



TORINO GT PERFORMANCE PLUS



By taking generous portions of proven fastback styling and combining them with a 390 cubic inch package of V8 performance, Ford has come up with a multi-purpose winner. Then by adding a "tunnel-port" 428 you really get with the program!

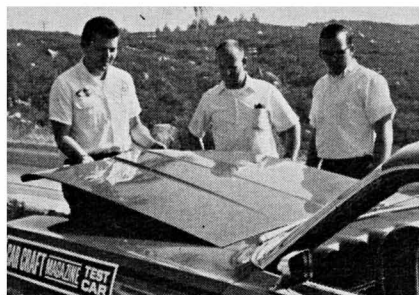
Test Team:
Globe Pacers
San Diego, California

BY DAN ROULSTON ■ When you have a car club test team that includes both a former drag racing world champion and an accredited car show director, you had better give them a vehicle with equal amounts of show and go. That was the situation CAR CRAFT encountered when it headed south from Los Angeles to conduct a road test with members of the Globe Pacers car club of San Diego, Calif.

The Globe Pacers have been an active group of automotive enthusiasts since 1954 and had an extremely well qualified team ready for us. We were also ready for them, with a 1968 Ford GT Torino equipped with a 390 cubic inch engine and Cruise-O-Matic.

Rolf Gefrom, a 30-year-old design engineer and car show advocate, was the styling authority for the sleek new fastback Fairlane from Ford. Leaning more toward the performance angle in the test was veteran drag race competitor Jess Van Deventer. Jess grabbed off the World Champion title in 1962 under the NHRA points program that served as the pioneer project for the now highly successful World Championship Series.

Rounding out our test trio was Dave Browning, a 19-year-old mechanic who



About the only real "minus" given to the Torino by our test team came from extensive sheet metal hood flex "at speed."

viewed Ford's new offering as to its appeal to the drive-in crowd.

Our test on the Torino was conducted right after the production-interrupting strike had ended, and the GT was a real eye-stopper and head swinger, since it was not yet generally available in new car showrooms.

In fact, the first stop on our test tour was at the ultra-modern Drew Ford agency in suburban La Mesa, and the Torino became the immediate center of attraction for both interested potential customers and Drew salesmen. Few of them had seen the sleek fastback, so the car received a double test, from both

the Globe Pacers and the interested observers at Drew.

One of the first plus factors extended to the Torino by everyone involved was the outstanding quality of the paint finish. The advances made in this area by Detroit manufacturers in recent years have been outstanding.

"Today's production cars would have been right in the running for 'Best Paint' at most of the top shows just a few years ago," Gefrom volunteered. There were no challengers to the engineer's observation.

Although the overall trim and finish of the car was bordering on outstanding, our test car had a most distracting air whistle around both of the ventless side door windows. This became even more of an irritant when you flipped on the AM-FM stereo radio, which has to be rated as something just a little on the sensational side.

Surrounded with music from the multi-speaker system, we headed for the open road. Although the throttle spring was rather "strong" on the test Torino, it also serves as a plus, since you had to exert increasing effort to accelerate. The car certainly didn't creep up in speed; you had to make it happen.

Our Torino weighed in at just over 4200 pounds although the "book" says 3600. Add to that our well-fed test team and we figured we were giving the GT a chance to operate in "average" conditions. It proved to be much more than an average motor vehicle.

"This is one of those cars that grow on you," observed Van Deventer as the "390" flattened out the winding hills of Highway 80 heading east from San Diego. "The more you look the more you see." Although it is confronted with the standard fastback problem of slightly blind corners when you look out the back, the overall view from inside was very good, except for the "right hand glance" void caused by the rear view mirror. This, however, is a shortcoming the driver faces in most of today's passenger vehicles.

Riding on high performance wide oval F70 x 14 tires and heavy-duty suspension, the car stayed "glued" to the road very well.

"It's not ready to challenge the Ford 'J' on a road course, but it certainly gets through regular curves and corners quick, while giving you a very secure feeling through the steering wheel," was Gefrom's observation.

At an overall length of 201 inches, the Torino is strictly in the big car category (the wheelbase measures in at 116 inches), but you still can't help but give it some degree of comparison to the "2 plus 2" Mustang, both styling and performance-wise.

This was the car's big selling point to Dave Browning.

"You make the scene in comfort with this one," observed Dave, one of the mechanics on the Globe Pacers' A/Gas '40 Willys.

With every machine that has the power to move out, you also have to have comparable stopping. The Torino fastback received passing marks in both departments, although the optional front discs are an almost must with the "390." The new disc brakes are floating caliper type with single pistons and non-energizing ventilated discs.

