



GMC TYPHOON

Mucho macho street fighter with
a modicum of refinement

BY KEN ZINO
PHOTOS BY RON PERRY

HERE'S THE PROPOSITION: Take a utility truck and lower the body and suspension to get that Fifties' rod posture. Next, stuff a turbo engine in, adding some hot to rod. Don't forget the special 16-in. alloy wheels and low-profile all-season tires to complement the all-wheel-drive chassis. Add the requisite air dams, skirts and black-out trim to make this hybrid look different from the run-of-the-mill offerings. Throw in charcoal-colored leather seating surfaces and other interior trim items, full power accessories and a decent stereo. Price it at \$29,470.

That's the deal.

Typhoon is the GM truck division's latest attempt to separate itself from those "Heartbeat" people who sell the same basic pickup and utility trucks as Chevrolets, not to mention the numerous offerings from Ford, Jeep and Dodge. From where we test it's the fastest-accelerating utility truck in the land. It's also one of the fastest vehicles, period, in a straight line.

The stimulation for such headway is supplied by a 90-degree, 4.3-liter V-6 engine that made its debut last year in the GMC Syclone pickup. A Mitsubishi turbocharger and water-to-air intercooler are added to the induction system of the Jimmy engine. The pistons,

individual port fuel injectors and throttle body are borrowed from the L98 Corvette V-8.

With a maximum of 14 psi of boost allowed by the Delco Electronics computer when running on 91-octane unleaded, the V-6 produces 280 bhp, as in "brute horsepower." Typhoon is the automotive equivalent of a Fourth of July fireworks display.

As our instrumented track times indicate, this 4x4 can launch from a green light and blow away just about anything on the street, save the odd Ferrari F40 or ZR-1 Corvette. Once you learn the subtleties of the engine-control system, that is. Hold your foot on the brake and load the engine, but don't go all the way to the floor with the brakes on as the boost will be dumped. Wait for the chassis to shudder and twist. Left foot up, as the right one dives and the show begins. Now!

A maximum of 360 lb.-ft. of torque is transmitted to the pavement (no off-roading allowed because of the reduced ground clearance) by way of a transfer case borrowed from the Chevrolet Astro van and a modified Hydra-matic 4L60 (old designation 700R4) transmission from the Corvette. The rear differential is a limited-slip type. Shift quality of the 4-speed automatic is only



Grippy hide-covered wheel and Corvette gear selector are Typhoon-exclusive touches.



There's a whole lot of compressing goin' on: air, from the turbo blowing through an air-to-water intercooler and into the combustion chambers of the Typhoon's 4.3-liter V-6; and your body, squeezed into the plush leather seats whenever the all-wheel-drive and deep torque reserves are called upon.

so-so. Firm engagements declare the selection of another gear or the locking of the torque converter. Underneath the Typhoon is machinery, truck machinery, and it never lets you forget it.

Torque is automatically split about 35 percent front, 65 percent rear when the Typhoon is operated on dry pavement. A viscous clutch mediates the routing of power on slippery surfaces between front and rear axles. If the front-to-rear speed differential is high, the silicone fluid between 51 clutch plates inside the viscous clutch thickens from the shearing action. This causes power to be routed to the wheels with more grip. It's a sophisticated system with almost instantaneous response that requires no driver action to be 100 percent effective.

The Firestone V-speed-rated, all-season tires were developed especially for this application, according to GMC. With four enormous contact patches clawing the pavement and precise electronic control of spark timing and boost, our testing times were exceptionally consistent. It's easy to drive, once you get used to some turbo lag and learn to keep the revs up.



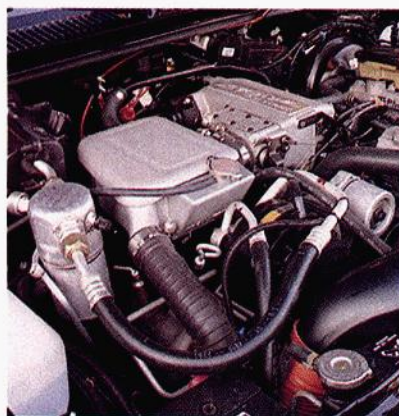
Handling isn't bad either, considering the unsophisticated truck ladder-frame chassis. The high center of gravity combined with the potent grip of the tires produces lots of body roll. This sudden seesawing about the longitudinal axis is intimidating at first. Not intimidating at all is the excellent outward vision from the high seating position, large windows and expansive rearview mirrors.

So take a deep breath, choose your cornering and exit lines carefully—and let it roll. Concentrate on the smoothness of your steering, throttle and brake actuations, and you'll find the Typhoon handles solicitously. Predictable understeer and no lurching surprises during transitions make for a

disporting time at speed.

