

## 1969 Mercury Cougar RX7



The introduction of the Cougar in 1967 finally gave Mercury its own muscle car. Built on a stretched Mustang frame, this model was slotted between the Ford Mustang and the Ford Thunderbird, the Cougar would be the performance icon and eventually the icon for the Mercury name for several decades. The Cougar was available in two models (base and XR-7) and only came in one body style (a two door hardtop). Engine choices ranged from the 200 hp (149 kW) 289 in<sup>3</sup> 2-barrel V8 to the 335 hp (250 kW) 390 in<sup>3</sup> 4-barrel V8. A notable performance package called the GT was available on both the base and XR-7 Cougars. This included the 390 cu in V8 as well as a performance handling package and other performance goodies.

Not much changed for the Cougar in its second year. The addition of federally mandated side marker lights was the major change. But the biggest changes were under the hood and performance-wise for the XR-7 model. Three new engines were added to the option list this year—the 230 hp (172 kW) 302 in<sup>3</sup>, 4-barrel V8; the 335 hp (250 kW) 428 in<sup>3</sup>, 4-barrel V8; and the 390 hp (291 kW) 427 in<sup>3</sup>, 4-barrel V8. Mercury was serious about the Cougar being the performance icon for the company. The XR-7G, named for Mercury road racer Dan Gurney, came with all sorts of performance add-ons, including a hood scoop, Lucas fog lamps and hood pins. Engine selection was limited only to the 302, 390 and the 428 V8. A grand total of 619 XR-7G's were produced, and only 14 G's were produced with the 428 CJ. The mid-year 7.0 L

GT-E package was available on both the standard and XR-7 Cougars and came with the legendary 427 V8. The 428 Cobra Jet Ram Air was available in limited numbers on the GT-E towards the end of the model year. Conservatively rated at 335 hp (250 kW) , the 428 Cobra Jet could produce much more (306 kW (410 hp)) from the factory. A grand total of 394 GT-E's were produced, and only 37 were equipped with the 428 Cobra Jet.

The third year of production, 1969, brought several new additions to the Cougar lineup. A convertible model was now available in both standard and XR-7 trim. These highly anticipated soft tops proved quite popular and today are considered, by many, among the most desirable of the '67-'70 production run. Exterior-wise, the grille switched from vertical bars to horizontal bars, and a spoiler and a Ram Air induction hood scoop were added as options. A new performance package appeared and several disappeared. The XR-7G and the 7.0 L GT-E disappeared, but the 390 and 428 V8s remained. The 290 hp (216 kW) 351 Windsor V8 was added to the engine lineup. The Eliminator performance package appeared for the first time. A standard 351 in 4-barrel V8 under the hood, with the 390 4-barrel V8, the 428CJ and the Boss 302 available as an option. The Eliminator was the new top of the line performance model of the Cougar lineup. It also featured a blacked-out grille, special side stripes, front and rear spoilers, optional Ram Air induction system, and a more performance tuned suspension and handling package. It also came in a variety of vibrant colors like White, Bright Blue Metallic, Competition Orange, and Bright Yellow. Only 2 Cougars came with the Boss 429 V8, making them the rarest Cougars ever built.

The 1970 Cougar was similar to the 1969 model, however there were numerous changes inside and out. It now sported a new front end which featured a pronounced center hood extension and electric shaver grille similar to the 1967 and 1968 Cougars. Federally mandated locking steering columns took place on the inside, and the aforementioned new nose and taillight bezels updated the look on the outside. The 300 hp (224 kW) 351 "Cleveland" V8 was now available for the first time though both the Cleveland and Windsor engines were available if you took the base model 2-barrel motor. The 390 Ford FE engine was now dropped from the lineup, and the Boss 302 and 428CJ engines soldiered along.

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