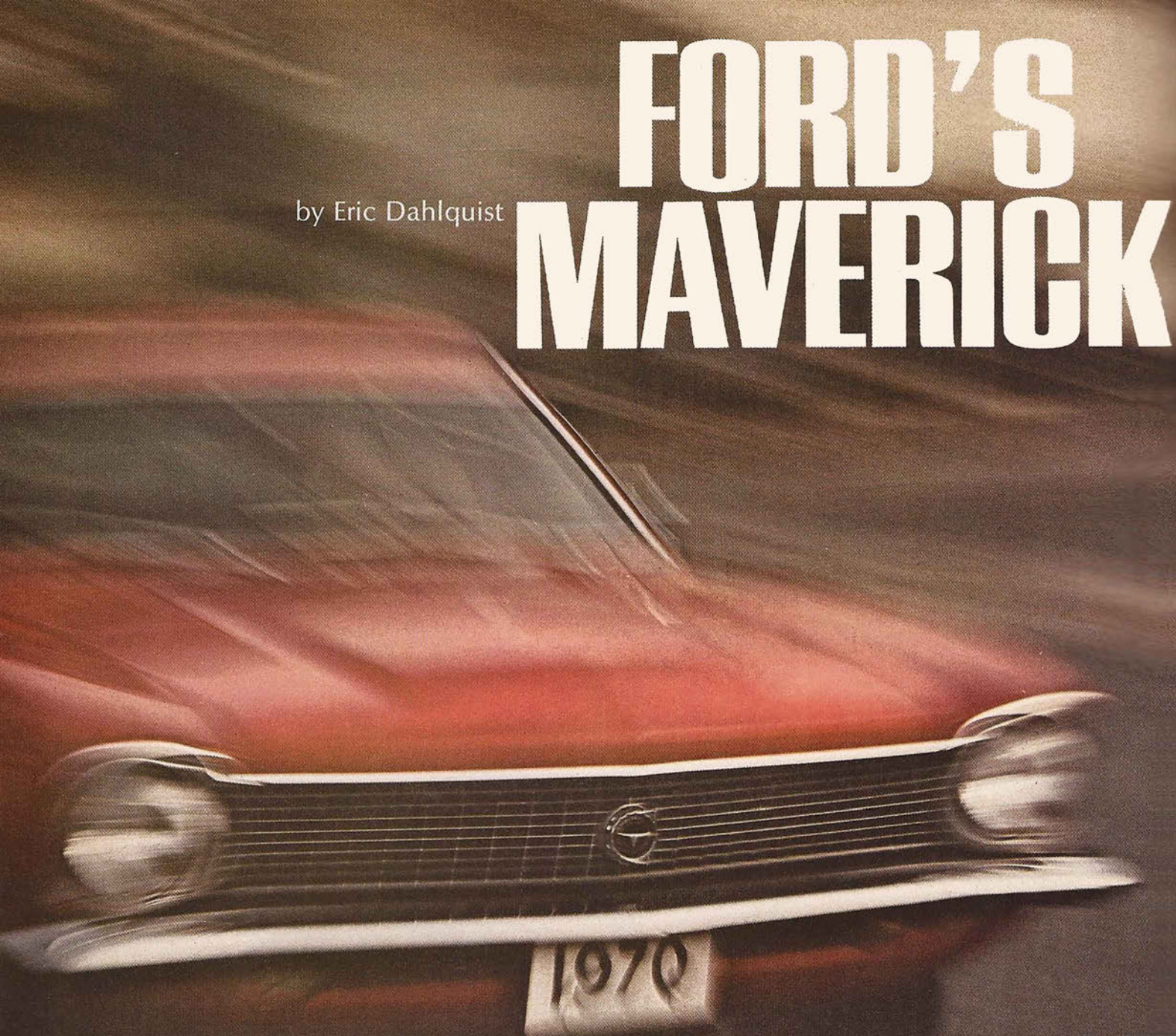


FORD'S MAVERICK

by Eric Dahlquist



**It's not a Volkswagen, but then it wasn't intended to be.
It's not revolutionary, but it's basic and will sell.**

It was very clever the way they did it. Ford got us all down to the instant affluent California golfing community of La Costa and previewed what was to be Dearborn's answer to the Volkswagen—a \$1995 (approximately) American car called Maverick. It even looked something like an economy import: 103-inch wheelbase; short, 179-inch overall length; relatively narrow, 70.6-inch maximum width and a package tray under the dash instead of a costly old glovebox. To fully convince us, there was only one model, a two-door, and the back windows flipped out instead of rolled-down—the car was very plain. If all that weren't enough, just like Volks there was an optional semi-automatic three-speed transmission which promised almost the same 22.5 mpg on regular gasoline behind a 170 cubic inch 6 as the standard three-speed manual.

