

SO YOU WANT the most powerful, fastest stock automobile available in America? Then you need look no further than your nearest Plymouth dealer. Simply walk in, pick your price range, and name your Plymouth.

Either Hemi or 440-cid wedge—they both provide brute acceleration far beyond the needs of the most jaded enthusiast.

The Hemi is faster, but it requires higher engine speed to deliver its maximum performance. Perhaps more important, it costs \$604.75 more than the high-performance 440.

Just how fast are Plymouth's bombs? Here's what the CAR LIFE performance runs looked like at Orange County Raceway in Southern California:

- The Hemi—Sporting an optional 4.56:1 rear axle ratio and 9.50-14 drag racing rear tires turned the quarter mile in 13.44 sec.
- The 440 Magnum—With 9.00-15 slicks and a 4.30:1 axle ratio turned the quarter in 13.97 sec.

Frankly, \$604.75 seems a lot to pay for that half second. Yet, it's the logical choice for the enthusiast who wants a dual purpose automobile—one for the street and one that will still go through the quarter as quickly as possible. CAR LIFE has never tested a standard passenger car with the accelerative performance of the Hemi Plymouth GTX. This is the winner. The fastest. The most powerful standard car built in

**CAR LIFE
ROAD TEST**

Two Plymouth GTXs—

THE HEMI

VS

THE 440 MAGNUM

Hemi always managed 14 sec. in the quarter-mile, but 440 had the torque for getaways

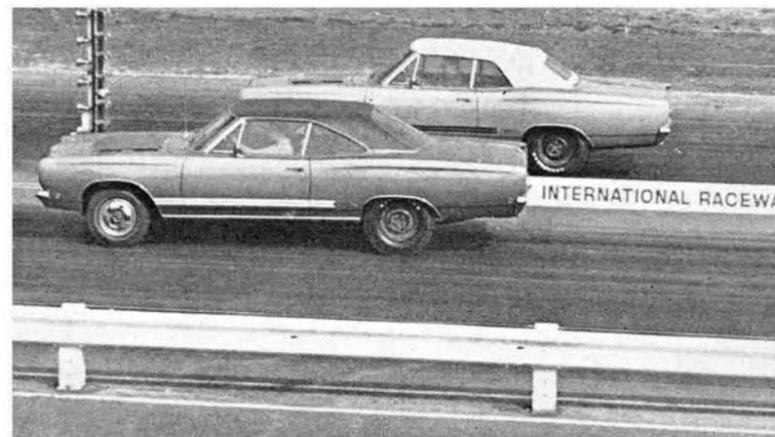


PHOTO SEQUENCE, from top right to bottom left, dramatically illustrates performance characteristics of two test cars. On initial takeoff, the high torque output of the 440-cid/375-bhp GTX hardtop shows itself by pulling into an early lead. Passing the starting signal, two car-lengths after takeoff, hardtop has its maximum lead over the higher-powered Hemi-engined convertible.



GIVEN TIME to wind up, the free-breathing Hemi 426-cid/425-bhp engine drives the GTX convertible past its wedge-engined brother. At the 400-ft. mark, above, the Hemi is just passing the hardtop. At the 800-ft. point, left, finds the convertible a full car-length in front, and charging to the finish line. Plymouth's Hemi is the fastest standard Supercar, but its big-displacement counterpart may be the toughest challenger.

America. And the 440 is not far behind.

Our test cars differed from each other in a few important areas. First, the Hemi was a GTX convertible. The apparent weight penalty over the hardtop body style of the 440 GTX was largely offset by the air conditioning unit installed in the hardtop. Also, the 440's air conditioning unit resulted in similar weight distribution, in spite of the 159-lb. weight penalty of the Hemi engine. Both test cars came equipped with 3.23:1 limited-slip rear axles, TorqueFlite automatic transmissions (slightly modified by Chrysler for use with these high-output engines, as compared with transmissions used in milder passenger cars), and power-assisted disc/drum brakes. During tests, CAR LIFE made further modifications to determine their effect on acceleration.

The Plymouth GTX is a rather specialized automobile. Obviously, the man who wants a cheap, utilitarian car won't buy one. Both test cars had list prices of well over \$4500, removing them from

the range of typical intermediate-size passenger cars. In fact, with transportation charges, taxes, and associated fees included, the test Hemi convertible would retail for about \$5000.

What do you get for your money? Stated simply, a tremendous amount of straight-line performance. This is not to suggest that handling, braking, and other phases of vehicle performance are lacking in the Plymouths, but simply that acceleration is their forte. For buyers who value a push in the back over all other automotive sensations, the Plymouths have few peers in the world market.

