



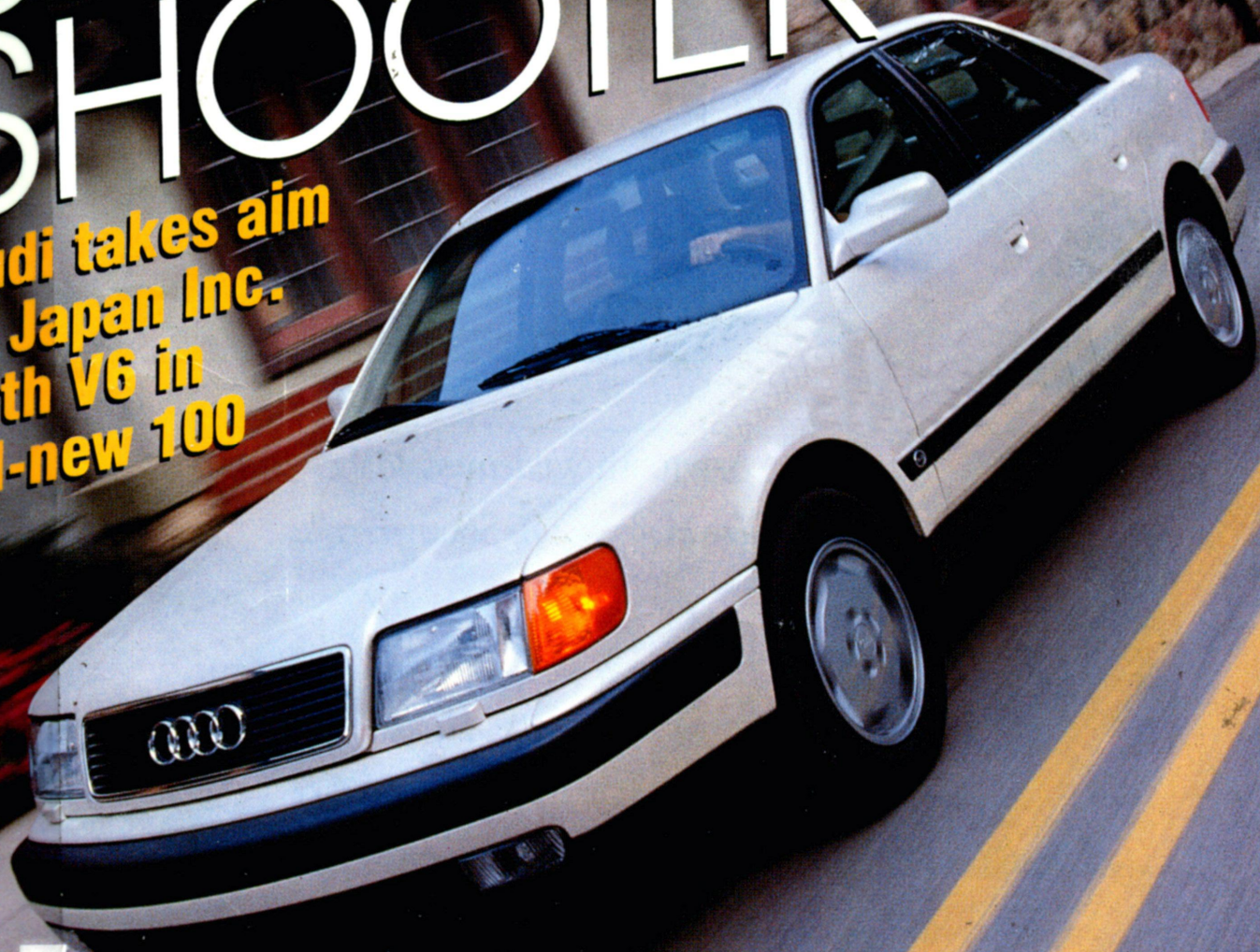
**BUICK MASTERS AN AMERICAN ROAD**  
**AUTOFILE: SYCLONE**  **ITALIAN GP**

September 16, 1991  
\$1.95 USA \$2.50 Canada

# AutoWeek®

## SIX SHOOTER

**Audi takes aim  
at Japan Inc.  
with V6 in  
all-new 100**







## A LAUNCH VEHICLE

### JUST THE FACTS

#### MANUFACTURER'S DATA

GMC Truck Division  
General Motors Corp.  
31 Judson St.  
Pontiac, Mich., 48342-2230  
Customer Assistance telephone number:  
(313) 446-4547  
Country of Origin: United States  
Number of dealers: 2455

#### PRICING

Base: \$25,500  
As tested: \$26,025  
Rebates: No national plan  
Destination charge: \$525  
What owners paid: \$21,600—\$28,692,  
\$25,417.49 avg.

