



# 1964 Buick Wildcat

*The Executive Hot Rod—Just The Thing For Tired Blood!*

**A**LTHOUGH WE'RE A bit late for Christmas, there always are those anniversary, birthday, Closing-of-a-Big Deal, or just plain graft type of gift-giving situations. And, if the object of such attention happens to be an automotive-minded business or industrial tycoon, the perfect gift might be one of Buick's latest vehicular creations, the Executive Hot Rod.

Any budding Horatio Alger would appreciate one of these, combining as they do the known quality and luxury of the big Buick line with a level of performance hitherto unattainable except in the more mundane, bourgeois automobile. With one of these, he can have his luxury and drive it, too.

Several elements readily identify the EHR from its erstwhile companions in Buick showrooms, the most immediately noticeable of which are the chromed steel "artillery" wheels. Optional (at \$91.38) for all the bigger

Buicks, they lend that particularly purposeful look which the rugged individualist would especially appreciate. Another element is the black vinyl-covered hardtop roof, a *ne plus ultra* item when placed above the conservative-yet-rich-looking silver-gray body finish.

The basis for these options, of course, is Buick's middle line of "big" cars, the Wildcat, which is a pretty round, sound package all by itself. This series puts big strong engines into big strong, roadable chassis with big strong brakes. Sure and easy in operation, they impart to their owners a feeling of permanence, both from their conservative styling and their quality of construction.

The Executive Hot Rod has all this, in spades. There's a lot more muscle than in the ordinary run-of-the-woods Wildcat, on an optional basis, of course. These vigorous additions to

EHR are in the form of a 3.91:1 axle ratio, a 360-bhp, 425-cu. in. engine, and a 4-speed all-synchromesh manual-shift transmission. These appurtenances obviously are for the man who thinks for himself, and who likes to take only the minimum elapsed time between stoplights.

This is the Executive Hot Rod: a handsome, custom-touched carriage, endowed with enough performance to show most of those whippersnappers a fast-disappearing set of taillights.

Wot'll she do? A hundred mph in under 22 sec., the standing ¼-mile in 16.0 sec. and 14 mpg between fueling stops. Not exactly in the Super/Stock league, but then how many Busy Executives could (or would) drive the chuffing, bucking S/S to work? And how many S/S are so luxuriously appointed?

Despite the 360-bhp output of the engine, performance could be better. Part of the problem lies with the car's tractive ability. The added muscle from that 425 is enough to keep the 7.60-15s spinning interminably, even on dry pavement—on wet surfaces, it's really touchy—so throttle-to-the-wall acceleration suffers from too much tire slip. Optional, wider 8.00-15 tires would help; so would a lower (numerically) gear ratio. Top speed is limited by the go-or-blow factor so by holding rpm to only 12.5% over the rated peak, we easily saw 115 mph on the speedometer.

Driving this animal up and down

## CAR LIFE ROAD TEST

the public streets is both a burden and a blessing. It has so much power pouring through that stump-puller gear that it can accelerate from 10 mph in top gear. Or, it will run from mild to wild in any of the other gears on an instant's notice. This gives the driver a choice of techniques—lazy skip-shifting or Banzai!

The former consists of starting in either 1st or 2nd, depending upon the load in the car and/or gradient, and then shifting to 4th at the earliest opportunity. This is the tired executives' system. However, the young man in a hurry will undoubtedly resort to the system of stab, grab and steer! This is best defined as stab the throttle, grab the next gear at six grand on the tach and steer with whatever hand is free at the time. The smash from one gear to the next is enough to achieve minor whiplash and, as one CL tester termed it: "The car's a rolling chiropractic treatment."

What a way to arrive home after a hard day at the office: emotionally and physically rejuvenated from the sheer challenge of whipping this demon through the traffic!

If the driver achieves something less than smoothness, it's because throttle linkage and transmission shift mechanisms both need some refinement. The transmission is the familiar Borg-Warner T-10, which has good, blocker-type synchronization of gears. Treated properly, this transmission is a joy to use, but the shift linkage system can make all the difference in the world. In this application Buick uses a husky, forward-slanting stalk to stir the gear soup, and this shaft is prevented from accidentally falling into the reverse slot by a heavily-sprung detent. The same spring works against gaining the 1st-2nd slot, too, and the combination of it with the awkward-slanting lever makes any gear less than 3rd and 4th an exercise to attain. However, the chair-bound executive may appreciate the improvement in pectoral tone after an evening of brisk traffic-blasting.