A GTX owner will probably want to get all he can out of it at some time or another. The question comes up, then, as to what combination of tires, rear axles and body configurations will be best for both engines. The only real way to find out was to do some tire changing and drop in new rears between runs at the dragstrip. Besides, it's the only way you're going to get a true competitive

picture between test cars and other makes. For example, the 1967 Pontiac GTO that CAR LIFE tested last October had a 4.33:1 axle ratio as standard equipment. Plymouth, on the other hand, delivers all GTX automatics with a 3.23:1 acceleration/highway compromise axle ratio. It seems unfair, then, to compare quarter-mile performance of two cars with such disparate ratios, especially when they are pretenders to the acceleration throne.

Now, before readers write hundreds of protest letters over fitting drag racing tires to the Plymouths when the GTO was tested with standard wide oval tires, let's go over two points: First, due to low engine torque at takeoff, the GTO was not severely handicapped by lack of racing tires. Also the axle ratio on the GTO was selected to provide maximum quarter-mile performance with standard tires. The ratio was, in fact, ideal with the standard tires, placing engine speed at the finish line just over the engine's power peak.

The ratios CAR LIFE selected for the GTX Plymouths were the ones that would yield maximum quarter-mile performance with large-diameter racing tires. They could not have been used with standard tires without overspeeding the engines. Further, the GTX ratios were chosen because they were the most popular ratios used on these cars in drag racing throughout the U.S. Finally, the Hemi and 440 Plymouth engines have so much low speed torque that initial acceleration would be severely limited by wheelspin without drag racing tires.

The ratios chosen for the two GTX test cars were not the same, due to the difference in operating range of the two engines. The Hemi is capable of—and produces peak power at—much higher engine speeds than the 440.

The first round of performance tests was done on the cars just as they were received—with no modifications. In this form, the Hemi roared through the quarter in 14.0 sec., carrying two passengers and test gear. Still in standard form, but with driver only, the car required 13.97 sec., registering 103.5 mph. Then on went a pair of 9.00-15 Goodyear stock car drag slicks. They had no appreciable effect on dragstrip performance so long as the Hemi had the standard 3.23:1 axle ratio—13.94 e.t. and 103.2 mph. Apparently traction gains were offset by the increased power required by the huge tires and by the reduced effective overall gear ratio. Wheelspin was non-existent in this trim. Starting procedure was simple: torque up against the brakes, and release the brake while simultaneously flooring the accelerator pedal.

After installing 4.56:1 axle, though, the Hemi's elapsed times dropped markedly. With the slicks, but with no



CONFUSING SPEEDOMETER markings place 30 slash under 40 numerals, and crowd marks in center of scale where majority of highway driving is done.

engine modifications and still running full street equipment, the Hemi reached *104.86 mph in 13.43 sec.* That, friends, is really outstanding performance for a car with no on-track tuning (we never even checked the spark plugs throughout the test period), with standard

reverse-flow mufflers, and carrying a heavy convertible body—with power windows, yet. Real luxury racing, and very impressive times.

The 440 GTX had some mean times to beat—if it could. Completely standard, the 440 turned 95.6 mph in 14.6

sec., carrying two passengers and test gear. With driver only, the times dropped to 14.3 sec., and speed rose to 97.9 mph. Fitting 9.50-14 Goodyear slicks dropped the elapsed time to 14.22 sec., while speed remained essentially the same at 98.79 mph. With the 4.30:1 rear axle installed, the 440 was unwilling to pull the 14-in. tires through the timing traps without running beyond the engine's optimum operating range. So we pulled the 9.00-15 tires off the Hemi and installed them on the 440. That's what it took for the 440 to break 14 sec. Its quarter-mile times: 99.77 mph in 13.97 sec.

Obviously the 440 does not benefit from proper gearing as much as the Hemi does. That's because the 440 is the more flexible engine. The 440's torque curve through its operating range is much flatter and broader. Therefore, it can pull well even when engine speed is below the power peak. The Hemi, however, produces substantially more power at the upper end of its operating range. It gives its best performance when kept in the high speed range over as much of the dragstrip as possible.

These same engine characteristics make the 440 a more pleasant street engine. In city traffic it is quieter and smoother. High gear acceleration, even

1968 PLYMOUTH GTX CONVERTIBLE (HEMI)



DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.....	116.0
Track, f/r, in.....	59.5/59.2
Overall length, in.....	202.7
width.....	76.4
height.....	54.7
Front seat hip room, in.....	22.0 x 2
shoulder room.....	58.1
head room.....	37.3
pedal-seatback, max.....	43.0
Rear seat hip room, in.....	47.6
shoulder room.....	48.6
leg room.....	34.6
head room.....	37.2
Door opening width, in.....	39.2
Ground clearance, in.....	6.4
Trunk liftover height, in.....	26.3

PRICES

List, FOB factory.....	\$3590
Equipped as tested.....	\$4874
Options included: Hemi engine; power steering, windows, disc brakes; tinted glass; console; limited slip diff.; light pkg.; wheel covers; head restraints; AM radio.	

