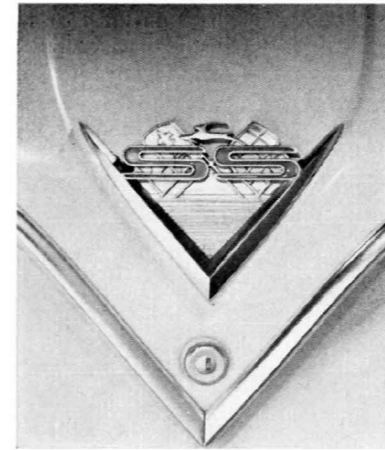


Chevrolet's **NEW** Impala
Super SPORT
 with the **409**-cubic-inch-engine



by Bob Ames

WITH ALL THE NEW VERSIONS of Detroit cars being introduced this summer, a lot of car enthusiasts might think that Chevrolet's new Super Sport falls into this classification. To be truthful, however, the SS package is a kit for the Impala, and Chevrolet is quite accurate in calling it so. But don't misunderstand the word "kit," as I did until I sat behind the wheel of a

new Super Sport. This SS had a four-speed transmission, and when I floored it in second I got the impression that Chevrolet had made a mistake in labelling this car a Super anything — they should have called it the Incredible Impala!

Performance is the shibboleth for the Impala SS, and all five of its engines are potent powerhouses. Just how potent is shown by the record turned in by one of the first 360-hp engines delivered to the West Coast. This Chevrolet won in its class at the 1961 Winternationals held in February at Pomona, California. The ET was an amazing 13.59 seconds for the quarter-mile, with a top speed of 105.88 mph. Just to prove that it was no mistake, the same car also recorded a non-official 13.19 seconds, 109.48 mph. These are eye-popping results for the first acid test of a new engine and are undoubtedly just the start of a long series of wins for Chevrolet's new Impala.

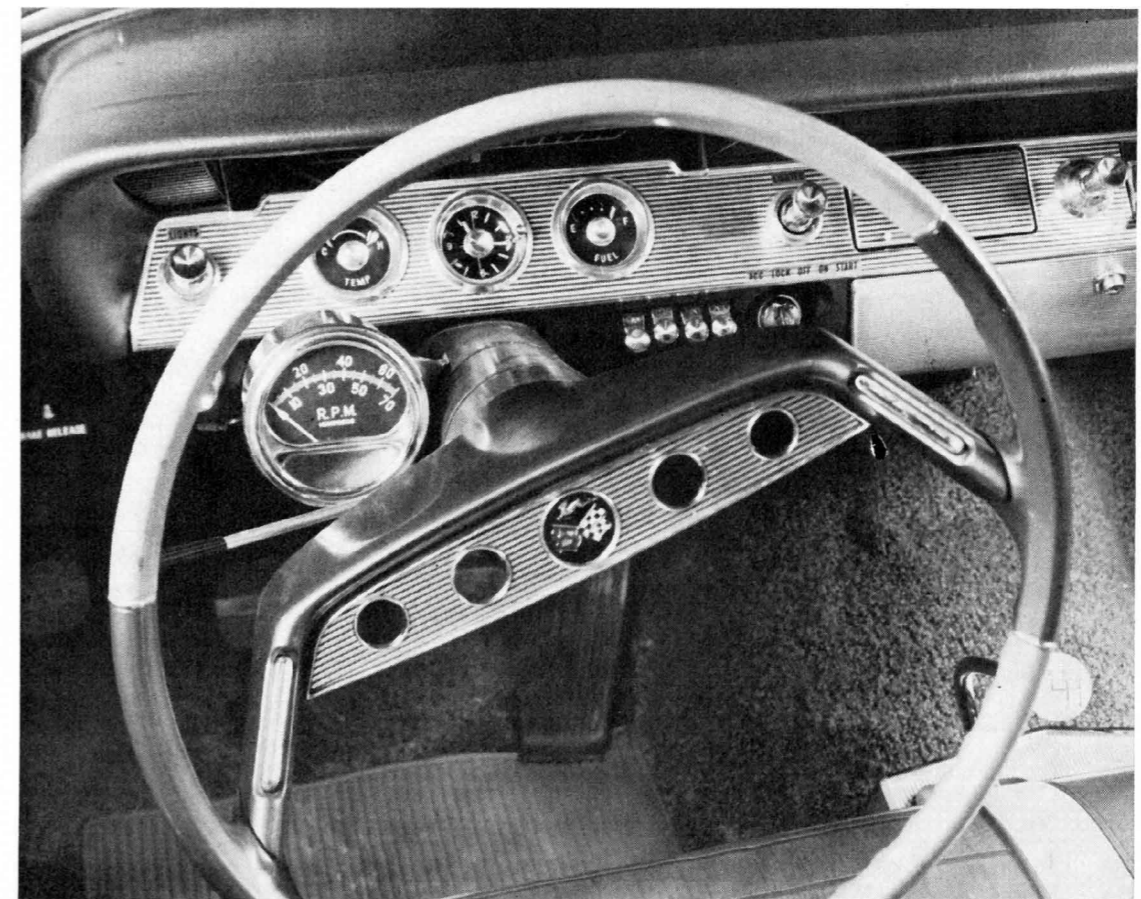
One of the more subtle—and equally as important as the performance power team options—is the list of extras that come with the Impala Super Sport kit. There is a special trim inside and out, padded panel, simulated knock-off wheel covers, power brakes and steering, and narrow-

