

## OLDS 442

A comprehensive, sophisticated package of options, aimed right at the Pontiac GTO market

Oldsmobile's 442 is a pretty decent automobile. The general reaction to this latest version of the intermediate-sized F-85 has been not only favorable but, in many quarters, downright breathless. Our reaction is a mixed one.

Not that we dislike the 442. It's just that we think the 442 is what *all* F-85s should be, and now we'd like to see Olds Division come up with one that *really* pulls out all the stops, that gets serious about going fast on the straights and around the corners, that's a little less gentlemanly.

Last year, 442 meant that the car had a four-barrel carburetor, four-speed transmission, and dual exhausts. This year, it means that the little dear is equipped with a 400 cu. in. V-8 engine, four-barrel carburetor, and dual exhausts. If this trend in model-names continues it could conceivably result in cars referred to by some other combination of features—like radio, heater, automatic transmission and tinted glass, or, hydraulic lifters, non-glare tilt-up rear-view mirror, and rear seat ash trays. We don't know quite how model names could be evolved from combinations like these, but we don't presume to tell them how to run their business anyway.

All kidding about the name aside, we should point out that there's a lot more to the 442 than the name's symbolic reference implies. The package is comprehensive and well thought-out, and represents something much better than the witless stuffing of a giant V-8 into an intermediate-sized compact car.

To begin at the beginning, the frame is the same as the one used in F-85 police cars—stiffer and more robust than usual. Added to this are heavy-duty shock absorbers and springs, heavy-duty rear suspension arms with higher-rate bushings, .937 in. stabilizer bars at both front and rear, heavy-duty engine mounts, and a beefier propeller shaft. U.S. Royal Red-line tires are standard equipment, and we're pleased to point out that they run on six-inch rims (one inch wider than normal). A heavy-duty manual steering gear is op-

tional, as are a variety of rear axle ratios and a choice of the "Muncie" four-speed all-synchro transmission or a two-speed automatic.

The engine is a sweetheart. It's a brand new unit, based on the 425 cu. in. V-8 that was introduced this year for the Olds senior lines; the only major difference being a reduction in bore from 4.125 to 4.00 inches. The bore/stroke ratio is virtually square, in keeping with the current state of the art in Detroit. It has big valves (2-in. intakes, 1.625-in. exhausts), a compression ratio of 10.2:1, a Rochester four-barrel carburetor, and lots of cooling. It produces 345 bhp at 4800, and 440 lbs. ft. of torque at 3200.

We've heard rumors that Pontiac may tame their GTO "tiger" a bit next year, to capitalize on the great name and reputation it's made in these last two years, with a car that's more appealing to the mass market. If that's true, then Oldsmobile's 442 is one jump ahead of them. It doesn't have any of the explosive savagery of the GTO, but it's the right size, and it has enough of the right things to make it very attractive to the man who wants all the outward manifestations of good performance without paying any of the penalties—like owning a perfectly virile, aggressive, pet tiger, but keeping him on tranquilizers so he won't bite you.

Driving the 442 gets us back to what we said earlier, about it being what we wish *all* F-85s were. We liked it, and we were impressed by a number of its features, but it seems like they went to an awful lot of trouble to produce a car that leaves no powerful or lasting impression on either the driver or the onlooker.

Then again, maybe that's no reason to grump about the car. The mere fact that it goes fast and well without making any physical or emotional demands upon the occupants isn't really a fault, is it? Perhaps, sometimes, we enthusiasts tend to assess a car solely on the basis of a handful of transient, emotional impressions, rather than thinking of it in terms of owning it and driving it every day for several years.

In that context, the 442 comes off very well indeed. It still has a few flaws, even when considered on the basis of the "greatest good for the greatest number of potential buyers," but they become less important. The two that spring to mind immediately are instrumentation and ride. The instrumentation is just plain old bread-and-butter F-85 with a couple of added fillips like the tachometer, which is mounted on the floor in such a way as to be absolutely worthless. One gets very little useful information from the instrument cluster, which seems like an anticlimax in view of all the thought and sophistication evidenced in the chassis and running gear.

The ride is great on smooth surfaces and annoying on most others. Broken, undulating pavement induced a relatively severe pitching moment, bad enough to force one

(Continued on page 128)





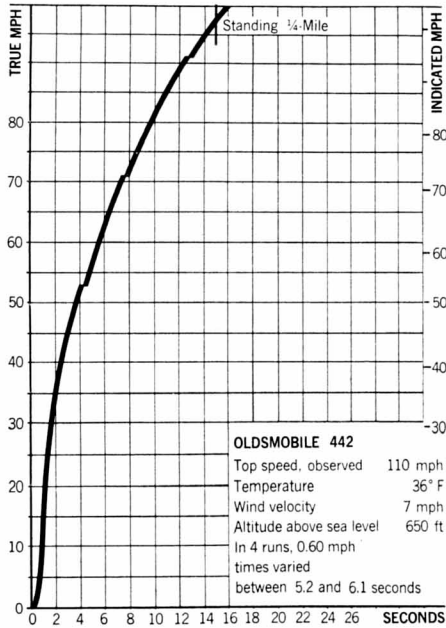
## OLDSMOBILE 442

Manufacturer: Oldsmobile Division  
General Motors Corporation  
Lansing, Michigan

