

THE MOST STUNNING aspect of the GTO is its looks. With clean, uncluttered lines, the Pontiac that started the Tiger Trend is just about the sexiest thing on four wheels. While it bears a strong family resemblance to the larger Pontiacs, its total visual effect is less bulbous and over-powering than the Catalina-type Tigers.

The lines and looks of our test car were complimented by a sharp white paint job, baby-blue top and interior, and a thick dark-blue racing stripe. An eye-catcher to beat all eye-catchers, the car drew admiring glances wherever we went, mostly from the younger set and especially from the bumpier sex.

A lot of people buy the GTO for

its looks alone. They want the supercar "image," but usually forego the many performance options available. This set of GTO owners order their Tigers with the single-four-barrel, 335-hp engine option (which is hardly a weak choice by any standards), and then add a two-speed automatic for the sake of convenience. What they are buying, essentially, is a husky Le Mans with the GTO nameplate and image.

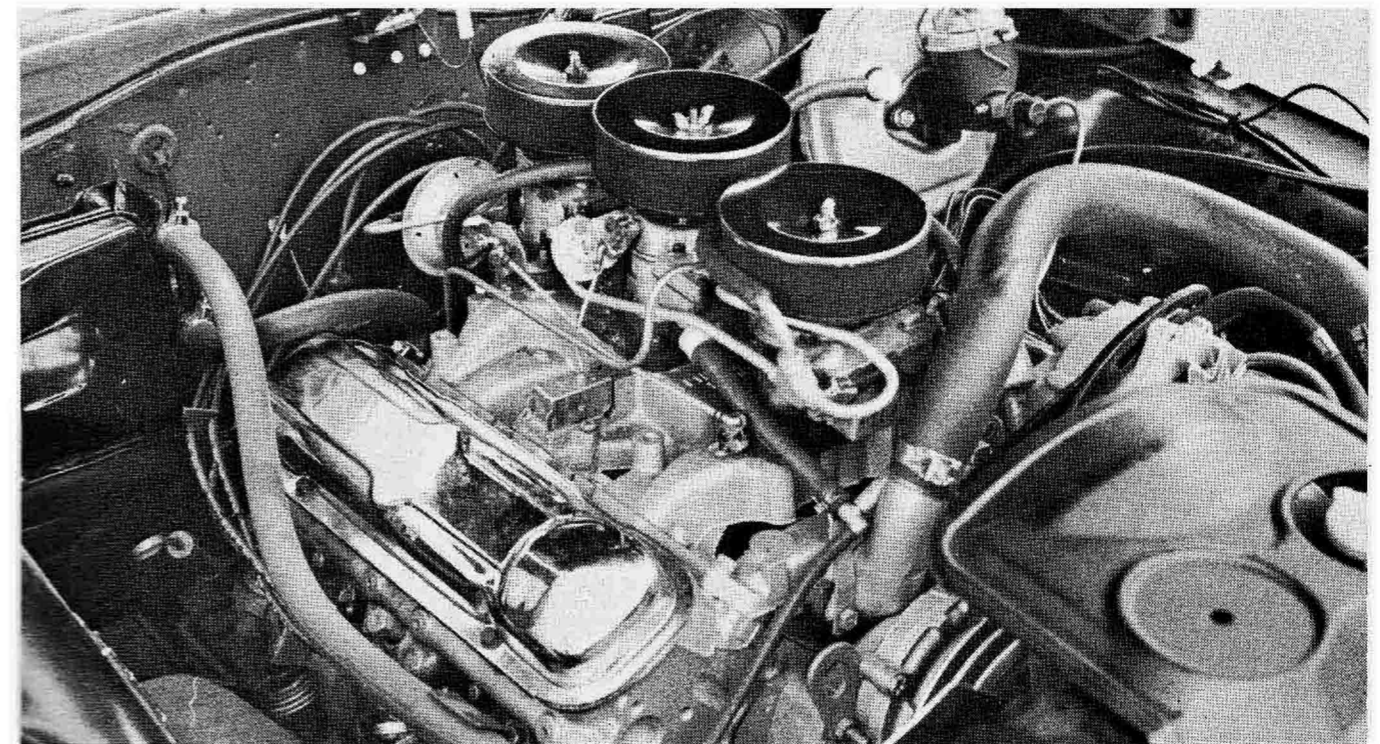
The other type of GTO buyer likes the looks and the image, too, but orders his Tiger in as torrid trim as possible. This guy fills in all of the goodie boxes and winds up with the 360-hp tri-carb version. A natural transmission choice for the stop-light

stormer group is the close-ratio four-speed box to get the most out of the ultra-power engine option. These buyers wouldn't be caught dead with the two-speed automatic option which Pontiac buys from Brother Buick and which isn't known for its drag strip potential. To most performance bugs, taking an automatic GTO to the strip is like running a three-day foot race in your socks.

