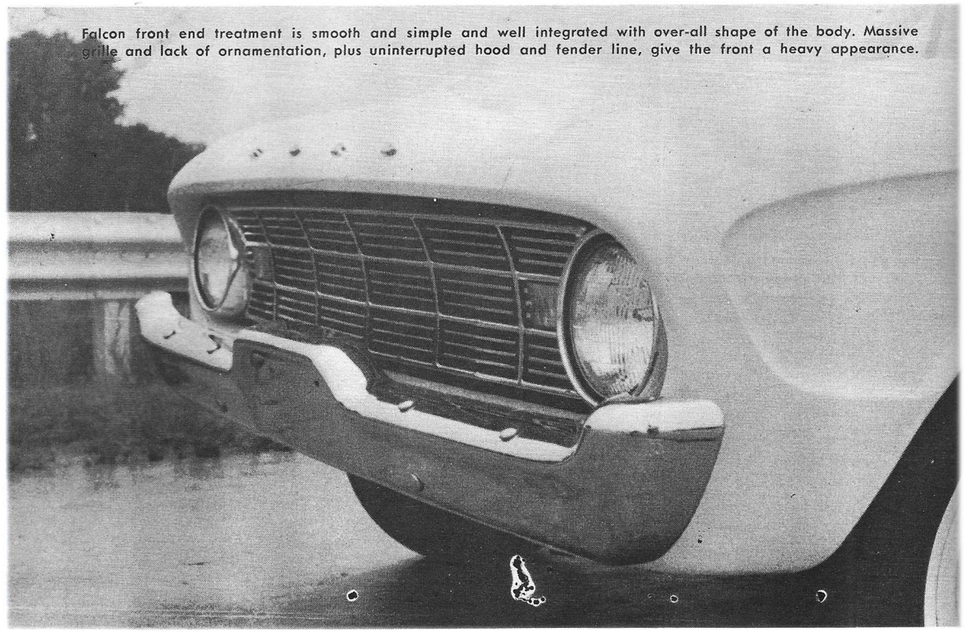
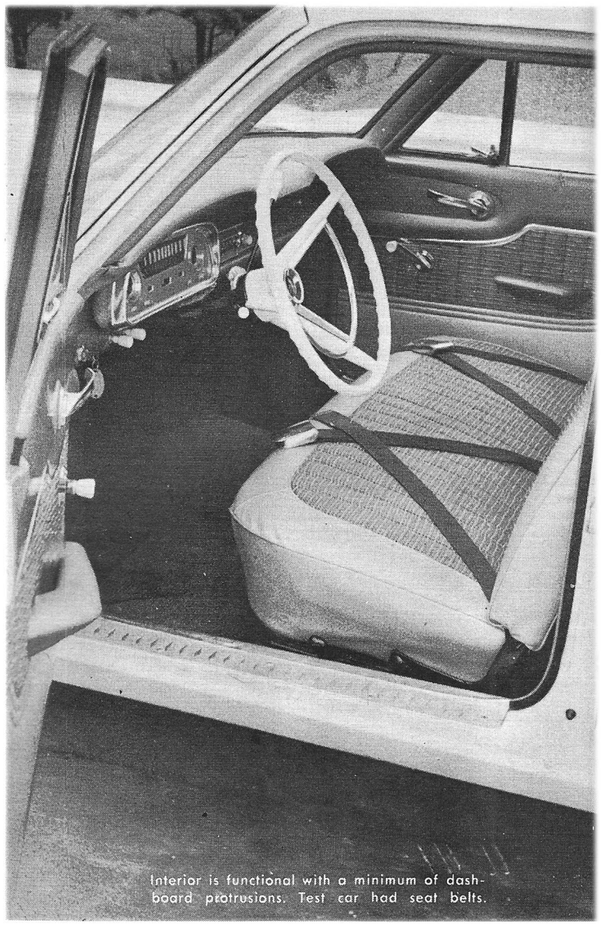


Falcon front end treatment is smooth and simple and well integrated with over-all shape of the body. Massive grille and lack of ornamentation, plus uninterrupted hood and fender line, give the front a heavy appearance.

PRELIMINARY
ROAD TEST

FORD FALCON



Interior is functional with a minimum of dashboard protrusions. Test car had seat belts.



The Falcon's lines are smooth if somewhat tubular in form. Sculpturing replaces chrome as side trim. Wide doors and high roof make car "livable".

