

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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2015 Dodge Challenger
R/T Shaker

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“Being challenged in life is inevitable; being defeated is optional.” —Roger Crawford

With models up to 707 horsepower, it's unlikely the new Challenger will be defeated.

The big SEMA Show in Las Vegas—the annual event of the Special Equipment Market Association that draws that busy city's biggest crowd (or second biggest, depending how you count—Consumer Electronics Show being the other), has grown steadily from an aftermarket event, to one the major auto manufacturers have increasingly acknowledged by allowing customizers more access to their specifications, to one where the automakers have developed their own huge presence. There are some displays of new models, but mostly they'll build and show off their own outlandish breakthrough concepts, in keeping with the

rest of the show, then be on their way. Last year's SEMA Show had a couple of neat items from Dodge—a Challenger with a shaker hood and another with a Scat Pack. The shaker hood has a cutaway exposing a cold air intake scoop rising from (and torquing with) the engine. The Scat Pack adds a variety of factory Mopar parts to the Challenger, an homage to modifications performed on the original Challenger by the Scat Pack Club in the late 1960s and early '70s. The crowd went wild. So the Challenger Shaker was put into production on 2014 models and sold out in four days. Dodge was amazed. “Let's face it—it's

a hood,” Dodge and SRT president and CEO Tim Kuniskis says in bemused amazement, as we join him in Oregon for the reveal of the 2015 Challenger. But the enthusiasm was clear, so for 2015 there will be a Shaker version available of each Challenger R/T.

Reinventing a reinvention

Retrospective styling is not unique to the Dodge Challenger. There are, of course, the Mustang and Camaro. Neither stayed with its original late '60s (and early '70s) styling through the intervening decades, although Mustang was sometimes evocative of that. But the past few generations of Mustang

2015 DODGE CHALLENGER	ENGINE	TRANS	HP / TORQUE	MPG(H)	BASE PRICE
SXT	3.6L V6	8A	305 hp / 268 lbft	30	\$26,995
SXT PLUS	3.6L V6	"	"	30	\$29,995
R/T	5.7L HEMI V8	6M/8A	375 hp / 410 lbft	(auto) 25	\$31,495
R/T SHAKER	5.7L HEMI V8	"	"	tbd	tbd
R/T PLUS	5.7L HEMI V8	"	"	25	\$34,995
R/T PLUS SHAKER	5.7L HEMI V8	"	"	tbd	tbd
R/T 392 HEMI® SCAT PACK	6.4L HEMI V8	6M/8A	485 hp / 475 lbft	25	\$38,495
R/T 392 HEMI® SCAT PACK SHAKER	6.4L HEMI V8	"	"	tbd	tbd
SRT 392	6.4L HEMI V8	6M/8A	485 hp / 475 lbft	25	\$45,995
SRT HELLCAT	6.2L HEMI V8 with twin-screw supercharger	6M/8A	707 hp / 650 lbft	tbd	\$59,995

have been distinctly retro—some more successfully than others, to our eye. Camaro took most of the last decade off and came back with a strong retro, but it strikes us as more of a 21st century echo (which is a fine thing, but a different thing). Challenger has done an amazing job with this—building an entirely new car with a new look that makes you think of the original immediately, though every bit of it is new and different.

But not completely so. For example, the grille and taillights had followed the style and feel of a 1970 Challenger. So to move the ball forward for a new generation Challen-

ger now, Dodge went back to what made a new Challenger then—in 1971. Keeping the basic body shell and profile intact, they have split the grille and split the taillights—just as was done when 1970 evolved into 1971.

Then there are the quad circular headlights. The design team had gone through much study and conceptual sketching for the new Challenger and kept coming back to those as a key element holding the essence of the original look. So those are here to stay, up-to-date with LED halos.



STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOE SAGE



RINGTONES • BARRETT-JACKSON

Download a HEMI® Hellcat ringtone for Android, BlackBerry and iPhone—along with mobile and desktop wallpaper images—at drivesrt.com/hellcatringtone.

Challenger SRT Hellcat VIN 0001 will be auctioned at Barrett-Jackson Las Vegas in late September. See full details on page 40.

In a world awash with Mustangs and Camaros, the Dodge Challenger has maintained a more distinctive look. You're less likely to see a dozen of them in one place, although you certainly did on the day we invaded Oregon. Challenger sales are likely to pick up dramatically with this new lineup. But we think the Challenger will still show up with a special presence.





From Vista House at Crown Point, Oregon, we had the whole world laid out before us—the Columbia River, Washington state on the far side, both sides lined with beautiful two-lane highways. • Things could slow down en route; the Prius is very popular there, and we may not have been as popular with them. The relatively large Challenger handled beautifully on narrow roads with no shoulders. • Bridge of the Gods took us across for a Washington side return to Portland.

