

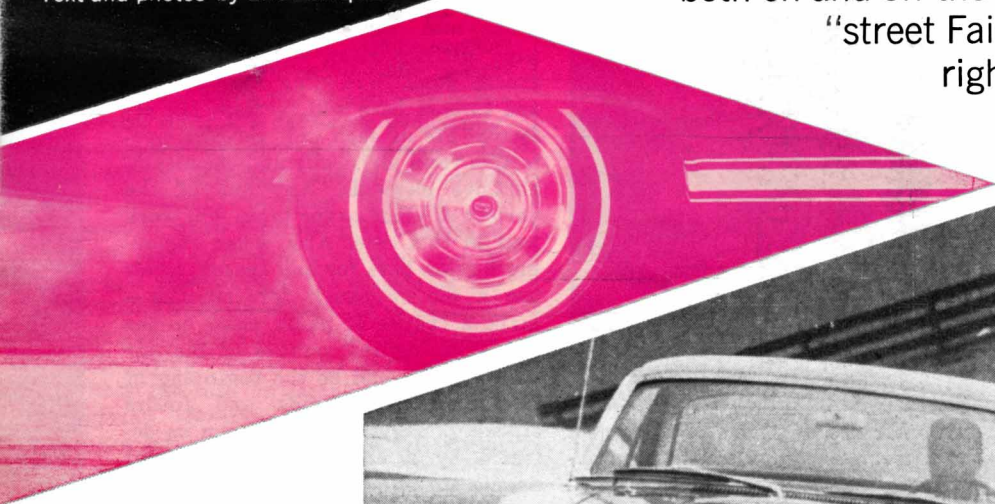
Well, what can we say, Ford's gone and built a 427 Fairlane that is likely to become one of the year's sensations. And there'll be little doubt about who has one because of the neat air scoop.



