



FIREBIRD

Pontiac's Plush Ponycar

BY DENNIS SHATTUCK

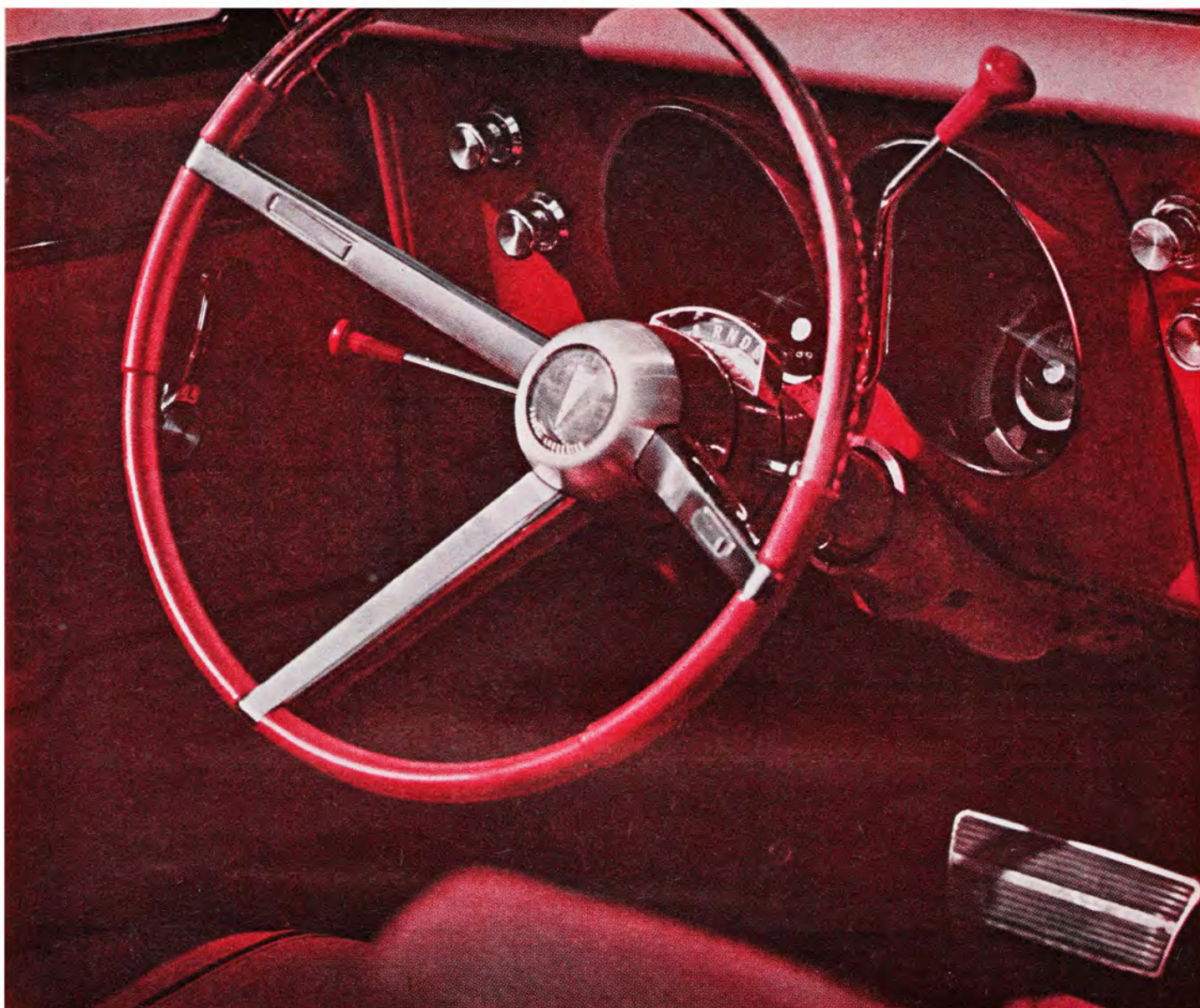
ENTRY NO. 5 in the Ponycar Sweepstakes will carry the silks of General Motors' Pontiac Division as it charges out of the starting gate in mid-February. What it can do against a very strong field, on a clear track, remains to be seen. Doubtlessly, non-entry manufacturers are closely watching the outcome for, though the field now may seem a bit full, still more Ponycars could be in the offing if the market remains firm.

Just as Mercury's Cougar is bred from Ford Mustang stock, Pontiac's new Firebird is begat of Chevrolet Camaro. However, unlike the Cougar's distinct chassis and visual differences from its parent, Firebird shows only minor change in these respects. On the other hand, Firebird utilizes Pontiac-designed and manufactured drivetrains where Cougar is dependent upon Ford components. The comparison between Firebird and Cougar may be

particularly germane: Though the Firebird is closer in size to Mustang and Camaro, its price/market area is likely to be closer to that of Cougar.

