

# Loaded

BY JOE SAGE

Dodge Hornet is the offspring of two Stellantis families—Dodge as a whole, and Alfa Romeo Tonale specifically. Though heavily based on the Tonale, Hornet's complete restyling has made it clear which side of the family it favors. And now the R/T badge makes it moreso.

The blood of both clearly runs in its veins. Alfa Tonale launched in early 2022 for model year 2023 as a metamorphosis ("La Metamorfosi"), a brand calibration combining luxury, electrification and connectivity. Dodge Hornet launched that summer, with just simpler GT and GT Plus trims. Now, the R/T trim rounds out the Tonale formula (though as a Dodge, R/T brings a trademark performance feel, versus the Alfa's Euro-luxe-exotic personality).

We met both in mid-2023—Hornet first, a GT

Plus here for a full week (see our July-August 2023 issue), then about a month and a half later an introductory presentation and short local drive with the Tonale (see September-October 2023). Roll forward a year, and the two have meshed, as the new Hornet R/T joined our fleet for a week.

Amped up considerably from the original GT, the R/T powertrain—with the more powerful engine, PHEV tech and transmission of Tonale, and upping the GT's AWD to electronic EAWD—not only meets, but incrementally beats the Alfa's specs (see chart comparing key attributes, below).

You can compare two ways. Alfa Tonale stakes claim to the same higher powertrain across all trim levels. But where Hornet used to all have the same

lower one, it now gives you a choice—its upper engine besting Alfa by about \$2500, or the lower one getting you into Hornet for \$10,000 less.

We took our Hornet R/T for a considerable drive through the rolling hills and hairpins of mid-altitude mountains and had a ball. Turning off auto stop-start in this is inherently achieved by hitting a sport mode button right below the ignition—a handy two-fer, as we usually want both, anyway. (There are a wider range of modes, including full-electric, via steering wheel controls.)

On a more open mountain four-lane, the transmission (a 6-speed versus the GT's 9-speed) was sometimes oddly busy even on slight grades that seemed nearly level. The turning circle is also larg-

er than we'd expect in such a small vehicle, just shy of 38 feet, but it's still tight enough for a four-lane boulevard U-turn.

(Of note: if you have big feet, you may find the pedals quite tight. You'll also get notable sound effects and a little drag presumably from the regenerative system, which can make you think your big feet may be on both pedals. Also, as on other Alfas, the paddle shifters are so large, your hands can get tangled in them, when going for a turn signal or wipers. But these are all the type of things an owner will surely get used to.)

All in all, you can get a good burst of grunt for accelerating up a ramp, with a solid steady pace and easy lane changes on the freeway.

Given all that the two Hornet powertrains offer, we are still intrigued by a third possibility. What if there were a more powerful version, but without PHEV? (Given the interdependencies of various powertrain elements, it might vary a little more than exactly just that. In fact, remove the electrified component of the R/T PHEV, and power and

torque are much closer to the GT, suggesting a spot for a third engine in between.) The thing is, the PHEV battery adds 276 pounds (close to a couple of permanent passengers), removes over four cubic feet of cargo volume, and makes the gas tank 2.3 gallons smaller (or almost 70 miles' worth). If you have a usage cycle that can benefit from the PHEV's electric-only mode daily (32 miles rated), it can have a clear advantage. But for other usage, including longer or more aggressive in-town use and certainly for longer distance travel, the full-electric advantage goes largely dormant. Hand in hand with that thinking, we'd also love to see a manual shift option. Maybe sales success will breed such options in the future. Maybe not. A lot has to do with the current driving forces behind the push for electrification.

As it stands, Dodge Hornet delivers a clever bag of tricks, in a vehicle that has largely come out of nowhere to replace (to a point) vehicles with huge provenance. They've covered a lot of bases, and all in all, we'd be proud to own one. ■

COMPARISONS	engine	hp / lbft	length/wb	weight	tow	mpg	\$ base
DODGE HORNET GT	2.0L turbo	268 / 295	178.0 / 103.8	3715	2000	21/29/24	\$31,400
DODGE HORNET R/T	1.3L turbo PHEV	288 / 383	"	4140	"	29/77MPGe	41,400
ALFA ROMEO TONALE	1.3L turbo PHEV	285 / 347	178.3 / 103.8	4133	"	29/77MPGe	43,845

We don't generally get into hypermiling, but at the end of our week, we noticed a readout staing we had an almost empty fuel tank and just 39 miles of gasoline range remaining. With an 11.2-gallon tank and 29 mpg combined rating, a full tank could cover 325 miles. So we checked records, and we had only driven 111 miles. Add that 39 remaining, and we had achieved just over 13 mpg actual, less than half the rating. (Even adding 25-30 delivery miles, not knowing at which end it was filled, it's about 16 mpg.)



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Pomigliano, Italy
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	.....Poland / Italy
PARTS CONTENT	.....Italy 56% / Poland 12% / US-Canada 0%
ENGINE	.....1.3L 4-cylinder turbo PHEV
MOTORS	.....F:P1 BSG 44 hp, R: P4 121 hp (90kW)
MOTOR TORQUE (F/R)	.....F: 199 / R: 184 lb-ft
BATTERY	.....Li-ion, nickel manganese cobalt graphite, 15.5 kWh, 306V
HP/TORQUE	.....net comb 288 hp / 383 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....6-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	.....eAWD
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	.....5.6 sec / 128 mph
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut, FSD damping; R: Chapman strut (FSD damping)
STEERING	.....elec pwr
BRAKES	.....Brembo calipers standard; F: 13.53; R: 12.08
WHEELS	.....(opt) 20-in Abyss finish alum
TIRES	.....(opt) 235/40R20 a/s
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....178.0 / 103.8 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....6.1 in (note: GT versions have 8.0 in)
TURNING CIRCLE	.....37.86 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....na / na
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....na / na
CARGO CAPACITY	.....22.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....4140 lb
PAYLOAD	.....1195 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....2000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....na / 11.2 gal
ALL-ELECTRIC RANGE	.....32 miles
MPG/MPGe	.....gasoline 29 / e-gas 77 (comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$46,400
PAINT: Acapulco Gold	.....595
CUSTOMER PREF PKG 28D: Tech Pack Plus w/o parallel & perp park assist, intelligent speed assist, active driving assist, surround-view cameras, ParkSense front/rear/side park assist, drowsy driver detect	.....2245
R/T BLACKTOP & TRACK PACK BUNDLE: black Alcantara non-vented seats w red accents, inox steel door sills, gloss black mirror caps, dark Hornet badge, dark R/T badge, gloss black side window moldings, sporty leather steering wheel, dual mode suspension, 20-in Abyss finish alum wheels, 235/40R20 a/s tires, bright pedals, red Dodge calipers	.....3590
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1595
TOTAL	.....\$54,425

Prices have increased; see below.

## 2024 DODGE HORNET LINEUP

GT AWD	.....31,400
GT PLUS AWD	.....36,695
R/T EAWD	.....41,400
R/T PLUS EAWD	.....▼ 46,745