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The Thunderbird, a new kind of personal car combining high performance with the comfort, convenience and safety of a conventional model, was announced today by Ford Division.

The Thunderbird has long, low graceful lines. Its all steel body is of durable, conventional construction. The car is powered by a new, 160 h.p. Y-block V-8 engine. It can be purchased with a special composition hardtop which makes it a complete, all-weather car. The Thunderbird is equipped with a convertible cloth top which folds completely out of sight behind the rear seat.

L. D. Crusoe, Ford Motor Company vice-president and general manager of Ford Division, said the Thunderbird will be placed in production next fall. It will be shown to the public for the first time February 20 at the Detroit Automobile Show.

"The Thunderbird will begin a new era in the automotive field," Mr. Crusoe said. "While it resembles a sports car, it is a full-size vehicle---most of the major parts are interchangeable with our regular line of cars. It is completely engineered and built so it can be serviced by any Ford dealer.

"Its engine is of the latest short-stroke, low friction design with 256 cubic inch displacement, a four-barrel carburetor and dual exhausts. Steering is made easier through Ford's new ball-joint suspension."

Ford test engineers say that "from a standing start, in 40 seconds the Thunderbird will be 53 car lengths out in front of a conventional 1954 car."

The Thunderbird normally seats two passengers but the full-width seat provides accommodation for a third passenger. Through the one-piece, wrap-around windshield, with its forward-slanting pillars, the driver has a full view ahead over the down-swept hood as well as to both sides.

"The Thunderbird's hardtop is so light that two teen age girls could remove it easily," Mr. Crusoe said. "And, of course, the cloth convertible top is always available."

The new model can be purchased with power steering, power brakes, four-way power seat and power window lifts. It has an adjustable steering column which telescopes in or out 3 inches to fit all drivers. In addition to the normal instruments on the control panel, the Thunderbird has a tachometer to indicate engine r.p.m.

The Thunderbird's high fenderline sweeps backward in a straight line and is slightly lower at the tail fins than at the headlights. Its low silhouette is indicated by the fact that the door tops are only 33.7 inches from the ground and its over-all height is 51.5 inches. This is nearly a foot lower than the 1954 Ford sedan, yet it has only slightly less road clearance.

The low hood line of the Thunderbird is accentuated by an air scoop which extends from the windshield forward over the oil bath air cleaner.

The Thunderbird's oval-shaped grille is covered with bright metal square mesh. Two round bumper guards rise from the wedge-shaped bumper with a center spinner in each guard, in keeping with traditional Ford grille design. Two circular parking lamps are located in the fenders directly below the headlamps.

The sides of the Thunderbird have clean, classic lines without extra ornamentation. Y-block V-8 engine insignia and nine small diagonal metal strips accentuate the front fender lines.

Round rear bumper guards on the Thunderbird also have two center spinners which serve as openings for the dual exhaust system. Tail lights are eight inches

in diameter and are topped by the high-arched fender ends.

To operate either the Fordomatic transmission or the standard transmission, the Thunderbird has a short selector lever in the floor on the driver's right. As on other Ford cars, clutch and brake pedals are suspended from the dash.

The Thunderbird has a 102 inch wheelbase, a 58 inch front tread and a 56 inch rear tread. Its over-all length is 175.5 inches. It has a curb weight of 2837 pounds. Road clearance is 5.5 inches, only slightly less than other Fords.

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