With the above in mind, our test GTO was a bit of a bastard. It had all of the good stuff, including the 360-hp, tri-carb engine option, but it also had the automatic. It seemed a waste of time to bolt a one-two slush box to such a fierce power package, and we, therefore, looked on

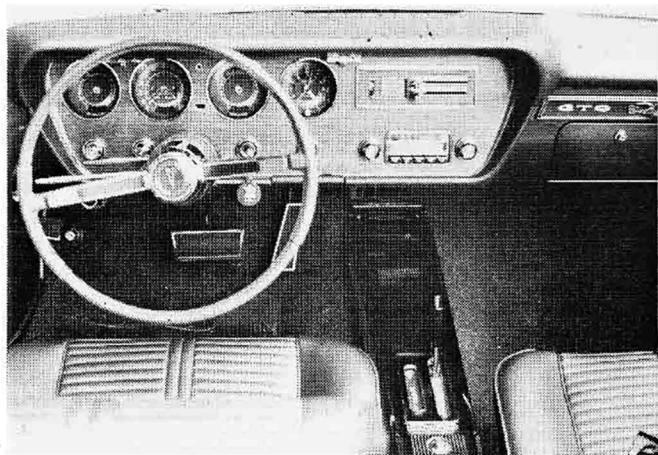
SHIFTLESS TIGER

Two-step automatic makes the GTO a very smooth cat yet leaves plenty of sharp teeth in Pontiac's popular prowler



With dark-blue racing stripes, our test car was just about the sexiest thing on the street. With the 360-hp engine option, power matched appearance. Two-speed automatic is a match for any stir-your-own sticks in the 0-60-mph range.

automatic can't make it on strip but is great for street use



Top, uncluttered, almost chromeless lines make the GTO a beautiful beast. Above, interior is comfortable, elegant. Thick steering wheel had seven-position adjustment option. Instruments on nice recessed wood dash were easy to read, but idiot lights predominated and car was tachless.



the test car with a jaundiced eye.

But slush boxes have come a long way since the days of the original two-step Powerglide. The guy who went for the two-speed slusher in those days did so simply for the convenience of not having to shift, and usually gave himself an extra half-hour to get where he was going.

Times have changed, however, and so have two-speed automatics. A much-modified GM slush box is currently revolutionizing the sports car racing circuits in the fabulously successful Hall-Sharp *Chapparral*. This box, which has been shrouded in secrecy since the car began touring the GT circuits, allows the pilot to whip around the road courses with nary a care about shifting and with both hands on the wheel. The *Chapparral* has knocked out some of the most famous four-speed marques by simply being simpler. And it's rugged too. Not once in the long and eminently successful career of the car has it been side-lined for torque-box troubles.

Admittedly, these qualities of the two-speed automatic don't extend to the quarter-mile drags. When it comes to acceleration, a four-speed box is the undisputed king, unless it comes up against a three-speed automatic like the Chrysler Torqueflite which can hold its own with any manual box in the quarter. But the Chrysler and GM boxes are horses of different colors. The GM two-speed will never make it with the strip-side bunch.

We were surprised, however, how close the performance of the two-speed automatic test car was to some four-speed GTO's we've driven in the past. The difference in 0-60 mph acceleration (which is the most important range for street-type stomping is almost non-existent. We managed to knock-off 0-60 in 7 seconds, which just about equals the performance of the best four-speed-type GTO's. This range with the automatic is taken in first gear only, since the full-bore upshift comes at 73 mph with the engine just breaking its 5200-rpm power peak where all 360 horses come in. The automatic, in addition, is more forgiving of heavy boots when coming off the line. It's less likely to incinerate rubber than the four-speed when the lead foot is applied.

Our quarter-mile runs, however, pointed clearly against the slush box. We did get a few minus-16-second and plus 90-mph (Continued on page 62)

S&S TEST SPECS

PONTIAC GTO

PRICE

BASE	\$3059
AS TESTED	\$3742

ENGINE

TYPE	90° V-8, OHV
DISPLACEMENT, cu. in.	389
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.75-TO-1
BHP @ RPM	360 @ 5200
TORQUE @ RPM	424 @ 3600
CARBURETION	TRIPLE TWO-BARREL
FUEL RECOMMENDED	PREMIUM

POWER TRAIN

TRANSMISSION	TWO-SPEED AUTOMATIC
DIFFERENTIAL TYPE	LIMITED-SLIP
GEAR RATIO	3.23-TO-1

PERFORMANCE

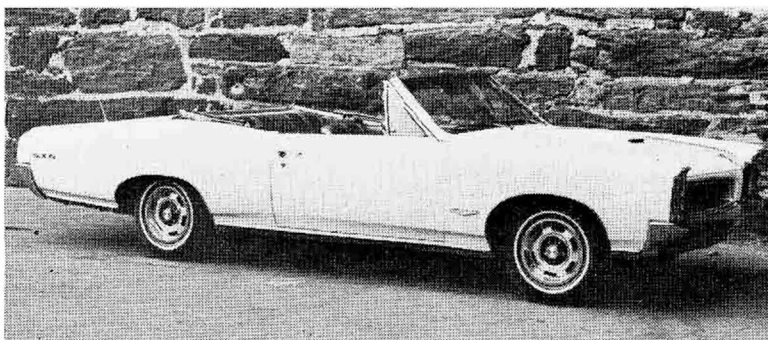
ACCELERATION	
0-30 mph, sec.	3.0
0-60 mph	7.1
QUARTER-MILE, mph	91
ELAPSED TIME, sec.	15.6
TOP SPEED, mph	121
FUEL CONSUMPTION, mpg	10/15

