

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 3  
MAY-JUNE 2023

**FINAL CHALLENGERS  
F-150 RAPTOR R V8  
TWO COMPARO EVENTS  
AUCTION RESULTS  
DEATH VALLEY OVERLAND  
COPPER QUEEN HOTEL  
ATLIS BECOMES NXU, INC.  
BOAT & BIKE NEWS  
AND MUCH MORE!**

*DODGE CHALLENGER R/T SCAT PACK WIDEBODY  
SHAKEDOWN "LAST CALL" SPECIAL EDITION*

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS



# YOU'RE GONNA MISS ME WHEN I'M GONE

BY JOE SAGE

**DODGE** has done a great job keeping the fires lit through the 21st century to date, honing its popular performance portfolio in particular, including the two-door Dodge Challenger coupe lineup, itself embedded in admirable and desirable Detroit iron roots going back more than half a century. Through a combination of the company's wider new ownership as part of Stellantis, along with government mandates of the moment (both here and in other international markets that affect the entire industry), this is all about to change. Or evolve, rather (see sidebar on last page of this feature).

What you've known and loved so well is appropriately going out with a roar. Prominent in this effort are the "Last Call" series of special editions, seven total, introduced from late last summer through now (also see sidebar). Of those, the one we're driving here was the first "Last Call" introduced—Challenger Shakedown, for short, based on the R/T Scat Pack (regular or Widebody).

We've long admired the Dodge lineup's price stair-stepping—it's remarkable what they do, offering such a variety of vehicles, within a relatively narrow price range, and the ways they distin-

guish each and keep them from overlapping are all very carefully calculated. As such, the R/T Scat Pack has always occupied a very sweet spot, with a 372-hp 345-cu.in. V8 at a midrange price. Adding Widebody, originally available only on pricier dedicated models, is a great shot in the arm, while still totaling some \$20 grand less expensive than the least expensive of the next-up SRT Hellcats. This miracle continues with the Shakedown "Last Call," juiced up to 485 hp with an SRT HEMI® 392 V8 and all that comes with it, yet still several thousand dollars less than the Hellcat starting point.

More is always more, while it's always debatable whether that is better, more desirable or just irresistible once you start shopping. But a very strong case is made for this Goldilocks build, espe-

cially amped up as a Shakedown and—in our case—also a Widebody.

In addition to its highly engineered engine (see specifications), the Shakedown includes other performance tweaks—cold-air-grabbing Mopar Shaker hood and intake, 20-by-11 Carbon Black Warp Speed wheels (on the Widebody) and red six-piston Brembo brakes. It's also immediately recognizable by a range of styling details—a Shaker underhood decal as well as a "Last Call" underhood plaque (as on the whole series), Shakedown spoiler graphic, stripes with red accent, a black Challenger grille badge, special R/T grille badge, red "392" fender graphics, an instrument panel Shakedown badge, premium black nappa/alcantara seats, red seatbelts and red stitching throughout. And it bears a variety of other features from the Plus Group, Technology Group, Navigation, Carbon/Suede and R/T Scat Pack Dynamics packages.

## FULL OF LIFE

The car sits in a sweet spot—equal parts low key and over the top. One thing you can't forget, as you gaze over its shaker hood is that you are showing off (though this does not create as much shaking as the old classics). At the same time, the car's two paints—Destroyer Grey for the standard build or Pitch Black for the Widebody—keep things bold yet toned down. The Widebody's solid

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## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY .....	Brampton Assembly, Ontario
ENGINE .....	SRT HEMI MDS 392 V8 (6.4L) 16v pushrod OHV, sodium-filled exhaust & hollow stem intake valves, 16 conventional lifters w roller tips, sequential multiport electronic returnless injection w fuel saver mode, deep-skirt cast iron block w cross-bolted main bearing caps, alum alloy heads w hemispherical combustion chambers
HP/TORQUE .....	485 hp / 475 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO .....	10.9:1
TRANSMISSION .....	TorqueFlite 8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN .....	RWD
SUSPENSION .....	F: Indep short-and long-arm w high upper A arm, lateral & diagonal lower links, Bilstein adaptive damping suspension (ADS) shocks, 34mm stblzr bar; R: five-link indep, Bilstein ADS, isolated suspension cradle, 22mm stblzr bar; SRT-tuned three-mode auto-sport-track
STEERING .....	elec pwr w multi-mode assist
BRAKES .....	Brembo high performance; F: 14.2x1.26 vented, 4-piston fixed monoblock aluminum; R: 13.8x1.10 vented, 4-piston fixed w aluminum housing
WHEELS .....	20x11 Carbon Black Warp-Speed
TIRES .....	305/35ZR20 Pirelli A/S Performance
LENGTH / WHEELBASE .....	197.5 / 116.0 in
GROUND CLEARANCE .....	5.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE .....	(Widebody) 38.7 ft
HEADROOM (F/R) .....	39.3 / 37.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R) .....	42.0 / 33.1 in
CARGO CAPACITY .....	16.2 cu.ft
WEIGHT / DISTRIB .....	4303 lb / 55/45 %
FUEL / CAPACITY .....	prem 91 oct unl / 18.5 gal
MPG .....	15/24/18 (city/hwy/comb)