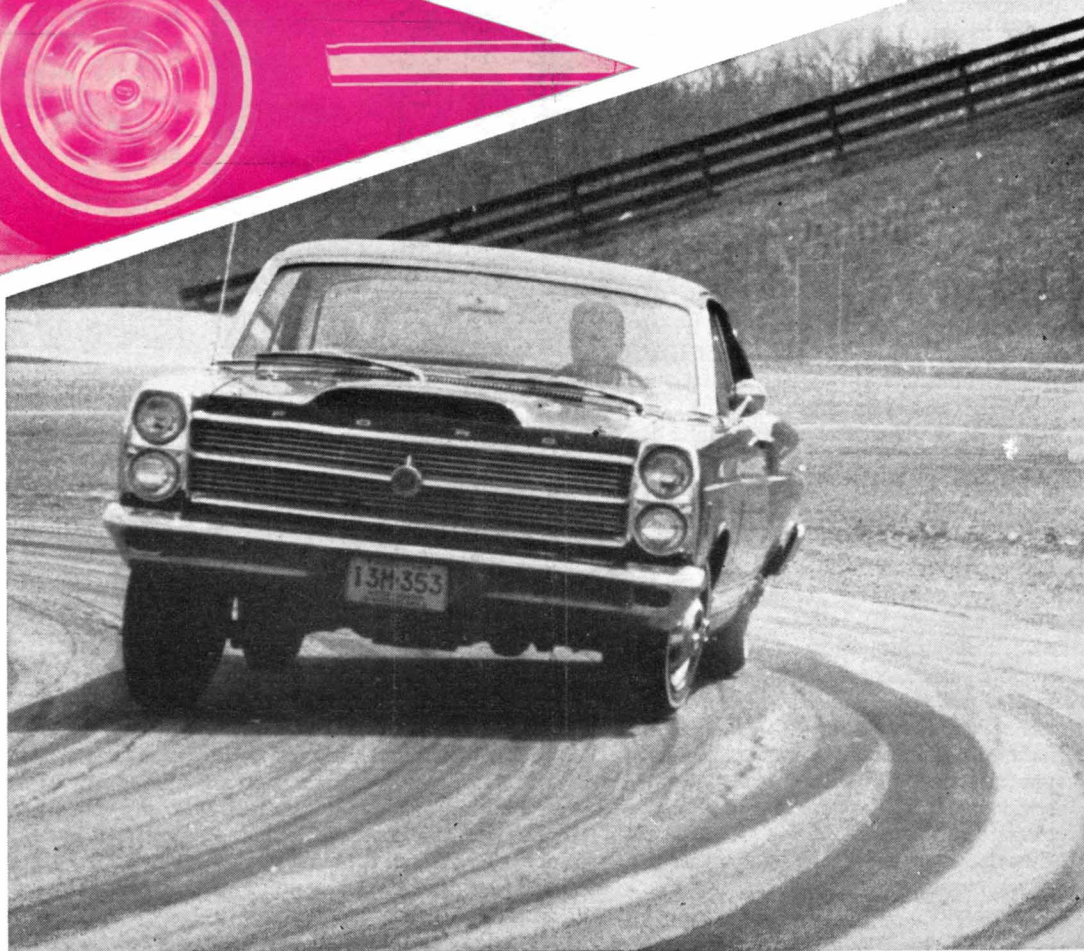
427 WEDGE SHOT

Text and photos by Eric Dahlquist

In today's titlist play, the national sales championship is decided both on and off the course. The new "street Fairlane" puts Ford right next to the pin



Hanging it all out, Rolf Kvamme demonstrates Fairlane's capabilities on dead flat sweeper at 70 mph. Already topnotch, GT suspension is not overtaxed by 427 powerplant. Tires are new type Generals.





Bill Holbrook, left, and Rolf show filter pack and air cleaner top can be removed to receive direct shot of atmosphere blasting through functional hood scoop.



Fairlane's interior is identical to any GT job with the exception of 9-grand tach mounted to right of steering wheel. Though not available yet, C6 Ford-O-Matic is coming.

It's a game, all this "youth market" high-performance stuff. First, it was the GTO (we mean currently, since the '32 Ford flathead V8 was the first hot compact), and it was followed by a bunch of others, then Chrysler came out with the "street hemi," partly for NASCAR rule compliance and partly because the pack had passed them, and they became king of the hill. But it couldn't last because this is a serious game.

For months it was just a rumor around Detroit. Then carrot-topped Charlie Gray, the taskmaster of Ford Performance Division, whose firm handshake lets you know he's 110 percent committed to total performance, calls up and says they're about to spring a 427 Fairlane "street package" on the world and would we like a crack at it. Would somebody dying of thirst like a drink?

Two days later we were at the door of Engineering Bldg. No. 1 with Bill Holbrook of the Performance & Economy Section, listening to the subdued roar of a Nightmist Blue Fairlane as it slid around the U-drive. The engine didn't sound a lot different from a normal GT hardtop, and at 550 rpm the idle didn't seem much rougher than standard either, but as soon as driver Rolf Kvamme let the 2700-pound pressure plate spring into action, you knew something was

up—like Ford stock. Out of the premises onto Rotunda Drive, Rolf punched it, just a little you understand, to merge with traffic, and the sound of all that cool morning air clawing its way through the yawning hood scoop (oh yes, it has a hood scoop) and into those eight Holley barrels (C5AF-9510-BC front, C5AF-9510-BU rear) said something we'd heard before. Something called brute power.

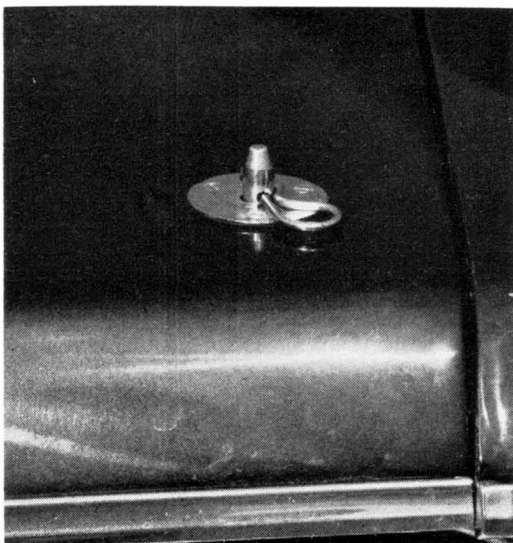
And that scooped hood made out of fiberglass—mm, boy, what a good thing for all you gay blades. It's held down with four chrome-plated NASCAR pins—no hinges, no springs, no latches—just instant status when you and your buddy calmly step out of your Fairlane at the gas station and gingerly pull the pins, lift off the hood and check the oil.

