

## *road testing the oldsmobile* **jetstar 88**

by Bob McVay, *Assistant Technical Editor*

OLDSMOBILE widened their sales horizons this year with a new Jetstar 88 series. Offering four models (a four-door sedan, Holiday four-door hardtop, a two-door hardtop, and a convertible), the Jetstar 88 stands in price between the F-85 and the Dynamic 88 series. Yet this is a full-sized Oldsmobile, sharing the 123-inch wheelbase of the Dynamic 88. Model for model, its price is \$75 to \$100 less than the Dynamic 88's and from \$350 to \$400 below the Super 88's.

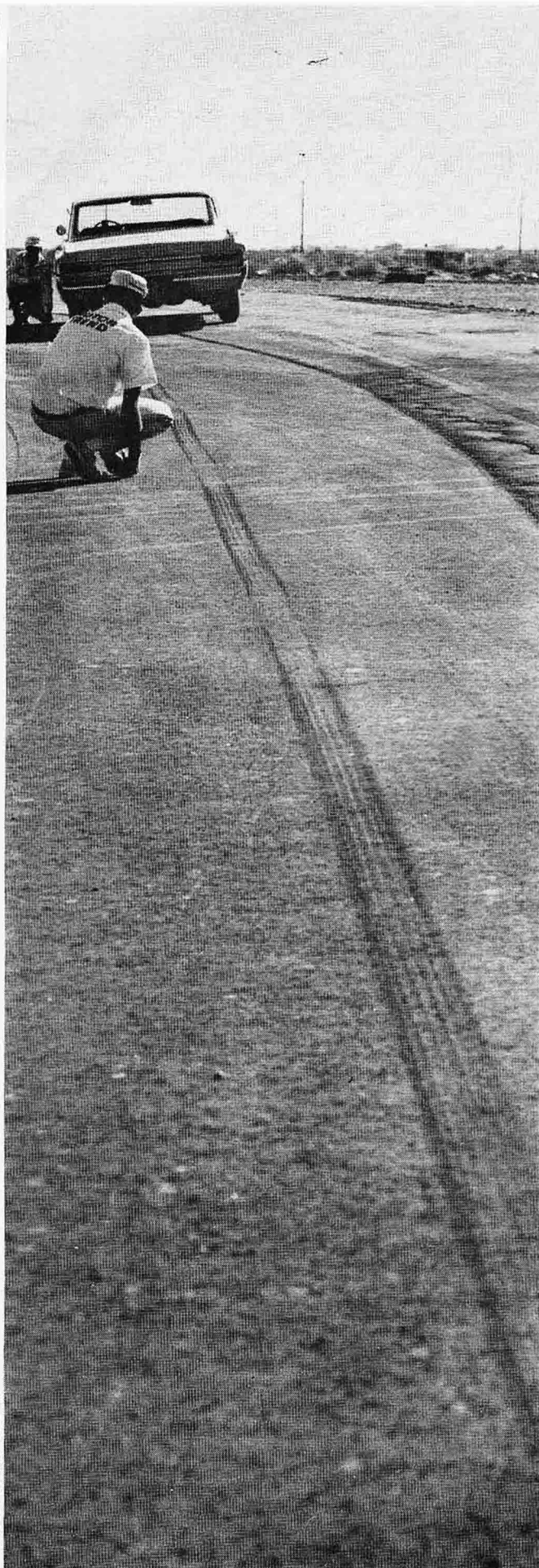
Although the new series uses the full-sized body and wheelbase, its basic components—engine, brakes, and running gear—are shared with the smaller F-85. A brand-new, lightweight, cast-iron engine (called the Jetfire Rocket) and a new two-speed torque converter automatic transmission (Jetaway) are Jetstar 88 items.

