

# MOTOR TREND

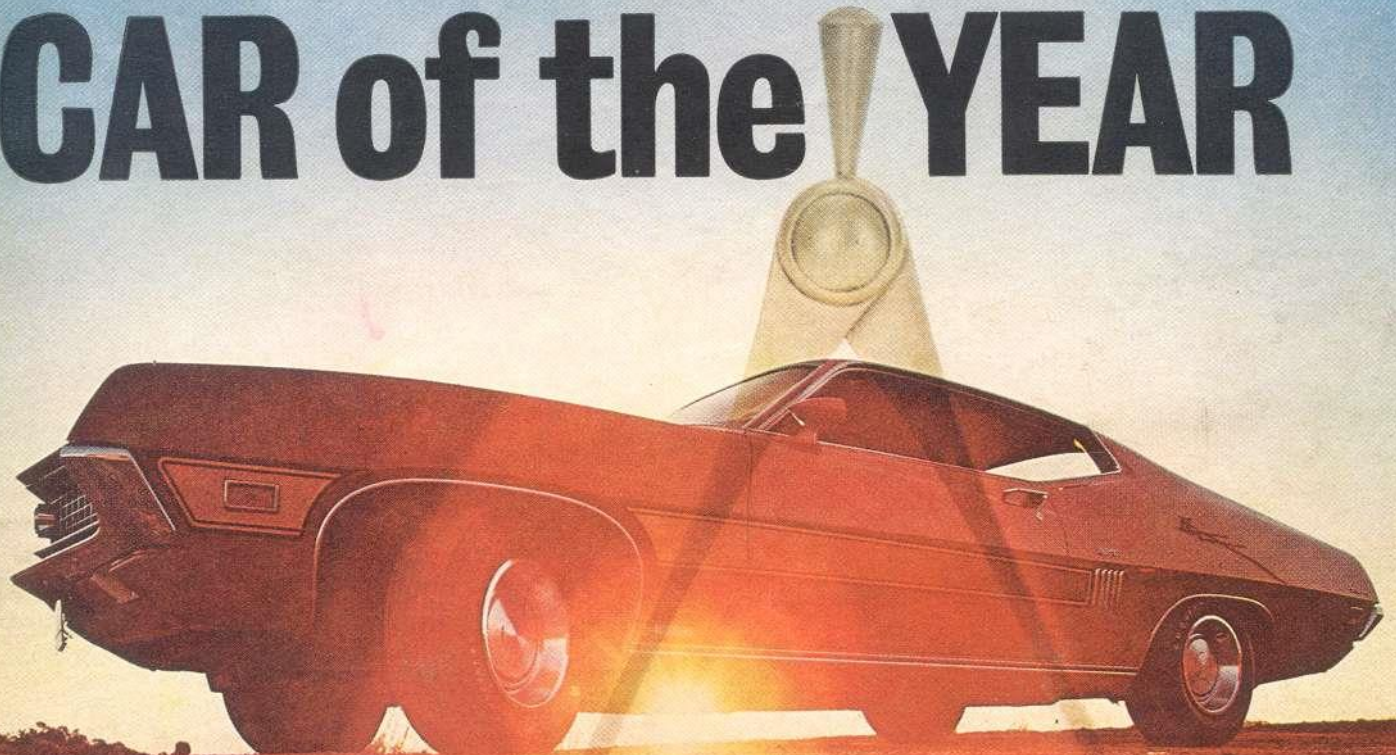
- Propane Gas for High-performance
- 70½ Pontiac Firebird Road Test
- NASCAR in the Heart of Texas
- New 350 Olds Beats Insurance Rap
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UK 4/3 Sweden KR. 3.95 Inkl. moms

50c FEBRUARY 1970



# CAR of the YEAR



Four-Car Comparison Test • How To Order: Performance, Luxury, Economy, Options, Accessories

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It was the day after the Firebird long-lead press preview; a bright, sunny day. Most of our fellow Fourth Estaters had long-since left and were, no doubt, already pouring out their hearts to their typewriters. Fred Enke and I had stayed around to test and photograph the Trans Am. We were at GM's Mesa Proving Grounds, just outside of Scottsdale, Arizona, and despite the sun, the early December wind, coming off the snow at Flagstaff, was chill. It was the kind of wind that makes your eyes water and nose run, and I welcomed any chance to get back in the car, periodically asking Fred if he was absolutely sure we didn't need any more action shots. We were out on the skid pad, a great, circular asphalt patch where you could indulge your secret desire to cut endless doughnuts without fear of running afoul of man, machine, or law officer.

