

CAMARO

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

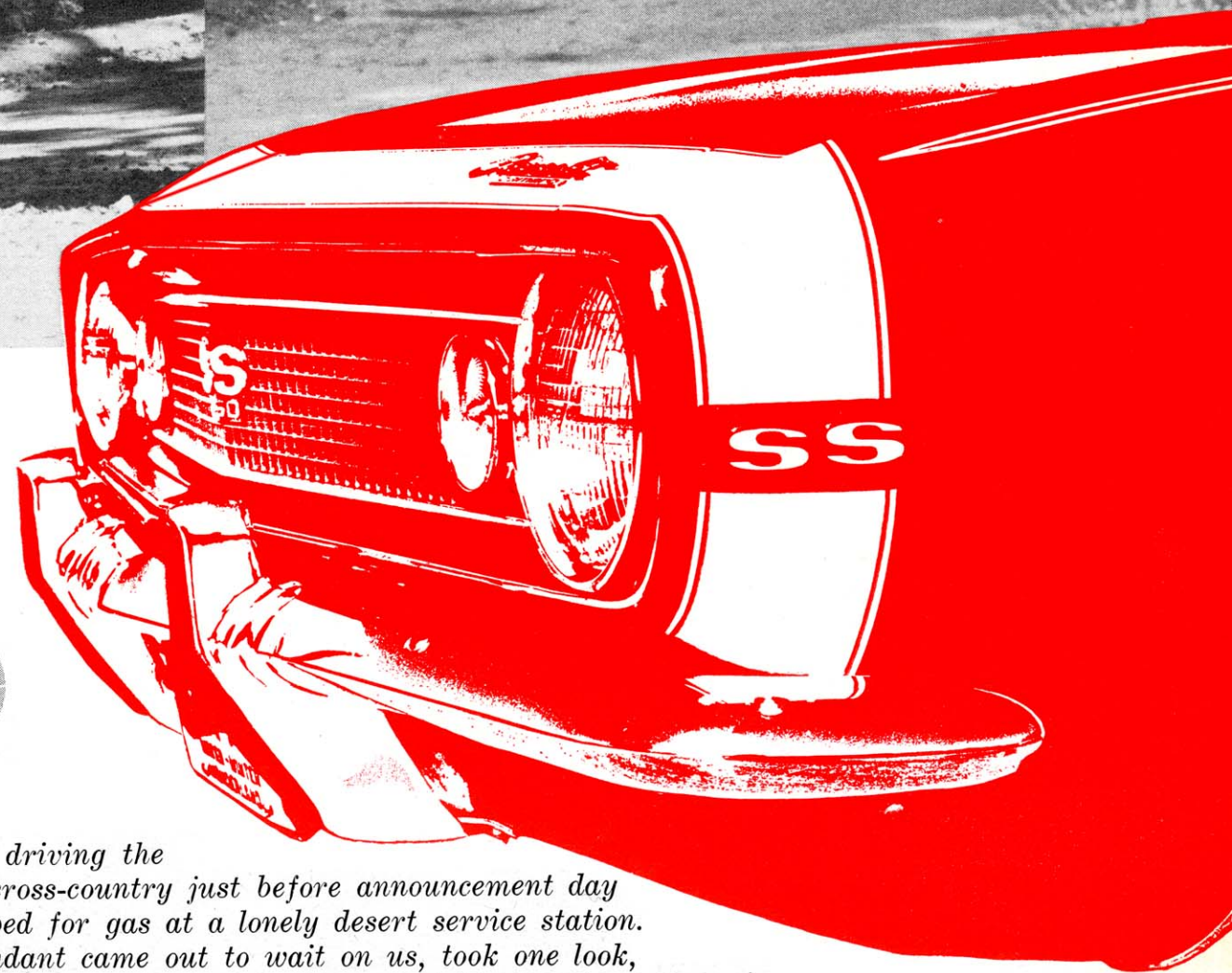
TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ERIC DAHLQUIST ■ A majority of one! That's what Ford had for 2½ golden years while the people at Chevy scratched their heads and tried to figure out why the very-engineered Corvair hadn't struck that same mother lode the Mustang was carting off to the bank in ever-mushrooming deposits. It just didn't make sense; the Corvair had unique styling, a unique powerplant and unique suspension. What else could they want? Would you believe cuteness?