band whitewalls. But these items are just the frosting on the cake. The enthusiast will be far more interested in the 7,000-rpm tach, heavy-duty springs and shocks and sintered metallic brake linings. This makes it mandatory that the SS not only have the guts to perform well, but is safe to drive at the speeds of which it is capable.

Any Super Sport kit is available with five power teams: 305 hp with four-speed manual or heavy-duty Powerglide, 340 hp or 350 hp with a four-speed manual. These three engines are all modifications of Chevrolet's familiar 348-cubic-inch V-8. The biggest optional powerplant is a new engine: a 409-cubic-inch V-8 turning out 360 hp at 5800 rpm and 409 lbs.-ft. of torque at 3600 rpm.

The new 409-cubic-inch V-8 is basically a hopping-up of the 348, but it is the type of a hot rod job that few individuals would be able to do. This is mostly because the 348 will not accept the larger bore and stroke (although a few might) and Chevrolet engineers made changes in the core casting to keep the water jacket at a safe thickness. The 409's bore and stroke are 4.3125 x 3.50, as opposed to the 348's 4.125 x 3.50.

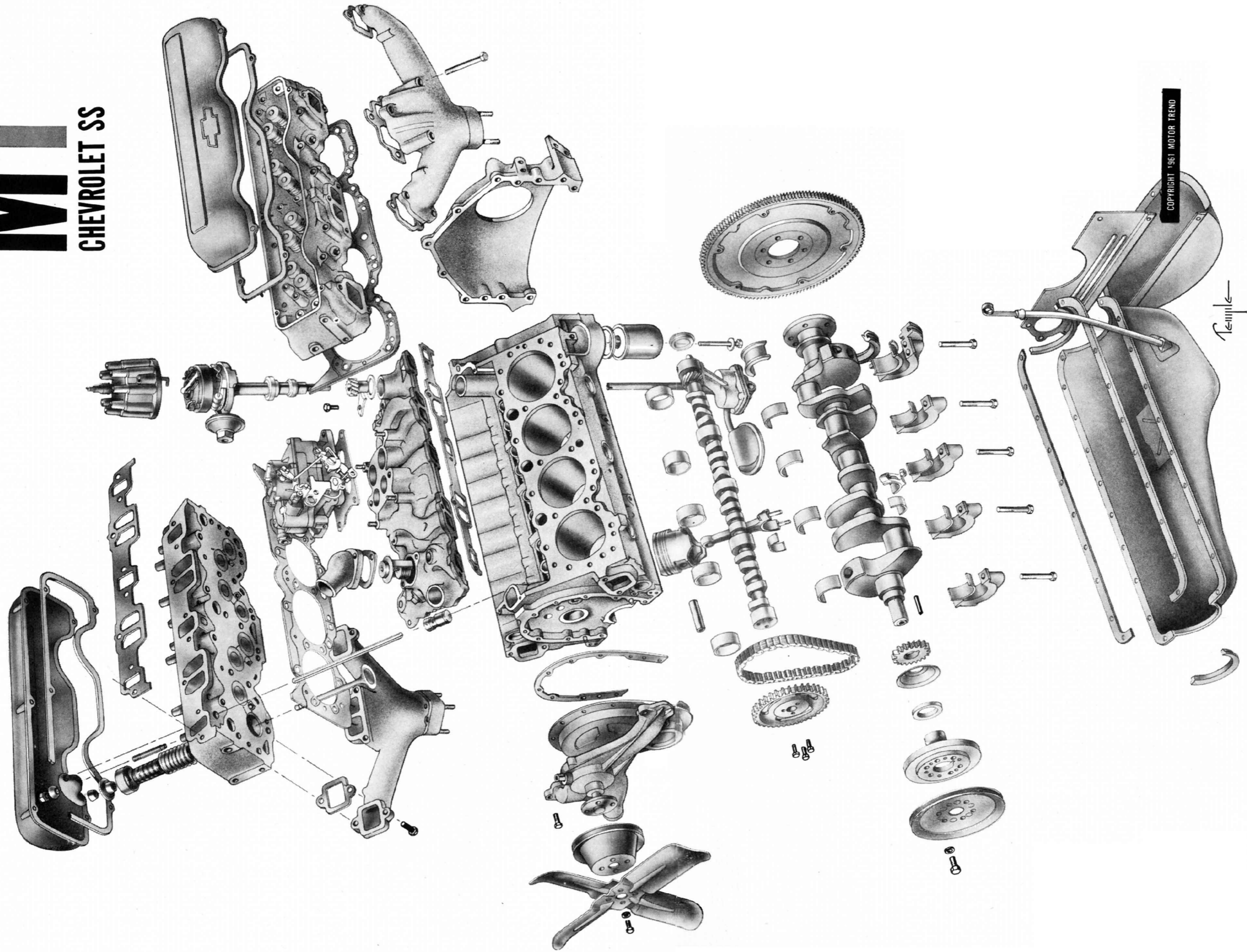
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STEERING WHEEL IS COCKED TO ONE SIDE HERE TO SHOW TACH; IN DRIVING, THOUGH, BAR HIDES INSTRUMENT.

