



GMC has taken their mild-mannered Sonoma pickup and transformed it into a sports car-eating monster called the Syclone.

STORM WARNING

GMC's Syclone — A sports car in pickup clothing

BY MIKE LARSON

There have been few vehicles, especially pickups, that have created feelings of outright lust like the GMC Syclone. A few years ago the creation of a pickup truck that would out-accelerate the mighty Corvette or legendary Ferrari would have been a laughable concept. But, the folks at GMC weren't laughing, they were burning the midnight oil to create just such a truck, one that would change the way the public thinks about trucks. The product of their labor is the Syclone, a truck that can go from 0 to 60mph in under five seconds. Definitely not your average sport truck.

Taking a standard S-15 Sonoma as a base, GMC has pumped up the 4.3 liter Vortec V-6 with the addition of a turbocharger, installed an all-wheel drive system, added all the necessary creature comforts and come up with a vehicle that would make any die-hard performance addict break out in

a cold sweat.

There haven't been too many test vehicles that have created a stir around the McMullen office towers like the

Syclone. Normally reserved staffers were falling all over themselves and making all kinds of outlandish promises to try and talk us out of the



ABOVE — You can get the Syclone in any color you want — as long as its black. The ground effects and the Lexxus TruxCover are standard equipment.

keys, and for good reason. The Syclone is a blast to drive.

Now, we could bombard you with graphs, pie charts, dyno tests and all sorts of techno-geek facts and figures about the Syclone, but that's not the kind of magazine we are. We'll just tell you the basic facts and then tell you how much fun the Syclone is to drive.

The Vortec V-6 features an intercooled Garrett turbocharger, port fuel injection with L98 throttle body and it produces a maximum of 280 horsepower and 350 lbs/ft of torque (at 4400 and 3600 rpm, respectively). This powerplant is capable of propelling the Syclone through the quarter-mile in 13.4 seconds.

Transmission chores are handled by a Hydramatic four-speed auto, while a Borg-Warner All-Wheel Drive transfer case transmits the power to the wheels. The torque split ratio of the drive system is 35 percent to the front, 65 percent rear.

Cornering prowess is aided by the lowered ride height and the combination of low-rate torsion bars and a 32mm stabilizer bar. In the rear semi-elliptical leaf springs handle the suspension chores.