**BASE PRICE (R/T Scat Pack Widebody) .....\$52,935**

### SHAKEDOWN SPECIAL EDITION PACKAGE:

Shakedown stripes and accents incl red 392 fender graphics, spoiler graphic & stripe w red accent, red Brembo brake calipers, instrument panel badge, red stitching on alcantara seats, 20x11 Carbon Black Warp-Speed wheels and Pirelli A/S performance tires .....2595

**8-SPD AUTOMATIC** .....1595

### PLUS PACKAGE:

heated power mirrors w manual fold, HID headlamps, locking lug nuts, premium stitch dash panel, alcantara/nappa seats w Scat Pack logo.....3485

### CARBON/SUEDE INTERIOR PACKAGE:

real carbon fiber interior accents, suede headliner .....1595

### AUDIO: Harman Kardon audio group

w subwoofer, Uconnect 4C NAV .....1795

### UCONNECT 4C NAVIGATION

.....995

### MOPAR HOOD PIN KIT

.....425

### SRT PERFORMANCE SPOILER

.....995

### DESTINATION CHARGE

.....1595

**TOTAL\*** .....**\$68,010**

\*(Note: no vehicle Monroney sticker provided; individual feature and package pricing based on current available information and details. See pricing chart, subject to change.)

## 2023 DODGE CHALLENGER LINEUP

	AWD	RWD
SXT .....	\$33,545	\$30,545
GT .....	37,240	33,940
R/T .....		39,480
R/T Scat Pack .....		46,940
R/T Scat Pack Widebody .....		▼ 52,935
SRT Hellcat Jailbreak .....		72,130
SRT Hellcat Widebody Jailbreak .....		78,530
SRT Hellcat Redeye Jailbreak .....		80,735
SRT Hellcat Redeye Widebody Jailbreak .....		87,135
SRT Super Stock .....		89,140

(Latest pricing, subject to change.)



stance is a winner with purpose, housing an extra-wide staggered tire set, all the better to grip and grin.

Power is immediate. Drive modes never crossed our mind—this car is fabulous right out of the box. Brakes are equally fantastic. Rock solid power, rock solid brakes. The transmission is an automatic, but delivers the strong and consistent strength that shifting fans would expect from a manual, holding its power stem to stern through any variety of surface street shifts and turns—a locked-in drivetrain with no loss no hesitation. A magnificent beast. Put it all together, and once you fire it up, you simply can't put it back down.

#### LONG DRIVE NORTH

While chassis and steering are tops, we wondered at first whether the ultra-wide tires might work against us in wet conditions. Lo and behold, it started to rain just a little bit. We switched on the intermittent wipers, which also reflect the car's firm and decisive approach to build and interface overall, with distinct clicks through the range—tactile and satisfying, as well as useful.

We always seem to keep one eye on our vehicle schedule and the other on the weather map, knowing the mountain highways running north out of the Valley are great for a road car, while the potential for high country snow might offer some additional adventure. In the interest of raw performance, we headed up the Beeline Highway as the rain picked up. With snow predicted at any time as we gained elevation, we figured we'd be turning around at some point. But we just couldn't. And didn't need to.

It was a fantastic drive. We went all the way to Payson, cruised around town as the rain turned to snow, grabbed a bite and headed back down. (Bonus: not only did the heated seats come on by themselves, so did the heated steering wheel, and best of all, unlike pretty much any other we've driven, it has no cold spots. Nice!) As for our drive through the curves and climbs at highway speeds in slick conditions—from relatively light flurries, to a little spit of rain and on through the occasional downpour—our powerful beast remained smooth and solid as it devoured it all. This was a made-to-order day full of Arizona's highly varied terrain and weather, and a great display of the Challenger Shakedown's highly varied powers and skills. A-plus all the way.

#### LONG DRIVE SOUTH

You might look at a car like this and think it's going to be a bone-shaking hand-ful. It's not. So well balanced and smooth, you could drive this anywhere for long hours, with power to spare and in perfect control and comfort.

