

## CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



Fury III slathered with items Detroit deems comfortable and luxurious, or safe to the eyes of the U.S. Senate. As delivered to *Car Life* for testing, this VIP carried an anti-smog Cleaner Air Package (mandatory only in California), power windows all around with the exception of side vents, electric door locks, an up-down/tilt/forward-backward front bench seat, recessed center armrests front and rear, an am/fm radio with balance controlled front and rear speakers of exceptional tone quality, a clock, rear fender skirts, a pushbutton heater/air conditioner unit, the mid-range 4-barrel (single) carbureted 383-cu. in. optional V-8 engine, variable speed windshield wipers, wheel covers, seat-belts front and rear, padded instrument paneling and a side mirror which is adjustable through a lever inside the left front door. Lights abound in the VIP. Current flows, on proper manual or automatic switch actuation, for illumination of the glove compartment, individual rear seat reading lamps, a parking brake warning flasher, yellow cat's eye front fender turn signal reminders, the luggage compartment and an emergency flasher system. These are in addition to conventional courtesy, driving, backing and instrument lights. Plymouth also offers an optional speed control for the VIP, but this car didn't have that item.

Vapid, idle pondering of the entire option scheme brings to mind one question: Why doesn't the Plymouth VIP catalog of options extend over an even wider range of add-on offerings?

Available on other manufacturers' option slates are tilt-and-telescope steering wheels, reclining front seat backs, adjustable head rests, power antennae, fm multiplex stereo and tape playback equipment, miniaturized television receivers for rear seat passengers, self-leveling shock absorber systems, ignition lock lamps, cornering lamps and shoulder harnesses in matching shades. Plymouth might also offer, for the dowager empress on a fixed middle income, electrically heated vibro-massage seats and a glass divider, complete with speaking tube, should she plan her VIP to be chauffeur-driven.

Veneer inlay panels of simulated mahogany set into the bright metal trim-work mark interior and exterior appointments of the VIP. The leather grained

black vinyl top covering, as on the CL test car, is an option. But covered or uncovered, the wide rear roof support pillars carry scrollwork encrusted emblems which proclaim that this car, indeed, is the luxurious epitome of option, the VIP. Upholstery, offered in black, red or blue, is of a glossy vinyl and cloth mixture. Lower portions of front and back seats and rear seat cushions, in addition to the floor, are carpeted in high-pile nylon.

Vast interior proportions aren't exactly the *forte* of the VIP, though a wheelbase of 119 in., an overall length of 209.8 in. and a Mercedes-like raised roofline would seem to indicate more than adequate roominess. With the front seat in its most rearward position, rear seat passengers discover an in-



# PLYMOUTH VIP

*A Sleek New Member Joins a Silver Spoon Family*

**V**ARIOUS INDICATIONS propound the current picture of American affluence—our abundant purchasing power, increasing spendable income, rising standard of living, expanding consumer demand and a vertical socio-economic transition. This booming upswing is rapidly being translated by Detroit automakers into steel, glass, vinyl, chromium plating and lustrous paint in a silver spoon family of automobiles. This urbane clan, designed expressly for people who have dollars to spend on more than bare necessities, includes Chevrolet's Caprice, the Ford LTD and, though shorter in wheelbase and overall length, the American Motors

DPL. A prominent new scion of this upper middle class society is a glittering hardtop sedan, the plushy Plymouth VIP.

Vacuous initial promotion of the VIP labeled it a "Very Impressive Plymouth." It is doubtlessly that, but individual impressions created by the VIP may vary with individual tastes in styling, engineering and demands for performance. One may be impressed that the VIP's truly handsome buffed acrylic lacquer of charcoal metalflake tone is reserved especially for this particular car among all Plymouths. Or, one's impression may stem from the fact that Chrysler Corporation's altogether satisfactory disc

brakes are offered only as an option and are not standard equipment for this top-of-the-line automobile. The VIP, a car plus accessories, with weight of nearly 4600 lb. and with very powerful engines available for very high top speeds, would seem to demand as standard the very best braking system offered by its manufacturer.

**V**ERY INTERESTING package might better describe the VIP—both from the point of view of the comfort-minded customer and the dealer who makes a satisfactory profit from the sale of optional equipment. The VIP is virtually a rolling option. Basically, it is a Plymouth







# VIP

adequacy of knee room. *Car Life's* tall man (6 ft. 3 in.) found leg room lacking in the driver's position though the seat was at its most rearward extension.