Challenger R/T

Challenger R/T and R/T Plus models start with a 375-horse 5.7-liter HEMI V8, then Scat Pack models up this to the 485-horse 6.4-liter HEMI also used in SRT models. Scat Pack models also add enhanced-performance suspension exhaust, brakes and alternator; body cues including rear spoiler, front splitter and 20x9 polished aluminum wheels with black pockets; and a variety of style, function and device upgrades inside.

Stunning deals in upgrade packages are available on top of that, such as a full heated-cooled Nappa leather and alcantara interior for just \$1500.

It was an easy decision to put the 2015 Dodge Challenger on the cover of this issue—it's that cool, and it looks that good. We chose the R/T because—as you can see in our chart on the prior page, and as our drive time confirms—it delivers the core Challenger experience, with either HEMI, and is now even available with the same engine and horsepower as an SRT 392, but at a more approachable cost—even when fully optioned.

But then there's the SRT lineup.

Challenger SRT 392

The fundamental specs in our chart show the similarities between the R/T 392 Scat Pack and the SRT 392, but the \$7500 difference delivers \$8900 worth of additional goods. The SRT is recognizable by its Viper-derived hood with a center air intake, extra-wide 20x9.5 Slingshot

hyper black forged aluminum wheels, rear body-color spoiler and available full-body twin stripes in black satin gloss or silver high gloss.

Under the skin, the SRT includes upgraded brakes (the largest ever offered by Chrysler)—15.4-inch fronts, Brembo 6-pistons with 2-piece slotted and vented rotors—and high performance adaptive dampening suspension.

Inside, it adds an instrument screen including SRT Performance Pages with launch control, a 900-watt 18-speaker Harman Kardon premium audio system, that optional interior from the R/T—high-performance Nappa leather seats with alcantara inserts, heated and ventilated front seats—a race-inspired flat-bottom three-spoke heated leather-wrapped steering wheel with power tilt and telescope, and your literal key to it all, a red pushbutton start.

Challenger SRT Hellcat

If the line between the Challenger R/T 392 Scat Pack and SRT 392 has become narrower, the jump from SRT 392 to the new SRT Hellcat is huge.

The core difference in the SRT Hellcat is its twin-screw supercharging of the same 392 (6.4L) HEMI found in the R/T Scat Pack and SRT 392. After teasing with “600-plus” for a few months, Dodge has probably still been conservative with its 707-horsepower rating, based on a few dynos.

We did what anybody would do with the SRT Hellcat—took it to the track—Portland International Raceway. Every version of the 2015 Challenger was available to us here, but time is limited. So we ran hot laps on the full course—a hair shy of two miles, with twelve turns—in the R/T Shaker and the SRT Hellcat. Then, the quarter mile, which has become a special claim to fame for this new supercar muscle car,



as its NHRA certified quarter-mile strip time of just 10.8 seconds has become a benchmark bragging point. We set the system's Performance Pages for maximum track characteristics, and the Christmas tree counted down. But the stopwatch was not run on each of us—why risk less than record times by a couple of dozen drivers of varying skill and experience, who just sat down in it for the first time? Understandable. But it is wicked fast, exhilarating, surefooted—and finished the run just begging for more.

These are the things that make headlines, but the amazing thing about the SRT Hellcat is that if you change the Page, it becomes a perfectly manageable daily

driver—something we haven't found in a top-horsepower Shelby Mustang or Camaro 2SS.

Challenger SXT Pentastar V6

For the drive back from the track, we went straight to the other end of the lineup, the six-cylinder Charger SXT, and found plenty to like. It has the lightest weight, the fundamental style, over 300 horses and gets 30 MPG highway.

In a pecking-order place like Phoenix, you might feel as though you were coming up short in this one. Stoplight challenges aside, though, you could enjoy the heck out of an SXT—as you can with any Challenger. Except ... it's the only one not available with a manual transmission. ■



At Portland International Raceway (“the other PIR”), we did hot laps in multiple versions of the Challenger, then ran the quarter mile in the SRT Hellcat with full track settings. Our launches were timed, but our runs were not. Not a problem—the Hellcat has already been NHRA-certified at 10.8 seconds (with drag radials).



SUPER TRACK PAK

The Challenger Super Track Pak—an array of chassis upgrades good for road or track—is now available on all models, including the V6 SXT for the first time. The Super Track Pak lowers suspension by half an inch and adds Bilstein shocks, enhanced brakes and retuned suspension. Super Track Pak includes a shortcut button to Dodge Performance Pages embedded in its 8.4-inch touchscreen, showing programmable shift light indicator, reaction time, 0-60 times, G-force indicator and lap times in the 7-inch TFT cluster display.