

ZAPPING the AMX

A shot in the arm to change the image changer

Text and photos by John Thawley



The car looks great; that smoke is for real and after hundreds of miles of driving our only deep, bitter complaint was the quality and fit of carpeting in the little coupe. Rambler six-cylinder front shocks aid weight transfer situation when drag racing. Factory cut-aways of engine show shallow pan; deepen for racing — a must.

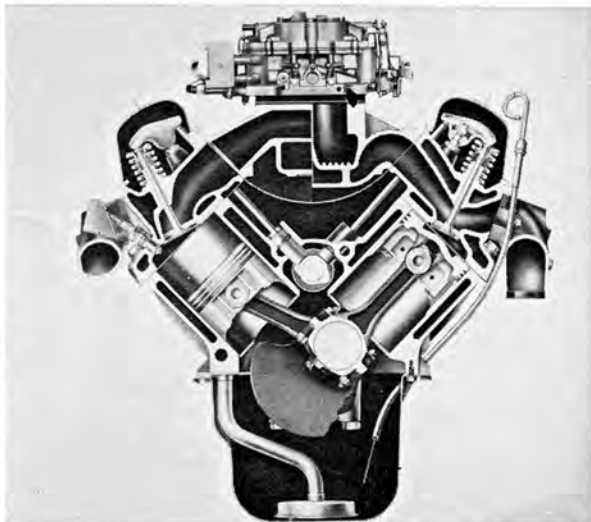
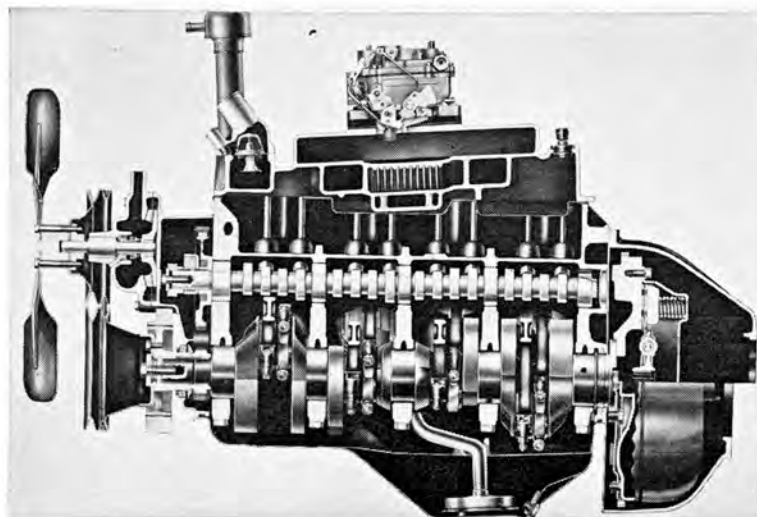
Without bolting on everything in the parts book, a 390 AMX street car should run in the mid-twelves uncapped and with slicks. With only a few modifications, the HRM test car ran a 13.18 e.t. at Irwindale Raceway with street gearing (3.55:1). Some "fiddlin' with the carburetor," loosening some belts and changing plugs, and the car might have gone into the twelves with the 3.5 gear.

Since last month's test on two AMX's, some modifications have been made to the four-speed car in an effort to better ascertain the quarter-mile potential for the American Motors performance offering.

Capped up, with only a set of 26½-inch-tall Casler 7-inch-wide slicks to help the car in stock condition, a best e.t. of 14.06 was logged. With Bill Hanyon donating countless hours and some busted knuckles along the way, a couple of performance nuts and bolts were added. Thanks, Bill.

Neither the stock clutch or shift linkage behaved in a satisfactory manner for drag strip applications, so both were replaced. A Schiefer 10½-inch Rev-Lok, with 2900 pounds of plate pressure, solved drive train coupling problems. The stock AMX clutch slipped badly after several hard quarter-mile runs. A Hurst shifter bolted to the close ratio four-speed box ended the "paddle in a bucket of oatmeal" feeling and certainly went a long way in adding to the consistency of the quarter-mile times.