CAPACITIES

No. of passengers.....	5
Luggage space, cu. ft.....	n.a.
Fuel tank, gal.....	19
Crankcase, qt.....	5
Transmission/dif., pt.....	17.5/4.0
Radiator coolant, qt.....	18

CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Frame type: Unitized.	
Front suspension type: Independent by s.l.a., torsion springs, telescopic shock absorbers.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.....	130
antiroll bar dia., in.....	0.94
Rear suspension type: Hotchkiss live axle, multileaf springs—different control right and left, telescopic shock absorbers.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.....	151
Steering system: Integral assist recirculating ball gear, parallelogram linkage behind front wheels.	
overall ratio.....	18.8:1
turns, lock to lock.....	3.5
turning circle, ft. curb-curb.....	40.6
Curb weight, lb.....	3950
Test weight.....	4320
Distribution (driver), % f/r.....	55.8/44.2

BRAKES

Type: Ventilated disc front, cast iron duo-servo drum rear, proportioning valve.	
Front rotor, dia. x width, in.....	11.04 x 2.04
Rear drum, dia. x width.....	10.0 x 2.50
total swept area, sq. in.....	387.8
Power assist: Integral vacuum.	
line psi at 100 lb. pedal.....	1100

WHEELS/TIRES

Wheel rim size.....	15 x 6JK
optional size.....	none
bolt no./circle dia. in.....	5/4.5
Tires: Goodyear Speedway Wide Tread.	
size.....	F70-15
normal inflation, psi f/r.....	30/30
Capacity @ psi.....	n.a.

ENGINE

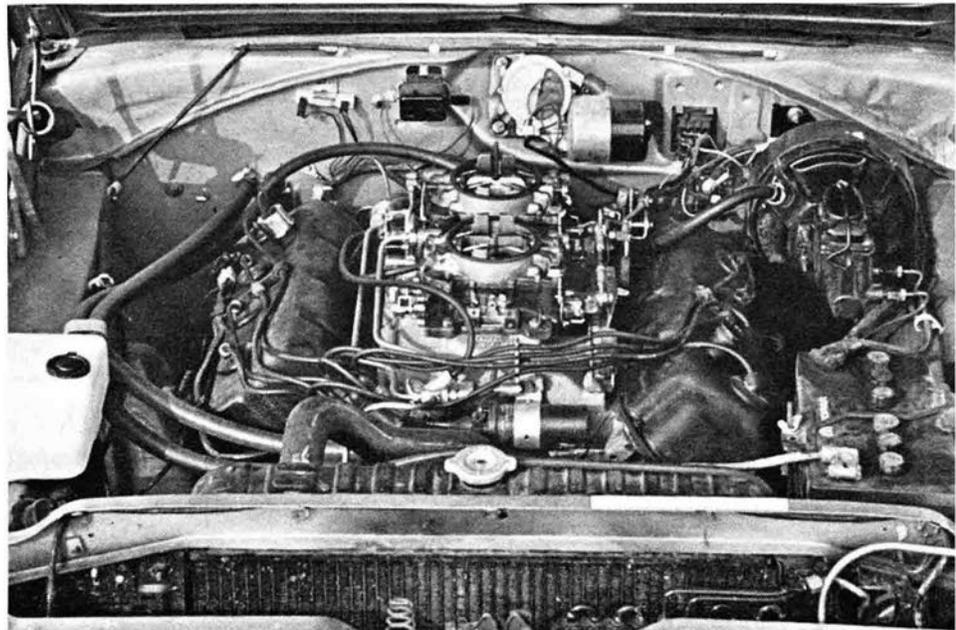
Type, no. of cyl.....	ohv 90° V-8
Bore x stroke, in.....	4.25 x 3.75
Displacement, cu. in.....	425.589
Compression ratio.....	10.25:1
Fuel required.....	premium
Rated bhp @ rpm.....	425 @ 5000
equivalent mph.....	122
Rated torque @ rpm.....	490 @ 4000
equivalent mph.....	97
Carburetion: Carter AFB 2x4.	
throttle dia., pri./sec.....	1.44/1.69
Valve train: Mechanical lifters, pushrods and overhead rocker arms.	
cam timing deg., int./exh.....	36-68/80-24
duration, int./exh.....	284/284
Exhaust system: Dual, balance pipe, reverse-flow mufflers.	
pipe dia., exh./tail.....	2.50/2.25
Normal oil press. @ rpm.....	55 @ 2000
Electrical supply, V./amp.....	12/37
Battery, plates/amp. hr.....	78/70

