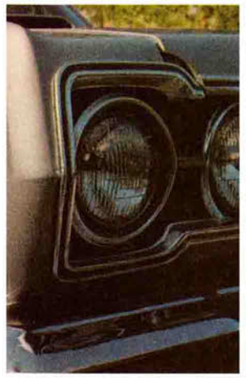


GTX

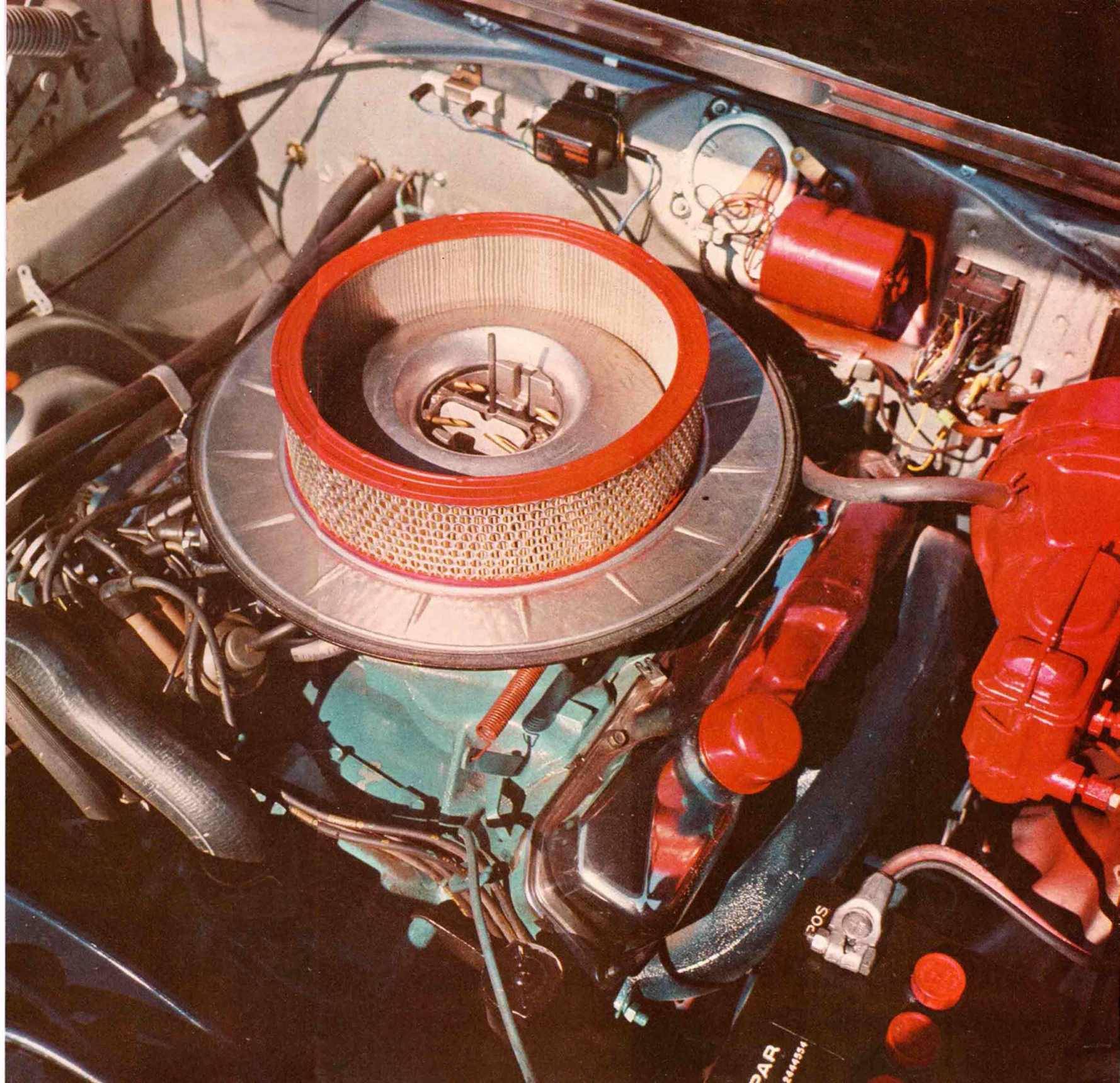
440 SUPER COMMANDO

PLYMOUTH COMES UP WITH A GROOVY DYNAMITE STREET PACKAGE THAT'S STRONGER THAN DIRT!

