



ELDORADO

BY ROBERT SCHILLING

SWITCHES FROM PUSH TO PULL

... AND IT'S HARD TO FIGHT SO MUCH LUXURY STANDARD EQUIPMENT



IT WAS INEVITABLE that we would bring to the Cadillac Eldorado road test some preconceived ideas about what the car would be like. We had driven other Cadillacs and were aware of the standard of luxury. We had already driven the Oldsmobile Toronado and knew what front-wheel-drive is like. We knew that the Eldorado and Toronado

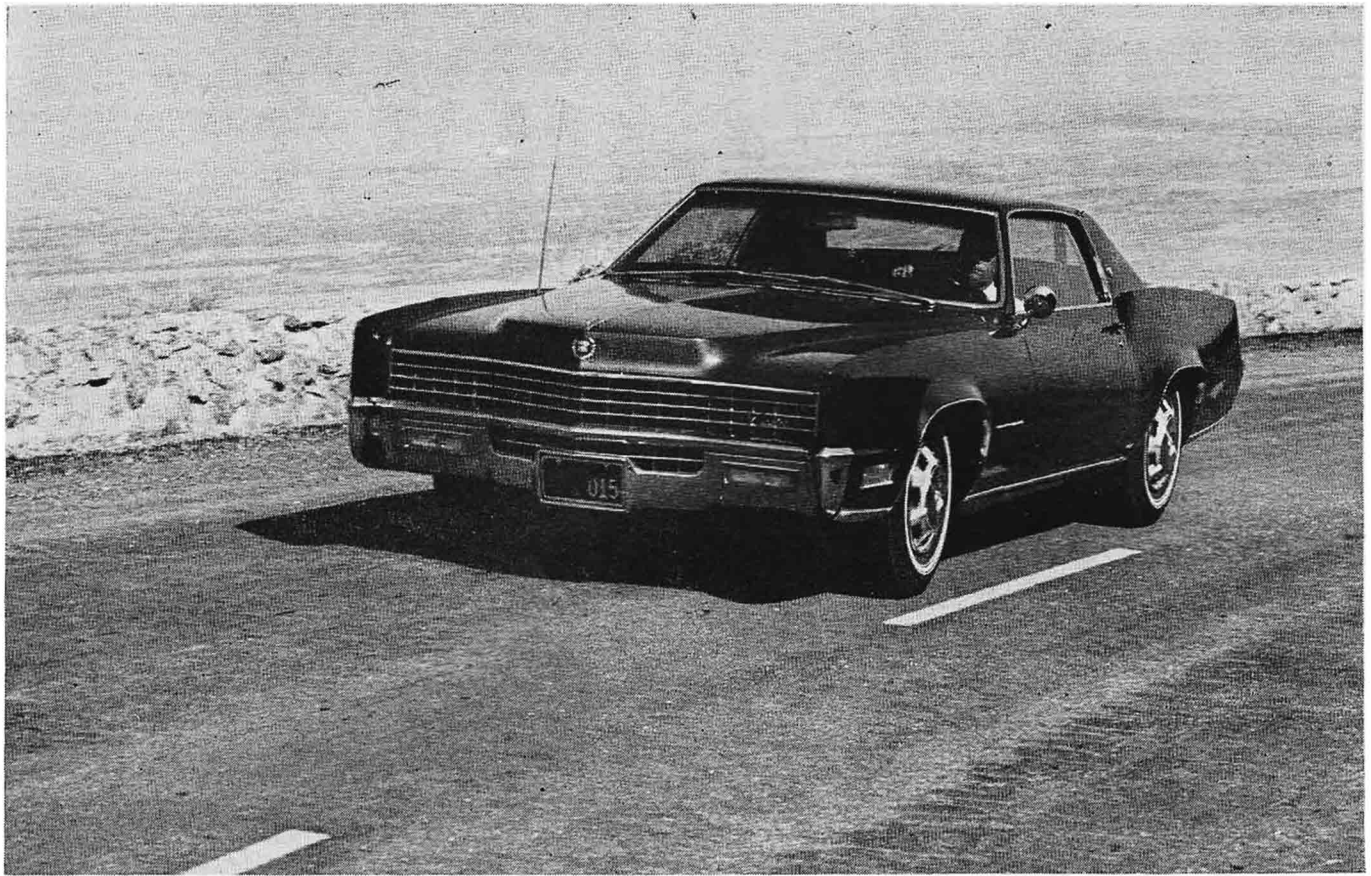
(along with the Buick Riviera) share Fisher Body Division's "E" shell. So the Eldorado would obviously be a plush Toronado with a Caddy grille and engine, right?