The car's high idle setting, a "might as well get used to living with it" side effect of the mandatory smog control, is one of the contributing factors to the feeling that you need all the brakes you can get.

All of these factors considered, when you need to stop, the Torino does it — straight and smooth with a minimum of nose dive.

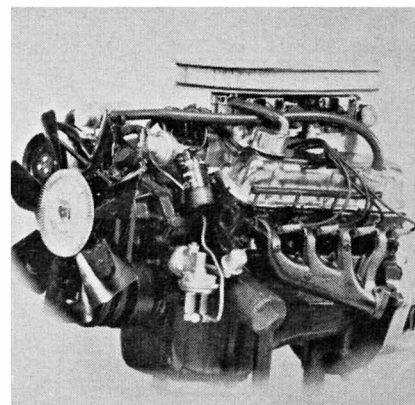
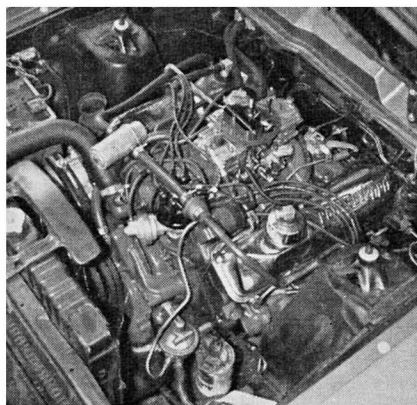
From the back seat, Van Deventer observed that a fold-down seat (such as offered in the fastback Mustang) would certainly give you a lot of "hauling" room inside. You could use it, especially on a trip, since the fastback inherited one of the few shortcomings of the Mustang — not quite enough trunk space.

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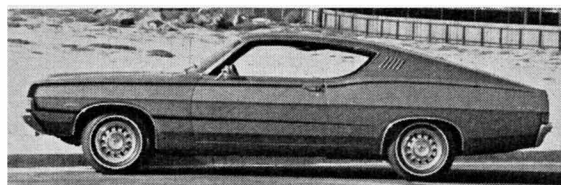
Photos by Bob Swaim

Sleek fastback styling of the Torino GT shows Mustang influence, but the car has its own personality throughout. It's definitely a "big" car, but there isn't anything wrong with making the performance scene in comfort and luxury of the "uptown" class.



After the initial test was conducted on the Torino, the 390 was replaced with Ford's exciting new tunnel port 428. All the nice things said about the "little" engine were just doubled with the hi-performance 428.

One step beyond our test 428 is the all-out racing version equipped with dual fours. Bolt-on tunnel port kits are now available for both small block and big bore engines, giving Ford "roar-ability."



ROAD TEST SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	390 CUBIC INCH V8
BORE	4.05 IN.
STROKE	3.78 IN.
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.5:1
RATED HORSEPOWER	335 BHP @ 4800 RPM
MAXIMUM TORQUE	427 LBS/FT @ 3200 RPM
CURB WEIGHT	3610 POUNDS
WHEELBASE	116.0 IN.
OVERALL LENGTH	201.1 IN.
OVERALL WIDTH	74.5 IN.
OVERALL HEIGHT	53.5 IN.
REAR AXLE RATIO	STANDARD — 2.75 OPTIONAL — 3.00, 3.25
FRONT SUSPENSION	WISHBONES & COIL SPRINGS
REAR SUSPENSION	LIVE AXLE & LEAF SPRINGS
STEERING	PARALLELOGRAM WITH CROSS LINKS & IDLER ARM
BRAKES, FRONT	DISC
BRAKES, REAR	DRUM
TIRES	F70-14 WIDE-OVAL
STANDING START QUARTER-MILE	14.85 SECONDS
STANDING START QUARTER-MILE	99.50 MPH

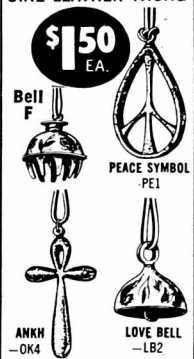
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ROAD TEST

(continued from page 31)

One thing that would interfere with a fold down seat, however, is a real plus for the Torino—a rear window defogger. Located between the rear stereo speakers, the defogger really gets the job done in bad weather.

Speaking of bad weather, a record setting rainstorm in the Los Angeles area gave the Torino a perfect opportunity to pick up a minus point or two, but even the whistling windows proved to be water tight.

For the most part, the Torino GT fastback offers slightly smaller interior dimensions than the rest of the Fairlane lineup, but our test car proved to be most comfortable in the front bucket seats and passable in the back (the days of really roomy back seats in anything below the chauffeur-driven class are probably gone forever).

