



Dodge

DART



WHEN WE ACCEPTED DELIVERY on one of the first Dart 440's for a full road test, our first glance suggested that they had sent us a Lancer by mistake. Naturally, they hadn't, but it points up how heavily the Dodge stylists have leaned on the sleek, taut lines of the Lancer. In doing this they have not only gained closer family identification throughout their entire line, but they have also come up with an eye-appealing package. This car has been completely restyled both inside and out, employing the short-deck, long-hood formula that is strictly European in origin.

By reducing unnecessary front and rear overhang, over seven inches have been whacked off the overall length. The 116-inch wheelbase is two inches closer to reality than the previous 118. The new full unit-construction body is two inches narrower and a half-inch lower. Surprisingly, they accomplished all this chopping without sacrificing any of last year's roominess. A lot of excess sheet metal has been trimmed out of this car and the results are evident in the cleaner, more functional design. There is also an extra bonus thrown in here of up to 200 less pounds per car to cart around.

Down inside, where it really counts, they haven't abandoned the basic engine designs, suspension concepts or drive line

characteristics that in the past have made the Dodge one of the best-performing, neatest-handling cars in its class.

The MOTOR TREND Dart 440, as tested, was a convertible, equipped with the standard 230-hp, 318-cubic-inch V-8, with two-barrel carburetor, geared through the new three-speed automatic transmission and 3.23 optional performance axle. According to the factory specs, a 2.76 axle is standard equipment for this model. Ours did have the speedometer drive gears that match the 2.76 axle, and we clocked some wildly optimistic speedo readings before we hooked up our electric test unit—like just barely keeping up with a conservatively driven Renault and the normal freeway traffic flow while the speedometer was indicating 85 mph.

Considering this was the small engine for this model (the smaller Slant Six isn't available for convertibles, four-door hardtops or wagons), we were more than satisfied with the acceleration figures we clocked. The 0-30, 0-45 and 0-60 times were, respectively, 3.6, 6.7 and 10.9 seconds. The standing quarter-mile was covered in 19 seconds flat, with a terminal speed of 78 mph. As usual, our runs were made with two men aboard, full instrumentation, and close to full fuel tank. This would put the weight of the car somewhere in the neigh-

440

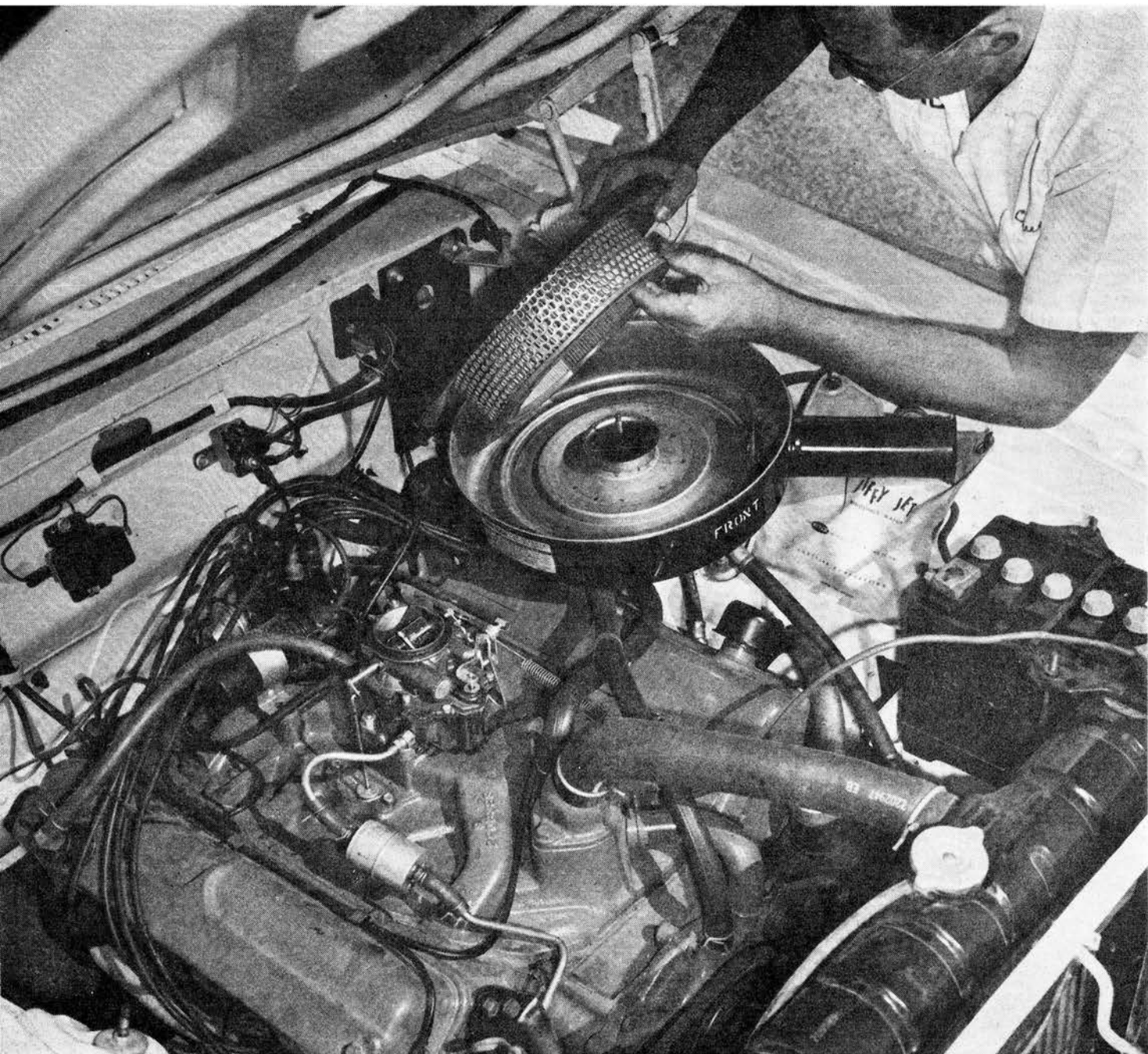
The shape is new
but there is a familiar foundation
of hot and agile power

