

PERFORMANCE TEST-
PONTIAC

GTO

GTO offers
hot rodders
a performance
package centered
around its new
400-cubic-inch
V-8 for gobs
of power.

By Forrest Bond

Pontiac's 389 inch engine was a drag strip terror in stock classes for many years. Now it's gone by the boards with the introduction of the 400-inch version this year. After testing a GTO equipped with the top of the 400-inch line, we can easily see why the change was made.

The GTO is available with four different versions of the engine, rated at 255 horsepower (two-barrel carb), 335 horsepower (standard engine), and two 360-horsepower options. Our test car was equipped with the second of the 360 models, the Ram Air. Difference between the two engines is in the Ram Air's use of a functional hood scoop and longer cam duration and overlap, all of which adds up to the same horsepower coming in at 200 more rpm. Torque is also the same for both engines (438 lb./ft.) but, like the horsepower, it comes in a 200 more rpm on the Ram Air.

Options on the test car included the heavy-duty suspension, Wide Oval Firestone tires, Turbo Hydra-Matic with Hurst dual-gate linkage, rally instrument cluster, disc-front/drum-rear brakes with power assist, power steering and windows and limited slip rear end carrying the standard 4.33 gears.

Thus equipped, it was off to Irwindale Raceway in San Gabriel, Calif., for the first part of our performance test. We tested the car "as delivered" so the times indicate performance that can be expected right off the showroom floor. After trying various techniques, we settled on one that seemed to suit the chassis-tire-horsepower combination. After staging, we locked the brakes, brought the rpm up to 1400, then let off the brake and floored the throttle. The engine lacked horsepower up to around 2400 rpm so the full-throttle starts produced very little



Engine compartment holds 400 cubic inches of Pontiac V-8 with Ram Air option consisting of functional hood scoop and ducting around air cleaner plus wilder cam. Spark plug changing is a breeze.

wheelspin. The transmission refused to make the one-two shift upon command, instead waited until the valves began to float at around 5,400 before dropping into second. The two-three shift was made with a bit more control, but the lever had to be sent on its way about 400 rpm before the trans was expected to shift. Optimum shift point worked out to 5200 rpm, about 200 rpm before the valve springs gave up the fight. After 11 runs, we had a best of 14.26 seconds at 100.11 mph.

By way of analysis, our test crew felt that putting a little advance into the distributor would have helped the bottom end horsepower problem and could have easily put the car into the high 13-second bracket. Tires, traction bars and blueprinting modifications allowed by the rule books should produce consistent low 13s and high 12s at about 105 — with proper gearing, of course. The car competes in NHRA's B/Stock Automatic class, where the records are 12.81 seconds and 110.97 mph.

On the road we were very favorably impressed with the GTO. The stiff suspension and wide tires combined forces for a ride that was exceptional. Cornering, whether at low speed in town or higher speed on the highway, was flat and smooth. The quick power steering put the car where it was aimed with a minimum of fuss and surprised us with its feel of the road.

Inside, the luxurious appointments of the GTO and its ground-hugging attitude made for quite a ride. A complaint has to be registered, however, over the lack of side support in the bucket seats. Even when securely strapped in with seat belts, one gets the feeling he's going to slide sideways out of the seat in a hard cornering situation.

The instrument cluster features gauges that are large and easy to read. Lighting makes the same true for night driving. The use of water temperature and oil pressure gauges is the hot set-up, but there's still one of those undependable "idiot" lights for the amps. The gasoline gauge works well as long as the car is traveling in a straight line, on a level course and under a constant throttle load. Make a turn, go up or down a hill or step on the gas, however, and the needle drops anywhere from a quarter to three-quarters of a tank.

The front bucket seats are well shaped, well padded and well positioned. Only drawback was in the aforementioned lack of side support. Access to switches and knobs on the dash was good. Rear seat room is average with the buckets forward. Sliding them back, however, makes for very little leg room. One member of our test crew is six-feet, four-inches tall and, as the photos show, he had a bit of trouble in the back seat.

Forward visibility was very good, but the rear view mirror on the GTO failed to give us a view of anything other than the top of cars behind us. Additionally, the slope of the rear quarter panels prevented us from having more than a remote idea of the location of the corners of the rear bumper. Needless to say, parallel parking was a bit hairy.

Driving on the highway was comfortable and we felt that long highway trips would put little strain on the driver. Wind leaks just weren't there and wind buffeting inside the car with windows down could be virtually eliminated by careful positioning of the wing windows. A conversational tone was audible throughout the car, even with the windows down.

