

# Fairlane sports coupe road test

by Jim Wright, *Technical Editor*

**A**FTER LOGGING over 2000 miles in the test Fairlane, we'd personally have to rate it very high in satisfaction potential. For a good, all-around car, it's hard to beat, and we think it's one that'll have appeal for a lot of people.

The Fairlane's basic blend is one of economy and performance, with the responsive handling characteristics of a lightweight and the solidity of a big car, all wrapped up in an intermediate-sized package that's neither big or small.

Much of the Fairlane's appeal lies in the size and variety of its option list. No matter what the buyer's personal needs, the Fairlane seems to offer it. Even its closest competitor can't match it on this score. Heading the list are



five different engine options — and by the time this test is published, there might even be several more.

The basic engine is the 170-cubic-inch, in-line Six. Following this is a larger Six displacing 200 cubic inches. Both Sixes are designed for those interested in low-cost, economical driving. Also for the economy-minded, but for those who want the added punch and smoothness of a V-8, is the 260-cubic-inch, 164-hp engine.

Top options are the "289s." The mild version is rated at 195 hp, and its 8.7-to-1 compression ratio lets it get along nicely on regular fuel. Hotdog of the lot is the Cobra-derived "289," rated at a healthy 271 hp. This one gets its go from 11-to-1 compression ratio, a four-barrel carburetor, high-performance camshaft with mechanical lifters (noisier than hydraulics, but not too noisy), and a free-flow exhaust header design.

Drive-train selections are as varied as the engines and include the standard three-speed, all-synchro manual transmission, offered with all the engines; the two-speed automatic, offered with the big Six and the "260" V-8; the newly introduced three-speed automatic, available with the 195- and the 260-hp "289"; and the four-speed, all-synchro manual, which can be had with either of the "289s." In fact, this is the only transmission being offered with the hot "289." A three-speed with overdrive (synchro on top two gears only) is offered only for use with the "260."

Among the many rear axle ratios available are 2.80, 3.00, 3.25, 3.50, and 3.80 to 1. This last is for overdrive only. For the performance enthusiast who buys his hot "289" with an eye for dragging, the factory offers either a 3.89 or 4.11 rear axle. Equa-Lock isn't available for some reason or other, although in our opinion, it definitely should be, because hot models do have traction problems.

For testing, we chose the popular two-door hardtop Sports Coupe with bucket-seat/console interior. A mild version of the "289" was specified, along with a four-speed transmission. This was mainly because we felt it offered the best balance of performance and economy and would be more representative of what the average buyer would order. A standard 3.25 rear axle was installed. Other options included power



**(LEFT)** The Fairlane handled rough desert roads like a champ. Suspension refused to bottom out on even the most severe dips. **(RIGHT)** On mountain roads, it leaned too much on sharp curves, but could be driven hard into corners without breaking loose.



PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO



steering, radio, heater, and whitewalls.

With a full gas tank, two men aboard, plus the usual test equipment, the MOTOR TREND Fairlane weighed in at 3582 pounds. Considering it uses unitized construction, this makes the Fairlane a heavier-than-average car. Still, performance isn't adversely affected by this — at least, not with the "289" engine. Zero-to-60-mph acceleration times were consistently in the 9.8- to 10.2-second bracket, which is just about what's needed to cope with today's quick-moving freeway traffic.

We had to be careful when mashing the throttle off the line to keep from getting the rear wheels (the right one, anyway) too loose, because it was possible to send up quite a lot of rubber smoke otherwise. The Warner Gear-built four-speed was smooth and quiet, and the shift linkage was strong and positive enough to pull off full-throttle shifts without any trouble. Once or twice we noticed a bit of rear axle hop on hard acceleration, but this only when the rear wheels were really smoking.

Top speed of 105 mph was actual on the Riverside Raceway backstretch. Our electric tachometer was reading approximately 4500 rpm on the high-speed run, and it didn't feel as if the engine wanted to wind any tighter — due mainly to breathing restrictions of the two-barrel carburetor.

At any rpm up to 4000, the engine was very responsive in fourth gear, and in any of the bottom three, it'd wind right to 5200 rpm without protest. This is the point where the hydraulic lifters start to pump up, causing valve float, so naturally we didn't exceed this figure. Best acceleration times were recorded by using 4800 rpm as a shift point in all gears.

During our 2000-odd-mile test cycle, the Fairlane's fuel consumption got progressively better. The car came to us with 995 miles on the odometer, so it was just barely broken in. The first tank we ran through (on the highway) produced a 15.3-mpg average, while the last tank under the same conditions gave the highest average we saw — 19.1 mpg. Around town, the average never fell below 15 mpg once the car was broken in. The specifications list either 8.7- or 9.0-to-1 compression for this engine, so it could fall anywhere within

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- 1) Car leaned a lot on hard corners, but always under control, felt well balanced.
  - 2) Controls were easy to reach and read, but steering wheel was a little too high.
  - 3) Trunk opened wide, had enough room.
  - 4) Getting in and out was easy, thanks to its wide-opening doors and good leg room.
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those two figures. No matter what the exact figure is, it's low enough so the engine doesn't need anything but regular-grade fuel.

