



COMET CYCLONE

*Low-Pressure Styling
For A High-Pressure Performer*

METEOROLOGISTS DEFINE a cyclone as a low-pressure area marked by winds of counter-clockwise movement. There are times, however, when weather phenomena are such that the cyclone develops into a tornado, a highly destructive movement of extremely powerful winds.

If Lincoln-Mercury name-pickers were trying low-pressure tactics in

choosing Cyclone as the name for their 1964½ Comet hardtop, the choice was perhaps appropriate. After driving one for several days, however, *Car Life* testers felt that the stronger weather condition would be more descriptive of such a potent machine.

The Cyclone, described briefly in last month's *Car Life*, is primarily a stylist's alteration to the Caliente al-

though it does become the 11th model in the Comet line. When the opportunity arose to test one equipped with 4-speed manual transmission and without air conditioning, we felt the car deserved a supplemental report to expand upon our Caliente test, where performance suffered with the cooler installation.

Powering the Cyclone was FoMoCo's durable and lightweight 289 cu. in. V-8, which, with hydraulic lifters, 4-barrel carburetor and 9.0:1 compression, develops 210 bhp at 4400 rpm. The transmission is the Warner Gear-supplied unit with ratios of 2.73 first, 2.07 second, 1.51 third and 1.00:1 high. It is controlled via a tubular shaft sprouting from the transmission tunnel. This shaft bends backward toward (but not quite reaching when in third) the driver's hand and incorporates a sliding collar under the knob to release

the reverse lockout. Final drive on the test car was the optional 3.50:1, rather than the standard (with manual) 3.25:1.

Such an arrangement, it turned out, was better suited to the drag strip than the highway. The gap between third and high was too great to make third very valuable as a passing gear. Conversely, the low gear ratio was almost too high (numerically) and second gear starts proved to be the most comfortable procedure during general-purpose driving.

Actually, it would seem that Ford's all-synchromesh 3-speed manual transmission (also an option) might make more people happier with this particular axle ratio. Or, when it becomes available, the newly-designed Ford 4-speed would eliminate most of this unhappy gear spacing. The latter would give overall ratios of 8.12, 6.86 and 4.52:1, which would provide an optimum first and a fine third for passing performance.

On the other hand, use of another axle ratio would make the present 2.73:1 gearset of better use off the strip. The Comet has an axle ratio of 3.00:1 available for the automatic transmissions, and this gearing would give overall ratios of 8.20, 6.20, and 4.53:1. Set up as it was, the test car traced a disappointing curve on the acceleration graph.

Without the drag of the automatic or the air conditioner pump, it was obvious that the engine had a usable limit of about 5000 rpm, imposed by cam timing and carburetion. The test car's engine, however, suffered from a sticky throttle which invariably had it screaming on up toward 6000 rpm when the clutch was disengaged during fast shifting. The engine is not particularly "hot" in this 0.76 bhp/cu. in. form, limited, among other things, by the standard single exhaust, but it is possible to specify (and pay for) a 271-bhp version if one desires some really magnificent motive force.

There have been no changes in the chassis or body structure from the Caliente, which means that it acquits itself quite well in handling and roadability. There is a greater-than-average firmness to the suspension which helps assure better stability than might be expected from looking at the distribution figures. The workings of the suspension components are not entirely unobtrusive but the shock damping takes care of all but the raggedest of road surfaces at any reasonable speed. The tail lightness did make its presence known in the wet, however, the more so in the Cyclone than the Caliente because of the former's more positive power application.