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch type: dia., in.....	
Transmission type: Three-speed automatic with 10.75-in. dia. torque converter.	
Gear ratio 4th () overall.....	
3rd (1.00:1).....	3.23:1
2nd (1.45:1).....	4.69:1
1st (2.45:1).....	7.92:1
1st x t.c. stall (2.10:1).....	16.63:1
Shift lever location: Console.	
Differential type: Hypoid, limited slip.	
axle ratio.....	3.23:1

at 30 mph, is fine for lane changing, hill climbing and passing. The Hemi is louder and rougher, and requires more frequent use of the lower gears to achieve the same level of low speed acceleration. Neither, however, is a fussy, temperamental racing engine which requires frequent throttle "blipping" to keep spark plugs clean, or demands running at 3000 rpm in first gear to avoid surging and stumbling. (That was a major criticism of the Ram Air GTO, called the "King" in CAR LIFE's October, 1967, report. The GTO ran very poorly below 2500 rpm, and city traffic operation invariably resulted in overheating and extremely rough running.) The GTXs, with either engine, were perfectly happy to motor sedately through town. They refused to overheat, foul plugs, surge at small throttle openings, or stumble on part-throttle acceleration.

With the standard rear axle and tires, highway performance of the GTX Plymouths was very pleasant. A 2.76:1 axle ratio would have made the 440, in particular, a better vehicle for high speed cruising. The standard 3.23:1 ratio is, however, a satisfactory compromise between freeway operation and thrilling acceleration. Brief operation of the test cars with the high numerical



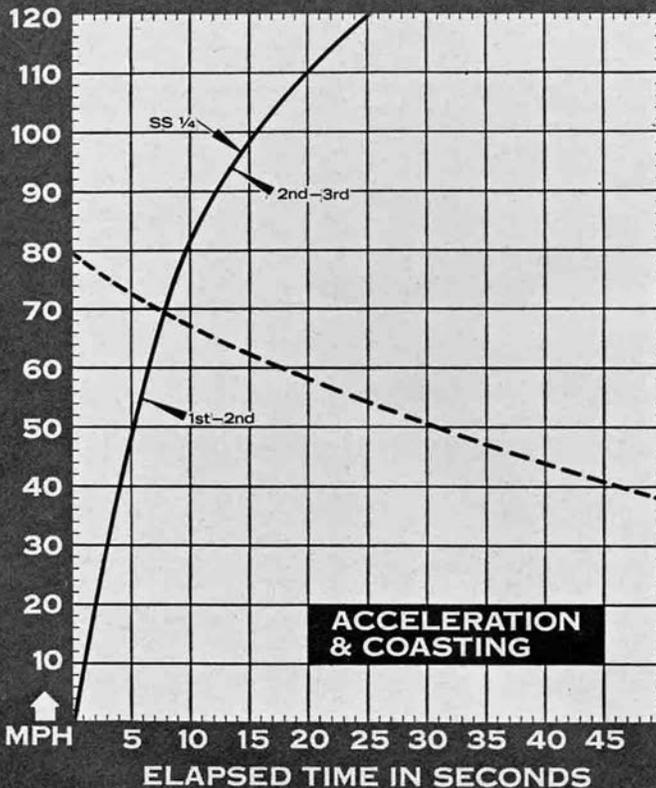
MOST POWERFUL engine fitted to a standard American passenger car, the Plymouth Hemi scored consistent 13.4-sec. elapsed times with no loss of tune.

ratio drag racing rear axles was unpleasant, to say the least. Engine noise was very high, fuel economy abysmally low, and vibration very annoying.

The place for axle ratios of 4.30:1 and 4.56:1 is on the dragstrip, not on the highway. It seems unfortunate,

though, that Chrysler must maintain its corporate policy of limiting options. A GTX buyer who wants to have an axle ratio for dragstrip and city operation must purchase the axle separately and have the local dealer install it. Similarly, a buyer who wants a large

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test weight)	10.2
Cu. ft./ton mile	141
Mph/1000 rpm (high gear)	24.3
Engine revs./mile (60 mph)	2470
Piston travel, ft./mile	1542
CAR LIFE wear index	38.1
Frontal area, sq. ft.	23.2
NHRA-AHRA class	A/SA-A/SA

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual	28.2
40 mph	37.9
50 mph	47.4
60 mph	57.0
70 mph	66.5
80 mph	76.0
90 mph	85.8

MAINTENANCE

Engine oil, miles/days	4000/90
oil filter, miles/days	8000/180
Chassis lubrication, miles	36,000
Antismog servicing, type/miles	tuneup check/12,000; replace PCV valve/12,000
Air cleaner, miles	replace/24,000
Spark plugs: Champion N-10Y	
gap, (in.)	0.035
Basic timing, deg./rpm	TDC/700
max. cent. adv., deg./rpm	28/3100
max. vac. adv., deg./in. Hg.	8.5/15
Ignition point gap, in.	0.014
cam dwell angle, deg.	37
arm tension, oz.	17
Tappet clearance, int./exh.	0.028/0.032
Fuel pressure at idle, psi	7.0
Radiator cap relief press., psi	16

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (5900), mph	144
Test shift points (rpm) @ mph	
3rd to 4th ()	
2nd to 3rd (5600)	.94
1st to 2nd (5600)	.55

