

very sincerely yours:

OUR lead-off piece this month concerns itself with one of Detroit's new "super stock cars," the Plymouth Fury. Perusal of this will indicate that the power race is by no means slackening off. It will also indicate a new trend in Detroit's (or at least Chrysler Corporation's) thinking in this regard. Unlike many of these family boomers built in the past, the Fury *handles*. It isn't just an overpowered passenger car. We have on our desk a letter from a Chrysler engineer who declaims loudly against the reports that the new super-stockers are getting dangerous. He states that all of the hot machinery turned out by his firm are built from the ground up to take the extra power. If the Fury is any indication, the man has a point.

Unfortunately, he can't speak for the entire industry; some of the new factory hop-ups are downright dangerous in inexperienced hands, particularly where automatic transmissions are used in conjunction with all that extra fire. With an automatic gearbox one quite often can't really feel what's happening, a fact which speaks well of the smoothness of the transmission but bodes ill for the life expectancy of an unsuspecting driver. At least one of the factory hot rods can hit 60 mph in 300 feet from a *standing start*. All the sensation of speed one gets is a steady, and strangely gentle, push in the shoulder blades. Without the necessity of shifting gears, there is little indication of the engine speed and the large herd of horses being poured through the driveline unless the driver is really aware of what he is doing.

When coupled with the usual unbalanced weight distribution and soft suspension common in the past on most passenger cars, the above combination can be deadly. Part of the fault lies squarely in the lap of a buying public and part of it lies with the factories for allowing the situation to continue. The public is now conditioned to expect horsepower in huge gobs. Unfortunately they are also accustomed to all the creature comforts. Padding to prevent injury *after* one of these juggernauts has attempted to climb a pole seems infinitely preferable, if the hucksters can be believed, to setting up the automobile in such a way that it doesn't have pole-climbing tendencies. The point driven at here is that the Fury is not uncomfortable by any standards. It is a bit firmer than usual and the payoff in security and roadability is amazing for the very small sacrifice in "sofa cushion" softness. At least one of the hop-ups has exhibited a disconcerting tendency to ground-loop on a straight road when the throttle is mashed exuberantly. The Fury, despite a demonstrably faster acceleration rate, shows none of these tendencies. It seems that there is a lesson to be learned here.

Last month we went on at some length concerning the Corvette. The space was deserved as can be seen from our road test beginning on page 24. Both the acceleration and top speed of a stock Corvette, loaded to the hat with heavyweight extras, are guaranteed to make the Jaguar contingent sit up and take notice. There are very few stock or even M-Jags that can move beyond the 120 mph mark or improve on the acceleration pattern turned in by SCI's test Corvette, this despite the Chev's curb weight of nearly 3,000 lbs. However, we still feel that unless the Corvette hangs up a record as a sales tool as well as a reputation for being a going bomb, we can't look to Detroit for much more of the same kind of thing. Things are looking up, though; from all early indications the Corvette will be as hot in the salesrooms as it is on the road.

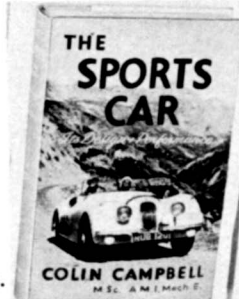
Coming up for the next issue is a full-bore road test on the 1956 Thunderbird. Ford's personal car is definitely an accelerating fool but how does it stack up with the Corvette in that department and others? We won't give out any secrets but Griff Borgeson will pass on the word in the June SCI. In the same issue, Karl Ludvigsen will take the Ferrari Monza apart for your delectation in the same way he pulled the D-type Jaguar apart in this one. Don't miss it! — *john christy*

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