

# DODGE Dart 270

*An entirely new Dart enters the "senior compact" market*

**T**IME WAS when the Dodge Dart was called the Lancer, and was virtually a carbon copy of the Plymouth Valiant at that. Times and the public's tastes change, however, and Dodge has altered its compact car, either as a reflection of that changing demand or at least soon enough to catch up.

While many basic body panels may be still interchangeable with Valiant, the Dart has a wheelbase lengthened by 5 in. and a stretch of 9.7 in. in over-

all length over its corporate stablemate. Station wagons, it should be noted, share the same smaller body specifications.

It is pointless to compare the car with last year's Dart, because the only evolutionary

link is the nameplate. What Dodge has done, in diluting the Dart name (or in fattening up the Lancer), is field an entrant in the "senior compact" segment of the auto market. This area, which now paces the sales efforts of most manufacturers, includes such competition as the Special, F-85, Tempest and Rambler Classic. This is a rough crowd to run with, and the Dart, while it may acquit itself well with the original compacts, also seems to fare

well with the intermediates, as we shall see in this report.

Our test car was the 4-door Dart 270, equipped with the 225-cu. in. version of Chrysler Corporation's slanted 6-cyl. engine and a 3-speed manual transmission. This is the model most likely to be purchased by an average buyer, in spite of its lesser grace and stylishness than that of the hardtop. In price, it was well below its GM competition but slightly more than the American Motors counterpart.

A combination of somewhat utilitarian appointments, high (but comfortable) seating and mediocre performance caused one staff member to characterize this car as "agricultural." Longer acquaintance with the car didn't dispel this designation, but did temper it toward a more charitable interpretation.

The bench-type seats in the 4-door, in addition to feeling higher off the

floor than usual present-day practice, were quite firm. Upholstering is with textured vinyl over foam rubber, and, while not luxurious, appeared extremely durable and attractive. Headroom, at 38 in. in front, was quite adequate in spite of the seat height (about 8-9 in. in front).

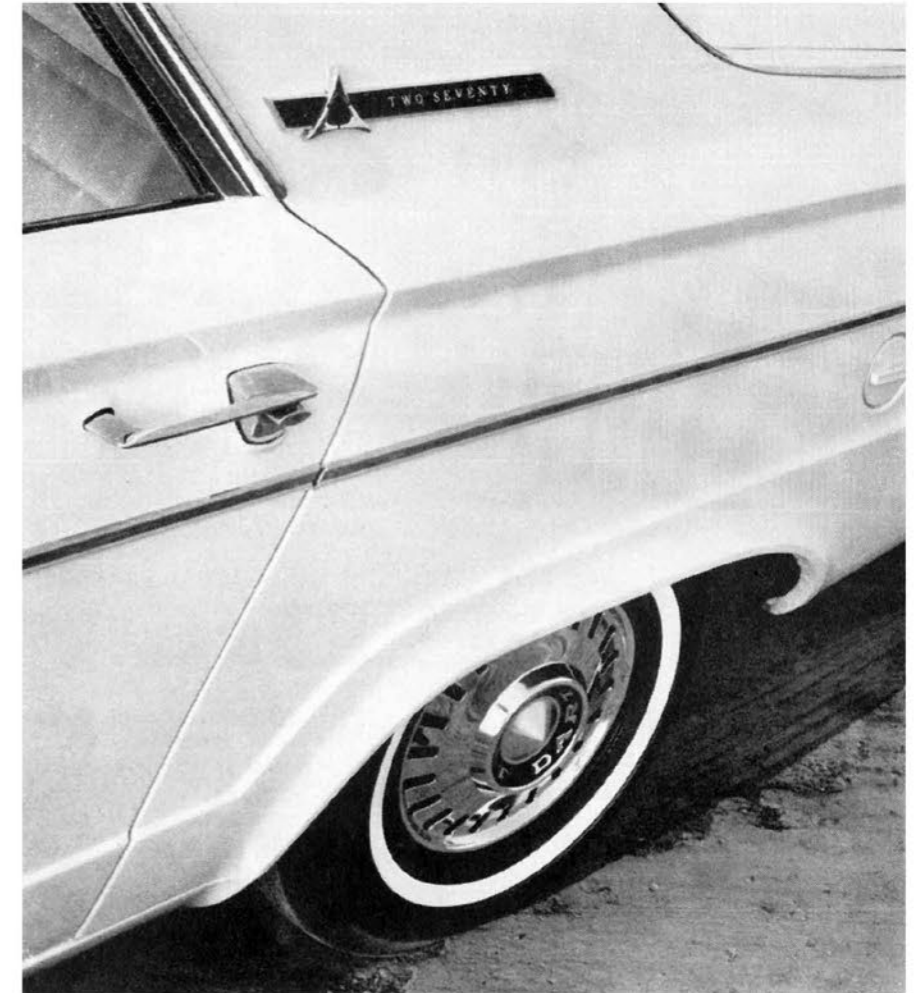
The sturdy, unitized construction of the Dart has undergone some altered fabrication methods this year, which results in stress loads being shared equally by metal throughout the body. Joints and seams have been eliminated wherever possible for rattle-free simplicity, e.g., one-piece stampings for front fenders. An increase in torsional stiffness of 20% over the Lancer has been recorded in engineering tests of unit wheelbase rigidity. Upper body strength is increased by more massive center door pillars and the use of straight windshield pillars which join both cowl and roof structures without the abrupt angles which tend to increase stress concentrations.

