

Pugmire's special appearance package for the Comet GT has boosted sales dramatically and raised grosses to \$694

'STABBER' puts Comet in Orbit

by M. M. Blackburn

THIRTY HIGH-GROSS COMET GT sales in less than 90 days—that was the score as Pugmire Lincoln-Mercury, Inc., Marietta, Ga., reviewed the results of its "Stabber" promotion started the end of 1970. The campaign is an action idea which has enabled the dealership to sell every GT it can get its hands on since the 1971 Announcement. Their "Stabber" line (a takeoff of Ford Division's successfully promoted "Grabber" series) is also resulting in offshoot sales of other Lincoln-Mercury models.

"Our 'Stabber', a standard Comet GT with a 302 V-8 engine and either automatic or straight stick transmission, has been modified to make it attractive to the younger set," explained dealer John Pugmire. "In fact, once a GT has been modified, we seldom have it around here more than a day or two."

Pugmire's "Stabber" is the brain child of General Sales Manager Jack Cooper and Pugmire's son, Jack, a salesman at the dealership. Ob-

erving the success of Ford's 'Grabber' Maverick, they reasoned that it also could be done with the 1971 Comet GT.

The modification

Cooper explained the modification: "We simply take a standard GT and equip it with a set of special traction master racing tires, slotted mag wheels, dual side pipes (replacing the original exhaust system), Gabriel highjacker air rear shocks, front coil suspension stabilizers, hood locking pins, steering wheel lace cover, a Hurst shifter T-handle (on cars with manual transmissions), and our special 'Stabber' decal.

"When we're through we've got a car that *looks* for all the world like it just came off a competition track. But under the hood is still the standard 302 V-8 engine, which allows the owner to claim subcompact status when applying for insurance (at a 20 percent rate reduction). This also reassures parents that their offspring aren't going to turn the city





(Top left) Salesman Jack Pugmire shows customer "Stabber" engine. (Top right) Slotted mag wheels and dual side pipes are part of package. (Bottom right) Car interior reveals Hurst shifter T-handle and face steering wheel cover. (Bottom left) Dealer John Pugmire



streets into raceways. So in effect, the young car buyer gets all the flair of having what *looks* like a hot car—without having to pay the price that a true performance car demands.”

Pugmire’s “Stabber” is profitable in addition to being a volume producer. The complete modification (done at a tire and specialty shop) costs the dealership \$465—labor and parts. With the package on the car, however, Pugmire asks for and gets enough more to give him an extra \$260 above his normal Comet gross.

“In effect, the ‘Stabber’ has allowed us to take Comet grosses and turn them into some of our highest,” said Cooper. “With the ‘Stabber’ package, it’s not uncommon for us to go to a \$650 or a \$700 gross on a GT.”

Promoting the “Stabber”

Pugmire has promoted his “Stabber” unspectacularly —

Distinctive “Stabber” decal placed on car fender attracts attention

but effectively. The car is currently being given star billing on the dealership’s portable billboard and it often receives special attention on the dealership’s TV spots and on the weekly radio remotes from Pugmire’s showroom and used car lot. “We don’t go overboard advertising the car—yet everybody seems to know about it,” Pugmire observed. “In fact, we often can draw young people here simply by having a salesman drive our ‘Stabber’ through a couple of drive-in restaurant lots.”

In modifying the GT, Pugmire has been careful to do nothing that will alter the car in a way that would void the

warranty. Thus, a “Stabber” has all the guarantees and protection of a regular Comet.

“Significantly, since promoting our ‘Stabber’ line our whole sales picture has taken a turn for the better,” said Pugmire. “With the 1970 line, we averaged from 35 to 40 new car sales (all lines) a month. Since promoting our modified Comet GT, we’ve already had one month in which we sold 75 units—and in another we’ve moved 62!”

In a further effort to spur Comet sales, Pugmire and Cooper are currently completing plans to display side-by-side a 1961 Comet (specially reconitioned for the display) and a 1971 Comet. A sign accompanying the display will list all of the engineering developments which have taken place in those 10 years—with special emphasis on the safety features of the 1971 model that weren’t available in 1961. □