

# GTO

## 1970 Super Car Extraordinary



Some say it was the model that was born rich. Sired by a Knudsen, nurtured by an Estes, a DeLorean and now a McDonald. Unquestionably it is a car that has discovered the perpetual image. On the street it is known as the good guy's car — on Detroit's Woodward Avenue it is known as the Throne. It even has nicknames like the Goat, Tiger, GeeTo, Judge. At drag strips it sometimes wins . . . but that's being changed. A GTO is a GTO is a GTO. While it changes every year . . . it's unmistakably a GTO. In short, it's a damned pure automobile and somebody would raise hell if they started hanging moldings and non-essentials on its shell that might transpose its traditional styling. And speaking of design, meet those at GM Styling who are synonymous with what we talk: right to left — William L. Mitchell, Vice President in charge of Styling; James McDonald, Vice President and General Manager, Pontiac Motor Division; Steve McDaniel, Executive in Charge, Automotive Interior Design; Irv Rybicki, Executive in Charge, Automotive Exterior Design; Bill Porter, Chief Designer, Pontiac Studio; Jack Humbert, Group Chief Designer, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick, Cadillac Studios.

Generation Gap? . . . these guys don't know the meaning of the words



Young people buy automotive personalities. Visual identification, sounds, the way a car feels, its ride, how it handles, performance. These engineering virtues don't just happen — not even for a vehicle born wealthy. There are no shortcuts to total engineering . . . except for a total system that produces a total product. These distinctions you can only inherit from a group who continue to think young, who can alertly ride and faze into changing times and who possess a very resourceful crystal ball. You just happen to be looking at such a group. We call 'em the GTO Engineering Establishment. Right to left: Steve Malone, Chief Engineer; Malcolm McKellar, Chief Engine Engineer; Joe Whitesell, Chief Body Engineer; Herm Kaiser, Executive Assistant Chief Engineer; William Collins, Assistant Chief Engineer; Doug McCullough, Assistant Materials Engineer.

Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., the man who made General Motors into the world's largest and most profitable corporation had definite ideas about styling. He didn't always like what he saw, even at GM. In 1957 he really got bugged about an industry trend. "They're not making cars anymore," he complained. "They're making fins."

We don't know what the problems were with fins in '57, but GTO has never been in that bag. Because it never has, we wanted to introduce the 1970 GTO in a different manner hopefully to find out why it's always been tagged the Tiger of the performance cars with an audience that runs the gamut from young execs to those who love to stretch their muscle on such automotive landmarks as Woodward Avenue and Van Nuys Boulevard.

To really get an inside view of this heritage we assembled all the men who have put their mark on this car with

the silver spoon in its grille and let them tell it as it is. When GTO was born in 1963, these men put down the gimmicks. Fins were passe. They gave it clean lines and guts. The first muscle car. They started what was to become a revolution. When Jim McDonald, Vice President and General Manager of Pontiac Motor Division and Bill Mitchell, Vice President in Charge of GM's Styling Staff, speak, people listen. . . .

McDonald: "I think right from the beginning the GTO was designed to be a muscle car for the highway. And that says a lot. It says it's gotta be tasteful, it should have honest performance and it's gotta be the kind of a muscle car a guy would be proud to drive."

Mitchell: "This car had an image from day one. It started off that way. It isn't vogueish. Vogue is a popular form of temporary usage and if you do some berserk things you

might like it one year and you can't wait to get it out of the room later.

"I think one of the first things is that the first one out is always hard to beat. Being the first car of this size and performance, we've established some real identity, even though we've had competition from others that may be hotter on the drag strips. I think we have a strong identity and Pontiac has a very youthful image within the corporation. The GTO adds to that, and while it changes every year, you still know it's a GTO. I'm sure that innovation has helped this car, too; there isn't much chrome, it's clean . . . and, it looks like a performer. Everything on the GTO has been kept pretty honest and pure. That's a big part of its success; no heavy chrome. It's not that kind of a car. It's all gotta add up to a pretty well-accepted image."