Wrong. It took us less than half an hour away from city traffic to realize that for all the similarities, the Eldorado has a character and personality *all* its own. Our previous concept of Cadillac luxury also went out the window — we were way short of the mark.

Some clue as to the public's changing taste emerges when you realize that the Eldorado, a 2-door hardtop, replaces the Eldorado convertible in the Fleetwood line. Once a symbol of youthful success and prestige, the ragtops have declined in popularity in recent years. Those buyers looking for the wind-in-the-hair

sensation are now likely to buy a real sports car. Another segment of the market has been attracted to luxury personal cars. It is this second group that the Eldorado is aimed at, as well as the "conquest" market — those buyers who can be enticed into buying their first Cadillac. Cadillac Division's confidence in both their product and market is reflected in the addition of a second assembly line for the first time in the 64-year history of the make. This line will produce nothing but Eldorados, with the first year's production scheduled for 15,000 units — enough to fill the demand (which already appears strong) but still remain exclusive.

Driving an Eldorado is something of an Alice in Disneyland experience. It takes longer to get used to all the



ELDORADO'S CRISP, TAILORED LINES AROUSED ADMIRATION EVERYWHERE, SHOULD WEAR WELL WITHOUT REQUIRING MUCH ANNUAL FACE-LIFTING.

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continued

automatic convenience accessories than to the car itself. One accessory our test car did not have which would have affected the driving was disc front brakes but more on this later. Standard equipment includes Hydra-Matic, variable-ratio power steering and an automatic load-leveling control. In addition, this car had the 6-way power seat, power windows, and power door and window locks. As was true of 88% of all Cadillacs ordered in 1966, this one had the automatic climate control air-conditioner/heater. An inside trunk control, automatic headlight control, speed control, AM-FM stereo radio with power antenna (that sounded better than the elaborate rig in our home), and a seat heater fill out the complement of automatic devices and controls the driver has to contend with. About the only extra the Eldorado doesn't have is a remote control for the driver to open the passenger's door.

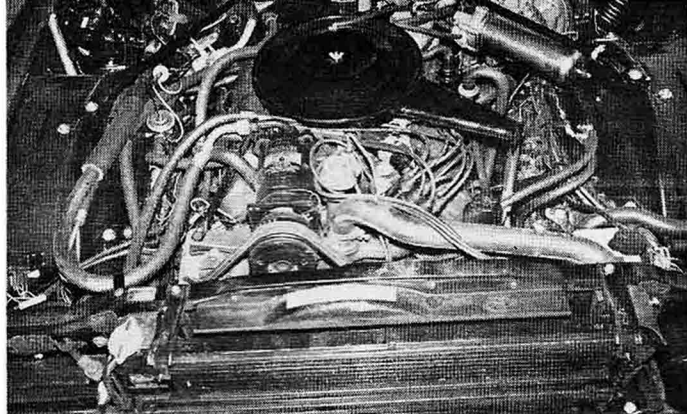
Before taking the car to the track for performance testing we drove for about 600 miles under a variety of conditions. These ranged from deserts below sea level to mountains, and both expressways and rush-hour surface streets. In all of these circumstances at normal

