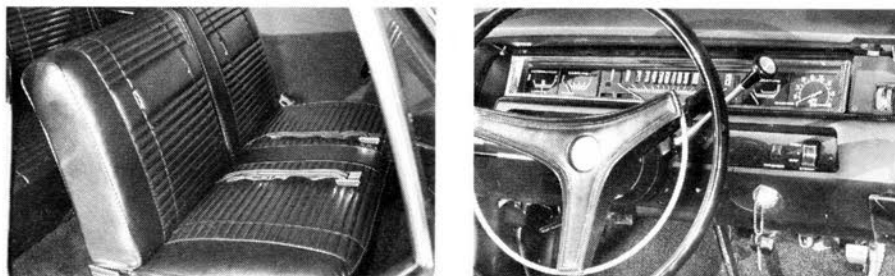




You won't see too many like this! Clear days in Los Angeles, that is. But if sales of the '69 RR are anything like those in '68, you'll be hearing "beep-beep" everywhere!

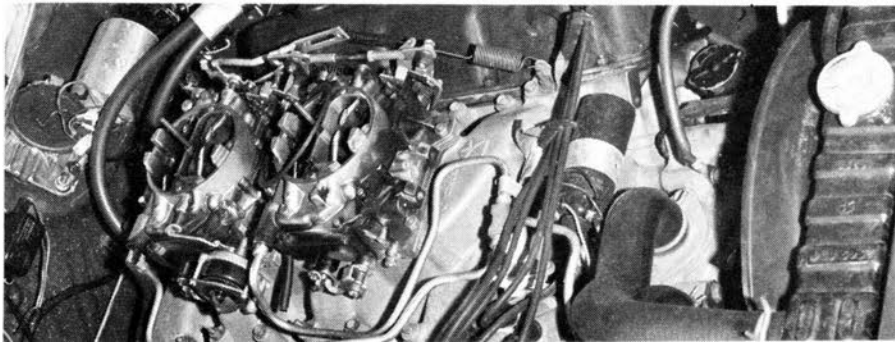


At Press Day showing, Ronnie Sox, left, and CC Associate Editor Bob Swaim discuss the fine points of the Road Runner's "Coyote Duster" fresh air package. It's dash controlled.



The interior and dash on this year's Runner are well thought out and executed. Tach face is small but easily legible; the "Carb Air" underhood air control is at the far right.

The Hemi does its heavy breathing through two Carter four-barrel carbs, fed by fresh air from the "Coyote Duster" intake system. Intake manifold is of lightweight aluminum.



HEMI road runner

Plymouth's '69 Roadrunner, an improved version of their '68 sales record setter, combines with a 426 c.i. Hemi and a "Coyote Duster" to produce the fastest and quickest piece of stock Detroit iron that CC has ever tested.

You wouldn't think that those four simple little **H-E-M-I.** letters would attract that much attention, would you? But recent experiences have shown us that when these letters are placed in a strategic location on each hood scoop of the 1969 Plymouth Road Runner, they have more attention getting effect than the flashy wheels, trick stripes, emblems and other accouterments common to today's super cars. Never before have we seen as many gaping mouths, bulging eyeballs, or had as many questions asked us regarding a car's performance as we did with our "Hemi-Bird." Most common query encountered was, "What'll it run at the drags?" "Around 13.35 seconds," was our standard reply. "You're kidding! That big red boat?" was the usual comeback. A reconfirmation of the RR's capabilities would invariably bring on questions regarding any modifications made. "Completely stock," we would say, which usually brought on a "WOW," or some other exclamation of astonishment or disbelief. But it's true, and then some!

It all began one autumn afternoon at Irwindale Raceway, where we went to pick up our first '69 CC Drag Test car. Admittedly a drag strip is an unusual place to take delivery on a new Road Runner, but it seems that the Plymouth people were kind enough to conduct the first phases of our test for us; and of course, they gathered a few facts that they needed to know at the same time. You see, about a week before, the Chrysler Crew, including a very talented driver by the name of Ronnie Sox, had arrived in Southern California. With them they had our Road Runner, along with three other Plymouth performance-type autos. The purpose of the excursion was to find out exactly how well their cars ran in stock configuration. Just to make sure that everything was on the up and up, NHRA's Tech Director, Bill "Farmer" Dismuke, was on hand to check the cars at the end of each day's running to certify that the



and the beep goes on...

times were indeed "pure stock."

But before we get into test results, let's find out a little more about our "Acceleratii rapidus maximus" (Latin for Road Runner, according to the ads). As we touched on before, the optimal 426 cu. in., 425 hp hemispherical head engine was the motivating force for the red two-door coupe. This was in lieu of the standard 383 c.i. powerplant. Transmission of the 490 foot/pounds of Hemi torque to the 4.10-1 gear in the Sure-Grip rearend was handled by one of Plymouth's TorqueFlite Automatics. (For those who would rather shift for themselves, a four-speed trans with Hurst shifter is standard.) In the tire department, Red Streak Wide Boots by Goodyear are original equipment. Heading up the list of options was a new offering for '68, the "Coyote Duster" cool air induction system. A significant increase in engine efficiency and performance is attributed to the system, which feeds air to two Carter four-barrels through a sealed air box on the underside of the hood. Engine air can be drawn from either the engine compartment or through the two hood scoops, and can be regulated by a control in the driver's compartment. Other options that came on our test "RR" included power steering, an AM radio with rear speaker, a remote control mirror, undercoating (not exactly the hot set-up for a performance car because of the added weight), and a tachometer. Total "sticker price" was \$4437, with the hemi option.