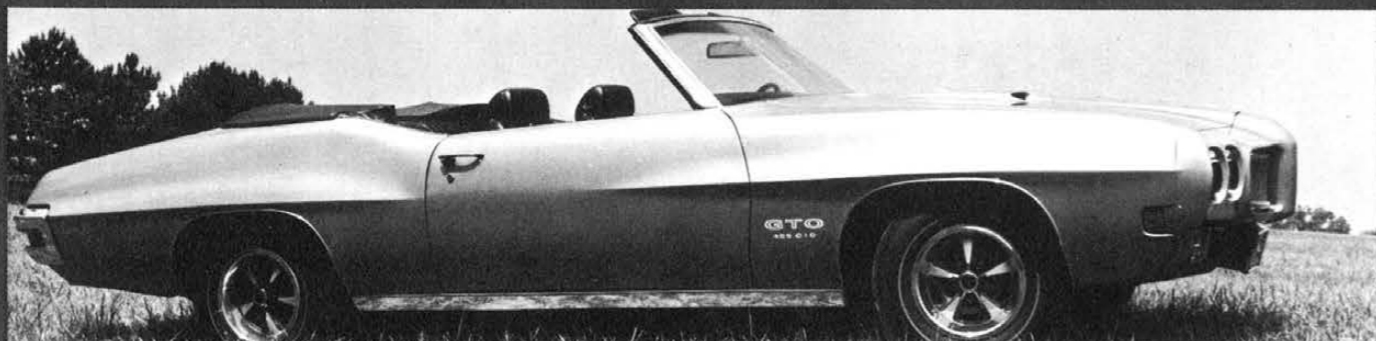
Although the '70 GTO has a redesigned grille behind the innovative Endura bumper, fenders have been flared slightly above the fender wells and dual exhausts now extend through the valance panel under the rear bumper, it's still

unmistakably a GTO. No chrome, no stripes, no gimmicks. Jim McDonald, Bill Collins, Assistant Chief Engineer and Bill Mitchell have definite opinions why . . . .

McDonald: "We have often talked about adding racing stripes to the GTO. We've looked at it with stripes and we still feel that this car is so tastefully and distinctively designed that they don't do anything for it. You really don't need them, we think, to make it alive. It's alive now. It just looks alive. All the competitors have some stripes on them. We have scoops, and even when we put the hood-mounted tach on, it's done in a very tasteful manner. If you look at the hood-mounted tach from the front of the car it really doesn't seem like an extra bump and it flows right in there. We don't junk the car up. We are constantly analyzing the type of buyer that we have and we know that the average is 25 years of age. We know that 85 percent of them are male, and about 55 percent of them are married. So, with those kinds of parameters, it gives you a certain talent to make a car for that group. We're sure that because of the type of car we have, that we have expanded beyond just the performance-minded individual. You see a lot of young women driving GTOs."

Collins: "I think the GTO offers quite a bit appearance-wise over some other models. It's a different kind of car for appearance. The GTO has been a simple car as far as the lines are concerned—it's got flowing lines. We tried to make the hood look really business-like, and our grilles have been considerably different from anybody else's. I think we started a completely different concept in grilles. And then the front bumper and the rear bumper came along, so I believe we've stayed out ahead of everybody when it comes to our overall appearance and appeal."

Mitchell: "Our long lead time gives us an opportunity to look at a lot of variety. We go off the beaten path, but it gives us a chance to weed out and find out what not to do. I think that's why we don't have any funnies. The car



Ah, stylists! Your magic touch transforms a fender.



A drag strip, a cloud of smoke, and a hearty Hi-Ho GTO.

