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JUNE 1993

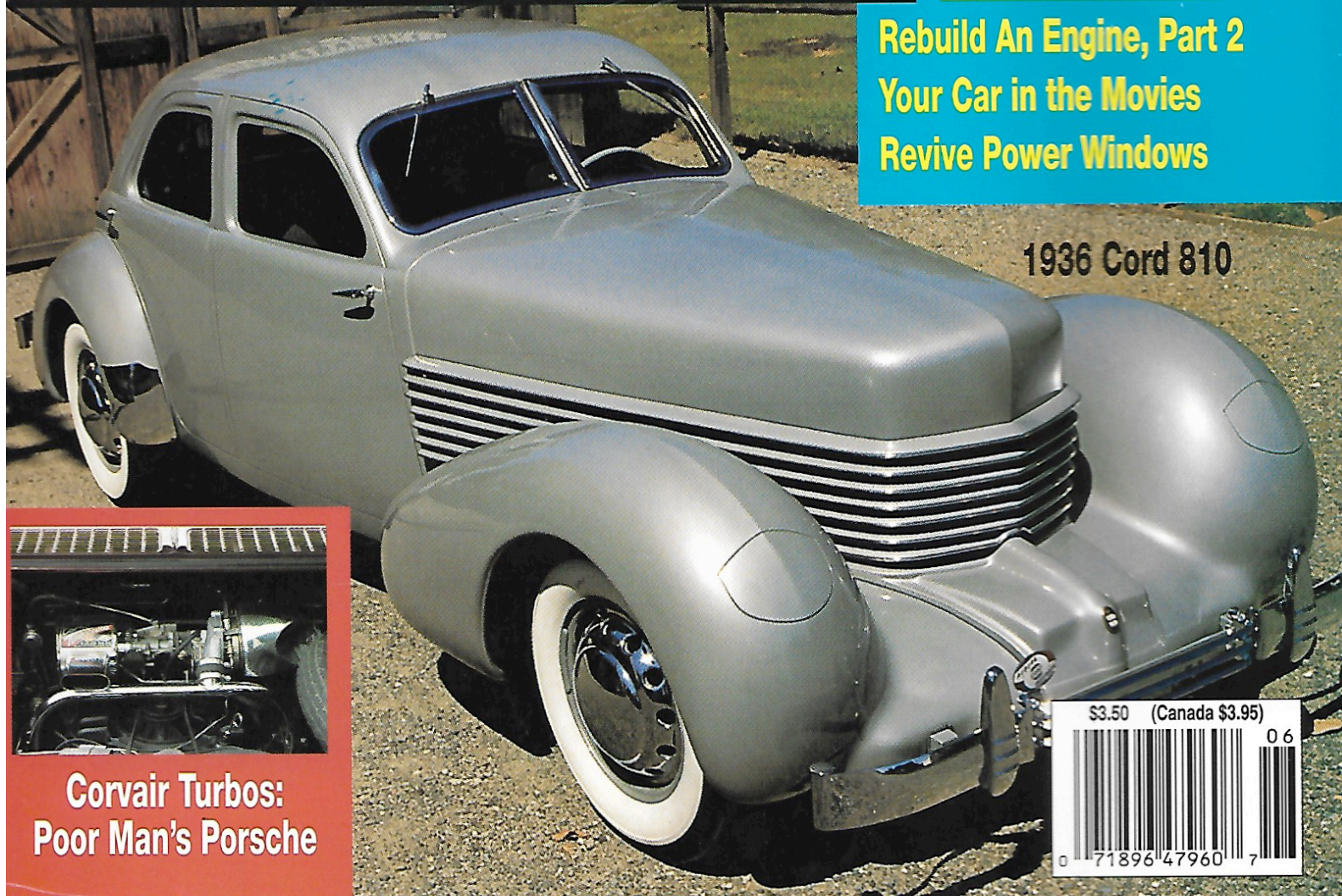
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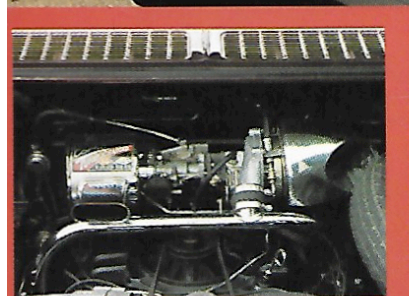
FAST FORWARD '57 FURY

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EAST FORWARD

'57 Plymouth Fury promised an early look at 1960.

