



'63

PLYMOUTH SPORT FURY

by Jim Wright, *Technical Editor*

ALWAYS A SOLID PERFORMER, Plymouth never really made it big on the performance scene until they came out with the "413" Super/Stock package last year. Then in one short season, they firmly established themselves as *the* car to beat at the nation's drag strips. They were able to do this in the face of competitors with several years' head start — and Plymouth's feat is remarkable, to say the least. Now that they have the Big Image, they aren't about to turn loose.

We get a little static from time to time from readers who think MOTOR TREND leans a bit too heavily toward performance. We're guilty — but for very good reasons. Besides the obvious ones (good performance means good engineering and more efficient machinery, etc.), it's because most of you have shown, either by letter or by the type of cars you're buying, that performance interests you.

If the skeptics who think performance doesn't sell cars would take a look at the overall Plymouth sales picture for the past year and the coming year (when it's complete), we think it will disprove them. Almost all through '62, sales were in a slump — but as the "413" began beating everything in sight, the sales picture brightened considerably. Of course, last year's styling didn't help any. Personally, we ended up liking it, but an awful lot of the general buying public (including a lot of long-time Plymouth buyers and dealers) didn't.

The 1963 styling should have a fairly easy time pleasing almost everyone. It's bold and it's clean and it makes a lot of sense. After seeing the first sales reports on the '63s (record-breaking), we don't have to go too far on a limb to predict that the combination of last year's performance, this year's styling, plus a big improvement in quality control will give Plymouth one of the biggest years in its history.

The MT test car was a Sport Fury hardtop coupe equipped with power steering, power brakes, and the big 383-cubic-inch Golden Commando engine. This brute uses a four-barrel carburetor and *continued*

Dust-kicking Fury models carry Plymouth's performance banner into the biggest, most extravagant sales year in Detroit history. If records are broken, this car's clean looks and clean heels should help break them.





PLYMOUTH SPORT FURY ROAD TEST

continued

10-to-1 compression ratio to punch out 330 hp at 4600 rpm, with a tremendous 425 pounds-feet of torque at 2800 rpm. A dependable three-speed Torque-Flite automatic transmission and 3.23 (optional, performance) Sure-Grip rear axle completed the power train.

Last year's Golden Commando option was based on 361 cubic inches and was rated at 305 hp. This engine is now known as the Commando 361 and is still available optionally. Last year we were surprised with the Sport Fury's quick acceleration figures, but this year we knew what to expect.

The additional 22 cubic inches and increased (one point) compression ratio show up readily in the performance of the '63 Sport Fury. With two aboard, plus a full fuel tank and the test equipment, our Plymouth weighed 3715 pounds. We made quite a few runs at the quarter-mile, and they all boiled down to a 15.9-second ET, 95-mph top speed. The 0-30, 0-45, and 0-60-mph fractions came up in 2.9, 4.6, and 7.2 seconds. Down a shortened version of the Riverside Raceway backstretch, our Weston electric speedometer was reading a true 118 mph and the needle was still climbing when we ran out of room. The tachometer read right at 5000 rpm at this point, and the engine felt as if it would easily pull 5500. This would put the absolute top speed in the 130-mph bracket.

We achieved the best acceleration results by using the buttons to control upshifts and by letting the engine wind to 5500 rpm in both first and second before shifting. By just using DRIVE, the upshifts occur at 4500 rpm, and as a result the Sport Fury didn't move quite as fast as it does when using the buttons. Traction was perfect, and the throttle could be floored hard coming off the line with the tires not leaving more than 18-inch strips.

Several years back, this kind of performance would've been considered very good in some of the hot coupe and sedan or street roadster classes. To have it in a family street machine was unheard of. Yet the Sport Fury is a car that's completely at home in heavy traffic, out on the open road, or at the Sunday drags.

Under the NHRA classification system (shipping weight divided by advertised horsepower), the "383" Sport Fury would be in the Super/Stock class. With proper preparation, it could be every bit as successful in this class as the big "426" will be in Super-Super/Stock. Speeds and ETs would probably be in the 108-to-111-mph, high 12-second bracket. One thing for sure — it'd be just as much fun as racing the big ones.