It should be noted that the brakes on the Cyclone performed somewhat better, indicating (as we suspected)



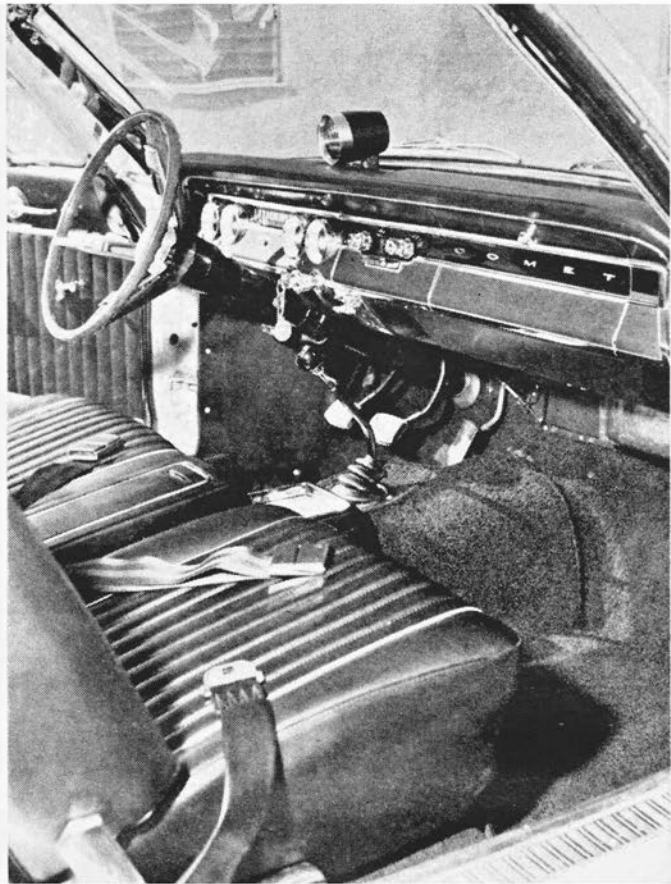
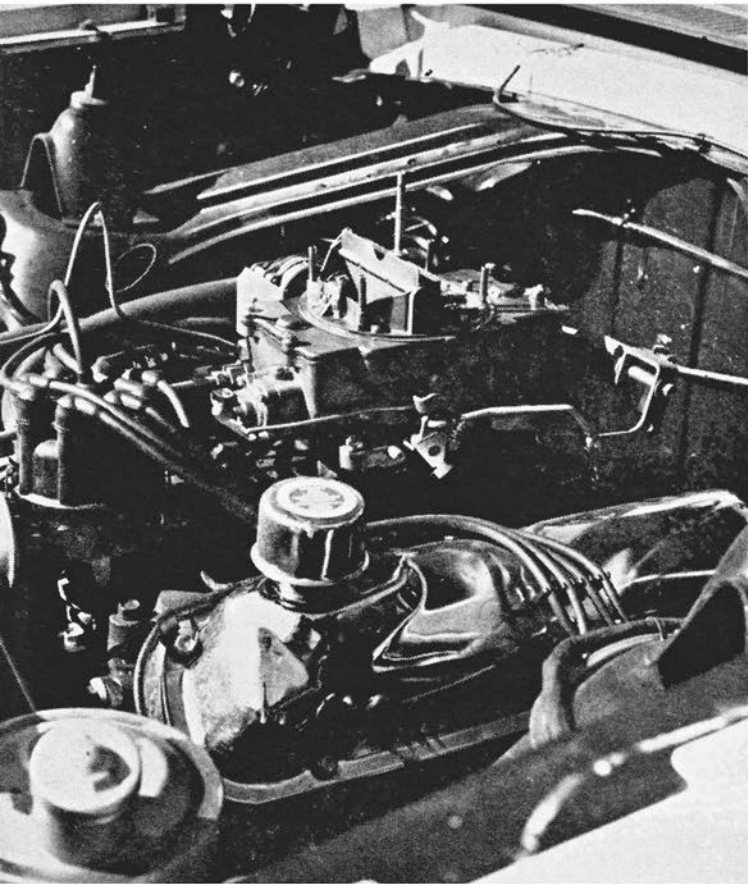
that those on the Caliente were seriously in need of adjustment. The Cyclone's were still susceptible to fade and registered only average readings on the CL decelerometer.

