

# Dodge's Flying Machine

BY THE CARS STAFF

Dodge's Daytona Charger  
wasn't designed for the street, but  
it has got to be the ultimate boulevard  
mind-boggler of all times!



**B**EFORE GOING into the how and why of the Daytona Charger, we would like to clear up some misconceptions which can be directly attributed to the styling of the Daytona. First off, Dodge *is not* going out of the auto business and into airplane manufacturing. And secondly, Dodge *is* serious about mass producing the Daytona and anyone with the guts can order one from their local dealer.

Now that that's cleared up we can get into the Daytona. It's unquestionably the mind-bendingest car we have ever road tested (narrowly edging out the Ramchargers' Candy striped A/FX Stage III wedge we

street tested in '64) and certainly the most outrageous machine ever to come out of Motown. To some it's beautiful and to others it's downright ugly. It's the kind of car that you either like or hate. It's not a middle-of-the-road compromise machine. We spent two weeks with it in and around New York City and really had a time with it. To give you an idea of what people thought of it, here's a cross section of comments:

1. "If Dodge tries to sell that thing, they'll be laughed out of business!"
2. "I got gypped! My R/T is loaded with every available option and I didn't get the nose and wing."
3. "Hey Batman, does it fly?"

4. "Wow. It's the grooviest—like a beautiful trip. I must have one."

5. "They gotta be kidding. Who would buy such an ugly boat with a clothes dryer on the back?"

6. "Boss, man. You really know where it's at!"

We found it to be a straight 50/50 deal after parking it in front of a major speed shop in the area and having the counterman take a popularity poll.

The Daytona we tested was one of the first hand-built prototypes manufactured. Finished off in Hemi Orange with black trim, it didn't stand a chance of not turning a head on any street. If the nose and paint didn't get

"If Dodge tries to sell that thing, they'll be laughed out of business"

Daytona looks more like a UFO than a production passenger car, especially when surrounded by conventional traffic on a main street.



'em, the tail treatment did. We had a ball with this one.

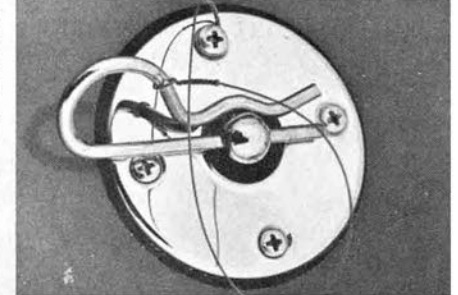
Basically, the Daytona is a straight stock Charger with the old 500 roof-line (full fastback, shortened deck lid) with a bolt-on nose and rear wing. It replaces the 500 as the factory nascar car and is available as a street machine with either 440 wedge or 426 Street Hemi power. It is the most streamlined, most advanced factory (stock) race car on the high speed ovals and is unquestionably an advance warning of things to come in the future. This goes for race machines as well as street and high speed road cars.

The beauty part of the Daytona Charger is that the front and rear end treatments are 100 percent functional, which sets it off from the common garden variety members of the spoiler and wing set (Boss Mustangs, GTO Judge, Firebird Trans-Am, Hurst Olds, etc). It was designed as a super-efficient race car and then carried over as a street model. It was not built to sell more cars or to appeal to a broader market. In fact, Dodge originally planned to market only the legal minimum needed to meet nascar specifications. They created a monster, however, and to date orders have totaled more than four times the nascar legal minimum. The orders were placed by dealers who saw only pictures. And, you know, they don't particularly care whether they sell them or not. Who could ask for a more magnetic drawing card than a brightly-painted Daytona sitting in the display window?

Our Daytona, finished in Hemi



Good friend and brave soul Joe Kocheck parked in front of Nathan's world famous eatery to check out reaction to '70 Daytona. Most passersby couldn't believe it was for real.



Small mesh grille and custom duct work keep the mill at normal running temperature. Hood is actually secured only by chromed NASCAR hood pins. Flush key locks are recommended.



Charger 500 fastback roof and extended wedge front account for a 15 percent fuel economy increase at 70 mph over conventional Charger.

Orange with black trim, sported 440-cube/375 hp wedge power backed up by a three-speed auto and 3.54 Sure Grip gears. The combination proved to be perfect for cruising at highway speeds as well as for around town jaunts. The optional 3.91 cog is a far better choice for "getting it on." At first we thought the Daytona would be rough getting used to, between the gaping stares and the 10 inches or so of sheet metal that extends forward of the stock bumper location. You see, line of sight drops off at the bumper line and you have to do some fancy judging or else you're in trouble.