The cost of performance, though, doesn't stop with the initial purchase price. It continues every time you pull into a gas station. For one thing, the compression ratio dictates the use of nothing but premium fuel. Then the bigger engine's naturally going to use more gas than either the standard "318" or medium-sized 361-cubic-incher. In over 1000 miles of all types of driving, the test car had an overall average of 12.7 mpg. The low of 10.3 mpg was logged in average stop-and-start city traffic. Out on the road we saw a high of 17.2 mpg. If the driver's real careful about opening the secondary throttles on the four-barrel carburetor, the Sport Fury will deliver satisfactory mileage figures. The standard 2.76 rear axle will add appreciably to fuel economy and, of course, either the "318" or "361" engine would be more economical. The Slant Six engine isn't available in the Sport Fury series.

This year's Plymouth is offering a more complete range of transmission options. Standard offering is the heavy-duty three-speed manual with 2.55-to-1 low gear (A-745). Available for the first time is a four-speed manual. This is the usual Warner Gear T-10 model, with 2.54 first gear, 1.92 second, 1.51 third, and direct high. One big feature here is that the four-speed will come equipped with the great Hurst-Campbell floor-mounted shift and linkage. The factory engineers don't feel that this box would take the torque of the "426" V-8, so it'll be offered only with the "318," "361," and "383" mills. The dependable, positive-shifting three-speed automatic remains unchanged from last year. It's interesting to note that the only changes they make to the automatic to hook it up to the "426" are a slight increase in line pressure and a different friction material on the clutch.

While there wasn't any trace of wheel hop during hard acceleration, quite the opposite was true during hard braking. Here the rear wheels had a tendency to lock up suddenly and solidly, and as a result the rear end of the car wanted to go every way but straight. The test car was equipped with 11-inch drums, front and rear, with an effective lining area of 207 square inches. The stopping distances

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PLYMOUTH SPORT FURY ROAD TEST

continued

weren't bad, but they could've been better if the rear wheels would've stayed on the ground.

This is the first time we've had this trouble with a Plymouth, and the answer could be that the rear linings hadn't bedded in properly. (By way of explanation, we don't try to lock all four wheels during our panic stops. Rather, we apply braking power as hard as possible up to the point where they do lock; then we quickly release and apply the

brakes again. This pumping action gives much more effective and quicker stops than when the wheels are locked up and all four slide.)

Basic suspension hasn't changed this year. It still consists of torsion bars at the front combined with outboard-mounted, highly asymmetrical, semi-elliptic rear leaf springs. Plymouths are still just about the best all-around handling cars in their price class. One thing that's been changed this year and that's affected the handling characteristics of the car is the type of tires used. They've gone to a two-ply design in place of the four. These have a lighter, more flexible sidewall — and as a result, what used to be slight understeer in slow, tight corners is now as excessive (with resulting tire scrub) as that found in other manufacturers' cars in this class. First-time Plymouth owners probably won't notice anything, but the old hands will.



INSTRUMENT PANEL IS ATTRACTIVE AND FUNCTIONAL. GAUGES ARE LARGE, EASY TO READ, AND NOW THERE'S ONLY ONE IDIOT LIGHT LEFT.

As long as we're on the subject, we personally don't think the advantages of two-ply tires (as stated by the tire manufacturers) can equal the obvious advantages of twice as many plies. But no matter what we think, once a manufacturer finds a way to put out a product for less money (his cost, not ours), the policy is public-be-damned. The high-speed ride and cornering ability haven't been affected to any noticeable degree—at least, not with five or six pounds more than recommended pressure in each tire.

The Sport Fury is comfortable enough and quiet enough to recommend it for extended high-speed turnpike cruising. Wind and road noise levels are low. Engine noise with the "383" is higher than it would be with the "318" due to dual exhausts and a non-silencing air cleaner, but it's a long way from the objectionable level.

The interior, with bucket seats in the front and a bench



With front seat all the way back, there's still leg room for rear seat passengers. Interior is attractive and comfortable.



