

*Lurking beneath maze of hoses is strong 315 hp 390 V-8. Cold air package on production SC/Rambler features vacuum-operated trap door in scoop and gasket to seal air cleaner to hood (not shown on prototype). Hurst shifter and T-handle are standard, but location of Sun tach complicates reverse gear selection. Car comes with close ratio four-speed and 3.54 Dana rearend.*



*Pure stock performance is very good, but big commotion should be produced when fully-prepped F/Stock versions hit strip. Of course, many owners will probably be content with reaction it elicits on the street. Heavy-duty drive train and suspension components are combined to provide chassis that matches racy appearance. Car runs 14.30's and 98 mph off showroom floor.*



**American Motors and Hurst rattle a few cages with a muscular Rambler boasting a 390 V-8, heavy-duty suspension and a price tag of under \$3000, fully equipped. But hurry up, they're only building 500!**

**By A.B. Shuman**

Photography: Bob Swaim



**M**OTORISTS BARRELING ALONG on open stretches of Detroit's lesser-traveled back roads are used to grabbing occasional fleeting glances at some pretty unusual machinery, often getting an unofficial, early look at new cars long before their public release. Sometimes they can pick out the make, but usually it's hard for them to tell exactly what it was they saw. This same impression was left with viewers at the Chicago Auto Show earlier this month, when American Motors unveiled their flashy SC/Rambler. For, beneath the colorful Hurst-i-fied trappings of this under-\$3000 supercar, they could make out what they thought to be a Rambler Rogue hardtop. But could it be? Yes, it could... and is.

While some may laugh and others scratch their heads, this quite honest attempt by AM to provide a budget performance car that handles well and runs quick in pure stock form will be a force to be reckoned with both on and off the strip. Supplied with a 315-horsepower, 390 CID engine and a shipping weight of about 3160 pounds, it falls right at the top of F/Stock. The same ten pounds per horsepower break holds for Super Stock/J as well, and some mighty impressive figures have been produced by roller-cammed 390's in private dyno tests. So, while emphasis is going to be on the F/S version initially—with at least 500 SC/Rambler's being produced—don't be surprised if you see a few of 'em mixing it up with the pony cars in SS/J.

The SC/Rambler (call it "Scrambler") is a

team effort, a joint product of the bright, new thinking at American Motors and the nuts and bolts know-how of Hurst Performance Research. On the working level, it was drag racers Walt Czarnecki (AM) and Dave Landrith (Hurst) who came up with many of the ideas that were carried through to the car's final form. And, the list of features bears looking at: 390 engine, 10" Borg & Beck clutch, close ratio four-speed (2.23 first gear), Hurst linkage with T-Handle, oversize universal joints, 3.54 Dana rear axle with Twin-Grip, rearend torque links, heavy-duty front sway bar, heavy-duty springs and shocks, quick steering, power-assisted front disc brakes, 14" x 6" mag-styled wheels and E70 x 14 Goodyear Polyglas Wide Treads. The Carter four-barrel is fed through the king-sized, functional scoop. The prototype vehicle we evaluated last January had an incomplete cold air induction system, but production models feature a vacuum-operated flapper valve in the scoop which opens under full throttle conditions, and a rubber seal which goes around the top of the air cleaner, sealing it to the hood. To keep tabs on engine speed, an 8000 rpm sun tach is mounted on the steering column, and a pair of hood pins hold the "bonnet" in place. And all these goodies come as part of the package, as advertised, for under three grand.

The next question, of course, is what's the final result of all this—"How does it run?" In off-the-floor form it zips through the quarter in about 14.34 seconds at just a shade over 98 mph, but that's only part

of the story. CC Associate Editor Bob Swaim drove the first SC/Rambler, recording his candid impressions as he did. Here's a page from his notebook:

"Handles surprisingly well due to beefed suspension and quick steering... steering could be a little quicker.

"Performance is very good for a pure stocker. When you put your foot in it, it's hard to believe it's a Rambler.

"Ride is very stiff.

"Lots of engine and transmission noise.

"Leaves line well... no wheel hop.

"Shifter position excellent. Can bang off shifts like greased lightning.

"Tach position could be better. Have to take eyes off road to see it... also bang knuckles when shifting into reverse.

"Instrumentation... good layout, but are still using 'idiot' lights for oil pressure and battery.


"Sometimes get blinding glare off top edges of hood scoop on bright day.

"Brakes... phenomenal... stops on dime with front discs.

"Interior... comfortable.

"Clutch operation... very easy pedal pressure... engages smoothly.

"Appearance draws lots of looks and some open mouths!"

The SC/Rambler is just what it claims to be—a budget-priced performance car that will run with the pack. Most of the rough edges we encountered in the prototype will doubtless be smoothed out in production units, and make no mistake—it's no slouch. American Motors means business (a lot, they hope!) 

# image *sc/rambler*