#### EQUIPMENT

**Standard:** 4.3-liter turbocharged, intercooled Vortec V6 engine, 16-inch cast aluminum wheels, three-point belts, air deflector, fog lamps, tonneau cover, a/c, tinted glass, power steering and brakes, leather-wrapped, tilt steering wheel, console, intermittent wipers, cruise control, AM-FM/stereo cassette, power windows and door locks, analog instruments, heavy-duty battery, locking differential, engine oil cooler

**Options on test car:** None

**Other major options:** (Only option available:) AM-FM/stereo cassette w/graphic equalizer (\$150)



**G**MC wants to play the numbers game with this truck. That's understandable. The Syclone is meant to impress with prodigious straight-line acceleration. Numbers are the easiest way to illustrate that. But that sets a trap for GMC.

Which wouldn't matter much except that the reputation of an exciting vehicle suffers. Besides being a very good straight-line accelerator, the Syclone is a decent all-around vehicle. And that's something that numbers can't always measure.

But, back to the trap. In the Aug. 15, 1991, edition of *USA Today*, a full-page GMC Truck ad quotes our test of the Porsche Carrera 4 (AW, Feb. 4, '91) in which we report getting the Porsche to 60 mph from a standstill in 5.0 seconds and to the quarter-mile in 13.7 seconds at 103 mph. GMC then gives its own numbers for the Syclone: 0-60 in 4.6 seconds, the quar-

ter in 13.4 seconds at 99.8 mph.

The trap closes now that we've put the Syclone through its paces at Michigan International Speedway. If our Porsche numbers are good enough for GMC, our Syclone numbers should be, too. But we doubt they will be because in our hands the Syclone tested slower than the Porsche, as the figures in "The Numbers" table prove.

Our numbers don't even completely cover what the factory had claimed—5.0 seconds or less for 0-60 and the quarter-mile in 13.4 seconds or less—when the Syclone was introduced (AW, Oct. 1, '90). But a lot of things affect acceleration: air temperature, humidity, track surface, track temperature,

driver. Change one of these and the times can change significantly, making a specific number unimportant.

What is important is that the Syclone is in an elite class in being able to hit 60 mph in less than six seconds. Throw in price and the exclusivity rises. The only things priced close to it that even approximate its acceleration are the 5.0-liter Mustang and—maybe—the 5.7-liter Camaro and Firebird.

The secret to the Syclone's success is not just the power it produces but its ability to put the power on the pavement. All-wheel-drive helps it hook up *right now*, making a brake-torque start resemble a space launch. Rolling acceleration isn't quite as awesome, particu-

## LIKES...

- Unequaled acceleration for the price, and almost just plain unequaled, period.
- Black-on-black exterior and aero look draws lots of stares.
- More luggage room than any sports car made.

## DISLIKES...

- The suspension bounces the truck out of line all too easily.
- Off-road use, towing and hauling more than 500 pounds is prohibited.
- Interior needs improvement.



Gauges and dials are crammed into a tiny space in small interior. Awd helps surprisingly good handling and rocket starts (below left)



JIM FRENK PHOTOS

## THE NUMBERS

### STANDING-START ACCELERATION

0-35 mph	2.1 sec
0-55 mph	4.5 sec
0-60 mph	5.2 sec
0-100 km/h	5.7 sec
0-65 mph	6.2 sec
0-City block (500 ft)	71.5 mph, 7.5 sec
0-quarter mile	97 mph, 14.2 sec

### ROLLING ACCELERATION

25-45 mph (kickdown)	1.9 sec
45-65 mph (kickdown)	3.4 sec

### BRAKING

65-0	147 ft
55-0	106 ft
45-0	71 ft
35-0	43 ft

### FUEL ECONOMY

EPA city	14 mpg
EPA hwy	17 mpg
EPA combined	15 mpg
AW overall	14.6 mpg
During track testing	12.8 mpg
Overall minus track	15.8 mpg
Corrected for odometer error of +2.5%	