Our test car was a bright yellow four-door hardtop, with a base price of \$3058. Adding air conditioning (\$430.40), automatic transmission, power brakes and steering, radio, deluxe trim, and white sidewall tires brought the

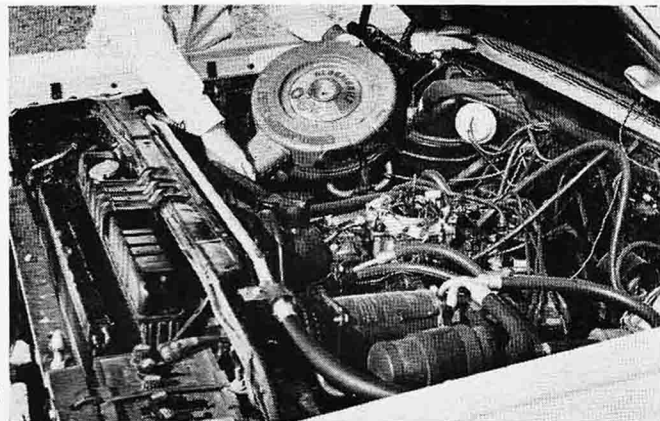
final price to \$4498, plus tax and license. The car was equipped with standard bench seats, trimmed in cloth and vinyl, making our Jetstar 88 a full six-seater. The seats are comfortable enough but lack the back and lateral support of buckets. Standard positioning of the steering wheel proved comfortable during our 800+ test miles. An optional seven-position adjustable steering wheel is also available.

Out on the road, the Olds Jetstar 88 gives a nice, soft, boulevard ride. It felt softer than the Dynamic 88 we tested last year, and it was. Springs are stiffer and the anti-roll bar is thicker on the Dynamic and Super 88 series. Filled with gas, our Jetstar weighed 4210 pounds and gave us much the same sure-footed handling ease of its stablemates, yet it seemed just a bit softer. Body roll on fast turns wasn't extreme; neither was nose dive or rear-end squat during hard braking or fast acceleration. The car's power steering, with 3.8 turns between locks, gave a light, positive road feel at all times and let us negotiate fast, winding roads without undue wheel winding. Hard dips taken more

1



PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO



2



3



4

1) Although the brakes on our particular test car were defective, Jetstar 88 with good brakes took 187 feet for 60-mph stop. With smaller drums than any full-sized GM model, Jetstar 88's 9½-inch units took longer to cool and heated up more quickly than Dynamic or Super 88's 11-inchers would've.

2) Lightweight Jetfire Rocket V-8, with thin-wall cylinders, puts out 245 hp in standard form, has two-barrel carb. Four-barrel costs \$34 more, adds 45 hp. Either way, new engine is very smooth, quiet, and flexible throughout its rpm range.

3) All four fenders can be seen from driver's seat, with fine 360-degree view. Four-door hardtop makes getting in and out easy. Car holds six adults, has ample trunk room for luggage.

4) Out-of-the-way spare leaves trunk uncluttered, but it's hard to get at when there's a full load of suitcases aboard.



JETSTAR 88 PROVED QUIET AND COMFORTABLE ON HIGHWAY OR AROUND TOWN. DESPITE F-85 RUNNING GEAR, PERFORMANCE IS ADEQUATE.

#### OLDSMOBILE JETSTAR 88 *continued*

quickly than normal found the front suspension bobbing up and down two or three times before settling down again. Tight turns, taken fast, caused the carburetor to flood slightly and made the engine miss a beat or two.

At all highway speeds, from a crawl in traffic to over-80-mph cruising, the car was whisper-quiet. Our overall impression was the same as Olds gave us last year — a quiet, relaxing, comfortable car to drive and ride in. Oldsmobile's integrated air conditioner and heating system worked perfectly, letting us set and keep any desired temperature. Controls are few and simple. The heater filled the car with warm air in minutes after starting on a cold morning.

The only gauge on the Olds' dashboard is for fuel. An easily read speedometer is the center of attraction, while warning lights tell of oil pressure, heating, and battery troubles. The step-on parking brake proved quick and easy to set or release.

Our test car had the optional 290-hp engine with four-barrel carb and used premium fuel. Our best mileage was 13.7 mpg during highway driving of between 65 and 70 mph. This was with the air-conditioning unit in use. Normal to-and-from-work traffic mixed with fast mountain driving gave us a low of 10.2 mpg, while our overall average for 800 miles was 11.4. The Jetstar's 21-gallon tank gives a 200-mile range between refills.

