

MERCURY

ROAD TEST





*Notchback roof line will have to compete with new fastback styling**

EACH YEAR, THE JOB of evaluating automobiles gets tougher and tougher. Why? Auto makers are continually upgrading their products, making it more difficult for us to find glaring defects, or to say categorically that a particular car is slanted toward a specific segment of the overall market.

The Mercury Monterey is a good case in point. It's an excellent car, with touches that nudge it into the luxury-car field. Yet, its price is mid-range — nowhere near the acknowledged luxury cars'. Its performance is lively enough to satisfy all but the few who buy primarily for that factor, but it's a perfectly docile car — one that should make any driver feel immediately at home.

Our Monterey Custom four-door featured one of the few different styling trends to come out of the Ford Motor Company for 1963 — the reverse-slant rear window. It's been used before, and exactly why it was revived at this time, we can't say. Evaluating it on its own merits, we must say that we found it worth while. (The "1963½" Mercury Marauder, an addition to the line, abandons the reversed window in favor of a steeply raked fastback, but it's available only as a two-door.)

The window has three primary advantages, all equally valuable as far as we're concerned. There is, of course, more head room for rear seat passengers than with the window sloped in the regular manner. The window's roof overhang provides a generous sunshade for the rear seat. (Who hasn't ever ridden in the rear and had the afternoon sun beat in on the back of his neck?) Finally, the window opens, operated by a dash control, and is very handy as a ventilation aid. (Roll-down rear windows were fairly common in the '30s, but they became impractical as full streamlining came into being.) We found the ideal way to keep a supply of fresh air flowing through the Mercury was to

open one or both of the dash-controlled cowl vents with the rear window part way down. The additional wind noise that goes with open side windows or wind wings didn't occur. We did find that to open the rear window all the way at highway speeds was to invite swirling, uncomfortable drafts.

As big cars go, the Monterey is right in league with the biggest. It hit us as a big automobile — and at 215 inches overall, it is. But size is relative. It's within an inch of the length of all this year's Chryslers, a fraction shorter than the Buick LeSabre, and actually two inches longer than the Continental. Aside from the parking problems that go with length, it's a very desirable car if interior space is important.

We got a feeling of enormous seating area, especially in width. At 80 inches' exterior width, the Monterey is the second widest car on the road for '63 (widest — Imperial), and much of the space is made usable on the inside. There are, for example, 62.1 inches of front seat hip room and 63.5 inches across the rear seat — more width than all but a handful of current models.

Seats in our four-door were conventional benches, with ample room for six big adults. The seating is high, with head and leg room enough to suit the ever-expanding American. Our test car was equipped with an optional six-way power seat, which moved the seat through a series of fore-and-aft, up-and-down, and tilting combinations that placed it in any attitude within a broad range of adjustment.

On the subject of seats, we must offer one negative observation. The upholstery material on the Monterey was a leather-grained vinyl in two shades of brown. It struck us as unfortunate that the leather graining had a highly artificial look, especially since there are plastics available that look so much like leather that they fool all but experts. One



by Wayne Thoms

*See "Merc Goes Racing," page 60. Fastback is a 1963½ model.

MERCURY MONTEREY ROAD TEST *continued*

observer summed it up by saying that it made the interior seem cheap and garish. It was certainly not in keeping with the generally elegant theme of the car.

On the mechanical side, the Monterey shows itself to good advantage. The test car was powered by the standard engine, a 390-cubic-inch V-8 developing 250 hp. It has a two-barrel carburetor and 8.9-to-1 compression. There is one option on this engine, a 9.6-to-1 compression, four-barrel carb version that puts out 300 hp but is otherwise identical.

Anyone really searching for performance should check into the two new Marauder engines just announced — 427 cubic inches each, rated at 410 hp at 5600 rpm with a single four-barrel carb, 425 horses at 6000 with a pair of four-barrels. If the performance we recorded with the least power-

ful mill is any indication, these new engines should make the Monterey a terror. The single-carb models will see action during the 1963 season in Marauder fastback coupes on the stock car circuit, while the more powerful of the two should acquit itself well on the country's drag strips.

