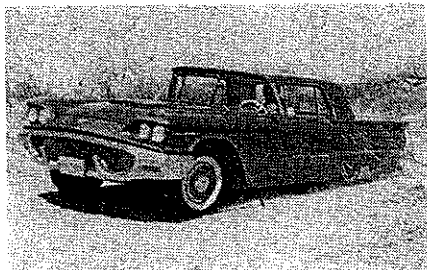


inch diameter bar now in use. These three steps, coupled with the Thunderbird's low CG should make a definite difference in overall handling and stability.

ECONOMY

Considering the weight of the car and the 352-cubic inch powerplant, this year's T-Bird does exceptionally well on economy. During the initial portion of our trip, driving through heavily congested traffic of downtown Los Angeles, it delivered 12.7 mpg at speeds ranging up to 30 and 35 mph, and with plenty of stops thrown in. Out on the open highway, unrestricted by city driving, heavy traffic and signals, the car delivered 16.5 mpg at an average



Springs and shock absorbers used for '58 are on the soft side so slight dips cause car to bottom and rebound quite easily. The new Bird is designed for city streets.

speed of 60 mph. Stepping that up a bit resulted in a loss of only .4 mpg.

BRAKES

We encountered minor trouble with the brakes on our test car after driving it several hundred miles. The left front brake grabbed at slow speed and we found the trouble to be in an uneven contact between the rear shoe and drum. Truing the shoe eliminated the trouble quickly and we found nothing further to complain about insofar as the Bird's brakes are concerned.

In fact, the brakes proved a little better than average under moderate or severe usage. On the entire test, including panic stops and quick braking following each acceleration run, we failed to notice any appreciable brake fade. In all cases, stops were smooth and even. One of the main factors behind this is the use of a cerametalix segment which is placed on the rear shoes of each brake, actually separating the lining into two separate pieces. This helps eliminate fade and provides a full contact for the best possible results.

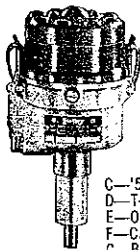
PERFORMANCE

Acceleration of the 1958 T-Bird is not outstanding, but it is not to be sneezed at, either. Remembering the increase in weight, plus power steering which we had on our test car, we were fairly impressed with the flat 10-second clocking for the 0-60 run. Hauling a 3.10 gear with an automatic transmission should be brought to mind also and when considering all of

(Continued on following page)

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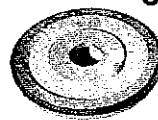
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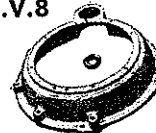
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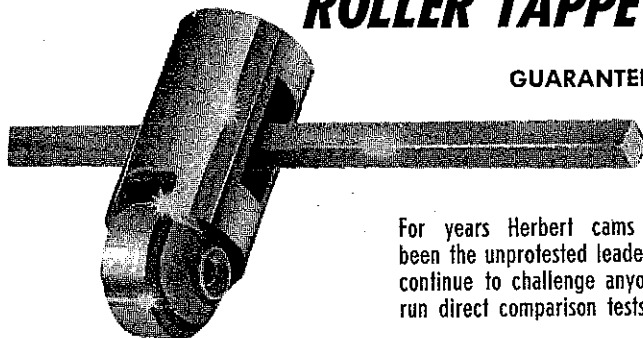


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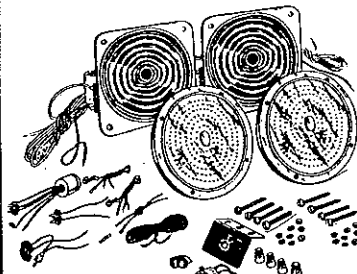
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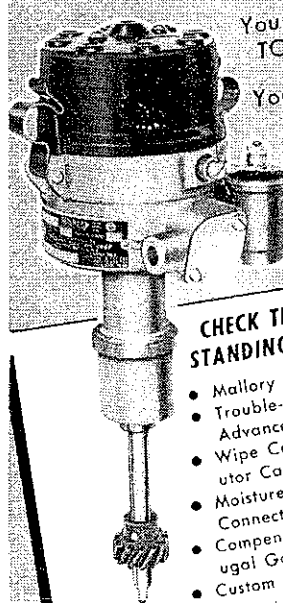
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'58 THUNDERBIRD continued

this, the Bird gives a fair account of itself. The chart back on page 21 tells the story in facts and figures.

On the San Gabriel Valley drag strip, our test car caught quite a bit of attention but there were some openly disappointed Ford enthusiasts after the first run was made. The Bird did the quarter in 16.77 seconds with a speed of 80.65 mph.

For all practical road purposes, however, we found that the T-Bird delivered a healthy punch for passing up to 80 mph, without a lot of protest from the engine. For the average Joe, who has to share his Bird with the Missus and family, the car has more than enough stuff to keep him happy.

The enthusiast who hopes to keep up with his competitors on the strip or elsewhere may find some encouragement in the fact that rumors are flitting about that the big 430-cubic inch Lincoln or Mercury Marauder engine will soon be available as an option for Thunderbird buyers. The big mill unquestionably would put plenty of poison in the Bird's bite. Don't count on this rumor until you see it announced by Ford, however.

An announcement has been made by Ford that a convertible model will be available by summer with the collapsible top to fold in a special well in the trunk. Press a button and a section of the rear deck raises up like Ford's retractable hard top for the convertible top to fold into, after which the body panel drops back in place to give clean, uncluttered lines. The metal top presently being used on the '58 Bird is part of the body and cannot be removed like the plastic top on the two-passenger Birds.

So, the big Bird is here! It is stirring up a lot of controversy, and at this writing has a waiting list of buyers that would indicate the car is not too far from what Ford wanted it to be. It is not a sports car but it does look sporty. We heard people who had driven the car prior to its release shout about how well it handled, but we disagree. The Bird we tested does not traverse a particular canyon road we favor for testing with nearly as much speed or stability as most other late model cars we have tried. The car leans too much and the rear wheels try to overtake the front wheels at just moderate corner speeds.

Ford Motor Company calls the '58 Thunderbird a "limited production" luxury car and places absolutely no emphasis on the performance angle so perhaps we shouldn't be overly critical when the car feels too soft in the ride department. The four-passenger models will sell to the family man who can afford the price tag (they list for nearly \$5000 loaded), but if you happen to have one of the old two-passenger models, better hang onto it for a while; the market for '55-'57 Birds should take a sharp rise.

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