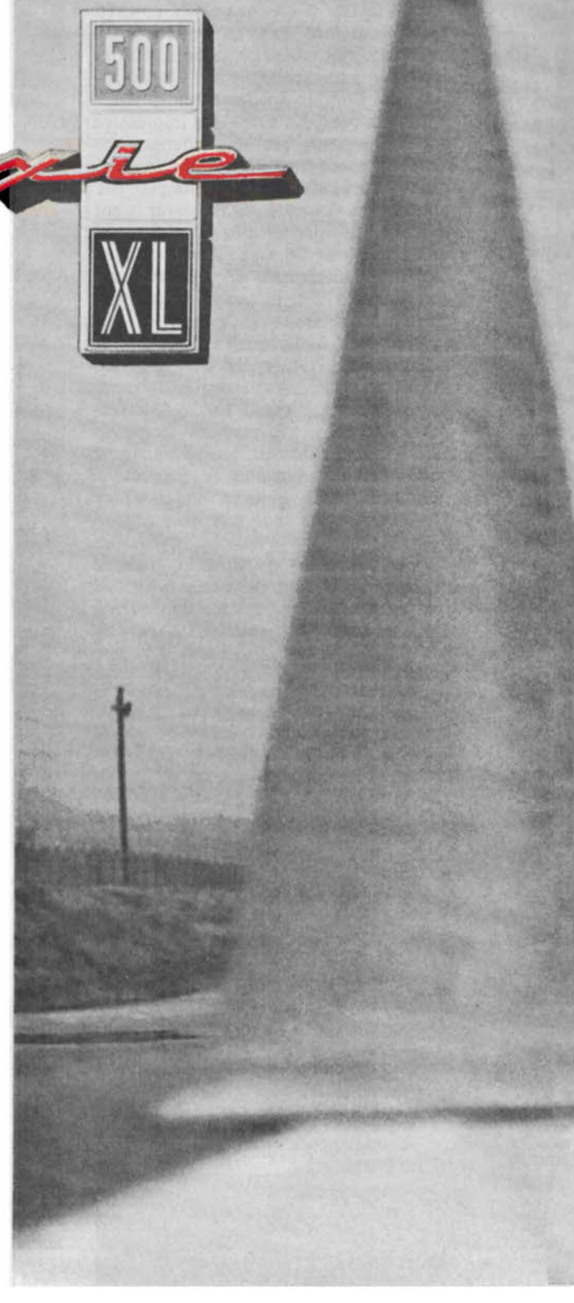
FORD

Galaxie 500 XL



Snap, luxury, quality from Ford's top-liner

MARKET RESEARCH ANALYSTS and product planning experts at Ford (and at other manufacturers as well) must be spending a lot of sleepless nights trying to keep ahead of what's become a rather unpredictable car-buying public. Just a short time ago, everyone was talking economy and the trend was toward smaller, less expensive cars. Suddenly the trend reversed, and while people were still giving lip service to the spartan series, they usually ended up buying top-of-the-line, option-loaded luxury models.

Over at Ford, this means the Galaxie 500-XL. In 1962, the basic Galaxie line accounted for 46 per cent of all Ford Division sales, with the sleek "XL" taking one in every eight of these. This year, experts predict an even greater swing to the sporty models.

The Galaxie 500-XL convertible we tested came equipped with most of the power options available. This included power steering, brakes, windows, and four-way seat, but not air conditioning. Power was supplied by the well proven "390" engine driving through a three-speed Cruise-O-Matic transmission and standard 3.00-to-1 rear axle. It's the same engine that comes as standard equipment on the Thunderbird and pulls 300 hp at 4600 rpm from its 390 cubic inches. Torque rating is a healthy 427 pounds-feet at 2800 rpm, which means plenty of mid-range punch for passing at highway speeds.

