

HOT TRUCK

Coming in December:

Our Project Truck Rolls Out
of the Paint & Body Shop

BACKYARD PROJECTS!
Dozens of Weekend
How-tos You Can Do



A Full Report on the Hot,
New GMC Syclone

Torque Converters:
How They Can Work for
Your Truck



The World's Quickest
Street-Legal Truck??

Look for the
**December HOT
TRUCK** on your
newsstand **October 9.**

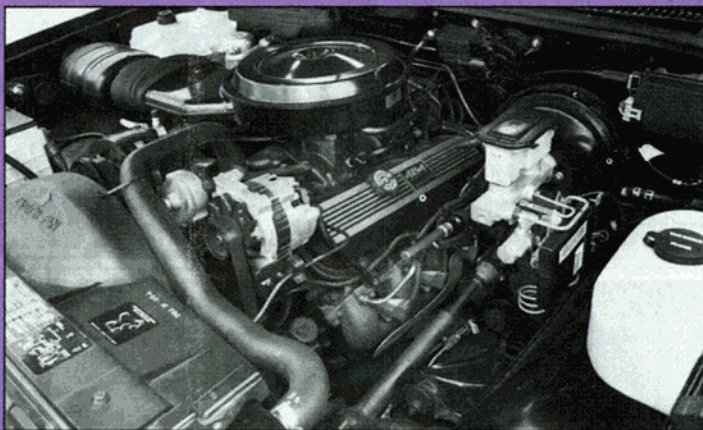
TRUCKIN' Around

454SS Gets New Tranny, Power Boost

The introduction of the Chevy 454SS in late 1989 marked a significant step in the truck industry. It was the first time since the fabulous musclecar era that there was a serious attempt at putting horsepower and a sporty truck package together. The 454SS thrilled enough Chevy fans to sell out a limited-edition run. But the truck was also a disappointment to many who expected the neck-snapping performance of the old 454 engines. The 454SS had a peppy driv-



The '91 454SS returns in its all-black scheme.



Chevy engineers unleashed an extra 25 horsepower in the 454 engine by designing a dual exhaust system. Other internal refinements were made to improve reliability and reduce manufacturing problems.

ing style because of the tremendous low-end torque. But it's mild quarter-mile times in the high 15s served notice that the 454SS needed a power boost.

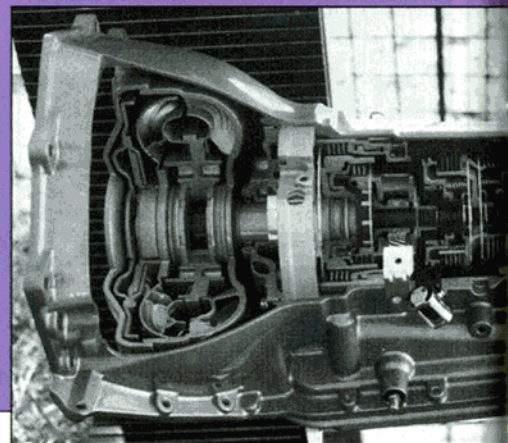
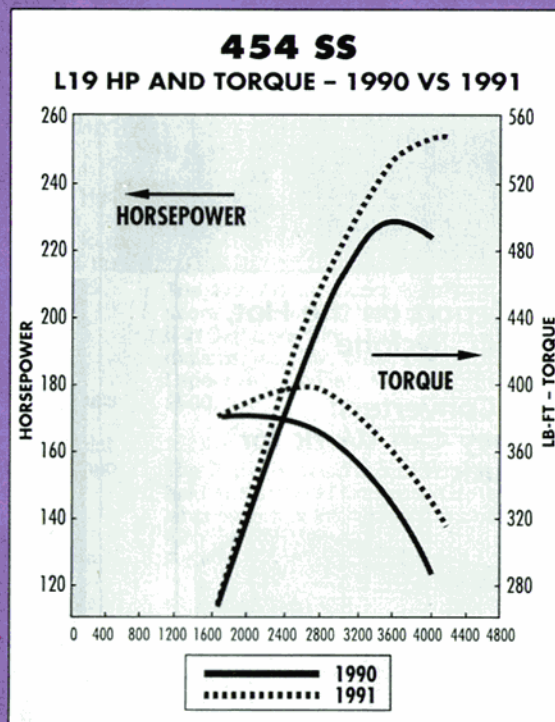
Chevy responded generously for the '91 model year. Not only does the 454SS receive an additional 25 horsepower, but there's a new electronically controlled 4-speed overdrive automatic transmission.