In an attempt to gain some more beans under the hood, the AMX high-performance hydraulic cam and kit were installed, along with an Edelbrock intake manifold and Holley three-barrel carb. Jardine supplied the exhaust headers. The AM cam kit consists of cam, special high-rate springs containing dampeners, rocker studs, pushrods and anti-pump lifters. Although not the wildest cam in existence, the performance offering from the



factory has it all over the stock 390 cam in every department; check the chart. And yes, the cam and kit may be installed in the AM 290 and 343 cubic inch engines.

The Edelbrock cast aluminum intake manifold is designated the R-4B. Compared to the AM stock manifold, the Edelbrock product could be called a high-rise manifold, but compared to other Edelbrock items, the manifold could more accurately be termed a medium riser. At any rate, the design is clean, runners are large and gently curved, and the opening at the carb flange is large enough for the largest Holley four-barrel in existence. The internal divider is specifically notched to accommodate the butterfly on the three-barrel. The manifold was installed with the performance intake manifold gasket from AM which blocks off the manifold heat in an effort to obtain cooler mixture at the combustion chamber. Again, this manifolding may be used on the AM 343 and 290 V8.

The Jardine headers made everything legal with the incorporation of the "smog tubes" that allow their use on the street as well as strip. These tubes made plug changing more of a hassle — but a sacrifice must be expected on a compromise product.

Before closing the hood and heading for the strip, Hanyon fashioned a curve for the distributor. The distributor lead of 20° (crank) was in by 2300 rpm. Another 18 degrees was added at the crank. Plugs used were NGK E7E gapped at .028-inch. Because of the high gearing, the Casler slicks were inflated to 34 psi to obtain some slip-page at the line, thus eliminating bog.

By coming off the line at 5000 rpm and shifting at 5800 rpm, the best time slip of the evening came out reading 13.18 e.t. with a top speed of 107.52.