### RIDING THE ON-RAMP

Banked 160-ft radius turn 47.6 mph (0.95g)

### PUBLISHED BENCHMARKS

0-60 mph	4.9 sec (MT)
SS 1/4-mile	13.6 sec (MT)
60-0	133 ft (MT)
Skidpad	0.82g (R&T)

### ENGINE

Front-longitudinal, turbocharged, intercooled  
4.3-liter/262 cid Vortec V6  
cast-iron block and heads  
Horsepower ..... 280 @ 4200 rpm  
Torque (lb ft) ..... 350 @ 3600 rpm  
Compression ratio ..... 8.35:1  
Valve train ..... Sohc, two valves per cylinder  
Fuel delivery ..... Electronic injection

### DRIVETRAIN

All-wheel-drive  
Transmission ..... Four-speed automatic  
Final drive ratio ..... 3.42:1

### BRAKES

F/R ..... Power vented discs/drums, ABS

### WHEELS AND TIRES

Cast aluminum, 245/50VR16 Firestone SBR BW

### SUSPENSION

Front: ..... Independent, control arms, shocks, antiroll bar  
Rear: ..... Rigid rear axle located by semi-elliptic leaf springs, shocks

### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase (in)	108.3
Length/width (in)	180.5/68.2
Test weight (lb)	3600

### CAPACITIES

Fuel (gal)	20
Cargo (cu ft)	40.1 (bed)

Voices," page 24). While a few may be disappointed in a 4x4 pickup that wears stickers warning against going off-road or fitting a slide-in camper and is incapable of carrying more than 500 pounds of cargo, most accept the tradeoffs made to gain the performance.

In addition the Syclone's ride, handling and braking are surprisingly competent given that it's an all-wheel-drive truck tuned for drag strip derring-do. Despite a suspension considerably lowered and stiffened, the ride does not jar eyeballs to jelly. Similarly—and thanks in large part to its awd and

Firestone Firehawk SVXs—handling on smooth surfaces is better than average for a car, far better than average for a truck. We recorded 0.95g on our simulated on-ramp, which compares favorably with the Acura Legend Coupe (0.97g). Braking distances were also comparable to the Legend's.

And compared with its spiritual ancestors—Buick Grand National and GNX and Pontiac 20th Anniversary Trans Am Turbo—the Syclone has superb road manners.

However, this hot-rod truck is not without its shortcomings. Ride and handling suf-

larly above about 35 mph, since turbo lag delays things a bit. Off the line is where the Syclone is most impressive.

Still, \$25K would be a large price to pay for a one-dimensional vehicle. Fortunately the Syclone offers more than that.

Most purchasers don't seem to care about its truck talents, but some do (see "Owners

fer on rough surfaces thanks to the suspension modifications. The automatic transmission jolts as it shifts even under mild acceleration. The instrument panel verges on the farcical since so many gauges, lights and dials have been crammed into so small a space. Unless you have an in-seam of less than, say, 30 inches you drive

with the seat all the way back and thus risk bouncing your head off the back window. And that window readily reflects the image of the instruments and your hands on the wheel into the rearview mirror.

And speaking of mirrors, you'd think a vehicle that can put objects in its mirrors as readily as the Syclone can would have side

mirrors adjustable from inside the cabin. Especially when the bottom line on the sticker is more than \$25,000.

Some of the problems mentioned here are addressed by the Syclone's sibling, the Typhoon. This new-for-'92 model is a two-door sport/utility version of the hot-to-trot truck. And as such it provides better room

## OWNERS VOICES

### Loads of fun, a bit impractical

#### OVERALL

It's a huge grin all the time.

*Edward Dow  
Houston*

It's the best \$25,000 toy I've ever bought in my lifetime. The awd and ABS are just world class up here in the mountains.

*Sig Davidson  
Prescott, Ariz.*

I own several high performance vehicles, including a ZR-1 Corvette, and I recently sold my 1986 Buick Grand National. I have been very favorably impressed with the overall build quality and performance of the Syclone. It clearly is as fast as the GN, but without all the furious wheelspin and axle-hopping that my stock (except for the Hypertech Stage 1 chip) Grand National would go through on hard launches. It really han-



dles more like a sports car than a truck. GMC can be credited with doing its homework on this one.