The extra ponies came from a complete redesign of the 454SS exhaust system. Last year the 454SS engine put out 230 horsepower at 3600 rpm with a peak torque rating of 385 lbs.-ft. at 1600. For '91s, the respective ratings are 255 horsepower at 4000 rpm and 405 lbs.-ft. at 2800 rpm.

Both the horsepower and torque curves were broadened with the engine changes.

Besides the dual exhaust, the engine was refined with improved sealing, new pistons and rocker bolts, an integral manifold for the throttle-body and structural revisions to reduce casting variances and assembly complexity.

Backing up the improved engine is the new Hydramatic 4L80-E transmission. This replaces the 3L80 (better known as the TH400). The new tranny features a high torque capacity, dual stators in the torque converter for improved low-



end torque, electronically controlled shifts and an electronically controlled torque converter lockup. (A closer look at this transmission can be found in "Top Secret," on page 64.) With the overdrive capability, the rear-axle ratio on the 454SS was lowered to 4.10:1.

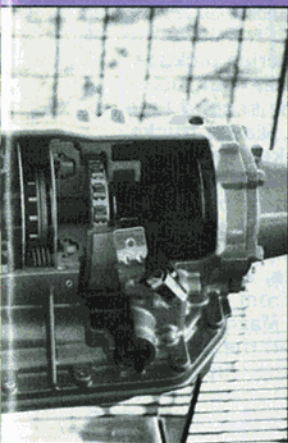
We recently had a chance to drive the new 454SS a few laps around the road course at the Michigan International Speedway. The extra power was noticeable, but we were most impressed with how smooth and precise the transmission worked. Chevy says the 0-60 times will be lowered by .90 second and the mileage will improve by two mpg with this new package.

Besides answering the cries for more power and better fuel economy, Chevy also responded to criticism over the unreadable and tach-less instrument panel. The new 454SS has a beautifully designed gauge panel that is ergonomically friendly. There's also a tach to monitor the engine revs, even though the new tranny seems to handle that chore quite well.

We'll pass along a full evaluation of the new 454SS in an upcoming issue.



Chevy also came up with an attractive, yet functional instrument panel.



Backing up the engine is a new Hydramatic 4-speed overdrive automatic transmission.



Highway Supercharger

Since the supercharger is part of our main theme this month, we thought you'd be interested in this little tidbit. Many truckers feel that a blower is not compatible with heavy highway and street use. But the

gang at Blower Drive Service hasn't had any problems with its supercharged crew cab dualie. Last year the BDS crew logged over 45,000 miles without any damage to the 454 engine, and that's pulling a 20,000-pound trailer!

Trucks Shine At Street Machine Nationals



B

More than 106,000 people attended this year's Street Machine Nationals, and they saw a truck earn one of four runner-up spots in the prestigious Grand Champion Street Machine competition.

John Spreitzer's beautiful, '56 Chevy (a) also earned Best Full-size Truck, and placed second in Best Interior and Best Paint.

Placing second behind John's '56 Chevy in the Best Full-size category, was Tim Dunfield's '55 Chevy (b) and William Sanders' '54 Ford F-100. In the Best Mini-Truck class, John Bone's '84 S-10 was the winner, followed by Chris DeUel's '85 S-10 and Joel Miller's '88 GMC S-15. Jim Kirby's '86 Nissan took second in the Best Graphics competition.

The three-day Street Machine



A

Nationals were held on the Du-Quoin (Illinois) State Fairgrounds. A record 3620 vehicles were registered; show officials say the most popular color was red (19 percent), while black was second. The event was sponsored by Ford, Motorcraft and Summit Racing Equipment, and is part of the General Tire Special Events Performance Series.

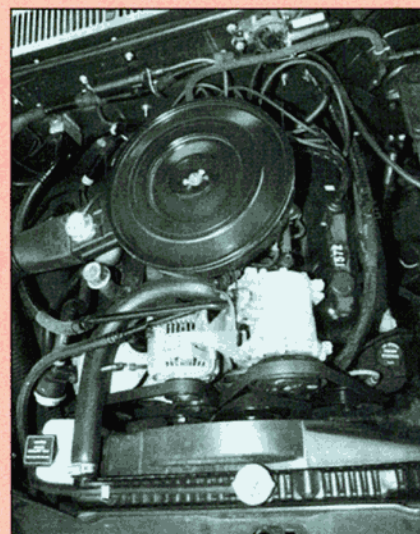
The Dakota Sport package features side graphics.



The biggest styling change came up front with an aero-influenced nose and wraparound headlights.