And, though tightly seat-belted in the driver's seat, on two occasions staffers received knocks on their skulls from the side curve of the roof in rebounds from traversing uneven intersections at 40 mph. Though front compartment shoulder room and hip room measure 60.0 and 63.3 in. respectively, large chrome and *ersatz* mahogany grabhandles, lo-

cated just above the door armrests and just below the window sills, definitely intrude into driver and passenger space and substantially reduce the driver's elbow room. A crack on the crazy bone while parking was ample evidence of this.

**V**ALES, INCLINES, promontories and anything more than gently curving roadways aren't the meat of the VIP. *Car Life's* impression is that the VIP is best suited to downtown and suburban traffic. On perfectly smooth, perfectly straight roads, with perfectly deliberate application of the throttle pedal, the VIP delivers a cloud soft, vanilla ice cream-smooth ride—for which a good number of people will sign that line at the bottom of a Plymouth dealer's sale contract. But softness, smoothness and reduction of driver effort have been built into the VIP at a sacrifice in ride and handling characteristics on surfaces other than midtown boulevards. At 70 mph over seamed concrete freeways, the soft, slow rebound of the VIP's front suspension permits a shuddering oscillation to establish itself. This disconcerting series of rapid, noisy thumps gradually diminishes until the automobile rolls over another rough bit of freeway and once again starts the oscillation cycle.

**V**IGOROUS INITIAL pedal pressure, when the VIP is at rest, induces a very healthy power surge—which winds up the lateral rear springs of the Plymouth's Hotchkiss drive and thereafter the location of the rear axle is subject to deviation with every small change in road surface. The VIP hops, tramps and seems to wallow away from the standing start.

**POSH AND** plushy, the VIP's luxury interior decor includes a great deal of chromium, synthetic mahogany, vinyl fabric and full nylon carpeting.



**CLEAN INTEGRATION** of tail, stop and reverse lights is characteristic of the white-tie-and-tails treatment accorded the VIP's exterior.



SCOTT MALCOLM PHOTOS

Then, as rear springs unwind and shock absorbers once more extend themselves, surge forces are equalized and the soft suspension components return to the job of producing a featherbed ride. It is obvious that the enthusiastic jab of the accelerator pedal isn't for the VIP—it destroys the aura of dignity and refinement that Plymouth stylists have tried so hard to create.

Very illuminating progress was made in the VIP over a section of hairpin and switchback mountain roadway. Again, the VIP performed well enough when not called upon to deviate from straight lines, but on anything else, the car suffered a very serious case of the bends. Power steering, admittedly superior to the Plymouth product of 1965, remains somewhat numb and transmits little road feel. This, added to the tender suspension, which induces a more than moderate body lean in curving sections of highway, results in the disconcerting impression that the car is about to leave the road. Attempts to apply additional power to stabilize the car in curves only distressed the rear suspension and worsened the already distinct sensation that the automobile was in a precarious position.

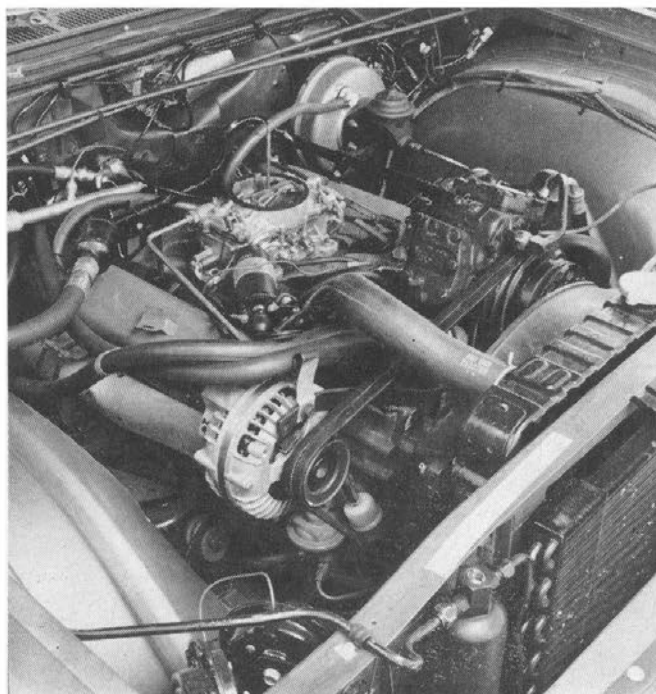
Virtually inadmissible performance may characterize the VIP's super-soft suspension system on a curved road, but this in no way minimizes the strength, responsiveness and tractability of Plymouth's 383-cu. in. engine. It offers top speeds in excess of 100 mph, if one should care to travel at that rate. It provides a sustained and effortless cruise at turnpike limits. It delivers smooth acceleration from stoplights, though it probably won't win many impromptu



racing championships. This engine is not as quiet as it could be, though it is silenced to a bubbling hiss which sometimes provides bass accompaniment to the less than faint transmission whine when accelerating. Engine and wind sounds intrude somewhat on passenger conversations, which must be carried on at something above drawing room level.

