

The Last Hurst/Olds

... may be the best ever: quick, comfortable and ecologically pure/By John Lamm

I was just out of Rocky Mount, North Carolina traveling north, in a '72 Hurst/Olds, when the disc jockey screamed that it was Oldie Goldie Time, a hit flash from the past with Jan and Dean. "The Little Old Lady From Pasadena," just slightly scratched, vibrated out of the speaker, a bit of musical *déjà vu* to rock us back to the first years of the super car. Those were the years of the zenith of the horsepower race, a competition now soured, perhaps not wholly unwarranted, by insurance rates and emissions equipment. Still, an occasional vestige of that time creeps out of Detroit, more often now under the arm of an aftermarket supplier.

It was appropriate that Hurst Performance had its name on the side of

that car about to do its final duties as Pace Car for the Indianapolis 500. For, it was not just transmission shifters that made Hurst a prime supporter of the super car era, but their spirit: Buxom Linda Vaughn in a low-cut second skin of gold lamé bowing deeply before the crowds at Daytona or the Indy Nationals, and the Hurst Shifty Doctor making house calls in the pits, checking that everyone's shifter — of whatever make — works properly or helping to put whole race cars together. The Hurst/Oldsmobiles, super 4-4-2's with big, honkin' engines and gold stripes, kind of epitomized that spirit and involvement. Now we've apparently come to the end of that line.

They tell us that this is the last



Hurst/Olds

Hurst/Olds. The 500 that will be built are basically 1972 Cutlass Supreme convertibles or hardtops, to be decked-out in the prime pieces of the Oldsmobile option list. As always, the cars only come in one color treatment, a Cameo White with "Hurst Custom Laser Stripes in Hurst Gold" — something akin to Midas gold. There are special "Black Accents," a vinyl roof for the hardtop, a 270-hp 455-cubic-inch high performance engine, 3.23 rear axle, Rallye suspension and new Goodyear G60 x 14 Polysteel tires on Super Stock III wheels.

Then come the special Hurst options: An electric sunroof, separate burglar alarms for the car and wheels; a "Digital Performance Computer" for direct readout of road speed and quarter-mile

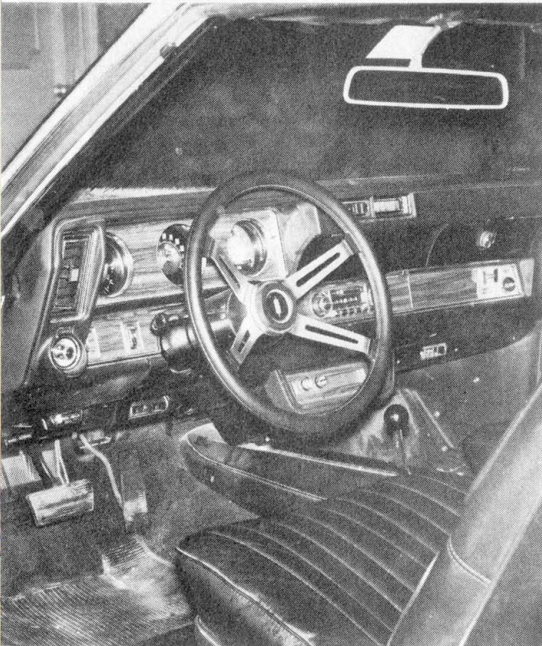
speed and elapsed time and the 300-hp W-30 engine package with 3.42 rear axle (though not in California). As a final bit of snob appeal, you can buy a set of decals that match those on the actual Indianapolis Pace car.

We had a chance to live with the car on a quick "space capsule" drive from Daytona Beach to Washington, D.C., heading up after that NASCAR race for the Great Curiale-Schampel Road Test. From the time I pulled onto Interstate 95, I liked the car. This family of GM intermediates has always been one of the most pleasant series of cars ever built in the U.S. and the Hurst/Olds has all the favorable attributes plus a few extra.

It is an excellent highway car; you put it in Drive, punch the Cruise Control knob and look for a good radio station. Being in the South, I wanted to obey the speed limits, so that's the way

in Washington, we put the Hurst/Olds through the timing lights in the same session as the Curiale-Schampel test cars. The best 0-60 run was 6.8 seconds; the best quarter-mile 15.2 seconds, with a terminal speed of 94 mph. Unfortunately, because of the torque multiplication of the automatic and converter, the brakes couldn't hold the car back long enough to get the engine wound up over 1500 on the starting line, somewhat limiting quarter-mile potential. After the straight line runs, we set up a pylon course for the car and it wiggled through with a fair amount of civility, considering that 57 percent of the car's whopping 4,060 pounds is up front.

Our big surprise came the next day, when the big, supposedly dirty, super car went through emissions testing at General Testing Labs. With a 150 road horsepower on the chassis dyno, compared to 108 for the Buick Electra 225,



Above: Hurst/Olds' interior is stock Cutlass with most options and dual-gate shifter. Right: It isn't the honest-to-God Indy Pace Car, but a replica for the masses.



HURST/OLDS	
Engine	OHV V8
Bore & Stroke — ins.	4.12 x 4.25
Displacement — cu. in.	455
HP @ RPM	270 @ 4400
With W-30	300 @ 4700
Torque: lbs.-ft. @ rpm	370 @ 3200
With W-30	410 @ 3200
Compression Ratio	8.5:1/91 Octane fuel
Carburetion	1-4 bbl.
Transmission	3-speed auto.
Final Drive Ratio	3.23:1
With W-30	3.42:1
Steering Type	Variable ratio
Steering Ratio	18.8:16.2
Tire Size	G60 x 14
Brakes	Disc/Drum
PERFORMANCE	
Acceleration	
0-30 mph	3.5
0-45 mph	4.3
0-60 mph	6.8
Standing Start 1/4-mile	
Mph	94
Elapsed time	15.2 sec.
Passing speeds	
40-60 mph	3.5
50-70 mph	4.1

I traveled, trying out the options. The radio was hampered by the GM windshield antenna, so I tried the stereo tape deck. It was broken. Both a bit disappointing, but not basic faults of the car. Then I rolled back the sunroof, even though it was 9:00 p.m., and was pleasantly surprised to find it quiet and comfortable even on a chilly night. Just move the "heat" lever a bit to the right and feel those stars shining down through the roof.

The ride was very acceptable, especially in consideration of the Rallye suspension and 8½-inch Polysteel tires, delivering the only one spooky moment when, at legal speeds, the back end began to kick out in the middle of a washboard highway in Georgia. Upon arriving

the Olds still came through the cleaner of the two. It cut under the hydrocarbon limit of 3.4 grams per mile with a .738 figure and the carbon monoxide standard of 39 grams per mile with only 8.6 grams per mile. (Readings for NOx were unavailable.)

A fitting *coup de grace* for the super car and Hurst. Perhaps efficiency and low-emissions can go hand-in-hand, after all. At least they're going out in style, leading the 33-car field around the Indy oval, flags whipping and snapping off the black bumper — a fitting farewell to the Hurst/Olds and, perhaps, the super car. It's a fine example of the best of a breed, and we can't guarantee the 1973 GM intermediates will be as good; so get 'em while they're hot. /MT