compression ratio 9.5:1. Displacement 348 cu. in. Three 2-bbl. carburetors. Dual exhaust. Advertised bhp 280 @ 4800 rpm. Bhp per cu. in. 0.80. Piston speed @ max. bhp 2600 ft. per min. Max. bmep 153.8 psi. Max. torque 335 lbs.-ft. @ 3200 rpm.

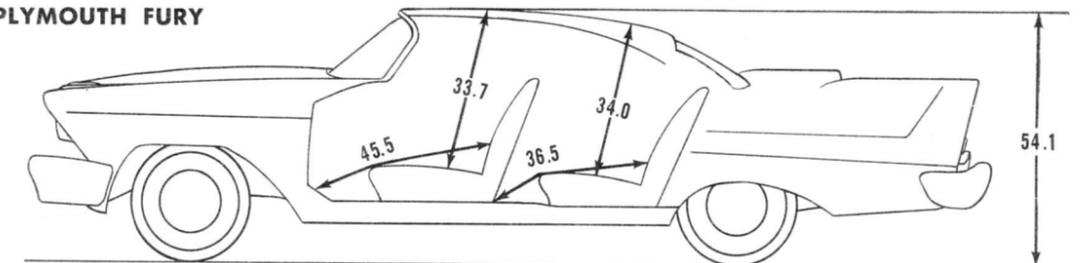
CHASSIS: Front suspension—dependent coil springs with short and long control arms. Rear—coil springs with one upper and two lower control arms. 7.50 x 14 tubeless tires. Mechanical steering, semi-reversible, recirculating ball, 5.2 turns lock-to-lock, overall ratio 23:1, turning diameter (left) 37.2 ft., (right) 37.7 ft. Rear axle—Positraction, limited-slip differential, ratio 3.36:1.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase 118 in., overall length 209.1, overall height 55.7, overall width 77.7, front tread 58.8, rear tread 58.8, rear overhang 55.8. Weight with gas, oil and water 3669 lbs. (52% front, 48% rear), weight/bhp ratio 13.1:1.

PRICE: Factory suggested retail price of test car equipped as described including federal tax but not state and local taxes, delivery and handling charges or freight \$3217.

TRANSMISSION: Turboglide, automatic triple turbine torque converter with variable pitch stator; ratios 2.67:1, 1.63:1.

PLYMOUTH FURY



ENGINE: Ohv V8. Bore 4.06 in. Stroke 3.38 in. Stroke/bore ratio 0.83:1. Compression ratio 10.0:1. Displacement 350 cu. in. Two 4-bbl. carburetors. Dual-breaker distributor. Dual exhaust. Advertised bhp 305 @ 5000 rpm. Bhp per cu. in. 0.87. Piston speed @ max bhp 2813 ft. per min. Max. bmep 159.4 psi. Max. torque 370 lbs.-ft. @ 3600 rpm.

CHASSIS: Front suspension—dependent, lateral, non-parallel control arms with torsion bars. Rear—unsymmetrical, semi-elliptical leaf springs. 8.00 x 14 tubeless tires. Power steering, rack and sector, 3.5 turns lock-to-lock, overall ratio 19.1:1, turning diameter 42.3 ft. Rear axle—conventional differential, ratio 3.31:1.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase 118 in., overall length 206, overall height 54.1, overall width 79.3, front tread 60.9, rear tread 59.6, rear overhang 55.2. Weight with gas, oil and water 3860 lbs. (56% front, 44% rear), weight/bhp ratio 12.6:1.

PRICE: Factory suggested retail price of test car equipped as described including federal tax but not state and local taxes, delivery and handling charges or freight \$3168.

TRANSMISSION: TorqueFlite, automatic three-element torque converter with planetary gears; ratios 2.45:1, 1.45:1, 1.00:1.