We put in a little time in a Fairlane "260" last year, and it didn't do much better in the mileage department. We've also driven the two Sixes, and while they'll do better on economy, we don't think this begins to make up for the lack of snap. We'd actually be worried about driving the "170" out on the highway.

We can think of several Ford engineers who feel exactly the same way. We went on a cross-country trip with the factory last year, and among the cars we were driving was a Fairlane hard-top with the "170" engine and two-speed automatic. It got great gas mileage, but it was almost impossible to overtake and pass another car in the 55- to 65-mph range — within any reasonable distance. We naturally wouldn't try any passing maneuvers with the car unless the road was straight, level, and completely clear ahead, but every time it seemed we'd get caught out there before we could finish the pass. The whole trip lasted only 2000 miles, but to us it seemed like the world's longest game of chicken.

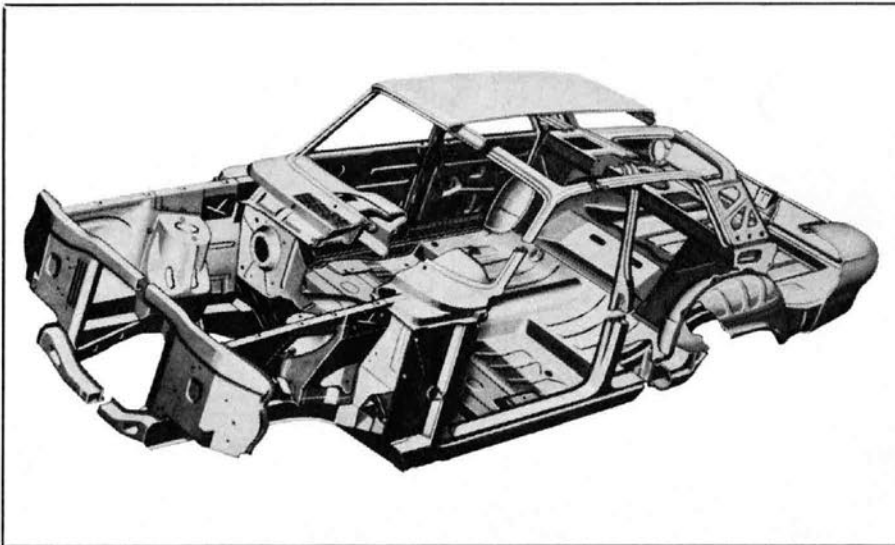
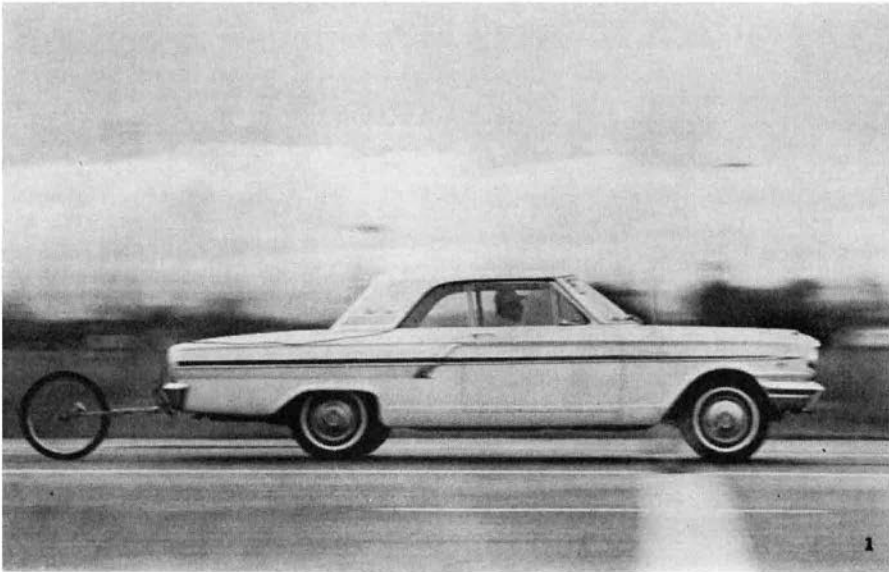
Our test car had optional heavy-duty brakes—actually standard wagon brakes — and they seemed to do a much better job than the smaller standard units. They survived two hard stops from 105 mph and were halfway through the third before they faded completely. It took about 15 minutes before they were back up to the point where we could run the regular braking tests. But when they were cool, it was possible to make quick, fairly straight stops. The test car wasn't equipped with power assist and really didn't need it, either. Pedal pressures are light and wouldn't offer a problem for any woman.

Steering, while light and responsive, was still a trifle slow between locks. Standard steering is 4.7 turns, while power assist drops this down to 4.3 — not much of an improvement. The Bendix unit Ford uses is the linkage type.

