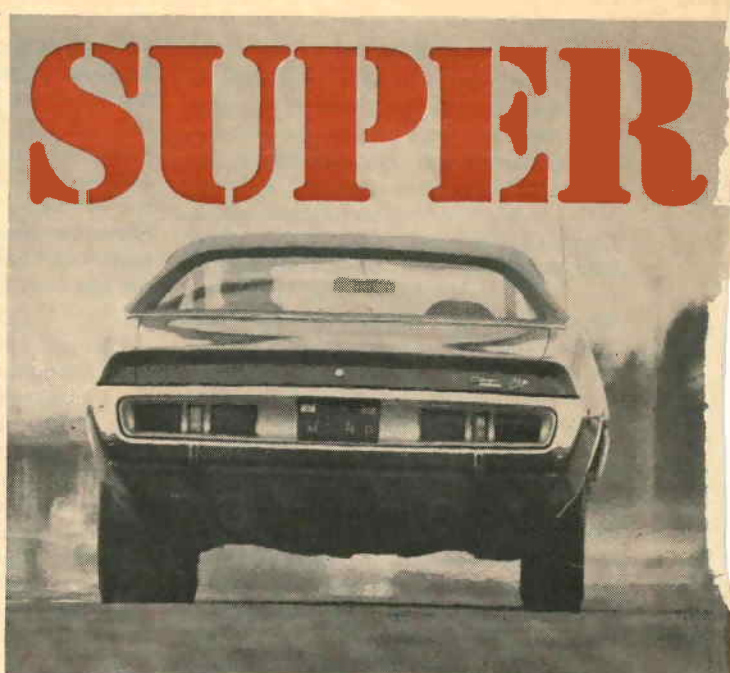
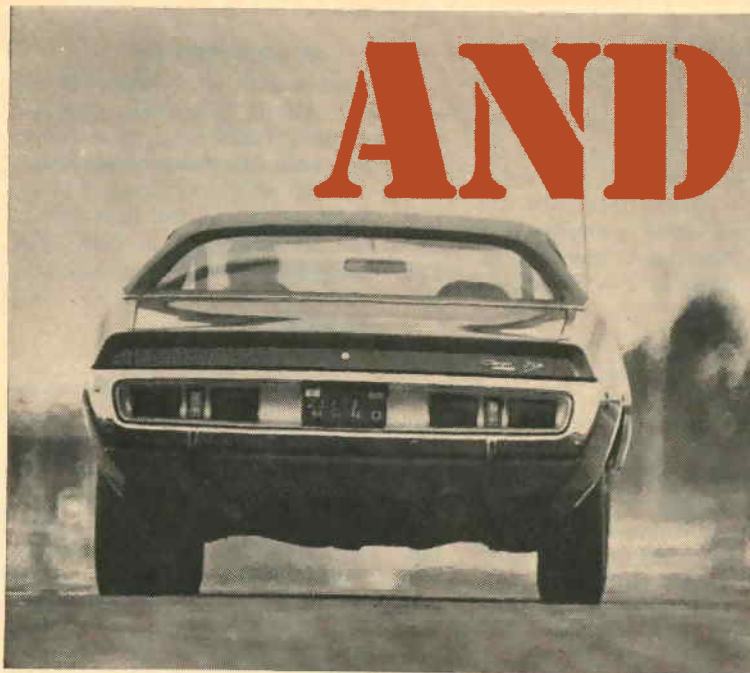


# AND SUPER



**By Steve Kelly** ■ Had Dodge not built a specialty car and named it "Charger" back in 1966, there might not be any good reason to put that name to one of their car lines now. Although the original fastback Charger didn't become an overwhelming sales success, it was a successful child in that it gave its parents an appealing image. Henceforth, from 1966, the Charger name denoted a specialty vehicle. The '68 Charger was a radical departure from the first model, and it too was a bit of a specialty car. The '68 through '70 Chargers were slightly more expensive than Coronets, although they shared underbody and suspension components. The 1971 Charger shows what Dodge was up to way back there when they put this specialty car to work. If you want a two-door "middle-sized" Dodge now, it'll have to be a Charger. The Coronet title encompasses four-door and station wagon models only, and these have a three-inch-longer wheelbase than the Charger, which rides on a 115-inch wheelbase. It's possible to find a Charger priced under \$3000 this year, but it wouldn't have any high-cost options, and it would be powered by a 225-cubic-inch Slant Six hooked to a three-speed. Basic V8 Chargers have 318 engines, and even these might be picked up for under three grand. No matter how Dodge realigns this marque, "Charger" will continue to denote a car with sporty character and good performance.

