



by Jim Wright, *Technical Editor*

PLYMOUTH WAS ALARMED last year at the way people were snapping up the big Super/Stock "426-R" option to run on the street. This engine, in either its 11-to-1 or 13.5-to-1 compression form, is anything *but* a street engine, and Plymouth knew they'd have a few unhappy customers on their hands by the end of the year. They did — in more than a few cases. We personally know two who ordered the "426-R" for go-to-work cars — and are they sorry!

This year, Plymouth's answer for those who like to go — but not necessarily on a strip — is a detuned version of the big mill, designed primarily for street use. It's called the

"426-S" and it's a bear. Like the two big "426-Rs," the "426-S" is a further development of that old standby, the "413." Actually, the "426-S" is closer to a "413" than it is to a "426." It shares bore and stroke with the "426-R," but heads, intake manifold, exhaust manifolds, crank, rods, and carburetion are strictly "413." The compression ratio is limited at 10.3 to 1, but this still demands nothing but the best at any gas station. A single, four-barrel Carter AFB-3611S or AFB-3704S carburetor is used. The large, 1.44-inch primary and 1.56-inch secondary barrels insure good breathing in the upper-rpm range. The cam is a rather mild 268-degree-duration grind and uses hydraulic lifters to keep everything fairly quiet.

Still, the mill puts out plenty of power, even if it does this in a deceptively quiet manner. The factory rates this one at 365 hp at 4800 rpm and 475 pounds-feet of torque at 3200 rpm. Interesting enough, the torque rating falls right in be-

tween the 470 and 480 pounds-foot ratings of the 11-to-1 and 12.5-to-1 engines.

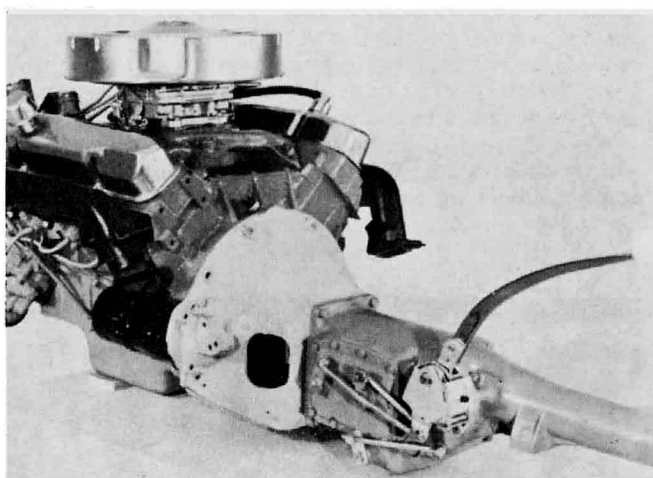
We specified this "426-S" engine for our test Sport Fury, along with Chrysler's brand-new, built-by-them, four-speed, all-synchro transmission. Normally, we'd want a rear axle installed that would be more suitable for acceleration than for cruising, but this one showed up with the 2.93 economy gearset. After putting over 1500 miles on the car, we weren't sorry that it was in there. Some of the other extras included power steering and brakes and 7.50 x 14 four-ply tires.

The "426-S" high-performance package carries a price tag of \$482.95, but this includes the four-speed transmission (with Hurst linkage), big brakes, and heavy-duty suspension. The bucket seats, console, padded dash, and plush carpets, plus a host of minor interior appointments (such as front and rear arm rests) are all standard equipment on the Sport Fury.

For a change, we didn't do our off-the-road testing at Riverside. They were in the process of getting the raceway ready for the big Golden State 400, the last big NASCAR race of the year (we'll give a report on it next month). Instead, we headed up north into the desert to a place called Rosamond (California), where the Willow Springs road-race course is located. This track has been around for a number of years, but in the past, no one has done much with it. Recently, a fellow named Bill Huth has taken over its operation and it shows a lot of improvement and promise. Huth has completely repaved the tight, nine-turn, 2.4-mile track, and it's a real challenging place to run a car. Part of the main stretch is devoted to a quarter-mile drag strip, and this is where we made our acceleration runs with the Sport Fury.

Since this is in the high desert, and the altitude is much greater than at Riverside, we had to bring out a piece of test equipment we don't get much of a chance to use. This

PLYMOUTH SPORT FURY ROAD TEST



is the K&D air density meter, a very useful instrument that does what its name implies — tells you how dense the air is. At Riverside, the reading is always right at 95 per cent, while at Willow Springs, mainly because of the altitude difference, the reading was 89 per cent. Since a drop in air density produces a proportionate drop in engine horsepower, the air density meter comes in handy for figuring a correction factor in our acceleration results from one strip to another. This helps keep *all* our road tests equalized, so our readers can get a more honest appraisal of one car against another, even though the acceleration runs were made at different locations under dissimilar atmospheric conditions.

