

Of course the GTO was the first. And from it sprang all the other so-called muscle cars. But the others were somehow never as good as the GTO, until it didn't matter anymore.

I can remember going over to Chrysler Engineering in the spring of 1966 and observing how frustrated they were about those "damn Wangers' GTO cheaters" that were being given out to the road-testing press. What got Chrysler hot, as well as most of the rest of Detroit's manufacturing clique, was the notorious Wangers Bob Cat GTOs, with their tricked up ignition curves, richened carburetors, thin head gaskets and special rocker arm studs that gave a quick 500 rpm any time.

Jim Wangers is maybe the most savvy marketing man who ever drove down Detroit's Woodward Avenue. It was he and DeLorean, then Chief Engineer at Pontiac, who slid the GTO through GM's corporate maze, convinced that the time was ripe for a special, new kind of automobile, a pure American hybrid that melded European sports car flair with big, gut-pulling American V-8 engines.

Wangers didn't ever work for Pontiac; he was an account supervisor at Pontiac's advertising agency, McManus, John and Adams. But when he discovered a strike richer than the Comstock lode—the Youth Market—he came to wield as much product influence as some general managers. The impact of these

two—Wangers and DeLorean—can only be measured by the fact that 36 months after the GTO's debut, it was selling at the rate of 100,000 units a year.

And that eventually was their downfall—the GTO, like the Mustang, priced itself right out of its market. Ironically, both Ford and Pontiac discovered that this year and re-invented the '60s two hottest machines, the original Mustang and the GTO.

The first GTO was an honest car. It had a big engine in a light chassis with stiffer suspension, bucket seats and a four speed if that's what you wanted. The 389 cubic inch engine was essentially the same one available in other Pontiacs, except it possessed a set of those famous 421 NASCAR Super Duty cylinder heads. Above all else, there was the one accessory that made it a real race car—triple carburetors. The GTO priced out at \$2861 in 1964 dollars—\$500 more than the base six-cylinder Mustang. But if you began adding options to the Mustang so that it was comparably equipped, the GTO seemed the best bargain to come along since the Auburn Speedster.

The 1974 GTO may be again, Pontiac, which has played most of the last 19 years with a low handicap, seemed to be hitting toward the flag again. The new GTO is once again being built on a low-line model series—this time the Ventura, not Le Mans as in '64. But, strangely,

a statistical comparison of the old and new cars discloses few significant differences—except in horsepower and handling. On one hand, even with a 200 lb. weight advantage, a 165 (approx. SAE net) hp 350 V-8 is just not going to run heads up with the old GTO 325 SAE gross hp 4 bbl 389, let alone the 348 hp tri-carb. On the other hand, the '74 GTO with its lighter engine, front and rear stabilizer bars, radial-ply tires, and lighter shock valving will wax any old Goat silly on a serious stretch of curved highway. Therefore, on balance, while the '64 is a train-length better than the '74 between stop lights on Woodward Avenue, the '74 will lap it at Lime Rock.

Obviously, Pontiac has needed to do something with the GTO since about 1970 when the insurance horsepower surcharge seemingly put the kibosh on performance. Jim Graham, Pontiac's marketing director, candidly admits, "the 340 Dusters (now 360), Darts and 350 Novas are killing us. That market alone is around 50,000 and growing."

"To carry off this new GTO we've got to tell them—the 20-34 age group—where we're at. That's back to the original '64. 'Don't give us only Detroit trickery,' they tell us."

And Pontiac won't, if it knows what's good for 'em. They are going to have to get out and sell the new Tiger, and Jim Wangers could tell 'em about that. ■

# THE '74 PONTIAC GTO

The new model may be a better automobile than the original '64/By Eric Dahlquist



| PONTIAC SPECIFICATIONS         |                         |                         | (Optional) Brakes    |                           | Disc front, Drum rear |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| DIMENSIONS                     |                         |                         | None                 | None                      | 11 ins., 9.5 ins.     |
| Overall Length                 | 1964                    | 1974                    | SUSPENSION           |                           |                       |
| Overall Width                  | 203 ins.                | 199.4 ins.              | Front stabilizer bar | 358 in. link-type         | 812 in. link-type     |
| Weight                         | 73.3 ins.               | 72.4 ins.               | Rear stabilizer bar  | None                      | 550 in.               |
| Wheelbase                      | 3,427 lbs.              | 3,278 lbs.              | Tires                | 7.50 x 14                 | E78 x 14              |
| ENGINE                         |                         |                         | (Optional)           | None                      | E70 x 14              |
| Cylinders                      | 8                       | 8                       | Rims                 | 14 x 6 ins.               | 14 x 6 ins.           |
| Bore & Stroke                  | 3.875 ins. x 3.750 ins. | 3.875 ins. x 3.750 ins. | Steering Gear Type   | Power, Recirculating ball | Same                  |
| Displacement                   | 389 cu. in.             | 350 cu. in.             | Ratio                |                           |                       |
| Compression Ratio              | 10.75:1                 | 7.5:1 (est.)            | Turning Circle       | 43.4 ft.                  | N.A.                  |
| Horsepower                     | 325 SAE GROSS           | SAE NET                 | Turns Lock-to-Lock   | 2                         |                       |
| (Horsepower, opt. H.O. engine) | 348 SAE GROSS           | None                    | TRANSMISSION         |                           |                       |
| Carburetion                    | 1-4 bbl.                | 1-4 bbl.                | Type                 | 3-speed manual            | 3-speed manual*       |
| (Optional)                     | 3-2 bbl.                | None                    | (Optional)           | 4-speed manual            | 4-speed manual        |
| BRAKES                         |                         |                         | (Optional)           | 2-speed automatic         | 3-speed automatic     |
| Type                           | Drum, front & rear      | Drum, front & rear      | DIFFERENTIAL         |                           |                       |
| Front Diameter                 | 9.5 ins.                | 9.5 ins.                | Ratio                | 3.23:1                    | 3.08:1                |
| Rear Diameter                  | 9.5 ins.                | 9.5 ins.                | (Optional)           | 3.55:1                    | None                  |