When one considers the car's advertised curb weight, 4364 pounds as equipped with a load of extras, our acceleration figures from a rated 250 hp were respectable. The car got off the line quite well, but its weight began to tell on acceleration at the top end.

The Merc-O-Matic transmission is a three-speed unit, with D-1 and D-2 positions on the quadrant. D-1 is used in normal driving as an economy device that skips low gear. In D-2, the transmission passes normally through all three gears, and



BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND IS A FULL ARRAY OF REAL GAUGES, ALL EASY TO READ AND INDIVIDUALLY HOODED TO PREVENT UNWANTED GLARE.

PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO

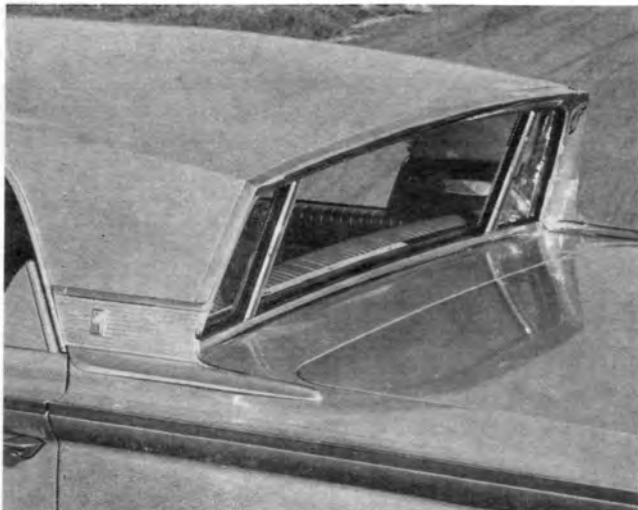


THE MERC HANDLES WELL ON ROUGH ROADS AT SPEED, BUT UNDERSTEER IS EXCESSIVE IN TURNS. ROLL ISN'T AS BAD AS IT FEELS.



Brakes had a tendency to heat up fast and cool down slow. When hot, one or more of the brakes would lock up without any warning.

(LEFT) Drawing shows front suspension "compliance link" that allows lower control arm, spindle to move out, back to ease shocks.



REVERSE-SLANT REAR WINDOW WAS FIRST INTRODUCED BY LINCOLN A FEW YEARS BACK. DASH CONTROL ALLOWS IT TO BE RAISED, LOWERED.



PERFORMANCE WITH THE 250-HP ENGINE SHOULD BE ADEQUATE FOR MOST OWNERS AND MOST CONDITIONS. BIG MERC WEIGHS OVER TWO TONS.

MERCURY MONTEREY ROAD TEST *continued*

that is the position we used for our acceleration runs. Quite likely our times could have been improved by holding the car in LOW range past its normal 4400-rpm shift point, but we prefer to record acceleration without resorting to unusual tricks. We did, however, get 57 mph at 5200 rpm as the maximum attainable by holding the car in LOW until the lifters began to pump up and power fell off. If one pushes the selector to LOW during deceleration, it will shift gently from DRIVE into second, then snap itself into LOW at about 23 mph, offering considerable emergency slowing effect.

The Monterey will cruise with very little effort at any speed right up to its maximum. We were able to coax 102 mph from the car, at which point our portable tachometer showed 4100 rpm and there was no road left. We felt, however, that we were extremely close to the true top speed. The discrepancy between this speed and our recorded mph per 1000 rpm can be attributed to high-speed tire expansion. (As an example of how strong the big Marauder engine is in comparison to Merc's smallest, a Monterey equipped with the new engine has been clocked in excess of 160 mph.) At fast cruise, we found wind and engine noise quite low.

Handling was not as good as we would have liked in the corners, but no worse than many of the Mercury's contemporaries. On the straights the car was steady, only nominally pushed by the strongest cross-winds. There was a good deal of understeer in high-speed turns, during which the front end had an alarming tendency to push straight ahead. Coupled with a large amount of cornering roll, this effect was not the most pleasant for fast motoring.

Actually, the ride was excellent, although on the soft side, which was the main reason for the poor cornering. Stiffer shock absorbers should work a healthy transformation on the Monterey's road manners without adverse effect on the ride. The fact that the Merc can be made into a formidable racing car with fantastically good handling indicates what can be done.