*Mark B. Rohrer  
Boston*

I have a Bentley Turbo R and a Mercedes 560SEC sitting in the garage while the Syclone is being driven daily to work and on weekends to the country club. The truck is great fun!

*Roger Frazier  
Hartford City, Ind.*

## WHAT IT'S WORTH

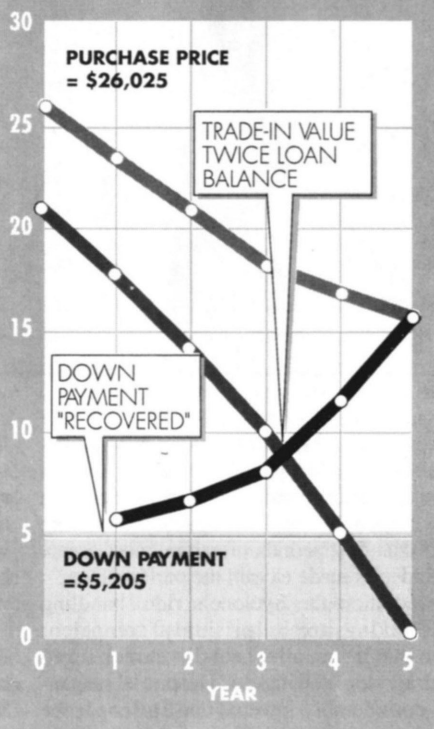
### Will the Syclone become a collectible?

*Probably not, but it will not depreciate too badly*

Predicting is hard in this case. Because this is a new model there's no track record. Even though the Syclone's based on a truck which *does* have a track record, it differs so much from that parent vehicle in intent and target market that a comparison would be ill-advised. But vehicles similar in intent and concept—i.e., Buick GNX and 20th Anniversary Trans Am—were, unlike the Syclone, limited in their model runs and so were not comparable.

Thus we've had to make some assumptions: The Syclone will be sought-after by collectors but will be driven on a fairly regular basis rather than stored as an investment, and it will continue in production for at least three years. Based on those assumptions two others have been made: the Syclone will lose 10 percent of sticker in each of the first three years of our model loan but level off to a five-percent drop for each of the last two years.

(FIGURES IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS)



● Trade-in value  
● Loan balance  
● Trade-in value minus loan balance

Projected trade-in values are not guaranteed. Projections are based on the assumption that what was true in the past will be true in the future.

#### LIKES

For pure neck-snapping performance this truck is the closest thing to a superbike on four wheels. If you forget what you are driving and punch it to pass or change lanes, you get a "wake-up call." The handling and braking are excellent and the body remains tight with no squeaks. Anywhere I drive or park it, people are always asking me questions about it.

*Vince Tuomey  
Northridge, Calif.*

It is a marvelously well-designed truck: drivetrain, braking system and suspension.

*Guy Reffett  
Rockford, Ill.*

The awd makes you feel like you're riding on rails.

*Gary Newton  
Birmingham, Ala.*

#### DISLIKES

I had reported a very rough idle which would cause the truck to stall when the engine is cold. I reported this problem to GMC shortly after I purchased it. They informed me that this is normal and I should not be concerned with it. Yet just



for the driver, no reflections and space for more than one companion.

In sum, the Syclone is a very exciting toy that offers some serious entertainment and a tool that can get down to some serious—if limited—business.

*James D. Sawyer, Jeremy Sinek, Mark Vaughn, Curt Catallo and Paul Wasinger compile AutoFile.*



last week I received a notice from GMC truck division that they have recalled my truck for a replacement "Memory Calibration Unit" which had not been optimally calibrated. As it turns out, this is the fix for my idle variation problem.

*Kregg A. Williams  
Dublin, Calif.*

Being 6 feet 3 inches tall, the cab is a tad bit on the tight side. The seats are comfortable—but don't tilt back enough.