All this is to say that the Dart is a stronger car structurally, but Dodge hasn't stopped there. More attention has apparently been paid to assembly and finish of the car than was previously practiced. We felt this car was put together as well as any near its price range and was fitted, if not opulently, at least in good taste.

Instruments are arranged in an asymmetrical cluster as is common today particularly on Chrysler products, and are easy-reading white on black. The 4-in. speedometer flanks the steering column to the left with fuel, water temperature and alternator gauges spread to the right. Just about the biggest and brightest red warning light in the industry signifies a lack of oil pressure; it is mounted just above the steering column and flanked by turn signal indicators. As a matter of personal preference and handiness, we felt the headlight switch and wiper control should have been reversed, with the former above the latter instead of in their present locations in the vertical arrangement.

The 3-knob control for the redesigned heater is hung underneath the radio at the center of the dashboard. These knobs operate a very efficient air-mixing type unit which permits an infinite range of temperatures by varying the percentage of air flowing through the heating core. The entire unit is installed under the instrument panel with only the blower motor and hot water tubes protruding into the engine compartment.

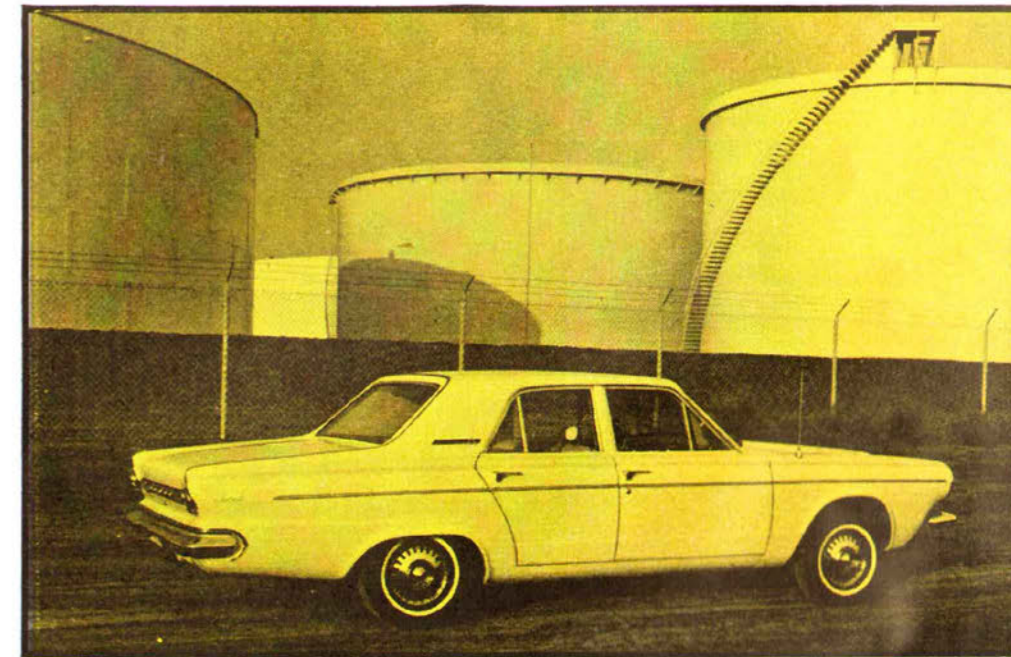
Handling characteristics, in keeping with Chrysler products of the past few years, are excellent. The ride is firm, aided somewhat by 5-leaf springs (with this engine) in place of the less powerful Dart's 4-leaf type. There is a tendency to take rough surfaces rather