# GTO

the hot '70s

Story by Bill Sanders



Special photography by Fred Enke

# GTO

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comes out well balanced; we have a chance to weed out the undesirables. We try things all the time that ultimately don't wind up on the car because after you live with them a few days or weeks they don't have the exact ring. And, GTO has got to be right. It has to be true blue all the way. When you have a chance to live with something a little while, sometimes it only takes a day, sometimes only a minute, sometimes a month, it begins to sink in. You ask yourself, is this really right for that car or not? And, if it isn't, it doesn't get on. Take Ferrari for instance. You look at the moldings, 20 years, fifteen years, ten years, five years... you know it's a Ferrari. They never get so smart that they don't put that in there. You know it's a Ferrari. They aren't going to make it look like something else overnight. Estes, DeLorean, McDonald, they're probably the best buyers we've got in styling. You come up with a new gadget, they'll go for it."

*Big cubes are making it in the power race these days. No one wants to be caught in a horsepower gap, especially Pontiac. Their 455 cubic inch V-8 engine option will undoubtedly turn on street racers and jet setters alike. It's a big valve mill, and with a four-barrel carburetor it's rated at 370 horsepower @ 4600 rpm, coupled to a brute 500 lbs.-ft. torque @ 3100 rpm. What's the outlook for this big bomb? Listen to Jim McDonald and Malcolm McKellar, Pontiac's Chief Engine Engineer...*

*McDonald:* "I think we're blessed at Pontiac with some real young thinking, let's say, car-motivated people. I think all of us at Pontiac feel that Pontiac has had and must maintain a performance image. We've got to keep energizing our performance image. There is no question about it. So we listen to these young G.M. people, within General Motors policy. We listen to these young fellows, give them some head, let their imagination run a little bit. In 1970 we're going to a 455 cubic inch engine as a new option. We've had the ram-air 400 and it's done a great job for us. The competition has gone to big displacement engines so we are too."

*McKellar:* "... Certainly this 455 engine is going to make this the most pleasant powerful car which doesn't require a higher numerical axle ratio to achieve its performance. I think this is certainly going to broaden the market for the GTO. With the larger engine, professional people who want air conditioning, for instance, will have a better feeling car. But, I still say you have to be careful you don't swing over to the point where you are only satisfying professional people and not satisfying the kids. The reason professional people are buying it is because the kids start buying it first. If you follow the professional people only, pretty soon you don't have a GTO anymore. This is important. We've been striving for the hot market group to be sure it doesn't happen. I think from my experience in driving this 455 engine about, the young guy is really going to go after it because

it comes on real strong in the higher rpms. That's really where he needs it if he's going to drag race the car—pull the revs up—and I think he's really going to develop that engine. And, our displacement engine is certainly a good place to start on development. You can bet that kids haven't changed that much—they accept those big cubic inches as a challenge and they'll do it."

*Whatever happened to economy? Who needs it... who wants it with a GTO? Up to now Pontiac has offered a step-down version of their 400 cubic inch engine in the GTO. Step-down meant a two-barrel carburetor and regular fuel. Here again we touch bases with Jim McDonald, Steve Malone, Pontiac's Chief Engineer and Bill Collins, who not only weren't bereaved by the passing of that engine, they were pretty excited about what's on deck...*

*McDonald:* "An interesting percentage of sales is the Judge, which is a GTO option, as you know. Since the judge was introduced in mid-January, it has been running slightly above fifteen percent of all our GTOs, and that is strictly a hot car."