Really, it seems that the people at Flint finally bought the "cute" theme — lock, stock and barrel — because they had a lot of long winter nights to out-sophisticate Ford "six ways from Sunday." But they didn't, because maybe the average guy could care less about I.R.S. and that stuff. And, anyway, when you get some of those good old tried-and-true pieces together in the right mix, it's time for a happening. That's the Camaro; a '67 happening. It doesn't have basically different components than the Mustang, yet there is a certain fascination that just oozes from all the flowing lines and a 350 cube engine that's got to be one of this year's treats.

Just as the first Mustangs looked mighty like a Falcon underneath, Chevrolet has borrowed freely from the Chevy II line, adopting its floor pan and the single-leaf "mono-plate" rear spring arrangement. Body construction utilizes two projecting frame stubs that thrust forward from underneath the front seat area to the limit of the radiator like the Chevy II setup. The Camaro seemingly bridges the gap between two construction worlds: frame and body on the one hand and unit-body on the other.

Chevrolet makes a particular point of specifying that the Camaro is "conventionally arranged with front engine and rear wheel drive" and that, further — Packards, Cadillacs, Deussenbergs notwithstanding — their car features the "long hood-short deck styling so successfully introduced to U.S. production by the Corvette." While legions of classic automobile aficionados will man the breastworks, refuting the credibility of this latter assertion, the former one elicits the inevitable conclusion that this is how the Corvair should have been in the first place. In fact, you'd be surprised how many people, even in a metropolis like Los

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We were driving the Camaro cross-country just before announcement day and stopped for gas at a lonely desert service station. The attendant came out to wait on us, took one look, then turned and yelled to his partner working on the lube rack, "Hey, Bill, come look at the Chevrolet Mustang!" Camaro is here, but it has a lot of catching up to do!

CAMARO

Angeles, still don't know what a Camaro is, despite the formidable ad campaign that launched the car. We were amazed to learn that many thought our Bolero Red test car was a new Corvair or (Chevy stylists, clap your ears) a '67 Mustang, for goshsakes.

It isn't too difficult to see why, since the Camaro is an obvious extension of GM's flowing style-setter family, of which Corvair is a member, though recently more like a far-removed cousin than anything else. You've got to admit the Camaro's lines are pretty slick, but equally important, and less apparent, all these curves multiply the torsional stiffness of the structure as compared with the old slab-side stuff of a few years ago. Following directly from this is the fact that being rigid severely reduces the possibility of the sheet metal responding to accoustical fluctuations or resonating in sympathy with mechanical vibrations. Like, it's quiet. This allows Chevy to keep the metal gauge relatively thin (as compared with 15 years ago when you bought a GM car because they were the stoutest things going), not add a lot of sound deadeners, and yet produce an uncannily solid car. Our test Camaro could be pounded down rough roads and the front fenders showed little or no signs of shake or flutter. And the doors, while not quite in the vault category, had a good closing "sound" as the breaker mechanism slammed home on the I-bolt. Anti-burst principle, you see.