Rounding out what has to be one of Detroit's best performance packages is the GTO brake system. After running 100 mph at the races, we were able to make

the first turn-off road, which is quite admirable. After 11 rapid-fire runs called for repeated stops from over 100 mph (we were driving past the finish line for brake test purposes) we experienced no fade or pull. Panic stops were accomplished from 60 mph with no fuss. The car stopped in a reasonable distance and failed to slide or skid.

All in all, it's a respectable package. The 1967 Pontiac GTO performs well on the street or on the track, gives acceptable gas mileage for a high performance car (10.4 mpg), corners like a sports car and, in short, hauls.

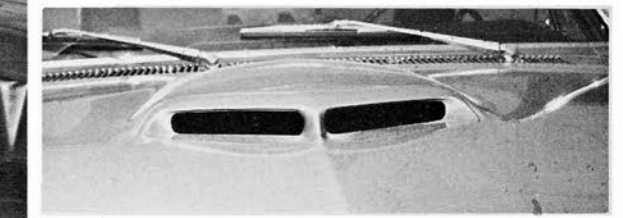
RAM AIR ENGINE OPTION FOR '67 GTO

Pontiac engineers put a lot of "goodies" into the 1967 GTO to make it an all-around performance car. Heading the list is the 400-cubic-inch engine, new for '67. Here are the specs on the engine behind the horsepower:

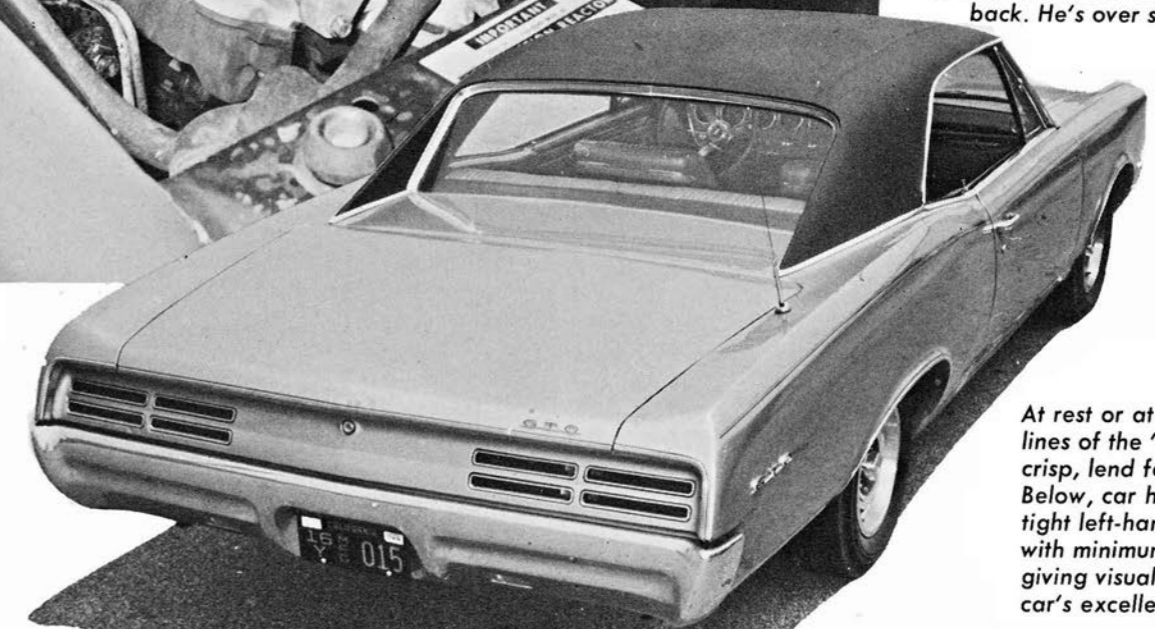
Horsepower @ rpm	360 @ 5400
Torque, lb/ft.	438 @ 3800
Bore & Stroke	4.12 x 3.75
Displacement, cubic inches	400
Compression Ratio	10.75:1
Carburetion	1 four-barrel Carter
Camshaft duration, degrees —	
intake	301
exhaust	313
overlap	76



Instrument panel on GTO offers excellent visibility. Large tachometer and speedometer dominate. All controls are easy to reach with minimum of fumbling while driving.



Member of test crew demonstrates lack of rear seat room with bucket all the way back. He's over six feet tall, however.



At rest or at speed, the clean lines of the '67 GTO are crisp, lend feeling of motion. Below, car hustles through tight left-hander at 60 mph with minimum of sway, giving visual testimony of car's excellent handling.

