



WHEN A MANUFACTURER offers more than one type of car (as most of them do), we always welcome the chance to test them as a group. Unfortunately, this is very seldom possible. To get really conclusive results, the test car should be lived with for at least two weeks, and no less (preferably more) than 1000 miles should be recorded on it. Work loads and scheduling (theirs and ours) or unavailability of certain test cars usually restrict us to one car from any one manufacturer at a time. This month everything fell into place, and we were able to grab off all three of the cars that Mercury is offering for 1962.

The MOTOR TREND test group consisted of the 114-inch-wheelbase luxury compact, Comet S-22; the 116.5-inch-wheelbase "in-between"-sized Meteor; and the 120-inch-wheelbase

top-of-the-line Monterey Custom. The Comet and Meteor were both two-door sedans, while the Monterey was a convertible.

The Comet and Monterey have undergone the face-lifting route to update them from the '61 models, but the Meteor is an all-new addition to the line this year. It shares the same basic shell as the Ford Fairlane but has an inch-longer wheelbase, is 6.8 inches longer overall, and has 14-inch wheels in place of the Fairlane's 13. The same engines, drive components and suspension are used in both cars.

All three of the Mercs bear a strong family resemblance when viewed from the front, and all three feature styling that is clean and smooth-lined (see MT, November and December, 1961, for the complete Mercury styling story). All three also

share the same basic purpose, that of a medium-priced (in their respective size groups), family-type transportation vehicle that offers the buyer a bit more luxury and quality than can be had in the low-price field.

The Comet test car came equipped with the optional 170-cubic-inch, 101-hp, ohv in-line Six engine, two-speed automatic transmission with 4-to-1 rear axle and air conditioning, but no power accessories. Standard engine for the Comet is a 144-cubic-inch Six, but even with the big engine, performance is so lacking that we would hesitate to recommend this setup to anyone. The Comet's 0-30, 0-45 and 0-60 mph times were 6.5, 11.9 and 22.2 seconds. It took 24.1 seconds to get to 61 mph at the end of the quarter-mile. On the top end it

was breathing hard at 75 mph, but if the long Riverside Raceway's back stretch had been longer, the car would probably reach 80 or more. Taking into consideration the fact that the 170-cubic-inch engine was originally designed for the smaller, much lighter Ford Falcon, we don't see how one could expect any better performance than this.

Our Meteor had the optional 221-cubic-inch, 145-hp, ohv V-8, two-speed automatic transmission with 3.5-to-1 performance rear axle and power brakes and steering. Our acceleration figures show that the Meteor's performance is about average for its class. We made the 0-30, 0-45 and 0-60 mph runs in 5.0, 8.7 and 15.2 seconds. The quarter-mile was run at 70 mph and 21.5 seconds, and at the end of the Riverside straight