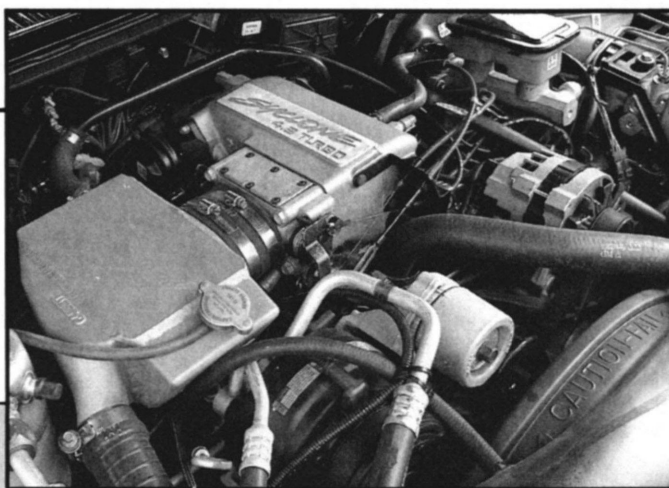
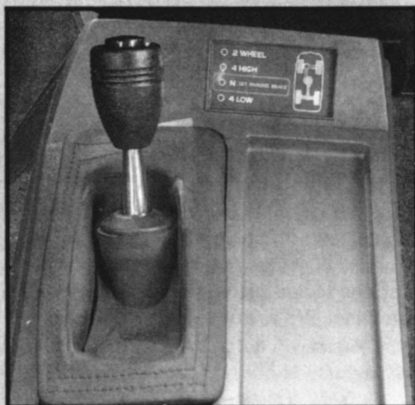
*Ken Peterson  
Seattle*

I was a little disappointed in the GM pieces—headliner, fan motor, etc. The Syclone pieces are fun.

*Hawley T. Chester  
Dunwoody, Ga.*

With its abrupt shifts under power and stiff suspension it very soon lets you know

**You could bang your head on the back window with seats back (right). An automatic with leather-clad shifter (below) is standard but it can jolt you as it shifts**



**The 4.3-liter Vortec V6 sizzles the track. Turbo helps summon 280 horses. Two-tone black exterior (far left) gets bright red Syclone badging**

it's a truck and is not very tolerant of bridge seams or railroad tracks—but then, who cares?

*Kenneth A. Swanstrom  
Doylestown, Pa.*

It's too slow. I think they passed some around for you guys (journalists) to drive with a superior chip in it. The one I got has another chip.

*Frank Bradley  
Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich.*

The rear suspension is too primitive. It jumps around on rough bends and bottoms-out on interstate dips. There is also



excessive body lean when you take it into the corners. There is too much turbo lag in the mid-range, for instance, when you're passing at freeway speeds.

*Edward Dow  
Houston*

#### **OTHERS CONSIDERED**

I had originally wanted the turbo Jimmy you reported on some months ago, except

that GM insiders I spoke to convinced me it wasn't to be built anytime soon. I decided, what the heck, you only live once.

*Jeffrey C. Smirz  
Indianapolis*

Other cars I was looking at were the '91 Corvette, Dodge Stealth, and Nissan 300ZX Turbo. I drove them all and the Syclone won me over hands-down. It took 7½ months from date of order to get my truck, so I bought a new BMW 525i to drive until it arrived.

*John Millhouse  
Appleton, Wis.*

I wasn't in the market for a vehicle, but bought a Syclone. The Typhoon appeals more to me because I have a family.

*William S. Witt  
Nashville*

## **AutoFile needs you**

### *Tell us about your car*

We're looking for owner comments on cars for upcoming AutoFiles. We'd like to hear from you if you own a:

- Pontiac Grand Prix GTP
- Infiniti M30 convertible
- Saab 900 convertible
- Chrysler LeBaron convertible
- Toyota Tercel
- 1984-to-present Corvette

There are a few requirements. First you must have purchased the car new and have owned it for at least three months but no more than 12 (except for the M30, which is new, and the Vettes). Second, please include your telephone number. Third, we'll need to know your vehicle identification number (VIN), which you can find on your title.

If you qualify, please tell us what you paid for your car, when you bought it and how many miles you have on it. We'd also like to know your overall opinion of the car, specific likes and dislikes, how good—or bad—your dealer is, what you pay for insurance and what other cars you considered buying.

Send your responses to AutoFile, *AutoWeek*, 1400 Woodbridge, Detroit, MI 48207. Or call Curt Catallo (313) 446-0343, Mark Vaughn (313) 446-1633, or Jim Sawyer (313) 446-0332 during regular business hours.

