

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



California GS



CHAN BUSH PHOTOS

fect was one of smoothness and sporting elegance befitting a car priced well above the California GS.

The interior in the California GS, while not featuring plush bucket seats or a plethora of cigar lighters, consoles and armrests, is done in good taste. Materials appear to be of good quality and, on the test car at least, harmonized with the metallic blue exterior in a pleasing manner. The bench front seat may not be as sporting as buckets, but it does have its advantages in providing additional usable passenger space. It's also a boon to the swinger and his cuddly date. The instrument panel is in the GM tradition, which means provision is made for only enough instruments to permit the driver to know how fast he is driving and when he must stop for fuel. The test car's fuel gauge obviously was lightly damped in its movement, and displayed an annoying habit of dropping to E(mpty) whenever the car was accelerated rapidly. The needle then would oscillate until it found a new level which, hopefully, represented the true level of fuel in the tank.

While on the subject of interior, it should be pointed out that anyone who buys this car intending to carry four or more adults is liable for some loud complaints from the rear seat passengers. Headroom in the rear seat is at an impractical minimum. Rear window interior molding intrudes into the scalp of anyone of average or greater height. This criticism is not, of course, applicable to only the California GS.

Nearly all intermediate-sized 2-door hardtop coupes on the market suffer from this deficiency. It seems unwarranted that the style conscious buyer in the United States must accept this situation in a car that is as large in overall dimensions as the CGS. Specifications for this car list its passenger capacity as six, but a comfortable two plus an additional pair sitting crouched in the rear is more nearly accurate.

The California GS is equipped with the 340-cu. in./260-bhp engine and 2-speed Super Turbine 300 automatic transmission. The remainder of the chassis is standard Buick Skylark with the mildest of the available handling packages installed. Tires on the test car were not of the wide footprint type currently in vogue for high-performance automobiles, but simply black sidewall UniRoyal Laredos. Because this is a California model, GM's Air Injector Reactor system was installed. Curb weight of the 115-in. wheel-base vehicle was a relatively light 3255 lb., which accounts for the creditable acceleration figures with the moderate power available.

IN ORDER to obtain a price that places the CGS squarely in the midst of the well-equipped Ponycars, certain accessories were deleted from the standard equipment list. Among these were power steering and brakes. Absence of power brakes was not considered a great problem. Pedal pressure was moderate in normal driving, and brake effectiveness was good. In fade tests, ▶

LIGHTWEIGHT, COMPACT 340-cu. in. engine proved muscular enough to propel the moderate mass of the test car at a brisk rate, while delivering fuel economy figures guaranteed to assuage the pocketbook pain of any sporting Scot.

Buick's Surprising Semi-Supercar For the Golden State's Swinging Set

A BUICK California GS is NOT:
—A Supercar in performance;
—A premium interior package carrier;
—A bucket seat sort of agile Ponycar; or
—A super economy, maximum mpg grabber.

The Buick California GS, however, IS:

- A Supercar in outward appearance;
- A well finished automobile for its price;
- A comfortable, soft-riding car, with good basic handling characteristics; and
- A sensible, reasonably economi-

cal car with surprisingly good performance.

The California GS is a merchandising creation of Buick's West Coast blarneying Irishman, Mickey Garrett. Intent of this particular model is to provide all the external visual impact of the current wave of Supercars, without forcing buyers to make the usual super/sacrifices in initial cost, operating and maintenance costs, and general lack of suitability for operation in urban traffic. With this set of guidelines, the \$3193 California GS can be evaluated fairly and not be compared with cars designed for other segments of the car-buying public.

The exterior trim package for the

California GS does its intended job very well. The car gives the appearance of being, in the swinger's vernacular, "a real tough machine." All of the trim displayed on the test car is standard equipment on the CGS model, hence a quick perusal of the accompanying photographs serves to emphasize the special features of the car's ornamentation. Attention was attracted whenever the test car was parked among members of the upper teen/lower 20s set. Wheels, pin stripes, vinyl top and hood scoops let it be known to all that this was a car for the enthusiast. Yet, for all the special ornamentation, the car remained relatively clean and well styled. The overall ef-





CALIFORNIA script signifies sportiness—with economy.

the brakes performed fairly well, the major problem being rear wheel lock-up when attempting maximum deceleration. Fade was encountered, but was moderate in comparison to other

manual brake equipped domestic automobiles.