MT

CHEVROLET SS



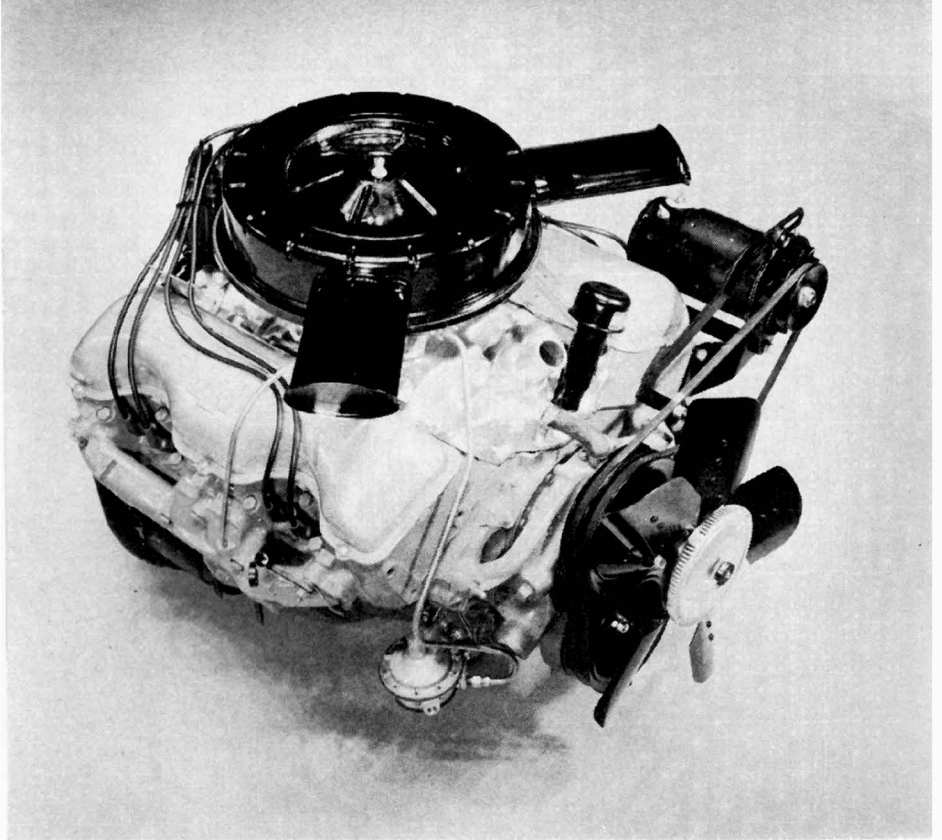
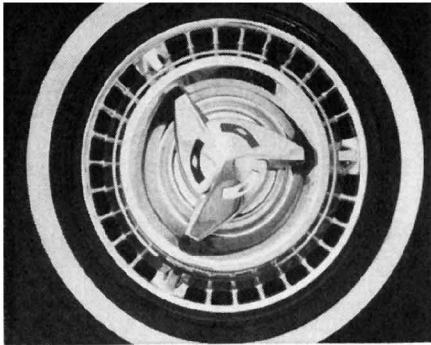
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Temple

THE 1961 CHEVROLET

409-Cubic-Inch-Engine

Chevrolet's new Impala Super Sport gets its visual identification from exterior trim effects like the individualistic wheel covers and SS imprint over the crossed flags. New 409 engine will always be the identifying feature for performance enthusiasts, however.