If that isn't enough to jar 'em right out of their sneakers, then the first light glinting off those chromed pent-roof-shaped valve covers—or better yet the bold, unpolished magnesium carburetor cover—is guaranteed to do it, money-back. And if you can't afford the bread for the genuine 427 fire-breathing article, the bonnet can easily be adapted to any '66 Fairlane. It's a cinch for the year's most impractical innovation award (consolation, it won't rust), but who cares? Can't you just see yourself now... Horace Wink, go home.

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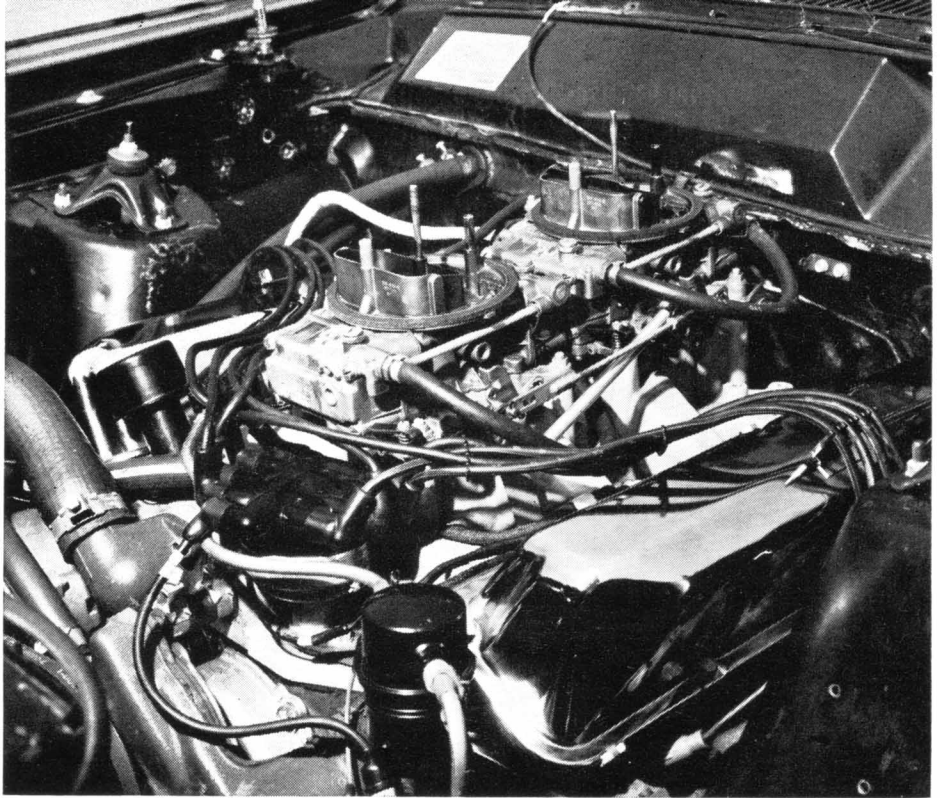
NASCAR pins? Right. Four of 'em to keep the 'glass hood buttoned mostly, but you won't lose any points at oil checks.

Look closely, lads, for this is a sight you're apt to see on many an occasion from here on out. Although wheel hop was not a distinct problem on our test car, all-out A/S competition will probably require some traction bars.



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Street Fairlane powerplant is trusty 427 V8 evolved through years of tough track competition. Fitted with a brace of Holleys, medium-riser manifold is identical to unit now legal for Grand National racing. Pancake distributor will seem familiar to flathead lovers for cap is nearly identical in outward design to 1941 configuration.



OK, now back to reality, medium-riser reality. Because that's from whence the Fairlane's new powerplant was derived. What Ford did was to take the same 4.232 x 3.784-inch bore and stroke engine that had been developed for competition and drop it into their intermediate shell albeit detuned a mite. For example, the compression ratio, which on some applications reached maximum at about 14:1, has been dropped back to nearer 10.25:1. Combustion chamber volume is pegged at 67.12cc (per chamber) with the pop-up type forged aluminum pistons having .010-inch minimum deck clearance (below block). Camshafts too are cooled down a bit; in fact, they are identical to a unit first offered in '63 (No. C3AE-6250-M). Timing specs at .100-inch valve lift: 2.195-inch intake valves open at 24°30' BTC and close at 69°30' ABC. Total duration is 277° with a maximum lift of .524-inch. Exhausts open at 72°30' BTC and close at 23°30' ABC, having a head diameter of 1.733 inches. Angles of seat and face for intake and exhaust are 30° and 45°.