"O.K.," he said offhandedly, changing the magazine on one of his Hasselblads, "put it into a couple of spins and we'll see if we can get anything good."

It was easy to oblige. The ultra-fast steering and low speed torque of the Trans Am made it writer's play to throw the car into a pattern of precise, if horizontal, Cuban Eights; but strange thoughts run through your mind when you're casually

spinning around... something to do with the inner ear I believe. We had driven out from Los Angeles in a Peugeot 504 and I began to wonder — groundlooping as I was — how it would fare under similar abuse. When Enke signalled that he had what he wanted, I immediately wheeled off the pad, jumped out of the Trans Am, jumped into the Peugeot and wheeled back onto the pad.

Now, maybe I was a little gentler with it, or maybe its speedo was overly optimistic, but somehow I was holding that little French car in a tight turn at some 15 mph above the Pontiac's breakaway speed, and just hangin' in there. Smoke was gently wisping off the Michelins, the body was tilting at a jaunty angle, giving the feeling that I was riding in some motorized British pram, but *sacre bleu*, it didn't spin. I got an instant lesson in what European handling philosophy is all about.

To be fair about it, the 504 is 1100 pounds lighter. Hmm, 1100 pounds lighter than the Trans Am Firebird and about as roomy inside as the Grand Prix. Can that be? Yes! And the trunk is 20 cubic feet big, compared to 14.3 for the GP. Of course, those sneaky Frenchmen cheat: the spare tire fits under the trunk, not in it. (Should you need the spare —

# La Vérité

The truth is . . . the Peugeot 504 is a good car.

By A.B. Shuman



though the odds of that are slim with steel-belted Michelin radials as standard equipment — there's a little handle you pull, and *voilà*, there she is, smiling up at you from underneath the bumper. You don't even have to move a single suit case or one case of wine.)

Ask the average guy what he knows about Peugeots and he'll probably mumble something about never having eaten there. Go on to explain that it's a car, not a restaurant, and he'll most likely allude to its storied engineering. Yes, they are supposed to have good engineering, but, if that's true, why doesn't anybody buy them? What we found out was that people do buy them, but only a small percentage of the relatively modest annual production is sent to the U.S. So few 504s had been seen in the States, Peugeot's massive ad campaign notwithstanding, that our test car was variously tagged as a Lancia, a Mercedes-Benz, and a Volvo. Not bad company to be in, but still rather bad for the ego. This condition may be eased shortly as they're building a new plant and there are plans to increase the number of cars coming over. There's even talk about the Kugelfischer fuel-injected version (with 103 hp, compared to 87 for the Solex-carburetted standard model) getting past the customs officials. Air conditioning is definitely on the way, at least, and the optional ZF three-speed automatic transmission is already here, both obviously aimed at American sales.

Our test car, however, had the standard BA7 four-speed gear box with column-mounted selector. This is an extremely smooth, quiet, and easy-to-shift combination, but the ratio change from third (1.41:1) to fourth (direct) seemed a little steep for the 1800cc four-banger at moderate speeds. The car was definitely happier at 80 mph than at 40. Passing situations at speeds below 50 mph generally call for a down-shift to third gear, which is easily accomplished as the box is fully synchro'd, but it's still somewhat bothersome. The basic rule of thumb with this car is: Keep the revs up. The