BY MARTYN L. SCHORR

THERE'S A brand new entry in the 1967 "supercar sweepstakes" and it has all the makings of a winner. In fact, we don't see how it could lose! With phony hood scoops, dual racing stripes, a 150-mph speedometer, a genuine racing-type flip out gas filler, it has everything going for it. It also has one of the most respectable powerplants, transmissions and suspensions just in case image alone doesn't sell this year!

The car we're talking about is the GTX, Plymouth's first and only *genuine* supercar. It stands out from the rest of the 116-inch wheelbase Belvedere line both in looks and power.



GTX

Standard with this package is a 375-hp 440-cube torque-maker, three-speed Torqueflite shifter and a street hemi suspension. There's only one power option and that's the ferocious 426 street hemi rated at 425 "big ones." Since most of the goodies are standard equipment, there are only a few options that will appeal to the go-fast fraternity. There are no suspension options, one power disc brake option, one transmission option (a four-speed), and some fancy dress-up items such as headrests and styled-steel, mag-type wheels. The GTX is one of the most complete ready-to-run supercars being fielded by Detroit in 1967.

Why they call it GTX we don't know! For all we know it could stand for George Taylor the Tenth! Regardless of what it stands for, its bark is mean and its bite super-sharp. The scoops may be phony, the flip-top gas filler a handy garbage disposal unit and the speedometer may be useless over 130 mph, but we really dig it. Plymouth has truly won us over with the GTX!

The GTX is actually a finely-tuned high performance stocker that can't

Charlie Dodge checks out optional wide 15-inch wheel and Goodyear "cheater" slick. When properly set up, 440 GTX is a natural for B/Stock honors.

be ordered as anything else. Either you take it with standard 440 cubes or pay the extra tariff and pick up on the King Kong street hemi. Even if you happen to be related to the Chairman of the Board of Chrysler, you can't get a GTX with small eight power! For years now Plymouth has been offering some of the hottest powerplant - transmission - suspension setups on the hot stock scene, but for the first time you can get them all wrapped up in a super-image package. Plymouth may be a late starter, but you can bet your last set of Goodyears that they won't be left behind at the line with their GTX!

1967 PLYMOUTH GTX SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Type	OHV V-8
Displacement	440 cubic inches
Compression Ratio	10.0-to-1
Carburetion	Single Carter Quad
Camshaft	Hydraulic, .450-.465-inch lift
Horsepower	375 @ 4600 rpm
Torque	480 foot/pounds @ 3200 rpm
Exhaust	Dual headers, dual pipes
Ignition	Stock, vacuum-advance

TRANSMISSION

Make	Three-speed Torqueflite auto
Control	Floor shift

REAR END

Type	Sure-grip (8¾-inch ring gear)
Ratio	3.23-to-1

BRAKES

Front	11.60-inch power-assisted discs
Rear	11.2-inch power-assisted drums

SUSPENSION

Front	Independent, HD torsion bars, HD shocks, sway bar
Rear	HD Multi-leaf springs, shocks
Steering	Power-assisted
Overall Ratio	18.8-to-1

GENERAL

List Price	$3178
Price As Tested	$3950
Weight	3700 pounds
Wheelbase	116 inches
Overall Length	200.5 inches
Tire Size	7.75 x 14 Goodyear