Since this is a high-performance number intended for competition as much as anything else, for buyers who want more than normal scat, a peppier version of the cam (C5AE-6250-D) will be offered. Figures on this bump-stick present a more interesting intake valve opening of 80° BTC (close at 36-30) with exhausts opening at 39° and closing at 11° ATC. Duration is a much longer 324°.

We pulled into the Experimental Garage, after getting legitimized by the security gendarms, and put the Fairlane up on a two-post hoist for a look-see underneath. And what to our wondering eyes should appear but disc brakes, 11.2-inch diameter jobs; Mustang-bred units linked via a proportioning valve to shoe-types in back but with finned drums no less (383.4 inches of swept area; 219.2 front, 164.2 rear). This news kind of did our hearts good, because in our first Fairlane road test back in March, we declared that the only thing which might improve the GT's already superior binders was a set of discs like these. Hurrah!

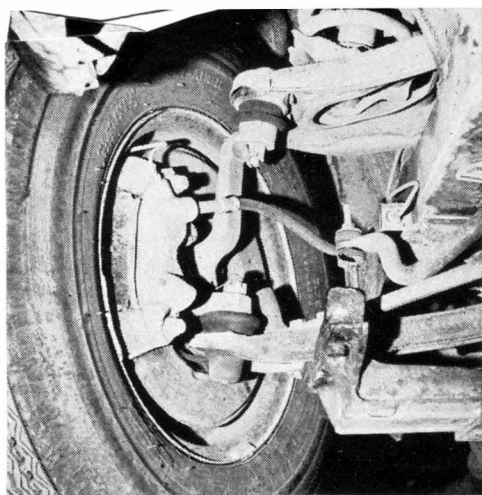
The 427 obviously needs a better chance to catch its second breath than the 390, so the standard 2-inch-diameter exhaust pipes have been replaced by 2¼-inch-diameter stuff, along with mufflers that look normal but have been debaffled. The upshot of these goings-on is that the bigger pipes (and mufflers) will fit a 390-equipped Fairlane with but a little rework at the inlet end since the 427 manifolds are different. Unfor-

tunately, the unrestrictive 427 manifolds will not bolt directly to a 390 powerplant, but 390 truck heads, which breathe better anyway and use the 427 manifold configuration and stud pattern, will. How's that for interchangeability, Dearborn-style.

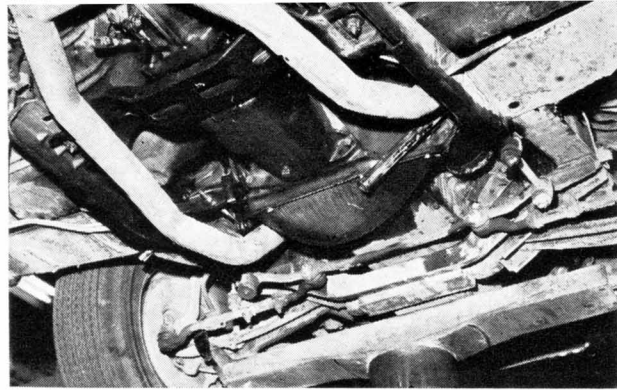
Backing up the engine is the previously-mentioned 11-inch clutch and the big Ford 4-speed with 2.32 low, 1.69 second, 1.29 third and 1:1 high. Although we all know that this particular unit is bags of fun to row around in town, around corners or around the competition, the superswift C6 automatic (described in glowing detail last month by Jim McFarland) is slated as an option. If this works as well as it looks like it works on those now-you-see-'em-now-you-don't ultra-funny Mustangs — oh, wow!

In the rear axle's domain, the 9-inch-diameter ring gear, first introduced in the GTA, remains with the option of any "pig" (pinion) from 2.90 to 4.86, including Equal-Loc. Axles, always a question mark in these high-powered rigs, are the very strong 31-spline variety with 5¼ x 14-inch rims bolted on the flange. These are bigger than current Fairlane equipment and they had to go this route because of the disc-brake space requirements. The Ford men say that next year this rim configuration will be standard on the Fairlanes. Could one take this to mean that disc brakes will be optional or even standard come the next model run?