► With the new Falcon, Ford has abandoned to a large degree the so-called "crisp" line although retaining a definite Ford "family" appearance. In so doing they have come up with the best looking Ford since the Thirties. Even painted white there is no feeling on the part of the viewer—or at least this viewer—that Fords and ice boxes could come from the same mold. In short, Ford's newest offering looks great.

If we cannot be as enthusiastic over the Falcon's performance as over its appearance, the reason is two-fold: the styling is good and it is not meant to be a race car. There once was a movie about a mythical automobile manufacturer whose motto was "comfort and safety for six with a Six". This could easily be Falcon's slogan as well, if they had thought of it first.

The Falcon program was begun with six definite objectives in mind. These were:

1. Light weight
2. Low cost
3. Full size (six passengers)
4. Low upkeep cost
5. Performance equivalent to the "normal" Ford Six
6. High economy of operation

How well have they succeeded in living up to these objectives? Except in item 5 above, very well indeed. With a shipping weight of only 2300 lbs and an engine weight of a mere 345 lbs. they have certainly succeeded in paring weight down, especially when one considers the size of the car. In European terms of reference the Falcon is not a *small* car. Across the ocean the Falcon would fit into the size category of such items as Simca's Vedette, Mercedes' 190 and Rootes' Humber. None of these are considered small but rather "medium" in size. Thus the Falcon's weight is indeed light.

In terms of low first cost, though no hard and fast price has at this writing been set, the target of "around $2,000" is certainly competitive with cars of this size and configuration. The chances are very good that the announced price will be under the target figure when it is finally set.

Item 3 has been met with a will. The interior of the Falcon is in some ways even more roomy than other cars in the Ford line. According to the Ford people the Falcon interior was built to accommodate the above average man, five feet 10 inches tall and weighing 160 lbs with adjustments built in to accommodate taller and shorter people. Further the design aim was to provide room for five other similar-sized passengers as well as the driver. Just to see if they had succeeded in this we packed in one less than a full complement with added test in that all of us were different sizes and shapes. This writer is five feet, eight, weighing about 135. Dick Judy of Ford's P.R. staff is a good six feet, four and lanky. Colleague Emmet Greene is five-six and chunky. SCI's Detroit Editor, Mike Davis is six feet even and stocky. We commandeered one of Ford's test drivers, a man of about five feet ten inches and 180 or so pounds to make up the fifth. All of us fitted with room to spare and each of us could adjust the driver's seat to fit our individual requirements, a wide variation indeed.

In the matter of low upkeep we can only be subjective and make an educated guess based on accessibility of the various components. Maintenance should be ridiculously simple when compared to the normal variety of Detroit cars which would bring labor costs in service and repair to a minimum. Nothing is tucked away and nothing is covered by tin shrouds. There are no big power assist units to get in the way. From what we could see the engine could easily be lifted out without stripping anything but the hood lid. Labor time being the major item in service these days it is easy to predict that service costs will be cut by a good third on the Falcon.

Now we come to Item 5, that dealing with performance. The aim was to give the car the performance of the normal-sized Ford Six. Subjectively and objectively they have missed by a good margin. They can be excused on this point for the good and sufficient reason that the target set was terribly high. The standard Ford Six is a gutty powerplant that will, in its latest form, push a normal sized Ford along at a pace that was considered good for a V8 a couple of years ago. It will do zero to 60 with automatic drive in something around 15 seconds or a good 10 seconds less than it takes the Falcon to reach that figure. It will move at a top speed in the high 90's where the Falcon labors mightily to produce a shade over a true 80. This, of course, applies to the two-speed Fordomatic equipped Falcon we tried. The factory test crew claim that the standard shift is quicker, getting to 60 in the neighborhood of 19 seconds.

One very definite fact was brought out in our test and that is that the two-speed automatic is *not* the transmission to be coupled with an engine of only 144 cubic inches. That amount of volume just cannot produce the torque necessary to move a 2300 lb car through only two gears even with the hydraulic assist of a torque converter. The subjective effect is that the car has nothing at the bottom end of the speed scale, a good bit of pull in the middle and then nothing at the top end.

The lack of top end, as seen from the big chunk of time it took to go from 50 to 70—23 seconds—could probably be pegged to the fact that this engine is designed for economy and suffers breathing problems near its peak rpm. Also, the singularly mild, tractor-like cam timing of 232 degrees duration is no help. But the lack of performance at the low end of the scale

can be blamed directly on the overly high (low numerical) gearing. Held in low gear, the Falcon will, when wound out, do a true 60 miles an hour which is an indication of the high ratio used to move it off the mark. Driving through a 3.10 to 1 axle, which is extremely high for a car of this size, is the two-speed automatic which produces in low range only a factor of 1.75 to 1. Standard practice on European cars of similar size is a rear end ratio of 4.11 to 4.55 and higher with a three or four speed gearbox with a lowest ratio of around 3 or 3.5 to 1. Thus, in comparison, the Falcon with Fordomatic is hamstrung at the stoplight. It will probably cruise comfortably all day long at 60 miles an hour but it is certainly no race car.