The throttle linkage is such that the car is driven 90% of the time on only one of the two Carter AFB 4-barrel carburetors. This makes it easier to operate. But, it makes the transition into both-carburetor performance a



WILDCAT HAS distinctive trim marks behind front wheel, to identify it from LeSabre and Electra models. Massive, steel wheels are an extra-cost option.

little sudden; that is, the linkage is not progressive enough and the engine takes a sudden surge when the second 4-barrel is opened. This, if the road surface is at all slick, can cause the rear tires to slip.

Each carburetor has 8.31 sq. in. of

venturi area, so the air intake can be voluminous. Some of the rushing air noise is damped out by a huge, chromed air cleaner, but the rest makes a reassuring thrum when the throttle pedal is fully depressed. This, combined with the wail of the transmission

TWIN, HUGE dials enclose speedometer and other instruments. Forward-slant on shift lever makes it less easy to use; tachometer is nearly invisible.



RALPH POOLE PHOTOS





## 1964 Buick Wildcat

gears, the scream of burning tires and the thrust of heart-rending acceleration, makes the very sensory impact of the Wildcat at full voice a memorable experience.

The power behind the thrum is the biggest, most powerful engine Buick has ever put on the market. It registers

360 bhp when equipped, as was the test vehicle, with two 4-barrel carburetors, or 340 bhp with one 4-barrel instrument. These make nice step-ups from the standard 325-bhp, 401-cu. in. V-8 and give Buick a chance to sell horsepower options where it had to give way to its competitors before.

### BIG BUICK ENGINES

Year	1953	1957	1959	1963	1964
Displacement	322	364	401	425	425
Bore x stroke	4.00x3.20	4.125x3.325	4.1875x3.640	4.3125x3.640	4.3125x3.640
Compression ratio	8.50	10.00	10.50	10.25	10.25
Carburetion	1x4	1x4	1x4	1x4	2x4
Bhp rpm	188 @ 4000	300 @ 4600	325 @ 4400	340 @ 4600	360 @ 4600

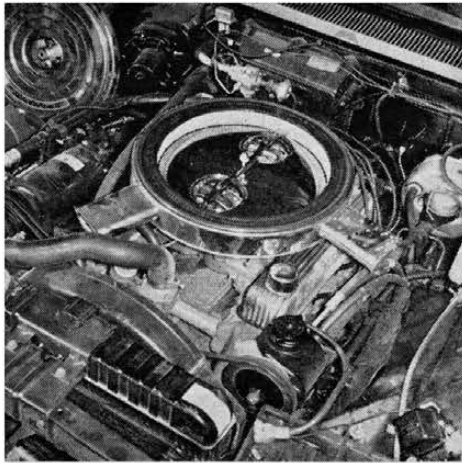
**THE EXECUTIVE'S Hot Rod:** A Buick Wildcat hardtop coupe with black vinyl roof and interior, chromed wheels, a 425-cu. in., 360-bhp engine and a 4-speed transmission.



The 340/425 was originally introduced in 1963, as an option for the Riviera. It sold well enough and proved durable enough to let the engineers go the next step, to the twin 4-barrel set-up. The 425-cu. in. displacement is just about as far as Buick can go with this engine design. To enlarge the 401 to 425, the engineers had to bore out the cylinders another eighth of an inch, to 4.3125 in., which is squeezing things up pretty close when they're laid out on 4.75 in. centers.

This engine started its manufacturing life with the 1953 Buicks, where its 188 bhp propelled even the heavy Roadmaster in brisk (for then) fashion. It underwent a pretty extensive redesign in 1957, when it was enlarged to 364 cu. in., and this engine is the real basis for the 401 and 425. Both bore and stroke have been considerably enlarged since then, along with the valves, but component design has remained relatively constant.

