

by Jim McCraw

440 6 BBL SUPER BEE



We would trade all the extra power of the engine for tight windows and doors.

photos by Mike Brenner

OUR RECENT TEST of the 1970 Dodge Coronet Super Bee was like a meeting of old acquaintances, except that in this case, our old friend Super Bee was taken ill, felled by an attack of evil gremlins. More about that later, though. For now we'd like to talk about the more pleasant side of the test period.

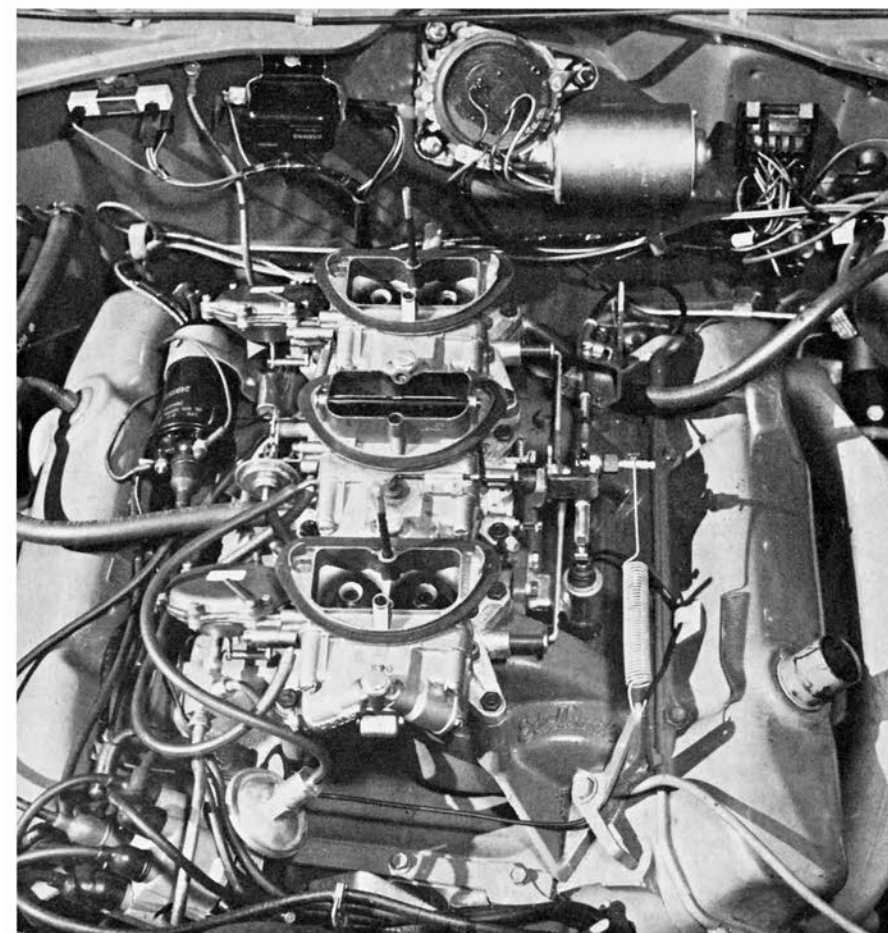
The test subject was a good looking in yellow, trimmed inside with black buckets, and decorated on the exterior by a black vinyl roof covering, one of Dodge's most popular options for the last three years or so, and the new "caliper" striping theme on the rear quarter. Then there were the road wheels, F60-15 black Goodyears, AM-stereotape radio, and the performance group, including 4-speed trans with Hurst shifter, 4.10 Sure-Grip rear, hood pins, sexy dash layout, and all. Power steering and brakes were along, too, but no air. Somehow air just kills the feel of a supercar, though it's definitely nice to have along sometimes.

Powerplant for the test car was the 1970 version of last year's pleasant surprise, the 390 hp, 6-barrel 440 wedge that we've seen so much of lately. But, because we've seen so much of it doesn't mean we don't care for it. Hardly. This one would be our favorite this year had it not been for the inception of the hydraulic hemi, which is the ultimate MoPar happening. The engine in this particular car was more responsive and quicker to react to throttle pressure than any 440 tri-power we've driven to date, probably due to some fine tuning somewhere along the line. Unfortunately, the rest of the car was not up to the level of the powerplant and made the whole test period a doldrum.