Despite there being a surcharge on high-performance machines, muscle-car buyers will continue to make themselves known at dealer showrooms. Our test subject, a Super Bee with a Six-Pack 440 engine, isn't going to carry any low insurance rates for under-25 buyers, but if you can afford the tab — whatever

your age — then you'll no doubt enjoy the car.

This car's performance fell short of our expectations. Best we could manage was a 14.28-second elapsed time through Orange County International Raceway's quarter-mile, with a top end of 99.55 mph. This is short of the clocking a nearly identically equipped Coronet Six-Pack 440 ran for a feature in our August '69 issue. That car weighed 3850 pounds and ran a 13.56-second e.t. at 105.63 mph in full street trim. This '71 Super Bee tipped the scales at 4135 pounds, and even with the added weight against it, the '71 car got under the 14.30 mark only one time. The rest of the e.t.s were 14.50 and slower. The car was allowed to cool down, and the lead was bumped two degrees on the distributor to obtain that 14.28 time. The 440 triple-two-barrel-carbureted MoPar engine hasn't been changed since 1969, and it's one of those engines that still operate on premium (leaded) fuel. It's perplexing to get a car with heaps of potential and then find it won't respond. In defense of this car's performance, we know it had been handed around a bit before we got it, and there was good evidence of blow-by. Quite likely there was a ring scuffing a wall, and an external tune-up (plugs, etc.) just won't cure such an illness. There's no reason why a well-cared-for and -prepared Super Bee, equipped like the one we tested, should not be able to travel a quarter-mile in less than 14 seconds.

This near-\$5000-priced car came fitted with a TorqueFlite and 4.10:1 rear gear with Chrysler Sure-Grip. This makes engine speed quite high at freeway cruising speeds, but with this engine's great torque output, high-speed passing is something to experience, especially

when it's downshifted to second and all three carburetors are put to work. Of course this isn't a benefit to gas mileage, and average readings were too close to 10 mpg for an economy-minded soul to like. Front and rear carburetors open via vacuum linkage, and they get all the way open almost as soon as the progressive part of the center carb hookup reaches the point where the additional carbs are contacted.

It is safe to go to 6000 rpm with the 440 Six-Pack motor, but it doesn't do any good. We found best shift point to be 5300, and with the automatic, this means anticipating this point by moving the lever at 5000. Left in "Drive," the automatic shifts up at 4500, which is too low for the engine to recover and keep pulling when the automatic gets into the next higher gear. Stall speed is right at 1200 rpm, and by the time the big red tachometer needle edges past 1000, the rear wheels are starting to overpower the brakes. Leaving the line, we found it best to drive into the carburetor(s) rather than plant the gas pedal to the floor. That's because of those front and rear carbs coming all the way open in a hurry, putting the Goodyears out of viable contact with the asphalt. It's also best to "drive into" the torque converter. By holding the line-load engine speed under 1000, the car comes out smoother and the initial acceleration occurs without any noticeable bog. This Charger had the Slap-Stik console-mounted shift handle, which makes it easy to upshift without worrying over pushing the lever a notch too far (say into neutral), which can have a disconcerting aftereffect.

For such a large and heavy car, the Charger sure does a good job in running

*(Continued on page 44)*

# IT IS



Charger Super Bees are like  
sin; you know it'll cost  
you, but you can pay later



Four, three, two, one. With proper application  
of the go-pedal, the Super Bee comes out without any  
delay, but its weight doesn't help at the top end.  
LEFT — Instrument spread is restricted to driver's  
reach. Optional tach has a huge face, and Credence  
Clearwater comes in clear on the stereo. BELOW —  
It still looks good — and like a Charger.