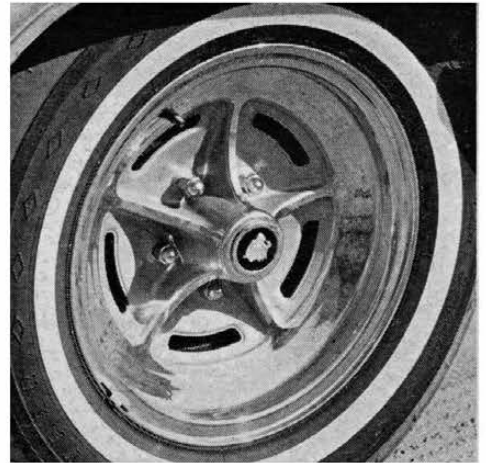
There are few differences, other than the multiplicity of carburetion, between the current 401 and the 425, about the only major one being in the camshaft and valve timing specification. The 425 cam opens slightly sooner, has a bit more overlap and lifts the valves a fraction higher. The 425's cam has 290° duration and 0.439 in. lift on intake, 299° duration and 0.441 in. lift on exhaust; overlap is 77°. As with all other Buick engines, the push-rod overhead valves are operated by hydraulic tappets; however, they can



**CHROMED** air cleaner covers throats of two 4-barrel carburetors.



**SPECIAL EMBLEM** on side of roof panel carries motif.



**OPTIONAL WHEELS** are \$91.38 extra, are chrome-plated for protection.

be pushed to nearly 6000 rpm, during acceleration bursts, without pump-up.

Buick lists the 425 with either carburetion combination for all the '64 Wildcats, Electras and Rivieras. In the

Wildcat either can be ordered with the 4-speed manual transmission; in the Electra and Riviera, it comes only with the 3-speed Super Turbine 400 automatic transmission.

Obviously, the Executive Hot Rod is just what the tired businessman needs to provide stimulation and relaxation at the end of a long day at a hot desk. ■

## CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



### 1964 BUICK Wildcat 2-door Hardtop

#### SPECIFICATIONS

List price	.....\$3256
Price, as tested	.....5700
Curb weight, lb	.....4420
Test weight	.....4750
distribution, %	.....54.3/45.7
Tire size	.....7.60-15
Tire capacity, lb	@ 24 psi 5020
Brake swept area	.....320.5
Engine type	.....V-8, ohv
Bore & stroke	.....4.31 x 3.64
Displacement, cu. in.	.....425
Compression ratio	.....10.25
Carburetion	.....2 x 4
Bhp @ rpm	.....360 @ 4400
equivalent mph	.....91
Torque, lb-ft	.....465 @ 2800
equivalent mph	.....58

#### EXTRA-COST OPTIONS

360-bhp engine, 4-speed trans., air cond., power steering, power brakes, w.s. washer, am/fm radio, tinted glass, bucket seats, power windows

#### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.	.....123.0
Tread, f & r	.....62/61
Overall length, in.	.....218.8
width	.....78.0
height	.....55.6
equivalent vol., cu. ft.	.....548
Frontal area, sq. ft.	.....24.1
Ground clearance, in.	.....5.8
Steering ratio, o/a	.....20.7
turns, lock to lock	.....3.5
turning circle, ft.	.....43.9
Hip room, front	.....2 x 25
Hip room, rear	.....54.0
Pedal to seat back, max.	.....44.0
Floor to ground	.....13.0
Luggage vol., cu. ft.	.....n.a.
Fuel tank capacity, gal.	.....20.0

#### GEAR RATIOS

4th (1.00) overall	.....3.91
3rd (1.51)	.....5.87
2nd (1.89)	.....7.39
1st (2.54)	.....9.93

#### PERFORMANCE

Top speed (5500), mph	.....115
Shifts, @ mph (manual)	
3rd (5500)	.....75
2nd (5500)	.....60
1st (5500)	.....45

#### ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.	.....2.8
0-40	.....3.9
0-50	.....5.7
0-60	.....7.7
0-70	.....10.3
0-80	.....13.6
0-100	.....21.7
Standing 1/4 mile, sec	.....16.0
speed at end, mph	.....87

#### FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range, mpg	.....11-14
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#### SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual	.....28.2
60 mph	.....54.2
90 mph	.....81.7

#### CALCULATED DATA

Lb/hp (test wt)	.....13.2
Cu. ft/ton mile	.....151
Mph/1000 rpm	.....20.7
Engine revs/mile	.....2900
Piston travel, ft/mile	.....1760
Car Life wear index	.....51.1

#### PULLING POWER

70 mph (3rd) max. gradient, %	.....17.5
50	.....28.3
30	.....40.0
Total drag at 60 mph, lb	.....195