The Sport Fury makes an excellent road car. Handling characteristics are as near perfect as anything Detroit produces.

padding to simulate buckets in the rear, is roomy and comfortable. All seats offer good support to the back and thighs, and while the bucket effect of the seats isn't pronounced, they do offer a certain amount of lateral support when cornering.

The instrument panel is very similar to last year's and features the same big, easy-to-read instruments. One letdown is that they haven't replaced the oil pressure warning light with an honest gauge to match the other gauges.

Interior upholstery and carpet materials are all top grade. We looked hard and couldn't find any annoying defects that indicated sloppy fit or assembly. The exterior of the Sport Fury was also Number One—no mismatched pieces of trim or misaligned panels. We've looked over a lot of '63s at various dealers', and the quality control on everything from the bottom-of-the-line Savoy Six right on up has improved greatly over what it was in previous years. It appears to be right on par with what the competition is offering.

The trunk has room enough to suit the needs of the average-sized family. Loading or unloading will be hampered a bit by the slightly high lip. The engine compartment is fairly roomy and should allow easy routine servicing and tune-ups.

One other important detail is the unprecedented five-year or 50,000-mile warranty now being offered on all Chrysler Corporation models. This warranty against defects in material and workmanship covers parts replacement or repair on the engine block, head, and internal parts; transmission case and internal parts (excluding manual clutch); torque converter, driveshaft, universal joints (excluding dust cover); rear axle and differential; and rear wheel bearings. The warranty is contingent on whether the car's been serviced at reasonable intervals according to approved factory schedules. /MT

1963 PLYMOUTH SPORT FURY

2-door, 5-passenger hardtop

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: Golden Commando engine, Torque-Flite transmission, power steering, power brakes, radio, heater, whitewall tires

BASIC PRICE: \$2851

PRICE AS TESTED: \$3767.75 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 65 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 6000 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph.....	2.9 secs.
0-45 mph.....	4.6
0-60 mph.....	7.2

Standing start 1/4-mile 15.9 secs. and 95 mph

Speeds in gears @ 4500 rpm (automatic shift points)

1st.....	42 mph	3rd.....	118 mph (top speed) @ 5000 rpm
2nd.....	74		

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading.....	.31	47	52	63	73	85
Weston electric speedometer.....	.30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear.....23.5 mph

Stopping Distances— from 30 mph, 34 ft.; from 60 mph, 170 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv V-8
Bore: 4.25 ins.
Stroke: 3.38 ins.
Displacement: 383 cubic inches
Compression ratio: 10.0:1
Horsepower: 330 @ 4600 rpm
Torque: 425 lbs.-ft. @ 2800 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.86
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Suspension

Front: Independent; lateral non-parallel control arms, with torsion bars and direct-acting tubular shocks
Rear: Rigid axle, with semi-elliptic 5-leaf springs and direct-acting tubular shocks

Gearbox

3-speed Torque-Flite automatic

Driveshaft

One-piece; open tube

Differential

Hypoid— semi-floating
Installed ratio: 3.23:1

Brakes

Hydraulic drum— self-energizing, self-adjusting
Front: 11-in. dia. x 2.50 in. wide
Rear: 11-in. dia. x 2.50 in. wide
Effective lining area: 207 sq. ins.