Starting at the front and working back, we found that: the miniature Super Bee emblem that rides between the two grille housings came unglued repeatedly; the hood pins had already started to rust; the ash tray door was out of alignment with the rest of the dash panel; the steering lock and its transmission interlock were very sticky and hard to disengage; the side windows leaked during rain and washing; and so did the trunk lid. That's enough to turn anybody off, especially when you consider that leakage problems have been around for three years now.

But, if you're of hardy pioneer stock and benevolent enough to overlook a few faults, the Super Bee turns out to be an adequate car. It's definitely more comfortable than previous offerings, due to redesigned seating, and seemed a lot quieter since Dodge licked the problem of the heat riser flapping constantly. In addition, the wider tires seemed to absorb more road shock than the old F70's and quiet down ordinary road noises as well.

Around town, driving the Super Bee is a two-gear proposition. All you need to take off with is second gear, with a shift direct to fourth coming soon after. The car's 4.10 gearing, combined with 480 ft./lb. of torque, would allow crawling around at 15 mph in fourth without untoward gyrations. In that respect, the Bee was very nice to drive. From the standpoint of economics, gas mileage is directly proportional to the will power of the driver. If you can keep your foot out of the secondary carburetors, and keep the revs down in



ABOVE—The 440 Magnum with three Holley two-barrels on a Dodge/Edelbrock manifold is rated at 390 hp, 480 ft. lb. torque, and is one of the few MoPar engines left more or less alone in the unending war on smog-producing engines in supercars. Response from this engine made the hemi look like a sluggard, but shifting didn't.



ABOVE—Since 1968, the performance Dodge cars have used this "Charger" dash layout, and now the Plymouths have it as well. Which all goes to prove that the American car buying public demands less now of its suppliers than it used to. While most of the instrumentation worked, the tach was erratic, pulsing as much as 1500 rpm, and the dashboard nearly fell apart from vibrations. It's time for a real change.

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gears, you may see 12 mpg. If you keep putting your foot in the carbs, look for 8-10 mpg or worse.

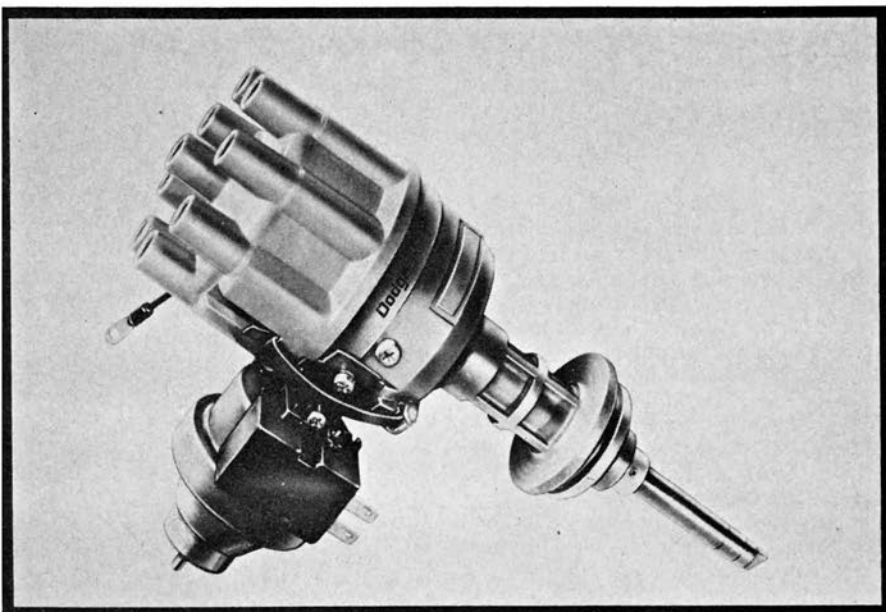
The essence of this car is, of course, acceleration, and so the last phase of its testing took place at York US30 Dragway. Since we had had experience with 1969 4-speed 6-Packs, and 1970 automatic 6-Packs, we thought we knew what to expect from the car, and prepared it accordingly. Tires were pumped to 60 psi at the front and 45 psi at the rear, and the air filter assembly was removed from the underhood tub right away. The dash control for fresh air was opened up, and the car rolled across the York scales, just for larfs: 3927 lb.!