At first glance, performance isn't what you'd expect from 300 horses, but remember that the test car was a convertible – heavier than a sedan because of the beefed-up frame and top-operating mechanism. Our car had an advertised curb weight of 3877 pounds, but it actually weighed 4150 pounds. This was with a full gas tank but didn't include any of our test equipment. With two men aboard, plus necessary test equipment, test weight was about 4500 pounds.

Over the standing quarter-mile the "XL" clocked in at 17.5 seconds and 79 mph. These times are the average of several two-way runs. During the 0-30, 0-45, and 0-60-mph stages of the acceleration runs, our times averaged 3.5, 6.5, and 9.8 seconds respectively. While definitely not of the neck-snapping variety, acceleration (we feel) will be more than enough for the average driver and will certainly be the match of any emergency situation. Some drivers might prefer the optional 3.50-to-1 rear axle, because it'd give just a little better pickup.

Down Riverside Raceway's backstretch, our fifth-wheel electric speedometer was reading an honest 107 mph. The tachometer reached 4400 rpm on the top-speed runs, and the engine felt as

by Jim Wright, *Technical Editor*

if it might wind tighter if we would've had a little more room. During these runs we were pleased to note that the wind noise level was very low (for a convertible). Due to the very liberal use of sound-deadening materials, we were unbothered by either road or engine noises. These materials add quite a bit of extra weight to the car, but they're definitely worth their weight in added comfort.

Ford offers a wide range of horsepower options, and the buyer can get just about anything he wants in the line of performance. At present, the different engines range upward from the 138-hp Six through the intermediate-range V-8s of 195, 220, 300, and 330 hp to a couple of all-out high-performance 427-cubic-inchers. These two recently introduced 1963½ powerplants replace the famous "406." They're offered either with a single four-barrel carburetor (410 hp) or with two fours (425 hp).

Transmission options are also plentiful and can be hooked up with a varied selection of rear axle ratios. One of the most interesting innovations to come along in quite a while is the brand-new *all-synchro* three-speed manual transmission. This is something that's been sorely needed ever since the manufacturers started coming out with big-inch V-8s. Because of the amount of torque these engines are capable of producing, there's been a steady swing to higher and higher (numerically lower) rear axle ratios. This is fine because it means more gas economy as well as less overall engine wear – but if one of these high-speed gears is tied up with a standard three-speed manual transmission, the resulting combination is pretty miserable. Second gear, in many instances, is almost useless below 15 to 20 mph, and to gear down at these speeds with the standard non-synchro-first-gear transmission is just about impossible. As a result, the driver's forced to let engine rpm drop too low in second gear. When this happens, the car bucks and lunges like a wild horse, and the driver has to come to a complete stop before he can engage first gear. With Ford's new unit, first gear can be instantly and silently engaged whenever needed. This is an efficient, smooth-shifting unit, and its introduction automatically makes all other three-speed manual transmissions even more obsolete. It's standard on all Galaxies.

Also available with certain engines are three-speed manual with overdrive (on all V-8s), four-speed manual, all-synchro, floor shift (on 352-, 390-, and 427-cubic-inch engines only), three-speed automatic with most V-8s, plus a two-speed automatic on the 223-inch Six and 289-cubic-inch V-8. Rear axle ratios range from 3.00 to 1 down to 4.11, plus a few even lower than this for special racing applications.

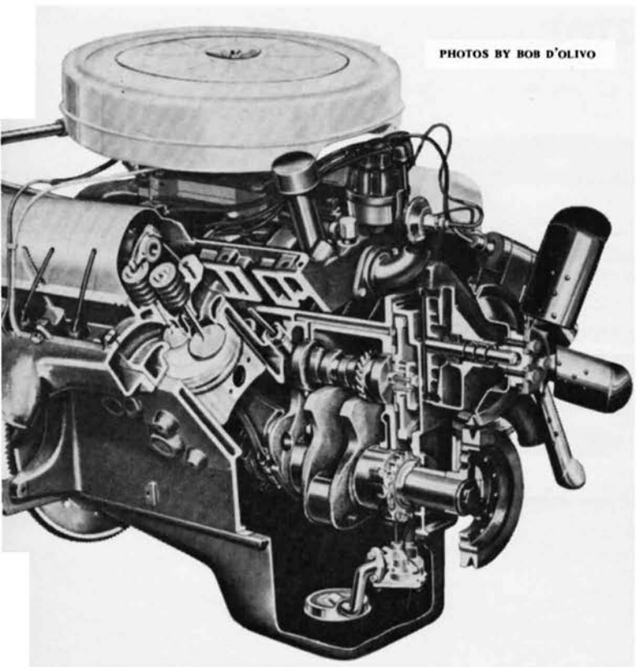
Gas consumption with the "390" engine is about what you'd expect – not bad, not good. For 800 miles of mixed driving, the test car averaged 11.8 mpg. Around-town consumption is in the nine- to 12-mpg range, while steady open-road cruising can give 14 to 16 mpg.