PERFORMANCE

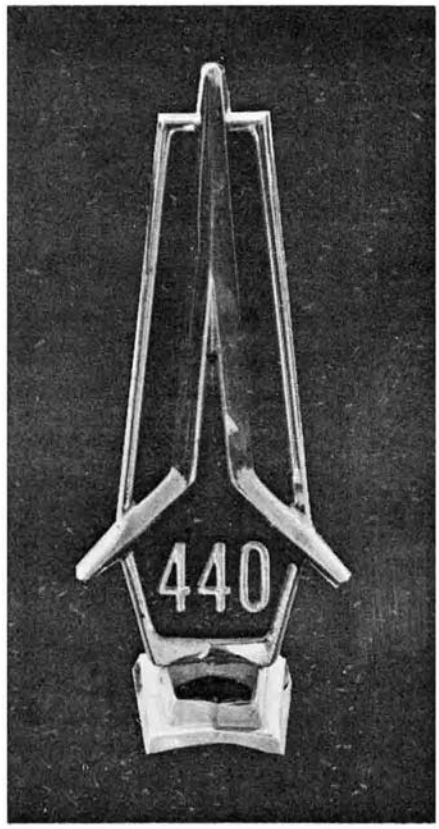
0 to 30 mph	3.8 seconds
0 to 60 mph	6.5 seconds
Standing ¼ mile	100.80 mph
Elapsed Time	14.49 seconds
Top Speed	125 mph (EST)
Fuel Consumption	8-10 mpg

The GTX we picked to test is, in our opinion, representative of what the buff buyer will go for. We purposely stayed away from the street hemi option fater we got a taste of the 440's performance on Plymouth's test track in Chelsea, Michigan. After a few runs through the clocks and against stop watches we discovered that there was very little to be gained by going the 426 route. Our test rig featured the standard engine package, standard three-speed Torqueflite transmission, standard street hemi suspension, standard bucket seats, optional steel-styled wheels, optional power disc brakes (front only) and the usual bash of extra-cost convenience equipment.

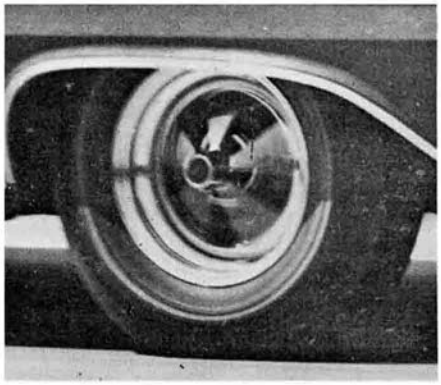
Appearance-wise, our test car stood out from its poorer brothers because of distinctive image-mobile insignas, a blackened grille panel, a super-sano body with bright chrome moldings around the wheel wells, a bright flip-top gas filler, heavy chrome dual exhaust outlets and a burnished bright-work panel across the deck lid. Except for the image trim, the car is basically the same as the Satellite series Belvedere offered in 1966 and 1967.

Plymouth's quality control boys slipped up on a few things, which slightly soured us on the product. The application of the two-tone paint indicated that the check-up boys are definitely color blind as they did not detect obvious areas which were adorned with overspray. The hood was badly out of line and the wavy finish of the fiberglass hood scoops left us with that "why did they bother" feeling! Most of these faults can be directly traced to dealer preparation which is usually nothing to write home about.

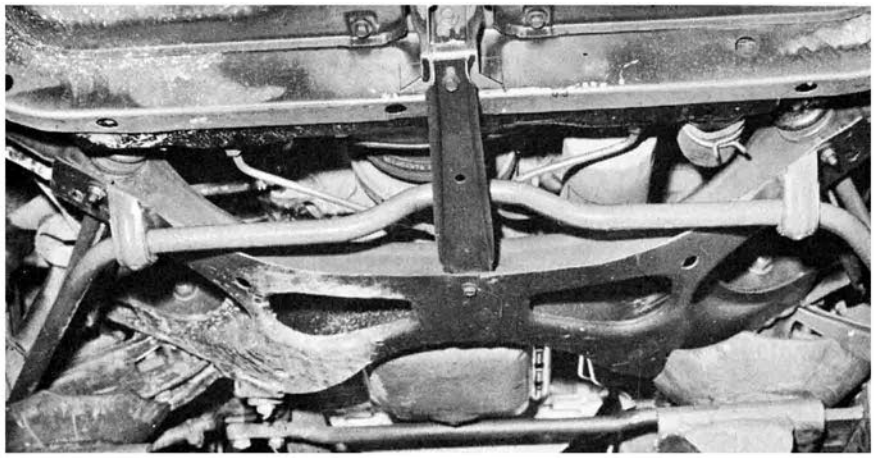
Where the GTX really came on strong was on the open road and whenever the opportunity to bury the loud pedal arose. Even with Plymouth's foolish idea of proper rear end gearing (at least five years behind GM on that count), our test car, with approximately 1000 miles on its odometer, wailed like a winner. The 440 engine proved to be super-responsive, super-smooth and without

