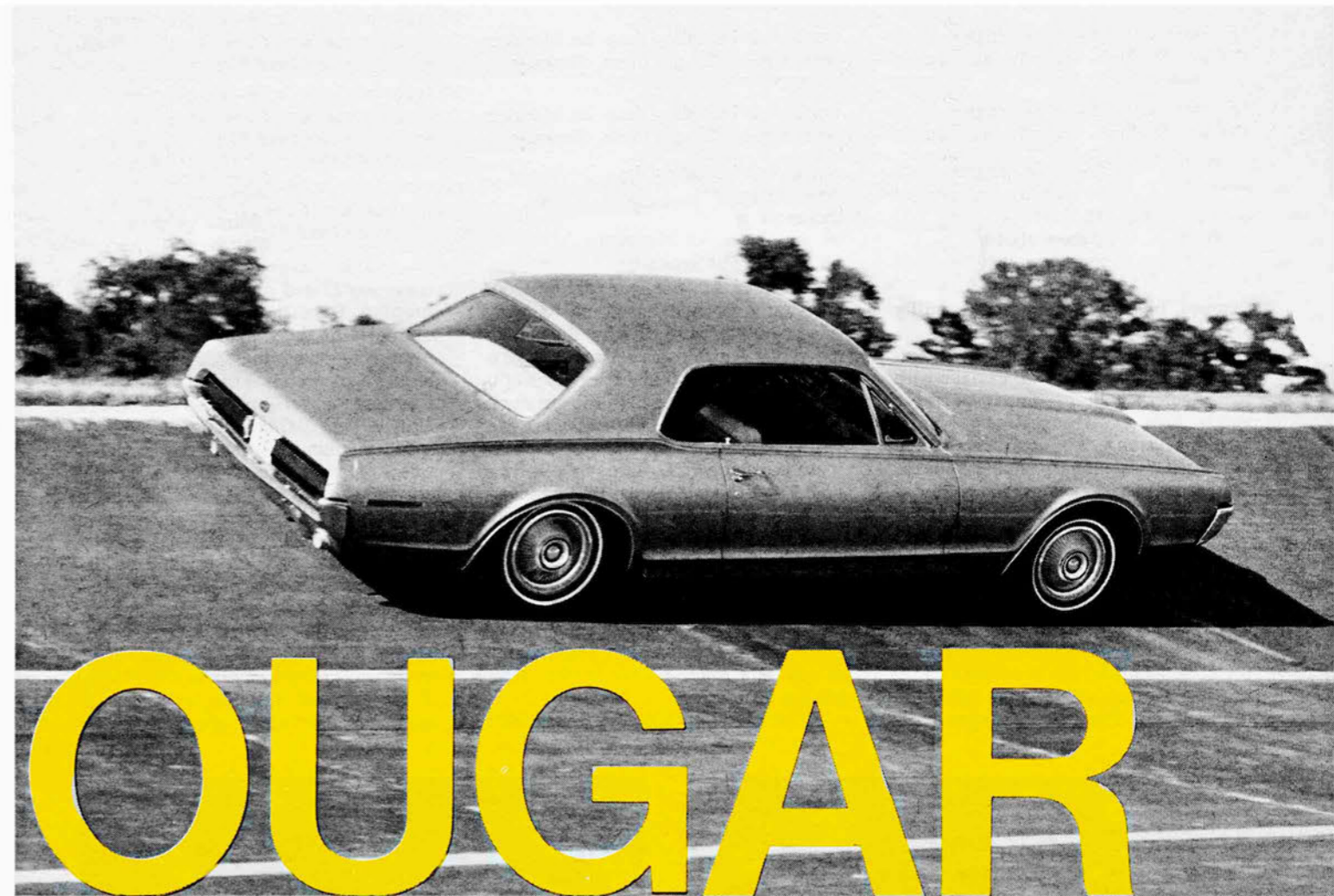


CAR LIFE
ROAD TEST



The Mercury Catcar's Fascination Is Finesse in Fabrication

SEEK A WORD to fit the Cougar and the search seems always to end with "finesse." In putting together the newest of the 2 plus 2 Ponycars, Lincoln-Mercury hasn't changed the formula, hasn't done anything radical, hasn't tampered with the million-seller concept. What L-M Division has accomplished is a completely finished product, simply done with very subtle discernment.