We took the Fairlane on several trips across the California desert to the Colorado River, mostly over little-used secondary roads. Anyone familiar with this type of road knows that in addition to the surface being not too smooth, the roads are just one big dip after an-



- 1) Fairlane had good traction — got off the line without excessive wheel spinning.
- 2) Fast driving during a downpour found car stable, easy to control on wet roads.
- 3) Cutaway shows reliable "289's" heavy rods and head and valve configurations.
- 4) Mild "289" was powerful, economical.



other. It's a real test of any car's suspension, especially if you're traveling 75 to 85 mph. There are several cars around that we wouldn't do this with, but the Fairlane rode and handled like a champ. Even the most severe dips couldn't make the suspension bottom out, and neither did the suspension go to its rebound limits when coming out of the dips. Through the mountains, we noticed that the Fairlane leaned more than we liked, but still it could be driven deep and hard into the corners without raising our adrenalin level.

One reason the Fairlane is heavy is because of the amount of sound-deadening material used. Ford hasn't spared it, and this is pleasantly apparent when the car's cruising at high speeds. Wind and road noise are at a low level, and even with a vent window open, normal conversation can be carried on between front and rear seat passengers. Engine noise levels are lower than we've come to expect from a car in this size and price class. Ford's chassis engineers seem to have the vibration problem licked. The Fairlane seems as free from noise and vibration, even on the roughest roads, as any car that uses separate frame and body construction.

The interior offers enough all-around room to take five adults on long trips. We would've liked to put the driver's seat back farther to get a little more arm room, but still, it wasn't too uncomfortable. The buckets are dished enough to give good lateral support, and they're also firm enough to keep you steady in them. Instruments are well grouped for easy reading, but we'd like to see an oil pressure gauge and ammeter instead of the warning lights. We also felt the steering wheel was just a little too high — five-foot wives have to look through instead of over it. Otherwise, all-around visibility is good.

When we returned the car, it had just over 3000 on it, but they were hard miles. Yet the car hadn't developed any rattles. All the exterior trim, doors, and panels fit as they should. The interior also reflects a high degree of quality, both in the materials used and in their fit.

Fairlane still offers the 24,000-mile or 24-month warranty. This warranty covers replacement of certain parts and the labor involved. It's also passed on to successive owners. /MT

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- 1) Side view shows off new outline for '64. Car hit honest 105-mph top speed.  
 2) Unitized body/frame construction gives car good torsional stiffness, quiet ride.  
 3) Brakes performed well under normal conditions — faded after three 100-mph stops.
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THE FAIRLANE'S FANTASTIC BEHAVIOR OVER SECONDARY DESERT ROADS AT SPEEDS OF 75-85 MPH INCREASED OUR ESTEEM FOR THIS CAR.

## FAIRLANE 500 SPORTS COUPE

2-door, 5-passenger hardtop

**OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED:** "289" engine, 4-speed transmission, power steering, radio, padded dash and visors, 7.00 x 14 whitewalls, misc. items

**BASIC PRICE:** \$2725.75 (includes buckets, console, heavy-duty suspension, heater)

**PRICE AS TESTED:** \$3224.10 (plus tax and license)

**ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST:** 995 miles

**RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE:** 5200 rpm

## PERFORMANCE

### ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph .....	3.2 secs.
0-45 mph .....	6.3
0-60 mph .....	9.9

Standing start 1/4-mile 17.5 secs. and 78 mph

Speeds in gears @ 5200 rpm

1st .....	45 mph	3rd .....	81 mph
2nd .....	60 mph	4th .....	105 mph (actual top speed @ 4500 rpm)

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading .....	30	46	51	62	72	82
Weston electric speedometer .....	30	45	50	60	70	80

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

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 37.5 ft.; from 60 mph, 158.5 ft.

## SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

### Engine

Ohv V-8  
Bore: 4.00 ins.  
Stroke: 2.87 ins.  
Displacement: 289 cu. ins.  
Compression ratio: 8.7:1  
Horsepower: 195 @ 4400 rpm  
Torque: 282 lbs.-ft. @ 2200 rpm  
Horsepower per cu in.: 0.675  
Carburetion 1 2-bbl.  
Ignition: 12-volt coil

### Gearbox

4-speed manual, all-synchro; floorshift

### Driveshaft

1-piece, open tube

### Differential

Hypoid, semi-floating  
Standard ratio: 3.25:1

### Suspension

Front: Independent, with coil springs, upper A-arm and single lower control arm with strut, direct-acting tubular shocks, and anti-roll bar  
Rear: Rigid axle, with semi-elliptic 5-leaf springs, direct-acting shocks

### Steering

Recirculating ball and nut, with power assist  
Turning diameter: 40.2 ft.  
Turns lock to lock: 4.3

### Wheels and Tires

5-lug, steel disc wheels  
7.00 x 14 2-ply tubeless tires

### Brakes

Hydraulic, duo-servo; self-adjusting; cast-iron drums  
Front and rear: 10-in. dia x 2.5 ins. wide  
Effective lining area: 155.2 sq. in.

### Body and Frame

Unitized  
Wheelbase: 115.5 ins.  
Track: front, 57.0 ins.; rear, 56.0 ins.  
Overall length: 197.6 ins.  
Curb weight: 3155 lbs.