There is some dissonance, alas. The weakness of the live rear axle with semielliptical springs and its considerable unsprung weight quickly become apparent on rougher surfaces. The bumping, twisting movements that result—is this why it's called "live"?—make for a palsied course line. This, depending on your speed and IQ, ultimately compels you to back off the throttle and slow down. Now.

Here, the anti-lock braking system is always ready to help sort things out while maintaining steering control. Unlike some utility vehicles, the anti-lock system works in conjunction with the 4-wheel drive, the best of both go and whoa modes. So even though pitching is pronounced when the brakes are applied, stopping distances are good, and pedal feel and directional stability, excellent. All this from a front-disc, rear-drum system. Like the Cyclone pickup that preceded Typhoon, GMC is betting it can lure enough buyers to justify a limited run of a few thousand per year. So Typhoon isn't intended to take the market by, well, storm. Good thing, too. The immense appeal of the prod-



GMC TYPHOON

0-60 mph	5.6 sec
0-1/4 mi	14.3 sec
Top speed	est 125 mph
Skidpad	0.78g
Slalom	59.4 mph
Brake rating	very good

PRICE

List price, FOB factory **\$29,470** Price as tested **\$29,604**
 Price as tested includes std equip. (air cond, ABS, AM/FM stereo/cassette, leather interior, central locking, cruise control; pwr windows & mirrors), upgrade sound system with CD player (\$134).



ENGINE

Type	turbocharged ohv V-6
Displacement	262 cu in./4300 cc
Bore x stroke	4.00 x 3.48 in./101.6 x 88.4 mm
Compression ratio	8.35:1
Horsepower (SAE)	280 bhp @ 4400 rpm
Torque	360 lb-ft @ 3600 rpm
Maximum engine speed	5200 rpm
Fuel injection	GM elect. port
Fuel	prem unleaded, 91 pump oct

GENERAL DATA

Curb weight	3800 lb
Test weight	3955 lb
Weight dist, f/r, %	57/43
Wheelbase	100.5 in.
Track, f/r	57.8 in./58.0 in.
Length	170.3 in.
Width	68.2 in.
Height	60.0 in.
Cargo space	15.0 + 18.0 cu ft

gious acceleration and reasonable handling are blunted by the inherent design disadvantages, including the loss of off-road utility, no trailer towing, and only 500 lb. of cargo capacity. Then there's the, gulp, formidable price.

Still interested? Owners, however non-numerous, aren't going to see a lot of taillights in the spotlight Grand Prix, or a lot of other GMC Typhoons, for that matter.



DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	4-sp automatic	
Gear	Ratio	Overall ratio (Rpm) Mph
1st	3.06:1	10.47:1 (4200) 28
2nd	1.63:1	5.57:1 (4300) 54
3rd	1.00:1	3.42:1 (4300) 88
4th	0.70:1	2.39:1 est (4300) 125
Final drive ratio	3.42:1	
Engine rpm @ 60 mph in 4th	2050	

CHASSIS & BODY

Layout	front engine/awd
Body/frame	unit steel
Brakes, f/r	11.9-in. vented discs/11.1 x 2.8-in. drums; vacuum assist, ABS
Wheels	cast alloy, 16 x 8
Tires	Firestone Firehawk SVX, P245/50R-16 96V
Steering	recirculating ball, power assist
Turns, lock to lock	3.7
Suspension, f/r:	upper & lower A-arms, torsion bars, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/live axle on leaf springs, tube shocks

ACCELERATION

Time to speed	Seconds
0-30 mph	1.8
0-60 mph	5.6
0-80 mph	9.8
Time to distance	
0-100 ft	2.8
0-500 ft	7.6
0-1320 ft (1/4 mi)	14.3 @ 93.0 mph

BRAKING

Minimum stopping distance	
From 60 mph	159 ft
From 80 mph	281 ft
Control	excellent
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop	20 lb
Fade, effort after six 0.5g stops from 60 mph	23 lb
Brake feel	good
Overall brake rating	very good

FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving	est 17.0 mpg
EPA city/highway	15/19 mpg
Fuel capacity	20.0 gal.

INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral	52 dBA
Constant 70 mph	70 dBA

Subjective ratings consist of excellent, very good, good, average, poor.

Test Notes . . .

■ Acceleration runs in the Typhoon are simple and dramatic. With one foot on the brake and the other on the throttle, load on the power until the body tilts under torque and let go. The rush that follows feels like the release of a tightly coiled spring.

■ The Typhoon's braking distances may not be remarkable in coupe or sedan terms, but considering the GMC's height and stubby wheelbase, its stopping capability is impressive.

HANDLING

Lateral accel (200-ft skidpad)	0.78g
Balance	moderate understeer
Speed thru 700-ft slalom	59.4 mph
Balance	mild understeer