## OTHER VOICES

### U.S. MEDIA

The wonder of the Syclone is not so much a pickup that'll do a Ferrari blur on the local scenery, although that's no small trick. The real magic is the way it makes this capability seem like a perfectly wonderful idea.

*Car and Driver*

I think I muttered "Jeez-zus," as we violently yanked away from the the start line. Tire spin was minimal. My jowls and stomach resisted the fierce acceleration. By the time we passed 60 mph, somewhere shy of five seconds, I had swallowed my gum and given serious thought to the fact that this could be dangerous. A quarter-mile was sucked up in just over 13 seconds, with us traveling at 100 plus. Yep, they claim it's faster than a ZR-1. True or not, it's the fastest darn pickup I've ever seen.

*Automobile*

Within the last few years trucks have changed dramatically. Square outward looks, bare interior accommodations, rough rides and low-geared, high-torque six-cylinder motors have given way to awe-in-



spiring, new-generation sport trucks like the Chevy 454 SS. Although this change has come as a breath of fresh air, nothing, but nothing has blown away all of the traditional rules like the GMC Syclone.

*Popular Hot Rodding*

Overall, we can confidently say that the Syclone is several notches higher on the adrenaline scale than any other factory pickup (as well as most customs) that we've driven. In fact, we feel that the Syclone is beyond mere truck comparisons. It definitely invites comparison with some of the best sports cars on the road ...

*Sport Truck*

For all its speed and road prowess, the Syclone does have its down side, reflected by low (Truck of the Year) subjective

scores. Judges complained about the GMC's uncomfortable fixed seatbacks, high level of interior noise, and substantial turbo lag. The most common criticism could be summed up by one judge's comment that "The Syclone sacrifices 'truckness' to go overboard on 'carness,' gleefully abandoning its truck heritage." With a lightweight 500-pound load rating and no rated towing capability, 'nuff said.

*Motor Trend*

### MASS MEDIA

Picture a jet-black, all-wheel-drive two-seater, powered by a turbocharged, 280-hp engine, with the acceleration of a Corvette ZR-1—at less than half the price.

This dream vehicle—surprise!—is a compact pickup truck: the GMC Syclone.

*Detroit Free Press*

## EXPENSES

### Some parts have \$-10 prices

#### SECURITY

3-year/50,000-mile basic coverage, 3-year/50,000-mile extra drivetrain/major component warranty, 6-year/100,000-mile corrosion coverage; GMC Truck did not rank in the 1991 J.D. Power Vehicle Dependability Ratings

#### SERVICE

First year\* \$425.00  
Second year \$650.00  
Third year \$425.00



#### PARTS

Alternator \$145.00  
Headlamp \$65.00  
Windshield \$513.00  
Front fender \$147.85  
Hood \$133.00  
Wheel \$428.50

#### FUEL

\$1,541.09/year\*\*

#### INSURANCE GRADES

#### INJURY\*\*\*

#### COLLISION\*\*\*

#### THEFT\*\*\*

	A	B	C	D	F
INJURY***					
COLLISION***					
THEFT***					

**Insufficient Data**

\*Scheduled maintenance at 15,000 miles/year. \*\*AW overall mpg 15,000 miles/year, gas at \$1.50/gal. \*\*\*IIHS rating, with F being the lowest

### FOREIGN MEDIA

The Syclone is not sold outside the U.S.

### INDUSTRY OBSERVER

The Syclone, based on a ... Sonoma pickup, is a witch's brew of the state-of-the-art in powertrain, driveline and braking—and the positively primitive in chassis and suspension design. But it works.

*Automotive News*

### MANUFACTURER

Its performance rivals top sports cars, but it's not a car. The world-class acceleration, handling and braking of the innovative 1992 Syclone from GMC Truck have revolutionized the image of the pickup.

*GMC Truck Division*

### THE DEALER

It's been bringing people in, that's for sure. It does create traffic, but not generally the buying kind. I sold four of them when it first came out but those were all out-of-state buyers who couldn't get one from their local dealers. We can't sell the one we have. It's been sitting here for two months. Hopefully I can get someone to buy this damn thing. We're not going to reorder any unless we have a sold order. That Typhoon's going to be the same thing.

*GMC Truck dealer in the Midwest*