

My GTO By Tod Leible



My fascination with cars started around 1973 when my father purchased a 1971 Dodge Challenger RT, a 383 magnum that literally shook the ground when it idled. I spent hours in the garage with my dad fetching tools and asking him thousands of questions and soon realized I was hooked! I can't even begin to tell all the good times we had in that car and smiles that were wiped from many faces when the stoplight turned green. He never really did any mods to the car other than keeping it looking new.

In 1979 he sold the Challenger and that was the end of my father's muscle car era. It saddened me since I was turning 16 the following year, but not all was lost. After working at McDonalds and saving my \$\$\$ I bought a 1969 Mustang Fastback black on black with a 351 Windsor....oh and did I mention it was a barn find with 4 flat tires and a dead battery in Brazeau, MO (near Perryville). So after spending several hundred dollars just to get it back to St Louis it marked the beginning of my own era in muscle cars and like most of my friends they too were pretty much into muscle cars.

I remember the day my buddy pulled up in front of my house in his newly acquired car, a 1969 GTO Carousel Red with a 400HO engine and the Ram Air hood, this thing was a beast, not all the fenders were strait and the paint had seen better days but these were the cars we could afford and he also was the one friend that I could never beat in a drag race but I certainly enjoyed trying and also cruising in it. To this day I'm sure there's still some tire rubber on Midland Blvd from all the drag races in my teenage years.

Before I knew it I had graduated high school, got married and started family thus suspending my muscle car days. Today I have 2 children, my son Joel 25 who is stationed at Dyess AFB in Abilene TX and my Daughter Lauren 19 in college currently living in Kirksville, MO. Ok I got a bit sidetracked there so I think it was back in 2005 I took a trip to Detroit to visit my brother, I'm standing outside the airport waiting to be picked up and he comes pulling up in a 2005 TR M6 GTO, I immediately start asking him about the car, he gave me little background on car and at that point I just wanted my turn behind the wheel, Soon after I got my opportunity to take it for a spin and was very impressed and would have like to get one but at the time the budget just didn't allow it but I still I knew I was going to give it serious considerations when the budget did allow for a new toy which brings us to today.

I acquired the GTO from a young man that realized that making the car payment, paying for premium unleaded and maintenance costs were way beyond what he signed on for thus putting the car for sale after only 4 months of ownership, when I located the car it had taken a pretty good beating and was wearing 3 different shoes.....the motor was strong but the rest of the car suffered from all the classic problems everyone faces with late model GTO ownership but I knew for the right price, it's all repairable. After some intense negotiations we agreed on a price and finally the day came for me to pick up the car and even though it drove pretty poorly the power and torque seem to make all the other problems seem minuscule.

I've slowly been putting it back together starting with tires & tie rod ends both of which were so bad that the car wouldn't pass inspection. After getting the car to pass and driving it for a while I started to notice little things like only one wheel applying power to the ground, this happened randomly so I decided it was time to start looking for the fix, after researching I decided to go with the Eaton Truetrac and the stock gears 3.42's and all new bearing and seals and a Lovells Diff insert. I would like to mention that if you do rebuild one, for the pinion seal and axle seals USE GM's not the aftermarket ones.

I then moved on to the shifter, clutch and transmission, So one day I'm driving home from work and decided to take the back roads home....why? I can't tell you but I'm certainly glad I did because a shift from 3rd to 4th broke the shifter handle off in my hand, now I'm stuck in 4th gear and look up and see a transmission shop and immediately pull in. After having some laughs at my expense as to what the look on my face must have been as I'm going down the road looking at the broken shifter in my hand. In the end they were nice enough to engineer a temporary shifter for free so that I can get home. Now there's a B&M shifter installed and so far its works fine. I then decided it was time for a new clutch and have the transmission freshened up. I had a Centerforce DFX clutch & Flywheel installed and well....since you're there change out the slave cylinder and pilot bearing, all new hydraulic & lines and a speed bleeder so it's now a one man job.

Next on the list..... The suspension, all I can say is after you put on an aftermarket kit like Lovells eliminator kit you'll question how you were able to drive such an ill handling car for so long. I have the Eliminator kit stock height, poly strut mounts and bearing and adjustable radius rod bushings and I'm extremely pleased with the results.

I then starting thinking I wanted a catback system, I liked the stock sound ok but I wanted something slightly more aggressive and something to play well with headers when that day comes. So one day I'm trolling eBay and see a 3" Magnaflow performance exhaust listed at as buy it now or best offer, now this is where I learned a valuable lesson about eBay, When you make a best offer and the seller accepts YOU OWN IT! The good news is that my offer was much less so much so that when it was accepted I started to think I just bought a huge box of air but everything worked out great. The last item installed was the SvedeSpeed OTRCIA, this was actually a fun install. I'm not sure that it provides better actual airflow than say a K&N but I like the appearance, also if you break out your IAT sensor from the MAF it gives more accurate readings when relocated into the SS Intake.

Overall I have a pretty good start on getting it where I want it.....my next item on the to do list is a tune. Then it's time to save for more goodies.



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