Even the name Cougar was chosen with care and skill. Lincoln-Mercury marketing specialists conducted two separate dummy advertising campaigns preparatory to the advent of the new specialty car. One campaign was based on the name "Apollo," the other on "Cougar." The latter appellation elicited responses such as "swift," "silent," and "lithe" from test subjects who were shown a car bearing the name. Swift, silent and lithe are most

desirable when applied to an automobile. Hence Cougar the car became.

The name seems very well chosen as it must compete with a brisk little horse, Mustang; a smooth, silver fish, Barracuda; the soon-to-be-announced Pontiac Firebird; and the Camaro, the little pal from Chevrolet, which could well have done with its own naming survey.

Name alone, however, does not necessarily merchandise a car. So, standard equipment specifications for the Cougar aims at enticing the taste-conscious, comfort-minded customer. Nylon carpeting, V-8 engine, a spate of courtesy lights, wheel covers, foam-padded bucket seats, softly padded all-vinyl trim and a floor-mounted shift lever are the automotive niceties the prospective buyer need not pay extra for. Yet, the list of Cougar extra-cost optional items is lengthy enough to

give a spendthrift pause. The exception to the additional equipment list is power windows which aren't available because current window lift motors and associated levers are thicker than Cougar doors can accommodate. As numerous potential Cougar buyers have expressed a desire for electric window lifts, Lincoln-Mercury engineers are busy designing a less bulky system for the car.

Buyers who decide to order, rather than choose a ready-made Cougar off a dealer's showroom floor, may elect to accept the standard 289-cu. in. V-8 with 9.3:1 compression ratio and single 2-barrel carburetion, rated 200 bhp at 4400 rpm. The two alternatives to this engine are the 289 with 9.8:1 compression ratio, 4-barrel carburetion, rated at 225 bhp at 4800 rpm, and the 390-cu. in. V-8, with 10.5:1 compression ratio and 4-barrel carburetion,

and rated 320 bhp. The 4-barrel 289 costs \$53 extra; the 390 engine is \$158 more.

THE 3-speed manual transmission, of course, is standard with all three engines, though a heavy-duty 3-speed is supplied with the 390. Four-speed manual transmissions are available for both 289s and the 390, as are Merc-O-Matic 3-speed automatics.

Power-assisted drum or disc brakes, and power steering are additional Cougar available options.

For approximately \$325 over the base Cougar price of nearly \$3000, the buyer may obtain the so-called GT Performance Group that includes the 390 engine, Firestone Super Sports Wide Oval Tires, special exhaust system, power disc front brakes and special exterior trim.

But, the sneaker in the Cougar catalog is the "Performance Handling Package." This adds a mere \$31 and includes higher rate front and rear springs, larger diameter anti-roll bar, heavy-duty shock absorbers all around, quickened steering (20.3:1, rather than the standard 25.3:1) and 6-in.

wide wheels. The catch is that the package is available only with the 390-cu. in. engine.

Among other extra-cost desirables are air conditioning, the kit for which includes a 55-ampere alternator, special fan and high capacity radiator; buyer's choice of am radio, am/fm radio or am/stereotape unit; bumper guards, luggage rack, limited slip differential, tinted glass and 2-tone paint scheme; deluxe seatbelts and shoulder straps; tilt-away steering wheel and speed control; styled steel wheels and wheel covers; and a "visual check panel" that includes door ajar, low fuel, seat belt and parking brake reminder lights. The options listing permits an owner to develop a factory assembled car to his taste—this taste being dictated only by affluence.

THERE IS another direction the Cougarist may travel. Lincoln-Mercury already has published a small, 4-page brochure on dealer-installed items that include a dual-point distributor kit, electronic tachometer, tuned exhaust headers, cast aluminum wheels, aluminum pistons, high-lift camshaft, and

induction manifolds for four 2-throat Weber carburetors or two 4-barrel Holleys. Of course, there will be the Cougar man who will buy a modest, plain-Jane car, then go shopping in the Shelby American catalog, which is full of Cobra performance equipment for 289 engines.