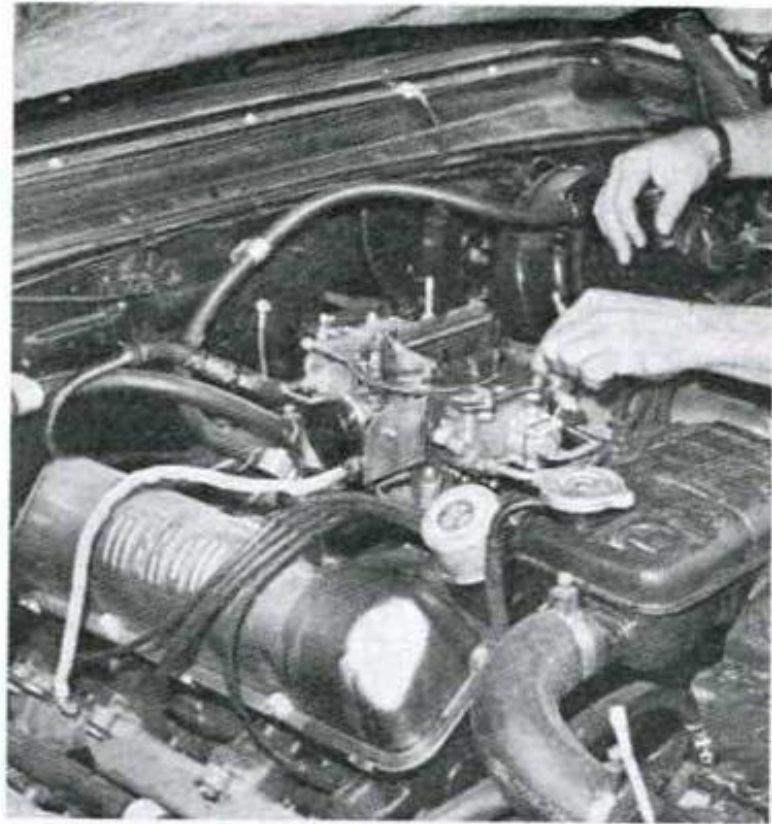
3 from Mercury

the Meteor was flat out at 95 mph. Standard engine for this car is the same 170-incher used in the Falcon and Comet — 'nuff said.

All the power goodies, including seat and windows, were on the Monterey. This definitely dictated the choice of the 390-cubic-inch, 300-hp (four-barrel carburetor) ohv Marauder V-8 that was installed. Power was transmitted through a dual-range, three-speed Merc-O-Matic and 3-to-1 rear axle. Performance on this one would fall somewhere near the upper end of average for the class. Our 0-30, 0-45 and 0-60 mph averages were a respectable 4.1, 6.7 and 10.5 seconds. The end of the quarter-mile was reached in 18.9 seconds, with a terminal speed of 81 mph. At the end of the Riverside straight our Weston electric speedometer was recording an actual 110 mph, while the tach was reading 4300 rpm. The big Merc didn't seem to be laboring at this point and no doubt had a few more mph left.

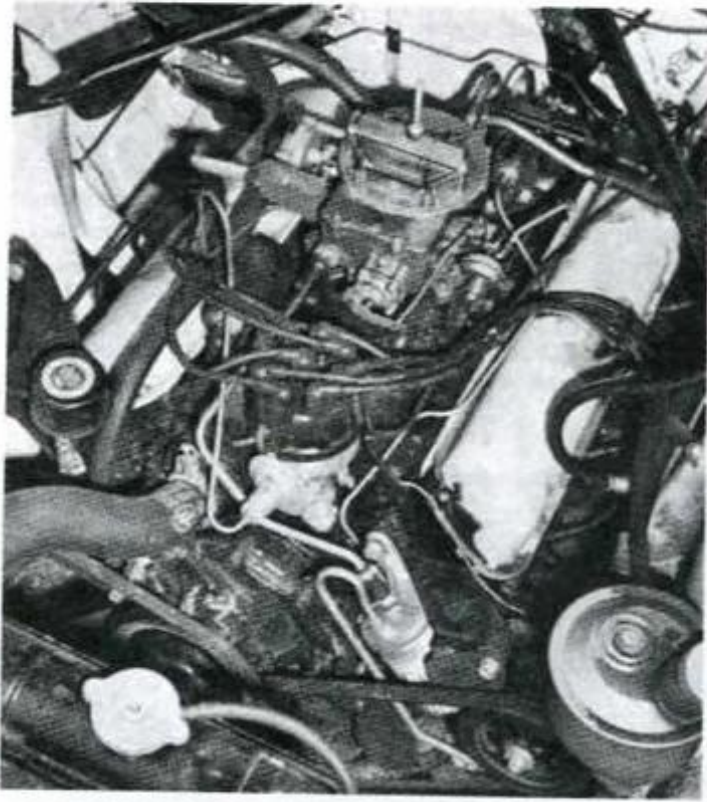
In summing up the performance figures, we can only draw the rather obvious conclusion that both of the smaller Mercs are hampered by an overweight, underpowered condition that isn't helped a bit by the power-wasting two-speed automatic transmission. Several other manufacturers are also using this device, but we hope that more aren't considering it. The installation of the three-speed manual in both cars would improve performance greatly.

Two-ton-plus Monterey is surprisingly sure-footed on all types of surface. Lean is almost non-existent.

