Oldsmobile Toronado

The Oldsmobile Toronado is one of the cars that have carved out a niche in the history of American car making due to its technological innovation. Formally, it was a large four-seat coupe that was not trying excessively hard to be a sports car; aesthetically, it broke a few molds but it wasn't unusual in a period of great creativity. The most surprising thing, however, was that it was the first front-wheel-drive American car since the 1937 Cord 810.



In the middle of the 1960s, General Motors' brands had well-defined roles. Chevrolet was the large-size brand, and people who wanted slightly sportier models bought a Pontiac. Cadillac was the luxury brand, and for conservative customers who didn't have the money to buy a Cadillac or who wanted to drive an elegant but less ostentatious car, there was Buick. But General Motors had a fifth brand, Oldsmobile. Midway between Chevrolet and Pontiac, Oldsmobile was known as the engineers' brand, the one that provided the group with the principal innovations and which always put brilliant ideas on the table. In 1965 it surprised everybody with the Toronado, an elegant four-seat coupe whose main innovation was that it was a front-wheel-drive car, the first in the American industry since the 1937 Cord 810.

A V8 ENGINE, OF COURSE

With a look derived from an earlier abandoned project called the Flame Red Car by the stylist David North, the Toronado had

The Oldsmobile Toronado was one of the most original cars made by the American car industry in the period. Its retractable headlights characterized the front.





The 1967 car had lost the slots above the headlights and it had a different mesh on the front grille.

front-wheel drive, but it kept the V8 engine, the traditional one in the big American coupes, placed longitudinally. The engine had 7 liters of cylinder capacity, a traditional 90° V-angle, and it delivered 385 SAE gross hp. It was connected to a Hydramatic three-speed automatic gearbox, habitual in many General Motors models. The engineers, however, had to invert the position of the gearbox and the torque converter so that instead of pointing toward the rear axle it pointed toward the front one. Although the Toronado was very large – almost five meters long (16ft) and more than two tons of empty weight – its performance was notable: acceleration from 0 to 100 km/h (0-60mph) in 8.1 seconds and a top speed of more than 220 km/h (136mph).
The structure of the chassis was quite peculiar. It had a front subframe mounted on a ladder frame chassis that ended in the middle of the car, just where a monocoque structure began. The suspension was also unusual, with torsion bars on the front drive axle and leaf springs on the rear axle instead of the springs that the brand's other models used in that period.

A VERY BOLD LOOK

The Toronado sold well, but without ever becoming a major success. And there was no shortage of reasons for this.



The fastback rear had enormous taillights, only separated by the license plate.

The front, characterized by a very low grille with retractable headlights just above it and a completely flat hood, was inspired precisely on the Cord 810, which was the brand's last model before its disappearance in the period before World War II. Its profile was notable for its hardtop concept, that is, with no B pillar or door frames, while the rear end was fastback, with a Kammback rear end where the huge taillights were housed that stretched across the entire width of the car, except for the small space left for the license plate. The wheel rims also had a characteristic design, with a sort of exterior cap with air intakes



In this picture of the dashboard you can see the peculiar barrel speedometer placed horizontally.

The Toronado's elegance was its main exterior characteristic. The mechanics were its greatest distinguishing feature.