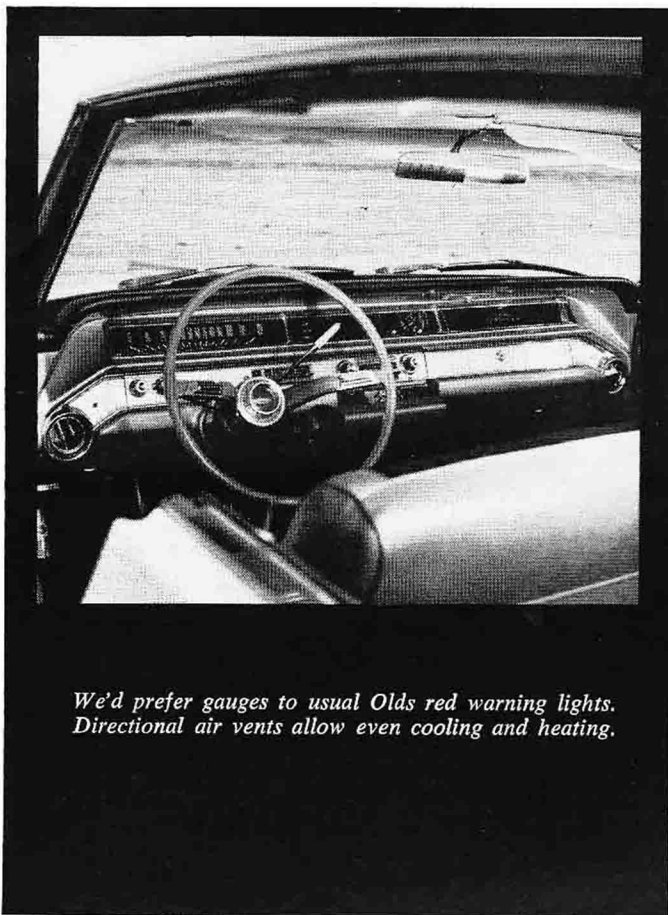
Oldsmobile's new Jetfire Rocket is a 330-cubic-inch, 90-degree, ohv V-8 that puts out 290 hp at 4800 rpm when fitted with the optional Rochester four-barrel carb (245 hp at 4600 rpm with the two-barrel carb), and gives 355 pounds-feet of torque at 2800 rpm. It uses a five-main-

bearing, forged-steel crankshaft, with main and rod bearings of nickel-steel matrix, babbitt coated for durability.

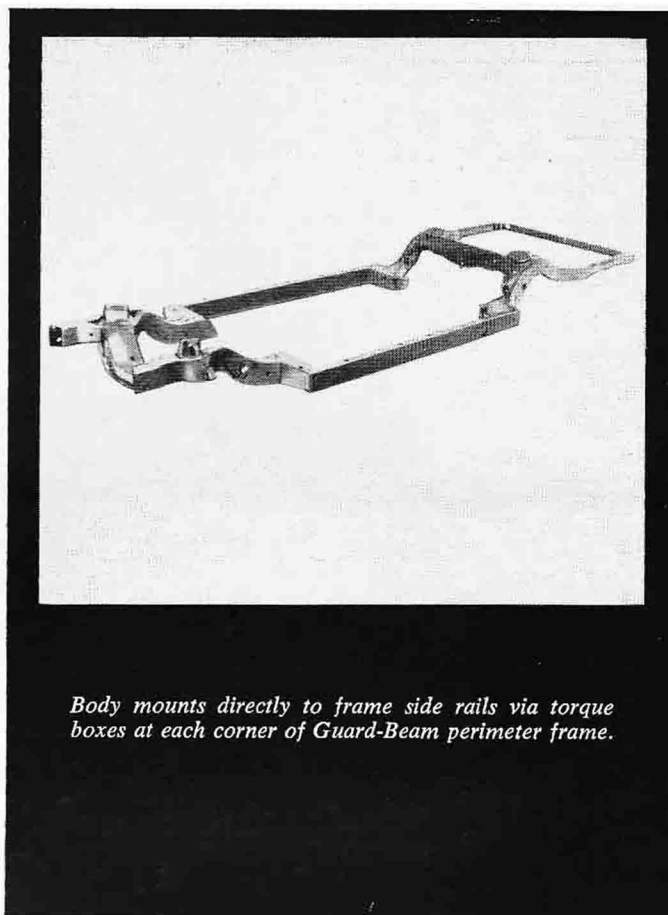
Joining Oldsmobile's power team for 1964 is the new Jetaway automatic transmission. It's a variable-vane, two-speed torque converter that uses a die-cast aluminum case and weighs a light 152 pounds. Low and REVERSE gears have five plates each in their drive clutches, and both use a 1.76-to-1 ratio. SECOND (or DRIVE) is a direct hook-up. The variable-vane control gives increased converter torque between 10 and 60 mph. A heavy-duty version of the Jetaway automatic is also available. The Jetaway costs about \$20 less than the Hydra-Matic unit.