Ford power brakes aren't so sensitive as some of the other systems available. They take a little heavier pedal pressure to operate. This we like, because they're easier to get used to, and in a panic situation the driver isn't so likely to lock them up as quickly as he would some of the more touchy systems.

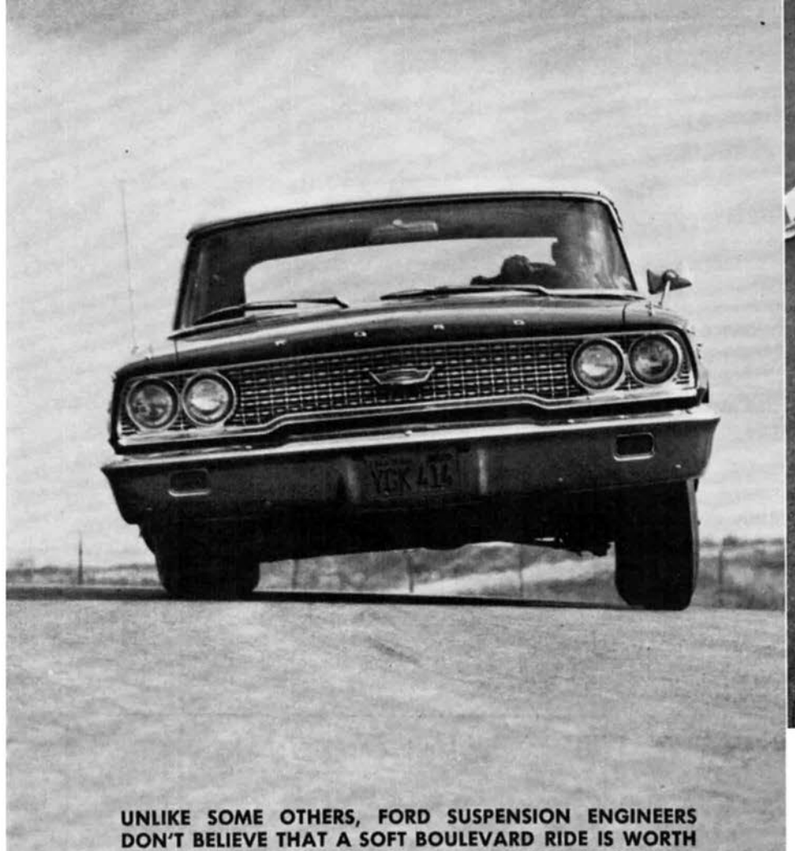
Ford was first in the low-priced field to offer self-adjusting brakes as standard equipment – this item's continued this year. The brakes on our test car withstood three consecutive hard stops from the top end of the high-speed runs before they faded completely. After a short cool-down period, they worked perfectly during our regular braking tests. All stops were straight-line, and there was no pronounced tendency for the brakes to lock up suddenly.

