



CARS ROAD TEST

THE ELECTRIC BANANA

Our impossible-to-please supercar critic—Joe Oldham—went 'bananas' over Buick's Stage I 455 GSX, finding it the greatest thing since fat tires and deep wheels!

BY THE CARS STAFF

DARE WE SAY IT? What the hell. Why not. The Buick GSX is *the* best handling supercar we have ever driven. Bar none. Yes, we know that's a pretty hairy statement and it takes in a lot of territory. But it's true. Why? Because Buick engineers have found the perfect combination of springs, shocks, anti-roll stabilizer bars, wheels and tires for their car. Period. It's as simple as that.

We've driven just about every Detroit supercar and ponycar made with just about every engine and suspension option and the GSX is best. That's all. It just goes to prove that you *can* make a big-engined car handle.

What was the combination? Heavy duty front and rear springs, heavy duty firm-ride tuned shocks front and rear, heavy duty rear lower control

arms and bushings and front and rear stabilizer bars. Wheels and tires were Buick's excellent factory mags with 7-inch wide rims and G60-15 Good-year Polyglas GT tires with 9-inch wide treads.

It doesn't look like much on paper, right? Other supercars we've driven have had most or all of those things. For instance, we recently did a comparison test on a Pontiac GTO and



Plymouth GTX. The Pontiac had everything the GSX had except that it came with G70-14 belted tires on 6-inch wide wheels. The Plymouth had everything the GSX had except that it didn't have a rear anti-roll bar. A 4-4-2 we recently tested had everything but it had G70-14 belted tires on 7-inch wheels.

It's the combo that counts and Buick engineers have it. Especially when it comes to picking spring and shock rates. We would call the ride in the GSX very firm but absolutely comfortable. The springs and shocks are a perfect compromise between ride comfort and handling. No, that's incorrect. They're really not a compromise because they work so well. The car couldn't handle any better no matter how stiff they made the springs and shocks.

The plain GS-455 we tested in our June issue was a whole different bag. It didn't have the Rallye Ride Control suspension package—part of the GSX option—and it had G78-14 semiwide tread tires on 6-inch rims. Our staff found the stock suspension "slightly mushy when the going really

got rough on a twisty road course." We also found the car to have "boulevard-type ride characteristics" over normal roads. The Rallye Ride Control package can be ordered on any Buick intermediate for \$15.80, a fantastic bargain.

A lot of the credit must also go to the wheel/tire combo, though. With all that rubber on the ground, the car just about *has* to corner well. They also helped the et's at the strip. We'll get to that in a little bit. Again, the tires can be ordered on any Buick intermediate—for \$162.19 (option code F4), with the 7-inch wide wheels and tires together (option code F7) go for \$230.65. Not cheap, but a dynamite combination.

We got so wrapped into the handling bag that we've forgotten about the rest of the car. First of all, what's a Buick GSX and how does it differ from the GS-455 we tested in June?

The GSX is a GS-455 with an A9 option group which includes a hood mounted tachometer, special Rallye steering wheel, power front disc brakes, four-speed manual transmission, 3.64 rear axle ratio with

Positive Traction differential, *Rallye Ride Control suspension package*, front and rear spoilers, black bucket seats, heavy duty cooling package, console, G60 tires on the 7-inch mag wheels, Rallye instrumentation, GSX ornamentation and custom interior trim package.

That's a lot of stuff, right? It's also a lot of money—\$1195.87 to be exact. Is it worth it? That depends on how much you like the ornamentation. All the rest of the stuff can be ordered on any regular GS model.

We happened to like it. We thought it was one of the best scoops-and-spoiler treatments out of Detroit. For one thing, the rear spoiler isn't some freaky looking wing pasted on. It looks like it belongs there. And the stripes blend well with the rest of the body lines. Very tasteful—in the traditional Buick mode.

Our test car had a few other options as well. One was the Stage I option for the 455 engine. It only costs \$113.75 when ordered with the GSX option. We also had the Turbo Hydra-Matic transmission which is \$42.24 with the GSX. A full length

console replaced the standard console and was just \$24.23 with the GSX. Fast variable ratio power steering was \$121.12, a pushbutton AM radio came to \$69.51 and tinted glass in the windshield only was \$26.33. With a \$56 destination charge, the sticker price for our GSX was \$4932.05. Base price of the GS-455 2-door sport coupe was \$3283.