Somewhere in the past year, the Plymouths have put on a little weight. This year, our test car weighed in at 3720 pounds, over 300 pounds heavier than our '63 Sport Fury weighed on the same scales. A lot of this added poundage would be in the engine, transmission, 2.1-inch-wider rear axle assembly, big brakes, and heavy-duty suspension.

We'd heard this package wouldn't have any trouble turning in 100-mph quarter-mile times — and we believe that if even the standard 3.23 rear axle had been installed, the test car would have done at least that. But, as mentioned earlier, our Fury had the economy 2.93 axle. Even so, it turned a consistent 95 to 96 mph in 15.2 seconds over the standing quarter, and 6.8-second zero to 60s were made without too much strain.

Traction wasn't too much of a problem, and rear-spring wind-up was non-existent. If we really tried, the rear wheels (the right one, anyway, since there wasn't a Sure-Grip differential installed) could be made to burn all the way to second gear. But by not using too much rpm and by easing the clutch in, those sub-seven-second 0-60-mph times were easily made with just a touch of initial wheelspin. Clutch action was light but positive and the new gearbox, with its standard Hurst linkage, allowed quick, smooth shifts.

Top-speed runs were made on a fairly straight, deserted desert road because at the end of the rather short Willow Springs main straight, the Sport Fury was turning only 115 mph and not even straining. Actual top speed was an honest 130 mph at 5200 rpm. Which, in a way, brings up the subject of tires. Our car had the optional 7.50 x 14, four-ply rayons on it, and you can bet we were sweating those top-speed runs. A car with this kind of top-speed potential definitely needs the best possible tires you can buy — even if those happen to be foreign tires like the Dunlop, Michelin, or Pirelli.

When we made our first stop for gas on the first long-distance haul with the Sport Fury, we really appreciated the 2.93 rear axle. The car had been pushed along at 75 to 80 mph, and when we ran the figures through the slide rule, they came out 16.2 mpg. When the road got hilly, this average dropped off to 15.6. Around town, the car delivered a consistent 11-to-30-mpg average. During the hard running at Willow, it fell off to 10.8. Overall average for over 1500 miles of all kinds of driving was 13.1 mpg. This is much better than you could expect out of 426 cubic inches — but those are the figures.

- 1) All off-road testing on Sport Fury was handled at recently re-finished Willow Springs road course at Rosamond, California.
- 2) Test car could have used a locking differential to cut down initial wheelspin on acceleration runs; times were still good.
- 3) Dash layout is simple and functional. Optional tachometer (not on test car) is installed on console way up under the dash.
- 4) Potent "426-S" package includes Chrysler-built, all-synchro four-speed transmission. The reliable Hurst linkage is standard.

The heavy-duty brakes included in this package turned out to be quite an improvement over the standard offerings. While we were getting a feel of how the car handled under extreme conditions (about 30 high-speed laps over the road course), we also got a good chance to really use those brakes. About three of the corners demand hard, fast braking. The 11-inch units delivered every time, and at the end of the 30 laps hadn't even begun to fade.

We made our regular braking tests directly after the hot laps without letting the brakes cool down. The stopping distances from 60 mph were the shortest we've ever recorded with drum brakes. We made several runs because we didn't believe the tape the first time. The 134-foot figure in the specifications chart is the average of all of them. Due to the power assist, it was hard to keep from locking the brakes, but even under these conditions, we didn't have to work too hard to keep the Sport Fury in a straight line. This was, no doubt, mainly due to the heavy-duty suspension, which gives the car very good balance.

The heavy-duty suspension package includes a hefty anti-roll bar at the front end. While a stock Plymouth has fairly good roll stiffness, we'd like to see the roll bar used on all of them. The car is very flat in corners with the roll bar, and this more than equalizes the added understeer it also causes. We'd say our test car could take a corner 10 to 15 mph faster than a Plymouth with stock suspension. On the highway, the car was completely stable at all speeds and little affected by crosswinds. Part of this stability is due to the wider rear track.