speeds the Eldorado, like any Cadillac, was an almost soporific machine but unlike its stablemates, it didn't *drive you*. That nebulous quality called "feel of the road" was definitely present. The only evidence of front-wheel-drive was the absence of a transmission/driveshaft tunnel on the floor. It was only in long tight bends when driven hard that the Eldorado had to be handled differently. Like most large American cars, the Eldorado has a front-end weight bias. Because of the fwd, this is even more pronounced, resulting in very noticeable understeer — what race drivers call "pushing the front end"—when driven hard into a turn. In a rear-drive car this can be corrected by feathering off the throttle, but on a fwd this only increases the understeer. The right way to do it is to slow down far enough in advance that you can enter the turn with the throttle open to pull the car through. If you get in over your head, the best thing to do is stay on the throttle and use more steering lock rather than feather. The front tires make a lot of noise, but the car will stick.

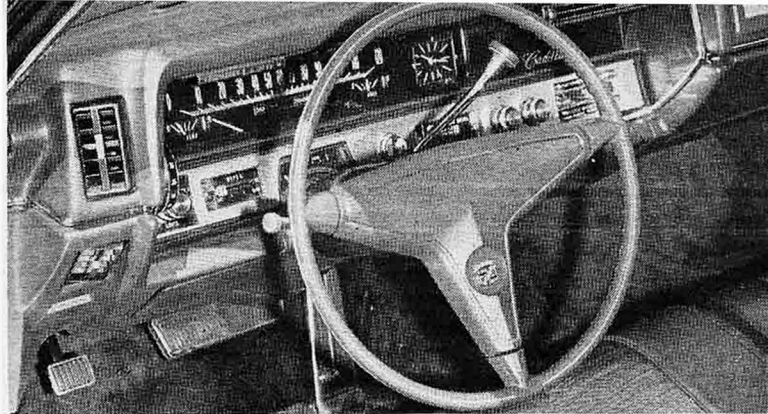
Such trick stuff becomes necessary only when driving with more verve than is usually needed or legal. For the

most part, we were more inclined to relax and enjoy the Eldorado than with any other car we've tested. Whenever possible we found the pace of traffic, set the speed control, and just steered. You can poor-mouth the super-automation of the luxury cars as gadgetry, if you wish, but those gadgets grow on you and do serve a purpose. On a 250-mile round trip taken on a familiar route we were amazed at how much fresher than usual we were at the finish, despite starting out at the end of a working day, in typical 6 P.M. expressway traffic, and returning the same night.

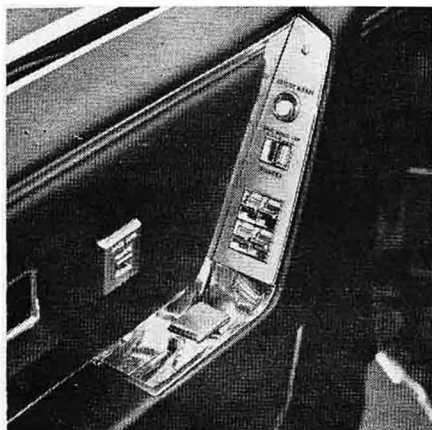
A flaw in all this plush is the seating. The 6-way power seat and adjustable steering column offered every arrangement but that which seemed entirely right to three of our testers. The front seat itself is an interesting compromise between a bench and buckets. It is a bench, but with the opposite ends contoured like a pair of buckets. They give excellent back support, but are just a bit too firm. The center part of the bench between the contoured parts is somewhat raised and too hard to be used for any length of time. Real buckets with individual adjustment, which