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.	3.0
0-40 mph	4.0
0-50 mph	5.1
0-60 mph	6.3
0-70 mph	7.8
0-80 mph	9.5
0-90 mph	12.0
0-100 mph	15.3
Standing 1/4-mile, sec.	14.0
speed at end, mph	96.5
Passing, 30-70 mph, sec.	4.8

BRAKING

Max. deceleration rate from 80 mph	ft./sec. ² .23
No. of stops from 80 mph (60-sec. intervals) before 20% loss in deceleration rate	8-no loss
Control loss?	None.
Overall brake performance	fair

FUEL CONSUMPTION

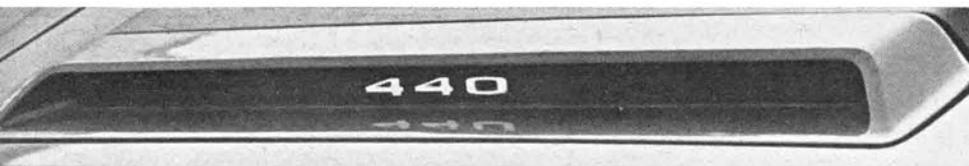
Test conditions, mpg	11.9
Normal cond., mpg	9-15
Cruising range, miles	160-270

GRADABILITY

4th % grade @ mph	
3rd	21 @ 60
2nd	28 @ 55
1st	off scale

DRAG FACTOR

Total drag @ 60 mph, lb.	129
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PHONY SCOOPS, flat-black paint are but two of the currently popular styling gimmicks adorning GTX in flashy, but rather tasteless array.



CLEANING tires required trick driving. Sticky Goodyear slicks provided all the traction needed by GTX 440.

displacement engine, like the 440, for highway cruising, must purchase a 2.76:1 rear axle and have it installed in place of the mandatory 3.23:1 unit. As it stands, the standard axle is a good compromise, but results in performance

PLYMOUTH GTX Hemi Convertible			
Tires	Axle Ratio	Elapsed Time	Trap Speed
Wide Tread			
F70-15	3.23:1	13.97	103.50
Dragway Stock			
9.00-15	3.23:1	13.94	103.21
Dragway Stock			
9.00-15	4.56:1	13.63	103.56
Dragway Stock			
9.50-14	4.56:1	13.44	104.89
PLYMOUTH GTX 440 Hardtop			
Wide Tread			
F70-14	3.23:1	14.35	97.93
Dragway Stock			
9.50-14	3.23:1	14.22	98.79
Dragway Stock			
9.50-14	4.30:1	14.21	98.36
Dragway Stock			
9.00-15	4.30:1	13.97	99.77

Note: All tires are Goodyear.

which is mediocre at both ends of the speed spectrum.

The power disc brakes on the test cars performed with another brand of mediocrity. In this case, though, the mediocrity concerns only maximum de-

celeration rate. Fade resistance of the brakes on both cars was phenomenal. Repeated hard stops from high-speed dragstrip runs refused to cause any loss in deceleration rate, and had no adverse effect on control or directional stability. Both test cars could muster no more than 23 ft./sec.², a rate which is not really bad, but which is not up to the best available braking systems. Interestingly, maximum deceleration rate was not limited by wheel lockup, as is usually the case with domestic power-brake systems, but rather was limited by the leg power of the test driver. Booster runout was encountered on every hard stop, and pedal effort required to lock the wheels was beyond the capability of a fairly strong man. Plymouth needs a booster with greater capacity for its disc-braked cars. Braking potential is there, but simply can't be tapped. A better booster, coupled with the outstanding fade characteristics of these brakes, would result in a superb system.

Just as brake effort was too high, steering effort with the power-assisted systems on both test cars was too low. Fingertip steering may be desirable for parallel parking, but not for high speeds. Complete lack of road feel and

1968 PLYMOUTH GTX 2-DOOR HARDTOP



DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.....	116.0
Track, f/r, in.....	59.5/59.2
Overall length, in.....	202.7
width.....	76.4
height.....	54.7
Front seat hip room, in.....	22.0 x 2
shoulder room.....	58.1
head room.....	37.3
pedal-seatback, max.....	42.5
Rear seat hip room, in.....	59.0
shoulder room.....	58.1
leg room.....	34.1
head room.....	36.7
Door opening width, in.....	39.2
Ground clearance, in.....	6.5
Trunk liftover height, in.....	26.5

PRICES

List, FOB factory.....	\$3329
Equipped as tested.....	\$4524
Options included: Air conditioning, power steering, power disc brakes, vinyl roof, AM radio, console, limited slip diff., head restraints, deluxe wheel covers, light pkg.	