But when we laid aside the press kit and appraised the Maverick in-the-flesh, a seed of doubt germinated. Of course, we did not expect these first examples of a brand new car to exhibit the fine paintwork, trim fit, upholstery detailing and quality control characteristics of a car Volkswagen has been building for

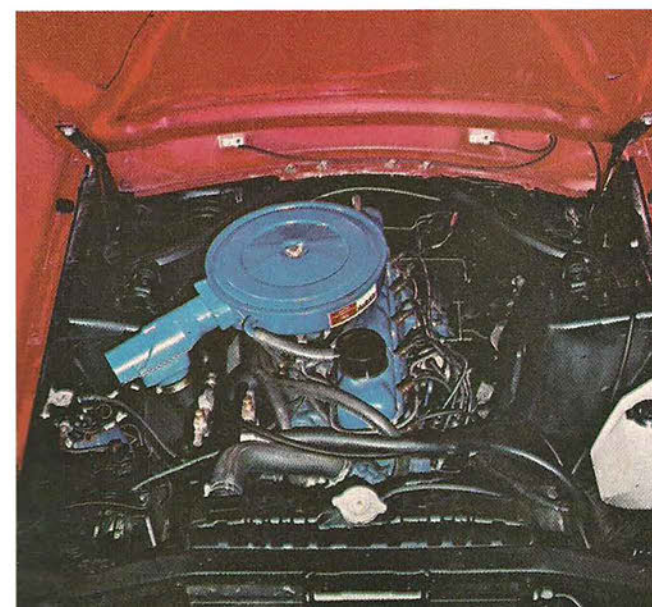
two decades, and they didn't. But we did expect a certain novelty about the car, a certain fresh approach to passenger packaging perhaps, utility without cheapness, form following function. Instead we got "long hood/short deck lines with fun-to-drive appeal for the now generation." Translated from pitchmanese this means that a car 20 inches longer than rival VW has precious little more interior volume, except shoulder room. In fact, a general comparison of all significant Maverick-Volkswagen dimensions is quite interesting, especially contrasted with the Falcon of a decade ago which seems a better vehicle to stem the foreign invasion than its replacement.

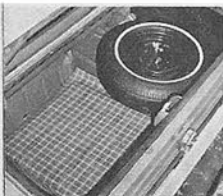
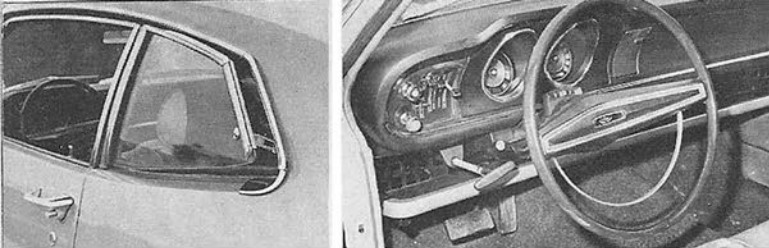
With almost ten years to feed reams of data about the foreign car buyer into their vast computer banks, the Detroit think tank offers a Maverick whose turning circle is just .6 feet greater than a Bug and then compromises it with a motor-winder's nightmare of 5½ turns lock-to-lock. Just short of double the VW's 2.8.

After all this time someone in Grosse Pointe must have divined that the generally advanced engineering from Europe and Japan has some attraction to American buyers. Overlay a cutaway of

photography: Bob D'Olivo

The Maverick (right), will be the emblem of the "now-generation" if Ford is perceptive enough to merchandise it properly. Wide boots will help. Interiors (far right), come in plain and fancy. Some of the instrument treatment is Corvair, circa 1965. The car's sweeping line (below), bears the Mustang mark. Engines (bottom left), come in 170 and 200 cubic inch sizes but V-8s are on the way and are the answer. Even on steep gradients (bottom right) 6 is peppy but rear end is very light.





You just can't build an economy car today without flip-out back windows (above left). Maverick dashboards are contemporary American, lots of padding and plastic. Corvair similarity did not go unnoticed (above). Ford's trunk capacity (left) is larger than VW, but not much.

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a 1970 Maverick and a 1960 Falcon and the chassis match up almost perfectly. If you have driven a 1963 or '64 Falcon, you already know how the Maverick feels. We need not labor the point that Volkswagen and others improve technically year by year. Even if VW hadn't gone to a Porsche-type true independent suspension in '69, note that the rear track of their 61-inch wide car is 53.3 inches. Contrasted to Maverick, nine inches bigger through the beam, but with only 2.2 more inches of track, it does not require a physics degree to guess which vehicle will corner better. It isn't just the Germans, look at a Fiat 124, Datsun, or for that matter, Pontiac.