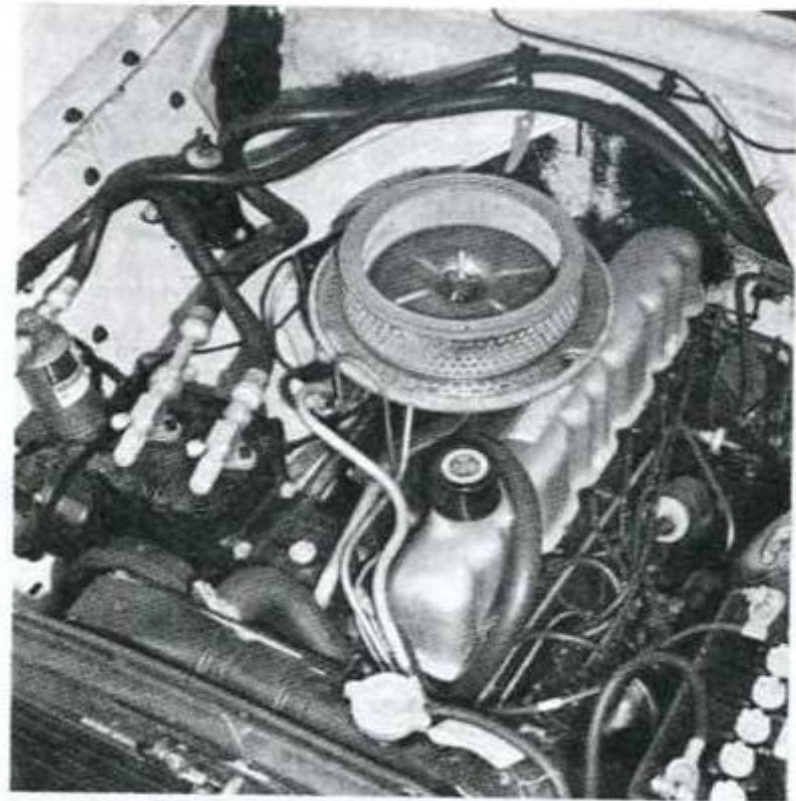


The Holley four-barrel installed on the big Marauder V-8 uses air velocity to actuate the secondary throttles. Mixture heat is supplied by water instead of exhaust.





Meteor's 221-cubic-inch V-8 has its weight set back from the front wheels, which results in better balance and eliminates any hint of nose-heaviness in the car.



Comet's 170-cubic-inch, 101-hp Six is out of its league in a car this size. The car would be a much more appealing package if it came with the Meteor's engine.

Prospective Meteor buyers will be happy to note that a more powerful, 260-cubic-inch version of the V-8 will soon be available. Too bad the factory hasn't decided to put the 221-incher in the Comet. The Monterey is also an overweight car (two tons plus), but the factory has crammed enough horsepower into it to overcome this. Also available is the big 406-inch, 405-hp high-performance mill with four-speed manual gearbox and a variety of rear axle ratios. But as we stated before, these cars were designed for family-type transportation and with the exception of the Comet, their performance is adequate for this.

