

# Dodge adjusts course

BY JOE SAGE

There have been smaller SUVs and crossovers from Dodge before—the compact Journey and perhaps counting Caliber—but as the brand has staked out its turf via a winning combination of proven Detroit iron and V8s-by-default in recent years, the midsize Durango has been their sole SUV presence.

Parent Chrysler's European mergers over the past 15 years or so (FCA, then Stellantis) brought off-the-shelf fuel economy, courtesy of Fiat and Alfa Romeo in particular, plus a chance to use them as the basis for US-brand iterations (e.g. Jeep Renegade and Fiat 500X).

This gave Dodge the headroom to achieve brandwide CAFE requirements while continuing its performance muscle focus. But those days are drawing to a close.

Expect electrified evolutions of some (see the Charger EV concept revealed in our last issue), but the new Dodge Hornet is a chess piece added to the board today, a small entry populating a new spot in the Dodge lineup.

It has been widely noted that Dodge Hornet is basically a reskinned Alfa Romeo Tonale. A bit closer to home and far more familiar in our market, it is also platform-mate to Jeep Com-

pass. Our comparative chart shows how powertrain variants are a big part of their commonalities and distinctions (along with somewhat-related Jeep Renegade and Fiat 500X).

Dodge Hornet is kind of two different vehicles—one (an R/T 1.3-liter turbo PHEV, coming soon) is more like the Alfa Romeo Tonale, and one (our GT 2.0-liter turbo, out now) is more like Jeep Compass, except the Jeep is a bit shorter to provide more off-road-oriented approach-departure-breakover. Like the Alfa, the Hornet of course also has more road-oriented tires and wheels than the Jeep.

GT Plus seems likely to be the default volume seller, with the simpler GT likely created to (almost) keep the starting price under

\$30,000, their original stated intent, while creating a smoother price walk to the PHEV.

As the Tonale-twin Hornet R/T PHEV is not here quite yet (though could be any day now), we're not able to compare its fuel economy or its pricing, either with the Hornet 2.0-liter or the Alfa (even the Alfa's fuel mileage information is coming just in small bits as available).

However you parse these points, Hornet—built at the same Italian factory as the Alfa—is marketed as a member of the overall Dodge "performance family," with its styling and stance generally supporting this quite well.

Hornet GT and R/T PHEV have the same suspension, different transmissions (R/T will be a 6-speed), same size brakes (with the red Brembo calipers of the R/T available on GT in a package) and different steering ratios. With its battery pack and motors, R/T will weigh

425 pounds (11.44 percent) more than the GT, yet will hit 60 mph almost a second faster.

Relatively powerful and relatively light, our Hornet GT Plus was always peppy, quick off the line. Though all versions are all-wheel-drivers, we perceived a bit of front-driveness in aggressive turns—and thus preferred it in sport mode, seeming noticeably improved for everything from cornering to straight line to braking. As with the majority of such systems, we had to reset to sport each time.

Choosing a compact crossover from among a sea of competitors can be both satisfyingly and frustratingly complex. Seen as one more entry, you may or may not find the Hornet remarkable. However, point by point, each detail is notably well-executed. It's an intriguing flag-bearer going forward, and one thing for certain—it's a handsome little devil. ■

*Familiar red slashes front and center in the grill are a solid sign that wherever Dodge evolution is headed, their focus remains intact.*

COMPARISONS	length/wb	engine	hp	weight	tow	mpg	base \$
DODGE HORNET GT	178.0 / 103.8	2.0L turbo	268	3715	2000	21/29/24	\$30,735
DODGE HORNET R/T	"	1.3L turbo PHEV	288	4140	2000	td	td
ALFA ROMEO TONALE	178.3 / 103.8	1.3L turbo PHEV	285	4133	2000	29 / 77MPGe	42,995
JEEP COMPASS	173.4 / 103.8	2.0L turbo	200	3620	2000	24/32/27	28,400
JEEP RENEGADE	166.6 / 101.2	turbo 1.3L	177	3320	2000	23/29/26	28,345
FIAT 500X	167.2 / 101.2	turbo 1.3L	177	3305	2000	24/30/26	28,965



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY.....FCA Italy S.P.A., Italy  
 ENGINE .....2.0L DOHC Hurricane turbo-4 ESS  
 HP/TORQUE.....(w prem fuel) 268 hp / 295 lb-ft  
 COMPRESSION RATIO.....TBA  
 TRANSMISSION .....9-spd 948TE auto  
 DRIVETRAIN.....AWD  
 0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED .....6.5 sec / 140 mph  
 SUSPENSION .....four-wheel independent,  
 Koni FSD adaptive damping dual stage  
 valve shocks w selectable modes:  
 F: MacPherson strut; R: Chapman strut  
 STEERING.....elec pwr  
 BRAKES.....Dodge branded Brembo Red:  
 F: 13.53 in four-piston fixed;  
 R: 12.08 in floating performance  
 system (incl w Track Pack)  
 WHEELS .....20x8.0 Abyss Finish  
 TIRES .....235/40R20 all-season  
 LENGTH / WHEELBASE .....178.0 / 103.8 in  
 GROUND CLEARANCE .....8.0 in  
 TURNING CIRCLE .....37.95 ft  
 HEADROOM (F/R).....TBA  
 LEGROOM (F/R).....TBA  
 CARGO CAPACITY.....27.0 cu.ft  
 WEIGHT .....3715 lb  
 PAYLOAD .....1245 lb  
 TOW CAPACITY .....2000 lb  
 FUEL / CAPACITY .....prem recmd 13.5 gal  
 MPG .....21/29/24 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE .....\$34,995  
 PAINT: Gray Cray .....495  
 BLACKTOP PKG: gloss black mirror caps, dark  
 "Hornet" badge, dark GT badge, gloss black  
 side window moldings, 18x7.5 Abyss Finish  
 wheels, 225/55R18 a/s tires .....1995  
 TECH PACK: intelligent speed assist (ISA), active  
 driving assist, surround-view cameras,  
 drowsy driver detect, ParkSense front/rear/  
 side park assist.....2445  
 TRACK PACK: black Alcantara seats w red ac-  
 cents, alum door sills, sport leather steering  
 wheel, dual mode suspension, bright pedals,  
 red Dodge brake calipers, 20x8 Abyss Finish  
 wheels, 235/40R20 a/s tires .....2995  
 (BUNDLE DISCOUNT GT: Track Pack & Blacktop)  
 .....(1000)  
 DESTINATION CHARGE .....1595  
 TOTAL .....\$43,320  
*Prices have increased; see chart.*

## 2023 DODGE HORNET LINEUP

GT .....268 hp 295 lb-ft AWD .....\$30,735  
 GT PLUS .....35,735  
 R/T PHEV .....288 hp 383 lb-ft AWD .....TBD