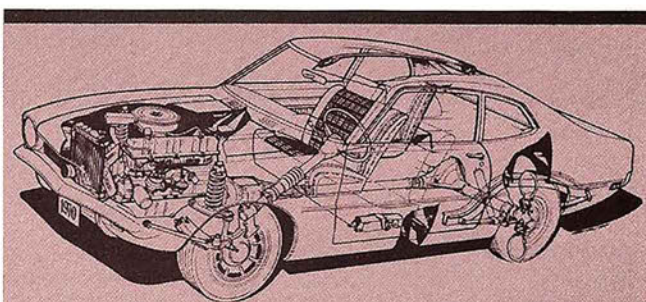
Spacial and engineering considerations aside, the Maverick's chances of seriously displacing Volkswagen in the economy field are indeed about as remote as Volkswagen winning Stock Eliminator from the Cobra Jets. They are two distinct vehicles. Unless Mavericks are to be built by Lincoln's craftsmen, its quality cannot compare with the German's. To lessen the negative impact of just average manufacturing tolerances, Ford has created some very ingenious, pleasing plaid fabric seat insert designs, but even if a Maverick and a Volkswagen had identical sticker prices, and they don't, the Ford can never win. By pure economics the simple fact that its engine requires twice as much oil at every change, one third more spark plugs at each tune-up, delivers from two to seven more miles per gallon less and wears out tires at a much faster rate because they are two inches smaller (thirteen versus fifteen-inch) and the car is 600 pounds heavier. Lastly, there is no reason to believe that a Maverick's resale value will be very much different from any other common Detroit product. Buying a Volkswagen, as you know, is almost as good as investing in blue chip stocks.

But the Maverick will not be a failure. What it is really, long hood/short deck and all, is a \$1995 Mustang for people who can't afford a \$2600 Mustang. At that it is very successful, and, there is the real potential for very much broader appeal. One of the Mavericks Ford had at La Costa was the optional 200 cubic inch 6 with a normal Cruise-O-Matic three-speed transmission. The little number would light the tires easily in low and grab rubber on the one-two shift. Now the plan forms. Either of the 6s is lost in the large Maverick engine compartment, a 302 V-8 is the next obvious step. It figures, Ford has already built a 302 Trans-Am version for evaluation and it looks very promising, good enough so a 351 four-barrel Maverick is on the way.

A 170 six manual, hits the street at 2501 pounds. Adding a 351 increases this to 2600. Hold that thought. Suppose your friendly total performance UAW worker was to bolt on a set of free-breathing 351 Le Mans heads, cam and manifold just ahead of a close ratio four-speed and stouter driveline. To keep everything grooving properly also add disc brakes, heavy-duty suspension and seven-inch wide ovals to fill up those cavernous wheel wells. For around \$2600 you've bought a 2600-pound machine with 350 horsepower. Could there possibly be a market for a \$400 less expensive Road Runner with equal or better performance?

If this all has a familiar ring of another place, another time—remember the Corvair? Its sales lagged behind the Falcon and Valiant until the bucket-seat, hotted up Monza came out and then it took off. Perhaps Ford feels history will not repeat, though in a 600,000-plus high-performance market, the prospect seems more likely than in the early '60s. As far as a true economy car goes, the Maverick is an interim design to turn the public's consciousness toward Ford, until their true urban vehicle, like Chevy's ohc four-cylinder front-wheel-drive, is ready in 1972 or '73. You see the once one-dimensional competition for our lush automotive market is not just Europe any longer, but Japan as well. The specter alone of Honda's 100 mph, 30 mpg, front-wheel-drive, four-wheel-disc-braked, Datsun-sized bomb for \$1695 should be enough to get those Mavericks out to the kids in a hurry. Ford probably has another Mustang on their hands—if they just realize it.

/MT



PERFORMANCE COMPARISON CHART				
	Maverick 170	Maverick 200	VW 1500	Falcon 144
0-45	8.5 sec.	7.5 sec.	11.5 sec.	12.2 sec.
0-60	17.5 sec.	14.5 sec.	20 sec.	21.0 sec.
Gas Mileage (Manufacturer's est.)	22.5 mpg	N.A.	27 mpg	25 mpg

BODY DIMENSION COMPARISON CHART			
	Maverick 170	Volkswagen 1500	1960 Falcon 140
Wheelbase	103	94.5	109
Tread — Front	55.5	51.6	55.0
Rear	55.5	53.3	54.5
Height — Overall	52.3	59.1	54.5
Length — Overall	179.3	158.6	181.1
Width — Overall	70.6	61	70.1
Front Seat Room			
Headroom	37.6	41	38.9
Maximum leg room to accelerator	41.3	38	44.6
Hip room	53.7	51	57.1
Shoulder room	55.0	48	N.A.
Rear Seat Room			
Headroom	36.1	37	37.3
Minimum effective leg room	31.9	30.5	40.1
Hip room	46.8	48	57.0
Shoulder room	53.5	47	N.A.
Luggage capacity (cubic feet)	11.3	7.3 (17.3 with rear seat folded flat)	23
Curb weight (pounds)	2501	1807	2350
CHASSIS SPECIFICATIONS			
Steering gear ratio	29.4:1	N.A.	27.0:1
Steering wheel turns (lock-to-lock)	5.2	2.8	4.64
Brake lining area (total gross) — sq. in.	131	96.1	114.3
PRICE	\$1995 approx.	\$1877	\$1912