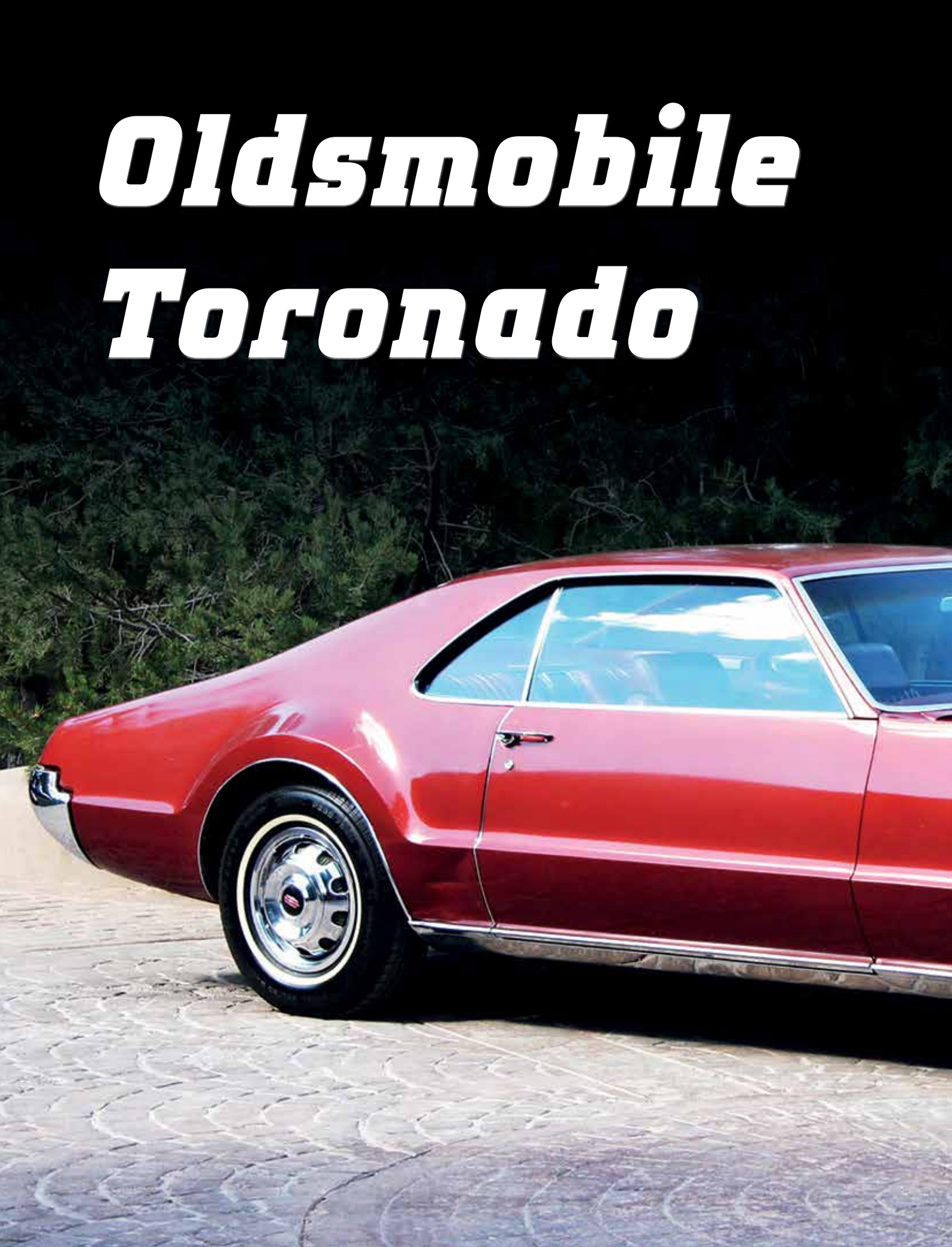


to cool the brakes. In the interior, the instruments were concentrated behind the steering wheel, with a barrel speedometer in a horizontal position, numerous dials and the gearshift on the steering column. The car was a model for five passengers with an unusual 3+2 configuration. As the front seat was a bench without armrests it could seat three occupants. In the back, a speaker of the sound system, just in the middle of the seat, made it complicated for a third person to sit there. Nothing in the Toronado was conventional.

EVOLUTION

Despite the fact that some skeptics considered that front-wheel drive was unsuitable for such a large car, the Toronado performed better dynamically than many of its competitors. And more so when, in 1967, together with a slight redesign that eliminated the retractable headlights, the brand offered the possibility of fitting disc brakes on the front axle and firmer suspension. Designed for long journeys and for relaxed driving in silence on the highway, the Toronado nevertheless had a sports car's temperament, especially when conditions got tricky. On wet surfaces, for example, it was easier to drive and more effective than any rear-wheel-drive muscle car. After the first generation, which was on sale until 1970, the brand launched three more, but the car lost the initial originality and mutated toward a more luxurious vehicle with fewer sports connotations. The last Toronado ceased production in 1992.

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Toronado
BY OLDSMOBILE

Technical sheet

Engine:	Front longitudinal
Type:	Gasoline V8
Cylinder capacity:	6,964 cc
Power:	385 hp SAE Gross at 4,800 rpm
Maximum torque:	644 Nm at 3,200 rpm
Transmission:	To front axle
Gearbox:	Three-speed automatic
Front suspension:	By torsion bar
Rear suspension:	Rigid axle with leaf springs
Brakes:	Front and rear, drum
Wheels:	8.85 tires on 15" wheel rims
Length:	5.36 m (17.6ft)
Width:	1.99 m (6.5ft)
Height:	1.34 m (4.4ft)
Wheelbase:	3.02 m (9.9ft)
Empty weight:	2,072 kg (4,568lb)
Fuel tank capacity:	91 l (96.15qt)
Top speed:	220 km/h (136.7mph)
Acceleration 0-100 km/h (0-60mph):	8.1 s