While we had no opportunity to get an accurate mileage test we can easily believe the Ford test crew's claim of mileage in the middle 20-plus mpg range for the standard shift equipped Falcon and two or three miles per gallon less in the Fordomatic equipped version. Under stop and go conditions, due to the problems outlined in the preceding paragraphs and consequent tendency to mash hard on the throttle it is likely that the automatic shift Falcon would suffer more than a mere two or three mpg in our humble estimation. However, to a man used to the gas gobbling propensities of the larger or even "low priced three" Detroit cars the mileage handed out by either version of the Falcon would come as a welcome surprise, especially on a trip wherein much of the travel was done on throughways or freeways.

In several departments the Falcon is outstanding. One of these is brakes. During our ten-stop test we got all kinds of horrible smells from hot linings but very little fade in comparison to most American cars in which about four hard stops leave the machine utterly brakeless. The first three stops with the Falcon gave a steady reading of eight tenths G, the next two produced seven tenths, the next four were around 6.5 tenths and the final one came back up to seven tenths again. The only drawback was a tendency toward alternate lock-up—each of the four wheels locking solidly at one point or another. The brakes that produce this no-fade stopping are not large by any standards being 9-inches in diameter all around, 2.25-inches wide at the front and 1.5-inches wide at the rear with a total effective lining area of 114.3 square inches. Effectiveness percentage is 63 percent at the front and 37 percent at the rear.

Another nice point is handling. True, this is no sports car and it doesn't give the effect of pancake-flat cornering but it does stick and the steering is light and, for a domestic product, quick or at least it feels so despite a lock to lock 4.64 turns. Taken at full tilt over Ford's twisting proving grounds (a *great* road course Mr. Ford) the effect was not at all unnerving as it can be in larger or less handy equipment.

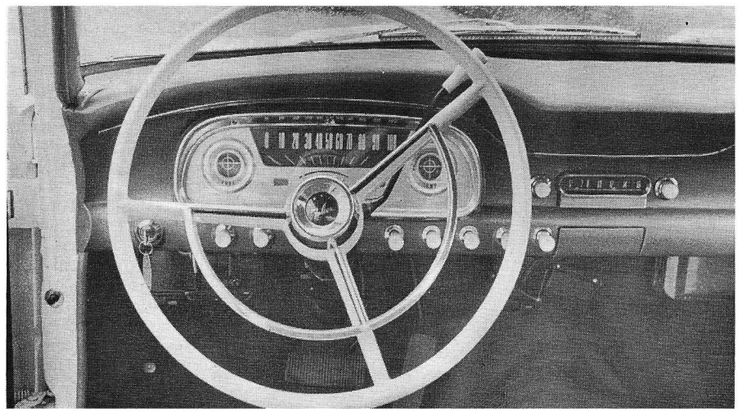
There are reasons for this, too. For one thing the Falcon is a true unit body construction and is torsionally rigid to a high degree. Consequently one doesn't feel that the frame is bending thataway while the body is attempting to go thisaway on a bumpy, twisty circuit.

Naturally, one can't just point at one item of engineering and say *"that's* why the car corners well" or some such statement and let it go at that. But one factor in the Falcon's handling is certainly the new front end layout—at least it is new for Ford though slightly reminiscent of the Willys in its later years. In this unit there is a fairly normal upper A-arm or wishbone and there normality in its accepted sense stops. The lower control arm is a single, deep hat section stamping located laterally by a diagonally placed trailing torsion arm. Springing is, as one might suspect, by coil, but the coil acts on the upper A-arm rather than on the lower arm which is where the Willys part comes in. The whole result is a neat, light effective unit that does a job excellently.

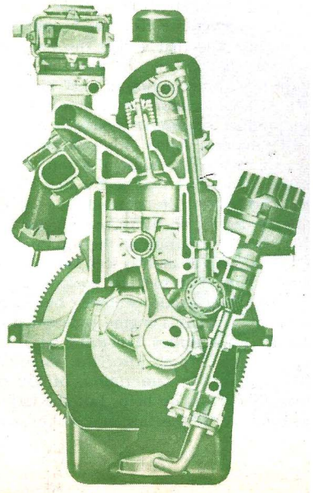
All things considered, Ford has taken the opposite tack from its major competitor and produced an absolutely normal compact car and in so doing have come up with something quite new. While there are no innovations on the Falcon as such the total effect is, for this era in Detroit, novel and effective, probably as effective in its way as the completely new and innovation-bristling product of the competition.