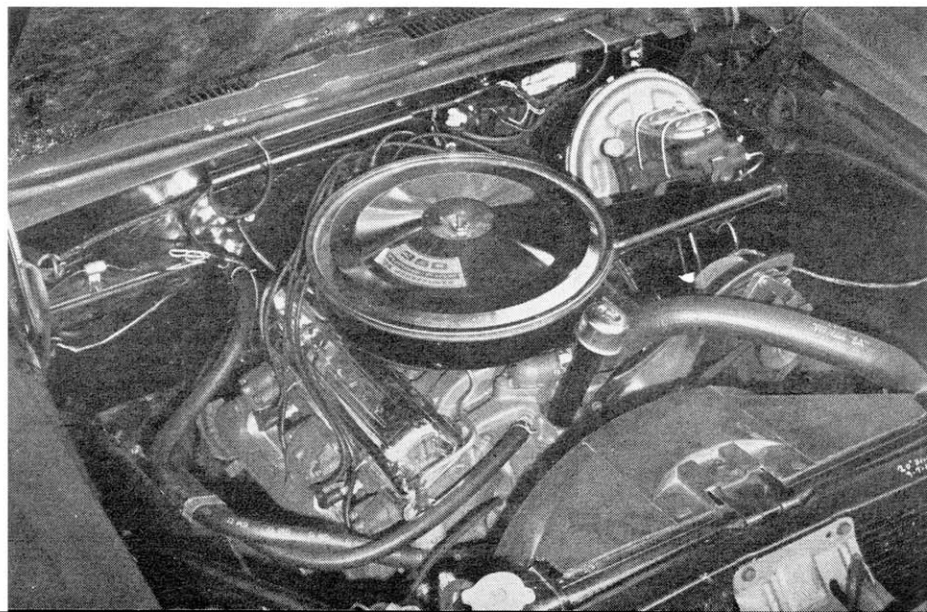
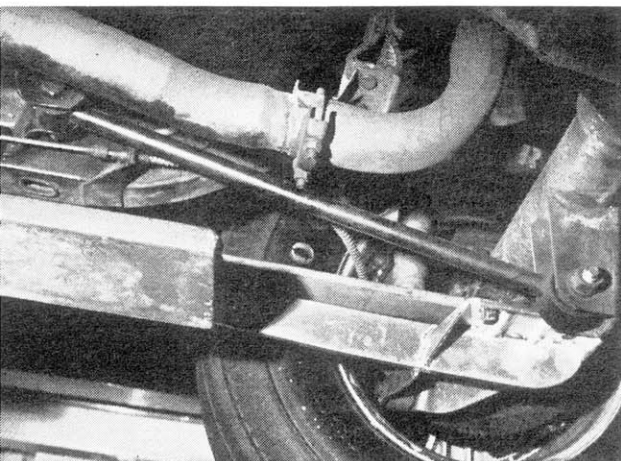
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. We know that and because of it, long dissertations on automotive style are usually avoided in our test reports. But the Camaro is different. No one we encountered in many miles of driving had anything but favorable comments about

the way "our" car looked — not Camaros in general, mind you, but "ours." By the number of people who made a specific effort to tell us, we'd guess that the unstriped, non-shiny-wheel-sans-white-walled-tire car is in trouble. Maybe it was just newness of the design but enough people seem to think that the "plain-Jane" model looks somehow too fat through the midsection and a little humpbacked to boot.

But that didn't bother us; we had the boss car, right? And it was more than just a showpiece; the Camaro went like blue blazes — around corners or in the straight, it made no difference. Our car was a Super Sport with heavy-duty suspension (Rally Sport option), quick steering and Delco-Moraine dual master cylinder actuated disc/drums. Up those twisting mountain roads we leaped, 295 charging horses clearing the way. There were no wide-ovals on the car to mask handling deficiency but the Camaro didn't need 'em — just pure sweetness to negotiate a bend at twice the normal velocity and still be master of the situation. Power there was on the steering but "feel" there was also, just the right balance of lightness and sensitivity to make it all child's play. Talk about low-speed torque; that new 350's got it to burn. We lugged our 3.55:1-ratioed machine down to 10 mph in fourth gear going uphill and the engine just went "chug-chug" and churned back up to speed without buck or shudder. All that, and after checking gas mileage figures for 200 miles of freeway and mountain driving around Lake Arrowhead, California, the Camaro slugged out an amazing 15 miles per gallon. That is something to write home about!