Lincoln-Mercury, under competition specialist Fran Hernandez, plans to go sedan racing with super-tuned Cougars. NASCAR tuner Bud Moore of Spartanburg, S.C., will prepare the cars. Formula I driver/builder Dan Gurney will captain "Team Cougar," which will include veteran Indianapolis competitor Parnelli Jones and long-time road racer and former Cobra driver Ed Leslie. Objectives of this operation, of course, are to promote Cougars generally, interest sedan racing types in purchasing Cougars in which to enter the competitive ranks and eventually the marketing of a whole line of performance equipment for Cougars. This equipment is slated for future development under the aegis of either Moore or Gurney. Also on tap are a limited number of Super Cougars that will carry underhood a high-

COUGAR

performance 428-cu. in. engine, à la Carroll Shelby's recently announced Mustang GT-500.

It is apparent, then, that the simple title Cougar is merely a tent to cover a great many different sorts of automobiles, plain and fancy, cool, cushy and competitive.

The temptation, certainly, is for unrestrained comparison of Cougar with the elder, smaller, sometimes more gaudy kinsman from Ford's animal farm—Mustang. The two cars share an almost identical engine lineup, though the 6-cyl. powerplant is absent from the Cougar list. The Cougar's wheelbase, at 111 in., is 3 in. longer than Mustang. Cougar front track measures 0.2 in. wider than Mustang 8-cyl. models, though rear track width is identical for both cars. Overall length comparison shows the Cougar is 6.7 in. longer than the Mustang's 183.6 in. The Cougar's maximum width is 0.3 in. wider. The 2-door Cougar hard-

top is 0.2 in. taller than its Mustang counterpart. Of all these dimensions, the most apparent Cougar difference, as compared with Mustang, is in overall length. The added 6.7 in. is mainly in increased hood length for the Cougar, but a portion has found its way into a slightly more lengthy, thus much more comfortable, passenger compartment. This is evidence of Lincoln-Mercury refinement of basic product. There's that word again, *finesse*.

In *CAR LIFE*'s road test of the ultimate Mustang (*CL*, Jan. '67), it was noted that the car tended toward ornamental ostentation. The Cougar, on the other hand, though quite similar in interior design, bears soft vinyl padding where the Mustang displays brushed aluminum, and quilted vinyl where the Mustang shows painted metal strips. The tone of Cougar is one of pleasing quiet luxury, rather than blatant decoration.

All the Lincoln-Mercury *finesse* isn't

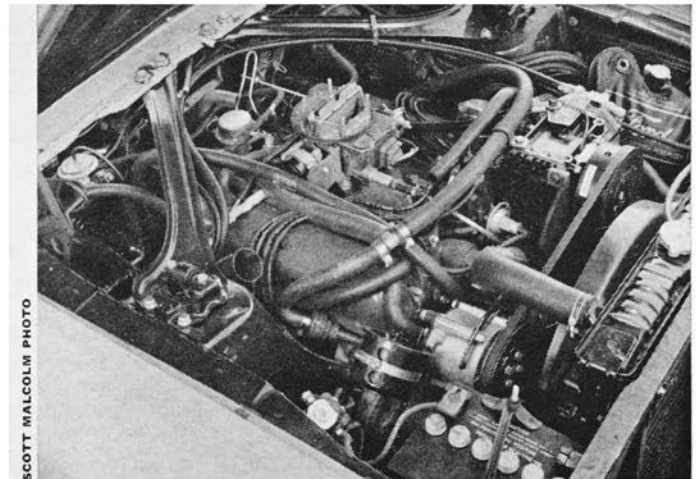
on visible surfaces. For example, the Cougar carries 123.5 lb. of sound deadening material—out, out, out for racing, but desirable when listening to progressive jazz from that fm radio. The Cougar's front suspension employs articulated—a hook-and-eye arrangement—drag struts that yield to roadway irregularities. Compliance bushings in the strut joints permit front wheels to recede slightly on impact.

Such are the generalities of Cougar. *CAR LIFE* staff members gleaned the specifics from three encounters with examples of the Catcar. Two of these meetings—one with a 289-cu. in./200-bhp engine and 3-speed automatic transmission version, the other with a 390-cu. in./320-bhp engine and 3-speed manual transmission model—were of such brevity to be worthy only of driving impressions. The third Cougar, with a 289 engine and 4-speed manual transmission, was with staffers for a sufficient length of time to develop more than a passing acquaintance and to gather sufficient data to complete a thorough road test.