stiffly, but cornering is precise and comfortable. None of the unexpected vices which on occasion plague other cars appeared during hard driving. In this respect, the Dart is comparable to the Valiant we recently tested (CL,

December), in spite of the additional wheelbase and overall length.

Ten-inch brake drums provide 195.2 sq. in. effective area and pull the Dart rapidly to a straight-line halt. Indeed, the brakes gave better than the usual





FUNCTIONAL driving compartment design is efficient, attractive.



OPTIONAL 225-cu. in. engine provided average performance.

# DODGE Dart

performance during our all-on controlled stops from 80 mph. The parking brake, operating the rear brake shoes, is now hand-operated by a T-handle to the left of the steering column under the dash, a change which the Dart shares with the Valiant.

Trunk space seems to continually concern most American drivers, and Dart has 5.4 cu. ft. more this year, for a total area of 30.2 cu. ft. A higher contour deck lid aids in this increase while the loading sill is still no more than 22 in. from ground level. A minimum of finish is apparent inside the trunk, however, and this consists of a floor mat over the spare tire and whatever body-dip paint that dries on the rough exposed body panels.

While we aren't usually impressed when a manufacturer trumpets with great gobs of press releases such a

minor detail improvement as new windshield wiper arms, the Dart's wipers are a vast improvement over previous years. They now are parallel acting, wiping clear the central portion of the windshield with their overlapping sweep. The blades are an inch longer to aid in the overlap, but another inch would seem advisable to really clean the previous blind spot effectively.

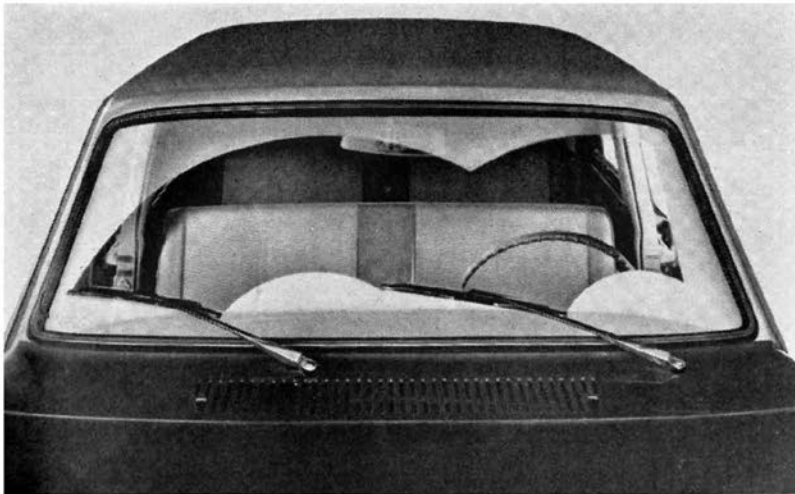
The optional 225-cu. in. engine in this Dart, which develops 44 more bhp than the standard powerplant, proved to be a wise choice. With this engine, the Dart seemed up to hauling, with briskness, the extra (compared with Valiant) 215 lb. that the car weighed. The Dart's ¼-mile e.t. of 19.3 sec., however, was very respectable for its class, recalling that our test V-6 Special with automatic posted 19.7, the F-85 recorded a 19.4, and the Tempest 4

recorded 21.2 for the quarter mile.