Price as tested: \$3093.00 FOB Lansing

### ACCELERATION

Zero to	Seconds
30 mph	1.7
40 mph	2.5
50 mph	3.8
60 mph	5.5
70 mph	7.4
80 mph	9.7
90 mph	13.2
100 mph	15.9
Standing 1/4-mile	9.8 mph in 15.0



### ENGINE

Water-cooled V-8, cast iron block, 5 main bearings  
 Bore x stroke 4.00 x 3.975 in, 102 x 101 mm  
 Displacement 400 cu in, 6596 cc  
 Compression ratio 10.25 to one  
 Carburetion Single four-throat Rochester  
 Valve gear Pushrod-operated overhead valves (hydraulic lifters)  
 Power (SAE) 345 bhp @ 4800 rpm  
 Torque 440 lbs-ft @ 3200 rpm  
 Specific power output 0.865 bhp per cu in, 52.5 bhp per liter  
 Usable range of engine speeds 700-5000 rpm  
 Electrical system 12-volt, 70 amp-hr battery, AC generator  
 Fuel recommended Premium  
 Mileage 10-16 mpg  
 Range on 20-gallon tank 200-320 miles

### DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch 10.4-inch single dry plate  
 Transmission 4-speed all-synchro (Muncie)  
 Gear Ratio Over-all rpm Max mph  
 Rev 2.27 8.08 10.3 51.5  
 1st 2.20 7.81 10.6 53  
 2nd 1.64 5.83 14.2 71  
 3rd 1.28 4.55 18.2 91  
 4th 1.00 3.55 23.4 117  
 Final drive ratio 3.55 to one

### CHASSIS

Perimeter frame with torque boxes, all-steel body.  
 Wheelbase 115 in  
 Track F 58 R 58 in  
 Length 204.5 in  
 Width 74.5 in  
 Height 54.0 in  
 Ground clearance 6.0 in  
 Dry weight 3576 lbs  
 Curb weight 3735 lbs  
 Test weight 3960 lbs  
 Weight distribution front/rear 58/42%  
 Pounds per bhp (test weight) 11.5  
 Suspension: F Ind., unequal-length wishbones and coil springs, stabilizer bar.  
 R Rigid axle and four-link arms, coil springs, stabilizer bar.  
 Brakes 9.5-inch drums front and rear (metallic linings, 269 sq in swept area)  
 Steering Recirculating ball (manual, 20:1 ratio).  
 Turns, lock to lock 4  
 Turning circle 41 ft  
 Tires 7.75-14  
 Revs per mile 775

### CHECK LIST

#### ENGINE

Starting Excellent  
 Response Good  
 Noise Very good  
 Vibration Good

#### DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch action Excellent  
 Transmission linkage Good  
 Synchromesh action Excellent  
 Power-to-ground transmission Fair

#### BRAKES

Response Fair  
 Pedal pressure Poor  
 Fade resistance Excellent  
 Smoothness Fair  
 Directional stability Good

#### STEERING

Response Good  
 Accuracy Good  
 Feedback Good  
 Road feel Good

#### SUSPENSION

Harshness control Excellent  
 Roll stiffness Excellent  
 Tracking Good  
 Pitch control Poor  
 Shock damping Fair

#### CONTROLS

Location Good  
 Relationship Good  
 Small controls Fair

#### INTERIOR

Visibility Good  
 Instrumentation Poor  
 Lighting Good  
 Entry/exit Good  
 Front seating comfort Good  
 Front seating room Excellent  
 Rear seating comfort Good  
 Rear seating room Fair  
 Storage space Fair  
 Wind noise Good  
 Road noise Fair

#### WEATHER PROTECTION

Heater Excellent  
 Defroster Excellent  
 Ventilation Fair  
 Weather sealing Good  
 Windshield wiper action Fair

#### QUALITY CONTROL

Materials, exterior Good  
 Materials, interior Fair  
 Exterior finish Good  
 Interior finish Fair  
 Hardware and trim Good

#### GENERAL

Service accessibility Very good  
 Luggage space Good  
 Bumper protection Good  
 Exterior lighting Good  
 Resistance to crosswinds Poor