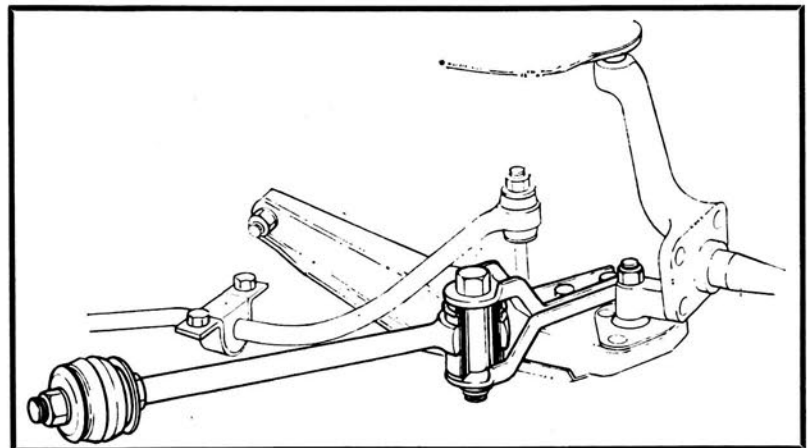
THE 289/AUTOMATIC was the choice, the favored Cougar, of one *CL* man because the 3-speed Merc-O-



TWIN CARBURETORS and specially cast valve covers on a prototype Cougar indicate that many things are in store for the Cougar buyer/performance enthusiast.



POWER FOR test car was from a 2-barrel, 289-cu. in. V-8. Below, articulated drag strut bushings yield to ease ride harshness when wheel strikes road irregularities.



Matic with ratios of 2.46, 1.46 and 1.00, first to third, coupled to a 2.80 rear axle, seemed very well mated to the torque delivery characteristics of the small V-8—if the driver shunned accelerative activity of any sort and used the car simply for pleasant transportation. This individual eschewed the manual transmission because he saw “no reason to row oneself around in this day and age, particularly when one has over 280 lb.-ft. of torque to call upon.” This car appeared to be the ideal commuter, not physically demanding in the stop-and-go traffic at city center, yet brisk and flexible enough for freeway maneuvering. Its soft—standard—suspension, however, was not well-suited to winding or rural roadways. Body roll was such that some drivers declined to corner with anything approaching verve.

The 390/3-speed manual combination had been given the GT touch with installation of the heavy-duty suspension components, wide-rim wheels, Firestone Super Sports Wide Oval tires and Kelsey-Hayes disc brakes with 11.38-in. diameter rotors. It could be anticipated that a 4-speed manual gearbox would be most suitable to the 390 GT-equipped Cougar. In truth, the 390-cu. in. engine's torque delivery (427 lb.-ft. maximum at 3200 rpm) is over such a broad range that the 4-speed manual transmission simply isn't necessary for top performance. Gearing of 2.42, 1.61 and 1.00, in the 3-speed gearbox, coupled to a 3.25 rear axle ratio, provided exceedingly rapid acceleration, quick second-gear passing maneuvers and an indicated top speed of near 120 mph.

TEST DRIVERS, accustomed by long experience to use of the common 4-speed, H-gated manual transmission, encountered some difficulty in adapting once again to the Ford 3-speed arrangement, with reverse gear at the upper left of the H, formerly the American standard. Drivers occasionally engaged reverse gear when first was desired. Luck, rather than skill, kept the Cougar's rear imprint from other cars.

It follows that the true enthusiast will find this car delightful, but his delight in the automobile need not extend to its penchant for rapidity. In addition to the 390/3-speed manual combination, suspension, brakes and tires must be considered.