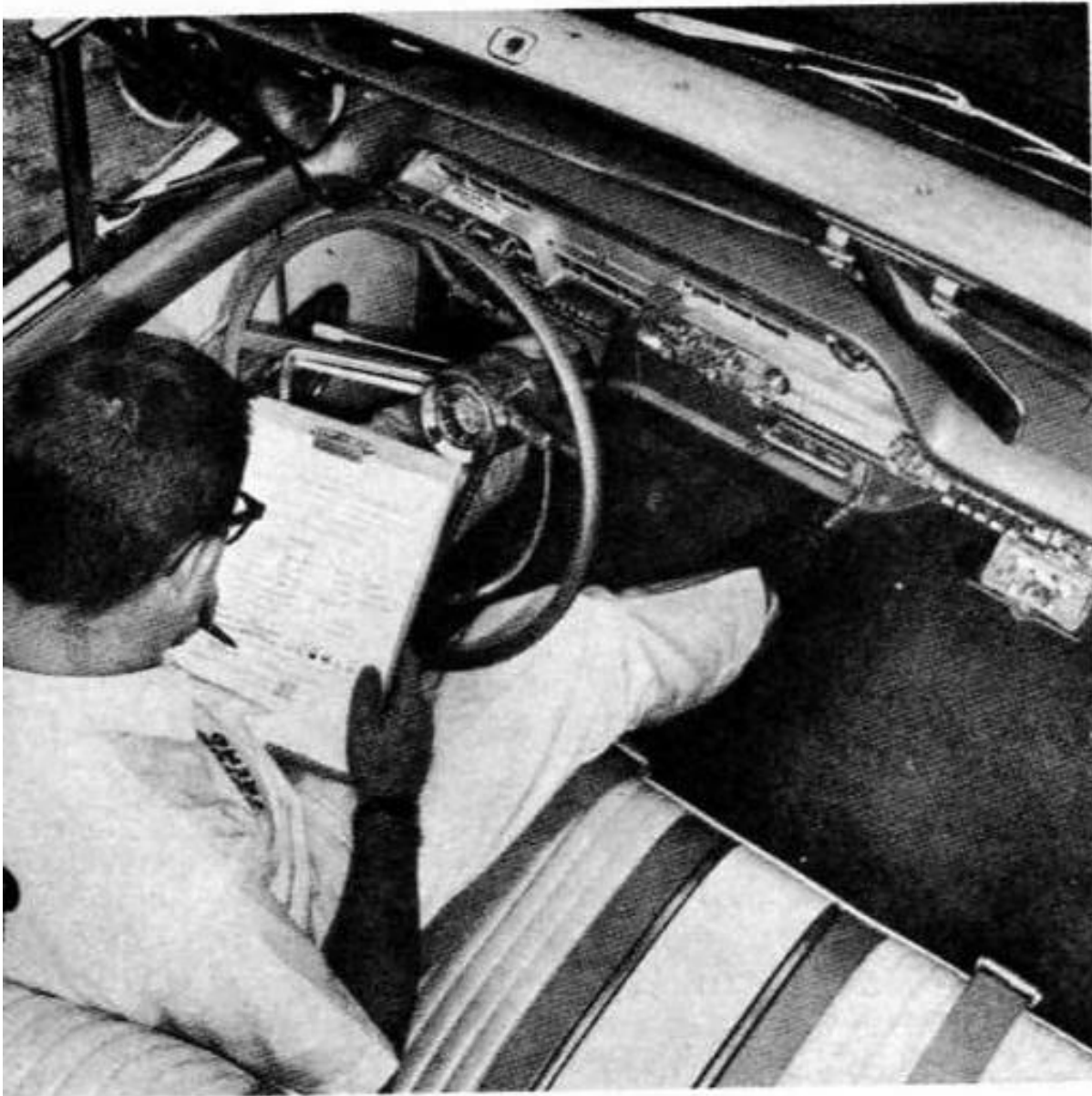
If you're an avid reader of advertising claims, our fuel consumption figures are less than you'd expect—especially for the Comet and Meteor. These two are being touted as economy cars and by rights they should be, but again, the weight and two-speed transmission problems combine to produce results that say otherwise.

City and freeway driving in the Comet produced figures in the 15.7-to-16.3-mpg range, with an overall average of 16.2 mpg for 1000 miles under all conditions. The Meteor was driven in excess of 1100 miles, with city driving consumption in the 11.3-to-14.8-mpg range. Freeway and open-road speeds pushed the figure up to 17.7 mpg, and the overall average was 14.8 mpg. The Monterey is a big car with a big engine and an appetite to match. A rundown of our figures compiled for everyday city driving shows the range to be 8.9 to 11.3 mpg. Out on the road at cruising speeds with short passing spurts up to 75 mph, we found that the 3-to-1 rear axle allows the big mill to loaf a bit and we were getting a consistent 15.5 mpg. Overall average for 1000 miles was 10.9 mpg.

Some of the Monterey's low around-town figures can be attributed to the four-barrel carburetor. The secondary throttles are actuated by the velocity of the air-fuel mixture through the primary barrels and are consequently open more than they would be if a mechanical progressive system were used. It will also be noted that the Meteor delivered a better figure at