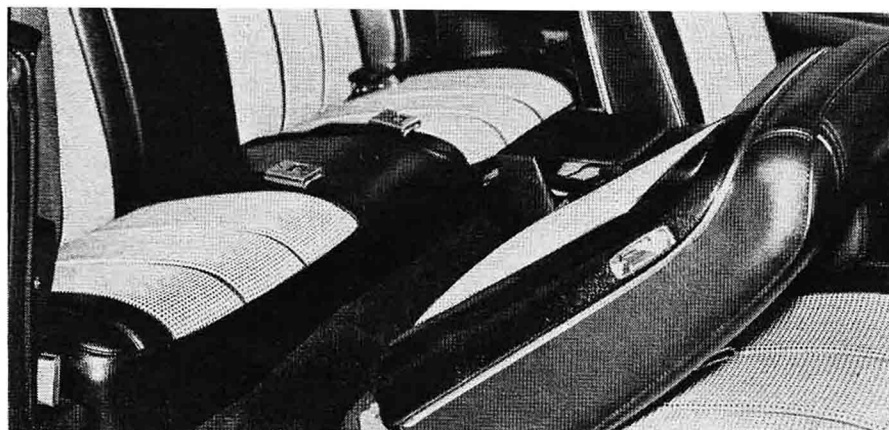
Pumps, plumbing, vacuum reservoirs, etc., necessary for accessories, completely hide the engine and front-wheel-drive.



Variable-ratio power steering makes possible a smaller steering wheel. Overall diameter is the same as the 1958 horn ring.



Accessory controls fill door. Testers would pinch their fingers in door latch recess.



Despite the bucket seat look, the front is a bench. A separate handle allows rear-seat passengers to open door from their seat. Note the shoulder harness at far left.

are optional but rather expensive because they are genuine leather, seem to be a better approach and altogether in keeping with the new-to-Cadillac character of the car. Another flaw to some of us is the horn-ring-size steering wheel.

The Eldorado at 221 inches overall is 3 inches shorter than the Coupe de Ville, despite the impression of length caused by the long hood and front overhang. That hood, by the way, is no optical illusion — it's 7 inches longer than on other Cadillac models. We found that the car was longer than many of the optimistic parallel parking spaces painted on the pavement.

Shrewd work with sheetmetal has created a car that is instantly recognizable as a Cadillac with hardly an impression of the other cars that share the same body shell. Eschewing the curves of the Toronado, Eldorado features crisp, tailored, almost razor-sharp lines. Prominent identification mark is the coffin-shaped hump on the hood which was likened to the Cord by more than one onlooker and incidentally, the Eldorado was a real attention-getter. Styling of any car may be a matter of taste, but Cadillac has done a fine job with the tricky task of mating a classic,

elegant look to contemporary verve. They've come quite a way in good taste since the garish fins of the late '50s.

The small back window with its vertical center crease was another matter. It may give a sense of privacy to the back seat, but this is not really a back-seat-passenger oriented car. We soon got used to bifurcated images seen through the creased glass, but the small size of the window made it difficult to see any part of the rear deck or fenders through it. This configuration required some very circumspect behavior when backing up. Not too surprisingly, gas station and car wash attendants were very careful to check if that creased window was plexiglass before wiping it. Despite the plastic appearance, it is made of glass.