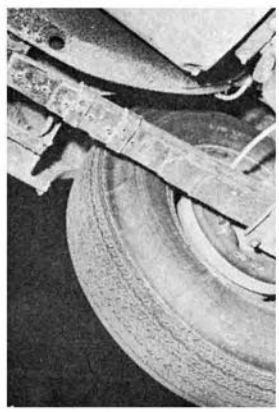


Car gets off the line super-quick with stock suspension and HP tires.



Phoney hood scoops are standard, while styled-steel wheels are optional.





Top, street hemi front sway bar is stock along with heavier torsion bars and shocks on basic GTX. Stock 440 model outhandles heavier 426-hemi version. Above left, ventilated front disc brakes can be ordered only with power booster. Dual master cylinder is standard equipment. Above center, beefy leaf-spring rear suspension sports extra leaf on right side for proper chassis preloading. No traction devices are necessary with this package. Above right, neatly contoured high-rise cast exhaust headers on 440 are close match for original 426 Ramcharger factory items. Plugs are hard to reach.

GTX a doubt the finest all-around performance engine this corporation has ever released for the street. We found it just about unnecessary to shift the Torqueflite manually. We just put it in Drive and it delivered! It's strictly a 'stab-and-steer car" that guarantees rubber in every gear. It's a no-nonsense machine that excels at quarter-mile bashing class, "freeway freedom fighting" or high-speed cross-country touring.

Responsible for the great abundance of torque on tap is an updated 440 cubic-inch engine originally designed for luxury Imperial and New Yorker applications. The GTX engine is a different breed of animal, however. It's realistically rated at 375 hp at 4600 rpm and boasts 480 ferocious foot/pounds of torque at 3200 rpm. For the GTX application, Chrysler-Plymouth engineers designed a new single quad intake manifold with a ten-percent increase in porting efficiency over the stock setup. The manifold mounts a Carter AFB 4327S pot with 1.69-inch primary and secondary jetting and a dual-inlet, individualized snorkel, high-performance air filter. The heads on the engine have also been improved as far as flow and valve train goodies go. The intakes measure 2.08 inches in diameter, which is a holdover, but the exhausts are ⅛-inch over (1.74-inch). Instead of going for dual valve springs to keep things in harmony at high rpm and prevent flexing, they switched over to extra-high-load springs with wound-steel spring dampers.

To insure a good torque and horsepower curve without the bother of setting valve lash, engineering settled on a hydraulic lifter cam that would produce a respectable amount of low end torque for the buyer who may never visit a drag strip and a like amount of mid-range and top end for the quarter-mile tire-fryer. The results are a .450-.465-inch lift stick with 268-284 degrees duration. Even with the 3.23-geared rear, our test car responded quite well under 2500 rpm which is unusual for a setup of this type.

The job of getting the exhaust out in a hurry is ably handled on the GTX 440 by a pair of cast-iron contoured headers similar in appearance to the ones installed on original factory 426 wedge Ramchargers drag cars. Large oversize 2½-inch pipes carry the fumes rearward via a minimum of restrictions to a pair of low-restriction street-hemi-type mufflers. The sound is pleasant and the interior noise level is super-good considering the efficiency of the system.

Since the two best tests for any supercar are the stoplight Grand Prix and the quarter-mile, we made the strip scene armed with stopwatches to check acceleration to 60 mph. For quarter-mile elapsed-time and top speed we relied upon the dual-lane Chrondek timers which have become *the* drag racing timing standard. Since we had the clocks to ourselves, we made eight passes through the traps, using various off-the-line procedures. We tried torque loading and punching it, revving up in neutral and dropping it in gear after the last yellow, and simply punching it off the line after standing at 1000 rpm. The best time recorded was 100.08 mph in 14.49 seconds using the simple punch-it-off-the-line-and-let-the-transmission-shift-manually method. We tried throwing the shifts ourselves, but there was no visible improvement.

