

(Options put the Grand into Grand Prix)

LET'S SEE WHAT can be done to put a little extra snap and crackle into the GP's handling and performance, all by way of a Pontiac order form, that pleasantly accommodating device for the zap-minded. We went about this task by asking Royal Pontiac ("The Home of the Hot Chiefs") of Royal Oak, Mich., what it recommends to bright-eyed and bushy-tailed people who want a GP with muscle.

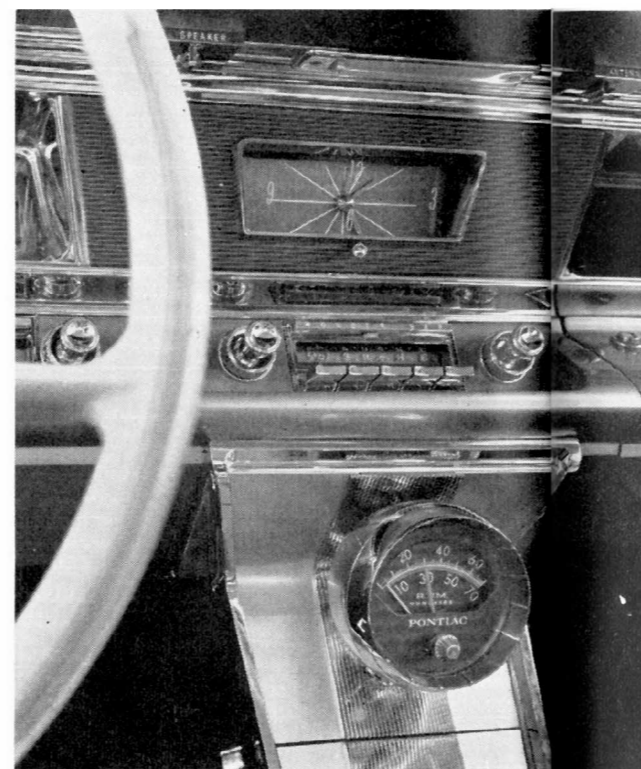
The first Magic Code Number, according to Royal, is 391. For \$3.82 the factory will arrange for the man on the assembly line to bypass the standard parts bin and fit medium-rate heavy-duty springs and shock absorbers. There are high-rate units available but they aren't advised unless you're somewhat of a masochist or a hang-all-else-but-handling type. The medium-raters keep affairs well snubbed, the car on an even keel in corners, and yet sacrifice

very little in boulevard riding comfort.

What about the actual muscle? Well, not counting the rortin' snortin' Super Duty 421s—which, being suited for racing only, are beyond the scope of this article—there are three more powerful engines for the GP:

Bhp@rpm	Torque@rpm	Displ.	Carb.	Cost
313 @ 4600	430 @ 3200	389	3-2	\$115.78
353 @ 5000	455 @ 3400	421	1-4	\$290.84
370 @ 5200	460 @ 3800	421	3-2	\$403.71

Far be it from us to tell you how much power you need; you're on your own in this department. But to help you make up your mind, we'll touch lightly on each engine. Geared properly, the standard 303-bhp engine (389 cu. in., 1-4 bbl.) is no slouch by any means (nothing with 430 lb.-ft. of torque ever is, unless hitched to an army tank). The 313-bhp engine? We'll answer our own question with another: Is 10 more horsepower, two more carburetors but no more torque worth \$115.78 to you?



TRI-POWER BOOSTS 421's horsepower from 353 to a vigorous 370 @ 5200 rpm.

ALUMINUM wheels are an \$122 addition.

Then there are the two 421-HO (for High Output) hydraulic-lifter engines, one with a single 4-bbl. and the other with 3-2 bbl. Here again it's a question of money as much as anything. The difference is 17 bhp, 5 lb.-ft., carburetion and \$112.87. We haven't tried the 353-bhp version, but the GP equipped with the 370-bhp engine that we did sample over a distance of 1500 miles prompted the following observations: Only fairly lumpy idle at 800 rpm; at home in chugging town traffic as well as on the open road; 8-12 mpg; 750 miles to the quart of oil; and scat like our old friend, the scalded cat. If you have the money—and the urge to transport yourself thither in one great whoosh—why not?

