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GMC Typhoon

Mr. Vader, your nightmare just arrived.

BY ARTHUR ST. ANTOINE

In the realm of four-wheeled conveyances, there's a fine line separating the outrageous from the silly. For example, a Lamborghini Diablo is outrageous. A \$1.6 million streetgoing Schuppan Porsche 962CR, on the other hand, is silly. An AMG Hammer is outrageous. So is a Dodge Stealth R/T Turbo. But a V-8-powered Geo Metro convertible is not. It's silly.

The fine line we refer to stretches

between power and overkill, between pushing the limit and going over the edge, between the sublime and the ridiculous.

Which brings us to GMC's two new *outré* machines, the Syclone pickup (C/D, September 1991) and the Typhoon sport-utility vehicle pictured here. Both are brutally fast, hormone-injected versions of normally pedestrian trucks. Yet both do not reside on the same side of the outrageous/silly fence. We'll explain.

You already know about the Syclone, the baddest, meanest, most testosterone-pumped production pickup in the land. It has 280 horsepower and four-wheel drive. It runs 0 to 60 mph quicker than a Ferrari 348ts. Amazing. Although the Syclone unquestionably offers a thrilling ride, you have to ask yourself one question: who wants a pickup truck that can blast to 60 mph quicker than a Ferrari? Sure, you could flatten your eyeballs by driving it



the Verdict:

Highs: Ferrari-quashing acceleration, commodious cabin, striking physique.

Lows: Limited off-road prowess, towing not allowed.

The Verdict: A supercar with 67 cubic feet of cargo space.



around empty all day. But what happens when you use it as a pickup? Owing to the Syclone's trick suspension, the cargo-bed capacity is a mere 500 pounds. Worse, just one half-push on the Syclone's throttle and *crash!*—your load of firewood and Old Yeller go sailing over the tailgate. Pretty silly, no?

But the Typhoon—now we're talking outrageous. The difference? It all boils down to the Typhoon's mission objective.

Today's sport-utility vehicles (SUVs) are less off-road warriors and more all-weather limousines. Check out a typical SUV and you're likely to see not an Orvis-outfitted outdoorsman headed for the duck blind but an Armani-attired advertising exec jawing away on his cellular tele-

phone. And what young power broker wouldn't be intrigued by a go-anywhere go-anytime machine that also goes like stink? So right away the notion of a hyper-fast SUV makes a lot of sense.

Until now, the top gun in the sport-utility stoplight drags has been Jeep's 4.0-liter Cherokee. Ask ten Cherokee owners what they love about their ride and eight will say, "It's a fast mutha." The current 4.0-liter straight six makes 190 horsepower, enough to clock runs from 0 to 60 mph in 8.2 seconds. An impressive number for a four-by-four. Impressive, but not even close to outrageous.

The new Typhoon, see, is an SUV like no other. It's a two-door S-15 Jimmy at heart, but you could easily forget that by

looking at it. Chunky 245/50VR-16 Firestone Firehawk SVX tires on alloy wheels shoulder out from under flared wheel arches. A beefy air dam with fog lamps bulges in front. The sheetmetal is Darth Vader menacing, and the entire package looks as if it had been dipped in a vat of black epoxy. And then there's the Typhoon's stance: you've never seen an ordinary SUV hunker down on the road like this one.

Inside, covering the deeply sculptured seats and the thick four-spoke steering wheel is enough black leather to outfit every member of the Whitesnake entourage. The dash, the carpeting, and the headliner are likewise black. Does this Typhoon sound serious or what?

COUNTERPOINT

•The GMC Typhoon qualifies as an exotic because, first of all, it looks the part of a take-no-prisoners speed demon. Our Typhoon swaggered into sylvan Ann Arbor dressed in inky, Texas-tea black. Coupled with its hunched-down stance, the Typhoon's gunslinger outfit makes a statement like a Lone Star State belt buckle. Though its restraint is questionable, it's far more assertive than the effete Explorer or the merely rugged Cherokee.

It scores on performance just as highly. And unlike tempestuous Italian exotica, its spacious body and four-wheel drive provide everyday performance. Of course, the turbo V-6 and perfectly mated automatic can dust off unsuspecting Mondials, too.

It misses on two points. It costs only \$29,000—that's what you pay in luxury tax on some Bentleys and Ferraris. And its name isn't a string of numbers longer than the VIN plate.

GMC's hellacious hybrids are unlike anything I've driven. If your SUV doesn't deliver a supreme kick, or if you're looking for a real American exotic, you know where the line begins.
—Martin Padgett Jr.