MAY 1965

CAR and DRIVER

ADVERTISER'S INDEX

Advertiser	Page
Airguide Instrument Company	100
Alfa Romeo	15
American Carry-Products, Inc.	76
Auto-Europe	10
Bakers World-Wide, Inc.	12
Bausch & Lomb, Inc.	117
Bosch Corporation, Robert	2, 97
British Motors Corp., Ltd., The	3rd Cover
Buegeleisen Company, Joseph	117
Buick Motor Division	50
Bulova Watch Company, Inc.	17
Castrol Oils, Inc.	115
Champion Spark Plug Company	38
Chevrolet Motors (Corvette)	27
Classic Car Products, Ltd.	21
Competition Press	116
D-A Lubricant Company, Inc.	124, 125
Dunlop Tire & Rubber Corporation	92
English Ford (Cortina)	123
Europe By Car Inc.	98
Ferguson Automotive International	100
Ferrari	20
Fiat Motor Company, Inc.	5
Fill-Mark Co.	116
Firestone Tire & Rubber Company, The	25
Fisher Products	6, 95
Ford Motor Company	74, 75
Foreign Car Specialties	116
Formula Veeva Car	105
Fuji Photo Optical Products, Inc.	99
Gears Speed Developments, America, Inc.	113
Gray, Vivian	104
Haan, Inc., Vilem B.	49
Halda Rally Instruments	127
Hoffman Motors Corporation (BMW)	7
International Automotive Imports	104
International Sporting Industries	100
Iskenderian, Ed	101
Jaguar Cars, Inc.	23
Judson Research & Mfg. Co.	26
Lucas Electrical Services, Inc.	20
M G Mitten	93
Mallory Electric Corporation	104
Marken, Ltd.	94
Martini & Rossi	103
Mercedes-Benz of North America, Inc.	111
Michelin Tire Corporation	13
Montesa Motors, Inc.	126
Oldsmobile Division	3
Pirelli Sales, Inc.	59
Plymouth Division	2nd Cover
Pontiac Motor Division	60, 61
Pure Oil Company, The	118
Quaker State Oil Refining Corporation	22
Quantum Division, Automotive Development Corporation	116
Rambler	83
Ramcote, Inc.	26
Renault, Inc.	91
Renfield Importers, Ltd.	103
Ronco Corporation	10
Senn Products, Inc.	16
Shell Oil Company	11
Standard-Triumph Motor Co., Inc.	18, 19, 4th Cover
Stewart-Warner Corporation	90
Sturtevant Co., P. A.	98
Transcontinental Motors	117
Tri-R Industries	113
VDO Instruments, Ltd.	24
Volvo Distributing, Inc.	9
Weber's Speed Equipment	26
Wilco	14
Yamaha International Corporation	10
Zeiss, Inc., Carl	8

OLDS 442 (Continued from page 81)

slow down well below the normal traffic rate over the same stretch of road. We also had occasion to make body contact with the pavement a couple of times, with both the front and rear ends of the car. We found the tail dragging with a full five-passenger load on a bumpy city street at about thirty miles per hour. We bottomed the front at about sixty when we hit a series of three frost heaves on an old asphalt parkway with only the driver aboard.

In both cases, we were travelling at speeds and under conditions that were quite normal—regardless of the kind of car, large or small, domestic or imported.

Of secondary importance were minor gripes, like the location of the shift lever (too far away), the vagueness of the shift linkage, some body panel and suspension noise (we had a convertible—this might not have occurred in a closed version), and a certain tendency to get blown around a bit by crosswinds.

Our test car was equipped with the "Muncie" four-speed box, which didn't have Hurst shift linkage, and needed it. If GM would only release their fine three-speed automatic transmission for use in the Buick-Olds-Pontiac intermediates, we'd never drive one with anything else. But since the less efficient two-speed is all that's available, we'll continue to cast our lot with the four-speed manual, which really gets the job done, provided Hurst linkage is fitted.

Maneuverability in the 442 is probably better than in Pontiac's GTO, even though it doesn't "feel" as responsive to the controls. The presence of the stabilizer bars at front and rear, and the more effec-

tive treatment of the rear suspension definitely make the car more agile, and produce a very useful and predictable tendency to oversteer when hurried. Even though the steering ratio on our test car was 20:1, the quick, oversteer-induced response to any given amount of steering wheel deflection was so good that the relatively slow steering ratio was never a problem.

Another plus in the 442's favor was the front seat design. The rear seat was no better or worse than any American convertible, but the separate front seats were fine. They seem both taller and more firm than those in their brother-compacts from other GM Divisions, and they held their occupants in place with comfortable reassurance.

Summed up, the Oldsmobile 442 is another one of those "special purpose" American cars that should really be sold as the all-purpose car. It isn't a sports car, and it isn't exactly like the imported sports sedans—even though that seems to have been the aim of its manufacturer—but it does approach a very worthwhile balance of all the qualities that we'd like to see incorporated in every American car.

It's good and fast, and its handling and general road behavior are better than ninety percent of the cars bought by American car consumers. It'd be nice to see the 442 idea carried over into the entire F-85 line, with a little attention to the areas that we complained about. Then the new Olds management team—which has certainly started off with a roar in the right direction—could bring out that hotter one for nuts like us. Keep your eye on Oldsmobile—they may surprise us . . . not to mention their competition. **c/o**