Driving this new engine/transmission combination felt a bit different from former Oldsmobiles with Hydra-Matic units. The Jetaway felt a lot smoother and didn't seem to lose so many rpm between shifts as the three-speed Hydra-Matic in last year's F-85. Under full throttle, it'd upshift at 65 mph, but it had lots of pulling power above 70 mph. Descending steep grades, the Jetaway's LOW range would hold the car between 35 and 40 mph. If we wanted to go faster, DRIVE was necessary. (Here's where we liked the Hydra-Matic's intermediate range. It gave more control for climbing as well as coming down steep grades.) The two-speed torque converter is shared with GM intermediates, and the bigger three-speed torque converters (used on full-sized Buicks and some Cadillac models) are expected to completely replace the Hydra-Matic in the near future.

Driving through a 3.08 rear axle, the new engine/transmission combination gave us 0-30, -45, and -60-mph times of 3.8, 6.0, and 9.2 seconds respectively; this without much wheelspin. The Jetstar 88 zipped through our measured quarter-mile test strip on Willow Springs Raceway's front



*We'd prefer gauges to usual Olds red warning lights. Directional air vents allow even cooling and heating.*



*Body mounts directly to frame side rails via torque boxes at each corner of Guard-Beam perimeter frame.*

#### OLDSMOBILE JETSTAR 88 *continued*

straight in 17.6 seconds and recorded 83 mph with two staff members and our equipment on board. The transmission upshifted smoothly and solidly, and the engine felt strong right up to its 105-mph top speed.

Since we do lots of driving in many different cars each year, we've become very brake conscious. The brakes on our test car just didn't feel so effective as they should have. Even though the Jetstar is a bigger, heavier car, it shares 9½-inch, cast-iron drums with the F-85. Effective area is up this year to 155.6 square inches (over 127 square inches for the F-85 last year). The Dynamic 88 uses 11-inch drums and has 163.5 square inches of effective lining.

Our test car's brakes heated up quickly under hard use and took a long time to cool down. Braking distances were 35 feet from 30 mph and a long 210 feet from 60 mph. The car pulled to the left and swerved left on hard application, so we took off the drums and found that the secondary lining on the left front shoe had disintegrated and that all linings were badly glazed from someone's abuse before we got the car.