The optional GT handling package includes 1.187-in. piston diameter shock absorbers where the 1-in. piston is standard. Front spring rate is raised from the standard 260 lb./in. to 320 lb./in. with the GT equipped car. The anti-roll bar diameter is 0.72 in. on standard Cougars, 0.84 in. on the GT. The standard Cougar's rear spring rate

THE ANATOMY OF TWO COUGARS

Symbol	Description	Standard Suspension 289-cu. in. Engine		Handling Suspension 390-cu. in. Engine	
	Car weight, total, lb.	3579*	3849		
	Front end weight, lb.	1905	2110		
	Rear end weight, lb.	1674	1739		
	Unsprung weight, total, lb.	478	525		
	Unsprung weight, front, lb.	182	196		
	Unsprung weight, rear, lb.	306	340		
WB	Wheelbase, length, in.	111	111		
Tf	Tread, front, in.	58	58.5		
Tr	Tread, rear, in.	58	58.5		
A	Centerline, front wheel to center of gravity, in.	52	50.2		
B	Centerline, car to center of gravity, in.	n.a.	n.a.		
ho	Ground to center of gravity, in.	21	21		
	Front ride rate, lb.-in.** (C)	85	120		
	Rear ride rate, lb.-in.** (C)	84	150		
	Front roll rate, lb.-ft./deg. (C)	320	565		
	Rear roll rate, lb.-ft./deg. (C)	145	220		
	Front roll center, height, in.	2.42	2.42		
	Rear roll center, height, in.	10.2	10.2		
	Roll center height to center of gravity, in.	15	15.1		
	Roll couple, ft.-lb.	388	419		
	Front roll couple, ft.-lb.	267	302		
	Rear roll couple, ft.-lb.	121	117		
	Roll rate, total, lb.-ft./deg. (C)	465	785		
	Cornering acceleration, G ft./sec. ²	0.1 G	0.1 G		
	Front suspension frequency, cpm (C)	54	63		
	Rear suspension frequency, cpm (C)	59.5	78		

*5-passenger load. **With tires. (C) Calculated.

is 85 lb./in.; the GT's is 120 lb./in. The standard Cougar employs hollow rubber rear spring eye bushings where the GT option has solid bushings.

By comparison to standard Cougars, the GT's suspension seemed very stiff. One complaint from drivers was that under brisk acceleration, and thus under suddenly strong torque loading, the car's steering changed direction to the left. Conversely, when torque loading was removed, i.e., foot off the accelerator, the car took a slight dive to the right. This condition was a bit disconcerting when it was first encountered in a passing maneuver on a narrow road, but when drivers learned that the acceleration-dip-left, deceleration-dip-right was to be expected, they were ready for it and adjusted their driving technique accordingly. The condition was diagnosed by some observers as “rear axle steering,” the result of a husky engine coupled to a live axle on flexible leaf springs.

Those big, fat, wide Firestone Wide Ovals again proved their worth. The 390 GT Cougar was taken at good speed over some of the crookedest roadway anywhere. The tires plainly would not come unstuck short of gross imprudence.

THE DRIVING experience in the 390 GT was gained without benefit of CL's decelerometer. Hence drivers could only guess at rates of deceleration achieved by the Cougar's disc brakes. A conservative estimate is that the deceleration rate approached 25 ft./sec./sec. The combination of Firestone Super Sports Wide Ovals and proportioned disc/drum braking simply can't be beaten.

The Cougar that CL was able to test over a longer period of time was one that might be ordered by the person more enthusiastic about creature comfort than cornering. Light blue paint, accented by white pinstripes at



UNCLUTTERED dash and readable instruments are Cougar plusses.

the beltline and styled steel wheels, seemed austere by today's standards of chromium plating and multitudinous medallions. The simplicity in decoration permitted the Cougar's refined, smooth styling to emerge sleekly uncluttered. It is to be hoped that Lincoln-Mercury stylists will allow this

plain functionality of exterior to remain, rather than adding bits and pieces of bright metal to "create" a chromium cluttered Cougar II for the 1968 model year.

Interior styling also was simple, but rich looking, in two shades of soft, textured vinyl over resilient padding. Instruments were located in two large dials directly in front of the driver. Speedometer and odometer were to the left and temperature gauge, fuel gauge and oil pressure and alternator warning lights were to the right. A clock, smaller in diameter, was between the two large dials. This cluster proved highly readable, but the system of warning lights was another matter—an example of styling, rather than human engineering. Brake system pressure and left-turn indicator lights were located well to the left of the panel, while the non-functional seat belt reminder and right turn lights were far to the right of the driver's range of vision. The high beam lamp was directly above the temperature gauge. As the optional "Visual Check Panel" had been installed in the test car, a door ajar and functional seat belt reminder lights were to the left of and below the radio, mounted in the center of the dash, and parking brake and low fuel warning lights were to the

right of and below the radio. Confusing? Exactly.