As a styling exercise, the Cyclone left us with mixed feelings. The removal of the spears, flashes and flamboyance from the flanks is certainly an improvement—so much so that the fender cutout moldings are almost welcome. But we erred last month in describing the Cyclone's wheels as chromed and coverless. As impossible as it is to believe, L-M stylists actually designed wheel covers which look just like bare wheels, with five holes for chromed lug nuts to project through! That either says something about the cost of dipping a batch of wheels in the chrome vat—or about stylists.

The interior of the test car was all-black all-vinyl, which presented a rich

and businesslike appearance. And as such, the distinctive "camera case" black instrument panel trim which replaces the phony wood veneer was a welcome touch. It would be possible, however, for this to present a more jarring note in some other color-keyed context. Instrumentation was *a la* Caliente, with the exception of a dash-top tachometer housing; the color-keying of this instrument, fastened to the radio speaker grille, kept it as unobtrusive as possible although it still looks like an after-thought in such a spot. Still praiseworthy, however, is the between-buckets console with a cover of non-injurious pliable plastic. Unchanged dimensions still limit the rear seat's usefulness for any family of more than two full-grown members.

All told, the Cyclone represents a pinnacle of restraint for L-M stylists, a group oft noted for its superfluous



STANDARD ENGINE for the Comet Cyclone is the 289-cu. in., 210-bhp version of Fairlane V-8. Four-barrel carburetor helps performance.

ALL-BLACK interior is rich-looking complement to clean exterior. Tachometer mounts onto radio speaker grille, was loose on test car.

COMET CYCLONE

and flamboyant chromery. As tested, the Cyclone also was a spirited sprinting machine which should certainly

appeal to that "youth market" so avidly sought after by all the manufacturers. It is distinctive, even amidst a group

of Calientes (and there are an increasing number of them on the roads), while retaining the compactness that has been its greatest virtue. Given the proper transmission and rear axle selection, there would seem to be quite a few buyers who could ask no more than the Cyclone. ■

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST 1964 COMET CYCLONE 2-door Hardtop

SPECIFICATIONS & DATA

Price, as tested.....	\$3027
Test weight, lb.....	3340
distribution, % f/r.....	56/44
lb./bhp.....	15.5
Tire size.....	7.00-14
Brake swept area, sq. in.....	251.3
Wheelbase, in.....	114.0
Tread, f/r in.....	55.6/56.0
Overall length, in.....	195.1
width.....	71.4
height.....	53.6
Fuel tank capacity, gal.....	20.0
Engine type.....	V-8, ohv
Displacement, cu. in.....	289
Bhp @ rpm.....	210 @ 4400
Torque, lb.-ft. @ rpm.....	300 @ 2800
Mph/1000 rpm.....	21.7
Car Life Wear Index.....	36.7

GEAR RATIOS

4th (1.00).....	3.50
3rd (1.51).....	5.29
2nd (2.07).....	7.25
1st (2.73).....	9.56

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (5000).....	109
Shifts, rpm @ mph (manual)	
3rd (5000).....	72
2nd (5000).....	52
1st (5000).....	40

ACCELERATION

	autom.	4-spd.
0-30 mph, sec.....	3.8	3.9
0-40.....	6.5	5.5
0-50.....	9.1	7.7
0-60.....	11.8	10.2
0-70.....	15.0	13.2
0-80.....	19.7	17.1
0-100.....	41.6	27.8
Standing 1/4-mile, sec.....	16.5	16.4
speed at end.....	73.8	77.0

PULLING POWER

70 mph (4th), max. gradient %.....	10.8	14.2
50 mph (3rd).....	18.4	23.8
30 mph (1st).....	31.2	34.0
Total drag @ 60 mph, lb.....	155	133

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range, mpg.....	12-15	13-16
------------------------	-------	-------