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Pontiac Unveils 2004 GTO Show Cars

LOS ANGELES - Giving the public its first look at the rebirth of a legend, Pontiac, General Motors' "excitement division," introduced show car versions of the 2004 GTO to audiences at the Los Angeles Auto Show and the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. The production version of the GTO will be available in Pontiac showrooms in late 2003.



"The public's interest in the GTO has been everything we hoped it would be, and more," said Bob Lutz, GM vice chairman of product development. "This car is a strong statement from both Pontiac and GM that we are determined to re-energize the car market with vehicles that command the customer's attention and excite their senses."

Pontiac plays an especially large role in this strategy in the 2004 model year with three new product launches. The new Grand Prix debuts in the spring and the V-8-powered Bonneville GXP will bow in early 2004.

"The GTO is really the 'exclamation point' on the new Pontiac line for the 21st century," said Lynn Myers, Pontiac-GMC general manager. "Together with the Grand Prix and the Bonneville GXP, the GTO will help define the evolution of Pontiac with fresh, contemporary styling, high performance excitement and exceptional driving characteristics."

Show car styling, production performance

The introduction of the show cars comes only seven months after GM announced it was bringing back the GTO. "The speed to market with the new GTO demonstrates GM's global product development capabilities and our renewed focus on dealer and customer enthusiasm," Lutz said. "This latest GTO will carry on the proud tradition of a legendary line."

Sporting a special high-gloss paint in red or yellow, the GTO show cars exhibit the strong Pontiac brand character with a signature dual-port grille and a wide aggressive stance. The vehicles ride on 18-inch alloy wheels. They also sport a high-performance powertrain that makes the vehicle worthy of the "GTO" name.

Under the hood is a specially tuned LS1 5.7-liter V-8 aluminum-block engine currently estimated at 340 horsepower @ 5200 rpm, 360 lbs.-ft. of torque at 4000 rpm with an appropriately tuned Pontiac exhaust note.

While sharing the same basic engine configuration with the base-level Chevrolet Corvette, the LS1 engine in the GTO has been modified with a high-lift camshaft and increased airflow induction to create greater horsepower and low-end torque than the Holden Monaro to address the needs of U.S. drivers.

All that power is mated to either an electronically controlled Hydra-Matic 4L60-E four-speed automatic transmission or the six-speed, close ratio manual transmission available on the Corvette ZO6. Both transmissions feature the same low-geared 3.46 final drive axle ratio in a rear-wheel-drive configuration to maximize off-the-line performance, a limited slip differential, and a three-channel traction control system designed to help enhance vehicle control. Although performance testing on the vehicle has not been completed, the production model GTO is expected have a zero-to-60 acceleration time of less than 6 seconds and run the quarter-mile in approximately 14 seconds at a speed of 105 mph. The top speed of the vehicle is estimated to be about 160 mph.

Stopping power is supplied by power-assisted four-wheel ventilated disc brakes with a standard four-channel anti-lock braking system. Additional standard safety features include: dual front air bags, side air bags, three-point seat belt systems at all seating positions and an Emergency Mode, which automatically shuts down the engine, turns off the fuel pump, unlocks the doors and turns on the dome light any time the air-bag system is deployed.

Performance-oriented interior

Befitting its position as a premium high-performance coupe, the GTO seats four adults in 2+2 bucket seats. Customers can choose between standard leather seats in black or color-coordinated to several exterior colors. In addition, the color-coordinated interior extends to the door panels and the instrument cluster.

A six-disc CD-changer with a premium 10-speaker sound system is standard, as is cruise control, a multi-function driver information center, keyless entry system and a host of other features that enhance the driving experience.

Strong heritage

The original GTO inspired the term "muscle car" when it debuted as a high-performance option on the 1964 Pontiac Tempest. Though originally only scheduled for 5,000 units, more than 30,000 Tempest GTOs were ordered in 1964 alone. Before the GTO ended its production in 1974, more than 500,000 were sold.

"We considered bringing the GTO back a number of times, but we never had the right product," said Myers. "We knew it had to be a V-8, rear-wheel drive and offer outstanding performance, but, until GM's leadership team looked at the Holden Monaro, nothing really fit."

Produced by GM's Australian subsidiary, the Holden Monaro shares many traits with the original GTO as the first all-Australian performance coupe of its type when it was introduced in 1968. The modern Monaro debuted in 2001 and quickly became one of the most sought-after vehicles in Australia.

Production of the 2004 Pontiac GTO is scheduled to begin in September 2003 at Holden's Elizabeth plant. Up to 18,000 GTOs will be produced annually.

Show car specifications

- 5.7 liter LS1 V-8 engine
- Approximately 340 horsepower @ 5200 rpm
- Approximately 360 lbs.-ft. torque @ 4000 rpm
- Rear-wheel drive
- Six-speed manual or four-speed Hydra-Matic automatic transmission
- Standard limited slip differential with traction control
- Four-wheel ventilated disc brakes with standard ABS
- 2 + 2 bucket seating with standard black leather seats with optional color-coordination to select exterior colors
- Six-disc CD player with 10-speaker sound system
- 18-inch alloy wheels