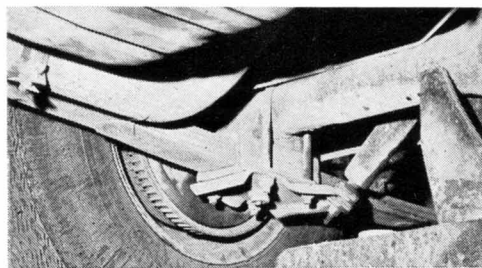
From the neck-craning caper on the rack we adjourned to a plain-back-drop cement paddock for some pictures and a peek at the engine installation. After Bill and Rolf popped the hood (an item which, incidentally, is not one of those ultra-light, and hence ultra-flimsy, replacements that are more delicate than Dresden china), it became evident that the 427 resembles closely its littler brother, the 390. In fact, a knowledgeable eye is required to perceive that anything radical has been done. Really nothing much in the way of physical reshaping was demanded save for drilling three 1½-inch holes on the right-hand spring tower and two 1½-inch holes on the left so that the exhaust manifold bolts would clear. Because of the powerplant's slightly bigger dimensions, plus the dual four-barrel carburetor setup, the engineers calculate the additional accumulated front end weight does not exceed a maximum of 60 pounds. Overall street weight was aimed for a spot somewhere in the 3600-pound neighborhood.



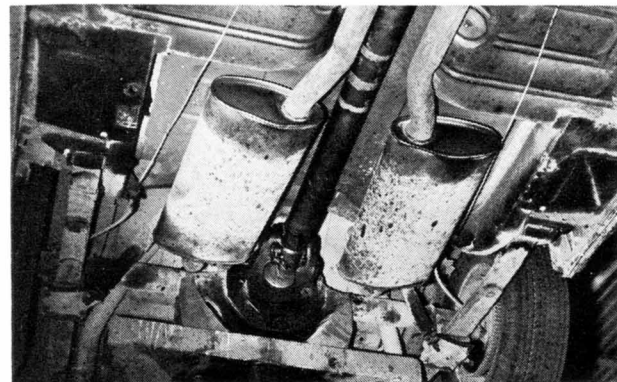
LEFT - Voila. Disc brakes. Mustang-sized calipers are fitted as standard for 427 Fairlanes, and boy, these brakes are fine for fast touring. Look for them as universal in '67.



RIGHT - Heavy-duty Ford 4-speed is standard equipment now and ultra-swift automatics are on the way. Exhaust pipes are big 2 1/4" with balance tube.



RIGHT - Mufflers are stock-appearing but have been de-baffled quite a bit for healthy engine. Pinion snubber bolts to 3rd member flange and could be used with extension for drags.



LEFT - Rear spring setup is identical to GT; finned drums on test car are possibilities. Axles are the strong 31-spline variety and ring gear is 9-inch.

As far as spring rates went, the Ford fellows figured that the weight increase was negligible so the GT rates (300 pounds per inch front, 105 rear) were retained along with the same shocks. Everything else seemed to clear in adequate fashion and no serious service problems are immediately apparent, if, in fact, any exist at all. Our engine briefing on the 427 had been fairly complete thanks to Vern Tinsler, so what drew our attention most was the hood and the way its underside is designed to surround the intake area of the air cleaner, guaranteeing an air supply from outside the compartment, where it will be cooler and, consequently, denser. If the scoop is not as aesthetically pleasing as the GTO's, it's not ugly by any means either. Since it provides not only fresh air, but, we suspect, a slight ram effect at high speed, there's something to be said for beauty in function.

Except for the addition of an nine-grand tach, the 427 Fairlane interior follows the same appointment pattern as described in our March test. We had forgotten the excellent seating position of this middle-sized Ford, but as soon as we slipped behind the 16-inch neo-Nardi (nylon) steering wheel for a little ring-out action around the ride and handling course, it all came back - especially the part about adequate seat travel. After a few familiarization laps about the twisting track that slithers through a collection of right- and left-handers (some reverse camber), we nailed the Fairlane and those 427 inches nailed us - right to the seat back! We anticipated that additional front end bias might have marred the GT's previously good handling manners but it didn't, except for a little more oversteer which might have been caused by charging into the sharp ones at higher velocity that with the 390 we had had. Just a little less pressure on the accelerator, though, and the back end would come smartly into line.