And, we really sweated the small chicken wire mesh grille opening which looks like it has the cooling area to handle a lawn mower engine and certainly not a monster wedge with a high temperature (smog control standards) thermostat. And, then there's that big black wing that follows you wherever you go!

All it took was a couple of spins around town to get used to the bolts. The cooling problem we had anticipated never arose. While the mesh setup represents less than 70 percent of the original stock Charger cooling area, the results are fantastic. With this setup 100 percent of all available

air flow is directed to the radiator via the mesh opening and ducts under the nose. A Trailer Towing radiator is standard and the unit is well shrouded for maximum efficiency. And, the reverse scoops on the fenders actually vent out the engine compartment and help complete a full cycle cooling pattern. We encountered absolutely no problems in the worst NYC rush hour traffic.

The reason behind the nose and tail treatments is to stabilize the car on the straightaways where speeds are now approaching the 200 mph mark and to improve cornering traction at high tract speeds. Under 70

mph on the open road it's almost impossible to detect any difference in the car's stability. Once we were up around the century mark we found the car amazingly stable under high crosswind conditions and it seemed to develop a super sure-footedness condition. We also noticed this to some degree when cornering at super high speeds. It felt as though the Daytona was losing some of its understeer characteristics, especially under high side force crosswind conditions. Under normal driving conditions, the modifications seemed to offer no more than unreal head turning power.

Basically, a stock car tends to pivot at the rear as speed increases, adversely affecting the steering. The spoiler acts to control lift as speed increases, making the car more stable. The high negative force created by the adjustable (for various angles of attack) rear wing helps keep the car on the road. The rear wing and front "plow" act to reduce oversteer when cornering at high speeds in a heavy crosswind situation.

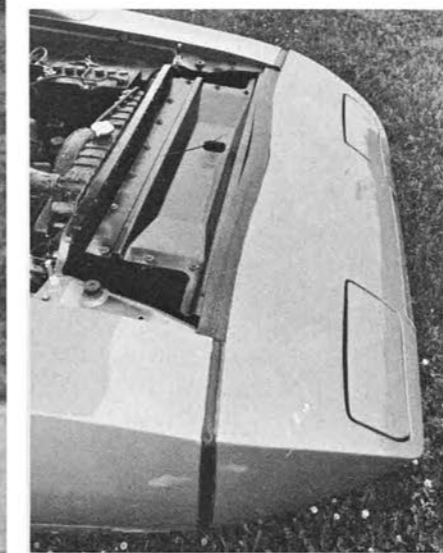
To make sure the Daytona was aerodynamically correct, various wind tunnel complexes were used to test 3/8-scale and full-size models. And then the finalized product was

tested on the high speed track. It's extremely interesting that while there's an additional 10 inches up front which accounts for a 10-percent gain in cross sectional area, there's no major change in the Daytona's center of gravity.

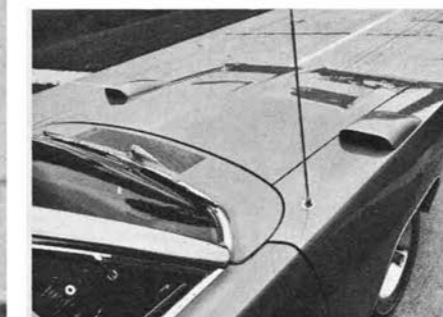
There's also an economy factor to consider, even though not too many economy-minded car buyers will even consider the Daytona. At 70 mph, the Daytona Charger gets 15 percent more fuel economy than a comparably powered and set up conventional Charger. The tapered nose and fastback 500 roofline get the  
*(Continued on Page 66)*



Note similarity between Daytona and Sting Ray frontal styling. Dig the headlight doors.



Race car driver Charlie Brownstein and friend couldn't quite get over the rear wing. They wanted to put one on Charlie's Camaro. Steel nose piece bolts up to stock Charger body. Note sloppy rubber moldings. Reverse fender scoops help cool the engine compartment.



inator brackets for all classes of competition. The car that won competition eliminator at Bristol was a fuel modified roadster, and during each round had to give tremendous head starts to his opponents, and in each round came from behind to win. By the time the eliminator had been decided, that particular entrant had a large following, and deserved it. So who says that the lower brackets aren't popular? Not the racers, and not the great percentage of fans.

It's the promoters. They've decided on their own that you don't wish to see anything but booked in shows of funny cars. Believe me, I think funny cars are great. They usually put on a boss show, but, and that's a big "but," I also like other areas of competition, and very probably you do to. Frankly, there are only a limited number of quality funny cars racing throughout the country right now, and it gets a little boring to see the same cars over and over again. The number of really good funny cars is less than thirty. Sure, there are more than that, but who wants to see a super funny car "blast" down the track with a "blistering" 8.50? Not me, and I doubt if you do, either.