Our top time may not seem that impressive by today's B/Stock standards, but you must take into consideration that our test car had 3.23 Sure-Grip gears, stock high performance Goodyear (*Continued on page* 66)

cast-iron construction. They're heavy, but are quite efficient for the street. However, lighter tube, steel headers, with tuned-length collectors as marketed by most exhaust plumbers, are far more efficient for competition. The cast-iron headers are quieter because of the natural silencing qualities of cast iron, and will fit any "B" heads installed on either an LB or RB block. They were, however, designed for installation on 1962-1963 Plymouths and Dodges without power steering or power brakes. Custom installations will require some chassis modifications. A separate pipe package carrying part number 2406318 is available for mating the headers via pipes and a crossover to a street-stock exhaust system.

From time to time, the factory has offered various cam and valve train packages for its racing wedge engines. There are also, of course, a wide choice of non-factory cams available for this engine on the speed equipment market, both in flat-tappet and roller form. The cam that stands out is the one included in the valve gear package carrying part number 2406313. It is for 383 and 413 RB engines and includes a #2402293 stick rated at .509 inches lift, 300 degrees duration and 75 degrees overlap. It's a bit hairy for the street, but it sure does come on upstairs! Recommended valve settings (cold) with this stick are .028 inches on the intakes and .032 inches on the exhausts. Rounding off the cam deal are #2402288 solid lifters, #2402326 heavy-duty pushrods with hardened inserts, #2402521-522 adjustable malleable cast-iron rockers, #2202546 heavy-duty spring retainers, and #2402265 double high-load valve springs, which should be installed along with the special camshaft.

In the spark department, you can get away with a stock dual-point, full - centrifugal - advance distributor which carries part number 2098582 instead of going for an exotic, expensive setup. This stock item has no vacuum advance mechanism and should be set up on a good machine for full advance to come in between 1000 and 1300 rpm. Full metallic-cored orange wires as used on the hemi race cars (Autolite silicone) should be installed along with this sparker.

As mentioned previously, the stock lower end should be modified to withstand the stresses and strains of competition. If you want to use a 413 crank in a 383 engine, the mains will have to be turned ⅛-inch under and finished with a 5/32-inch radii. Stay away from early 413 cranks which have a large rear seal and no flywheel pilot. Newer cranks have narrow seals for better support and are quite a bit beefier. On a 413 crank, the pins can be ground .001-inch under to accommodate F-77 Clevite Tri-Metal bearings. Forged aluminum competition pistons are available from the factory in 11-to-1 (#2421336) to 13.5-to-1 (#2421340) ratings. The higher compression pistons are not recommended for the street as their lifespan is limited to short bursts lasting not over 15 seconds!

Many of the above mentioned goodies can also be installed on the 426 street wedge engine which never really came into its own because of the use of 383 heads and camming on the bigger cube block. There are some excellent high-riser single-quad manifolds, including a rare unit originally marketed by Dragmaster in California which can handle the largest series Holley pots, and do a creditable job on the street. Performance of this engine can be parked up by aligning the intake and exhaust ports of the heads with the manifolds, replacing the mild cam with a stick rated in the neighborhood of .480 inches lift and 298 degrees duration, installing an ignition system with a good curve, J-12Y plugs for the strip and J-10Y's for the street, headers with muffler takeoffs and a deep pan with a swinging pickup.

Between the factory parts still available, used racing parts listed in the classifieds of drag racing newspapers, and bolt-on goodies available from the Gold Coast, the Mopar wedge is still very much alive!

tires (fronts pumped to 35 psi, rears to 27 psi) and a completely showroom stock engine with closed exhausts. It would be safe to estimate that a super-tuned and prepared GTX with good gears, open pipes, cheater slicks and the usual "weekend warrior" equipment would be good for 105 to 108 mph in the 13.20's.