Addition of power steering, a \$95 extra, was considered almost essential for the CGS. Enjoyment of the vehicle was minimized by its standard effort, slow-ratio steering. City traffic operation was most unpleasant, when trying to negotiate tight right angle corners and, perish the thought, parallel park. The manual steering system on the test car was not in character with the concept of the sporting CGS. Perhaps too many power steering equipped American cars have spoiled *CL* testers, but the massive front end weight of the majority of V-8 engined automobiles is accentuated to the extreme by manual steering.

Buick's choice of the 2-speed automatic transmission with variable pitch torque converter is a good compromise between performance and cost. The converter delivers initial acceleration as good as many 3-speed transmission equipped cars. Transmission ratios are well chosen for overall vehicle flexibility and shift quality is good. There are times, however, when the variable pitch feature of the torque converter is not desirable and results in more engine noise than necessary for the prevailing conditions. It would be

more desirable to be able to accelerate in direct drive by cutting out all converter slip with some sort of manual control. The existing system is well designed to meet the majority of driving situations. High gear acceleration in the passing range is good, if not startling, and again the "switch pitch" feature comes to the rescue, enabling the engine to accelerate the car at a brisk rate in spite of the numerically low overall gear ratio. A 4-speed manual transmission in the hands of a competent driver probably would enhance both performance and economy, but no such option is available for the California GS.

ONE OF THE ways in which the price of a given automobile can be kept to a minimum figure is to reduce the number of options available. Large option lists mean large parts inventories and material handling costs, and are reflected in the purchase price of the car. In maintaining a base list price of \$3128.68, Buick seeks to give the buyer a maximum amount of car for the money and has wisely economized in areas which do not affect the basic package. The potential buyer would do well to compare this price against cars with optional items that are sold as

1967 BUICK CALIFORNIA GS 2-DOOR HARDTOP



DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.	115
Track, f/r, in.	58.0/59.0
Overall length, in.	205.0
width	75.4
height	54.1
Front seat hip room, in.	53.2
shoulder room	58.0
head room	38.2
pedal-seatback, max.	40.3
Rear seat hip room, in.	58.8
shoulder room	58.1
leg room	35.7
head room	37.2
Door opening width, in.	42.2
Ground clearance, in.	6.25
Trunk liftover height, in.	26.5

PRICES

List, FOB factory	\$3129
Equipped as tested	3193
Options included: Radio.	

CAPACITIES

No. of passengers	6
Luggage space, cu. ft.	18.9
Fuel tank, gal.	20
Crankcase, qt.	4
Transmission/dif., pt.	19/2.75
Radiator coolant, qt.	12.7

CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Frame type: Perimeter.	
Front suspension type: Independent by s.l.a., coil springs, telescopic shock absorbers, antidive.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.	101
antiroll bar dia., in.	0.781
Rear suspension type: Live axle, coil springs, 2 lower longitudinal and 2 upper diagonal control arms.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.	107
Steering system: Recirculating ball nut gear, parallelogram linkage in front of wheels.	
overall ratio	28.6:1
turns, lock to lock	5.56
turning circle, ft. curb- curb	40.6
Curb weight, lb.	3255
Test weight	3670
Curb weight distribution, % f/r	54.9/45.1

BRAKES

Type: Two-line system, duo-servo, composite cast iron drums.	
Front drum/rotor, dia. x width, in.	9.50 x 2.50
Rear drum, dia. x width	9.50 x 2.50
total swept area, sq. in.	268.6
Power assist	none
line psi at 100 lb. pedal	830

WHEELS/TIRES

Wheel rim size	14 x 6JK
optional size	none
bolt no./circle dia. in.	5/4.75
Tires: UniRoyal Laredo	
size	7.75-14
normal inflation, psi f/r	24/24
Capacity, lb. @ psi	5080 @ 24

ENGINE

Type, no. of cyl.	ohv 90° V-8
Bore x stroke, in.	3.75 x 3.85
Displacement, cu. in.	340.176
Compression ratio	10.25:1
Fuel required	premium
Rated bhp @ rpm	260 @ 4200
equivalent mph	110
Rated torque @ rpm	365 @ 2800
equivalent mph	73
Carburetion	1x4 AFB
throttle dia., pri./sec.	1.44/1.44
Valve train: Hydraulic lifters, push-rods and overhead rocker arms.	
cam timing, deg., int./exh.	32-85/70-47
duration, int./exh.	297/297
Exhaust system: Single, reverse flow muffler.	
pipe dia., exh./tail.	2.25/2.00
Normal oil press. @ rpm	33 @ 2400
Electrical supply, V./amp.	12/42
Battery, plates/amp. hr.	66/61