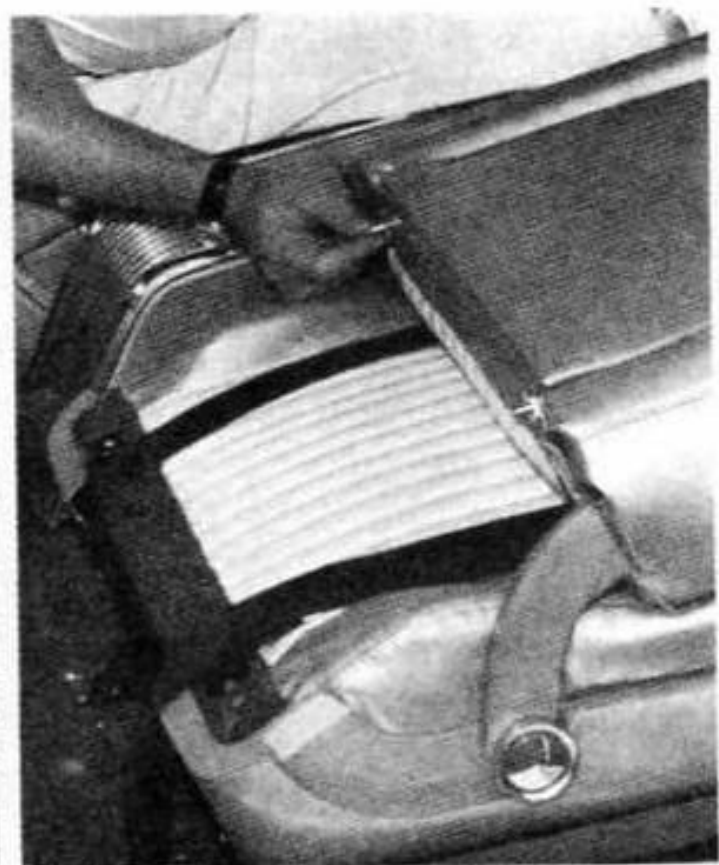
Usable trunk area should be adequate for the needs of most everyone. The lip on all three could be lower.



**3 from
Mercury**

Seating position on the Monterey was the most comfortable. Electric window buttons and door handle could have been placed differently — we kept banging both with our left knee.

Meteor steering wheel (right) was a little close for comfort, but not nearly as bad as the Comet's. Leg-, hip- and headroom are adequate in all three cars.



We couldn't get the seat back far enough to suit us in the Comet. Steering wheel's diameter is excessive for the room available. We did like the catches on the front seatbacks that kept them from slamming forward when brakes were applied.



cruising speeds than did the Comet. This is because at 65 mph the bigger V-8, with bigger tires and a 3.5 axle, is still fairly loafing at 3000 rpm, while the smaller Six in the Comet is almost straining at 3750 rpm to pull the smaller tires and 4-to-1 axle.

The Comet does weigh 400 pounds less than the Meteor, but at the same time, its weight-to-power ratio is greater than the Meteor's (24.68 to 1 against 20.75 to 1 — National Hot Rod Association Stock Car Classification Guide). Standard axle for the Comet is 3.20 to 1 and *should* produce better mileage figures but *probably won't* because the throttle would be floor-boarded constantly in an effort to keep up with the normal traffic flow.

We hate to keep picking at the Comet, but we also found it to be lacking in stopping power. Before we ran the braking tests, the nine-inch units seemed adequate for normal, everyday use. In the test area they survived several hard stops from 30 mph but about halfway through the first brake-down from 60 mph we could feel the pedal pressure rapidly increasing and our rate of deceleration rapidly decreasing. After this, the brakes never were quite the same. The pedal pressure was abnormally high, and the deceleration rate was much slower.

The ten-inch brakes on the Meteor were power assisted and operated much better. We didn't have the trouble with fade and pressure build-up with these, but they did have a tendency to lock up suddenly and without warning, which necessitated fast and constant steering corrections on our part to keep the car in a straight line. There was some fade apparent after the tests, but as the brakes cooled they came back to normal.

The Monterey had the best-behaving brakes of the three. These were 11-inch, power-actuated units that pulled the big car down to quick, straight-line stops with no sudden lockups. Several panic stops produced a slight amount of fade and pedal hardness but this was negligible and things returned quickly to normal as the brakes cooled.



3 from Mercury

We couldn't find a thing to argue about in the ride and handling departments. The suspension on all three cars is firmer than any we've encountered on any of the other '62s, and all three incorporate a stabilizer bar at the front end. As a result, they corner with much less lean than any of the current domestic cars (with the exception of the Fords, which are set up the same way). Even with the firm suspension, the ride is as comfortable as anyone would want it to be. Both the Meteor and the Monterey use Mercury's "Cushion-Link" suspension, introduced last year. This allows both the front and rear wheels to move rearward as well as up and down under road shocks, and as a result, the harshness is taken out of severe bumps and jolts.

