

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



PONTIAC TEMPEST GTO

Order-Blank Building Produces a Winner

BY ROGER HUNTINGTON

NO COMPANY in the industry has done more in the special-purpose option line than Pontiac. It has led this trend since the late 1950s and its '65 catalogs are bulging with new stuff. Special-ordering a special-purpose '65 Pontiac is an interesting story in itself and, of course, the obvious dealer in these parts is Ace Wilson's Royal Pontiac dealership in Royal Oak, Mich. Royal has been the top Pontiac performance dealership in the country for years. It has catered to the youth market, sponsored many dragstrip cars, set up a sales force that is fully informed on the available options and has even developed a special "Bobcat" tune-up package that can be done in the Royal shop for a few dol-

lars. This latter treatment is guaranteed to give a Royal Pontiac better street performance than other Pontiacs of the same model.

The logical man to see at Royal is the live-wire performance sales manager, Dick Jesse. Dick sold more GTOs last year than any other Pontiac salesman in the country—118 in all, 68 of them to out-of-state buyers.

What kind of a car did we "build?" First off, we based the package on a '65 GTO. Then, we wanted something that would be reasonably flexible to drive on the street and highway, would have excellent handling and braking for fast traveling on rough, twisty secondary roads, would have a fighting chance in the B/Stock class at the

dragstrip with only minor changes, would be a decent rally car and would have a few fancy gimmicks here and there.

Space won't permit a detailed discussion of all the options available for the '65 GTO so we went down the list carefully and picked a dozen or so that helped fill the bill. There are actually two different order blanks. One lists the regular production options and a second pink order blank carries the limited production options. These latter are available for assembly-line installation but the installation rate is so low that it's a headache to stock the equipment on the assembly lines so the factory doesn't encourage these orders. A Pontiac

salesman probably won't offer to get out the "LPO" order blank unless you ask him for the "Special Equipment" list.

Here was our order: A push-button AM radio with electric antenna (\$62.41); an underhood lamp for working on the engine in the dark (\$3.55); windshield washers and 2-speed wipers (\$17.27); the dual exhaust "splitters" which are chromed dual-outlet ends for the single pipes on each side, for looks and "image" at \$21.30; a padded safety dash (\$16.14); and back-up lights (\$12.91). We also ordered power steering to reduce the rim effort in city driving and to get the fast 17.5:1 overall steering ratio that is only available with the power gear. This is great for handling and rally work on twisty roads. The standard Tempest steering ratio is 24:1, and you can order an optional quick manual gear with 20:1 ratio. But this 17.5 power gear is even better—and modern power steering units are so responsive that overall handling doesn't really suffer. Price: \$96.84.

Power brakes were another must. We ordered hard metallic brake linings and these require relatively high pedal pressures when they're cool so the vacuum booster is needed to get easy braking action. Price: \$42.50. We also ordered the special rally gauge cluster and tachometer package to replace the standard Tempest instrument panel (\$86.08). This is a beautiful thing, as well as being functional. There are dial-type gauges for amps, fuel, oil pressure and water temperature, plus a full-swing speedometer and large tachometer with 250° needle swing.

Then we ordered chrome door edge guards to prevent scuffing (\$4.84), and the new Custom Sports steering wheel at \$39.27. This has a plastic rim that looks and feels like wood, but won't splinter. We also ordered the "Ride & Handling Package" at \$16.14. The regular GTO option on the Tempest base includes special heavy-duty springs and shock absorbers, but this special package goes a step further, with even stiffer springs, shocks and stabilizer bar. These give the optimum handling and cornering needed for hard rally work and ride doesn't suffer too much.