SPECIFICATIONS

TEST WEIGHT, lb.	3720
WHEELBASE, in.	115
OVERALL LENGTH, in.	206.4
FUEL TANK CAPACITY, gal.	21.5

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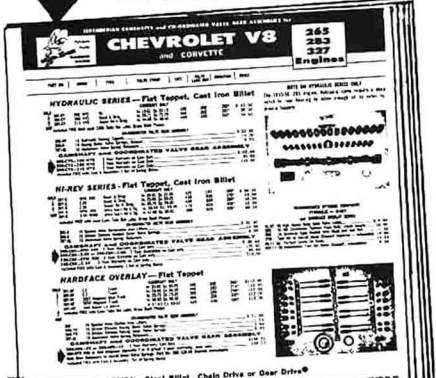
FRAME	UNITIZED
BRAKES	9.5-inch METALLIC DRUM
TIRES	7.75 X 14





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SHIFTLESS TIGER continued

runs, but almost any long-ratio stick Tiger will find it easy to match and better this mark.

We also tried stirring our own gears with the console-mounted shifter a couple of times, but found that it was best to leave the slusher to its own resources when it came to changing gears.

Aside from its strip short-comings, the automatic was great on the street. It shifted smoothly and surely and the three-element converter was able to withstand the gaff of the three wide-open two-barrel Rochester carbs without overrun.

The 3.23 rear end, however, wasn't as strong. It was, in fact, the only weak item on our test car. We originally picked the boat up with a big 16 miles on the odometer, and after 250 easy break-in miles the rear gears sounded something like an unlubricated grist mill. When we picked the car up again for the performance runs, the car had 600 miles under its belt. We put on another 300 miles, and when we returned the car to the friendly people at the Pontiac Zone Office here in New York the rear end was again making like a party noisemaker. This trouble, we feel, is probably particular to our test car—merely a factory defect.

Aside from the rear end problem, the car performed admirably during the entire test. It was a pleasure to drive around town and an excellent road car. The four-way power seats were very comfortable and the seven-way adjustable steering wheel is just the ticket for position fiddlers.

The heavy-duty suspension (a whopping \$3.71 option) provided a firm ride and came through nicely in the corners, but it was a bit *too much* on washboard surfaces.

Stopping with the 9.5-inch metallic-lined and power-assisted drums brakes was adequate, but not really up to the performance potential of the car. We encountered fade after two panic stops. A car like the GTO really needs discs—at least in front—and it looks like GM will have something to beat the drums in the near future for all of its supercars. Until that time, the GTO buyers will have to be satisfied with the heavy-duty metallic binders.

Wrapping it up, the 360 hp GTO with an automatic has its drawbacks as a drag strip stormer, but it is hard to beat on the street. In addition, the tri-carb option is a good choice for the convenience buyer whose interest is stripless, and who

likes his cars shiftless. The three-in-a-row Rochester setup offers just as good or better mileage than the 335-hp four-barrel arrangement. The extra power is always on tap, but it doesn't cost anything extra when it's not being used. Our test car was just the thing for the lazy GTO lover—that's us.

RAMCHARGED DART continued

tion. Machine work is by Pat McCarroll of Northern Balancing of Detroit. Ignition system is a Mallory Super Mag magneto, which provides high voltage at high engine rpm. Headers were made by Stahl Engineering.

Also in the one-of-a-kind class are the Candymatic's dual rear brakes, consisting of two sets: one organic, the other metallic. Organic shoes provide good braking at the starting line, while the metallics take over in high-speed, high-heat conditions.

Ten-inch slicks at the rear and 5.50 front treads, both by M&H, are mounted on 15-inch Hallibrand wheels. Both sets of rear brakes are 10 X 2.5 standard Coronet, and the rear suspension is Dodge Super Stock. Front-end support is provided by compact, high-strength Armstrong coil-shock units.

Thornton and Buckel will sit in a dragster-type fiberglass bucket seat, also built by Gilmore, directly over the rear end. Shifting is through a Ramcharger-built pushbutton console mounted about midway between the driver and the firewall, where a Sun tachometer, oil pressure and engine heat gauges are located. The Dart is guided by a wheel mounted on a strut projecting back from the firewall about three feet.

Overhead and within easy reach of the driver are two D-rings that activate twin 9-foot-diameter Simpson drag parachutes mounted on the rear bumper. Simpson also supplied driver's shoulder harness and lap belt.

The familiar candy-striped red-and-white paint job, a Ramchargers trademark, is by Alexander Brothers of Detroit. Lettering on the Candymatic is by R. H. Horn Sign Company, also in the Motor City.

After a few trial runs at a strip just outside Detroit, Thornton said, "We think we've made the right moves. The Dart handles right. It's got a lot of pep. It seems strong. Everything's going real smooth, and I think we've got a winner.

"If it goes the way we expect it to," he predicted, "We'll have to expand our trophy room next fall."