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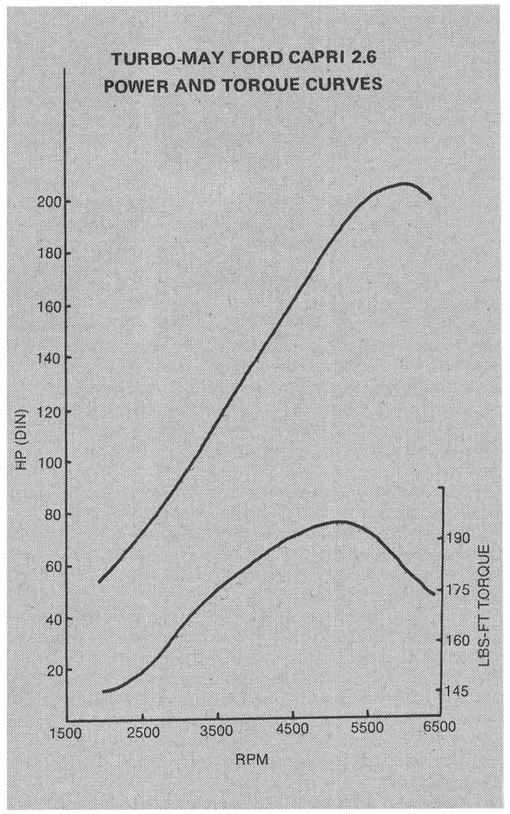
THE ULTIMATE CAPRI: TURBO-MAY

KNOW YOUR SPORTS CAR: PART 1

THE TURBO-MAY 2.6 LITRE



Power and torque curves for the amazing May.

THE ULTIMATE CAPRI

60 mph to 100 mph in just 12 seconds! The recipe involves Ford of Germany's 2600 V6 Capri, a turbocharger, and the "cordon bleu" touch of Swiss magician Mike May, renowned for his work with turbos.

From JERRY SLONIGER

JUST THREE FIGURES tell you why the Turbo May Ford Capri (Cologne 2600 V6) is a different ball-game entirely. One is the maximum horsepower, lifted from 125 DIN to 208. The second is a full-bodied 192 lb/ft of torque at 5000 rpm.

But the figure to remember for this medium-size automobile of 2.6 litres is 12 seconds — that's all the time it takes for the turbocharged May car to surge from 60 mph to an even 100 using top gear only.

Despite the rather noticeable paint job on Mike May's own car borrowed for our 800-mile test), this can be a very lazy automobile indeed. It's rather as if you drove a compact European car up to 3000 rpm and then dropped in a big-bore American-type V8 for the next 3500 rpm.

On dull days you can just as easily go direct from first gear to top, while III is almost superfluous on all days except those when you want to enjoy the special and seemingly endless push of turbocharging. In fact, we found ourselves using all four gears on all days just because the Capri felt so eager.

Consider acceleration figures like 15.6 seconds for the standing quarter mile — as good or a hair better than the works injected Capri RS can do for nearly twice the surcharge.

In fact, the May car could do much better yet if it didn't have an electronic rev limiter aboard. This is required by the German licensing authorities in deference to the only slightly modified 2600 GT XLR Capri chassis and brakes.

The normal red-line is 5800 and we respected this for most driving in the interests of engine wear. The practical limit for full thrills is more like 6500.

Even at the nominal red mark you are doing 35-60-93 and nearly 120 while the true top speed turned out as 128 mph. As I say, these can be very nearly matched by the RS . . . for a higher price and higher fuel consumption.

What no normally aspirated engine can ever offer is the turbocharger's willingness to climb the tachometer like some demented monkey.

"Normal" cars continue to accelerate to their

maxima, of course, but they make the second half of the trip more slowly than the first. A turbocharged Capri goes up to 100 in 21.5 s and does it by gaining speed nearly as rapidly above 80 as it did below that point.

To take one example; 60 mph in top gear with a 2.6 Capri requires 3000 rpm. And that is precisely the point where the turbocharger comes in when you need to overtake suddenly.

For a given speed, say 70, the consumption in this Capri is less than 0.5 mpg above that for a carburetted 2.6 Ford V6. Our overall figure of 18.9 mpg includes several hours of 100-plus freeway work and at least 5500 in all gears at all times.

Another factor in turbocharging as a way to stun the big-bore natives is the ease of application. May, the German-domiciled Swiss specialist, is adamant that a V6 2.6 kit won't fit your pre-war Hudson. Each is keyed to a specific engine/gearing combination on his own engine dyno.

Then they are sold as after-sales kits (beats American and perhaps other emissions laws) through selected Ford dealers.

Even Ford of Cologne goes along with this and their largest garage in Germany has been fitting smaller V6 Fords for over two years. The short, stiff crank makes this an ideal engine for turbocharging.

Assuming, then, that you remain loyal to the V6, the turbocharger can be unbolted without opening the engine at all when your car is sold. And fitted to another.

Speaking of emissions, May claims that turbocharged engines meet even the California specs.

Anyway, you needn't touch an internal thing to apply turbocharging. Bearings, gaskets, even carburettor are stock. Only the plugs are changed, for colder Champion N2G items.

The two exhaust manifolds must be swapped of course for May units with the turbocharger mounted directly on your right manifold and a pipe from the left bank crossing under the engine to the blower.

The blower itself, its trunking, air filter and a welded-up can atop the carburettor (he uses the original air cleaner can) complete the kit.

The installation is particularly neat under that Capri bonnet.

The heart of May's blower success is his patented control unit which takes care of atmospheric twitches, temperature, flow and revs, thereby surmounting the problems which turned GM off with the Corvair and Olds.

In practice we never had the slightest surge on acceleration, there were no flat spots from 600 revs to 6000 and no loading up on over-run.