Now that we know what we were working with, let's get back to results. Several initial blasts by Sox had netted times in the mid-thirteens and speeds in the 105-106 mph bracket. After getting the starting line technique worked out, which was a tricky matter with stock tires and the gobs of torque produced by the Hemi, and a change of plugs, from Champion N-10Y's to cooler UN-12Y's, a best pure stock run was made at 13.35 seconds and 107.39 mph. Needless to say the Chrysler people were happy, while we were thoroughly impressed. Thirteen-thirty-five for a pure stock anything, especially a 3,825 pounder, is extremely rapid.

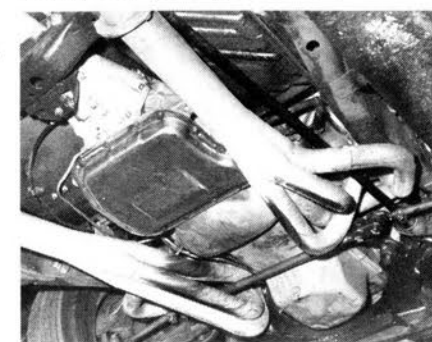
Now that we knew what she would do stock, we and the Chrysler people decided to see what difference a couple of changes would make. Out came the stock, solid lifter camshaft and in its place went a Racer Brown SSH-25 hydraulic type. With 294 degrees dura-

tion, and a lift of .485-inch, and 70 degrees of overlap, this is the one that is recommended by Chrysler for best all around street-strip performance. A trip out to Hooker Headers in Ontario, Calif. was next in order, for the installation of a set of their under-the-frame headers.

Back to Irwindale, and Sox began to test for results from the changes. Before opening up the headers, several runs were made to get a rough idea of how much effect the Racer Brown cam alone would have. A 13.06 sec. ET and 108.69 mph best spelled out a .29-second and 1.3 mph improvement. The headers were then opened up in preparation for the Road Runner's hopeful assault on the twelve second bracket. Again a number of runs were made down the 1320, and we were in the high twelves. Finally, the top marks for the "Hemi-Bird" with the cam and header combination were set at 12.79 seconds and 112.50 mph. Altogether, that's a .56 second and 5.11 mph improvement.

Up to this point in the testing, it had been pretty much Chrysler's show, with CC observing from the sidelines. Now, the MoPar men were ready to turn the Road Runner over to us, and we were anxious to see what we could do with the "Bird." But before we could take

Hooker Headers make gentle bends around Hemi; they were good for .27 e.t. drop.



Another of our CC staffers, Tech Ed. A.B. Shuman, got low e.t. of trials at 12.6. Valve damage incurred at Press Day preview limited top performance, but it still screamed!



Text and Photos by Bob Swaim

her away, there was one more small matter to get out of the way. Bob Norwood, manager of Chrysler-Plymouth's PR office here in L.A., decided to give the automotive press in the area a chance to test drive each of the four cars that had been used in the performance trials. We are bringing out this fact for two reasons. First of all it gave John Dianna of *Hot Rod Magazine* a chance to put down an early morning run of 12.77, bettering Sox's best time by a couple of hundredths. Secondly, there were many hard runs put on the RR that day by the various press writers and photographers in attendance, and on several occasions the car was over-revved to the point of valve float. Although we didn't think too much about it at the time, this was to have a definite effect on the rest of our test, so keep this fact in mind. But now it was our turn!

First impression? It was our turn to "wow!" Getting that "bear" out of the gate with those stock F70-14 Goodyear Polyglas tires was really a job. The throttle had to be squeezed very gingerly toward the floor to get any kind of ET at all. Too much throttle and she would just sit there and burn a hole in the asphalt. So in search of traction, we went on. (continued on p. 80)

Cragar Super Stock wheels and Goodyear tires did the "good job" at the rearend



DRAG TEST

(continued from page 41)

A call over to Dick Landy's shop located the tires that we needed, or so we thought. On the way to the track we stopped by and picked up the 8½-inch wide, 8.90-15 Goodyears, mounted on Cragar wheels. One more stop was in order before we could run again, this time at Ray Alley's Engine Masters in Garden Grove, to bolt on a set of traction bars. Eastern Tool of New York had been kind enough to send out a set of their New Milford ET bars for our test car, figuring that after our previous experience, we needed all the help we could get. The bars were installed in about twenty minutes, and we were on our way again.

Upon our arrival at Orange County International Raceway we proceeded to switch tires, open up the headers and head for the staging beams. After a couple of high twelve second runs, we returned to the pits to regroup. It seemed that now the case was *too much* traction. We couldn't get the Road Runner out of the gate, as those Goodyears and ET Bars teamed to give us a combination we couldn't break loose. At the same time, it felt as though engine power were down a bit, but we weren't positive. Anyway, we kept trying. By bumping the timing, changing tire pressures, cooling her off, and finally by resorting in desperation to neutral starts at 4000 rpm (which is highly undesirable with a stock trans), we managed to eke out a 12.65-second time at around 110 mph. Although that is a .12 second improvement, the speed was down considerably, which indicated to us that something was definitely amiss in the engine department. Unfortunately, our impending deadline for this story precluded any further work with the car, so regretfully we returned it.

Upon our advice the Road Runner was returned to Landy's, where his ace engine man, Willie Honsberger, dove in to see if he could find any obvious problems. A quick compression check revealed a 50 lb. variation between some cylinders, which most likely meant bad valves. Remember that press day at Irwindale? Well, we just received a call from Willie which verified our suspicions. Two valve guides were "junk," while most of the valves were bent, three of them badly. So when you consider this handicap, 12.6 wasn't too bad after all. Surely we would have gotten below 12.5 seconds had everything been in order, but that's the way the valves bend. Anyway you look at it, though, the Hemi Road Runner is a mighty formidable "streetster." So next time you hear a *beep-beep*, and look around, and spot "H.E.M.I." on a hood scoop, you better cool it, unless you're just hankerin' to get your doors blown off! ©