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch type: dia., in.	
Transmission type: 2-speed automatic, variable pitch torque converter.	
Gear ratio 4th () overall ..	
3rd ()	
2nd (1.00:1)	2.78:1
1st (1.76:1)	4.90:1
1st x t.c. stall (2.45:1)	12.00:1
Shift lever location	column floating.
Differential type: Hypoid, semi-floating.	
axle ratio	2.78:1



BUICK'S OFFERING for the western youth market features a Supercar sheen over lively, if not terrifying, running gear. Eminent practicality is cloaked in pinstripes, medallions and vinyl topping, all rolling on dazzling styled wheels.

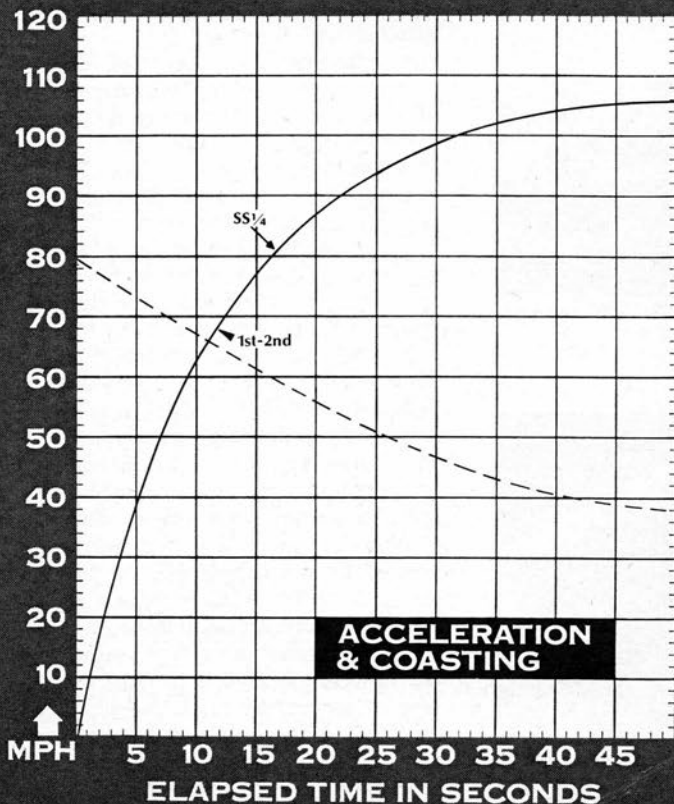
standard on the California GS models.

Road testing was approached with mixed emotions. An examination of the specifications of the California GS led to a hasty leap to a number of un-

founded conclusions regarding the performance of the car before any actual driving was done. Some *CL* crewmen believed that this automobile could be nothing more than a "Paper Tiger," a

poor imitation of Buick's GS 400 Supercar. In actual fact, the test car showed many virtues of its own, and the general opinion of the car improved steadily as it was used for all

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CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test weight).....	14.1
Cu. ft./ton mile.....	127
Mph/1000 rpm (high gear).....	26.2
Engine revs./mile (60 mph).....	2295
Piston travel, ft./mile.....	1472
CAR LIFE wear index.....	33.8
Frontal area, sq. ft.....	22.7
Drag class, NHRA-AHRA.....	F/SA-1/SA

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual.....	29.3
40 mph.....	39.8
50 mph.....	47.6
60 mph.....	58.9
70 mph.....	67.7
80 mph.....	78.3
90 mph.....	88.2

MAINTENANCE

Engine oil, miles/days.....	6000/60
oil filter, miles/days.....	6000/180
Chassis lubrication, miles.....	6000
Antismog servicing, type/miles.....	
PCV valve replacement/12,000, tension air pump belt/12,000.....	
Air cleaner, miles.....	clean, 12,000
Spark plugs.....	AC44S
gap (in.).....	0.030-0.035
Basic timing, deg./rpm.....	25/550
max. cent. adv., deg./rpm.....	28/4600
max. vac. adv., deg./in. Hg.....	19.5/16
Ignition point gap, in.....	0.013-0.019
cam dwell angle, deg.....	29-31
arm tension, oz.....	19-23
Tappet clearance, int./exh.....	0/0
Fuel pressure at idle, psi.....	4.25
Radiator cap relief press., psi.....	15

