

WATCH

SYCLONE

How About An S-15 With A Turbocharged V-6, All-Wheel Drive, Four-Wheel ABS . . . And Unlimited Production?

By Rik Paul

The Syclone is coming. And when it arrives, all eyes in the truck industry will be watching carefully.

The first sighting of this radical new GMC S-15 pickup occurred about a year and a half ago at the '89 North American International Auto Show in Detroit. It was just a concept vehicle then, but it was hot. It sported a lowered body, a full aero package and a rear spoiler, and it was finished in all white with red graphics. But the real news lay under the hood, where GMC had slipped in a 270-hp Buick Grand National turbocharged 3.8-liter V-6. Although it was impressive on the show circuit, concept vehicles rarely get anywhere near a dealer's lot without extensive changes.

In the months following, however, rumors surfaced that the Syclone was being seriously considered for production. Then the Syclone reappeared at the '89 SEMA Show in Las Vegas last November, where GMC confirmed that it had every intention of bringing it to the street.

As expected, the truck had changed. Instead of the committee-like compromises we expected to see, the Syclone actually seemed better. It still had its lowered stance and full aero package, but the truck was all black and meaner looking.

Meanwhile, for reliability and production reasons, GMC opted to go with a turbocharged version of the 4.3-liter Vor-

tec V-6 in place of the 3.8, which upped the power estimate to 285 horsepower. The Syclone looked powerful and imminent. Everyone hoped it wouldn't blow itself out before it could hit the dealers' showrooms.

Now, it's official. The Syclone is just around the bend and, judging from a scouting expedition that *Sport Truck* just completed, it looks like it's going to blow away the competition.

Here's the scoop. The Syclone is scheduled to go into production in January, 1991, and it should be on dealers' lots soon after that. The production version was developed by PAS of Troy, Michigan, working in conjunction with the GMC Truck division. PAS has drawn from its extensive racing and engineering experience to transform the Syclone into a truck that's even more impressive than the original concept vehicle.

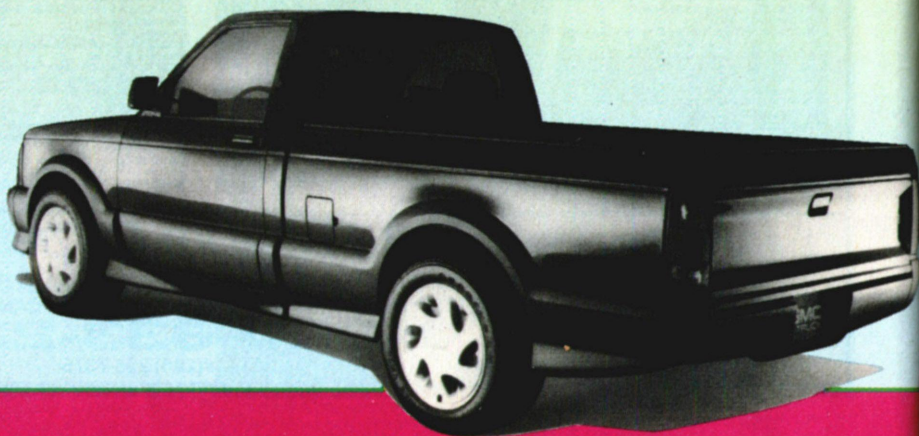
The Syclone is still all black with subtle red graphics accents. The body was