Imagine trying to sell stuffy GM executives on the Typhoon (or the Syclone, for that matter.) "Uh, well, it's a 280-horsepower four-wheel-drive truck that, um, can't be driven off road. Cost? Um, well, uh, about 30 grand, but it'll do 0-to-60 in 5.3 seconds!" And then the demonstration ride at the test track: a ride befitting a Conestoga wagon. Rubber steering. Neck-flopping

shifts. And enough forward thrust out of the hole to turn even the stuffiest gray-suit into a leering, grinning idiot. This all makes for a very strange truck. Stranger than the AM General Humvee (try to find one) or the Lamborghini LM American (it's slower, and out of production, too.) More remarkable is that this frantic device comes from a company known for—or perhaps notorious for—making ordinary transportation. Risky products add spice to the market. If the General and his minions can make a profit on the Typhoon, then more power to them. —Don Schroeder

Is this merely another example of an engine in search of a car? Buick's limited-edition GNX of 1987 was a perfect specimen of an abominable car matched to a wonderful turbo V-6. Dodge's 224-hp Spirit R/T comes to mind as another example. The 280-hp Typhoon sounds like a prime manifestation: a sports car it is not. The Typhoon comes with a warning not to drive it off-road, but underneath it's a truck. However, the Typhoon transcends other factory hot rods and avoids joining the all-engine category because it's drivable. You can use all 280 hp. The secret to its drivability is four-wheel drive. Mitsubishi, Toyota, Dodge, Plymouth, Subaru, Audi, BMW, Mercedes, and Isuzu all offer four-wheel-drive cars—none have 280 hp. I really like the Typhoon's combination. It's not just a fast truck—it's a fast anything. Faster than a BMW M5 or a Porsche 968 to 60 mph. Nothing this quick comes any cheaper—except GMC's Syclone pickup. —Phil Berg



Oh yes, the Typhoon is serious—one look at its hardware proves that it has the muscle to back up its visual threat. In the engine room sits the same turbocharged and intercooled 4.3-liter V-6 used in the Syclone. This beastly powerplant churns out 280 horsepower at 4400 rpm and a boggling 350 pound-feet of torque at 3600. Passing through a robust four-speed automatic, the power is delivered to a full-time four-wheel-drive system with a center differential and a viscous coupling that apportions torque 35/65 front/rear. Four huge brakes (front discs and rear drums) with standard anti-lock control do the stopping.

The Typhoon's performance is as serious—scratch that, as *outrageous*—as its specifications suggest. For maximum off-the-line oomph, you'll want to run up the engine against the brake. Okay, shift into drive, hold the brake down with your left foot, and lower the throttle until the boost gauge swings as far as it will go. Ready for liftoff? Just lift your left foot off the brake and hold your right foot to the floor. *Whoooooossh!* No tire smoke. Barely a chirp from the rubber. And you are *gone!* The sprint from 0 to 60 mph takes—get this, SUV mavens—just 5.3 seconds. Not only is that enough speed to pummel the once-omnipotent Cherokee, but it's enough to humiliate such standouts as the Ferrari 348ts and the Ford Mustang V-8.

But wait. There's more ahead. The quarter-mile comes up in just 14.1 seconds at 95 mph. That, supercar fans, is just a few ticks slower than an Acura NSX. But the performance ends not long after that. Top speed—prudently limited by a governor—is just 124 mph. Probably you wouldn't want to drive an SUV faster than that anyway.

As impressive as it is leaving a stoplight, the GMC Typhoon really kicks in when accelerating on a roll—such as when passing an eighteen-wheeler on a stretch of tight two-lane. The Typhoon's top-gear acceleration times are among the quickest



GMC TYPHOON

we have ever recorded for any vehicle—a blast from 30 mph to 50 mph, for instance, takes a mere 2.9 seconds. That big-rig driver will think he's just been buzzed by a UFO.

The Typhoon has other moves, too. The grippy Firestones help the ABS-equipped brakes bring down the Typhoon from 70 mph to a standstill in just 185 feet—an astonishing figure for an SUV. (Indeed, we recorded a longer stop with the Ferrari 348ts.) And there's 0.79 g of cornering grip on tap (try to find another SUV that can manage that). The Typhoon may not steer as finely as a two-seater, but it's an easy machine to drive hard. You can hustle this big brute through turns like a good sports car.

In other ways, the Typhoon is a lot like any other SUV on the road. The engine starts without complaint and runs smoothly. The ride is firm but not overly stiff. The seats are notable for their comfort. Which is to say, the Typhoon feels a lot like a hard-edged luxury sedan. Except that this luxury sedan can carry through in the roughest weather and blow off that pesky two-seater in the next lane.

The Typhoon's amenities list is comprehensive. Standard equipment includes everything you'd find in a luxury cruiser, from power locks with a keyless entry system to an AM/FM/cassette system with graphic equalizer. A compact-disc player is even optional. The interior isn't up to Lexus standards—the plastic cutouts that cover the instruments, for example, fit poorly and look cheap—but overall this is a fine place to conduct the business of driving.

Ah, but the Typhoon is not completely devoid of silliness. The low-slung suspension and low-profile Firestones aren't up to the rigors of serious off-roading—the Typhoon driver will have to sit and watch as the other SUVs go boulder hopping. And those of you with campers or boats will be thrilled to know that the Typhoon's towing rating is—*ta dah!*—0 pounds. Yep, the only thing this SUV can haul is ass.