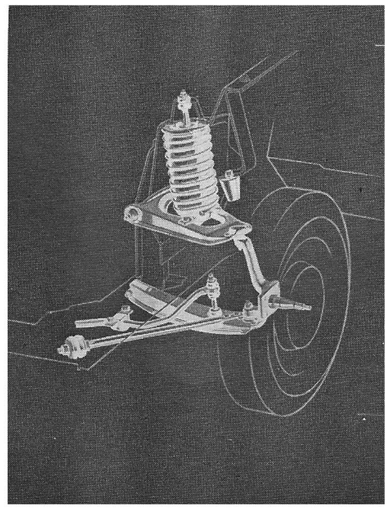
A public relations man representing a well-made and popular foreign sedan took one look at a side view of the car, shook his head and said: "It'll sell." We have very little doubt that he's right.

—jpc



Below: Straight-six engine is normal in design being similar to the engine in the English Ford Zephyr and Zodiac models.

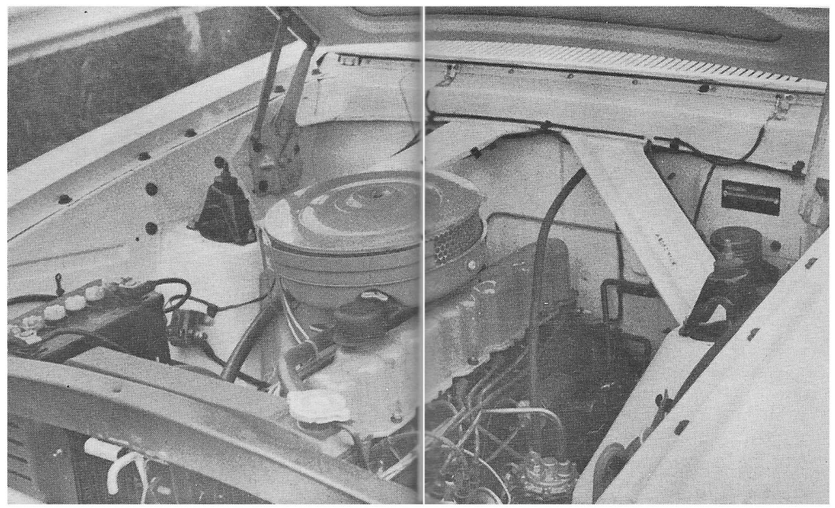


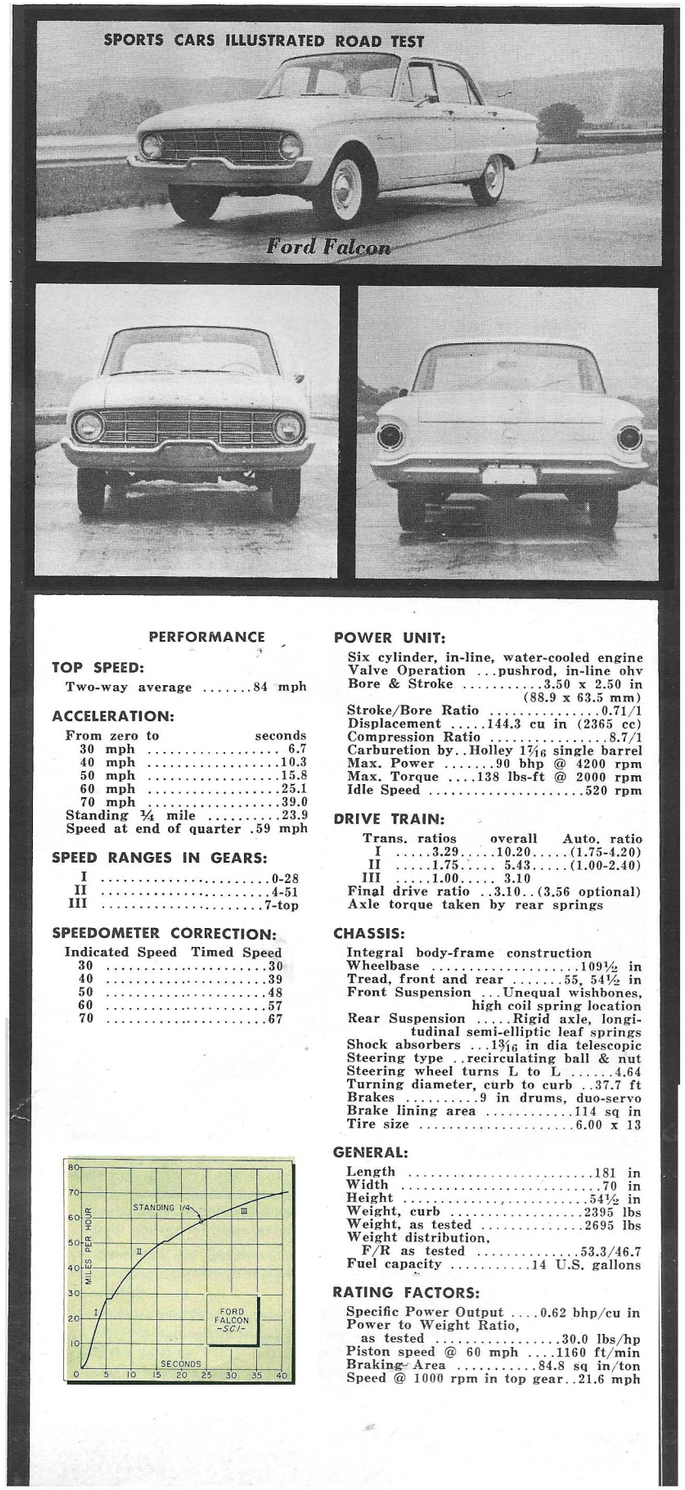


Above: Dashboard consists of 100 mph speedometer, a multitude of knobs and warning lights. Below: Front suspension detail showing normal upper wishbone, single lower arm with locating rod.



Above: Trunk is ample in size although high sill makes it necessary to lift baggage over. Below: Engine compartment is neat and all regular service can be accomplished easily.





PERFORMANCE

TOP SPEED:

Two-way average .....84 mph

ACCELERATION:

From zero to	seconds
30 mph	6.7
40 mph	10.3
50 mph	15.8
60 mph	25.1
70 mph	39.0

Standing ¼ mile 23.9
Speed at end of quarter .59 mph

SPEED RANGES IN GEARS:

I	0-28
II	4-51
III	7-top

SPEEDOMETER CORRECTION:

Indicated Speed	Timed Speed
30	30
40	39
50	48
60	57
70	67

POWER UNIT:

Six cylinder, in-line, water-cooled engine
Valve Operation ...pushrod, in-line ohv
Bore & Stroke .....3.50 x 2.50 in (88.9 x 63.5 mm)