By Thomas Glatch

Photos by the author

Suddenly, it's 1960! Never mind that the calendar said 1957. Seeing and driving the new '57 Plymouths would transport you into the future...or so the ads proclaimed.

If the advertising slogans were somewhat ambitious, so was

Plymouth's goal: Creating a modern image for cars that were viewed as economical, dependable, dated and dull in a decade of longer, lower, wider and faster.

Born in the Great Depression, Plymouth was solidly established as Chrysler's bastion in the low-price

range. But though it once trailed only Chevrolet in total sales, in the Fifties the division had fallen behind Ford and Buick as well. Clearly, Plymouth needed some forward momentum.

In one flaming moment, Plymouth leaps three full years ahead—the only car that dares to break the time barrier!





1957 Plymouth Fury Sport Coupe

Specifications

List price, base	\$1874
List price, Fury Sport Coupe	\$2900
Weight	3625 lb.
Weight distribution (f/r)	52/48%
Tire size	8.00-14 in.
Brake swept area	184 sq. in.
Engine type	cast iron, ohv V-8
Bore x stroke	3.91 x 3.31 in.
Displacement	317.6 cu. in.
Compression ratio	9.25:1
Carburetors	dual 4-barrel Carter
Power	290 bhp at 5400 rpm
Torque	325 lb.ft. at 4000 rpm

Dimensions

Wheelbase	118.0 in.
Track, front	60.9 in.
Track, rear	59.6 in.
Length	206.0 in.
Width	79.4 in.
Height	53.5 in.
Steering ratio (power)	19.8:1
Turns, lock to lock	3.4
Turning circle	42.3 ft.
Seat width, front	63.0
Seat width, rear	56.0
Front seat leg room	45.9
Trunk capacity	18 cu. ft.
Fuel tank capacity	20 gal.

Calculated Data

Pounds per hp	12.5
Mph per 1000 rpm	23.5
Engine revs per mile	2558
Piston travel, ft./mile	1411
Maximum speed in gears at 5700 rpm	
1st	55 mph
2nd	93 mph
3rd	134 mph

Performance

Top speed (at 5100 rpm)	120 mph
Quarter-mile	16.4 sec. at 83.1 mph
0-60 mph	8.5 sec.
0-80 mph	13.5 mph
Fuel consumption	12-17 mpg

Source: *Hot Rod* test, May 1957



Gearing

	Trans ratio:1	Overall ratio:1	Speed in gear
1st.....	2.45	8.23	55 mph
2nd.....	1.43	4.80	93 mph
3rd.....	1.00	3.36	134 mph
3.36:1 final drive			

Fury features

- 318 cu. in. 290 bhp V-8
- Dual 4-barrel carburetors
- Dual exhaust
- TorqueFlite 3-speed automatic
- Power drum brakes
- Heavy duty suspension
- Bumper wing guards
- Two-tone steering wheel
- Back-up lights
- Variable-speed wipers
- Chrome drip molding
- Windshield washers
- Dual outside rearview mirrors
- Special Fury interior
- 150 mph speedometer
- Special gold grille
- Sportone trim

The Fury-ous Frahms of Frankenmuth

On his 21st birthday in 1957, Dale Frahm drove into the next automotive decade. He bought a Fury off the showroom floor, which he used for dates with his wife-to-be Berniece. Five years later the demands of marriage and family caused the Fury to be replaced with something more practical, but they never lost their love of that first Fury.