For more positive control of the gasworks, think about replacing the vacuum-operated carburetor linkage with a mechanical, progressive linkage. But don't ask the factory for it—it's a dealer-installed option that runs to about \$42.50, installed. It's money well spent if you intend operating your engine up near the revolution limit on shifts. The vacuum-operated device's reaction to a backed-off throttle can be hesitant enough to allow the revs to keep climbing for a moment too long, in which direction lies pumping up of the hydraulic lifters and an effective termination of forward urge, oh heavy-footed one. Another nice thing about the mechanical linkage is that it has a solid detent just before the point where the two end carburetors cut in on the 3-carburetor setup, giving you fair warn-

ing when you're at the threshold of passing into the gas-gobbling stage.

But back to factory options. To make sure that what churns out of the engine gets poured onto the road evenly, make a note of Code 691. It stands for \$42.50 worth of Safe-T-Track, which is Pontiac's name for its limited-slip differential assembly.

The standard transmission in the GP is stirred via three on the tree, but we'd be surprised to hear of more than a handful being ordered through with this 3-speed column shift. The choice is thus between Pontiac's 3-speed Roto Hydra-Matic and the all-synchro Warner 4-speed, both of which have their levers sprouting out of the center console and both of which cost \$231.34.

If an automatic is what you want, then all that remains is to pick the right axle ratio; more about that in a moment. If messing about with gears is irresistible, then pay attention: Two gear sets are available, installed at the factory, for the Warner 4-speed, one with 2.54, 1.92, 1.51 and 1.00 gears and the other, the close-ratio set, with 2.20, 1.66, 1.31 and 1.00 gears. The close-ratio box comes through automatically with the 421-HO engines, unless otherwise specified, but not with either of the 389-cu. in. engines. Seems the factory doesn't feel too happy about such a high ratio 1st gear being used with the lower horsepower engines; clutches get slipped more than they should on take-offs with the 2.20 ratio—and goodbye clutch.

When it comes to axle ratios, Pontiac

would seem to be in the numbers racket. They're worth listing, if only because they make such an impressive array:

2.56*	3.42*	4.44	5.57
2.69*	3.55	4.55	5.86
2.87*	3.64*	4.67	6.14
3.08*	3.90*	4.88	
3.23*	4.10	5.13	
3.31	4.30	5.38	

A choice of any of the ratios marked with asterisks is available for the GP (and most other Pontiac models) at no extra cost. The other ratios are over-the-parts-counter affairs, made available for racing gentry.

What ratio to pick? It all depends upon the kind of driving you have in mind. If you care for nought but acceleration, a 3.90 rear end is what you want. If it's a high cruising speed at relatively low rpm that you're after, then specify a 3.23 rear end for the manual shift and 3.08 for the auto-

matic (which, because of the torque multiplication of 1st gear, can stand a higher axle ratio than the manual shift-equipped GP). If you want a bit of both worlds, plump for a 3.64 axle.

Oh, yes: Don't rely on the factory's memory for every niggling thing. If you choose one of the optional axle ratios, specify the matching speedometer gear adapter right on the order form. You could end up with a wildly inaccurate speedometer otherwise.

Still got some money for us to spend? Well then, how about \$122.13 worth of aluminum wheels, hubs and drums (Code 694)? Even if they didn't help cool the brakes, they'd be pretty hard to resist, esthetically speaking. And what about Pontiac's transistorized, breakerless ignition for premium-fuel engines at \$75.27? Code 671 for the 389-cu. in. engines, 676 for the 421-HO engines and well worth it. ■

LABEL ON THE aircleaner cover identifies the 421-cu. in. High Output engine option.



PONTIAC GRAND PRIX can be turned into a tiger by ordering the proper accessories.