On rough, secondary-type roads the three Mercs are well behaved. The suspension doesn't bottom easily but when it does, the cars recover immediately. On the open road all three have good directional stability and are little affected by crosswinds. Thanks to the excellent selection and use of sound-

deadening materials, the Mercs are among the quietest-riding cars on the road. Engine noise level is a trifle high in the Comet, but road noise is almost non-existent in all three at cruising speeds.

Traction is very good on loose, wet surfaces or in frame-high mud. We spent the better part of two days, and several hundred miles, up in the mountains on some very tight, wet, twisty roads. As a result, we have a new respect for the cornering power of the Mercurys. They are basic understeerers but not excessively so. They will plough slightly on tight corners but a little fast work with the throttle will bring the rear end around. On wider-radiused turns the Mercs can be pushed hard.

We usually shudder at even the thought of putting a stock domestic through any kind of a corner at a velocity even slightly close to the limit of adhesion. Because they do corner so flat that the weight remains over the tires where it belongs, we found that the Mercs could be put into a neat, easily con-

We gave all three a bath in frame-deep goo, and they all charged through without bogging down. Good weight distribution and firm suspension mean good control anywhere.



MERCURY COMET S-22

2-door, 5-passenger sedan

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: 101-hp engine, automatic transmission, radio, heater, air conditioning, padded dash and visor.

BASIC PRICE: \$2368

PRICE AS TESTED: \$2991.55 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 91 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5000 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph 6.5 secs
0-45 mph 11.9
0-60 mph 22.2

Standing start ¼-mile 24.1 secs. and 61 mph

Speeds in gears @ 4400 rpm

1st 48 mph High 81 mph (est.)

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading 30 45 50 60 70
Weston electric speedometer 29.5 44.5 49.5 59.5 69.5

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear 17 mph

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 56 ft., from 60 mph, 173 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv in-line 6
Bore: 3.5 ins.
Stroke: 2.94 ins.
Displacement: 170 cubic inches
Compression ratio: 8.7:1
Horsepower: 101 @ 4400 rpm
Torque: 156 lbs.-ft. @ 2400 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.59
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Rear: 5-leaf semi-elliptic springs, rigid axle; direct-acting tubular shocks

Steering

Recirculating ball and nut
Turning diameter: 39.9 ft.
4.64 turns lock-to-lock

Wheels and Tires

Steel disc — 4 lugs
6.00 x 13 2-ply tubeless tires

Brakes

Hydraulic, dual-servo; self-adjusting
Front: 9-in. dia. x 2.25 in. wide
Rear: 9-in. dia. x 1.50 in. wide
Effective lining area: 114.3 sq. ins.

Body and Frame

Uniltized
Wheelbase 114.0 ins.
Track, front 55.0 ins., rear 54.5 ins.
Overall length 194.8 ins.
Curb weight 2711 lbs.

Gearbox

2-speed automatic; column shift

Driveshaft

One-piece, open tube, with 2 cross-type U-joints

Differential

Hypoid — semi-floating
Standard ratio 3.50 (Optional 4:1 installed on test car)

Suspension

Front: Independent, single lower arm, coil springs, with stabilizer bar; direct-acting tubular shocks

trolled, four-wheel drift with very little effort. We don't recommend that, of course, but it is nice to know it can be done in a pinch.

The Meteor and the Monterey had power-assisted steering, which helped out nicely for in-town driving in heavy traffic. By comparison, the Comet steering at 4.64 turns lock-to-lock and no power assist was sluggish and tiring. Standard lock-to-lock turns on the Meteor and Monterey are 4.68 and 5.25, but with power are 4.34 and 3.75, respectively.

Exterior and interior quality and workmanship are excellent throughout the Mercury line. All panels, doors and trim were flush fit and well aligned.

For our personal configuration (5-11½, 180 pounds), we found that the Monterey offered the best seating position. In the Meteor we were slightly close to the steering wheel and in the Comet we were right on top of it. The Comet's 17-inch steering wheel is also too large for the space available. All

three offered plenty of hip-, leg-, and headroom for both driver and passengers (front and rear), but we kept opening the power windows on the Monterey with our left knee.

All three feature well-laid-out instrument panels with all instruments (the Meteor is the only one of the three with *real* gauges) and controls in easy sight or reach. Do-it-yourself tuners and tinkers will be happy with the accessibility of everything in the engine compartment.

Total trunk volume on all three should be adequate for the average family. The Meteor, with 31.5 cubic feet, has the largest, followed by the Monterey with 30.7 and the Comet with 29.8.