CAPACITIES

No. of passengers.....	5
Luggage space, cu. ft.....	n.a.
Fuel tank, gal.....	19
Crankcase, qt.....	4
Transmission/dif., pt.....	18.5/4.0
Radiator coolant, qt.....	18

CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Frame type: Unitized.	
Front suspension type: Independent by s.l.a., torsion springs, telescopic shock absorbers.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.....	130
antiroll bar dia., in.....	0.94
Rear suspension type: Hotchkiss live axle, multileaf springs—different control right and left, telescopic shock absorbers.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.....	151
Steering system: Integral assist recirculating ball gear, parallelogram linkage behind front wheels.	
overall ratio.....	18.8:1
turns, lock to lock.....	3.5
turning circle, ft. curb- curb.....	40.6
Curb weight, lb.....	3870
Test weight.....	4240
Distribution (driver), % f/r.....	56.4/43.6

BRAKES

Type: Ventilated disc front, cast iron duo-servo drum rear, proportioning valve.	
Front rotor, dia. x width, in.....	11.04 x 2.04
Rear drum, dia. x width.....	10.0 x 2.50
total swept area, sq. in.....	387.8
Power assist: Integral vacuum.	
line psi at 100 lb. pedal.....	1100

WHEELS/TIRES

Wheel rim size.....	14 x 5.5JK
optional size.....	15 x 6.0JK
bolt no./circle dia. in.....	5/4.5
Tires: Goodyear Speedway Wide Tread.	
size.....	F70-14
normal inflation, psi f/r.....	24/24
Capacity @ psi.....	n.a.

ENGINE

Type, no. of cyl.....	ohv, 90° V-8
Bore x stroke, in.....	4.32 x 3.75
Displacement, cu. in.....	439.723
Compression ratio.....	10.1:1
Fuel required.....	premium
Rated bhp @ rpm.....	375 @ 4600
equivalent mph.....	108
Rated torque @ rpm.....	480 @ 3200
equivalent mph.....	75
Carburetion: 1x4 Carter AVS.	
throttle dia., pri./sec.....	1.69/1.69
Valve train: Hydraulic lifters, pushrods and overhead rocker arms.	
cam timing deg., int./exh.....	21-67/79-25
duration, int./exh.....	268/284
Exhaust system: Dual, balance pipe, reverse-flow mufflers.	
pipe dia., exh./tail.....	2.50/2.25
Normal oil press. @ rpm.....	55 @ 2000
Electrical supply, V./amp.....	12/46
Battery, plates/amp. hr.....	78/70

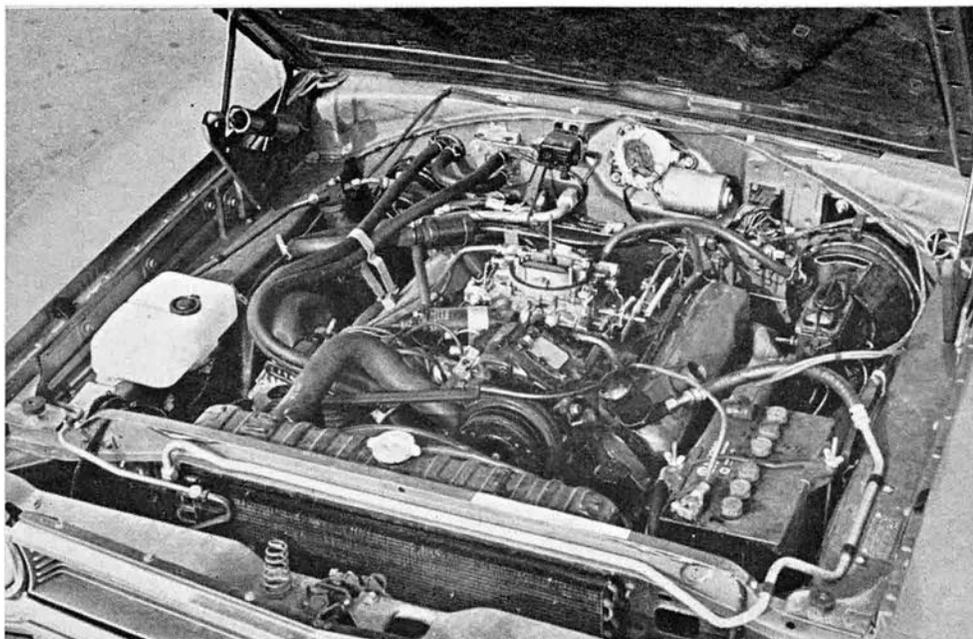
DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch type: dia., in.....	
Transmission type: Three-speed automatic with 11.75-in. dia. torque converter.	
Gear ratio 4th () overall.....	
3rd (1.00:1).....	3.23:1
2nd (1.45:1).....	4.69:1
1st (2.45:1).....	7.92:1
1st x t.c. stall (2.00:1).....	15.84:1
Shift lever location: Console.	
Differential type: Hypoid, limited slip.	
axle ratio.....	3.23:1

lack of centering force made the test cars feel unstable on the freeways. Conscious effort was required to keep from steering the car from one side of a traffic lane to the other. A hands-off approach was partially effective in reducing wander, but that's hardly recommended. With all the engineering talent available it seems ridiculous that no one has devised a variable-effort system to minimize parking effort while retaining some road feel and reasonable effort at high speeds. Non-assisted steering is not the answer (unless you *enjoy* getting hernias maneuvering cars with 2000-lb. front ends around at low speeds). To reduce effort on non-assisted cars, steering ratios are so high that slow steering is a major deterrent to maneuverability.