Standard axle ratio with manual transmission is 3.23:1, and while this provided sufficient flexibility for most potential Dart customers, we feel the optional 3.55:1 ratio would be more acceptable to those who like a bit more acceleration to better protect themselves in heavy boulevard traffic.

The extra torque of the long-stroke engine proved to be an additional boon in view of the balky operation of the column-mounted shift lever. This shift control setup is our only serious complaint about the car and was a constant vexation. After wrestling the lever between gears for a couple of days, we finally decided to leave it in 2nd for all about-town driving. An indicated 45 mph was easily within the reach of this gear, which also was powerful enough to permit rolling off from stops with a minimum of clutch slippage. Snap shifts during acceleration runs were all but impossible without severe gear grinding.





PARALLEL-OPERATING wipers all but eliminate usual blind spot.



GOOD-SIZED trunk has spartan décor, odd filler pipe location.

The more direct floor-mounted shift levers, which are available for this transmission, are to be preferred here. Or Dodge's excellent 3-speed plus

torque converter automatic transmission might be an even better solution, for that last ounce of performance.

In the final analysis, we felt the Dart

is more than adequate transportation, and incorporates enough stylishness to satisfy a great number of owners who ask no more of an automobile. ■

## CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



### 1963 DODGE DART 270 4-door sedan

#### SPECIFICATIONS

List price.....	\$2135
Price, as tested.....	2315
Curb weight, lb.....	2890
Test weight.....	3160
Tire size.....	6.50-13
Tire capacity, lb @ 24 psi.....	3340
Brake swept area.....	254.5
Engine type.....	6-cyl, ohv
Bore & stroke.....	3.40 x 4.12
Displacement, cu in.....	225
Compression ratio.....	8.2
Carburetion.....	1 x 1
Bhp @ rpm.....	145 @ 4000
equivalent mph.....	88
Torque, lb-ft.....	215 @ 2400
equivalent mph.....	53

#### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.....	111.0
Tread, f and r.....	55.9/55.6
Over-all length, in.....	195.9
width.....	69.8
height.....	54.0
equivalent vol, cu ft.....	428
Frontal area, sq ft.....	21.0
Ground clearance, in.....	5.7
Steering ratio, o/a.....	28.7
turns, lock to lock.....	5.3
turning circle, ft.....	38.7
Hip room, front.....	56.9
Hip room, rear.....	57.0
Pedal to seat back, max.....	38.2
Floor to ground.....	12.7
Luggage vol, cu ft.....	17.3
Fuel tank capacity, gal.....	18.0

#### GEAR RATIOS

4th ( ), overall.....	
3rd (1.00).....	3.23
2nd (1.83).....	5.91
1st (2.95).....	9.53

#### EXTRA-COST OPTIONS

Radio, heater, 225-cu. in. engine, wsw tires.

#### PERFORMANCE

Top speed (4300), mph.....	95
Shifts, rpm-mph, (manual)	
3rd ( ).....	
2nd (4400).....	53
1st (4300).....	32

#### SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual.....	30.0
60 mph.....	57.5
90 mph.....	88.5

#### CALCULATED DATA

Lb/hp (test wt).....	19.9
Cu ft/ton mile.....	113.0
Mph/1000 rpm.....	22.0
Engine revs/mile.....	2740
Piston travel, ft/mile.....	1885
Car Life wear index.....	51.6

#### ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.....	3.3
0-40.....	5.7
0-50.....	8.5
0-60.....	13.3
0-70.....	18.3
0-80.....	24.4
0-100.....	
Standing 1/4 mile.....	19.3
speed at end.....	72

#### PULLING POWER

3rd, maximum gradient, %.....	12.8
2nd.....	22.9
1st.....	30.2
Total drag at 60 mph, lb.....	140

#### FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range, mpg.....	17-20
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