Events with totally booked cars with no open spots available lose their importance. In past years, titles won at major open events such as the Olympics of Drag Racing and the World Series really meant something to both spectators and manufacturers. But now, since all the cars are guaranteed money anyway, what does the title prove? Absolutely nothing. With a large guarantee anyway, a racer could show up with a really hurtin' car, motor through in the first round, collect his money and leave. What real incentive is there for him to hang it all out? Maybe none, unless he has pride in himself and in his ability to put on a good show. There are those drivers around. The ones with pride, I mean. Of course, the other kind are around, too. So, as the saying could go: "You pays your money, and ya' takes your chances!"

The World Series of Drag Racing is featuring three straight days of funny car action, instead of the usual one day of blown funnies, one day of injected funnies and super stocks, and final day of Top Fuel, Top Gas, etc. During all three days of racing

only six spots will be open for unguaranteed racers, and those are on Friday night. I personally think that by Sunday, the final day of the event, the promoter is going to find that his overall attendance is down from last year. Maybe he won't care. Who knows. But the other racers care, and they make up the majority of people at his track every week. For the first time in years, all of the brackets won't have an opportunity to race. Maybe they won't care. I think they will, but will they tell the owner of their feelings? I hope so. And I also hope that for 1970 the World Series of Drag Racing goes back to its long tradition of being one of the Midwest's finest open competition events. My feelings about the Series are the same as those about the Olympics of Drag Racing.

With a tradition almost as long and great as that of the Series, the Olympics became a "guaranteed" race this year, after the most horrendous problems imaginable during the 1968 race. The track crew was so poorly organized, so inefficient and downright terrible that the first round of Top Gas wasn't even staged up until 9 o'clock Sunday night, and the event was finally finished about two on Monday morning. Naturally, there wasn't a spectator in the place when it ended, and who could blame them.

Well, for this year, Great Lakes Dragaway has hired a complete new crew, and they're really pretty good, so what happens? They book sixteen funnies, sixteen fuelers, a few super stocks, and there goes the tradition down the drain. And, of course, those racers that have supported Great Lakes on a weekly basis all season lose their one opportunity to make some really big money. For them, it's tough. The only way to prevent a fiasco like the 1968 Olympics is to get a good working crew, and if that's impossible, hire in a good one just for the weekend. I understand that it's possible to hire the NHRA Division Director and his efficient crew for any given race, but you'd have to check with the DD to confirm that. The point I'm trying to make is that for some money a good crew is always available. It might be worth considering if you're planning on having a good open event, Mr. Promoter.

And, Mr. Promoter, your local racers deserve some type of large open event at least once a year. They'll support your race, and so

will your fans. Think about, and you racers do the same. Talk to your local promoter about a large open event. It can't hurt, can it?

## DODGE DAYTONA continued

credit for the economy boost.

There are many things we like and dislike about the Daytona. First off the bug-eye recessed headlights look great when they're hidden, but completely ruin the frontal styling when they're brought into view. The rear wing treatment is downright ugly, but super functional from a racing viewpoint. We really missed the normal front bumper, especially when parking. But the word is that the full productionline models will sport some frontal protection. And, we really can't hack the mating surface between the streamlined nose and the stock fenders. The rubber molding gets kind of sloppy and looks cheap. The rest of the car—performance, comfrot, appointments—is Charger R/T and certainly competitive with the current market. At first we hated it, but as time went on we learned to groove on it. If it were only available in some conservative colors. . . .

## TORQUE EAST continued

a big improvement over the old jeep's rigid axles front and rear. However, the M151's rear suspension is a swing axle design a lot like the old VW and Corvair cars. Also, the jeep must be able to cope with all kinds of rough terrain while hauling a good size payload around the boondocks. As such, it's fitted with super duty springs. The result, of course, is a rear end that is constantly changing camber. The rear wheels tuck under at a moment's notice and the M151 has earned a reputation—and rightfully so—of being tippy. In other words, the damn thing turns over easily.

Any knowledgeable car enthusiast could solve the problem of the M151 very quickly. All it takes is some standard handling tricks for swing axle cars. First, they should decamber the rear suspension a little. Second, install a camber compensator similar to the ones sold by EMPI for VWs. It's really that simple.

Unfortunately, nothing is simple in the Army. So they continue to use unsafe vehicles that have already killed and maimed. But then, what's an army for? (Continued on Page 68)