There is plenty of room under the hood, however, and even with the 390 bolted in, you can find space to work. With a 4.05 bore and 3.78 stroke, the engine gives out with plenty of usable power throughout the range. At the drag strip (we just happened to stop off to check on the progress of a CAR CRAFT drag test being conducted by CC's John Raffa) the Torino GT cranked off some sub-100 (but just barely) runs in the high 14's. Remember, this was strictly in assembly line trim and running all of the air emission controls (somehow it's hard to relate smog to our CC readers in the wind-swept Midwest).

On our test run, which included city streets, freeways, mountains and side roads, we averaged almost 18 mpg. I don't know if it will carry throughout the line, but when we pulled anxiously into an out-of-the-way service station with the "low fuel" light shining brightly and the needle reading "empty," we could only pump a little over 17 gallons into the 20 gallon tank. With the 390 running 10.5:1 compression, we stayed with premium fuel, but it isn't necessary to pull all the way to the high priced pump, just good Ethyl.

The "Grand Touring" details in the Torino really put the finishing touches on a fine automobile—they are tasteful, and distinctive. When you pull into your friendly neighborhood drive-in with this one, everyone will know you have something a little special. You need some interior dress up, however, to compensate for the drab "nothing" of the dash. Keep in mind, though, that Detroit doesn't exactly have a free hand in designing its own automobiles anymore.

One thing that could be improved upon, however, is the placement of the tach. Although it has a full face, its recessed location and angle (directly behind your right hand when you hold it at two o'clock) makes it almost im-

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possible to see.

With a smooth, divided highway in front of you and the scenery flashing by, you feel yourself becoming more and more a part of the Torino — and it's a good feeling.

Back in San Diego, the Globe Pacers were hesitant to call the test to an end, so we rehashed the test, amplified the pros and cons of the Torino, and finally gave it our test team "stamp of approval."

A couple of days after our road test was completed, Ford announced the availability of its new tunnel port kits, so we headed the blue Torino for the garage and a little "changee-changee."

Designated the "Cobra Jet," the new engine (see full feature in the February '68 CAR CRAFT) features the competition proven tunnel port design which routes the pushrod through a special shaft located in the center of the intake port. Valves in this engine are a whopping 2.06 intake and 1.625 exhaust. Carburetion flows through a 735 CFM four-barrel, mounted on a cast iron intake manifold that is a replica of the aluminum competition unit.

The bigger displacement 428 engine dropped right in with no problems. The only thing that had to be changed was a slight realignment of the exhaust pipe from header to muffler on the left side. Carrying no external identifying marks, the setup was a real sleeper, since the car was still in "390" trim.

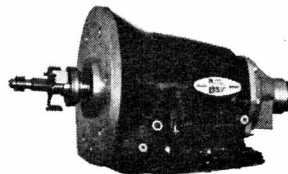
An immediate performance increase was clearly evident, even though the 390 was a most satisfactory engine. Additional road testing with the 428 definitely established that the Torino needed considerably more brakes to bring it up to the "feel" that is desirable with a car of this performance potential.

At Carlsbad Raceway, we took the car through the quarter-mile on a few quick passes — and they were quick. Considering that we were still running the factory installed Wide Ovals and were at partial throttle a good 250-300 feet off the starting line, our times of 14.23-104.54 weren't bad at all. These marks (our best) were established by simply staging, watching the lights at idle, and motoring away until you were out far enough to really give the free-breather a chance to run. Surprisingly, the car was not equipped with a limited-slip differential (although it is an available option), which further restricted any real power takeoffs. Everything considered, the Torino GT 428 is a real luxury way to get performance — lots of it.

The Ford Torino received an additional accolade when it was selected as the official pace car for the 1968 Indianapolis 500-Mile Race on Memorial Day.

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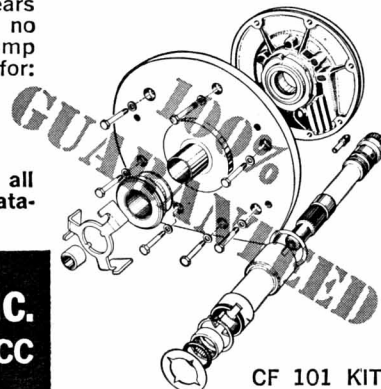
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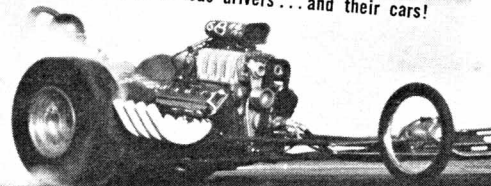
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