Front seat belts with retractors (\$7.53), front and rear floor mats (\$6.24), and transistor ignition to jazz up the top end of the rev range (\$64.51) were added. Sales of these optional transistor ignitions have been disappointing throughout the industry but Pontiac is keeping the system on its option list for even the few who might still want it. Pontiac says it really does help engine power above 4500 rpm. Then there are the new "Rally Wheels" at \$35.50 a set. These are new all-



TWO ORDER blanks are needed to get the "right" kind of GTO—the normal order form and, underneath it, the "All Series Special Equipment" pink-and-white blank.

steel wheels made by Budd, with more offset, wider base, and inner styling to look like the popular magnesium wheels. Pontiac engineers found that some of the inexpensive cast mag and aluminum wheels on the market were not safe in hard cornering. They tend to crack and break in the spoke area or around the bolt boss. These new rally wheels look almost like the mag wheels (you have to look twice), they're a lot cheaper, and the heavy-duty all-steel construction is perfectly safe under the hardest conditions. They are a bargain at \$35.

The remaining option choices were quite straightforward. We ordered the Safe-T-Track differential (\$37.66), 4-speed transmission with Hurst shift linkage (\$188.30) and the Tri-Power 389 engine option rated 360 bhp at 5200 rpm (\$115.78). This engine not only has the triple carburetion, but there is a special long-duration hydraulic-lifter cam used in this engine that is not used in any other '65 Pontiac engine. The combination is a lot stronger than the standard 335-bhp GTO 4-barrel engine, and well worth

the extra \$115. We also ordered optional 3.90:1 rear axle gears (no charge), as the best compromise between low-speed dig and highway cruising. Dick Jesse frequently recommends this ratio for GTO buyers. The standard 3.23 gears with the GTO 4-speed package are fine for everyday duffing around; but they reduce useful acceleration in city traffic—where most of us do 75% of our driving. (Other gear options included 3.08, 3.36 and 3.55. The 4.11 and 4.33 gears are available for dealer installation.)

Then Dick and I had to go to the Special Equipment list for a couple of things to round out the package. The metallic brake linings are on this list, at \$40. I should mention here that there is a regular heavy-duty brake option on the RPO list. This uses aluminum front drums with harder organic linings. These are good brakes, but Jesse suggested the stronger metallic linings for really hard rally work—with the vacuum booster to keep decent pedal pressures in normal driving. Another important choice on the LPO list was the close-ratio gearset for the

GTO BOASTS the cleanest lines of the A-body GM series, has stop, tail and turning lights integrated into rear trim. Exhaust splitters poke out behind wheels.



SCOTT MALCOLM PHOTOS



GTO

4-speed. GTOs normally come through with a wide 2.56-low gearset in the Muncie-built transmission. But Jesse generally recommends the 2.20-low gearset with 3.90 axle gears. This still gives plenty of punch in low, and the closer ratios above (1.64 in second, 1.28 in third) give better all-around performance in the upper speed ranges. The close ratios are very handy for downshift braking in rally work. There is no extra charge for these special gears in the transmission.

So what have we got when we add it all up? The base price on the Le Mans hardtop was \$2333. The GTO option package runs \$295.90 and includes the 335-bhp engine with dual exhausts, 3-speed synchromesh transmission with floor shift, heavy-duty springs and shocks, 7-blade fan with clutch, 7.75-14 red-line tires and the various

dress-up and trim items. Then, when we add up all the options listed earlier, we get a total sticker price of \$3643.79.

And we do get performance. Cliff Riley opened up his Milan, Mich., dragstrip for the acceleration tests and Dick Jesse did the honors behind the wheel. I wanted to see what kind of times we could get with the car right off the factory lines, with only a very minimum of tuning—and these only of the “screwdriver” variety that anybody could do. Accordingly, we had Royal specialist Milt Schornak make a very minor tune-up with the car in otherwise showroom trim. His moves: Drop the exhaust pipes from the manifolds, switch to new Champion J-12-Y plugs with 0.032 in. gaps, remove air cleaners (and underhood pad to keep the stuff from being sucked into the carburetors) and jack up the initial spark advance from the standard setting of 6° BTC to about 16°. Nothing was done with the carburetor jetting or rocker stud adjustment for high