Stroke/Bore Ratio 0.71/1
Displacement ....144.3 cu in (2365 cc)
Compression Ratio 8.7/1
Carburetion by..Holley 1⅜6 single barrel
Max. Power .....90 bhp @ 4200 rpm
Max. Torque ....138 lbs-ft @ 2000 rpm
Idle Speed .....520 rpm

DRIVE TRAIN:

Trans. ratios	overall	Auto. ratio
I	3.29	10.20 (1.75-4.20)
II	1.75	5.43 (1.00-2.40)
III	1.00	3.10

Final drive ratio ..3.10..(3.56 optional)
Axle torque taken by rear springs

CHASSIS:

Integral body-frame construction
Wheelbase .....109½ in
Tread, front and rear .....55, 54½ in
Front Suspension ...Unequal wishbones, high coil spring location
Rear Suspension .....Rigid axle, longitudinal semi-elliptic leaf springs
Shock absorbers ...1⅜6 in dia telescopic
Steering type ..recirculating ball & nut
Steering wheel turns L to L 4.64
Turning diameter, curb to curb ..37.7 ft
Brakes .....9 in drums, duo-servo
Brake lining area .....114 sq in
Tire size .....6.00 x 13

GENERAL:

Length .....181 in
Width .....70 in
Height .....54½ in
Weight, curb .....2395 lbs
Weight, as tested .....2695 lbs
Weight distribution, F/R as tested 53.3/46.7
Fuel capacity .....14 U.S. gallons

RATING FACTORS:

Specific Power Output ....0.62 bhp/cu in
Power to Weight Ratio, as tested .....30.0 lbs/hp
Piston speed @ 60 mph ....1160 ft/min
Braking Area .....84.8 sq in/ton
Speed @ 1000 rpm in top gear..21.6 mph