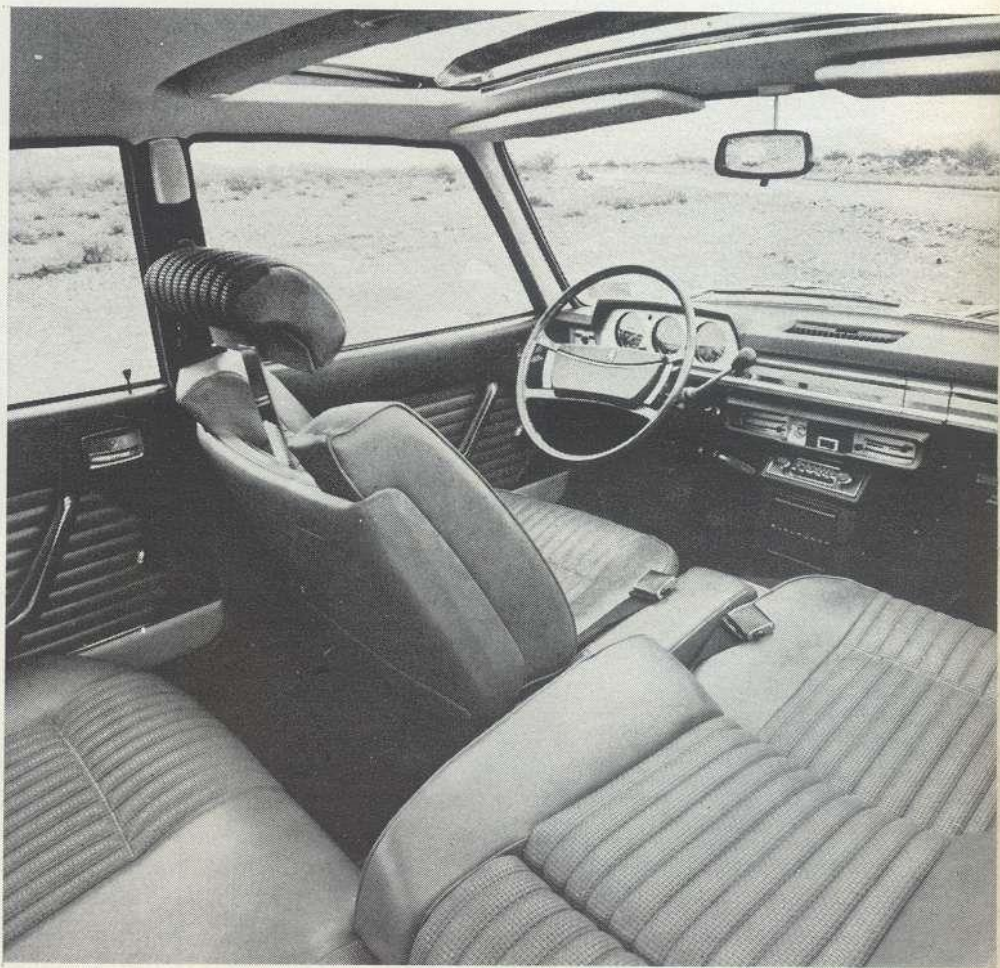
engine, which develops its power at 5500 rpm and easily buzzes to 6000, readily obliges. The only problem is that there's no tachometer to guide you in the uncharted region between bog and valve float. A nice big electric clock, but no tach. There is enough of a change in exhaust note through the rpm range to keep you apprised of the approximate situation, though, and for most this is adequate, if not precise. The source of the sonic signals is what appears at first glance to be half a Mopar 426, a demi-Hemi. It's a compact four-cylinder, inclined at a 45-degree angle. The one-barrel Solex carb bolts directly to the hemispherical chamber aluminum cylinder head via a small adapter; there is no intake manifold per se. The five main bearing crank moves the pistons up and down 3.2 inches through the 3.3-inch bores, for a swept volume just shy of 110 cubic inches. The block is cast iron and the wet sleeve cylinder liners are removable. They, along with almost everything but the head and crank, are carried over from the 1618cc 404 engine.

While you're messing around under the bonnet (chapeau?), you'll also notice the thermostatically-controlled, electrically driven cooling fan. It is actuated only when the coolant temperature is between 175 and 195 degrees F. We don't know if the thing ever gets to turn on, as the engine seems to be particularly cold-blooded. In sustained high-speed cross-desert driving and bumper-to-bumper in-town crawling, the temperature indicator never got above the normal range, whatever that might be — there are no numerical benchmarks. [I wonder if Consumers Union will let us say that?] Also in the engine compartment you'll find the handy tool set, a quaint throwback to the time when owners would tinker with their cars before calling the auto club.

The aforementioned interior roominess reflects the people-package school of design. Up front there are two big, fully adjustable buckets. They slide fore and aft to accommodate

*continued*

photography: Fred Enke



Here, monsieur, is the Peugeot 504. Please note the stainless steel exterior trim, monocoque construction and doors that swing open more than 85°. The interior, you will note, is quite spacious for a vehicle on a 108-inch wheelbase and the driver's view panoramic, with 331° of all-around visibility.