by Jim Wright, Technical Editor

PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO



DART 440 IS A NEW DESIGN. EVIDENT HERE IS THE SHORT-DECK, LONG-HOOD FORMULA THAT FORMS THE BASIS OF THIS YEAR'S STYLING.



EASY ACCESSIBILITY OF UNDER-THE-HOOD COMPONENTS MAKE THE DART 440 A MECHANIC'S DREAM. DRY-TYPE AIR CLEANER IS STILL USED.

borhood of 3800 pounds. So the performance is quite respectable for a family-type pleasure vehicle.

Our fuel consumption figures are not indicative of what you could expect out of this car had it been properly broken in. But as usual for this time of year, time was short and when we got the car it had only 50 miles on the odometer. During the course of our tests we racked up another 400. Through a mixture of stop-and-go city driving (where we believe in moving out smartly to keep from getting run over) and several legal-limit 65-mph freeway jaunts, the Dart 440 averaged 12.6 mpg. Given a fair chance with more break-in time and the standard axle ratio, these figures would no doubt be somewhere in the 12-to-17-mpg range. (We can almost hear some outraged owner screaming now, "I get 22 on the road pulling a 30-foot trailer!" but let's face it — boasting about gas mileage is practically an old American custom.)

For those who prefer a little more performance, there is a four-barrel carb and dual-exhaust option that brings the output

of the 318-incher up to 260 hp. If that isn't enough, try the 305-hp, 361-cubic-inch option.

The Sunday drag racers will be sorry to hear that the factory is no longer making the ram-tuned intake manifold. Why, we don't know and can only guess that maybe they thought it was too much trouble to redesign the rig to fit the new body-space requirements. Instead, for these all-out-type options, the factory catalog is now carrying names like Edelbrock, Iskenderian, Howard and Hedman—to name a few. To go along with the horsepower options, there is the usual variety of performance-inducing rear axle ratios, as well as the trusty old manual three-speed transmission.

During our acceleration runs, no amount of coaxing could induce any more than an initial chirp out of the rear wheels, but the good low-end torque of this mill (340 lbs.-ft. at 2400 rpm) enabled the Dart 440 to get out of the chute without a trace of hesitation.

We've always considered the Torqueflite automatic trans-

mission as one of the best available. This year they've made it even better. The old cast-iron case has been junked, and in its place is a lightweight, one-piece, aluminum die-casting which encloses both the transmission and torque converter.

The new unit is said to be about 60 pounds lighter with a ten per cent greater torque capacity. Under all load and throttle conditions we found the shifts to be smooth and positive, no trace of jerk or slippage. Using DRIVE upshifts from 1st to 2nd to 3rd occurred at 3800 and 4200 rpm, respectively. FIRST provides 1st gear only, while SECOND allows both 1st and 2nd gear to operate, which makes for easily controlled upshifts and downshifts. The engine wound freely to 5200 rpm (80 mph) in 2nd gear. This is 800 rpm past the horsepower peak and 200 rpm past the point we'd recommend as a red-line for the engine.

We were a little disappointed in the handling characteristics of this year's Dart. They've reduced the diameter of the front torsion bars slightly and lengthened them an inch. Also the rear springs have softened slightly. This makes for a more comfortable ride, but it detracts a bit from what we've come to expect out of the whole Chrysler-Plymouth-Dodge line. Don't get us wrong—the Dart 440 is still the most roadable in its class. It still corners like it was on rails and it still has near-perfect neu-



Trunk is wide and long but not deep. It still provides a lot of room for the easy-to-reach spare plus an average load of luggage. Cardboard shield defines the hinge area.