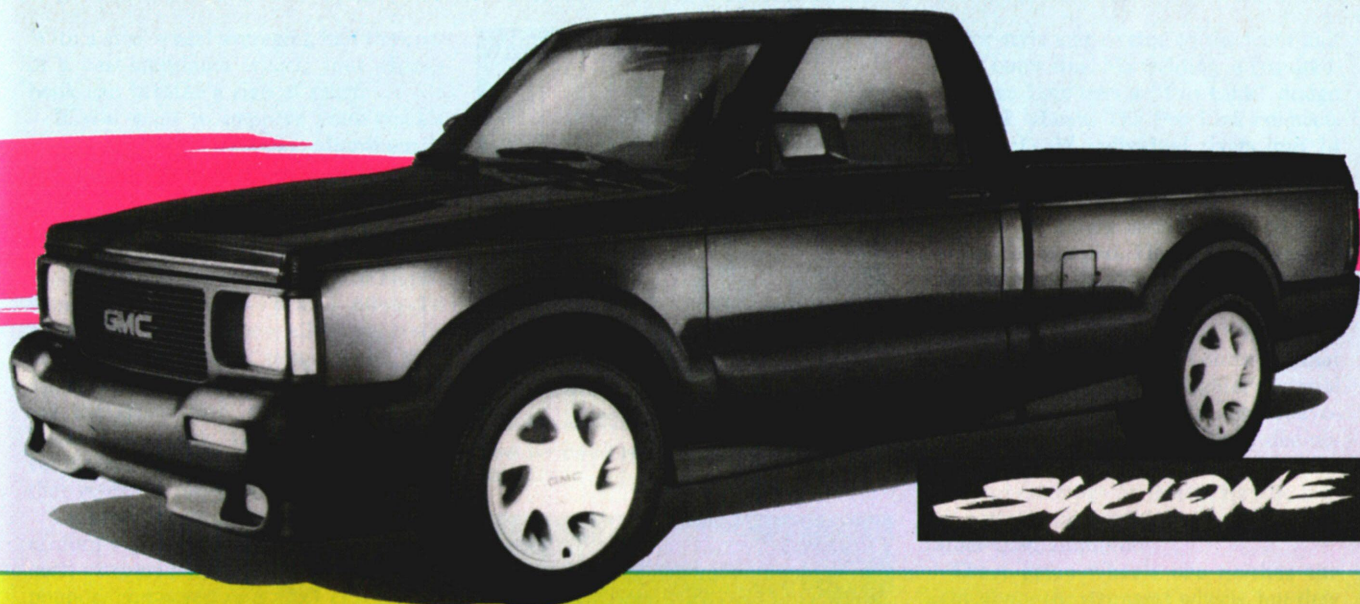
lowered three inches in both the front and the rear to enhance its street-fighter look. In addition, the aero package was further refined through wind tunnel testing. It's not only aerodynamically functional, but it's also one of the cleanest ground-effects packages we've seen.

Complementing this sleek exterior are 16-inch aluminum wheels and 50-series, V-rated Firestone tires that have been designed specifically for the Syclone.

Under the hood lies all the power a sport trucker could yearn for. The turbocharged 4.3-liter V-6 is estimated to put out 285 horsepower at 4200 rpm and a potent 370 lb-ft of torque. Compare these figures with the 230 horsepower and 385 lb-ft of Chevy's current 454 SS, and then consider that the Syclone will weigh about 1500 pounds less than the 454 SS. According to GMC's testing, this adds up to lightning-quick 0-60 times in the mid-four-second range.

To help the 4.3 churn out this kind of





power, a tuned-port fuel-injection system replaces the stock throttle-body system. In addition, the turbocharger features a water-cooled intercooler. This unit helps cool the turbo's charge as it enters the combustion chambers, resulting in denser intake air and increased power output.

In order to get all that power to the ground in the most efficient and controllable way, the Syclone is equipped with a full-time, all-wheel-drive system. Plus, the first four-wheel antilock braking system ever available on a pickup truck will haul the Syclone down effectively and controllably, without any wheel lockup or need for brake modulation.

The rest of the Syclone package looks just as impressive. For instance, covering the bed is a Luzzus TruxCover tonneau cover, made by Innovative Accessories in Norman, Oklahoma. The tonneau snaps to an aluminum frame that attaches to the truckbed without drilled holes, so corrosion protection is not compromised. This setup also offers the convenience of being able to open the rear tailgate without the need to unsnap the tonneau.

Inside, cloth-covered sport bucket seats, with side and thigh bolsters and a

Syclone insignia, are standard fare. In between them sits a center console, which includes two cup holders, a storage compartment and a sporty shifter for the 700R4 four-speed automatic tranny.

Other standard features include a leather-wrapped steering wheel, matching cloth door trim, air conditioning, power windows and locks and an AM/FM/cassette stereo. In addition, GMC had the good sense to replace the stock gauge package with a complete set of round analog gauges, including a tachometer and a turbo boost gauge.

In fact, the only options that will be offered for the Syclone are a sunroof and a compact disc player.

No price has been set for the Syclone yet, but GMC is trying to bring it in for under \$25,000. In contrast to the limited production runs for the 454 SS and GMC's proposed Spectre, this speedster will be produced in unlimited numbers, according to buyer demand. Theoretically, there will be enough Syclones to go around for anyone who wants to buy one.

Unfortunately, our scouting expedition didn't include a test drive, because all running prototypes were tied up in vari-

ous testing. However, the Syclone watch goes on. We expect to have a finished production-version Syclone to drive very soon, so look for an update in an upcoming issue. ■



These prototype gauges were taken from a Pontiac Sunbird Turbo, but the Syclone's production gauges will be very similar.