

# Mercury's '63 Monterey

By Steve Repergel

In 1963, Mercury exploded on the scene with a whole new image. A unique styling with unlimited features and a race track persona were all part of a completely different marketing strategy that gave high recognition to an otherwise average automotive manufacturer. Remarkably, all of these efforts were created for one vehicle, the Mercury Monterey. As with the previous year, Mercury provided four categories, including the base Monterey, Monterey Custom, S-55 and Colony Park. However, they pulled out all the stops with production by introducing seven body styles and an astounding sixteen individual models.



The retractable rear window on the Monterey was not something entirely new. Lincoln had introduced this attraction to their 1959 Lincoln Mark IV. The retractable "Breezeway" rear window, as it was commonly referred to, was part of Mercury's production line until 1968.

With styling, Mercury had some influence from Lincoln designers especially in reference to the 1959 Lincoln Mark IV. The retractable "Breezeway" rear window with the backward slant encased in a flat, square like roofline, is a typical Lincoln styling motif. Moreover, the tailfins, rear light cluster and wide, lateral chrome molding also carry many similarities. The Monterey was long and with exception to the slightly smaller station wagon, outsized the 1963 Lincoln with a wheel base of 120 inches and an overall length of 215 inches.

Still, Mercury did add its own distinctive characteristics to the Monterey. From hood to tailfin, a beautiful, fluid and uninterrupted contour of convex and concave shaping was carried throughout the body. This perspective denounced a bulky appearance to the sides of the car. The front grille was also new and possessed an inward curve, thus creating a silhouette appearance.



The Monterey Convertible S-55 was issued mid-way through 1963. It was considered the top-of-the-line model and was available with the optional big block 427 cubic inch.

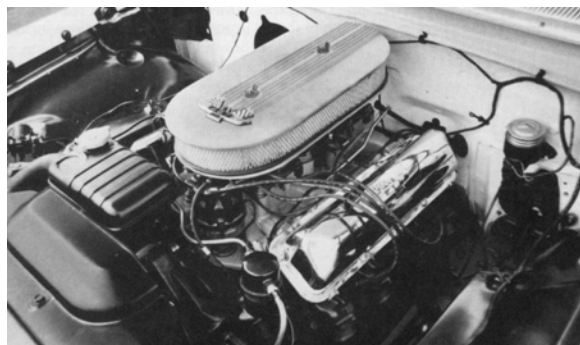
The interior of the Monterey was Lincoln-esque, enormously roomy with 80-inch wide seats. The "Breezeway" window also helped provide better shading to rear seat passengers, greater ventilation and expanded headroom. Consumers also had their choice of several interior designs, including six solid colour cloth materials and 14 vinyl patterns. New for Monterey was an AM/FM radio, an electronic tach, the infamous "Swing-Away" steering wheel, a 6-way power seat and cruise control. Power windows and air conditioning were provided as optional features.

A variety of transmissions were offered, including a three speed manual with or without overdrive, a Warner four speed or a "Merc-O-Matic." The standard engine was the 390 cubic inch which carried a four barrel carb, 10.8:1 compression, 427 ft/lbs of torque and 300 horsepower. The Monterey S-55 carried a slightly enhanced 390c.i., known as the Police Special. Also on the line up were two 406 cubic inch engines, offering 11.5:1 compression and a variance of horsepower

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between 385 and 405. Made readily available were hi-performance parts for the 406 cubic inch, including an aluminum intake with dual four barrel carb setup. The 406 had a beefier block, special heads, pistons and camshaft.

Mercury continued production of their traditional models, the two door, four door and station wagon, but introduced new and exciting editions mid-way through 1963. The Mercury Marauder Fastback and Convertible were announced as the *crème de la crème* and were only available in S-55 and Custom series. These models included a two door hardtop, equipped with bucket seats, a gear shift built within the console and an all new 427 cubic inch "Marauder" V8. The engine was actually called the "Marauder" and was carried forth into the name of the car model. Although pricey, the sleek and aerodynamic roofline of the Marauder Fastback created an interest in both consumer and racecar enthusiasts. In fact, it was not uncommon to see Marauder Fastbacks on the track breaking one record after another.



An absolute rarity, this 427 8-V Hi-Performance engine comes with dual four barrel carbs. It is uncertain how many were produced or have survived.

The 427 replaced the 406 and came in two versions; 415 and 425 horsepower. The only distinction between the two big blocks was that the Super Marauder received a dual four barrel carb setup and an aluminum intake manifold. Otherwise, both had 11.5:1 compression and mechanical valve lifters. The Super Marauder produced a worthy 425

horsepower and 480 pounds of torque. Either engine came with an optional three speed or four speed manual tranny. Power train warranty was dropped to three months or 4000 miles, whichever came first, regardless of which 427 V8 version was under the hood. The 427 Marauder was initially the largest big block in Ford history and started the idea of a production of elite automobiles for stock car enthusiasts. It is quite clear the Monterey paved the way to creations like the Ford Thunderbolt, which was available to the public the following year.

Nevertheless, the Monterey's were not without subtle flaws. Owners who possessed the big block 427 cubic inch complained that high revolutions would sometimes blow the mufflers off and that in-town driving was difficult due to under steering in tight corners. In addition, without proper traction modifications, the 15 inch rear tires would often spin relentlessly while pushing full throttle. However, none of these incidentals could offset Mercury's success.

To market the Monterey's with their big block engines, Mercury took a politically correct approach by promoting the phrase "Safety Surge V8's," a term that supported statistics proving accidents per mile occurred with primarily low horsepower vehicles. At the same time, it was necessary for Mercury to enter their Monterey's in stock car racing to prove to other target markets that they were not just a "family" car automaker. At an American Hot Rod Association (AHRA) event, Mercury placed a 427 cubic inch under the hood of a station wagon, but promoters disputed the legality of such an endeavor. As a result, Mercury's drag racing team packed up and left. Regardless, Mercury's Monterey set unprecedented records in the stock car racing industry, beating out the opposition which sometimes included its parent, Ford.

It seemed that Mercury's marketing paid off. The public were fascinated with the Monterey's revised styling and its reputation on the track. All of this attention while securing confidence in the public on "Safety Surge V8's," dramatically increased sales and created an everlasting image of Mercury's separation from the "family" auto. Without question, 1963 marked the success of Mercury's racing career and set in motion a production of limited racing vehicles to come. As for the Monterey, it would continue to receive prestigious awards and compliments from the automotive circuit for the next four years until its demise in 1967.