Firebird's basis is the GM/Fisher F series of hardtop and convertible bodies introduced as the Camaro at the start of the 1967 model-year. These have semi-unitized body construction (illustrated, Page 47) and a unique "wheelbarrow" front sub-frame for a 108.1-in. wheelbase. In





FIREBIRD

Pontiac's Plush Ponycar

BY DENNIS SHATTUCK

ENTRY NO. 5 in the Ponycar Sweepstakes will carry the silks of General Motors' Pontiac Division as it charges out of the starting gate in mid-February. What it can do against a very strong field, on a clear track, remains to be seen. Doubtlessly, non-entry manufacturers are closely watching the outcome for, though the field now may seem a bit full, still more Ponycars could be in the offing if the market remains firm.

Just as Mercury's Cougar is bred from Ford Mustang stock, Pontiac's new Firebird is begat of Chevrolet Camaro. However, unlike the Cougar's distinct chassis and visual differences from its parent, Firebird shows only minor change in these respects. On the other hand, Firebird utilizes Pontiac-designed and manufactured drivetrains where Cougar is dependent upon Ford components. The comparison between Firebird and Cougar may be

particularly germane: Though the Firebird is closer in size to Mustang and Camaro, its price/market area is likely to be closer to that of Cougar.

Firebird's basis is the GM/Fisher F series of hardtop and convertible bodies introduced as the Camaro at the start of the 1967 model-year. These have semi-unitized body construction (illustrated, Page 47) and a unique "wheelbarrow" front sub-frame for a 108.1-in. wheelbase. In



THREE OF THE FIVE firebirds show both available body styles—coupe and convertible. Foreground car has hood scoops typical of "Firebird 400."



HOOD-MOUNTED tachometer is a feature of the sohc Six Firebird, as is the "overhead cam" lettering alongside the hood bulge.

PAUL E. HANSEN PHOTOS



HIGH-WINDING ohc 6-cyl. engine barely fits under low hoodline but is an admirable performer in the lighter-weight Firebird chassis.



BIG V-8 supplies plenty of muscle for Firebird flight. Fitted with 4-barrel carburetor, 10.75:1 compression, it beats out 318 bhp.

FIREBIRD

concept the Firebird represents the true 2 plus 2 approach to automobile design. They aim at being light, powerful touring cars, capable of carrying two passengers all of the time, with accommodation for two additional passengers for at least part time.

Firebird's interior dimensions are those of the Camaro, just as its exterior dimensions are virtually identical, too. Bucket-type front seats are standard equipment. The major exterior divergence is in overall length, where Firebird's extra-long snout gives it 188.4 in. to Camaro's 184.6 in. Some differences in weight may be apparent, too, as the Pontiac drive-trains tend to be heavier than those of Chevrolet.

Chassis specifications are nearly identical, with Pontiac adopting like suspension systems and underbody components. Front suspension is independent with coil springs and a hefty antiroll stabilizer; rear suspension has a Hotchkiss drive and live axle on parallel single-leaf springs. Certain versions of Firebird will be fitted with torque arms for suspension stabilization, as are certain Camaros. However, the Firebird torque arm has a unique design to prevent axle windup (illustrated, Page 67). Brakes are the 9.5-in. duo-servo units used in Tempests, unless disc/drum brakes are ordered as an extra-cost option. The discs are the radially vented, 4-piston caliper type, with 11.12-in. rotors.

Pontiac also will offer its highly regarded metallic lining brakes.

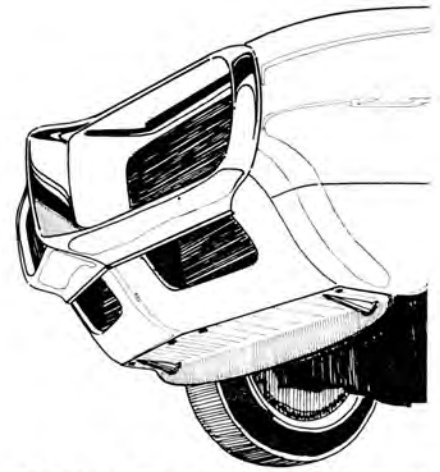
Firebird's engine availability closely follows that of Pontiac Tempest/GTO, with a few exceptions. Basically, Firebird will have three engines available, the single overhead camshaft 6-cyl., the 326-cu. in. "small" V-8 and the 400-cu. in. big V-8. Pre-production plans called for two of each, the second one being an HO variation, for a total of six. Specifications are:

Displ.	Type	Cr.	Carb.	Bhp @ rpm
230	ohc, 1L-6	9.0	1x1	165 @ 4700
230	ohc, 1L-6	10.5	1x4	215 @ 5200
326	ohv, V-8	9.2	1x2	250 @ 4600
326	ohv, V-8	10.5	1x4	285 @ 5000
400	ohv, V-8	10.75	1x4	318 @ 4800
400	ohv, V-8	10.75	1x4	325 @ 5200

The two 400-cu. in. units appear to be variations of the GTO's 335- and 360-bhp engines, de-rated to make them agreeable with corporate lb./bhp policy. Obviously, the 325 @ 5200 rpm 400 is the High Output engine, and could easily be fitted with the



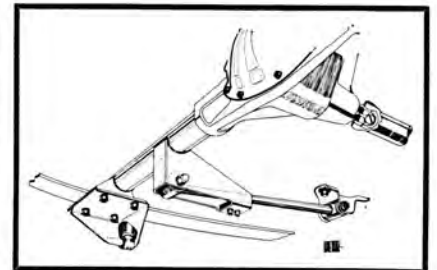
LONGER FRONT overhang gives Firebird 188.4-in. overall length, though it shares 108.1-in. wheelbase of 3.8-in. shorter Chevrolet Camaro.



SPOILER lip under front creates low-pressure area beneath engine to pull out cooling air.



FRONT sub-frame carries suspension and engine/transmission in rubberized isolation.



U-SECTION torque arm bracket has extra pad in its extension to limit axle wind-up.



TEN-LB. WEIGHT on transmission housing serves as vibration damper on 6-cyl. cars.

DAN HANEBRINK ILLUSTRATIONS

GTO's "Ram Air" equipment. The Ram Air 400 is rated 360 bhp at 5400 rpm.

Transmissions also are Tempest. The 3-speed all-synchromesh manual-shift is the standard unit, with 4-speed manual and 2-speed automatic as options for 230 and 326 engines. The 3-speed Turbo-Hydra Matic can be ordered only with the 400s. Rear gear ratio selection will run the usual gamut, from 2.93 to 4.33:1, with a limited-slip differential available with certain of these ratios.

Visual identification of the Firebird is most pronounced at the front, where the grille *cum* bumper is divided down the middle by a "nose" in traditional Pontiac fashion. This grille/bumper is a single chrome-faced unit, floating with enough clearance to allow it to absorb parallel parking bumps without rumppling of the front end bodywork. Though Firebird has the same basic body, doors, rear end as the Camaro, it has its own front sheet-

metal. Quadruple headlights are exposed; no peekaboo option is planned. Everything from the cowl forward is Pontiac. At the rear, Pontiac's special touches consist of a small access door for fuel replenishing, where Camaro has an exposed filler cap, and louver-covered taillights.

Pontiac plans to market the Firebird as five separate cars, basing the distinction on engine size and related equipment. The "Firebird" will be the plain-Jane sohc Six; the "Sprint" will incorporate the 215-bhp Six and (preferably) the 4-speed transmission. The basic 326-cu. in. Firebird will have yet another character, characterized by the 2-speed automatic which best suits its engine performance. The HO 326 is a "Rally," fitted with disc brakes, 4-speed transmission and extra-firm suspension; the HO 400 obviously is aimed at the truly enthusiastic car buff. This, again, will comprise a special package, with the 400-cu. in. engine backed by front disc brakes, a

special twin-scoop hood, and either 3-speed automatic or 4-speed manual transmission. It is simply called the "Firebird 400." ■

FIREBIRD vs. MUSTANG Comparative Specifications		
	Firebird	Mustang
Wheelbase, in.	108.1	108.0
track, front	59.0	58.0
track, rear	58.9	58.0
Overall length, in.	188.4	183.6
width	72.6	70.9
height	51.6	51.6
Front head room, in.	37.0	37.4
max. leg room	41.8	41.8
shoulder room	56.7	53.4
hip room	56.3	53.9
Rear head room, in.	36.7	37.4
min. leg room	30.5	28.8
shoulder room	53.8	53.9
hip room	54.5	50.9
Luggage capacity, cu. ft.	8.3	9.0
Standard engine	sohc, 1L-6	ohv, 1L-6
Top engine option	V-8, 400/318	V-8, 390/335
Std. Transmission	man. 3-speed, all synchromesh	
opt. transmissions	man. 4-speed, all synchromesh	
Brakes	2-speed auto. 3-speed auto. all drums; power disc/drum optional	
Curb weight, lb.	3000	2700