The hot setup for '55-'57 Chevys has been the 327 short block replacement, but that's all over now — quick, grab you a 350. Get this! We knew the car felt quick, but right off the street with bum plugs it ran 15.05-91 mph. Sure, Bill Thomas had cleaned a spider-leg

VEHICLE	
Camaro Super Sport	
PRICE	
As tested \$3,639.52 f.o.b. Detroit	
ENGINE	
Cylinders	8
Bore and stroke	4.00 x 3.48
Displacement	350 cu. in.
Compression ratio	10.5 to 1
Max. horsepower	295 hp @ 4800 rpm
Max. torque	380 lb-ft @ 3200 rpm
Valves: Intake	1.935 in.
Exhaust	1.495 in.
Camshaft: Lift3900 intake, .4100 exhaust
Duration320"
Carburetion	Single 4-bbl Quadrajct
Exhaust system	Dual, with resonators
	2.50 in. exhaust pipe, 2.00 in. tail pipe
TRANSMISSION	
Type	All synchro, 4-speed
Ratios: 1st	2.52:1
2nd	1.80:1
3rd	1.44:1
4th	1.00:1
DIFFERENTIAL	
Type	Salisbury: Semi-floating, overhung pinion gear
Ring gear diameter	8.125 in.
Ratio	3.55 to 1
BRAKES	
Type	Delco Moraine — disc front, drum rear
Dimensions: Front	11.5-m.
Rear	9.5 x 2.0
Swept area	NA
SUSPENSION	
Front	Unequal length A-arm, coil spring and concentric shock
Rear	Two single-leaf ("Monoplate")
Stabilizer	6875-in. diameter
Tires	Firestone (7.35x14)
Rims	5 1/2-inch wide
Steering gear: Type	Power, Saginaw, coaxial
Ratio	17.5 to 1
Turning circle	37 ft.
Turns of steering wheel, lock to lock	3.0
PERFORMANCE	
0-30	NA
0-40	NA
0-50	NA
0-60	NA
Standing quarter-mile	95.65 mph in 14.85 sec.
Fuel consumption	15 mpg
DIMENSIONS	
Wheelbase	108.1 in.
Front track	59.0 in.
Rear track	58.8 in.
Overall height	51.0 in.
Overall width	72.5 in.
Overall length	184.6 in.
Ground clearance	NA
Curb weight	3380 lbs.
Test weight	3380 lbs.
Crankcase capacity	4 qt.
Cooling system	NA
Fuel tank	18.5 gal.



out of the Quadrajets (don't ask us how it got in there) and put a curve in the ignition, but that's all. We slipped in a new set of AC 44's and — zap — 14.95-94, and with a warm heat-range to boot. Two more runs and we were at 14.85-95 mph. We'll underwrite the fact that those single-leaf springs are not the dragman's dream, but Chevy's gone and put a neat traction bar on the right rear, curing much of the wheel hop. The Muncie shifter is not too slick, either, even after meticulous adjustment, so "Big Daddy" Hurst gets into the act of correcting it for a few bucks. Yes?

You launch the Camaro off the line by bringing the revs up to 1200, swiftly engaging the clutch and driving the car out about 25 feet before nailing it. At 95 mph, the last speed light goes blur, and you just whack the brakes to see what happens. It stops. Straight as a surveyor's line, the Camaro comes to a halt like nothing short of a Sting Ray. Oh, the back wheels tend to skid just a bit sometimes, but the rear doesn't start coming around. Last year only the Corvette had discs; now the rest of the Chevy line has come over, and if the Camaro's typical, it's just dandy.

Since the Camaro was designed to be

like the Mustang in many ways, Chevrolet has also seen fit to include some of the Mustang's limitations: like no rear passenger or luggage room to speak of. In fact, for the trunk department they have even gone Ford one better and created a space that requires a specially-shaped suitcase. Maybe they'll have optional "Camaro bags" or "Camaro cases" later on: L-shaped affairs that will allow better utilization of the 8.3 cubic feet of trunk space. A load of water will fit fine. Our test coupe had the optional, folding rear seat back that provided a nifty space platform for the kids, but for non-ambulatory objects, it's a chore to get heavy stuff into the back seat without puffing, not to mention scratching the trim.

