

BEAUTIFUL, TOUGH AND FAST BY JOE SAGE

It's not hard to tell that we liked the last generation of Dodge Charger—it made our cover exactly one year ago. And it's equally easy to see that we liked the 2015 Challenger, which just graced our previous cover this year. So take a dose of Charger. Add a dash of Challenger—with a 707-hp Charger SRT Hellcat added to the lineup. And let's see what we get.

Most obvious at first glance is the front sheetmetal, all new (and varying by trim). It's a master stroke of redesign, startlingly different the first time you see it, then better than its predecessor every time after that. Gone is the once-characteristic large grille. In its place is an equally aggressive and equally big-air-breathing wide mouth.

A new rear spoiler has a more refined, distinctive and effective shape. Scalloped sides remain in spirit from the prior gen-

eration, but only the roof and rear doors are actually carryover panels. The biggest changes lurk under the hood, in the driveline and inside.

Let's jump right to the SRT Hellcat. The top model, this incorporates the same 707-hp 6.2-liter HEMI® supercharged V8 (with 675 lb-ft of torque) as its Challenger SRT Hellcat stablemate. The two Hellcats use the same 8-speed automatic (though Challenger is also available with a 6-speed manual). The Charger weighs a little more than the Challenger, but as a four-door can brag as the quickest, fastest and most powerful sedan in the world (acceleration, top speed and horsepower/torque).

The angelic and non-feline Charger SRT 392 has a normally aspirated 485-hp 6.4L HEMI V8. Hellcat starts at \$63,995, the SRT 392 at just over \$47 grand. The bang

for the buck equation is easy to grasp.

The lineup starts with a Charger SE and SXT, bearing a 3.6L Pentastar® V6 at 292 hp (or 300 hp with a Rallye Group option) and 260 (or 264) lb-ft of torque. (This engine is one of two at the heart of the don't-even-try Charger Pursuit police package; the other is the R/T's 5.7L HEMI.)

Of the many option packages available for the Charger, the Rallye Group applies to the SXT only, adding cold-air induction and sport-tuned exhaust, nudging horsepower from 292 to 300, and torque a few lb-ft as well. The package also adds badging and trim differences, performance suspension, 20-inch black aluminum wheels, wheel-mounted shift and sport modes—and a high-powered BeatsAudio system, in case you tire of that exhaust note. Option pricing has not yet been released.

2015 Dodge Charger SRT Hellcat



Charger SE and SXT are the only two offering all-wheel drive, although the top 31 MPG of an RWD V6 slips below 30 when you go this route. All-wheel drive is automatic, with a class-exclusive active transfer case and front axle disconnect to preserve fuel economy when not needed.

Next up—a compelling combination of power, styles, features and fuel economy—is the R/T. The HEMI V8 kicks in here, a 5.7-liter delivering 370 hp (about halfway from the V6 to the SRT). You rate 25 MPG highway, and city fuel mileage dips a couple of points—an easy tradeoff for any gearhead who requires V8 rumble. And purchase price moves up just three grand.

An R/T Road & Track package brings upgraded brakes and tires, Super Trak Pak suspension, a high-speed engine controller and a higher rear end, all adding up to just what its name declares: a perfectly road-capable Charger that's always happy to spend time on a track.

The R/T Scat Pack has much the same mission, but even moreso, swapping to the same 485-hp 6.4L HEMI as an SRT 392. There is a psychological jump here, from what feels like just over \$30 grand to about \$40 grand, so your best bet is to compare the whole list of features. This does give you the SRT's engine, while the actual SRT 392 badge and fitments will take you close to \$50 grand.

But only an SRT is an SRT, and that badge—and its upgraded brakes, wheels, suspension, electronics, interior and more—does deliver in this pecking order. If you shop SRT, you know who you are, what you need and why you want it.

There's only one way to really top the pecking order, though, and that's with the



aftermentioned 707-hp Charger SRT Hellcat. Despite its immense capability on the track—which we proved at Summit Point Motorsports Park in West Virginia—the Hellcat, as with its Challenger cousin, is an extremely friendly daily driver road car, as well. Each model level delivers something more, and there are no functional tradeoffs—just some cash and a bit of MPG.

That does, of course, leave one beast that actually tops any pecking order—the Dodge Charger Pursuit, whether it has the V6 or the 5.7L HEMI V8, as in either case it also has a light bar and a badge.



This brief chart adds up to nine 2015 Dodge Charger models, not even including the Pursuit—plus there are extensive options and packages. "It's our formula car," Dodge says, perfect for the family, and right on up to the fastest four-door sedan in the world.

2015 DODGE CHARGER

SE, SXTBASE: \$27,995 / 29,995
3.6L V6 • 292 hp • 8-sp auto • RWD/AWD	
R/T, R/T R&TBASE: \$32,995
5.7L HEMI V8 • 370 hp • 8-sp auto • RWD	
R/T SCAT PACKBASE: \$39,995
6.4L HEMI V8 • 485 hp • 8-sp auto • RWD	
SRT 392BASE: \$47,385
6.4L HEMI V8 • 485 hp • 8-sp auto • RWD	
SRT HELLCATBASE: \$63,995
6.2L HEMI V8 s/c • 707 hp • 8-auto • RWD	



Charger sales have grown by 62 percent over the past five years, double the rate of its full-size sedan segment. Buyers are on average 15 years younger than those of the competition. Those buyers will find what they're looking for inside: Uconnect 8.4-inch touchscreens, remote start and lock/unlock, on-demand WiFi mobile hot spot, audio from BeatsAudio and Harman Kardon, and Aha by Harman, iHeart-Radio, Pandora and Slacker, all accessible using your existing device's data plan. Available navigation has one-step voice destination entry and enhanced 3D maps.

Electric power steering is new to the Charger, but it's engineered to make you feel more connected with the road, with normal, comfort and sport settings. Upgraded Performance Pages offer transmission, engine and suspension tweaks and upgraded launch control. The electronic shifter adds physical linkage feel, so you know your position, eyes-on or eyes-off.

Finish off your cockpit from among 19 combinations of interior colors and materials, including cloth, leather, Nappa or Laguna leather—throughout the lineup.

The average person in North America is about 21 pounds heavier than in Europe or 50 pounds heavier than in Asia, and one



to three inches taller. The spreads were even wider a generation ago. Building a big sedan is second nature to Dodge.

Whether you grew up driving mom and dad's big American sedan or have only lusted after them, the 2015 Dodge Charger will fit you like a pair of jeans that would still look good with a tuxedo. Similarly, it will handle anything you can throw at it, while proving just as strong, purposeful and raw stylish.

Dodge and SRT director Tom Sacoman brings the Charger lineup into focus via three models. The Hellcat is "the industry's most irreverent four-door supercar," one in which you can run an 11-second quarter-mile, "then strap the kids in and

get 22 MPG on the way home." The new R/T Scat Pack is the fastest four-door under \$40 grand. Or for under \$30 grand, you can have an SE or SXT, with the same DNA and all-wheel drive.

Sacoman boasts of the same muscle car attributes as Mustang or Camaro, but with four-door sedan practicality. He calls it a "3-in-1" car: occasionally supercar, a practical muscle car and always a family car.

The Dodge Charger was not designed by focus groups—decidedly not. It's a car conceived and built by professionals with vision, who know how to do it right. The car "defines itself," says Dodge president and CEO Tim Kuniskis. What you get is all "because of the honesty of the car." ■

2015 Dodge Charger R/T
Road & Track