Dodge still puts out one of the surest-handling cars on the road. Even in the soft stuff, under full power, the driver feels and knows he is in complete control of his car.





All but some of the more expensive imports will have a rough time keeping up with the Dart on mountain roads.

tral steering characteristics. But it corners with a bit more lean now, and on a rough road the pitch is more pronounced. A stiffer set of shocks should cure these minor faults with no trouble.

While we're on the subject of handling, we'd like to mention that the power steering on the Dart with its almost sports car-like 3.5 turns, lock-to-lock, is an option that we'd recommend to anyone. A car that goes through the corners as surely and as quickly as the Dart 440 should have the steering to match.

The new self-energizing, self-adjusting brakes are adequate under normal circumstances. We tried several panic stops and the 10 x 2.5-inch units pulled the car down straight and smooth every time without a trace of fade. We can remember a while back when one of the MOTOR TREND test crews tried a panic stop with the driveshaft-mounted parking brake. Result was the driveshaft broke and fell out on the ground. This year, we're happy to note, the parking brake is on the rear wheels, where it belongs.

The interior has been completely restyled and the one-color, tastefully pleated vinyl upholstery installed in our car is a welcome change over some of the more recent two-color efforts. The split-back front seat is well padded and provides good support to the back and legs. The pull-down center armrest is an added luxury, and the extra lateral support it offered came in handy when we were putting the car through some pretty vigorous cornering tests. Front and back seating arrangement and adjustment provided more than adequate room for our near-six-foot frame, although the wife, who is nearer five feet, opined that she couldn't get as close to the pedals as she'd have liked. The various buttons, switches and knobs are easy to reach. Instruments are well grouped, with easy-to-read dials. The temp gauge is included, as is an ammeter, but you still have to depend on the blinking red light for oil pressure (or rather, lack of it). The steering wheel was located just right for us, and even the wife found she could look over it instead of through it.

We have heard that Dodge has launched a series of "motivational research" studies to find out what people really want in a car. If the results of their studies had anything to do with the 1962 Dart 440, then all we can say is that are headed in the right direction. /MT



The split-back front seats are comfortable and offer good support to the back and thighs. The fore-and-aft adjustment is adequate. The pull-down armrest comes in handy.



Legroom in rear seat should be enough to accommodate the average-sized adult on moderate-length trips. We also liked the tastefully done, one-color pleated upholstery.



RAISING OR LOWERING TOP IS AN EASILY ACCOMPLISHED, ONE-MAN OPERATION. TONNEAU COVER STOWS IN TOP WELL WHEN NOT IN USE.

DART 440 CONVERTIBLE

5 passengers

OPTIONS ON CAR TESTED: Power steering, automatic transmission, transistor radio, heater, 3.23:1 performance axle

ODOMETER READING AT START OF TEST: 345 miles

RECOMMENDED ENGINE RED LINE: 5000 rpm

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION (2 aboard)

0-30 mph.....	3.6 secs.
0-45 mph.....	6.7
0-60 mph.....	10.9

Standing start 1/4-mile 19.0 secs. and 78 mph

Speeds in gears @ 3800 and 4200 rpm, respectively

1st.....	32 mph	2nd.....	63 mph
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Speedometer Error on Test Car

Car's speedometer reading	35	54	59	71	83	95
Weston electric speedometer	30	45	50	60	70	80

Observed miles per hour per 1000 rpm in top gear.....24.5 mph

Stopping Distances — from 30 mph, 46 ft; from 60 mph, 167 ft.

SPECIFICATIONS FROM MANUFACTURER

Engine

90-degree ohv V-8
Bore: 3.91 ins.
Stroke: 3.31 ins.
Displacement: 318 cubic inches
Compression ratio: 9.0:1
Horsepower: 230 @ 4400 rpm
Ignition: Voltage

Gearbox

Automatic 3-speed, with pushbutton controls

Driveshaft

Open tube

Differential

Hypoid
Standard ratio 2.76:1 (3.23:1 optional performance axle installed in test car)

Suspension

Front: Independent, lateral, non-parallel control arms, with torsion bars
Rear: Semi-elliptical, parallel longitudinal leaf

Wheels and Tires

Steel disc
7.00 x 14 tires

Brakes

Self-energizing, self-adjusting
Front and rear: 10-inch dia. x 2.5-inch wide

Body and Frame

Full unitized
Wheelbase 116 ins.
Track, front 59.4 ins., rear 57.5 ins.
Overall length 202 ins.
Dry weight 3245 lbs.