Okay, we said, so it's a heavyweight, so what? We had visions of early trips into the 13's at 105 mph. But alas, it was not to be. The first pass down the York quarter yielded a 15.13 at 94 mph because it took us most of the way to get the car into second gear. After two more sets of burn-outs and two more runs in the 15's, we thought we were ready. By bringing the car out at 2200 rpm and feathering, first gear was quite usable, and very strong, but that's where it stopped. On every run, the 1-2 shift had to be made so slowly and deliberately that forward motion fell off to nil, and the run began again using 2-3-4. Two more runs in the 15's.

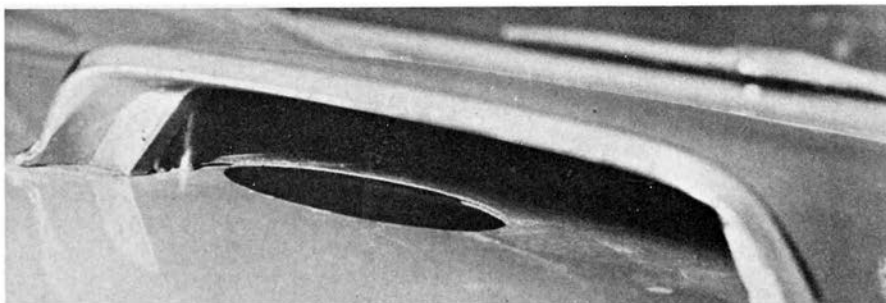
We tried everything, and some things produced positive results. Like a change in the seat location, affording a straighter shot at the stick, which dropped the et to 14.67 merely because of a quicker 1-2 shift. A couple more like that, combined with a refined line approach, produced a 14.53-101.12 mph run, which is still out of the ballpark. Confident now, we started the next run figuring on a much better et, and blew the shift altogether. This was backed up by a 14.46-101.58 mph run.

For the next 90 minutes on test day, the entire test crew took turns trying to drive the Dodge to something better than a 14.5 elapsed time. Coincidentally, there were some prominent Super Stock racers on hand, from all camps, and it soon became a matter of honor to get low et from the Dodge. Starting with a 14.41-101.12 run, professional Bill Stiles managed to get all systems working at once. His second pass was a 14.39-101.12, followed by a 14.35 at an overwhelming (for this car) 103.32 mph. Then Stiles finished off with a 14.31-102.50 mph.

These figures are about .8 seconds off, and about 4 mph slow for a stickshift 6-



ABOVE—Here's the equipment that keeps a 440 6-Pack from running away with itself. Since the engine idles at 1000 rpm for emissions, a solenoid is used to retard spark at the distributor on cruising, and another solenoid is mounted to the throttle linkage. The second switch maintains the desired idle screw position, but shuts throttles completely on shutdown to keep the engine from dieseling along after.



TOP—Our test Super Bee, one of the early ones, had '69 style fresh air intake, which will be superseded by a more complex and more stylish unit almost immediately. ABOVE—Exterior look of the car was praised by most who saw it, but the majority didn't care for the twin horsecollar grillework. Poorly mated windows caused bad leakage.

Pack, according to the performance of our automatic 6-Barrel Road Runner last month, and there was only one reason for the poor showing. The miserable factory shifter. The one with the famous name on it. The one with 47 compound curves and angles in the stick. It's our belief that, were the shifter changed, the desired performance would have appeared instantly.

In sum then, the Dodge Super Bee is a

decently styled (this is the third year for this body shell), standard priced, American supercar that will go like hell in a straight line and stop in an average distance whilst getting slightly sideways. We are a little fed up with Dodge's quality control, and disappointed in the division's concept of quality, period. Our hope is that the newer designs in this line, such as the Challenger, are better than the old standbys. ■

SUPER STOCK MAGAZINE