Once test drivers oriented themselves to driving by ear and by posterior sensitivity, the GTXs proved to be good-handling automobiles. Both cars understeered very strongly, and cornering limits were consequently rather low. However, handling was completely predictable and required little skill to recover from corners entered at excessive speed.

Traction limits of the Goodyear Wide Tread tires seemed low, and tire squeal

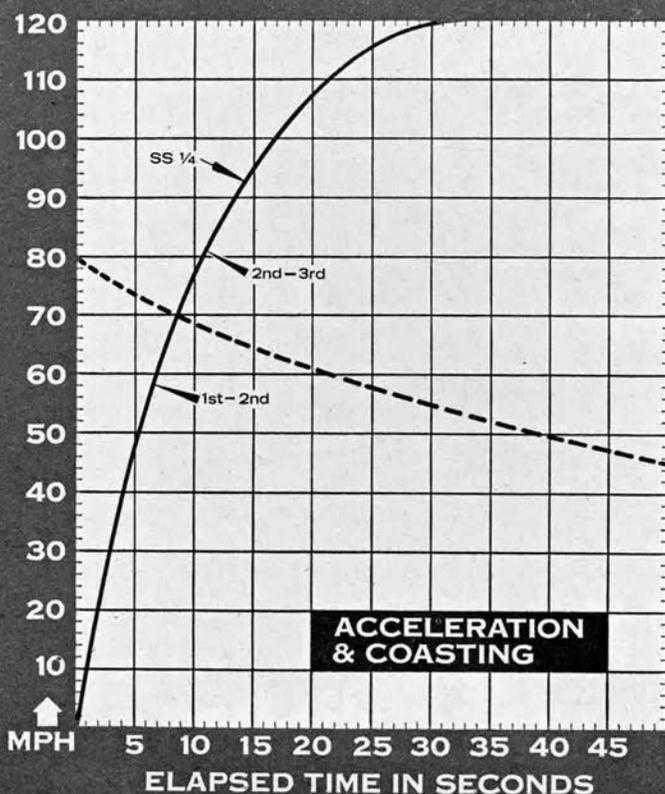


HIGH TORQUE, 440-cid engine is largest of all Supercar powerplants. Low noise level, excellent flexibility make 440 a fine everyday performer.

was much too easily attained, but these characteristics simply served to keep the driver out of trouble. At break-away, the front end simply plowed toward the outside of a curve, and reducing throttle opening was generally

all that was required to maintain directional attitude. Obviously, the power available in both cars permitted the rear end of the car to be drifted into an oversteering attitude, but this also was easily controlled by throttle pressure.

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test weight)	11.3
Cu. ft./ton mile	160.3
Mph/1000 rpm (high gear)	23.5
Engine revs/mile (60 mph)	2550
Piston travel, ft./mile	1593
CAR LIFE wear index	40.6
Frontal area, sq. ft.	23.2
NHRA-AHRA class	A/SA-C/SA

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual	27.0
40 mph	36.7
50 mph	46.1
60 mph	56.0
70 mph	65.8
80 mph	75.4
90 mph	85.3

MAINTENANCE

Engine oil, miles/days	4000/90
oil filter, miles/days	8000/180
Chassis lubrication, miles	36,000
Antismog servicing, type/miles	tuneup check/12,000; replace PCV valve/12,000
Air cleaner, miles	replace, 24,000
Spark plugs: Champion J-11Y	
gap, (in.)	0.035
Basic timing, deg./rpm	TDC/600
max. cent. adv., deg./rpm	28/4600
max. vac. adv., deg./in. Hg.	16.5/15
Ignition point gap, in.	0.014
cam dwell angle, deg.	28
arm tension, oz.	17
Tappet clearance, int./exh.	0/0
Fuel pressure at idle, psi	3.5
Radiator cap relief press., psi	16

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (5150), mph	121
Test shift points (rpm) @ mph	
3rd to 4th ()	
2nd to 3rd (5000)	81
1st to 2nd (5000)	48

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.	3.0
0-40 mph	4.1
0-50 mph	5.3
0-60 mph	6.8
0-70 mph	8.5
0-80 mph	10.6
0-90 mph	13.5
0-100 mph	17.4
Standing 1/4-mile, sec.	14.6
speed at end, mph	95.6
Passing, 30-70 mph, sec.	5.5