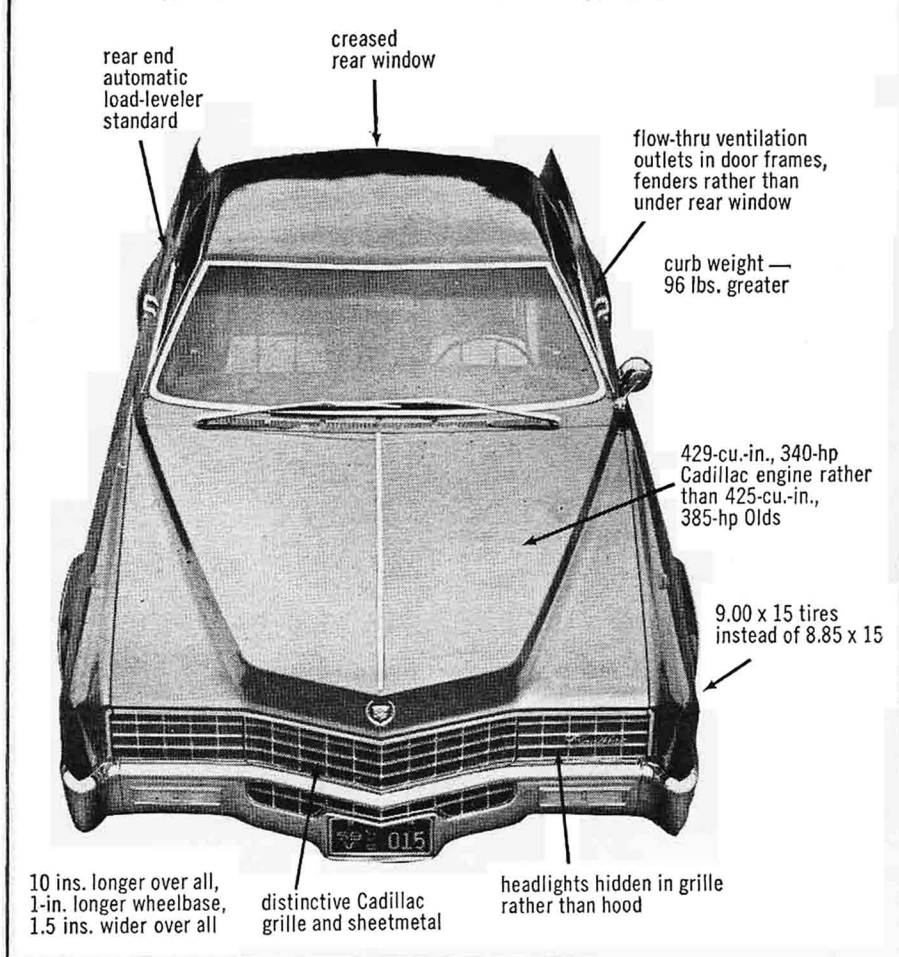
The slotted vents on the inner sides of the rear fenders also caused much speculation. They are exhaust vents for the forced-air ventilation system. Two more are located in the rear side of the door frames outboard of the rubber seal, but are visible only when the door is open. We found this system very effective, even in the desert, when we turned off the automatic climate control for a while.

The performance tests were very revealing, and in some ways quite surprising. Briefly, the car went much quicker than we anticipated, but didn't stop quite as planned.

One thing we hadn't expected was much performance off the line. The 429-cubic-inch V-8 puts out a perhaps conservatively rated 340 hp, not too spectacular for a car with a curb weight in excess of 4700 pounds. Nevertheless, the Eldorado was more than willing to smoke the front tires every time and recorded a high 8.9 seconds in the 0-to-60-mph department. It will come as a blow to the stop light grand prix set to know that the best times, both e.t. and trap speed, were made starting in "Drive 2" with very low stall speed. Even this technique burned some rubber, but gained us nearly a second over the more spectacular starts. Performance was not in a class with a Hemi Charger or GTO, but the car was certainly no stone either.

The trip through the mountains had revealed no brake problems, but our stopping tests at the drag strip certainly did. The test from 30 mph concerned us less because of the distance than the fact that the car slid around 45 degrees before stopping. Test cars often get out

ELDORADO COMPARED TO TORONADO



Although they share a body shell, Saginaw front-wheel-drive unit and GM parentage, the Eldorado differs from the Toronado in every department — size, shape, engine, and prestige. Production is limited to 15,000 with hand-picked men on the assembly line.

ELDORADO continued

of shape when we miss the ideal feathering pressure at 60 mph, but rarely at 30. We were more judicious on subsequent 30-mph stops, and it pulled up straight, but never in less distance.

With no desire to lose anything that big or that expensive at 60 mph, we looked for the best stop we could manage in a straight line. The stopping distance of 204 feet was the same as that required to stop a Chrysler Town & Country station wagon carrying an 840-pound payload (MT, Sept. '66). In more graphic terms, it was almost two car lengths more than we would have expected. The answer seems to be that the Eldorado really needs the disc front brake option (our test car had drums), which looks like a bargain at \$105.25.