What impressed us most about our GTX's quarter-mile performance was the way the suspension cooperated with the power-making team. Stock suspension on the GTX includes heavy-duty ball joints, oversize .92-inch diameter torsion bars (.88-inchers are stock), heavy-duty stabilizer bar, shocks and springs. The right rear bank of leaf springs sports one extra leaf for proper preloading of the suspension when the stops are pulled out on the quarter. The ride is obviously firmer and there is a little more than normal transmission of road shock. However, the resultant handling and traction plus-features more than make up for any road discomforts. We experienced zero wheel hop, chatter, and spring windup under full acceleration conditions which speaks favorably for the tuned package. The Torqueflite carries a first gear ratio of 2.45-to-1 while the optional four-speed carries 2.65 first gearing. Torque multiplication is superb with the automatic and we saw very little reason to try and beat the dial-a-win box by shifting manually. In fact, we managed to catch rubber in each gear, even when the transmission was shifting through the gears automatically!

On the road we were delighted with the car's handling ability, as all standard GTX's are factory-equipped with the street hemi suspension and a 440 engine. Since the 440 tips the scales at approximately 85 pounds less than the hemi, steering control, braking, and front end dip are improved over last year's street hemi Satellite. The wider - than - stock Goodyear tires mounted on 5.5 K wheels were partially responsible for the car's superior adhesion on the open road and the drag strip.

We tried a few panic stops from 75 and 80 mph, but they had little or no effect on the 11-inch rear drum binders (2½-inch wide linings) and front power disc brakes. Even though the car was fitted with discs it did not seem to stop any faster than comparable models fitted with drums all around. However, the fade-free characteristics of the discs are noteworthy and should be considered as a must-option by anyone who plans on doing a lot of high speed touring or mountain driving. Standard with either setup is the new dual master cylinder and independent front-rear brake systems. Also standard across the board is the new safety steering column which collapses on impact.

Although just about every performance goodie is offered as standard on the GTX, there are some extras that the dealers aren't pushing. While at the Chelsea proving grounds, we noticed that four-speed 426 Street Hemi GTX honkers were equipped with the

(*Continued on page* 68)

beefier 9¾-inch Sure-Grip ring gear rear with special Dana #60 axles. This is the only rear which should be used if drag racing is planned. The smaller automatic rear with 8.75-inch fixtures will not hold up on the track if the car is fitted with slicks. We also noticed that the four-speed 440 cars were fitted with dual-point ignition systems, slip fans and oil sumps with windage trays built in to prevent the oil from being churned up (foamed) by crank rotation at high rpm. Goodies or no goodies, it's just about impossible to beat that Torqueflite with a four-speed mixmaster. Besides, the four-speeder weighs approximately 100 pounds more than the dial-a-win unit. So who needs it?

In the final analysis we rate the 440 GTX as a formidable competitor. Its only weak points were the lack of factory-installed good gears, an idiot light in place of a functional gauge, a 150 mph speedometer with normal high speed cruising range numerals too close together, and out-of-sight markers from 120 to 150 out in the clear. There was also an obvious lack of quality control and careful dealer preparation. The car's performance was flawless with acceleration from a standing start to 60 mph in the mid 6's and a top end of 125-plus mph. Plymouth may be a few years late with the supercar bit, but they sure came up with the right combination.

GTO continued

taken the trouble to convert it for use with progressive mechanical linkage. If, on the other hand, you'd like to try the new single four-barrel Rochester Quadrajet, you'll find that it is quite flexible, and probably the fastest way out of the hold or away from the starting point.

Dick Housey (yes, the same Dick Housey that campaigned another make and has now been converted to a full standing GTO man) gave us several good tips on setting up the Quadrajet for strip performance. The spring action of the air valve on the secondaries is adjustable. It should be set so that the engine gets its air as fast as possible, but without falling flat on its face when you floor the throttle. More accelerator pump shot can help with problems in getting out of the gate.

Sid Warren now has an extensive program under way to see what changes are needed in the power jets, needles, and secondary needles to bring forth maximum drag strip performance. The results were not ready at this writing, but since Sid had one of the fastest GTO's around last year, he is likely to have a repeat performance this year. Sid will be a good man to keep in touch with at Royal Pontiac.

Milt Chornack gave us quite a few hints on sprucing up the ignition department to best advantage. He prefers Champion J63 Y's for street use. He has also used a UJ10 Y to good advantage. The wiring was changed from a radio suppressor type to one with a wire core. Milt also ups the initial advance, and simultaneously cuts down on the amount of centrifugal advance in the distributor. To insure a snappier response, the advance in the distributor is made to come in

(Continued on page 75)