A wind rumble develops between 60 and 70 mph, but it is unobtrusive because it is only another sound. Uphill sections of mountain highway proved the 383-cu. in. engine a very adequate piece of equipment for hill climbing. However, the test car's water temperature gauge was inoperative and thus was developed, during a sustained climb, a

**THE UPPER-middle-class engine for the VIP is the 4-barrel carbureted 383-cu. in. V-8, rated at 325 bhp with a compression ratio of 10:1.**



**LOW LIFTOVER height is a VIP offering for travelers, but spare tire location is not the handiest for quick changes when carrying luggage.**







# VIP

nagging worry over the possibility of engine overheating.

Various identifying points of the 383 option engine are that its bore is 4.25 in. and its stroke is 3.38 in. In 2-barrel carburetor and 9.2:1 compression ratio form, 383 cu. in. deliver 270 bhp at 4400 rpm. The 4-barrel, 10:1 compression ratio version, which CL tested, produces 325 bhp at 4800 rpm. The standard engine for the VIP, as with the Fury III, is the 318-cu. in. V-8 which, with 2-barrel carburetion, is rated at 230 bhp at 4400 rpm. Largest of optional powerplants obtainable with the VIP is the 440-cu. in. engine which the ultimate Plymouth shares with equally ultimate Dodges and Chryslers. The 440, with 4-barrel carburetion and a compression ratio of 10.1:1, produces 365 bhp at 4600 rpm.

Ventures into pleasures of changing

gears manually are offered with the choice of either 3-speed or 4-speed do-it-yourself gearboxes. But why bother? The VIP is a caterer to ease and thus seems best suited to the Chrysler 3-speed automatic transmission.

**V**EXING INCAPABILITIES presented themselves when the VIP was put through the braking test. Instant fade, that is predilection of a single one of the four wheels to lock up, was apparent. Repeating the panic stop procedure increased the fade and measurably lengthened stopping distances. The suspension permitted an almost alarming nosedive when full brake pressure was applied and deceleration weight transfer occurred. A straightline stop was difficult. The VIP's optional 8.55-14 tires—larger than standard 7.75-14s to support the added power and comfort options—provided an adequate bite in all dry conditions and even in a small bit of wet. Curving roads, negotiated at moderate speeds, brought groans of protest from the Goodyears as the body leaned heavily this way and that, but the tires allowed little or no deviation from the course selected by the driver.

Various illnesses plaguing the VIP as a result of soft suspension aside, the 3-

speed automatic transmission appears to be the best piece of equipment bolted to the car. Torque from the engine is transmitted smoothly with almost imperceptible gear changes from first (2.45) to second (1.45) at 40 mph and into top (1.00) at 70 mph. The 3-element water-cooled torque converter is a tight, precise unit which permits little power loss. Indeed, the VIP is inclined to creep slightly at idle when the driver's foot is resting lightly on the brake pedal. The standard VIP axle ratio is 3.23, but ratios of 2.76 and 2.94 also are readily available.

Value identification psychology, that is, creating a concept of value in the buyer's mind as he spends dollars for options seemingly synonymous with luxury, appears to be the Plymouth Division's prime motive in creation of the VIP.

Victory in producing something lavish, however, comes from the lavishing of attention and craftsmanship on small details. What lavish treatment the VIP was given was in the use of trim, chrome, buttons, handles, dials and identification markers. Too little quality control attention, however, was paid to panel fit, molding joints, door flashings and the like. Examples of this, apparent in the

test VIP, were a large gap between floor and door at the right front, threads raveling from rear seat upholstery, bits of vinyl leatherette trim which should have been tucked out of sight but weren't, and a ragged gap between the base of the accelerator pedal and adjacent floor mat, just right to entrap a spike heel. If Plymouth's application of luxury psychology is to create customer satisfaction in ownership of equipment—that good feeling of money's worth—then corporate moguls should see to it that more than glitter value is received for the upward of \$4600 VIP price. There once was a saying for imperfection: "It won't show on a trotting horse." Possibly Plymouth believes it won't show on a vanishing VIP.