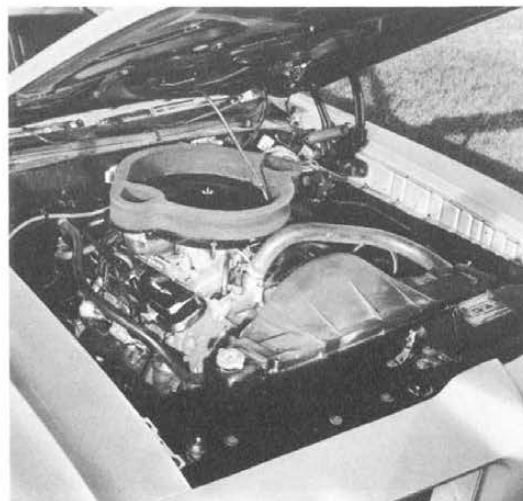
*Malone:* "We've had a situation where the GTO has kept certain appointments in it that might be classified a little more luxurious than our competition. Some of our competitors have come out with a bare body shell and big engine to appeal to that segment of the market. We appeal to a wider segment, but we want more coverage with the GTO for the kid who wants a nice performing car and doesn't want all the refinements. The Judge isn't really that kind of a car, it's got a few more features on it. We've sold them primarily because it's a new entry in the field. It will have to level off sometime, then we'll know how successful it is. We've given a lot of consideration to putting out a bare bones type car, in other words, a better car with a performance engine. We haven't done that yet but we've got a marketing group looking over the potential in this area. What the potential is, we haven't decided yet. It's a possibility in 1970, but it wouldn't be at the start of production."

*Collins:* "The Judge has really exceeded our expectations in that field. We wanted to get something out there that was really almost a put-on for Woodward Avenue. Those of us in the marketing group conjured up the car. There's some resistance to offering a car like that, but it has done well."

*Malone:* "But, to go back and put out the same car as our competition, as far as I'm concerned, is copying what somebody else did when they copied us, and we're trying to stay one step ahead of just reverting to copying. I still feel the GTO has a definite personality which is instilled in the car by the people that work on it. What people are buying is the personality we feel that car should have in terms of its visual identification, the things you hear, the way it feels, the way it rides and handles."

*Herm Kaiser, Executive Assistant Chief Engineer and Doug McCullough, Assistant Materials Engineer, know where it's at when it comes to suspensions. For instance, take the front stabilizer bar that's been increased to 1 1/2 inches in diameter, or the new rear stabilizer bar. They've*

*continued on page 99*



(Above) Race anyone? Steering wheel is copy of Trans-Am type. (Right) Hood-mounted tach stays in same spot for '70. Hurst shifter isn't changed much either. Ram-Air still goes.

## GTO

continued

even gotten on the trend of softer springs, à la NASCAR. That's to compensate for the stabilizer bars that now control roll. So, GTOers will get a more comfortable ride, too. The car still has a mild understeer, but in '70 it's much closer to neutral. These guys aren't building their GTO for any little old ladies in tennis shoes...

Kaiser: "We've improved GTO handling again in 1970. We'd like to have a car that handles so well it surprises people by its handling. We're adding a rear stabilizer bar and putting a larger front stabilizer bar on it plus shock valving and springing. The tuning that goes into matching those things lets you end up with a hell of an automobile. You don't want to raise spring rates but you do want to increase shock valving. Even race cars have gotten away from the very hard springs. There's no reason for a car to go bouncing down the road." McCullough: "I don't believe most people understand, with regard to ride and handling, the degree of precision with which the dynamic components on the car are developed. For instance, an engine mount, body mount or a compression bushing. We can tune the component and its dynamic characteristics in very small incremental changes and try these small changes on the car until we get the car tuned to exactly what we think that car should be. And, having established those characteristics and put numbers on them, we can then be assured we'll have components like that in production."

The Goat has "one-upped" again. It's got a new big mill under the hood as an option. It's got an improved suspension that combines better ride with better handling. And yet, it's still a GTO. There'll be no mistaking it. A GTO is a GTO is a GTO...

McCullough: "These automobiles don't just evolve by themselves — they don't just turn out to be whatever they are by a process of natural evolution. They are what they are as a result of a team effort that's backed by a solid management sensitivity to the market."