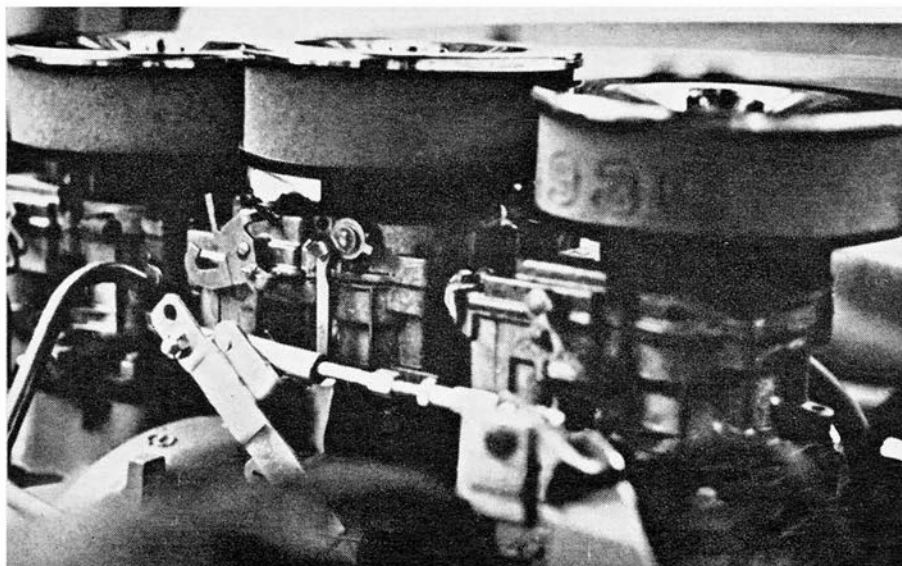
rpm. They did throw on a set of M&H Super Stock 9.00-14 tires on 6-in. wheels to try to get a better bite (the standard GTO red-line tires are not the best on a dragstrip).

We made a series of 0-30 and 0-60 mph runs against the stopwatch and calibrated speedometer; Jesse shot a number of quarter-miles with no passenger in the car and I made my usual horsepower and torque tests by taking accelerometer readings at various speeds to calculate the true hp and torque outputs at the clutch. Here's what we came up with:

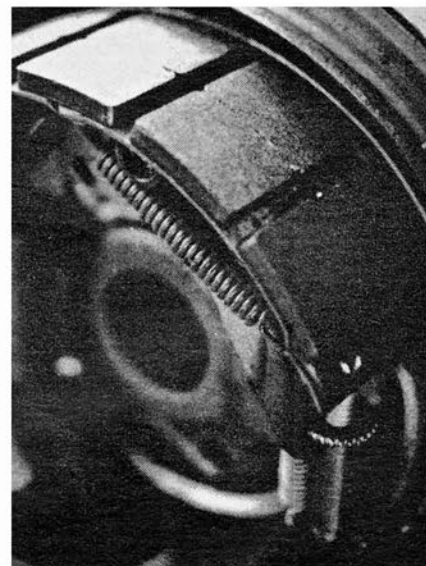
0-30 mph	2.6 sec.
0-60 mph	5.4
Quarter-mile ...	14.06 e.t. @ 102.14 mph
Maximum hp at clutch	345 at 4800 rpm
Maximum torque	420 lb.-ft. @ 3400 rpm

This is pretty good performance for a minimum of tuning. The quarter-mile times should win the B/Stock class on a good many dragstrips around the country on a given Sunday afternoon. Note that the actual horsepower output was very close to the

TRI-POWER system of 3 dual-throat carburetors comes with progressive mechanical linkage on manual-transmission Pontiacs, offers smooth operation.



