

As GM's performance division Pontiac's job is to bring fun and excitement back to the corporate lineup. So, how's it going? Getting better I'd say. The two models you see here deliver loads of driving pleasure.

The Solstice offers much for enthusiasts to love, starting with its striking design. Deliciously curvaceous, focus on any line you like and it's pleasing to the eye. Viewed as a whole, the Solstice possesses a bold, aggressive stance.

Powered by a 2.4L 4-cylinder engine with 177 horsepower, the Solstice is quick enough to be satisfying. Power builds in a linear fashion, so winding it out to redline pays few dividends. Low- and mid-range power is this engine's forte and that offers good performance in the type of driving most of us do. Hungering for more power? Be patient and you'll see a 250 horsepower turbo version appear mid-year.

Aimed squarely at the Mazda Miata (now MX5) in size, power and price, the Solstice is one of the rare shorter convertibles that look great with the top up. Raising and lowering the top is not difficult but does require getting out of the car. With top up, trunk space is slight. Top down, miniscule. Small, soft duffle bags only—any suitcase will just have to go on your *paramour's* lap.

Seats are comfortable with great bolsters to hold you in place. The driver's seat, though, seriously needs height adjustment. Several women who had fallen in love at first sight found the seat too low to feel confident.

Bottom line? Those who enjoy the traditional sports car top-down-motoring experience will love the Solstice. Responsive steering, short, easy throws on the 5-speed stick and a light, progressive clutch made for simply joyful work on winding mountain roads, and the thing sticks like glue around sharp corners, thanks to meaty 245/45x18 Goodyears. Yes, this is a real sports



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL COONEY

Pontiac Solstice and G6 GTP Coupe Help! I'm having too much fun!

car, not some cute pretender.

Fuel economy is good too, if you take it easy. On one drive into local mountains and back I restrained myself and got 29.2 mpg. A heavy right foot, though, can quickly send mileage into the low teens. Your choice.

Want something sporty in the



same price range but need to carry four? Pontiac's new front-drive G6 GTP Coupe is another capable driver's car. With a smooth, great sounding 240 hp V6 and 6-speed stick (4-speed auto is available), this slick two-door is reminiscent of the high-performance fastbacks of the late '60s and early '70s, albeit two cylinders short.

With the 6-speed, it's easily as quick as most muscle cars of yesteryear (0 – 60 in 6.2 seconds according to *Motor Trend*), and with its sleek fastback even looks the part. Furthermore, with grippy 225/50x18

tires attached to a slightly firmed-up suspension, it will run rings around olden-days GTOs and Firebirds on winding roads while getting about twice the fuel economy. That's 40 years of progress for you.

Inside, the sporty feel continues with comfortable perforated leather seats including front seat heaters, easy-to-read red-backlit instruments plus generous rear seat legroom to finish off a highly attractive package.

Pontiac's Solstice, loaded with options, totaled \$25,000 including destination. The G6 GTP Coupe starts at about \$24,000, and this loaded tester totaled \$28,310. The Solstice is EPA-rated at 20-city, 28-highway mpg and I averaged 21.5 mpg. This G6 GTP Coupe is rated 18-city, 29-highway, and I got 20 mpg.

With these two Pontiacs you get to pick your flavor of fun. Nimble sports car or sporting 4-seater, both offer considerable driving pleasure and look good doing it. I expected the Solstice to be huge fun (it was) but was surprised by the GTP. It was satisfying too, and proved that Pontiac is on track in fulfilling its mission. ⚡

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