Steering

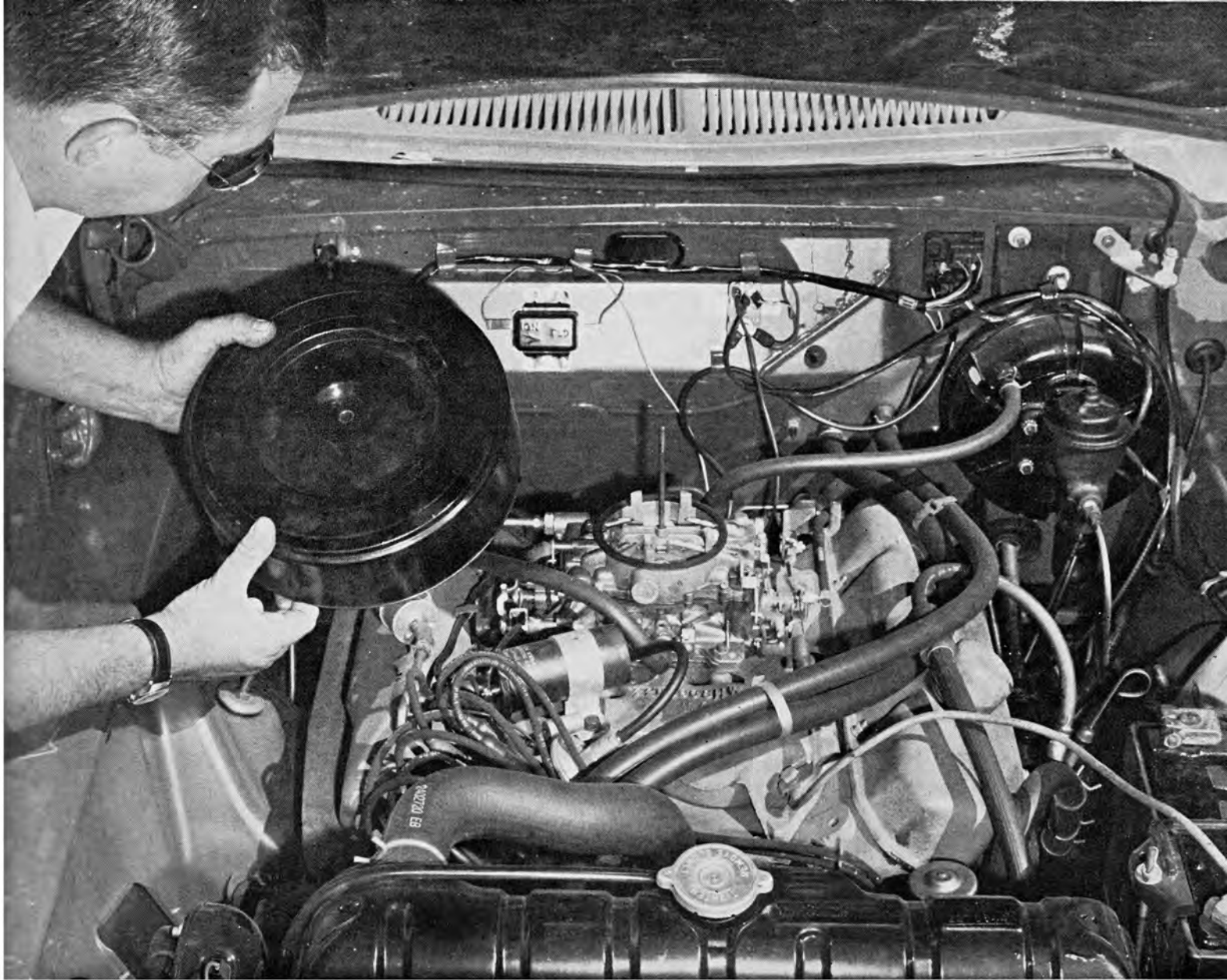
Rack and sector (integral power)
Turning diameter: 40.8 ft.
Turns: 3.5 lock to lock

Wheels and Tires

5-lug, 14 x 5.5 K steel disc wheels
7.50 x 14 2-ply tires

Body and Frame

Unitized
Wheelbase: 116.0 ins.
Track: front, 59.4 ins.; rear, 57.5 ins.
Overall length: 205.0 ins.
Curo weight: 3334 lbs.



BIG 383-INCH GOLDEN COMMANDO V-8 USES SAME BLOCK AS "426" S/S. SMALL AIR CLEANER HAS PAPER ELEMENT, DOESN'T SILENCE.



Under hard acceleration, Sport Fury exhibits nose-high stance that shifts the weight back in the direction of the rear wheels.



Rear springs, while behaving perfectly under acceleration, let rear wheels hop during panic stops, and caused some swerve.