There was a strong crosswind blowing when we made the high-speed runs. While we had to crank about 20 degrees of lock into the steering wheel, the "XL" was extremely

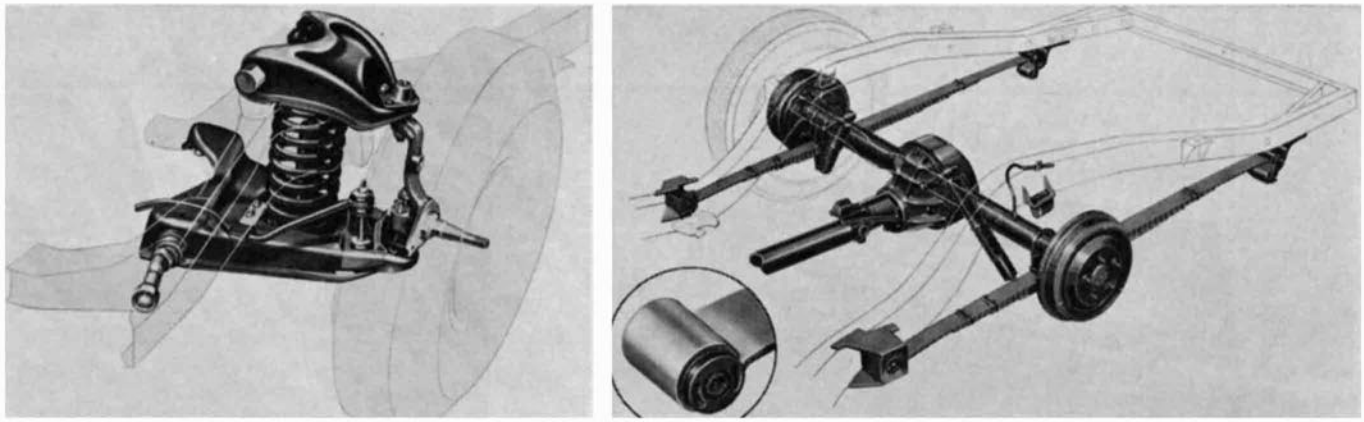
PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO



Well proven 390-cubic-inch engine, borrowed from the Thunderbird, is rated at 300 horsepower. Another variation of this engine (Police Performance) uses different camshaft to produce 330 hp.



UNLIKE SOME OTHERS, FORD SUSPENSION ENGINEERS DON'T BELIEVE THAT A SOFT BOULEVARD RIDE IS WORTH SACRIFICING EVERY ASPECT OF HANDLING STABILITY.



DETAILS OF THE "COMPLIANCE-LINK" SUSPENSION SYSTEM AS EXPLAINED IN THE TEXT ARE EASILY RECOGNIZED IN THE TWO DRAWINGS ABOVE.

FORD GALAXIE 500-XL *continued*

steady. Even when the wind force would suddenly vary, we had to make only minor steering wheel corrections to keep the car straight.

Ford still favors suspension that's a bit on the firm side (by today's standards). As a result, the Galaxie's handling qualities are very good. Rather than go to marshmallow suspension to get a good boulevard ride, Ford keeps the firm suspension but has developed the "compliance link" as a suspension aid to eliminate harshness. Conventional suspensions absorb road shocks vertically. Because of this, a disturbance is both felt and heard when the car goes over tar strips and minor irregularities in the pavement. The compliance link is designed to permit shock absorption in the horizontal as well as vertical plane. This horizontal resiliency is introduced into the Galaxie suspension by hanging the lower control arm front anchor on a crank, or compliance link. The weight of the vehicle automatically centers this crank. The compliance link allows the front of the lower control arm to move out and back, which causes road disturbances to be fed into the suspension members at a more acceptable angle, thus giving more of a cushioning effect.

A variation of this is used at the rear through the unique design of the leaf spring front anchor pin. This anchor pin is supported above and below by rubber blocks but is free to move fore and aft a controlled amount so each rear wheel can absorb shocks horizontally as well as vertically. Ford engineers also use what they call the "tuned spring technique." Tension shackles are used at the rear of each spring, and the movement of these shackles automatically changes rear spring rate to adjust for heavy loads and difficult road conditions.