THE 200-BHP, 2-barrel carbureted 289-cu. in. V-8 in the CL test car was coupled to the sporty 4-speed with first to fourth ratios of 2.78, 1.93, 1.36 and 1.00. The 2.80 rear axle, however, limited the car's acceleration capabilities to 18-sec. quarter-miles. The 4-barrel version of the 289 is delivered with a 3.00 rear axle. It becomes obvious that if the buyer chooses the 289 engine, his choice of transmission depends greatly on what sort of driving he intends to do. For all practical purposes, the standard 3-speed manual, with 2.99, 1.75 and 1.00 gearing, first to third, and the 2.80 rear axle, would prove adequate, if not ideal.

The 289/4-speed manual Cougar suffered by comparison to the 390/3-speed manual GT-equipped model. After driving the GT, the 289/4-speed's acceleration and handling at first seemed sorely lacking. It was during a long turnpike tour that test crewmen were shown what the small V-8 with the 4-speed gearbox could do. It would travel at 75 mph, at a relaxed engine speed of 2700 rpm, yet deliver a smooth, air-conditioned ride at an actual 16.5 mpg of regular grade fuel. There are rewarding aspects of auto-

1967 MERCURY COUGAR 2-DOOR HARDTOP



DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.....	111.0
Track, f/r, in.....	58.1/58.1
Overall length, in.....	190.3
width.....	71.2
height.....	51.8
Front seat hip room, in.....	2 x 23.0
shoulder room.....	53.8
head room.....	37.5
pedal-seatback, max.....	36.0
Rear seat hip room, in.....	51.2
shoulder room.....	53.2
leg room.....	30.7
head room.....	35.9
Door opening width, in.....	39.1
Floor to ground height, in.....	10.3
Ground clearance, in.....	6.3

PRICES

List, fob factory.....	\$2851
Equipped as tested.....	4149
Options included: Smog controls; 4-speed manual transmission; cour- tesy and safety check lights; white sidewall 7.35-14 tires; console; power steering and disc brakes; am/fm radio; tinted glass; air con- ditioner; styled steel wheels.	

CAPACITIES

No. of passengers.....	4
Luggage space, cu. ft.....	9.1
Fuel tank, gal.....	17.0
Crankcase, qt.....	4.0
Transmission/diff., pt.....	4.0/4.0
Radiator coolant, qt.....	15.0

CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Frame type: unitized platform	
Front suspension type: Independent s.l.a., drag strut, ball joints, coil springs mounted over upper arm, telescopic shock absorbers.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.....	103
anti-roll bar dia., in.....	0.72
Rear suspension type: Hotchkiss drive with parallel, longitudinal, semi- elliptic leaf springs, telescopic shock absorbers.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.....	110
Steering system: Recirculating ball and nut, parallelogram linkage, Bendix power assisted.	
gear ratio.....	16.0
overall ratio.....	20.3
turns, lock to lock.....	3.73
turning circle, ft. curb-curb.....	38.9
Curb weight, lb.....	3280
Test weight.....	3720
Weight distribution, % f/r.....	58.9/41.1

BRAKES

Type: Two-circuit hydraulic with pro- portioning valve; vented cast iron rotors, 4-piston calipers, front; duo- servo shoes, cast iron drums, rear.	
Front rotor, dia., in.....	11.38
Rear drum, dia. x width.....	10 x 1.75
total swept area, sq. in.....	330.0
Power assist: Integral vacuum line psi @ 100 lb. pedal.....	1050

WHEELS/TIRES

Wheel size.....	14 x 5J
optional size available.....	14 x 5
bolt no./circle dia., in.....	5/4.5
Tires: General Jet-Air size.....	7.35 x 14
recommended inflation, psi.....	24/24
capacity rating, total lb.....	4640