Our test car was chrome yellow with black stripes and trim. Actually, it was on display at the New York International Auto Show as part of the Buick exhibit. We took the car when the show ended.

Like most Buicks, the interior of our test car was sumptuous. The black interior and black padded wheel were sporty but luxurious. Steering was quick and precise thanks to the variable ratios. Over the road with the windows up, the car was silent despite the 455 cubes throbbing under the hood. Only under full throttle, with all four bores of the Rochester Quadrajets opened wide, was there any noise at all. And that noise was the comforting sound of many cubic feet

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Yes, son, there is a wider Goodyear; it's the 60 series—Polyglas, too.



Rubber takes care of sealing the unusual plenum-scoop fresh air arrangement.



Above, the GSX handles well on both road course and drag strip. Right, the 455-incher takes care of movin' 3988 pounds—right on!



1970 BUICK GSX SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Type	OHV V-8
Displacement	455 cubic-inches
Compression Ratio	10.5
Carburetion	Rochester Quadrajets
Camshaft	Hydraulic
Horsepower	360 @ 4600
Torque	510 lbs./ft. @ 2800
Exhaust	Dual
Ignition	Stock, single point

TRANSMISSION

Make	Turbo-Hydro 400
Control	Floor shift

REAR END

Type	HD limited slip
Ratio	3.64

BRAKES

Front	11.1-inch power-assisted discs
Rear	9.5-inch power-assisted drums

SUSPENSION

Front ..	HD independent: coil springs, shocks, stabilizer
Rear	HD coil springs, shocks, stabilizer
Steering	Power
Overall Ratio	Variable 18.7-15.4

GENERAL

List Price	3283
Price As Tested	4932
Weight	3988
Wheelbase	112 inches
Overall Length	200.7 inches
Tire Size	G60-15 Goodyear Polyglas GT
0 to 30 mph	3.0 seconds

PERFORMANCE

0 to 60 mph	6.2 seconds
Standing ¼ mile	103 mph
Elapsed Time	14.00 seconds
Top Speed	115 mph
Fuel Consumption	9-15 mpg

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TORQUE EAST

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through November 29. Wednesday night time trials run through Sept. 30. Vince and Rich are thinking about running Friday night bracket racing, which is growing so quickly in popularity all over the country. Right now, they're still undecided. If you'd like to see it, drop either Rich or Vince Napp a note at the track.

Speaking of big meets, whatever you do, don't miss our *CARS* magazine meet this year. It just has to be one of the big ones of the year. We've already lined up a super stellar field in both the funny car and heads up pro stocker categories. It's all happening on August 1st at Cecil County Dragway in Bayview, Maryland. Warm ups are on Friday, July 31. Not only will you see the grooviest racing ever but you'll be able to meet some of our staffers like editor Marty Shorr, Dilbert Farb and myself. Not that it's so great meeting us but you can rap in person and save yourself the price of a stamp.

DILBERT FARB

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example of this premise may be shown in the following quote, "A street racer may have to cruise around for a couple of hours before picking up a run." As a member of the AHRA and a competition driver who is much involved with a competition machine, I do not believe a responsible publication would condone street racing. The AHRA and NHRA are organizations designed not only to provide monetary gains for a competition team but also to encourage drag racing; and street racing is not drag racing. The basic question is what is the difference between street racing and drag racing? The answer is simple: street racing is against the law. Your article, therefore, helps a person to more efficiently break the law. It is difficult to find any responsible journalism in this type of literature. This coupled with the fact you have sold this magazine on the open market warrants the foregoing letter.

I have noticed that you state you are not responsible for letters. It is felt however, that when a price is imposed for your unsolicited journalism, the aforementioned objection is a part of professional journalism.

Yours truly,
 Richard White
 Mt. Clemens, Mich.

