

# All business

By Joe Sage

As with the whole lineup, this Charger six is a rock solid choice

Say the hottest word in the automotive world this year—Hellcat!—and people will reflexively respond with “Challenger” and “Charger” before you can hit sixty. There’s no question Dodge, in its rapidly successful effort to cement the brand as the all-American muscle marque in the FCA lineup, has created a halo car or two, with the 707-hp 6.2L supercharged HEMI V8 versions of these two well-established cars.

We attended the launch of the 2015 Dodge Challenger in Oregon last fall, then the launch of the 2015 Charger in the Mid-Atlantic states early this winter. In both cases, the high-potency Hellcat was generating maximum buzz. But in both cases, one of the neat conclusions about the Hellcat is that it can be driven as an everyday car—unlike the majority of its high-potency competitors, which are an uncomfortable handful in normal traffic.

That was a noteworthy commendation for the Hellcat. But it also inadvertently emphasizes the fact that, even in such rarified models, everyday behavior is a worthy goal. It may seem to turn that logic on its head, but now that we think about it, the inverse can be true: our first impulse with a V6 Charger was to compare it with the Hellcat.

Let’s start with a few six-cylinder advantages. There are two V6 Dodge Chargers: the SE and SXT, starting at \$27,995 and \$29,995. That’s right—the top-of-the-line

3.6-liter Pentastar V6 Charger is still under thirty grand. Its engine puts out almost 300 horsepower (292, to be precise, not that far off 370 for a 5.7-liter HEMI, lest we think the Hellcat is the next point of comparison). And the SE and SXT six-cylinder models are rated at 31 MPG highway.

That highway fuel mileage rating drops to 27 MPG for an all-wheel-drive version, but yes, this is another Charger V6 advantage. AWD traction and handling is an option on the sixes only.

One almost unavoidable association with the Charger is its ubiquity as a police cruiser. In fact, this may be a factor in the general air of authority you feel while driving a Dodge Charger. Or it may just be the car’s own raw capabilities.

Not long ago, for a police cruiser to qualify as a pursuit vehicle, it needed a V8, period. Not so, with a Dodge Charger Pursuit V6, essentially the same car as this SXT (though with upfitted brakes and police-specific electronics interfaces and such). Both Charger police models are Pursuit rated.

None of this is to dismiss

the value and place of the rest of the Charger lineup. As noted in our launch writeup (see the Nov/Dec 2014 issue), each has been masterfully positioned to suit its purpose and market. The 5.7L HEMI V8 R/T models give you 370-hp performance (the same as the V8 police Pursuit model) for just over thirty grand. Add a Scat Pack with 6.4L HEMI and you’re track ready, but still shopping in the upper thirties. Go full-blown SRT 392 and you’re in the forties, with the same 6.4L V8 but all the fixin’s of an SRT. And nobody will dispute the unique position of the line-topping SRT Hellcat—at just shy of \$64,000, still a heck of a bargain for something that can dust most common supercars, while still also performing as a four-door family sedan.

There’s not a bad driver in the bunch, and the same basic beautiful Charger styling and powerful grace are fully present in every one of them.

Interestingly, while the six-cylinder models are the only civilian Chargers available with AWD, in the Pursuit lineup, it’s the other way around—AWD on the V8 only. In a way, we’re glad this is not the case in the regular lineup. Much as we’d

welcome an AWD V8, we appreciate the way it’s one clear factor defining the civilian six’s niche.

Our week with the Charger followed a week with a car some two or three times its price. After that other, it seemed a little spartan, but it was everything it’s supposed to be and was very welcome. The six-cylinder Charger SXT is certainly full-featured (see inclusions in sidebar). All for \$29,995. Keyless entry and start were flawless, and the cabin is clean and purposeful. In fact, the SXT’s seats and “Hectic Mesh” finishes are about the coolest non-leather interior you could have—a combination of performance grip surfaces, very tough fabric, strong but subtle patterns and heavy stitching. And all family-friendly.

Dodge’s electric power steering has been noted by us before as being unequalled in delivering a solid and true reaction and feel equivalent to

the best full mechanical or hydraulic setups.

The Charger’s trunk gives you 16.5 cubic feet of well-arranged space for errands, chores, travels or activities. And don’t miss the fact that your SXT can also tow 1000 pounds—giving it a degree of utility you won’t find in most four-door sedans.

The 2015 Dodge Charger SXT: a fine build, a fine ride, a beautiful package outside and in, and we’ll say it once again: under \$30,000, almost 300 hp, over 30 MPG. Beat that. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	3.7L longitudinal V6
TRANSMISSION	8-speed with Auto Stick
DRIVETRAIN	RWD
	(available AWD)
POWER/TORQUE	292 hp / 260 lb-ft
	(with optional Rallye Group 300/264)
WHEELS	18x7.5 satin carbon aluminum
WEIGHT	(52/48 front/rear) 3966 lb
TOWING CAPACITY	1000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	Reg 87 octane / 18.5 gal
MPG	19/31/23 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE ..... **\$29,995**

INCLUDED: Billet silver metallic clear coat, gloss black grille with gloss black crosshairs, body-color lower body side cladding, bi-function halogen projector automatic headlamps, LED daytime running lights, LED fog lamps, power heated mirrors (manual fold), dual bright exhaust tips, all-season performance tires, electric power steering, 4-wheel antilock disc brakes, rain brake support, ready alert braking, electronic stability control, all-speed traction control, hill start assist, keyless entry and start, black cloth sport seats with Hectic Mesh accents, heated front seats, power 8-way driver seat with power 4-way lumbar, Uconnect 8.4-inch touchscreen (incl 6-month Uconnect Access), SiriusXM (incl 1 year), 276-watt 8-speaker audio, instrument cluster with 7-inch reconfigurable display, voice command with Bluetooth, SD-USB-Aux hub, dual remote USB charge, two 12-volt aux power outlets, auto dual zone climate, compass, outside temperature, theft deterrent system, remote start system, advanced multistage front airbags, front seat-mounted side airbags, side-curtain front and rear airbags.

OPTIONS ..... none

DESTINATION CHARGE ..... 995

TOTAL ..... **\$30,990**

## LOGBOOK NOTES

We quickly and fully adjusted to the new sheetmetal. The old style looked as though it was ready to suck up any road; the new one looks as though it’s ready to scoop up any road—both noble endeavors.

During the time we had this car, a prominent colleague had posted a tale on social media, pointing out that, with some other car, for 50 percent of the price you could get 95 percent of the performance of a supercar. The Dodge Charger SXT is a car in which for about a quarter of the price, you can get 95 percent of the performance.

The final equation for us, with a car for just a week and something else cool coming, is when you want to run back out in this once more. We were all packed out of the Charger SXT but loaded our gear back in three more times, for three more errands, before they came to pick it up.

