

New meaning for '75

'Performance' sells Pontiacs

BLOOMFIELD HILLS — Pontiac Motors, the division of General Motors which probably did the most to capitalize on the automotive enthusiast's desire for "performance" in the horsepower-conscious 1960s, once again emphasized performance Monday at the 1975 model introduction at Bloomfield Hills Country Club.

But the meaning of the word performance has changed. Martin J. Caserio, division general manager, is relying on performance to bring Pontiac out of the oil-boycott-inspired sales slump of 1974. Performance is what is going to make the cus-

tomers shell out the extra \$500 or more the new model will cost him. Performance should create a 32 percent increase in sales to bring the 1975 total to 750,000 units.

But performance is no longer measured in quarter mile times, cubic inch displacement or smoking tires. Today performance means a car that will start right away, improved gasoline mileage (up 12 percent this year), no stalling during the warm-up period and luxury throughout the range of car sizes.

The end of performance in the old sense is symbolized by the retiring of the "GTO" nameplate

(although Caserio hints that it may be revived again). The Tempest-based GTO of the mid '60s made Pontiac synonymous with Woodward Avenue supremacy. Painted on the Ventura quarter panels last year, the name no longer drew a long line of buyers.

PONTIAC ENDED its real participation in the last of the hot cars by stopping production of its SD465 engine. Only 295 Firebirds were built with this engine in 1973 and only 1,000 in 1975. But enthusiasts with cash were there in greater numbers than engines were available.

Caserio told the press-briefing of the nation's top auto and business writers "... with our improved lineup, especially our sub-compact Astre, our castly restyled Ventura and growing strength in the regular size car market — we see no reason that we should not realize substantial increased market penetration."

He pointed out that the current outlook for the total auto market during the 1975 model year is 10 million units, which would make it the third best year ever.

Pointing to the vastly improved used car market as a key barometer to new car sales, he said "... there does not appear to be much question at this time that sales of regular size cars are coming back

to respectable levels. We feel there are still a number of regular car buyers who aren't back in the market because of reaction to the energy problems ... but we feel a lot of these people are about ready to get back into their traditional buying patterns."

AT THE OTHER END of the product lineup, Caserio cited Pontiac's entry into the sub-compact field with the new Astre (pronounced as-tra ... meaning star in French). "With about 25 percent of all new car buyers now going for imports or domestic sub-compacts, this is a market we are glad to be in," he added. Approximately 100,000 of the Astres are expected to be sold.

The new little Pontiac is available in the popular hatchback and station wagon models and is powered by a 140 cubic inch four-cylinder overhead cam engine. A full line of options is available.

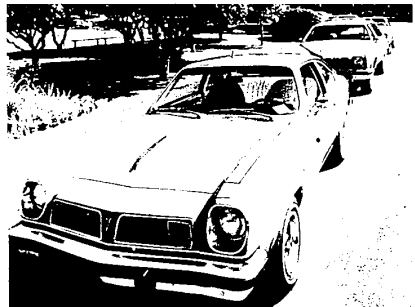
Caserio also told members of the new media that Pontiac is stepping up its program of long-range customer satisfaction. He announced the 100-Day Survey, which solicits important customer feedback on cars, dealers and service, will be mailed to all Pontiac customers 100 days after purchase of a car. Previously, only 30 percent of the new car customers received the survey.



Martin Caserio (left) shows Jack Nicklaus the 1975 line of Pontiacs at Bloomfield Hills Country Club. (Photographed by Douglas Bauman)



The redesigned Ventura is expected to increase the division's sales in the compact market by 50 percent



The Astre leads Pontiac's entry into the subcompact market

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