

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1971 Pontiac LeMans Restoration Guide

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1971 Pontiac LeMans Restoration Guide

Model Years 1971

Model	Pontiac LeMans — now the full intermediate series
Wheelbase	112 in (two-door); 116 in (four-door)
Engines	250 six; 350; 400; 455 (325 hp); 455 HO (335 hp)
Transmissions	3-speed manual; Muncie 4-speed; TH350 / TH400 automatics
Identity	Tempest retired; every intermediate is a LeMans or T-37; compression drops line-wide

Every specification in this guide was checked against factory literature, marque references, period road tests, and documented survivor vehicles. Where sources disagree or the record is silent, this guide says so rather than guessing.

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1. What this guide is — and is not

This is a single-year guide. It covers model year 1971 only. Where a neighbouring year differs, the difference is stated as a difference — the other year's parts, ratings and trim are never silently borrowed. Shared platform engineering is shared honestly; the specification table, the year-change register and the finishes in this guide are this year's own.



2. The year in brief

For 1971 Pontiac retired the Tempest name and promoted LeMans to full-series status: every Pontiac intermediate was now a LeMans-family car, with the low-priced T-37 (the former Tempest) at the bottom, in two- and four-door sedans and a hardtop coupe, and the GT-37 package continuing on T-37 two-doors. Styling was facelifted — divided grille, updated bumpers — and the engineering story of the year is compression: every engine was detuned to lower ratios so the range could run on regular, low-lead or unleaded fuel, one year before the industry moved to net ratings.

The big news for LeMans buyers was at the top of the sheet: the 455, offered only on the GTO in 1970, became available across the intermediates — as a 325 hp four-barrel and as the 455 HO at 335 hp. The combination this creates at the bottom of the range is the stuff of legend: a T-37 with the 455 HO is one of the great sleeper builds of the era — eleven were built, four automatic and seven manual, per the documented record — but note carefully that those eleven are T-37s, and this LeMans guide claims them for the LeMans family story, not for any individual car's badge. PHS documentation decides every such claim.

3. Year-change register

Read this register before ordering anything. It is the difference between a 1971 car and a car that merely looks like one from across the street.

Item	1970	This year (1971)
Series map	Tempest / LeMans / LeMans Sport / GTO	LeMans is the series; T-37 at the bottom; GTO still separate
Compression	High-compression era ends (1970)	Lowered across the range for low-lead/unleaded fuel
455 availability	GTO only (1970)	Across the intermediates: 325 hp and 455 HO 335 hp
Styling	1970 face	Facelift: divided grille, bumper revisions
Ratings basis	Gross	Gross (net era begins 1972) — compression, not measurement, drives the drops

4. Specification table — 1971

Item	Specification
Wheelbase	112 in (2-dr); 116 in (4-dr)
Engines	250 six; 350 V8; 400 V8; 455 V8 325 hp; 455 HO 335 hp (all gross)
Transmissions	3-speed manual; Muncie 4-speed; TH350; TH400
Axles	10-bolt (small V8); 12-bolt (400/455); Safe-T-Track optional
Brakes	9.5-in drums standard; front discs optional

5. Numbers, tags and identity

- 1971 identity starts from the PHS invoice more than any prior year: with LeMans covering the whole range, the same badge spans a six-cylinder T-37 and a 455 HO car, and only the paperwork separates their values.



- Compression is the year's mechanical fingerprint: verify the engine's specification against 1971 codes — a high-compression 1970-spec engine in a 1971 car is a rebuild choice someone made, not a factory build.
- The eleven 455 HO T-37s are the most-cloned fact in this guide's family. Any such claim without PHS papers is a story, priced accordingly.

6. Engines and transmissions

- **250 six / 350 / 400.** Carried over in architecture, retuned in compression for the new fuel reality — the specification change is inside the engine, which is why code verification matters.
- **455 V8.** 325 hp four-barrel, newly available line-wide.
- **455 HO.** 335 hp — the round-port HO is the performance ceiling of the LeMans family for 1971 and the engine around which the T-37 legend formed.
- TH400 behind the big engines, TH350 behind the small V8s; Safe-T-Track the axle option that matters.

7. Paint, trim and finishes

The divided-grille facelift is 1971's visual signature. Interiors span the widest range yet under one nameplate — T-37 austerity to LeMans Sport richness — so the trim code and the PHS packet, not the badge, dictate the upholstery order.

8. Rust and inspection map

The A-body map applies. Low-compression engines forgive fuel; they do not forgive the cowl leak. Inspect in the standard order.

- Cowl and lower windshield channel — the A-body's signature leak, rotting the front floor pans from above.
- Lower front fenders and the doors' lower skins, especially at the rear corners.
- Rear quarter arches, wheelhouses and the trunk floor with its extensions — check from inside the trunk with a light.
- Frame rails at the rear kick-up and at the body mounts; convertible frames deserve a straightness check as well as a rust check.
- Battery tray and the core support beneath it; the tray's acid history eats the support first.
- Convertible top well and the rear seat bulkhead on open cars.

9. Restoration priorities for this year

- PHS first — the broader the LeMans umbrella, the more the invoice is the car.
- Restore the year's low-compression specification as built; 'correcting' it to 1970 tune is a modification, not a restoration.
- 455 HO claims: documentation or discount — there is no third option.
- Keep T-37 and LeMans content in their own lanes; the family story is shared, the cars are not interchangeable.