It is axiomatic that if you can afford a Cadillac, you shouldn't have to worry about gas mileage. On the other hand, many of the people who can afford such

cars have now reached that enviable position because they do worry about such things. Our best mileage was on the high-speed, flat straights of the desert at 12.6 mpg. In the mountains the figure dropped slightly to 11.9, about the same as we got in the city. During our performance test when the car was driven very hard the entire time, mileage dropped to just 10 mpg, still not a bad figure for such a big car, even under the best of circumstances.

This isn't the first time a major engineering concept has been introduced by Oldsmobile the year before its adoption by Cadillac. With public acceptance of the then unique Toronado established by 50,000 sales in 1966, Eldorado seems unlikely to have trouble selling the forecasted 15,000, even with a much bigger price tag. Introduction week enthusiasm in the showrooms bears this out, too. Maybe it just takes pull. /MT



eldorado at a glance . . .

Most luxurious personal car on the road . . . features front-wheel-drive and host of automatic conveniences, including many as standard rather than extra-cost options . . . excellent ride . . . 340-hp V-8 has plenty of power, but car needs disc-brake option for satisfactory stopping power.

how the car performed . . .

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)	
0-30 mph	3.5 secs
0-45 mph	5.3 secs
0-60 mph	8.9 secs
0-75 mph	13.9 secs
TIME AND DISTANCE TO ATTAIN PASSING SPEEDS:	
40-60 mph	4.4 secs., 322 ft.
50-70 mph	5.1 secs., 448.8 ft.
STANDING START QUARTER-MILE:	
	17.01 secs., 84.04 mph
SPEEDS IN GEARS @ SHIFT POINTS:	
1st	46 mph @ 4500 rpm
2nd	75 mph @ 4500 rpm
3rd	(not max) 72 mph @ 3000 rpm
SPEEDOMETER ERROR:	
Electric Speedometer	30 45 50 60 70
Car Speedometer	31 47 53 64 75
MPH PER 1000 RPM: 24.0	
STOPPING DISTANCES:	
From 30 mph, 43 ft.; from 60 mph, 204 ft.	

specifications . . .

ENGINE: Ohv V-8	
Bore and stroke (ins.):	4.00 x 4.13
Displacement (cu. ins.):	429
Horsepower:	340 @ 4600 rpm
Max. torque (lbs.-ft.):	480 @ 3000 rpm
Compression ratio:	10.5:1
Carburetion:	1 4-bbl.
TRANSMISSION: 3-spd. auto	
FINAL DRIVE RATIO:	3.21:1
SUSPENSION: Independent front by torsion bars.	
Rear beam axle by single-leaf springs per wheel and dual tubular shocks per wheel.	
STEERING: Concentric gear with variable-ratio power boost, 16.3:1. Turning diameter: 44.5 ft curb-to-curb. Turns lock-to-lock: 2.6.	
WHEELS: 15 x 6.00 stamped steel.	
TIRES: Goodyear 9.00 x 15 2-ply.	
BRAKES: Dual-system hydraulic with power boost — 12-in.-dia. drums front and rear.	
FUEL CAPACITY: 24 gals.	
MILEAGE RANGE: 11.9 — 12.6 mpg	
BODY & FRAME: Boxed perimeter.	
DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase: 120 ins. Track: 63.5 ins. front, 63 ins. rear. Overall length 221 ins., width 80 ins., height 53.3 ins. Usable trunk capacity: 13.7 cu. ft.	
CURB WEIGHT: 4647 lbs.	

prices and accessories . . .

MANUFACTURER'S SUGGESTED RETAIL: (excludes state and local taxes, license, options, accessories, and transportation) 2-door hardtop \$6327.	
OPTIONS & ACCESSORIES:	
Power rear vent windows (door windows std.)	\$ 63.15
6-way power seat (4-way std.)	83.15
Radio AM FM stereo	287.90
Climate Control (heater/air cond.)	515.75
Adjustable steering wheel	89.50
Automatic headlight control	50.00
Cruise Control	94.75