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (4000), mph.....	105
Test shift points (rpm) @ mph	
3rd to 4th ().....	
2nd to 3rd ().....	
1st to 2nd (4500).....	.68

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.....	3.7
0-40 mph.....	5.4
0-50 mph.....	7.1
0-60 mph.....	9.3
0-70 mph.....	12.2
0-80 mph.....	16.2
0-90 mph.....	22.5
0-100 mph.....	32.5
Standing 1/4-mile, sec.....	16.7
speed at end, mph.....	.81
Passing, 30-70 mph, sec.....	8.5

BRAKING

Max. deceleration rate from 80 mph ft./sec./sec.....	.20
No. of stops from 80 mph (60-sec. intervals) before 20% loss in deceleration rate.....	.4
Control loss?.....	moderate
Overall brake performance.....	fair

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Test conditions, mpg.....	14
Normal cond., mpg.....	14-16
Cruising range, miles.....	280-320

GRADABILITY

4th % grade @ mph.....	
3rd.....	
2nd.....	16 @ 56
1st.....	32 @ 34

DRAG FACTOR

Total drag @ 60 mph, lb.....	143
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California GS

sorts of general transportation. The straight-line acceleration of the California GS, while well below the GS 400, remains solidly in the high-performance category. Considering the 340-cu. in. engine, 2-speed automatic transmission and tall rear axle gearing, the car is surprisingly rapid. Torque available from the variable pitch converter at wide open throttle on takeoff

is nearly all that can be transmitted to the pavement by the standard tires. There is no danger of the CGS being run over in the stoplight Grand Prix. Even a driver conditioned by many miles of high-performance automobile driving would find the acceleration level of the California GS acceptable. Substitution of a 3.55:1 rear axle would be a marked asset in terms of

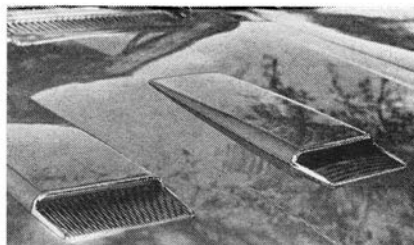
low speed acceleration, but would mean a sacrifice in highway economy and noise level and would, in the opinion of CL testers, not be practical.

The suspension system of the California GS places primary emphasis on ride comfort. This does not mean, however, that the car handles like a wallowing ship in a rough sea. Vigorous driving in the California GS was stimulating, if not exciting. The most noticeable characteristic of the car was understeer. Body roll proved moderate, pitch control was good, spring rates were a satisfactory compromise between ride and handling, and the car was quite stable on winding roads. As is the case with most domestic automobiles, shock absorber control was marginal. Undulating surfaces produced a floating sensation which was decidedly uncomfortable. Understeer was moderate in comparison to other vehicles of this type and tended to keep the driver out of trouble should he inadvertently enter a curve at too high a speed. Closing the accelerator in the middle of a curve in the California GS did not produce any drastic changes in attitude, and the car could be forced through most turns at a decreasing rate of speed without any heart stopping results. The UniRoyal Laredo tires did nothing to enhance the adhesion of the car, particularly on damp surfaces. A set of high-performance Firestone Super Sports Wide Oval or Goodyear Speedway Wide Tread tires would be an excellent addition to the car.

BUCKETLESS INTERIOR provides a maximum of passenger capacity, while holding purchase price at a pleasantly economical minimum figure.



GS EMBLEM and dummy hood scoops add to the visual impact of the car, presenting a high-performance flair, while doing nothing for function.



SIGNIFICANT PORTION of the large trunk volume is rendered inefficient by the intrusion of a floor mounted spare tire and wheel.



GENERAL CITY and highway operation is the California GS's forte. It handled such mundane duty with ease and efficiency. No trace of highly tuned fussiness or rapid degeneration of mechanical components could be detected in the test car, which is in sharp contrast to some of the Supercars that the California GS emulates. A night of cruising the town in this car does not result in a set of fouled plugs, a tank of super premium fuel consumed, or a left leg and right arm cramped from rowing a balky racing engine around at speeds below its comfortable idle rpm.

The California GS, then, is a sheep in wolf's clothing—an appealing sheep, however, that performs whatever is required of it without misbehaving. An owner can revel in admiring glances of passersby who are impressed by the appearance of the car and still own a vehicle which transports him with a high degree of comfort, reasonable economy, satisfying performance and, perhaps most important, at a purchase price that belies its outward elegance. For the enthusiast who values sporting appearances and reliably good performance, the California GS is an exceptional value. ■