Our chief problem was heat in the 90-degree weather of this test. May uses a stock Capri cooler, there being none other around Germany.

For cold starts you simply wait a moment for the pump to fill the carb (a la injection) and turn the key. It started immediately every time.

When the engine was fully warm and you had to start and stop it several times it might take some cranking of the starter with right foot well away from the accelerator before it would fire.

Initial idle was about 1250, but once the engine warmed up it would tick over at 600 even after long, hard runs.

The obvious point is simply that a blower compresses air and compressed air is hotter. This bears on its clean exhaust.

Apart from the engine, which is our reason for writing, the car was virtually standard and that points up the real limits of turbocharging — the Capri chassis can't take too much.

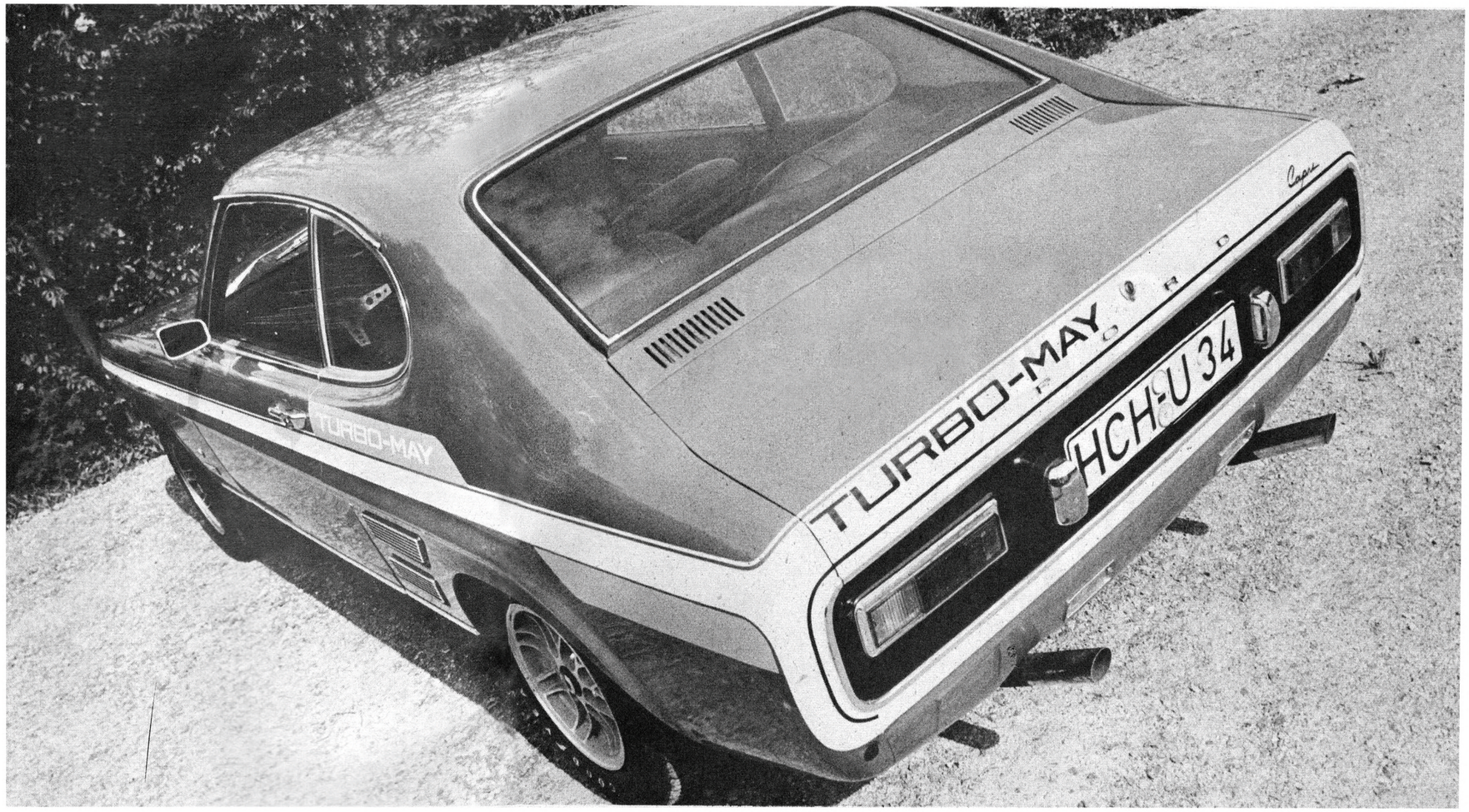
For their own RS, Ford lowers the car with special front links and single-leaf rear springs. Apart from looking like a dachshund, the RS bottoms on the smallest pebble.

For his own car May, Europe's first Formula Junior champion and a winning Spyder RS racer, compromised.

He used the single-leaf RS back end but left the front nearly standard Capri, which gives a drag strip launch attitude when you scan the profile. It also let the car wander at higher speeds, so that driving could be an adventure.

Inside the car was almost standard . . . no hardship, since Ford fits more and better dials than most firms. May likes to drive fast in comfort, so he put a full bucket on the driver's side. You don't realise how great the lateral *g* forces are in this eerily silent machine until the passenger has to fight to stay aboard.

All this and the cost is only a few dollars over $A700, a fair deal for turning your Ford (any 2.6-litre V6, sedan or Capri) into a BMW-thumper. *



A hard car to overlook in bright red with white and black stripes/lettering and day-glo orange signs on each side, not to mention blue wheel trim.

Turbocharger and its intake trunking neatly tucked into right (relative to car) side of engine bay alongside V6. Air box is welded up as collector over stock carb. Exhaust manifolds are special to feed blower.

TURBO-MAY 2.6 LITRE