

## THE SQUARE BIRD

### 1959 THUNDERBIRD

Text by Arch Brown  
Photographed by Vince Manocchi

When it came time to introduce its 'personal' car, Ford — as the company's ads like to proclaim — had a *better idea*.

Chevrolet had started it all, of course — in 1953, with the Corvette. Strictly a limited production car, that first 'Vette (a nickname nobody had heard of at the time, by the way), powered as it was by the old "stove-bolt six," wasn't about to blow anybody's doors off. But it was, nevertheless, a true sports car, the first to be produced in this country in many years, unless you count the Crosley "Hot Shot."

Ford, entering the market two years after its rival, took off in another direction. *Sporty* their little Thunderbird was, when it appeared for the 1955 season; but a *sports car* it was not. In suspension, appointments and tune, it was a luxury car built for two, a convertible with a choice of hard or soft top. Nothing less; maybe a little bit more: it was an absolute knockout when it came to looks!

Immediately it became apparent which firm had read the market correctly — the 'Bird flew past its competitor, ahead by a country mile. In fact, over the three years of its production, the two-seater T-Bird outsold the Corvette by a margin of more than five to one!

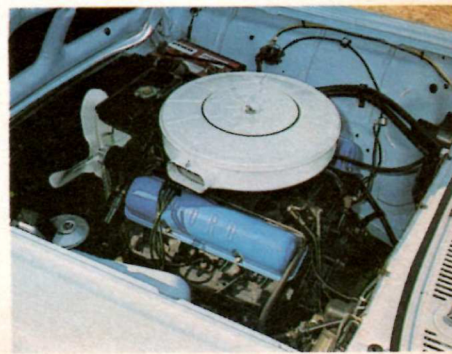
Not very often, in the years since Bill Knudsen put Chevy on the map back in the mid-twenties, had Ford scored such a coup. One might logically expect that in the sweet euphoria of victory the company would elect to stay with what was obviously a winning number — particularly since, in its third year of production, 1957, sales of the little



The rear-quarter shot shows why the car is referred to as the 'Square Bird'.



Quad headlights on T-Birds began a year earlier with the 1958 model.



The Thunderbird Special engine developed 300 horsepower @ 4600rpm.