But the Typhoon can handle the main things that most SUVs are used for, and then some. For a base price of \$29,530 you get a vehicle that rides high above the traffic, offers enough room for a month's worth of groceries, coddles its passengers with leather trim and power appointments, tracks through winter storms with ease, turns heads at every stoplight, and possesses enough straight-line speed to stand at the head of the performance class with such heavyweights as the Corvette LT1 and the Nissan 300ZX Turbo.

If that isn't outrageous, we don't know what is.



Vehicle type: front-engine, four-wheel-drive, 4-passenger, 3-door wagon

Price as tested: \$29,790

Price and option breakdown: base GMC Typhoon (includes \$535 freight), \$29,530; CD player, \$134; luggage rack, \$126

Major standard accessories: power steering, windows, and locks, A/C, cruise control, tilt steering, rear defroster and wiper

Sound system: Delco AM/FM-stereo radio/cassette/CD player, 4 speakers

ENGINE

Type.....turbocharged and intercooled V-6, iron block and heads
 Bore x stroke.....4.00 x 3.48 in, 101.6 x 88.4mm
 Displacement.....262 cu in, 4300cc
 Compression ratio.....8.4:1
 Engine-control system.....GM with port fuel injection
 Emissions controls.....3-way catalytic converter, feedback fuel-air-ratio control, EGR
 Turbocharger.....Mitsubishi RH06
 Waste gate.....integral
 Maximum boost pressure.....15.0 psi
 Valve gear.....pushrods, hydraulic lifters
 Power (SAE net).....280 bhp @ 4400 rpm
 Torque (SAE net).....350 lb-ft @ 3600 rpm
 Redline.....4800 rpm

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission.....4-speed automatic with lockup torque converter
 Final-drive ratio.....3.73:1, limited slip
 Transfer-gear ratio.....1.00:1
 Gear Ratio Mph/1000 rpm Max. test speed
 I 3.06 6.5 31 mph (4800 rpm)
 II 1.63 12.2 59 mph (4800 rpm)
 III 1.00 19.9 96 mph (4800 rpm)
 IV 0.70 28.4 124 mph (4350 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase.....100.5 in
 Track, F/R.....57.8/58.0 in

Length.....170.3 in
 Width.....68.2 in
 Height.....60.0 in
 Ground clearance.....7.1 in
 Curb weight.....3822 lb
 Weight distribution, F/R.....56.8/43.2%
 Fuel capacity.....20.0 gal
 Oil capacity.....4.5 qt

CHASSIS/BODY

Type.....full-length frame with rubber-isolated body
 Body material.....welded steel stampings

INTERIOR

SAE volume, front seat.....52 cu ft
 rear seat.....39 cu ft
 luggage space.....28 cu ft
 Front seats.....bucket
 Seat adjustments.....fore and aft, seatback angle, lumbar support
 Restraint systems, front.....manual 3-point belts
 rear.....manual 3-point belts
 General comfort.....poor fair **good** excellent
 Fore-and-aft support.....poor fair **good** excellent
 Lateral support.....poor fair **good** excellent

SUSPENSION

F.....ind, unequal-length control arms, torsion bars, anti-roll bar
 R.....ind, rigid axle located by semi-elliptic leaf springs, automatic leveling shock absorbers

STEERING

Type.....recirculating ball, power-assisted
 Turns lock-to-lock.....3.1
 Turning circle curb-to-curb.....35.4 ft

BRAKES

F.....11.9 x 1.3-in vented disc
 R.....11.2 x 2.8-in cast-iron drum
 Power assist.....vacuum with anti-lock control

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size.....8.0 x 16 in
 Wheel type.....cast aluminum
 Tires.....Firestone Firehawk SVX, P245/50VR-16 M+S
 Test inflation pressures, F/R.....32/32 psi

CAR AND DRIVER TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

Seconds
 Zero to 30 mph.....1.7
 40 mph.....2.6
 50 mph.....3.8
 60 mph.....5.3
 70 mph.....7.2
 80 mph.....9.4
 90 mph.....12.0
 100 mph.....16.2
 110 mph.....23.2
 120 mph.....40.0
 Street start, 5-60 mph.....6.0
 Top-gear passing time, 30-50 mph.....2.9
 50-70 mph.....4.1
 Standing 1/4-mile.....14.1 sec @ 95 mph
 Top speed.....124 mph

BRAKING

70-0 mph @ impending lockup.....185 ft
 Fade.....**none** moderate heavy

HANDLING

Roadholding, 300-ft-dia skidpad.....0.79 g
 Understeer.....**minimal** moderate excessive

COAST-DOWN MEASUREMENTS

Road horsepower @ 30 mph.....9 hp
 50 mph.....23 hp
 70 mph.....47 hp

FUEL ECONOMY

EPA city driving.....**15 mpg**
 EPA highway driving.....19 mpg
 C/D observed fuel economy.....**14 mpg**

INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL

Idle.....53 dBA
 Full-throttle acceleration.....76 dBA
 70-mph cruising.....74 dBA
 70-mph coasting.....74 dBA