The Frahms, of Frankenmuth, Michigan, now own two restored '57 Furies. One was purchased in 1980 from Tennessee and is equipped with manual transmission, fender skirts, dual rear antennas and an AM radio. In 1983 they bought another Fury that originally came from Texas. This one is loaded with options: automatic transmission, power steering and brakes, tinted windows, Search Tune AM radio, dual rear antennas and fender skirts.

Both were solid Southern cars, and Dale did all of the restoration work himself except the upholstery, plating and engine machining. But restoring a '57 Fury takes diligent effort. Unlike Chevys and Fords of the same vintage, there's relatively little demand for '57 Plymouth parts and no reproductions are being manufactured. So Frahm and other Fury enthusiasts have had to be resourceful in finding used and NOS parts.

"The air cleaners were the most difficult to find," Dale recalls, "but any of the special Fury pieces are difficult, too."

The gold anodized Sportone trim strips proved tough to restore because they are too long for an anodizing tank, so Dale had to make his own fixtures to coil the trim pieces. He's since done the same for other owners.

His effort has paid off in two beautifully restored cars that offer performance and style that upstages more common '57 Chevys and Fords. □



FURY

continued

The car you might have expected in 1960 is at your dealer's now! See it! Drive it! Buy it!

One look and you might have been convinced. Chrysler styling director Virgil Exner brought his "forward look" to its zenith in what Plymouth called Flight-Sweep styling. From the bold, broad grille to the sweeping fins, the '57 Plymouth made a styling statement that was dramatic without being gaudy. For the driver and passengers, the new design promised "Control Tower Visibility" thanks to a 45 percent larger windshield and 29 percent more glass area.

For the first time in decades, Chrysler's designs forced General Motors' hand. Within two years GM styling went to extremes to counter them.

One factor that helped Exner and head Plymouth designer Henry King create such a bold look was the new

platform Chrysler engineers had created, featuring widely spaced frame rails. By providing step-down floors, this platform allowed designers to make the cars lower without sacrificing headroom. The new Plymouth also grew 3.5 inches in width and 3 inches in wheelbase, but careful packaging made it slightly shorter than the 1956 car.

A new Torsion-Aire torsion bar front suspension promised "the quietest, softest, smoothest ride on the road," and overall the '57 Plymouth was claimed to have "exhilarating new sports car handling" with the added stopping power of Total Contact drum brakes.

The 1957 Plymouth line began with the economical Plaza model, followed by the mid-price Savoy, the Suburban station wagon and the top-of-the-line Belvedere. A new push-button TorqueFlite three-speed automatic transmission was available only on the Belvedere, while lesser Plymouths could be ordered with the two-speed PowerFlite automatic or the standard

three-speed manual. Overdrive was a \$100 option on cars so equipped.

THE STAR OF THE SHOW

Engine choices started with a "1960-new" Powerflow Six—actually a warmed-over flathead 132-bhp design from years back. Then came the Hy-Fire 277-cubic-inch V-8 with 197 bhp, available on the Plaza only. Standard on Savoy and Belvedere, optional for Plaza, was Plymouth's pride and joy, the "fabulous new Fury 301 V-8" delivering 215 bhp. Or, for just \$36.20 more, there was the Fury 301 Quad version rated at 235 bhp.

Plymouth engineers had to design a whole new car to handle the terrific power of this mighty new engine.

The star of Plymouth's show in 1957 was the Fury, a limited edition performance/luxury car based on the Belvedere. But the Fury nameplate had already been introduced on a mid-year '56 model the previous spring, a coupe with a base price of \$2807.

The '56 Fury had style—special



Fantasy Fury convertible

“It’s the car Chrysler should have built,” declares Dale Frahm of his custom-made ’57 Fury convertible.

Imagine an automobile with the beauty and power of a ’57 Fury, combined with the

wind-in-the-hair, sun-at-your-back excitement that only a ragtop can deliver.