Vanity influences purchasing in many cases, hence lack of finish and inadequate attention to detail are likely to be overlooked by the potential buyer whose eyes are blinded by the outward flash and sparkle of things his dollars will make his own. Unfortunately, the VIP is not the only "luxury line" automobile to suffer the indignities of slipshod assembly line techniques and prideless craftsmanship. *Car Life*, in recent days, has had opportunities to inspect workmanship in automobiles offered as

"top-of-the-line" items by the other two members of Detroit's Big Three. Bare spots of insulation where carpeting should be, ill-fitting plastic moldings, paint drippings from rag-tag masking and gaps where headliners should not gap seem to be the order of the day, rather than the exception, among new cars turned out by current manufacturing practices. The impression is one of seeing an otherwise elegantly attired man-about-town with holes in the heels of his socks.

Viewed independently, production imperfections seem slight, but taken in total—after showroom-new glamor has diminished—these bobbles can only detract from owner satisfaction.

**V**ERY IMPORTANT PERSON appeared during World War II as a term for generals, senators, civilian experts and admirals' wives. When persons of this ilk traveled by Military Air Transport Service, their luggage and passenger listings were coded VIP and flight and terminal crewmen were on order to accord these people special treatment. VIP? What do these letters mean when appended to this Plymouth? Numerous word combinations come readily to mind, but nothing really fits. ■

## 1966 PLYMOUTH VIP 4-DOOR HARDTOP



### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.	119.0
Track, front/rear, in.	62/60.7
Overall length, in.	209.8
width, in.	78.7
height, in.	55.3
Front seat hip room, in.	63.3
shoulder room, in.	60.0
head room, in.	38.0
pedal-seatback, max.	46.0
Rear seat hip room, in.	63.5
shoulder room, in.	60.0
head room, in.	38.7
leg room, in.	37.7
Door opening width, in.	35.2
Floor to ground height, in.	13.0
Ground clearance, in.	N.S.

### PRICES

List, FOB factory	\$3133
Equipped as tested	4645
Options included: 383-cu. in. V-8, air cond., am/fm radio, vinyl top, remote rearview mirror, power steering, power brakes, power windows & door locks, power seat, wsw 8.55-14 tires, automatic trans.	25.0

### CAPACITIES

Passengers accommodated	6
Luggage space, cu. ft.	17.0
Fuel tank, gal.	25.0
Crankcase, qt.	4
Transmission/diff., pt.	18.5/4.0
Coolant radiator, qt.	18.0

## CAR LIFE ROAD TEST

### CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Frame type	unit-body
Front suspension type	Independent by upper/lower control arms; torsion bar springs, tubular shock absorbers.
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.	n.a.
anti-roll bar dia., in.	none
Rear suspension type	Live axle on parallel semi-elliptic multi-leaf springs; tubular shock absorbers, ride rate at wheel, lb./in. n.a.
Steering system	Integral power boosted rack and sector gears, parallel idlers.
gear ratio	15.7:1
overall ratio	19.4:1
turns, lock to lock	3.8
turning circle, ft. curb-curb	42.7
Curb weight, lb.	4327
Test weight	4720
Weight distribution, % f/r	55.7/44.3

### BRAKES

Type	Single-line hydraulic with duo-servo shoes inside drums.
Front drum, dia. x width, in.	11 x 2.75
Rear drum, dia. x width, in.	11 x 2.50
total swept area, sq. in.	362.8
Power assist	Integral with pedal line psi @ 100 lb. pedal n.a.

### WHEELS/TIRES

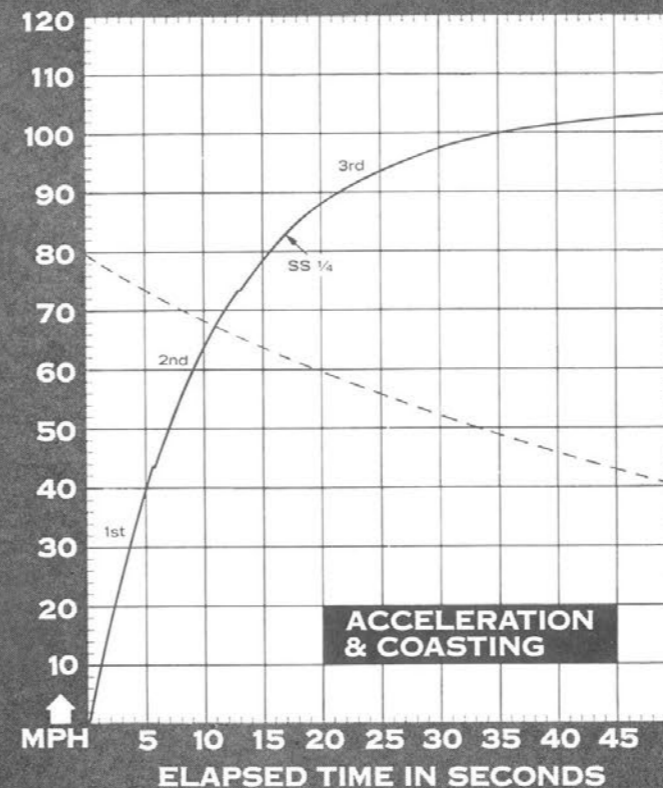
Wheel size	14x6.0 JK
bolt no./circle dia., in.	5/4.5
optional size available	14x5.5 JK
Tire make, brand	Goodyear Power-Cushion
size	8.55-14
recommended inflation, psi	24
capacity rating, total lb.	5280