Your letter was not addressed to me, but I will answer it in person. First of

all, the editors of this magazine do not condone or advocate street racing—they live with it. Do you think if we stopped calling street racing "street racing" it would put an end to stoplight competition in this country? Or in Europe? Or in South America? Sure, it's not legal in most cases, but it's happening. And telling what's happening is the job of this magazine as we see it. Do you think if we titled the article "Setting Up A Hemi Solely For The Track" that this would have any effect on what's happening on the street? That the street racer would pass the article over as not being meant for him? Let's be realistic. You say that street racing is not drag racing. But what came first, the chicken or the egg? Do you think the NHRA predated hot rodding? You say you're a competition driver and a member of the AHRA. You say that the AHRA and NHRA are organizations designed to provide monetary gains for drag racers. Are you kidding? What was the last cash prize you received at an AHRA event? Not a tinsel trophy—cash? And how much did you pay to get your car and your crew into the track in the first place? In reality, you probably paid through the nose for the opportunity of putting on a show for a lot of spectators who also paid through the nose to get into the track. If you're the average AHRA or NHRA drag racer, you probably lay five grand worth of equipment and endless amounts of work on the line every weekend, for the opportunity of paying high admission prices and for the prospect of winning a 19 cent trophy. The drag organizations are out for one thing—the drag organizations. We consider responsible journalism to be telling it like it is. And that's what we're doing. No hard feelings, but if you don't want to stand the risk of being perverted in the future, please don't buy this magazine.

ELECTRIC BANANA

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of air rushing through the carb and into the engine.

With only a 3.64 ratio, over the road cruising was not revvy at all. At 60 mph the engine was turning a lazy 2800 rpm, right at the torque peak for instant passing power.

If you notice, we haven't dealt with the drag performance of the car because it's basically the same as we got in the June test. However, we did go to Madison Township Raceway Park in Englishtown, New Jersey for

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SUPER HOLLEY

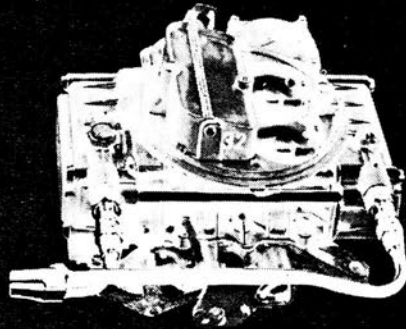
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ELECTRIC BANANA

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both our acceleration and handling testing.

On the strip, the big G60's dug in pretty good. They're the hot setup these days in Pure Stock classes. Still, with 510 lbs./ft. of torque on tap at all times, we had to ease off the line.

The best timeslip read 14.00 flat. In June, the best we could do was 14.20. But that was with skinnier tires and 3.91 gears. The lower section height of the G60's made up for the difference in gearing and the wider tread gave us much more traction.

There you have it. One of the best looking and *the* best handling supercar yet. If you can hack the insurance payments and The Man following you around all the time just waiting for you to do something, buy one!

POWER TOOLS

(Continued from page 56)

1000 rpm. There are loads of power bits, nut setters and basic drill accessories available for this super drill. There's no reason to settle for a standard drill when you can handle so many jobs with this single power tool.

SPEED BLOC SANDER #330A

How many times have you had to finish off some rough edges on a fiberglass dune buggy, roadster or sports car body, or prepare a panel for finishing and ended up doing it by hand or running out to borrow or rent a sander? Big professional shop grinders and sanders are expensive, clumsy and are really not needed by the do-it-yourselfer. But, Rockwell's sano 330 A super-light (3 3/4 pounds) is inexpensive (compared with big shop sanders), trouble free (all ball-bearing construction) and was designed for simplified one-hand operation. Its extra heavy duty motor and swirl-free finishing action make it a natural for anyone involved in the auto sport. It's a must for dune buggy builders.

BAYONET SAW #348

When was the last time you had to trim a wood, fiberglass, plastic, aluminum or sheet steel panel or make up a supercar or race car hood scoop and you loused up the job by using a hacksaw and drill or any other makeshift cutting tool? It happens all the time. But there's really no reason why it should ever happen when there are quality electric saws around like this neat and light (5 pounds) bayonet model. Its orbital

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