

THE MERCURY CYCLONE CJ is without a doubt the most exciting big car that the Lincoln-Mercury division has ever produced. The division staff has very carefully brought performance, styling, and comfort together with downright animal appeal to create this limited-production specialty car, and if things go on as they have been in salesrooms, they'll have to build many more than planned to satisfy demand for the car.

As you can see in the accompanying photos, this was not just another Mercury. It was a Calypso Coral 2-dr. fastback with hood pins, functional hood scoop, large, explicit lettering, and a 428 CID Cobra Jet Ram Air engine, for openers. In addition to the heavy-duty suspension and electrics that are part of all CJ packages, the car was delivered with SelectShift transmission, a 4.30 Traction Lok rear, power steering and power disc brakes, and Goodyear F70-14 Polyglas tires on styled steel wheels.

That takes care of the performance items. Then, on top of all that, the car had power windows, tinted glass, tachometer, console and buckets, and AM-FM stereo radio. Not to mention various light

groups and the new Rim-Blow horn which took us half an hour to find. When you add it all up, you find that this car involved plenty of money and lots of extra weight. So, almost immediately, we had doubts about performance. Wasn't that silly of us?

Yes, it was. For after only a few minutes behind the twin-spoke wheel, we found that as heavy and optioned-out as the car was, it was also extremely strong on the street. And comfortable to drive for most people (if you're taller than average, there's no support for upper legs; if you're short, the wheel is too high to see over). We say comfortable to drive only to indicate that the front buckets are the place to be. If you're forced to sit in the back, forget it. There just isn't sufficient living space back there for a normal adult, mainly because roofline styling, with that giant backlight, dictates that rear seat passengers sit far, far forward of normal rear seat position; thus legroom disappears.

But, as we said, driving the car was quite an experience. The steering was quick enough in most instances to maintain control. Brakes were very powerful

## The Strong Wind From Dearborn

Even with the consistent SelectShift C-6,  
the Cyclone came on strong, and  
went into the 13's easily



and well-balanced. The radio and most other creature comforts performed well. But the dashboard instrument panel layout was found wanting. There were only two reading instruments: the tach, which only went to 6000 rpm, short of the CJ's potential, and the fuel gage. Every other system was monitored by lights, which is not desirable in this kind of car.

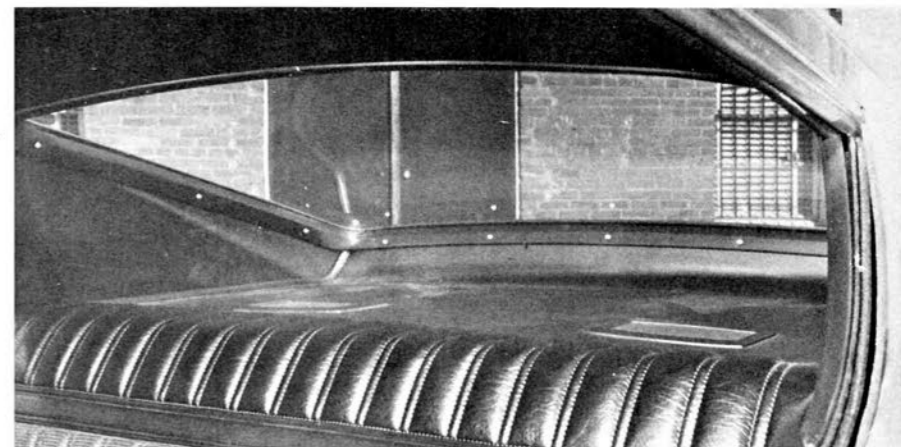
The only other real gripe we had about this particular car was the gearing. As you'll see later, the 4.30 Traction Lok didn't really help the car's drag strip output that much, and it did make highway driving quite unpleasant. Can you believe 4000 rpm at 60 mph? For 60 to 90 minutes at a time? Ugh!

And the thing we liked most about the Cyclone? Easily the 428 Cobra Jet engine, which will go down in history as one of the strongest wedges ever engineered. Even strangled by the Thermactor air pump smog setup, and fed by the smallish 735 cfm Holley, the engine never faltered on street or strip, never failed to start, and loped just loudly and wildly enough to be noticed. And the Ram Air induction system was icing on the cake. Using a vacuum-controlled gate in the top of the air cleaner assembly, fresh air is metered to the carburetor under zero vacuum (full throttle) conditions only. The rest of the time, the flap stays closed, keeping the elements out. When the throttle was mashed, that cold air flap would snap open and produce an unreal sucking noise that was mildly unnerving at first.

As long as we're on goods and bads, here's another bad that exists, but will never be remedied. It has to do with the roofline of the fastback models and the shape of the rear window glass that the configuration produces. What we're trying to say is, in order to see out of it clearly, you've got to be lying on the giant package tray directly beneath it! That's right kids, there ain't no way you can back up safely without looking out the side window. Before we picked up this little trick, we had run off the road more than once while backing up and also did our share of guard post bumping in various parking lots. And when it rained, the window might as well have been soaped up—it was that useless.