In summing up, we might add that performance is not, and never has been, synonymous with quality. What the Mercs might lack in the first, they more than make up in the latter. Last year they were a solid sixth in total sales, which shows that there's still a big market for a quality product. /MT



MERCURY METEOR

2-door, 6-passenger sedan

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: 145-hp engine, automatic transmission, radio, heater, power brakes, power steering.

BASIC PRICE: \$2469

PRICE AS TESTED: \$2952.30 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 2778 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5000 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph	5.0 secs.
0-45 mph	8.7
0-60 mph	15.2

Standing start ¼-mile 21.5 secs. and 70 mph

Speeds in gears @ 4500 rpm

1st	52 mph	High	95 mph (est.)
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Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	30	45	50	60	70	80
Weston electric speedometer	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear21 mph

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 50 ft.; from 60 mph, 166 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv V-8
Bore: 3.50 ins.
Stroke: 2.87 ins.
Displacement: 221 cubic inches
Compression ratio: 8.5:1
Horsepower: 145 @ 4500 rpm
Torque: 217 lbs.-ft. @ 2200 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.64
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Gearbox

2-speed automatic; column shift

Driveshaft

One-piece, open tube, with 2 cross-type U-joints

Differential

Hypoid — semi-floating
Standard ratio 3.00:1
(Optional 3.5:1 installed on test car)

Suspension

Front: Independent, single lower arm with high-mounted coil, stabilizer bar; direct, double-acting tubular shocks

Rear: Rigid axle, 5-leaf semi-elliptic springs; direct, double-acting tubular shocks

Steering

Recirculating ball and nut, with power assist
Turning diameter: 39.5 ft.
4.3 turns lock-to-lock

Wheels and Tires

Steel disc — 5 lugs
6.50 x 14 4-ply tubeless tires

Brakes

Hydraulic, duo-servo. Single anchor, internal expanding; self-adjusting
Front: 10-in. dia. x 2.25 in. wide
Rear: 10-in. dia. x 1.75 in. wide
Effective lining area: 120.5 sq. ins.

Body and Frame

Unitized
Wheelbase 116.5 ins.
Track, front 57.0 ins., rear 56.0 ins.
Overall length 203.8 ins.
Curb weight 3224 lbs.

MERCURY MONTEREY CUSTOM

2-door, 6-passenger convertible

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: 300-hp engine, dual-range Merc-O-Matic transmission, radio, heater, power windows, power seat, power brakes, power steering, padded dash and visor

BASIC PRICE: \$3222

PRICE AS TESTED: \$4086.95 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 3908 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5200 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph	4.1 secs.
0-45 mph	6.7
0-60 mph	10.5

Standing start ¼-mile 18.9 secs. and 81 mph

Speeds in gears @ 4600 rpm

1st	47 mph	High	114 mph (est.)
2nd	79 mph		

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	30	45	50	60	70	80
Weston electric speedometer	32	50	60	65	76	86

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear25.5 mph

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 58.5 ft.; from 60 mph, 158.5 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv V-8
Bore: 4.05 ins.
Stroke: 3.78 ins.
Displacement: 390 cubic inches
Compression ratio: 9.6:1
Horsepower: 300 @ 4600 rpm
Torque: 427 lbs.-ft. @ 2800 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.77
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Gearbox

3-speed automatic; column shift

Driveshaft

One-piece, open tube, with 2 cross-type U-joints

Differential

Hypoid — semi-floating
Standard ratio 3.00:1

Suspension

Front: Independent, single lower control arm with cushion-link coils, stabilizer bar; double-acting tubular shocks

Rear: 5-leaf semi-elliptic springs, with double-acting tubular shocks

Steering

Recirculating ball and nut, with power assist
Turning diameter: 41.6 ft.
3.9 turns lock-to-lock

Wheels and Tires

Steel disc — 5 lugs
8.00 x 14 4-ply tubeless tires

Brakes

Hydraulic, duo-servo. Single anchor, internal expanding; self-adjusting
Front and rear: 11-in. dia. x 2.5 in. wide
Effective lining area: 180 sq. ins.

Body and Frame

Separate "X"-type frame and body
Wheelbase 120 ins.
Track, front 61 ins., rear 60 ins.
Overall length 215.5 ins.
Curb weight 4550 lbs.