Why didn’t Chrysler build a convertible Fury? Maybe corporate planners feared it would detract from Chrysler’s flagship models, the Chrysler 300-C and De Soto Adventurer, both of which were available as either hardtop or convertible.

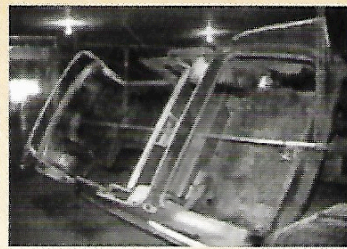
Whatever the reason, it’s a car that might have been but never was. So Frahm built one.

After years of collecting parts for his other cars, Frahm had enough of the rare performance and trim pieces left over to build his fantasy Fury. He bought a rough Belvedere convertible from northern Michigan, then began the lengthy restoration and conversion.

As with his other cars, Frahm did most of the restoration work himself. (One trick he used was a self-styled body rotisserie created by passing a pipe through the body, suspended from his garage rafters.)

The car features a V-800 Fury 318 engine and the unique Fury interior and exterior trim, including such hard-to-find pieces as the 150 mph speedometer, gold anodized aluminum trim and dual rear antennas.

If there had been a Fury convertible, this would be it: The car Chrysler should have built. □



Egg-Shell White paint with gold anodized trim, a gold-finished aluminum grille, dual outside mirrors and Fury script on the rear fenders set it apart. It also had performance to match its name, from a special 303 cubic inch V-8 that initially delivered 240 bhp. A dealer-installed dual four-barrel carb setup made available that May boosted horsepower to 270.

It had speed, too. On January 10, 1956, a Fury broke records on the sands of Daytona Beach by averaging 82.54 mph in a two-way run through the measured mile from a standing start and 124.01 mph from a flying start—12 mph faster than the previous class record.

A total of 4485 Furys were sold that first year, and for ’57 Plymouth put the performance of the previous model into a “1960-new” package. The Fury’s brochure proclaimed: *This study in steel is compounded of fire and fashion, of air and dare, of lion and lamb. It is long, low and lean; eager and obedient; fleet and flirtatious.*

The special Fury styling cues established in 1956 continued with Sand Dune White paint and gold anodized Sportone trim, along with upswept front bumper extensions, back-up lights, dual outside mirrors, special wheel covers and nameplates on the rear fins.

The Fury’s interior matched its striking skin. Trimmed in cocoa fabric and beige vinyl, it came equipped with a padded dash, two-tone steering wheel and 150 mph speedometer. Options included power windows, Search Tune AM radio, rear seat speaker, air conditioning and—rarest of all—a Highway Hi-Fi record player.

The ’57 model was powered by the Fury V-800, an upgraded version of the previous year’s 301 engine that was bored to 318 cubic inches and fitted with dual four-barrel carburetors, dual exhaust and a 9.25:1 compression ratio. It produced 290 bhp at 5400 rpm, which compared favorably to Chevy’s rare and temperamental Ramjet fuel-injected ’57 Bel Air (283 bhp at a

screaming 6200 rpm) and Ford’s equally rare Fairlane 500 (300 bhp from an exotic supercharged 312 cubic inch V-8). Either a Synchro Silent three-speed manual or the push-button TorqueFlite three-speed automatic delivered the Fury’s power.

After adding the Fury to its lineup alongside the Chrysler 300-C, Dodge D-500 and De Soto Adventurer, Chrysler Corporation had the performance bases covered in 1957. While the other divisions’ performance cars all featured hemi-head V-8s, however, Plymouth’s engines were of standard polyspherical design.

Built only on the Detroit assembly line, a total of 7436 Furys were produced in 1957. But part of its goal was to help sell other Plymouths, and the whole “1960-new” line proved to be a great success with plants in Detroit, Los Angeles and Evansville, Indiana, churning out 655,006 cars, over half of Chrysler’s total volume. That propelled Plymouth past Buick and into third place in total sales that year. □