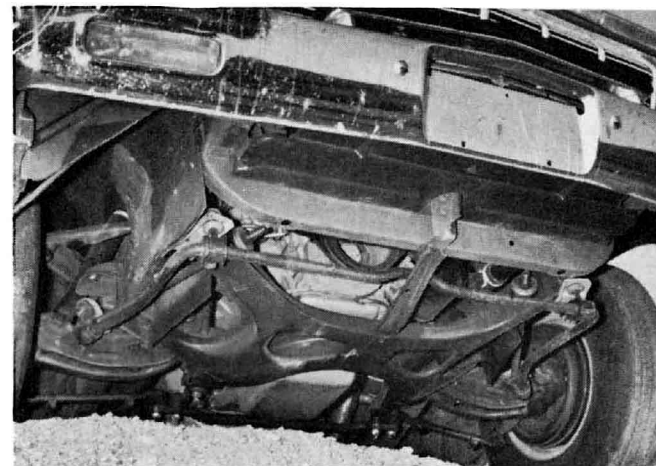
We also drove the car at high speed over rough, loose-surfaced roads to check handling under these conditions. No complaints. One thing did bother us about the suspension — we've noticed this and complained about it on the '62 and '63 models, too. The design of the rear spring is such that the axle is carried way forward on it. This makes for a short, stiff front half that effectively eliminates spring wrap-up on hard acceleration. But at the same time the rear half, which has to carry braking forces, just won't stand the pressure of hard stops, and when the wheels lock up, they tramp quite badly. If the driver doesn't back off on the brakes to unlock the wheels, this could easily cause a complete loss of control and maybe even cause the car to change lanes. Imagine that on a crowded freeway.

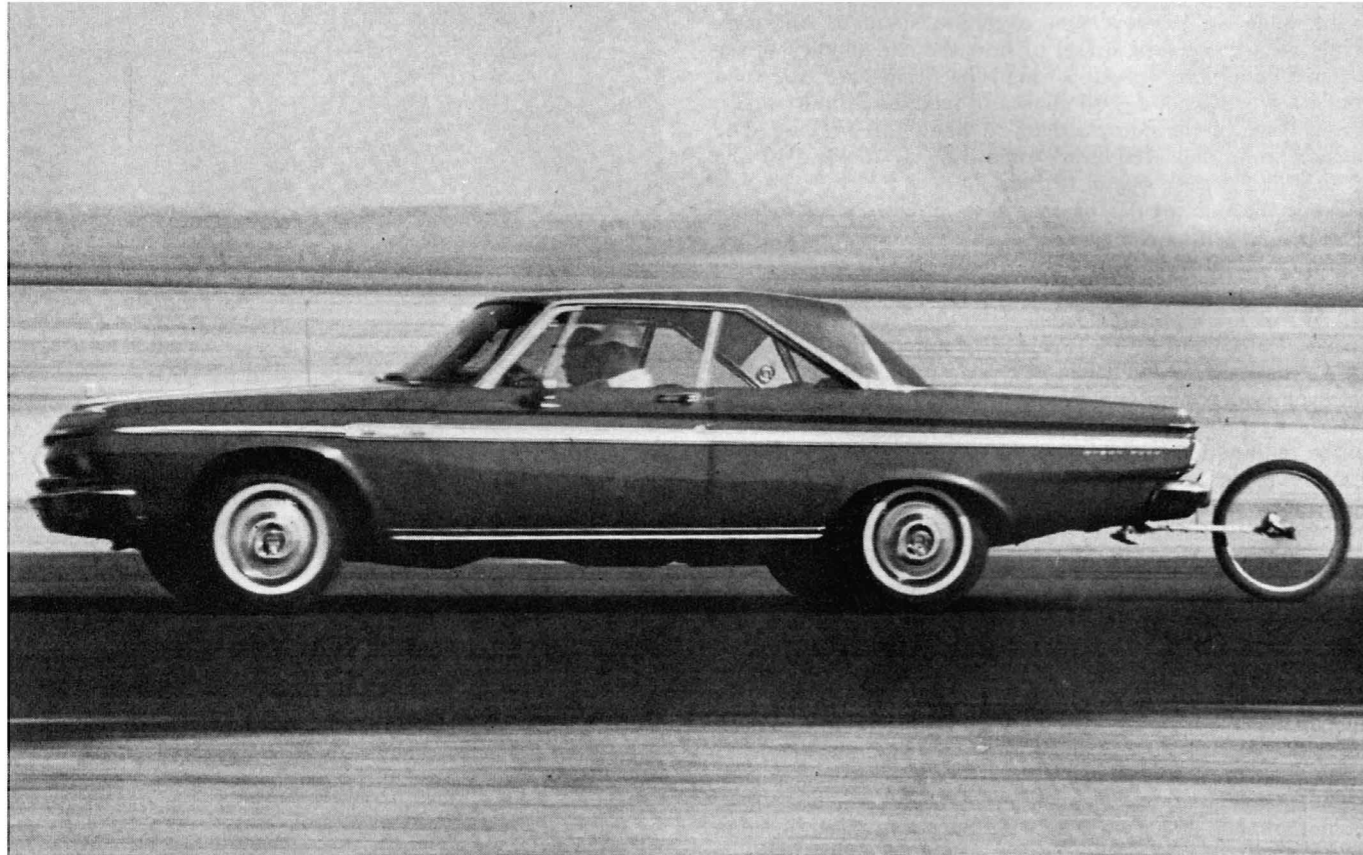
We couldn't find any fault with the way our test car was put together. All the panels and doors fit well, and the chrome trim and strips were as straight as could be expected. The seats were comfortable and offered good all-around support. Steering-wheel location was satisfactory, and visibility was good in all directions. Instruments (everything but oil pressure) are grouped in four large, round dials and are all easy to see without shifting the eyes too much. We felt the seat upholstery could show a little more quality, and while we didn't have a '63 to compare it with, we'd say it's not the same material used last year.