### ENGINE

Type, no. cyl.	ohv, V-8
Bore x stroke, in.	4.25 x 3.38
Displacement, cu. in.	383
Compression ratio	10:1
Rated bhp @ rpm	325 @ 4800
equivalent mph	120
Rated torque @ rpm	425 @ 2800
equivalent mph	70
Carburetion	1 x 4 barrel dia., pri./sec. 1.44/1.56
Valve operation	Hyd. lifters, push rods & rockers
valve dia., int./exh.	2.08/1.60
lift, int./exh.	0.425/0.437
timing	14-62, 62-18
duration, int./exh.	256/260
opening overlap	32
Exhaust system	Dual, reverse-flow mufflers.
pipe dia., exh./tail	2.25/2.00
Lubrication pump type	rotary
normal press. @ rpm	45-65 @ 2000
Electrical supply	alternator
ampere rating	46
Battery, plates/amp. rating	78/70

### DRIVE-TRAIN

Transmission type	Torque converter, automatic with planetary gear transmission.
Gear ratio 4th ( ) Overall	3.23
3rd (1.00)	3.23
2nd (1.45)	4.68
1st (2.45)	7.92
1st x t.c. stall (2.20)	17.4
synchronous meshing?	planetary
Shift lever location	st. column
Differential type	hypoid, ltd. slip gear ratio
	3.23:1



### CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test weight)	14.5
Cu. ft./ton mile	113
Mph/1000 rpm (top gear)	25.0
Engine revs/mile (60 mph)	2400
Piston travel, ft./mile	1350
Car Life wear index	32.4
Frontal area, sq. ft.	24.2
Box volume, cu. ft.	527

### SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual	30
40 mph	40
50 mph	50
60 mph	60
70 mph	70
80 mph	79
90 mph	88

### MAINTENANCE INTERVALS

Oil change, engine, miles	4000
transmission/diff.	none/36,000
Oil filter change	8000
Air cleaner service, mo.	6
Chassis lubrication	36,000
Wheelbearing re-packing, as needed	
Universal joint service	none
Coolant change, mo.	12

### TUNE-UP DATA

Spark plugs	Champion J-13Y
gap, in.	0.035
Spark setting, deg./idle rpm	12.5/500
cent. max advance, deg./rpm	29/4500
vac. max. adv., deg./in. Hg	29/16.5
Breaker gap, in.	0.014-0.019
cam dwell angle	28-32
arm. tension, oz.	17-20
Tappet clearance, int./exh.	0/0
Fuel pump pressure, psi	4-5.5
Radiator cap relief press., psi	16

### PERFORMANCE

Top speed (4200 rpm), mph	104
Shifts (rpm) @ mph	
3rd to 4th ( )	
2nd to 3rd (4200)	73
1st to 2nd (4200)	43

### ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.	3.7
0-40 mph	5.2
0-50 mph	6.8
0-60 mph	8.9
0-70 mph	11.7
0-80 mph	15.6
0-90 mph	21.6
0-100 mph	35.5
Standing 1/4-mile, sec.	16.8
speed at end, mph	83
Passing, 30-70 mph, sec.	8.0

### BRAKING

Maximum deceleration rate achieved from 80 mph:	
1st stop, ft./sec./sec.	15
fade evident?	yes
2nd stop, ft./sec./sec.	18.5
fade evident?	yes

### FUEL CONSUMPTION

Test conditions, mpg	12.2
Normal conditions	12-15
Cruising range, miles	300-375

### GRADABILITY

4th, % grade @ mph	
3rd	17 @ 85
2nd	22 @ 54
1st	37 @ 32

### DRAG FACTOR

Total drag @ 60 mph, lb.	120
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