A hefty anti-roll bar at the front end keeps the Galaxie quite flat during cornering. Although the car is the heaviest in its class, the combination of front and rear suspension geometry is such that the Galaxie feels as light as a compact on most roads. The Galaxie understeers basically, but this is to such a small degree that you never get the feeling the front end's pushing excessively.

That built-in quality Ford's becoming known for is evident on both exterior and interior of everything from the least expensive to the most expensive of the Galaxie line. These are solid cars, and from what we've seen of them personally, they usually come from the factory with everything put together just right.

The bucket seats in our test car were a little harder than we're used to, and the seat bottom doesn't extend out far enough to give really good support to our upper legs. Otherwise, the interior's very roomy and the choice of carpeting and upholstery materials leaves nothing to be desired.

Ford's a leader in the extended lubrication field – this year the lube periods are even further apart. The traditional 1000-mile new-car inspection has been eliminated, and no routine maintenance is required for 6000 miles. Major lubrication intervals have been upped from 30,000 to 36,000 miles. This same figure applies to change of radiator coolant, fuel filter, air cleaner element, and front wheel bearing lubrication.

This combination of good styling, high quality *and* the reduced maintenance feature makes the new Galaxie 500-XL an attractive package to the buyer who wants a well built, dependable car with a touch of sporting flavor. **/MT**

FORD GALAXIE 500-XL

2-door, 5-passenger convertible

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: 390-4V engine, Cruise-O-Matic transmission, power steering, power brakes, power seats and windows, radio, heater, tinted windows, seat belts

BASIC PRICE: $3518

PRICE AS TESTED: $4579 (plus tax and license)

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 4242 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5200 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph	3.5 secs.
0-45 mph	6.5
0-60 mph	9.8

Standing start ¼-mile 17.5 secs. and 79 mph

Speeds in gears @ 4200 rpm

1st .....42 mph
2nd .....71 mph
3rd .....107 mph (observed)

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	33	47	53	62	70	80
Weston electric speedometer	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear .....24 mph

Stopping Distances – from 30 mph, 36.5 ft.; from 60 mph, 143 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine
Ohv V-8
Bore: 4.05 ins.
Stroke: 3.78 ins.
Displacement: 390 cu. ins.
Compression ratio: 9.6:1
Horsepower: 300 @ 4600 rpm
Torque: 427 lbs.-ft. @ 2800 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.76
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Gearbox
3-speed automatic (Cruise-O-Matic); floor-mounted control

Driveshaft
One-piece — open tube

Differential
Hypoid — semi-floating
Standard ratio: 3.00:1

Suspension
Front: Independent coil spring with upper and lower A-arms (compliance link on lower arm); direct-acting tubular shocks and anti-roll bar
Rear: Rigid axle, with 4-leaf, semi-elliptic springs; direct-acting tubular shocks

Steering
Recirculating ball and nut, with separate power assist cylinder
Turning diameter: 41.12 ft.
Turns: 5.25 lock to lock