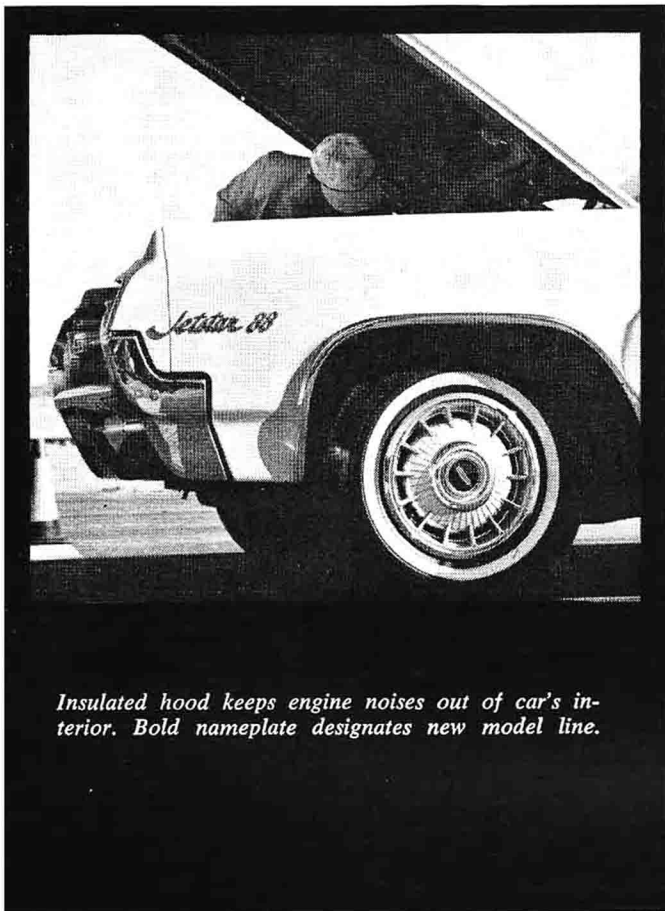
Oldsmobile immediately furnished us with another Jetstar 88. We'll have to admit its braking was smoother and more effective than our initial test car's, but even at that, it was only a little better than adequate. After less than 10 miles of hard mountain driving, we managed to stop from 60 mph in 187 feet. We came to a halt with the pedal against the steering column and the brakes almost completely faded away. All other full-sized GM cars use 11-inch or larger brake drums and have greater effective lining area than the Jetstar 88. For those who want more than marginal braking, we recommend the optional metallic linings.

Sharing many interesting options with its sister Oldsmobiles, the Jetstar 88 can be well tailored to the needs of any particular driver. It can be ordered with any of the well

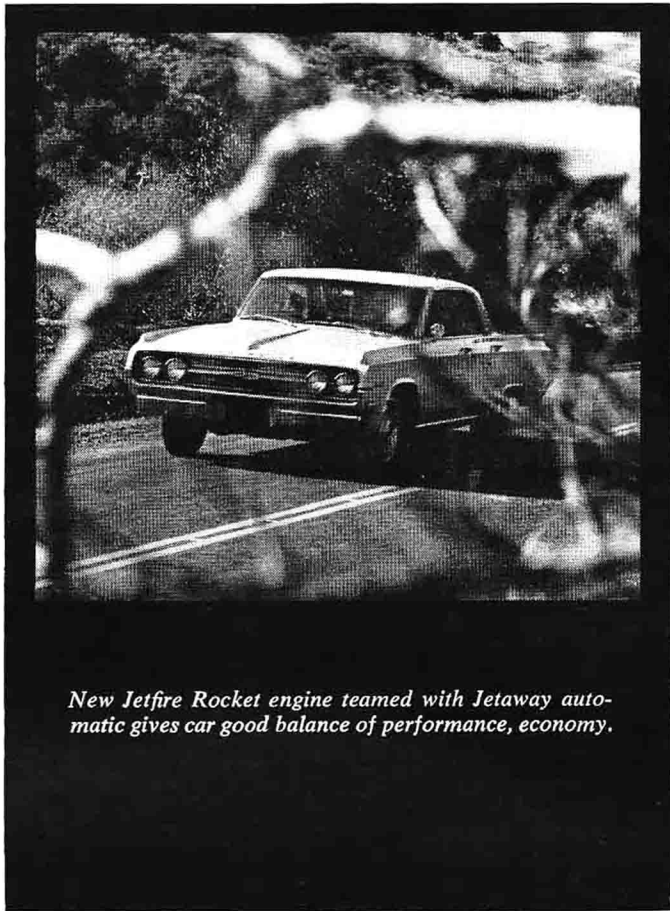
known Olds power accessories and some interesting performance options as well. These include the four-barrel carb (installed in our test car) and an all-synchromesh, four-speed gearbox with a floor-mounted shift lever. A three-speed manual transmission, synchronized on second and third only, is standard. On this one, the buyer decides where the shift lever should be: on the column or on the floor. Manual transmissions use a 3.23 rear axle. In addition, many towing options are available. These include Superlift rear shock absorbers, heavy-duty frame, larger-capacity radiator, and a wiring harness for trailer lights.