All in all, the Plymouth Sport Fury is a very satisfying car to drive — and the same could be said about owning one. It's as good as they come in overall performance and offers surprising economy to boot. And it's covered by the 5-50 warranty, too.

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- 5) Heavy-duty brakes, included in the high-performance option, survived braking tests in good shape, gave quick, easy stops.
- 6) Increased roll stiffness keeps body lean to minimum, thanks to addition of large-diameter anti-roll bar in front suspension.
- 7) Willow Springs course features long, sweeping turns as well as assorted short ones, affords real test of car's handling.
- 8) Interior room is more than adequate on all counts. Rear seat configuration (like two buckets) will hold two or three adults.





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PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVIO



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- 1) Sport Fury had a top speed of 130 mph, could turn consistent 95-mph quarter-mile.
- 2) Heavy-duty suspension improves handling on all surfaces, means a safer auto.
- 3) Loading lip is a little high, but usable trunk area is plentiful for needs of most.
- 4) Hood ornament is a tip-off to the performance package lurking under the hood.

PLYMOUTH SPORT FURY

2-door, 5-passenger hardtop

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: "426-S" high-performance package (includes 4-speed transmission, heavy-duty suspension and brakes), power steering-brakes-windows, radio, heater, tinted glass, 7.50 x 14 white-walls, seat belts

BASIC PRICE: \$2851

PRICE AS TESTED: \$3882.75 (plus tax and license)

ODMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 1200 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5500 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph	2.7 secs.
0-45 mph	4.5
0-60 mph	6.8

Standing start 1/4-mile 15.2 secs. and 95.5 mph

Speeds in gears @ 5500 rpm

1st	55 mph	3rd	105 mph
2nd	77 mph	4th	130 mph (actual top speed @ 5200 rpm)

Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading.....	27	42	46	56	66	76
Weston electric speedometer.....	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 26 ft.; from 60 mph, 134 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

Ohv V-8
Bore: 4.25 ins.
Stroke: 3.75 ins.
Displacement: 426 cu. ins.
Compression ratio: 10.3:1
Horsepower: 365 @ 4800 rpm
Torque: 475 lbs.-ft. @ 3200 rpm
Horsepower per cubic inch: 0.86
Carburetion: 1 4-bbl.
Ignition: 12-volt coil

Steering

Rack and sector, with integral power
Turning diameter: 40.8 ft.
Turns lock to lock: 3.5

Wheels and Tires

5-lug, steel disc wheels
7.50 x 14 4-ply rayon tires

Gearbox

4-speed manual with Hurst linkage, all-synchro; floorshift

Driveshaft

1-piece, open tube

Differential

Hypoid, semi-floating
Standard ratio: 3.23:1 (2.93:1 on test car)

Brakes

Hydraulic, duo-servo; self-adjusting; cast-iron drums
Front: 11-in. dia. x 3 ins. wide
Rear: 11-in. dia. x 2.5 ins. wide

Suspension

Front: Independent, non-parallel control arms with lateral torsion bars, direct-acting tubular shocks, and anti-roll bar
Rear: Rigid axle, with semi-elliptic 6.5-leaf springs and direct-acting tubular shocks

Body and Frame

Unitized
Wheelbase: 116.0 ins.
Track: front, 59.5 ins.; rear, 59.6 ins.
Overall length: 211.5 ins.
Overall width: 75.1 ins.
Curb weight: 3720 lbs.