



HURRICANE OUTRAGEOUS

... the 'O' is for Dr. Oldsmobile's *stormin'* W-30

THERE are some things you just never get around to do. Take road testing, for example. In all our years of road testing, there is one thing we've always wanted to do but have just never had the opportunity. *We've never road tested a car in a hurricane!* Now, thanks to Hurricane Agnes, we've fulfilled a lifelong dream.

Hurricanes aren't supposed to happen on the East Coast in June. Yet, Agnes dumped untold tons of water all over the East this year precisely at the time we were testing a '72 Oldsmobile W-30 442. Such is the way dreams are fulfilled. And we can happily report without equivocation that the W-30 442 Olds is a perfect car for commuting to work in a hurricane!

It's also a perfect car for dragstrip blasts and white-knuckled laps around a handling loop. It would also be a perfect car for long distance road work if there were a gas station every 200 feet along the way.

That the W-30 442 is a particularly satisfying automobile to any car enthusiast would seem like reason enough for the package to be dropped from Oldsmobile's lineup for '73. It is dropped for '73. There will still be a 442 that will most likely be a fine handler, but there is no more W-30 and what a shame. There was no way the Olds engineering department could get the W-30 engine to pass emissions—or so they claim. Frankly, we get the feeling that they didn't even try. Similar engine packages from Buick, Pontiac and Chevrolet were successfully modified to meet 1973 emissions standards.

If Olds engineers didn't try—or weren't allowed to try—that's really sad, once a manufacturer gives up hope and begins to stagnate, something vital and viable is lost.

It's also sad for every performance car fan because our test car was one hell of a performer that didn't have to make excuses to anyone regarding quarter-mile performance or ride, handling, braking or evasive maneuverability.

Luckily, Agnes ended before we had to return the car to Oldsmobile and we were able to get in a day of quantitative testing on Raceway Park's dragstrip and handling loop in Englishtown, N.J.,

BY JOE OLDHAM



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home of NHRA's Summernationals.

There was no way to come off the line hard with the massive torque of the 455-cubic inch W-30 engine combined with the high torque multiplication of the heavy-duty Turbo Hydra-Matic and smallish G70-14 tires. The rear axle ratio was 3.42 which further compounded the wheel spin problem. Still, the low compression smogger 455 could push the 3885-pound Cutlass to 14.37 et's at 98 mph, which is as quick as any pure stock '72 you'll find. Sure it's still over a half second off what a '70 high compression W-30 would run. But that half second is recoverable via swapping to 3.90 rear axle gears and a sharp dyno tune. More tire, at least a 60-series for the street, would eliminate much off-the-line smoke, too.

But as we said, the W-30's performance is a moot question at this point. The biggest Olds engine for '73 will have something like 250 net horsepower, well down from the 300 SAE net horses at 4700 rpm of our test W-30. The

net torque output was a stump-pulling 410 pounds/foot at 3200 rpm.

A word is in order here on the unbelievable three-speed Turbo Hydra-Matic in our test car. We questioned Olds engineering about it and they swore it was a stock production heavy-duty M41 Turbo. We haven't felt such a health Turbo since around 1969. The unit in our 442 reminded us of those bang-shift Turbos they used to install behind solid-lifter 396 and 427 Chevy engines!

The thing shifted Pow! under full throttle and always left at least a 10-foot patch of scorched rubber on the pavement whether we shifted manually with the Hurst Dual-Gate shifter or let the Turbo do it alone. There's no need to modify this orfe for hot street performance; it's standard equipment! And the Hurst Dual-Gate is probably the most positive and sophisticated automatic trans shifter around. It, too, is dropped from the '73 option list.

The 442 has traditionally been one of the best handling of

A Cliff-Gromer piloted car in the midst of a hurricane. ... The only way to travel! Even with dual exhausts and sano bumper treatment, the 442 is a "mere logo of its former self."



**OLDSMOBILE
W-30 442 CUTLASS
SPECIFICATIONS**

ENGINE

Type OHV V-8
Displacement 455 cubic inches
Compression ratio 8.5 to 1
Carburetion One Rochester Quadrajet
Camshaft 308/308 hydraulic
Horsepower 300 net at 4700 rpm
Torque 410 net lbs./ft. at 3200 rpm
Exhaust Stock, dual pipes
Ignition Single point, emission controlled

TRANSMISSION

Make M41 Turbo Hydra-Matic
Control Hurst Dual-Gate

REAR END

Type Limited slip
Ratio 3.42 to 1

BRAKES

Front 10.88-inch power discs
Rear 9.5-inch power drums

SUSPENSION

Front Independent: HD coils, shocks, sway bar
Rear HD coils, shocks, sway bar
Steering Variable ratio power

GENERAL

List price \$3087.
Price as tested \$5255.
Weight 3885 pounds
Wheelbase 112 inches
Overall length 203.6 inches
Tire size G70-14

PERFORMANCE

0 to 30 4.1 seconds
0 to 60 mph 7.1 seconds
Standing 1/4-mile 98 mph
Elapsed time 14.37 seconds
Top speed 115 mph
Fuel consumption 5-8 mpg



442

W-30

Hurst dual-gate shifted our M41 heavy duty Turbo, which was the healthiest automatic we've bashed in a long time. Olds interior is attractive, seat-wheels-pedals driveable. Torque's there. . . . But where is our true love, the W-30?!

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the Detroit production cars. *The 442 pioneered the use of rear anti-roll stabilizer bars in 1964.* It was years before the rest of the industry caught up. The 442 is still a fine handler with almost neutral steering right up to breakaway. The only trouble is the breakaway isn't very far up the scale compared to other Detroit offerings these days. Oh sure, the '72 442 is miles ahead of a mid-'60s supercar in handling, but *compared to most '72s, it's only average.* The trouble lies in the tire department. Almost all other manufacturers have gone to wider 60-series rubber but Olds clings to the 70-series tires that were the hot setup in 1967. In fact, Olds is the only company making an intermediate that does not offer a 60-series tire at least as an option! (For '73, steel-belted 70-series radials will be an option.)

One of the most remarkable feats is that Oldsmobile's suspension engineers have managed to make the 442 handle reasonably well even with the big 455 engine up front and still maintain good ride comfort. The 442's FE2 suspension package is a firm ride setup, but is never harsh. It gives the 442 a flat, stable feeling even under the most adverse conditions—driving through hurricane force sidewinds and blasting through flooded out roadbeds that

would bury most other cars. . . . Our 442 just rolled along.

It's this fantastically stable feeling that instills driver confidence and makes the 442 such a great hurricane car. Interior comfort helps too. The interior appointments are first class with the very comfortable, individual buckets. One thing we still don't like is the combination clock and tach. Almost impossible to read, all the numbers seem to coalesce. Then the gauge is obscured by the steering wheel. You must duck your head under the wheel rim to read it. It's not the hot ticket when you're blasting through a series of flooded out roadbeds and you want to know what time it is.

The combo tach-clock prompted one former staff member to make a classic statement after road testing a '69 442 with this option. When asked what he shifted at at the dragstrip, he replied, "About 10 to 4."

The old W-30 442 is an anachronism, a throwback to the halcyon days of the supercar of the '60s. It is Oldsmobile's last performance gasp—but a good one!