Although the 1964 Jetstar 88 is the new Rocket on the Olds horizon, a wide range of full-sized Oldsmobiles is available in the Dynamic and Super 88 series, and in the larger 98 series on a 126-inch wheelbase. These cars share the well proven 394-cubic-inch, ohv V-8 that ranges from a low-compression, regular-fuel 260 hp to a fire-breathing, 345-hp option. Three sports models are offered with special trim, bucket seats, and power options for those who want more fire. These special sporty jobs are the Starfire, Jetstar I, and F-85 Cutlass. The Starfire and Jetstar I use the 10.5-to-1 compression, 345-hp, 394-inch V8, and the Cutlass uses the top-horsepower Jetfire Rocket engine as installed in our test car. The Jetstar I has a dual, chambered exhaust system that's an industry exclusive. We drove one, and it gave off a very sporting, throaty rumble.

Getting back to the Jetstar 88, our test car reflected good fit and finish, as we've come to expect from the Oldsmobile division of General Motors. We found the new torque converter quite a bit smoother than the Hydra-Matic. Teamed with the new Jetfire Rocket V-8, it should please the family looking for Oldsmobile room, comfort, and quality in a full-sized package for less than a full-sized price tag. Oldsmobile's making an honest effort to please most of the people most of the time. Their fourth-place national sales standing proves they're doing a good job. /MT



Insulated hood keeps engine noises out of car's interior. Bold nameplate designates new model line.



New Jetfire Rocket engine teamed with Jetaway automatic gives car good balance of performance, economy.

## OLDSMOBILE JETSTAR 88

4-door, 6-passenger hardtop

**OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED:** Jetaway automatic transmission, air conditioning, power brakes and steering, radio with rear speaker, heavy-duty radiator, whitewalls, seat belts, misc. access.

**BASIC PRICE:** \$3058

**PRICE AS TESTED:** \$4498.93 (plus tax and license)

**ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST:** 4150 miles

**RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE:** 5200 rpm

### PERFORMANCE

#### ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph	3.8 secs.
0-45 mph	6.0
0-60 mph	9.2

Standing start 1/4-mile 17.6 secs. and 83 mph

Speeds in gears @ 4800 rpm	
1st	65 mph
2nd	105 mph
(actual top speed)	

#### Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	32	47	53	64	74	85
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, 35 ft.; from 60 mph, 210 ft.						

### SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

#### Engine

Ohv V-8 (90-degree)  
Bore: 3.9375 ins.  
Stroke: 3.3850 ins.  
Displacement: 330.0 cu. ins.  
Compression ratio: 10.25:1  
Horsepower: 290 @ 4800 rpm  
Torque: 355 lbs.-ft. @ 2800 rpm  
Horsepower per cu. in.: 0.879  
Carburetion: 1 4-bbl.  
Ignition: 12-volt coil

#### Gearbox

2-speed automatic (variable-vane torque converter); column-mounted lever

#### Driveshaft

1- piece, open tube

#### Differential

Hypoid, semi-floating  
Standard ratio: 3.08:1

#### Suspension

Front: Independent coil springs, with direct-acting tubular shocks and anti-roll bar  
Rear: Coil springs and direct-acting tubular shocks; torque taken through control arms

#### Steering

Ball nut, with integral power assist  
Turning diameter: 42.8 ft.  
Turns lock to lock: 3.8

#### Wheels and Tires

5-lug, drop-center welded wheels  
8.00 x 14 4-ply whitewall tires

#### Brakes

Hydraulic, duo servo, with integral power assist; self-adjusting; cast-iron drums  
Front and rear: 9.5-in. dia. x 2.5 in. wide  
Effective lining area: 118.0 sq. ins.

#### Body and Frame

Welded steel body on box-section frame with 4 crossmembers  
Wheelbase: 123.0 ins.  
Track: front, 62.2 ins.; rear, 61.06 ins.  
Overall length: 215.3 ins.  
Overall width: 77.76 ins.  
Curb weight: 4210 lbs.