For the first couple of orbits we played it straight in third and fourth gears, using the brakes mostly and lugging the engine down to 20 mph in top a couple of times to see if it accelerated without bucking. To our utter amazement, the 427 will go from a crawl to whatever top speed it has without jerk or shudder. It's called low speed torque and the car shines because of it (480 pounds-feet at 3700 rpm).

Out at the Riverside 500 last January, we noticed that many of the Fords there retained the factory shifters, including winner Dan Gurney, indicating their excellent

gear-changing character, but the one on our Fairlane was obviously misadjusted, allowing too much movement. Despite this, we got down into the second and third sequence for the track and learned that you can really power this machine around with confidence. Coming out of a sharp corner, we set up a line with the wheels cocked and then added and subtracted throttle for some of that good dirt-track feel. Hard down on the loud pedal brings the rear end out farther, let off and it goes right back. It's the greatest.

And then we went out to the quarter-mile for a few shots on the long straightaway connecting the two banked turns. Because we had to sandwich ourselves in between the regular product evaluation team's work on the course, the Chrondeks couldn't be set up in time, so we had to rely on the speedometer and the seat of our pants for times. Our test machine was one of three Fairlanes put together for production evaluation and was in a rather good state of tune, though not blueprinted. First pass with normal shifting and two people aboard put the asphalt quarter behind us at just under a hundred mph. Next time around, with power shifting in the last two gears, the speedo indicated about 101-102 and allowed the idea that we literally had a tiger by the tail. Before it was over we made a half-dozen runs, most of them with full throttle shifts.

Even with the shift not working as slick as we like, it's almost child's play to make a good run. Bring the revs up to about a grand on the line, maybe a little less. Let the clutch out. Easy on the gas until you're underway and then pin the pedal to the mat. Ahhhhh! All those eight butterflies are flapping open and the sleek Fairlane body is twisting its way to the right, fighting the torque. The tach touches six-grand and -wham! - second gear. The body rocks back momentarily before you catch your breath and the body hops. Then through third and on to fourth, when you fly over the finish and those 427 inches are still making it, all the way through the lights and beyond. No sweat.

And on the other side of the line, we had to brake hard for the loop turn-around. Time after time we cleared the traps at over a hundred and stood straight-up on those beautiful anchors and they never complained or got irritated. No fade, no pulling or grabbing - nothing but the feeling that the chute had just deployed. (Who knows? This might be an option later.)

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Some of the mechanics on the project confided that during the testing program, the 427 Fairlane averaged about 100 mph in the quarter (clocks operative) with elapsed times in the 14.50-14.60 bracket, in absolute street trim. As a start at improving this, a fellow could, if he wanted, fabricate a set of headers made from 2 1/8-inch-diameter tubing, each runner 32 inches long ending in a 5 1/2-inch-diameter collector. For best results, the collector ought to be 13 1/2 inches long and tapered to a final diameter of 3 1/2 inches. Sort of a reverse cone effect. For even more of the hot tip on the 427, or any Ford machine for that matter, those seeking the "word" might write to the Ford Motor Company, Engineering Building Number 1, 20000 Rotunda Drive, Room 3252, Dearborn, Michigan, where those Bondish lads have accumulated a veritable wealth of information to befuddle your foe.

The Fairlane's times are roughly equivalent to the Chrysler street hemi, and this was the whole idea in the first place. The people at Ford know that they're about 50 ponies shy of the hemi, but they hope this is compensated for, at least in part, by a weight advantage of 200-250 pounds. NHRA has classed the 427 Fairlane in A/Stock, which happens by coincidence to be the nesting ground for the hemi.

The 427 Fairlane will be available in 2-door, 500 2-door, 500 2-door hardtop and XL 2-door hardtop models; also with the dual four (eight-barrel) setup or a single quad (also A/S). Plans call for an initial batch of 50 such cars to be built at the Atlanta assembly plant. (Sorry, gang, they're all spoken for.) But if demand is great enough, you people out in HRM-land could change all this. Don't shout, send money. ■ ■

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