METALLIC brake shoe pads do the job properly despite small drum size.



advertised 360 bhp, showing that Pontiac is sticking to its practice of using conservative power ratings. My measured maximum torque of 420 lb.-ft. is also close to the rated figure of 424 lb.-ft. at 3600 rpm. This is a remarkable performance for a showroom engine with no radical tuning. Most other Detroit engines would be at least 15% off their advertised ratings under these conditions. And, think of the additional things that could be done for better strip performance—special tuned exhaust headers, carburetor re-jetting, re-adjusted rocker joints to

prevent lifter pump-up (Jesse could get only 5200 rpm in these tests), juggled spark advance curve and different gears. The GTO is a very promising car for the B/S class.

Handling (with the red-lines back on the rear) was just as good as the acceleration. Jesse racked it around a few corners in the southern Michigan area. There is still plenty of understeer but the stiff roll bar controls body lean enough so the front end doesn't plow too much. The tires seem to have considerably more casing stability than the average passenger car

tire and they're an excellent compromise between ride and handling. And the metallic brakes are great. Pedal pressure with the vacuum booster is reasonable (although more than with organic linings) and there is no noticeable fade under very rough braking conditions.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: CL borrowed an identical, but non-Royalized, GTO to run off its own controlled set of performance figures. These, as is CL's standard, were taken with a 2-man crew aboard, and with stock mufflers and tires in place.]

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST

1965 PONTIAC Tempest GTO

SPECIFICATIONS

List price.....	\$2556
Price, as tested.....	3579
Curb weight, lb.....	3590
Test weight.....	3920
distribution, %.....	56.7/43.3
Tire size.....	7.75-14
Tire capacity, lb. @ 24 psi.....	4480
Brake swept area.....	269.8
Engine type.....	V-8, ohv
Bore & stroke.....	4.06 x 3.75
Displacement, cu. in.....	389
Compression ratio.....	10.75
Carburation.....	3 x 2
Bhp @ rpm.....	360 @ 5200
equivalent mph.....	98
Torque, lb.-ft.....	424 @ 3600
equivalent mph.....	68

EXTRA-COST OPTIONS

360-bhp HO tri-power, 4-speed trans., power metallic brakes, rally wheels, Safe-T-Track, HD suspension, seat belts, custom steering wheel, instrument package, power steering, tinted glass, radio, padded dash.

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.....	115.0
Tread, f & r.....	58.0
Overall length, in.....	206.1
width.....	73.4
height.....	53.5
equivalent vol., cu. ft.....	468
Frontal area, sq. ft.....	21.8
Ground clearance, in.....	5.5
Steering ratio, o/a.....	22.0
turns, lock to lock.....	4.2
turning circle, ft.....	40.9
Hip room, front.....	2 x 24.2
Hip room, rear.....	59.0
Pedal to seat back, max.....	44.0
Floor to ground.....	10.0
Luggage vol., cu. ft.....	21.1
Fuel tank capacity, gal.....	21.5

GEAR RATIOS

4th (1.00) overall.....	4.11
3rd (1.28).....	5.26
2nd (1.64).....	6.24
1st (2.20).....	9.04



CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test wt.).....	10.9
Cu. ft./ton mile.....	182
Mph/1000 rpm.....	16.9
Engine revs/mile.....	3170
Piston travel, ft./mile.....	1980
Car Life wear index.....	62.8

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (6000), mph.....	114
Shifts, @ mph (manual)	
3rd (5800).....	86
2nd (5800).....	67
1st (5800).....	50
Total drag at 60 mph, lb.....	140

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual.....	27.6
60 mph.....	54.2
90 mph.....	82.6

ACCELERATION

0-40 mph, sec.....	3.6
0-50.....	4.7
0-60.....	5.8
0-70.....	7.3
0-80.....	9.2
0-90.....	11.4
0-100.....	14.5
Standing 1/4 mile, sec.....	14.5
speed at end, mph.....	100

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range, mpg.....	11-14
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