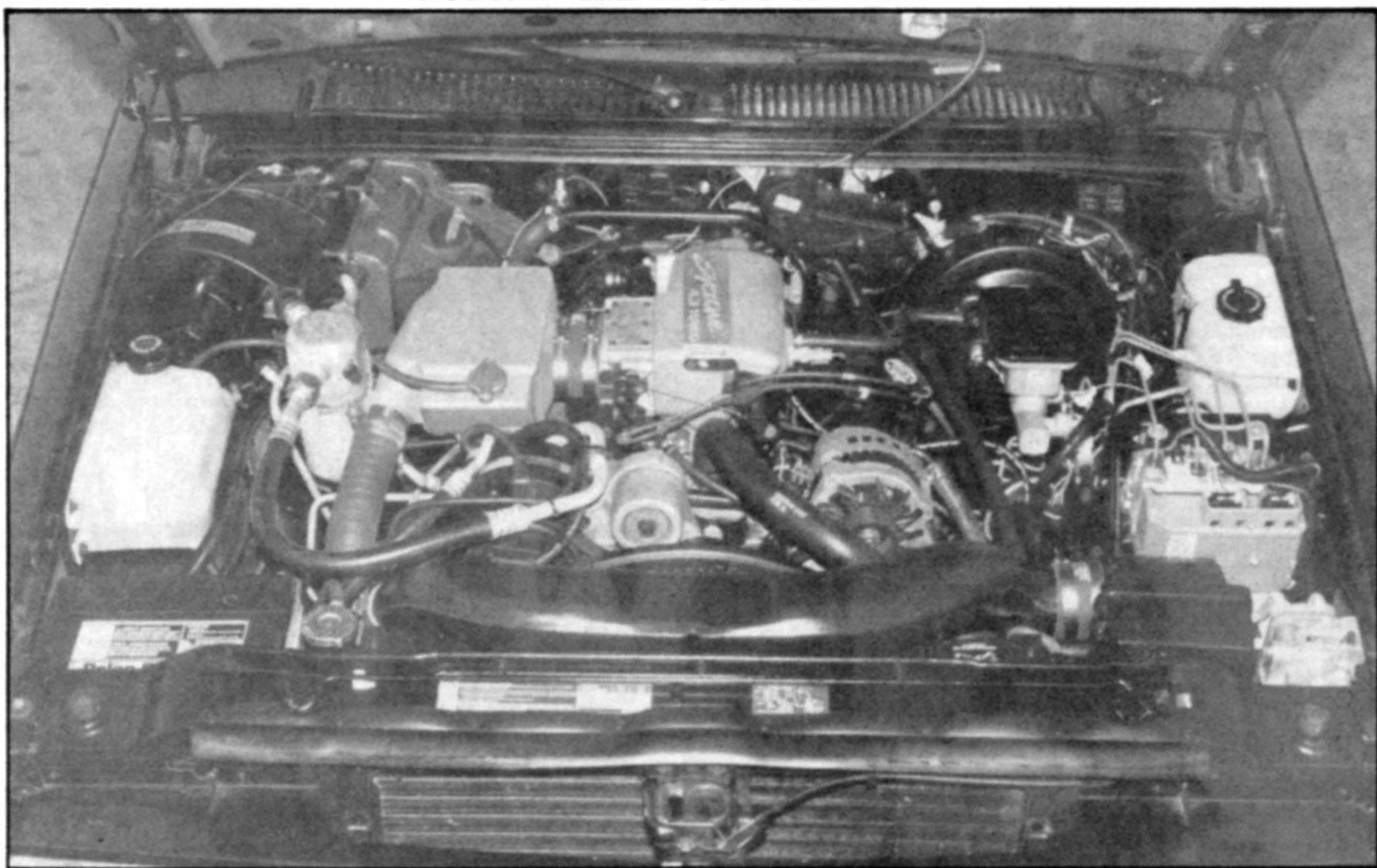


ABOVE — These 16-inch alloy wheels were designed especially for the Syclone. Fat, low profile Firestone tires and all-wheel drive keep the truck glued to the pavement.

There aren't many optional extras available on a Syclone, the list of standard equipment is substantial. Firestone 245/50 VR-16 tires, wrapped around 16-inch alloy wheels, which are designed especially for the Syclone, are standard. Other amenities include air conditioning, tilt wheel, cruise control, AM/FM stereo cassette player, intermittent wipers, power steering and a Lexus TruxCover. Contoured sport seats are part of the package, and they include inflatable lumbar supports. A leather-wrapped steering wheel and floor-mounted shifter with console are standard as well.

Sure all the standard features are nice, but the best part of this truck

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ABOVE — Power for the Syclone comes from a 4.3 liter V-6 equipped with an intercooled turbocharger and pumps out 280 horsepower.



LEFT — The interior has plenty of luxury features, including the sport seats with air-adjustable lumbar supports.

BELOW — Syclone has a complete set of analog gauges to keep the driver in touch with what is going on. A leather-wrapped steering wheel is also standard equipment.