ENGINE

Type, no. cyl.....	ohv, 90° V-8
Bore x stroke, in.....	4.005 x 2.87
Displacement, cu. in.....	289.112
Compression ratio.....	9.3
Rated bhp @ rpm.....	200 @ 4400
equivalent mph.....	121
Rated torque @ rpm.....	282 @ 2400
equivalent mph.....	66
Carburetion.....	1x2
barrel dia., pri./sec.....	1.437
Valve operation: Hydraulic lifters, pushrods and overhead rocker arms.	
valve dia., int./exh.....	1.780/1.449
lift, int./exh.....	0.3684/0.380
timing, deg.....	16-70, 52-24
duration, int./exh.....	266/256
opening overlap.....	40
Exhaust system: Single transverse reverse-flow muffler.	
pipe dia., exh./tail.....	2.0/2.0
Lubrication pump type.....	rotor
normal press. @ rpm.....	50-60 @ 2000
Electrical supply.....	alternator
ampere rating.....	42 @ 12 V.
Battery, plates/amp. rating.....	54/45

DRIVE-TRAIN

Clutch type: Semi-centrifugal, dry single disc.	
dia., in.....	10.0
Transmission type: Manual, 4-speed.	
Gear ratio 4th (1.00) overall.....	2.80
3rd (1.36).....	3.81
2nd (1.93).....	5.41
1st (2.78).....	7.78
synchronous meshing?.....	all four
Shift lever location.....	console
Differential type: Hypoid, straddle- mounted pinion.	
axle ratio.....	2.80

motive performance other than the blast-off from a dead stop.

The test car was equipped with 10-in. rotor disc brakes forward, drum brakes aft and the proportioning valve in between. This braking system, in conjunction with 7.35-14 General Jet-Air II tires, returned deceleration rates of 24 and 19 ft./sec./sec. in two consecutive all-on stops from 80 mph. The driver experienced no untoward directional changes and no wheel lock-up, facts that may be attributed to the proportioning valve. During the second stop, the driver encountered some vacuum run-out.

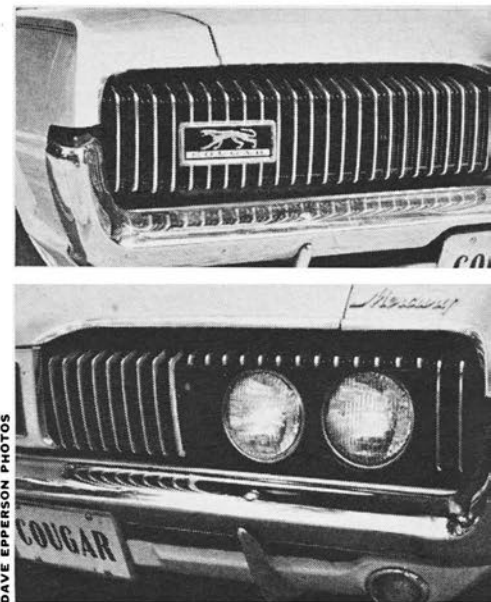
A similar braking system on a 390-cu. in. engined Mustang fitted with Wide Ovals (CL, Jan. '67) delivered deceleration rates of 29 and 27 ft./sec./sec. which indicates the broad footprints of the race-bred Firestones contribute in no little way to the stopping ability of an automobile. The cost of this capability, with respect to the Mercury Cougar, however, is approximately \$168. The pricetag includes \$85 for the power disc brake system and \$83 for the Wide Oval tires.

DISCUSSION of the price of options brings up the total price of the car. Were the buyer to add on every

conceivable item from Lincoln-Mercury's options catalog, he would receive about \$10 in change from a \$5000 bill—before taxes, insurance and licensing fees. If the buyer chose the non-factory high-performance equipment direction, he could well dig for a C-note or two in addition to the five grand. There is ample latitude for expenditure in Cougar country.

A writer of road test/product reports might be tempted to close with: "Well, there it is, the Cougar," but that won't quite get it. The statement lacks finesse. He could try "Well, there they are, the Cougars," and be a bit more accurate, but that won't do either.

There are Cougars from race car to dragway performer, from country corner to freeway commuter, from luxury transporter to Cobra-equipped Musclecars. Thus it is difficult to determine where exactly these Cougars fit in the Ponycar market. In base price the Cougars are some hundreds of dollars higher than Mustang, Barracuda and Camaro, though some models of all four are priced equally. In volume, Lincoln-Mercury initially found a sufficient number of Cougars could not be built to satisfy customer demand. Dealers in hotcakes would be happy to find their products selling as