Well, on to the drag strip. If that first line doesn't sound too enthusiastic, its because we weren't either, about the results of the testing session. We made a total of twenty runs over a period of about three hours and we weren't improving, so... well, we'll get to that soon enough. The first seven passes were made with the entire air cleaner assembly intact and the rest of the car as it came from the street. As expected, the first trial didn't produce any earth shattering times, 14.57-101.91. The car was driven off the line with the SelectShift trans doing the shifting and all belts and other units untouched. Run number two produced a 14.13-102.97. A bit better because we shifted the car manually at six grand and cleared the traps at 5500. The third consecutive run produced a 14.08-102.73, torquing the motor to 1500 and then standing on it at the green. We

FEBRUARY 1969



OPPOSITE PAGE—Our Calypso Coral CJ is shown here on its way to a low 14 second pass. TOP—Here's a look at the nemesis which plagued us throughout the entire test period. Even in clear weather, visibility was foggy. ABOVE—Here's what a panic stop looks like from 80 mph. With front discs, brake control was excellent. BELOW—A 735 cfm Holley tops off the Ram-air 428 chugger. With air cleaner on, and all power stuff hooked up, engine compartment becomes a nightmare.





# The Strong Wind From Dearborn



TOP—Polyglas tires helped, but off-the-mark starts were hampered by loss of traction as soon as power overcame the tires. Note the lift of the front end upon mashing the throttle!  
ABOVE—Emblems on the side tell you that this Montego is different from all the others on the block. Here we go to a best of 13.99-103.92. The SelectShift C-6 trans shifted crisply and flawlessly during entire twenty passes.

decided to alter our starting procedure and, for the next pass, we simply staged the car and flattened the throttle. No torque loading, just mashing the gas and shifting the transmission manually. This technique netted us a 14.01-102.97. Similar runs produced a 13.99-102.97.

It went like this for three more trips until we felt it was time for at least one change. All agreed that the hot plan was to deprive the filter of its air cleaning element. By doing so, times dropped to 13.96-103.92. As it was, this set of figures was the best to be had for the rest of the

test session. Since we had very handily forgotten our tool box, we couldn't even loosen a belt here and there in order to let the 428 perform just a tad better. We did have a pressure gage handy and dropped the rear tire pressure to 30 psi, but to no avail. The car was delivered to us with about 1100 miles on the odometer and still had the factory plugs installed. During the week before the test, we had logged some nine or so hundred more, so the sparkers were really not in the utmost for continuous flat out running. So, what with a hot engine and misfiring

## SPECIFICATIONS

### 1969 Mercury Cyclone CJ

#### ENGINE

Displacement.....	428 cubic inches
Compression ratio.....	10.6:1
Carburetion.....	One Holley 4-bbl.
Camshaft.....	Hydraulic, in. 270, ex. 290
Ignition.....	Stock, single point
Exhaust.....	High-capacity dual
Horsepower.....	335 @ 5200
Torque.....	440 @ 3400

#### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission.....	3-speed Selectshift
Rear axle ratio.....	4.30:1 Traction-Lok

#### CHASSIS

Front suspension.....	Independent coil springs, unequal arms
Rear suspension.....	Leaf-spring Hotchkiss
Brakes.....	Disc F Drum R
Steering.....	Power assisted
Wheels.....	14" x 6" HD
Tires.....	Goodyear F7-14 Polyglas

#### GENERAL

Weight.....	3700 pounds
Wheelbase.....	116 inches
Overall length.....	201 inches

#### PERFORMANCE

3 to 30 mph.....	3.0 seconds
0 to 60 mph.....	6.5 seconds
Standing start, 1/4-mile.....	103.92 mph
Elapsed time.....	13.99 seconds
Top Speed (est.).....	112 mph
Fuel consumption.....	5-7 mpg

plugs, we were never able to regain the magic thirteens again.

The engine would run well up until it was time for the shift to high gear. At this point, the engine would misfire—puffs of gray smoke told the tale. Maybe with some tools and a box of fresh plugs... We let it cool, soaked the radiator with cool stuff and tried again. Still the same. Time to pack it in.

You'd expect a car that was equipped with the same type of power as that which holds the SS/E and EA records to fare a little better than it did. Maybe that would be expecting a little too much. Our car weighed over 3900 pounds, so performance really wasn't that far off.

As we said before, the only thing that was out of place on our test car was the nowhere 4.30 gear. As you can see, the cogs really didn't help our quarter-mile times. They definitely have no place in a street machine and they are out of the ball park for the serious drag racer. For the street car that the Montego should be, a set of 3.90's would compliment it nicely.

If the way the engine sounds pulling through the gears or the rump-rump idle doesn't attract your attention, the looks of the car will. We had more people gawk at this number than all the other cars we've had, combined. We'll put it to ya this way fellas, you just got to get one for your wife to get groceries in. ■

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