CHEVROLET'S SUPER SPORT
continued

There are many other changes in the 409 — and some of these are going to present several interesting possibilities for modification-minded enthusiasts with a 348. The crankshaft is heavier, and a new type of bearing material is now being used. The pistons are quite different and are forged aluminum with a full-width valve relief cut across the top. The connecting rods are 1/8-inch shorter than those of the 348 but weigh more since they are more heavily built.

The cylinder heads are virtually identical, but the 409 has bigger holes for the heavier pushrods. The cam has been changed and the timing set to provide the greater air that is necessary at the higher rpm's. The performance potential of the 409 also required heavier valve springs.

The only carburetor available with the 409 is a Carter four-barrel. Both the primary venturi and throttle bore openings are larger than those found on this same carburetor when it is installed on a 348.

Besides the options listed for the SS kit, there are dozens of other interesting modifications that will be of importance to the performance enthusiast. Axle ratios, according to the AMA specs are 3.36 for the 360 hp and 305 hp (3.55 with Powerglide); and 3.70 for the 340- and 350-hp

Interior is little changed from a stock Impala. Floor-mounted four-speed shift is mandatory except on the smallest engine option.

engines. But enthusiasts will probably be familiar with the Chevrolet RPO's which go as high numerically as 5-to-1. Another important axle option is Chevrolet's limited-slip differential, Positraction. The car driven for this report had this option, and it must be highly recommended for all-out performance.

A mere reading of the specifications, changes and options is no preparation for driving Chevrolet's Impala SS. About the closest practical comparison that can be made is with a Police Special option that Detroit manufacturers (including Chevrolet) offer to law enforcement agencies. The SS will do everything that most of these cars will — and will do better than many.

Acceleration is sharp and so rapid that at first it is a little hard to believe. The car I drove had only four miles on the odometer, so an all-out acceleration was out of the question. But without trying hard, the SS will shoot away from practically anything else on the road. With the limited-slip there was absolutely no spin of the wheels — but with a properly broken-in and tuned engine, it would probably peel

rubber at any speed up to 70 mph.

Handling is another area that will surprise the uninitiated, although those drivers who are familiar with an all-out performance machine will know exactly what to expect. Corners can be taken flat, fast and furious. Since the car was so new and the time limited, corners familiar to me were too far away to get to. But a flat, 90-degree, hard-topped corner is practically the same wherever it is. The SS will take these faster and safer than almost any stock sedan I've driven this year — and this includes representative versions of every car Detroit builds.

The Morraine sintered metallic brake lining and the heavy-duty brakes which are required with the SS kit came in for a lot of close scrutiny. There have been some complaints of cold weather fade with this combination. Chevrolet's engineering department feels that this problem has been licked, and the few tests I had time for proved this is true. If they work as well over a long period, these brakes should be given serious consideration by anyone who intends to buy a performance car.

I have one complaint about the Impala SS, and it is one that every enthusiast is going to gripe about. The tach, which worked smoothly and gave a precise reading, is located on the steering column post with a strap. The only logical place for it appears to be just above the spoke in the steering wheel. When doing any type of driving it is difficult to read, and on winding mountain roads where the Impala SS will be a marvelous car to drive, the wheel spoke will obscure it entirely from view. Since this is a time for a lot of down- and up-shifting, the fellow who likes to shift at precise points is going to run into a lot of trouble.

As for the trim, grab handle, wheel covers, etc., my own opinion is that they are rather flat. They aren't different enough to set the SS apart from a regular Impala, although they don't add a lot to the cost. For myself, I can take or leave this particular feature. For me, and for any true aficionado, the engineering guts are what count — and Chevrolet's Impala Super Sport is about as gutty a machine as can be bought over the counter today. /MT

PONTIAC JOINS in the parade of mid-season new model announcements as it makes two new two-door coupes available in the compact Tempest lineup. Using the same coupe roof line that has been developed for the other GM compacts, the new Tempests will have identical exterior dimensions to the four-door sedan that has been in Pontiac showrooms since last fall. A lone exception will be a half-inch lowering of overall height.

The standard coupe, as pictured below, will have conventional bench-type front seats, normal Tempest interior appointments and a full-width rear window. A more deluxe version will have bucket seats in the front, deluxe carpeting and a special interior trim. A preview of the latter model was given at the International Auto-

mobile Show in New York in April. Called the "Le Mans," this high-styled coupe has a special cloth and vinyl-coated roof with a small rear window, similar to the Buick Skylark, pictured earlier in this issue.

Both coupes will be offered with the full range of four-cylinder Tempest engines with output ratings from 110 to 155 hp. The 155-hp aluminum V-8 is also a customer option. Transmissions now available are a three-speed, floor-mounted manual and a two-speed automatic.

Naturally the Tempest's other unique design achievements, the transaxle and flexible driveshaft, are incorporated in the two-door versions of the MOTOR TREND "Car of the Year." /MT

THE NEW TEMPEST COUPE