DeGaulles, and the backs swing through almost 90 degrees, for whatever grand designs the owner may have. Meanwhile, overhead there's a sliding sun roof that's standard equipment. The rear seat capaciousness and legroom is unbelievable in light of the 108-inch wheelbase — the same as the Firebird, 'Cuda, Challenger, Mustang, Valiant, Duster, etc., etc. A man could get lost back there. They've even got an armrest that folds down like a padded bundling board. So much for fun and games. The mandatory head restraints are part of the front seat package and stow away neatly should you be a rebel or come up barber-chair style if you're a complier. The upholstery, like everything these days, is some kind of amorphous plastic, molded into what looks breathable but isn't. Oh well, you can always pick up a ventilated seat cushion from J. C. Whitney.

Speaking of ventilation, the 504's got an elaborate system of cooling and heating. They've even got air coming out of the door handles. Actually, the draftiness and wind noise are about the two biggest complaints we had with the car. If you intend to carry on a conversation at speeds above 60, it's best to bring along a Rudy Vallee megaphone, otherwise you may never get your point across. Just about none of the racket comes from the engine or drivetrain and virtually no road noise is conducted to the passenger compartment, though exhaust resonance becomes noticeable above 70 mph. It's just about all pure wind noise; but while the gale howls about you, you're nice and comfy inside. So, what does it matter, just turn up the Blaupunkt another notch.

Cornering and handling are very fine, inspiring you to emulate Kirk Douglas winning the *Mille Miglia*, as seen in "The Racers" on the late show. Should you end up drafting a little too closely, the excellent power-assisted four-wheel Girling discs will slow you like a LEM retro, unless you lock them. The suspension is independent all the way around, with MacPherson strut-type (I-beam section, triangular lower control arms, coil springs and telescoping shocks) up front, swing axles and trailing arms at the rear. Healthy anti-roll bars are used at both ends and the rack and pinion steering makes for a turning circle under 36 feet in diameter. The steering effort is quite light at speed, where we found that when left to its own devices the 504 flies straight and level "hands off." In the parking lot environment, it takes little extra effort to wheel her around. At any speed it goes where you point it, but, like we said before, everything's better at 80 mph. Except the police, of course.

The Peugeot 504 is not perfect, but what shortcomings it has are chiefly in detailing: the concept and design are very sound. U.S. manufacturers would do well to take a long, hard look at it. /MT



PEUGEOT 504

Engine	OHV Four
Bore & Stroke	3.3 in. x 3.2 in.
Displacement	1796cc/109.8 cu. in.
Max. horsepower	87 @ 5500 rpm
Max. torque	108.5 lbs-ft @ 3000 rpm
Compression ratio	8.35:1
Carburetion	1-bbl Solex
Main bearings	5
Transmission	4-speed manual
Final drive ratio	3.90:1
Steering type	rack & pinion
Steering ratio	22.2:1
Turning diameter (curb-to-curb)	35.9 ft.
Tire size	175x14
Brakes	4-wheel power disc
Front suspension	Independent/McPherson strut with coil springs
Rear suspension	Independent/trailing arms with coil springs
Body/Frame construction	Monocoque body
Wheelbase	108 inches
Track, Front/Rear	56½ inches/53½ inches
Curb weight	2650 lbs.

Performance (Two aboard)

0-30	4.2 seconds
0-45	8.2 seconds
0-60	14.2 seconds
0-75	24.4 seconds
Standing start ¼-mile	19.2 secs @ 69.3 mph
40-60	8.0 seconds
50-70	12.2 seconds
Speeds in gears at shift points	
1st	31 mph @ 6000 rpm
2nd	53 mph @ 6000 rpm
3rd	80 mph @ 6000 rpm
4th	95 mph @ 5150 rpm

Speedometer error

Actual	Indicated
30 mph	31 mph
45 mph	47 mph
50 mph	52 mph
60 mph	62 mph
70 mph	72 mph
80 mph	82 mph

Stopping distances (panic stops)

From 30 mph	30 feet
From 60 mph	141 feet
Braking stability	good
Gas mileage	19.5-21.1 mpg (premium fuel)
List price (West Coast)	\$3295.00
Price as tested	\$3540.86



With fully independent suspension and large diameter anti-sway bars front and rear, the 504 handles quite well. The steering is neutral, the turning effort light and the car goes where you point it. What more could a fellow ask for?

# TURIN

Don't kid yourself,  
the trick cars still  
come from Italy