Wheels and Tires
5-lug, steel disc wheels
7.50 x 14 4-ply tubeless nylon tires

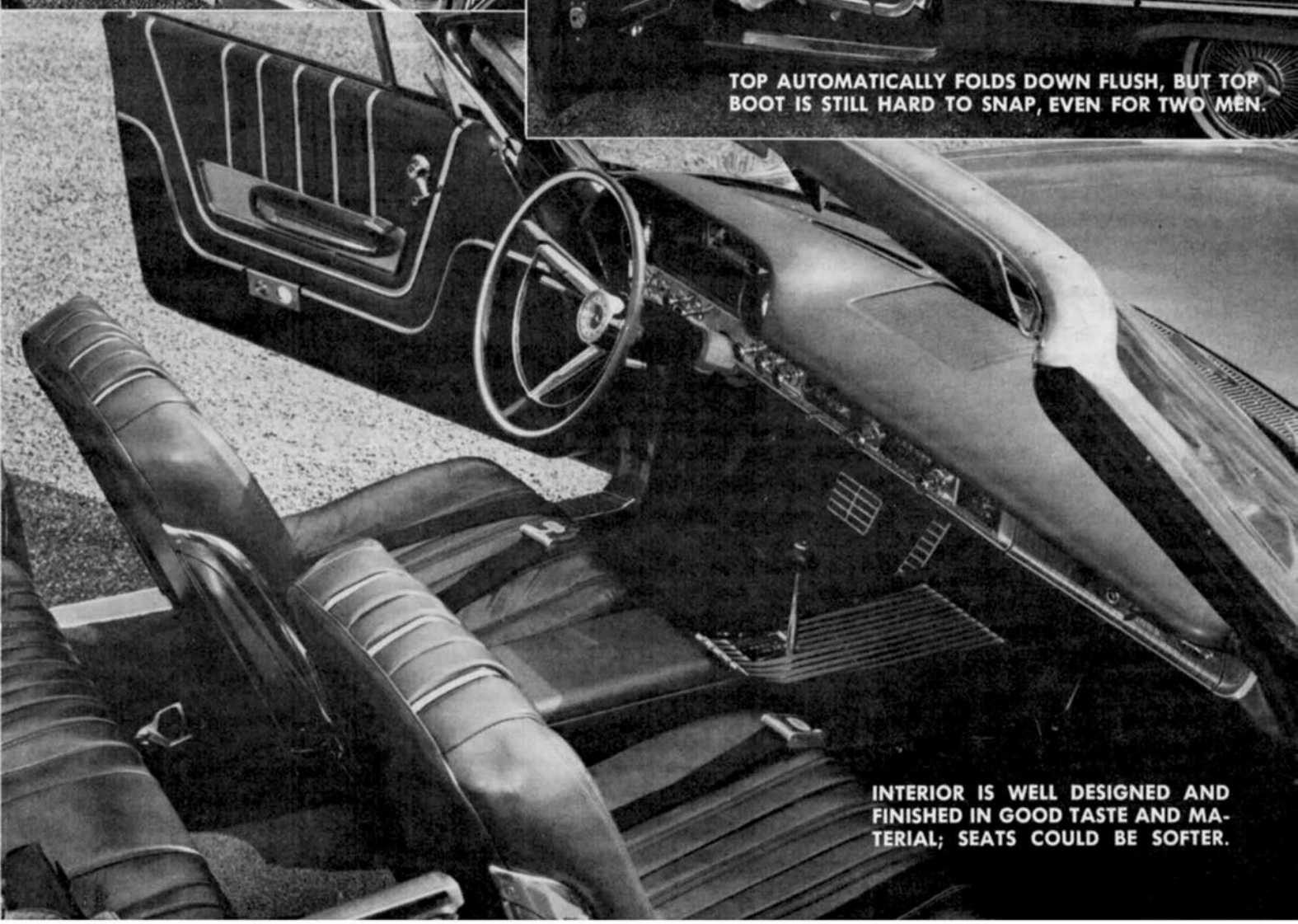
Brakes
Hydraulic, duo-servo; cast-iron drums; self-adjusting
Front: 11-in. dia. x 3.0 ins. wide
Rear: 11-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide
Effective lining area: 198 sq. ins

Body and Frame
Separate body and ladder-type frame, with full-length boxed side rails and 5 crossmembers
Wheelbase: 119.0 ins.
Track: front, 61.0 ins.; rear, 60.0 ins.
Overall length: 209.9 ins.
Curb weight: 3877 lbs.

CONVERTIBLE PROVED WEATHER-TIGHT DURING NORMAL TO HEAVY RAINFALL ON TEST.

LUGGAGE AREA IS SHALLOW BUT WIDE AND FAIRLY LONG.

TOP AUTOMATICALLY FOLDS DOWN FLUSH, BUT TOP BOOT IS STILL HARD TO SNAP, EVEN FOR TWO MEN.



INTERIOR IS WELL DESIGNED AND FINISHED IN GOOD TASTE AND MATERIAL; SEATS COULD BE SOFTER.