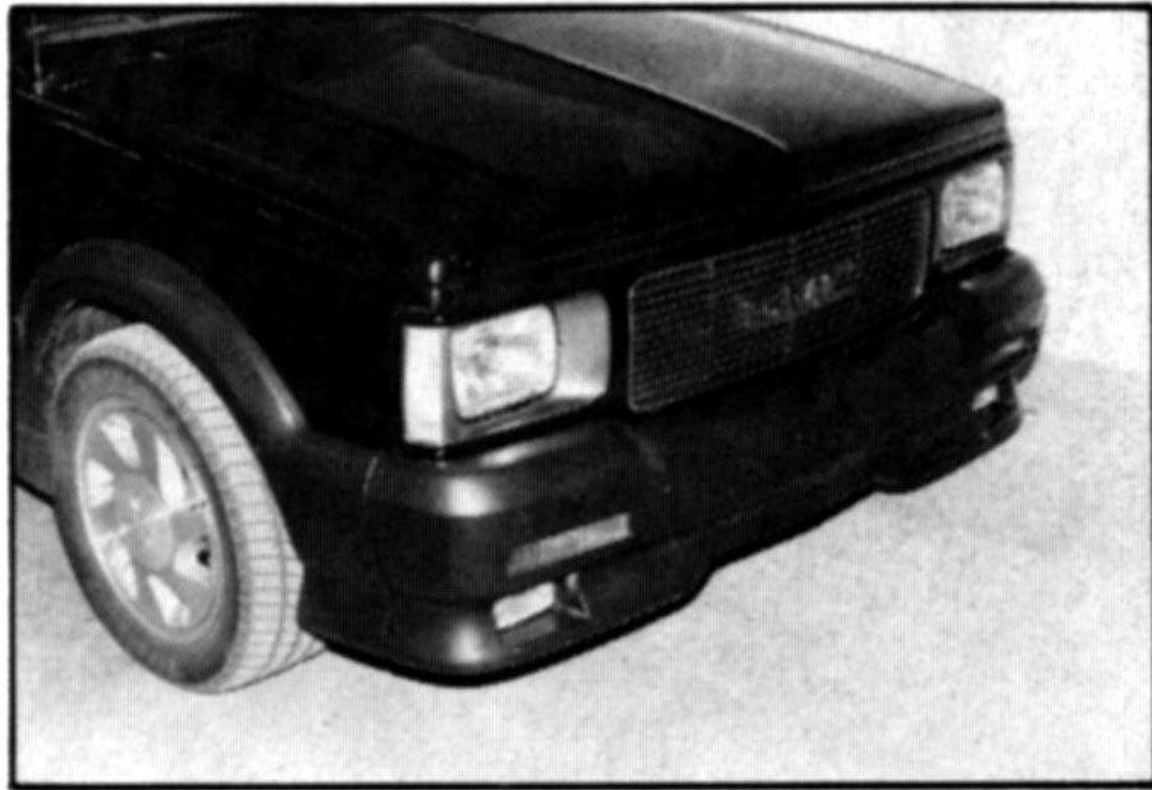


ABOVE — Syclone is capable of blurring the horizon in a hurry, with a 0-60 acceleration time of under five seconds.

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is the time spent behind the wheel. Of course having a high-performance, turbocharged engine under the hood, doesn't hurt. Power isn't a problem, although from slower speeds, there is the characteristic "turbo lag" before the power really kicks in. We can live with that slight lag though, because the power builds quickly and it is deceptively smooth, so smooth in fact that you find yourself exceeding most speed limits in no time flat. Don't expect massive tire smoking burnouts either, with the all-wheel drive system the Syclone just hooks up and goes.



ABOVE — Blacked-out trim and a smoothed-out front bumper/spoiler combo give the nose of the Syclone an aggressive look.

All that power would be useless if the Syclone handled like a typical truck. The lowered stance, tuned suspension, wide tires and all-wheel drive all combine to give the truck the handling characteristics of a sports car, you just point it and it goes that way. No wallowing through the turns and no excessive body roll, the Syclone always gives the driver a feeling of total control.

If there is a negative about the Syclone it would be the price. With a list price of around \$26,000, it definitely isn't for the light of wallet. But, it is much less expensive than anything that performs in the same league. Have you priced a Corvette ZR-1 or an exotic Euro import lately? You'll find out that you do get a lot of bang for your buck with the Syclone.

Taking the pickup truck, what the general public has thought of as a vehicle used to haul pigs, hay or manure by farmers, and elevating it to the hallowed turf of those mega-dollar European sports cars and American muscle cars, is no small feat. GMC did it and has taken a step beyond normal truck engineering in creating a new type of vehicle — the hypertruck. ■