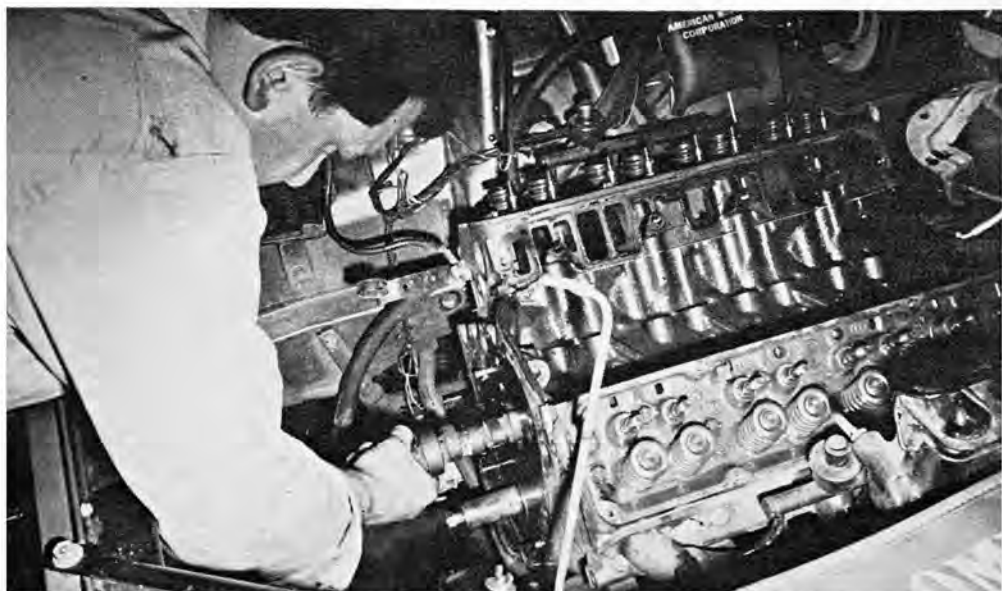
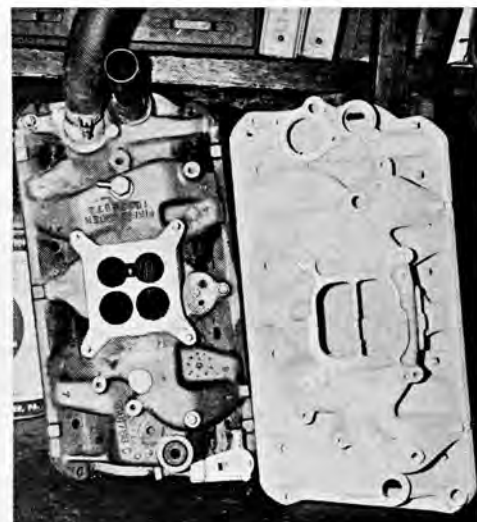
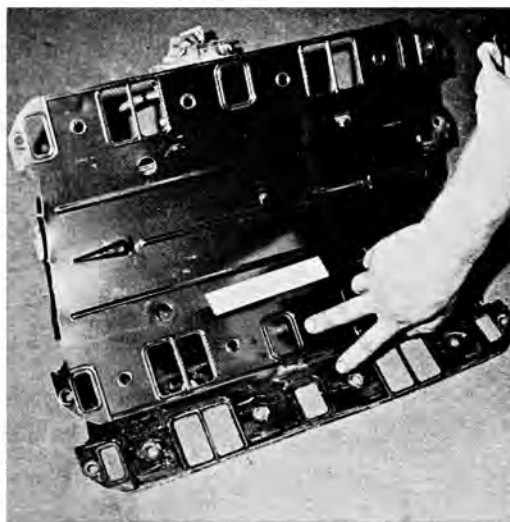
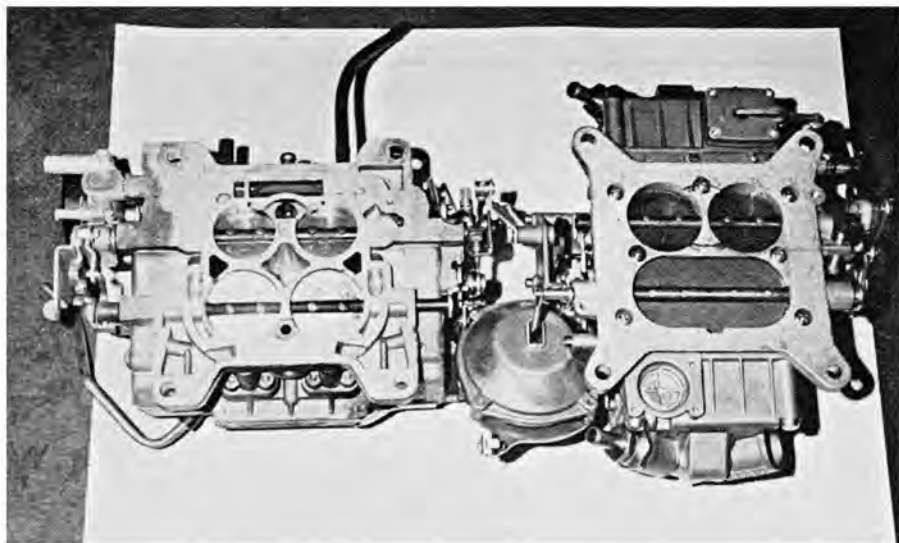
Like we said, with 4.44:1 gearing and a few tuning experiments, a 390 Javelin or AMX should run in the mid-twelives with a degree of regularity. ■ ■

AM Performance Parts List

	Parts No.
Hydraulic cam and kit	320-8586
Blocked heat-riser manifold gasket	320-8750
Close-ratio four-speed transmission	319-3964
Edelbrock manifold, carb and kit	448-5731
4.44:1 ring and pinion	320-8551
4.10:1 ring and pinion	320-8546
3.91:1 ring and pinion	448-5750
3.73:1 ring and pinion	448-5749
Rear axle torque link kit (Javelin)	448-5582
Rear axle torque link kit (American)	448-5753

AM Cam Specs

	Lift	Overlap	Duration
High-performance	.298	98°	302°
Stock	.265	44°	266°



A healthy part of the drop in e.t. can be attributed to the change in the intake manifold and carburetion. Comparative pictures of each show bigger venturis and larger and smoother flow passages. Edelbrock manifold and Holley carb were set on top of AM gasket which seals exhaust heat from carb — allows cooler mixture in the manifold. 'Neath the lantern's glow, Bill Hanyon guides the hydraulic AM bump stick into the block. New studs, springs, keepers, pushrods and lifters also went in. Adding the extra pieces costs a little more and takes more time to install but is well worth the effort if the desire is to be consistently quicker.