We took the luxury of another full day and headed south, through Maricopa, across two-lane AZ 238 to Gila Bend, then back up AZ 85 to I-10, over to the Loop 303 and around the west side of the Valley to the north end. It was a great drive, though it wasn't till the end that our passenger noted we'd had so much fun just open road cruising, we hadn't given her the thrills of powering through corners on the surface streets. True, although we had done that plenty during

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the rest of the week. Out of time, we vowed to follow up on this later.

This powerful Challenger does all that it does with decent fuel mileage, too—rated 24 MPG highway—thanks to cylinder deactivation (electronic injection fuel saver mode), which lets the big V8 cruise along on four cylinders when you won't even notice—and with the other four still immediately on tap.

#### WHERE IT'S ALL HEADED

There's no question Dodge is at the top of their game with these cars. So why can't everybody do this? and why would these guys ever stop?

We had a magnificent week with the Challenger Shakedown. Yet we know it marks the end of the line or at least of the era. It has been noted many times that Dodge has not made fundamental changes to their core models in some time—and that's the core reason they're so perfect. Besides the fact that they do everything so well, their reliability ratings have shot right up to the top, attributable to the fact that they do what many industries have sought to do for decades—they perform continuous improvement. Always fine tuning.

It all makes for sort of a sad celebration. While the core Stellantis brands—Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram Trucks—have been building these fundamentally flawless vehicles, a rebirth or replacement is also in the cards, largely through outside requirements. They've made significant strides in electrification, with a number of key models notably redeveloped as highly successful plug-in hybrids. Surely they can do something else based on this track record in progress—as they turn their attention to developing full battery-EVs.

So far, we've seen a solid, gorgeous and futuristic show truck in the Ram REV BEV battery-electric pickup, with Ram's treasured styling cues and functional roots still intact, as displayed at the recent Chicago Auto Show. And we've seen an equally solid, gorgeous and futuristic Charger EV concept, also with style and roots intact (see sidebar at right). It seems they've been saving up some major advances for when this big EV lane change would fall due.

When the production version of the Ram REV BEV was announced a day or two later, it bore a more familiar look overall, though still easily distinguished, nicely juiced up with modern EV cues in its lighting and other style points.

What we've been wondering (industrywide, really) is this: are seasoned powertrain engineers branching out and relearning their fundamental craft, all modified for new directions and technologies? Or are they headed out to pasture? Or is it (most likely) a combination of the two, as the process does take time, and there's always turnover and new blood in any such endeavor. Here, it's the culture that matters, and that has been very strong with Stellantis.

#### LIMITED PRODUCTION

As for our 2023 Dodge Challenger R/T Scat Pack Shakedown "Last Call", only 1,000 units are planned for production—500 non-Widebody in Destroyer Grey and 500 Widebody in Pitch Black (like our sample driven here)—all of which are allocated to specific dealerships. Want one? Better jump on it fast. ■



#### ONE MORE "LAST CALL": CHALLENGER SRT DEMON 170

Dodge unveiled the seventh and final "Last Call" special-edition model at Las Vegas Motor Speedway in March. The world's fastest, quickest and most powerful muscle car ever produced, the 2023 Dodge Challenger SRT Demon 170 pulls the highest acceleration of any production car at 2.004 g's and hits 60 mph in 1.66 seconds. With 1,025 hp and 945 lb-ft of torque on E85 fuel, the SRT Demon 170 did the quarter-mile in an NHRA-certified 8.91 seconds at 151.17 mph. Production is limited to 3,300 (3,000 US, 300 Canada), or less depending upon capacity and component availability. MSRP is \$96,666. All customer sold orders for Challenger SRT Demon and notarized customer acknowledgment letter must be received before May 15, 2023. Customer orders certified sold at MSRP (without markup) will receive priority scheduling. See dealer allocations at DodgeGarage.com. ■



#### WHAT'S NEXT? CHARGER DAYTONA SRT EV CONCEPT

The first Dodge electric muscle car concept—making its way through the auto show circuit—bears the Charger name, a natural for an EV, while returning the Charger badge to its two-door roots. Three features make up the core of the Charger Daytona SRT EV Concept: an aerodynamic front R-Wing for efficient aerodynamics while retaining the Dodge profile; a Fratronic Chambered Exhaust system (an industry first for an EV), for a performance sound evoking the SRT Hellcat; and an eRupt electro-mechanical multi-speed transmission for a familiar Dodge performance shifting experience. The car is powered by a new 800V Banshee propulsion system. "Dodge isn't going to shy away as we develop the next generation of muscle car—one that just happens to be fully electric," says Stellantis Dodge brand CEO Tim Kuniskis. "We're demonstrating how old school hot-rodding will thrive in an electrified muscle car future." ■