BRAKING

Max. deceleration rate from 80 mph	
ft./sec. ²	23
No. of stops from 80 mph (60-sec. intervals) before 20% loss in deceleration rate	8-no loss
Control loss? None	
Overall brake performance	fair

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Test conditions, mpg	10.3
Normal cond., mpg	9-15
Cruising range, miles	160-270

GRADABILITY

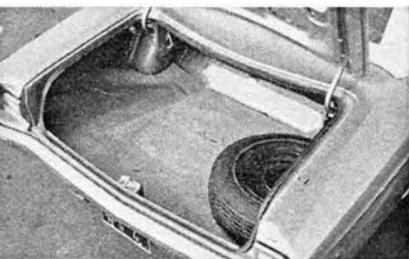
4th % grade @ mph	
3rd	23 @ 55
2nd	32 @ 50
1st	off scale

DRAG FACTOR

Total drag @ 60 mph, lb.	110
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GTX INTERIOR is one of the best-executed of current safety-oriented layouts. Instrument panel is attractive and hazard-free, and visibility is good.



SPARE TIRE location makes convertible trunk, left, much less usable than spacious trunk compartment of GTX 2-door hardtop, shown at right.

much more pleasant. Except for a 150-mph speedometer which was so cluttered up with hash marks as to be all but illegible, instruments and controls were convenient. Rocker switches, a result of safety legislation requirements, were particularly easy to operate. Seats were very attractive, but seatback rake was insufficient. The too-vertical seatbacks resulted in discomfort on long trips, although general seat contour and padding were adequate.

Ride quality of the Plymouths was, in a word, harsh. Stiff suspension is part of the standard GTX package, and is helpful in providing stable handling, but ride comfort is sacrificed. Expansion joints in concrete roads were particularly annoying, and broken pavement caused considerable wheel-hop, audible thumping and spine-jarring. Undulating roadways were handled in fine fashion. The stiff shock absorber calibration proved its worth in controlling vehicle oscillation. The recommended tire inflation pressure of 30 psi, front and rear, in the Hemi GTX added considerably to ride harshness. The 440, at 24 psi, was noticeably quieter and smoother over small pavement irregularities and California's rather infamous mid-intersection water drainage gullies.

How good is the Plymouth GTX? As a performance car, the GTX has few equals. With the Hemi engine, it is the fastest quarter-miler among current domestic Supercars. With the 440 engine, it offers as much performance-per-dollar as anything on the market, and more than most. With either engine, the GTX is a completely acceptable general transportation vehicle. But bear in mind the obvious sacrifice in fuel economy attendant with large engines run at high output levels. No real deficiencies were noted in the operation of either test car, except for an annoying exhaust period in the Hemi convertible at idle. Both cars were expensive, but they were loaded with almost every available option. The same performance package could be purchased for much less than the test cars' list prices, by eliminating some of the extraneous accessory equipment.

The standard 440 GTX should appeal to the man who wants a very fast passenger car with sporty styling and reasonable smoothness and economy. The Hemi GTX will appeal to the acceleration enthusiast who wants the ultimate—the fastest standard car on the market. There is also a certain prestige factor in owning a Hemi-engine car. Enthusiasts everywhere are aware of the competition successes garnered by this engine. The pair: exciting, enjoyable, extremely capable. They're not everyone's ideal car, but to those who like Supercars, they may just be the epitome. ■

HEMI vs 440

continued

GTX handling can best be summed up as being adequate for these high-performance cars. Smooth-road cornering is fun, and eminently safe. Rough surfaces cause considerable rear-end hop and skittering, but this holds true for any domestic live-axle automobile.

Though the test cars were similar in most respects, the two body styles gave us the opportunity to evaluate the creature comforts of different sporty body configurations. As expected, the convertible fell short of the hardtop in the squeak and rattle department. The GTX convertible developed an inordinate number of loud squeaks in the top-to-windshield joint, as well as various rattles in the rear parcel shelf area. Body rigidity was, however, judged to be very good for a domestic convertible. Cowl and steering column shake, while present, was not objectionable.

The GTX 2-door hardtop remained almost rattle-free throughout the test

period. Overall quality was exceptionally good on this car. Panel fits, trim details and interior finish were well above the usual domestic quality control level. Everything worked (except the air conditioning switch), everything fit properly, and all controls operated smoothly.

Styling of the test cars was not of the attention-grabbing variety. Only the fake hood scoops prompted frequent comment—generally derogatory. The flat-black paint splash across the hood of the hardtop was particularly objectionable to most observers, although the swinging set found it kinda zoomie. We found the pseudo antiglare panel, broad side panel stripes and GTX ornamentation to be a rather distasteful conglomeration of current automotive cliches. These are the gimmicks that seem to sell cars, though, and that's the name of the game in Detroit.

Interior styling of the GTXs was