



ABOVE: DESPITE THE SMOG-MOTOR STRAIGHT-SIX, IT STILL PROVIDES MORE THAN ENOUGH TORQUE TO SPIN THE WHEELS WHEN REQUIRED!

was no easy task; in fact the body of the Pacer had to be widened by six inches. Later AMC would use this as a plus point in advertising, saying 'If you want to ride like a Pacer, you've got to be wide like a Pacer'.

In practice, the wideness of the Pacer did give it an amazing ride, and the width – which was actually about the same as a Cadillac – meant interior cabin space that was very good for a compact. AMC also added an interesting 'safety feature', which amazes people to this day: the passenger door is four inches longer than the driver's. The idea was that if it were easier to get into the back from the pavement, you would be safe from traffic. Fair enough, I suppose.

Initially at least, the Pacer was a reasonable success story for AMC, with 145,528 cars being sold in the first year. Despite it being quite heavily criticised by the press, many American buyers seemed to like the Pacer for its nonconformist looks. However, the novelty wore off quickly and sales went downhill rapidly. The tide was turning, and increasing numbers of Americans were mocking rather than praising the oddball Pacer.

The Pacer's relative lack of power didn't help, thanks to its engine being strangled for economy and emissions. For the 1976 model year, a 120hp 4.2-litre High Output engine with bags of torque was offered as an option, but proved too thirsty for the performance it gave, especially when compared with Japanese imports that were by then prolific. Later, for the 1978 model year, a 5.0-litre V8 was offered, but this was too late in the day to save the Pacer – the 'buzz' had long since worn off. After 280,000 units had been produced, the last Pacer finally rolled off the line in 1980.

Lee Garrison, the original owner of the amazing Pacer you see here, bought this car new back in 1976, via an AMC dealer in Beverly

Hills, California. And it's thanks to our Mr Garrison's eccentric buying habits that this is now one of the most fascinating Pacers you're ever likely to come across. You see, the car was ordered with so many factory options that he could quite easily have bought a Cadillac for the same money. It's amazing what some people would do back then to save on fuel...

Back in 1976, AMC offered two Pacer models: the basic Pacer X and the D/L, which stood for Distinctive and Luxurious. This particular example is a D/L, coming with numerous equipment gains over the X. Over and above the D/L pack, at the time of ordering the car Lee Garrison added virtually every possible factory option available. The list included air conditioning, tinted windows all round, alloy-style wheel trims, a vinyl roof, quarter light windows, a heated rear window, rear wash-wipe, roof rack and an exterior trim pack – which comprised rubbing strips, over-riders and bumper trims, along with stainless brightwork on the wheel arches and doors.

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Mechanical options ordered by Garrison included the High Output 4.2-litre engine and an uprated suspension package with stiffer springs and a front anti-roll bar. (Having driven this particular car, we'd hate to think what a Pacer without the suspension pack drives like!) This Pacer also came with power disc brakes, limited slip differential, sports automatic transmission with column change, overdrive, power