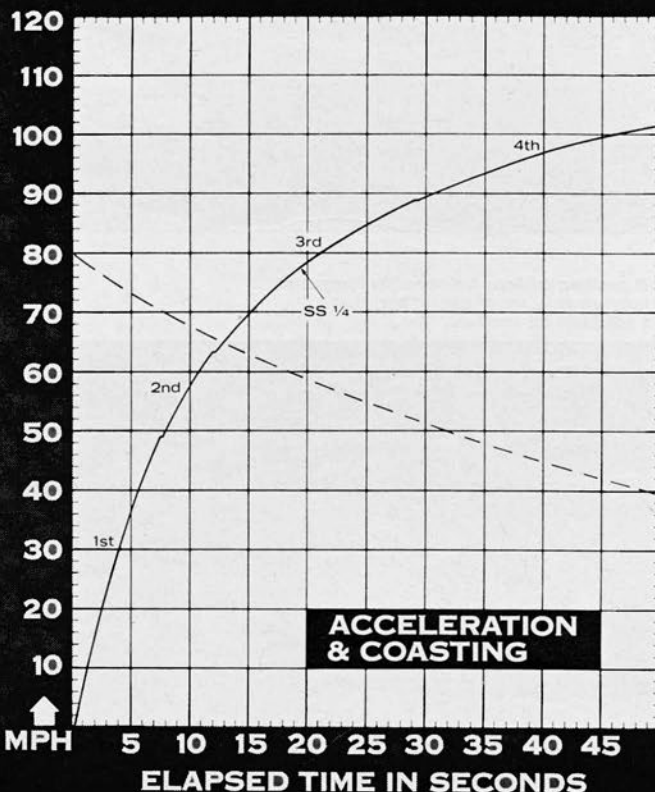
DAVE EPPERSON PHOTOS

VACUUM-powered retractable doors cover twin headlamps.

fast as did Cougars at the beginning of the 1967 model year.

If the buyer exercises as much finesse in making his purchase of a Cougar as its builders have done in its production and marketing, he'll own a car that, like a well-tailored suit, fits perfectly. ■

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test weight)	18.6
Cu. ft./ton mile	97.2
Mph/1000 rpm (high gear)	27.5
Engine revs./mile (60 mph)	2180
Piston travel, ft./mile	1032
Car Life wear index	22.5
Frontal area, sq. ft.	20.5
Box volume, cu. ft.	406.5

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual	30.4
40 mph	40.7
50 mph	51.1
60 mph	61.4
70 mph	73.3
80 mph	84.2
90 mph	95.8

MAINTENANCE INTERVALS

Oil change, engine, miles	6000
trans./differential	6000
Oil filter change	6000
Air cleaner service, miles	12,000
Chassis lubrication	36,000
Wheelbearing re-packing	36,000
Universal joint service	36,000
Coolant change, mo.	24

TUNE-UP DATA

Spark plugs	Autolite BF-82
gap, in.	0.032-0.036
Spark setting, deg./idle rpm	0/1100
cent. max. adv., deg./rpm	27.5/4000
vac. max. adv., deg./in. Hg.	22/17
Breaker gap, in.	0.014-0.016
cam dwell angle	26-28.5
arm tension, oz.	17-20
Tappet clearance, int./exh.	0/0
Fuel pump pressure, psi	4.5/5.5
Radiator cap relief press., psi	12-15

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (4000), mph	110
Shifts rpm @ mph	
3rd to 4th (4400)	89
2nd to 3rd (4400)	63
1st to 2nd (5000)	49

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.	4.3
0-40 mph	5.9
0-50 mph	7.9
0-60 mph	10.7
0-70 mph	15.7
0-80 mph	21.0
0-90 mph	31.2
0-100 mph	46.2
Standing 1/4-mile, sec.	18.0
speed at end, mph	77.8
Passing, 30-70 mph, sec.	16.7

BRAKING

(Maximum deceleration rate achieved from 80 mph)	
1st stop, ft./sec./sec.	24
fade evident?	no
2nd stop, ft./sec./sec.	19
fade evident?	no

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Test conditions, mpg	15.4
Est. normal range, mpg	14.9-16.8
Cruising range, miles	238-269

GRADABILITY

4th, % grade @ mph	10 @ 59
3rd	15 @ 55
2nd	20 @ 50
1st	30 @ 39

DRAG FACTOR

Total drag @ 60 mph, lb.	110
--------------------------	-----