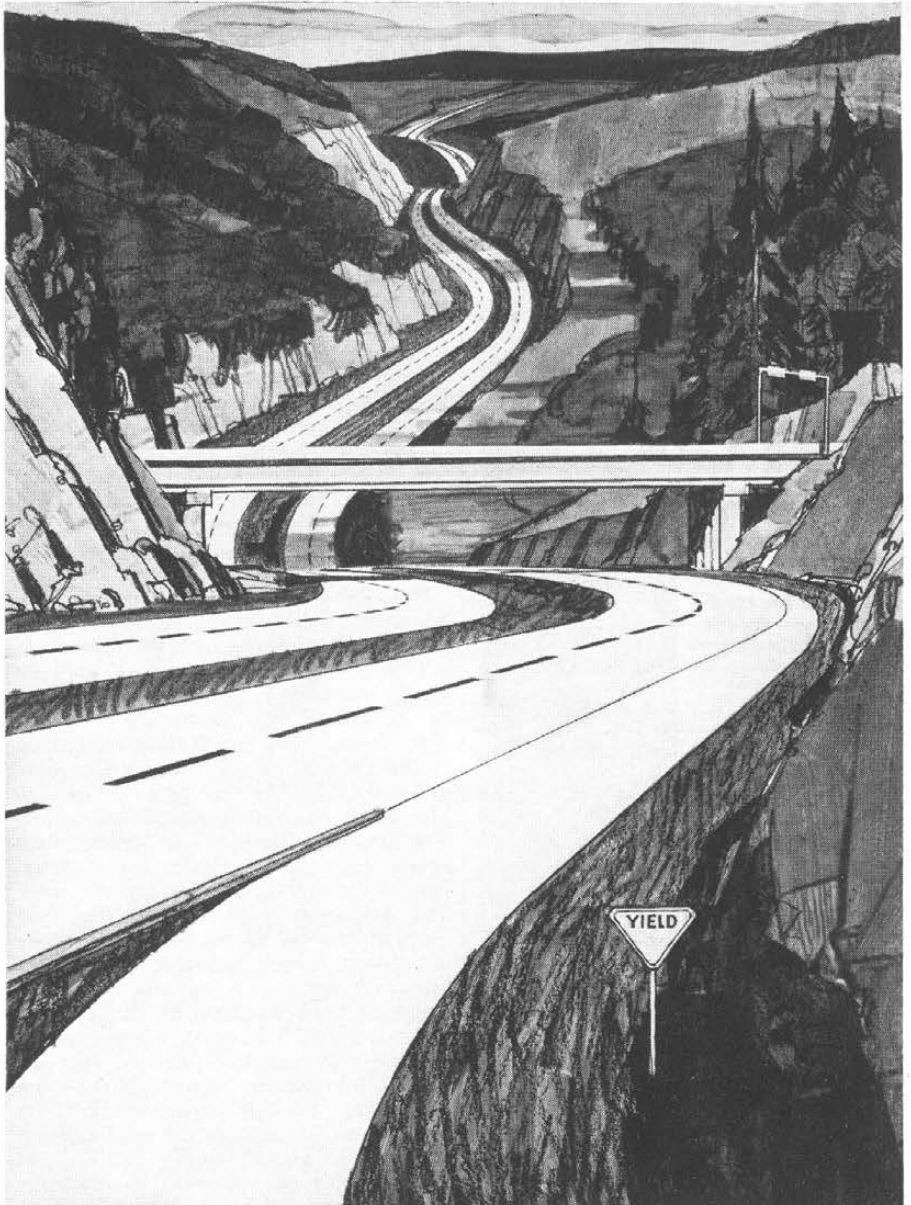
Mitchell: "I might say this: anytime I want a Ferrari, Chinetti, who is a good friend of mine, helps me get it through. The one car he always wants in return is a GTO." /MT

### WHO SAYS AUTOMOBILES AREN'T POPULAR?

**German Night Party Saturday,  
June 14, Xavier Auditorium**

The German Night Party sponsored by Circles 47-12 of St. Francis Xavier Basilica parish at Dyersville is scheduled for Saturday, June 14th. The Sausage Supper will be served in Xavier Auditorium beginning at 5 p.m. until all are served. There will be amusements for all, games and rides for the children and door prizes awarded every hour. A Dodge fishing car and two hogs will be given away.

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