The power steering takes 3.9 turns lock to lock, a moderately fast ratio that will put the car around a 41.6-foot minimum turning circle. As a point of minor annoyance, we found that the horn button segments on the steering wheel spokes were so sensitive and so near the rim that we continually brushed them while cornering, honking the horn without intending to do so.

We had the opportunity to whip the Merc across a heavy

layer of fine powder dust, deliberately pushing it through its own dirty wake to see just how tight the body was. While the exterior quickly required a wash job, the inside remained clean and dust-free. This also gave us a chance to check out the air conditioning, which kept us supplied with pure, cool air in spite of the artificial dust storm we had raised around the car.

Brakes, which were power assisted, stopped the car in good order in a straight line from 30 and 60 mph. The higher speed did require rapid pumping to minimize lock-up and shorten actual stopping distance — a condition that prevails with all present-day power brakes. As with most current passenger cars, however, one good panic stop requires a several-minute cooling period before the brakes are really effective again. An attempt to repeat the 60-mph stop immediately after the first one found the car pulling badly to one side and hard to control.

The Mercury's fuel economy was neither astoundingly bad nor good throughout our test. The bottom of the range was just over nine mpg, the result of a prolonged session of city stop-and-go driving, with particular emphasis on using the car's acceleration and braking capabilities to the fullest. We tallied 14.6 mpg for a section of super highway, moving through moderately heavy traffic at speeds ranging between 65 and 75 mph. It is a figure that any driver should be able to match as a norm, or exceed with a little care.

Base price of the Monterey Custom is only \$3075. While the car can be purchased for that, such a figure is misleading when a typical load of factory accessories is added. Our test car had just about all of Mercury's extras, including three — power windows (\$102), Merc-O-Matic transmission (\$221), and air conditioning (\$360) — which gave the price a healthy boost toward its \$4422 total on the West Coast. Even so, we felt that the price is fair for a roomy, solidly built family sedan that offers so much comfort and performance. It is a car with qualities that should strike a responsive chord with motorists who appreciate outstanding products. /MT

Stand-out features of the Monterey are plenty of interior passenger room, plus enough usable trunk area for extended trips.



MERCURY MONTEREY CUSTOM

4-door, 6-passenger sedan

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: Merc-O-Matic transmission, air conditioning, power windows, 6-way power seat, power brakes and steering, radio, whitewalls, seat belts

BASIC PRICE: \$3075

PRICE AS TESTED: \$4422 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 2100 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5000 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph.....	4.0 secs.
0-45 mph.....	7.0
0-60 mph.....	11.3

Standing start 1/4-mile 18.5 secs. and 75.5 mph

Speeds in gears @ shift points

1st	45 mph @ 4400 rpm	2nd	72 mph @ 4200 rpm
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Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	32	48	52	62	71	80
Weston electric speedometer	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear

22.5 mph

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 38 ft.; from 60 mph, 148 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine	Ohv V-8 Bore: 4.05 ins. Stroke: 3.78 ins. Displacement: 390 cu. ins. Compression ratio: 8.9:1 Horsepower: 250 @ 4400 rpm Torque: 378 lbs.-ft. @ 2400 rpm Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.64 Ignition: 12-volt coil	Steering	Recirculating ball and nut, power assisted Turning diameter: 41.6 ft. Turns: 3.9 lock to lock
Gearbox	3-speed Merc-O-Matic; column shift lever	Wheels and Tires	5-lug steel disc wheels 8.00 x 14 2-ply tubeless tires
Driveshaft	One piece — open tube	Brakes	Hydraulic, duo-servo; self-adjusting; power assisted Front: 11-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide Rear: 11-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide Effective lining area: 177.5 sq. ins.
Differential	Hypoid — semi-floating Standard ratio: 3.00:1	Body and Frame	Ladder-type frame with full-length boxed side rails and 5 cross-members Wheelbase: 120.0 ins. Track: front, 61.0 ins.; rear, 60.0 ins. Overall length: 215 ins. Curb weight: 4364 lbs.
Suspension	Front: Independent, with upper and lower wishbones, coil springs, tubular shocks, stabilizer bar Rear: Rigid axle; 5-leaf semi-elliptic springs; tubular shocks		