These deficiencies are not all bad, if, in fact, in later-20th-century America, they are not bonuses. It's reverse status: One Camaro is not big enough to haul everything around in, so you buy two. Or look at it the other way around: You've already got a big Chevy for mundane chores, so the Camaro satisfies your adventuresome instincts. Single types will probably go for the Camaro for the same reasons they lapped up the Mustang, only now the

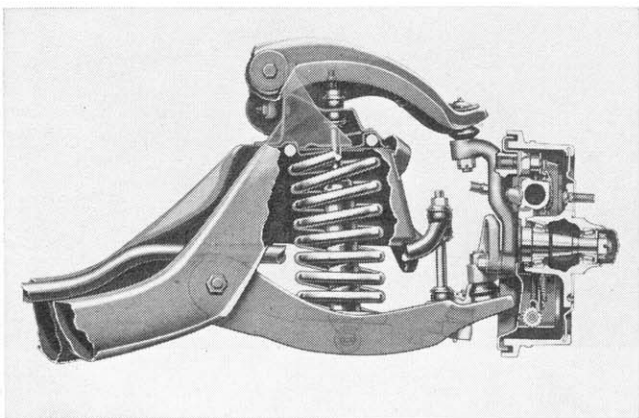
Camaro is the new thing. Besides the fad appeal, the secretaries or buck-downers will dig the 6-cylinder action (230 cube, 140 hp, or optional 250 inches @ 155 ponies) and, with a few deft trim maneuvers, pass it off as a luxury version. Who's to know? As an afterthought, we drove a 155 in-line-powered Camaro and for what it lacks in power (compared to a 350) it retaliates with exceptional balance and agility. (FLASH! Chevy has just announced a super super engine option: a 325 hp., 396 for the light Camaro. Good grief, B/Stock!)

Six or V8 (327 cube 210 hp standard, 350 295 hp optional) the Camaro is offered with an all-synchro standard 3-speed (2.54 low), heavy-duty 3-speed (2.41 low), 4-speed for sixes (3.11 low) and a V8 4-speed (2.54 low), and that's where the good times stop rolling — at the automatic's doorway. Everybody knows that the Powerglide, or "peanut butter drive" as it is referred to in less formal circles, was not even adequate ten years ago, but here it is, hanging like a millstone on the back of all Camaro powerplants as the only automatic choice. Pity, too, because the 3-speed Turbo-Hydramatic would be just the "spiffiest" ever.

As for quality, the Camaro seems to represent the first step back from the pit of shoddy workmanship that has plagued recent models. It's no longer enough to have that bow-tie emblem, especially with Ford shouting to the rooftops about that "better idea" stuff. So the Chevys now have almost no "orange peel" in their paint, the pieces fit right and everything works.

Safety comes along in here somewhere, and we must say that the car is much less of an injury instrument than before. Knobs, even on the radio, are flat with good radii, the door handles are recessed and locks are fitted to the seat backs so they don't fall forward. Apparent care has been taken to reduce glare with non-reflective dashes and satin-finish windshield wiper arms. But the stylist hung a fat curve on them. The legs of the deep-dished steering wheel, as well as the hub cover, were all chrome, chrome that on several occasions took the low-angled light of the sun and sent a blinding bolt at us, obliterating the rest of the world!

If the Camaro didn't have the 350, things might not possibly be so rosy, but the newest extension of the mighty-mite 265 will pull the fat out of the fire, if indeed it ever fell in. You see, there are those eight-thousand-plus Chevy dealers around that are not going to let all these cute coupes and roadsters — oops! . . . convertibles — just sit. Then, it's a neat car; don't forget that. The Camaro is going to sell. In this way, too, it's like the Mustang. ■ ■



LEFT — New "F" car, as it is known in the line, has unequal length A-arms with stabilizer bar. Drums are stock but discs are optional.

BELOW — Front seat room was adequate but we can't say the same for the back. Folding rear seat was of some space value. Test coupe was rock-solid.



FAR LEFT — Camaro is available with optional traction arm on right hand side of axle. Bill Thomas spring-stabilizer/lift-bar was added after testing.

LEFT — 350 engine is peculiar to Camaro and destined for long-lived popularity in older Chevys. Next step is "porcupine" 396 and Chevy has one, a 325-hp model, planned for mid-year.