Mopar News

We hear that the T300 truck program at Dodge will not produce a new full-size truck until '94. Previous reports had indicated a possible '92 release date, but a Dodge official has confirmed that a '94 target date is now on the books. No other details were available, but we



A 5.2-liter V8 is now available in the Dakota. It's rated at 165 horsepower with a peak torque output of 250 lbs.-ft.

do know that Dodge is focusing a great deal of attention on its V10 truck engine development.

We also hear that Dodge has

dropped the Dakota convertible. Despite the popularity of the convertible look on mini trucks, especially in the Sun Belt, it never caught on with Dodge buyers.

The best news for Dakota fans is that the '91 models will have an optional 5.2-liter (318ci) V8. Designers stretched out the nose an extra three inches to make room in the engine bay for the V8. The nose also received wraparound lights and a new grille and bumper. The Sport package will add a front air dam with integral fog lamps.

Dodge didn't hop up its 318 for the Dakota, but the 165 horsepower is welcome relief from the anemic 3.9-liter V6, which used to be the top powerplant. That engine was rated at only 125 horsepower. The V8 will be available with just the 4-speed automatic transmission, while the 3.9-liter and the standard 2.5-liter I-4 can be ordered with a 5-speed manual. We'll have a full road test on the V8 Dakota in an upcoming issue.

In the full-size ranks, all the changes were cosmetic except for a redesigned rear bumper for increased towing capacity. On the Jeep side, the 4.0-liter Comanche has been boosted up to 190 horsepower. That's up from 177 in previous models. Ironically, Chrysler did not have any of the new high-power Comanches at its press preview. This led to speculation among the

automotive scribes concerning Comanche's future: Is Chrysler considering to drop the Comanche to concentrate on the Dakota and Ram 50 trucks in the downsize market?

Finally, if you already have a 3.9-liter Dakota, don't feel left out of the hi-po street market. You may be interested in one of three over-the-counter engines soon to be available from Mopar Performance. Two are 360ci V8s, while a third is



The Dodge full-size trucks also have a new front grille.

a 3.9-liter V6. The latter should produce around 160 horsepower and comes complete, except for a 4-barrel carb. The 360 engines will be available in 300- and 360hp versions. Contact your Mopar Performance dealer for more information.



The Mazda B-series pickups must be a big hit with their owners. For the second time in three years, Mazda trucks have been ranked first in the J.D. Power customer satisfaction index for light trucks. The survey matched 50 models of full-size and compact trucks, vans and sport utilities from 15 manufacturers. The Mazda B-series also ranked the highest among all pickup trucks.

The Real Pickup From Hell

Hold on to your hats, the Syclone is blowing through with a hurricane force that will stun the entire truck industry.

It's no longer a rumor or a concept vehicle for the car shows. The

gan) Dragway just a few days before deadline. Sorry, you'll have to wait until our next issue for the full report, but we can offer you this tasteful appetizer: Syclone is the quickest American production vehicle, short of a ZR1 Corvette, and those ZR1s had better be in top shape before they square off with a Syclone.



The muscular, all-black Syclone features a wind-tunnel tested aero package.

GMC Syclone is a reality and will be available at your local GMC dealer this January.

For those who haven't heard of the Syclone, it is a radical and high-powered version of the S-truck. Syclone was developed by GMC Truck in cooperation with PAS, an automotive custom fabricator based in Detroit. Briefly, the Syclone features a turbocharged 4.3-liter Vortec

Editor Mike Magda ran a best of 13.25 at 98.68 mph on a very hot and muggy day. Kim Nielson, a Syclone engineer, recorded a best of 13.22 at 99.55 mph. Two weeks earlier on a cooler day, while making test runs with our sister publication, *Hot Rod*, Kim ran a 13.06 at 100.44 mph with the same truck.

Syclone is perhaps the hardest-launching vehicle ever to come off

cess transfer case is replaced by a single-speed, viscous-coupler, Borg-Warner unit used in the Safari vans. The truck also gets a Corvette 700R4 4-speed automatic transmission. Modifications necessary to accommodate the driveline changes, such as U-joints and drive-shafts, are also made. Syclone retains the stock front and rear differentials, both fitted with 3.42:1 gears. Its suspension was modified to lower the truck three inches and to provide a softer ride.

The engine's long block is stock, with the exception of lower compression (8.35:1) pistons. Power comes from a Mitsubishi turbo-charger that forces air through an intercooler into a Corvette L98 throttle body. A new split intake manifold, featuring port-fuel injectors was fabricated for the Syclone.

This combination puts out 280 horsepower at 4400 rpm with a peak torque of 360 lbs.-ft. at 2800 rpm. That's an increase of 120 horsepower of the stock Vortec engine, and GMC officials say the turbo version also gets better fuel mileage.

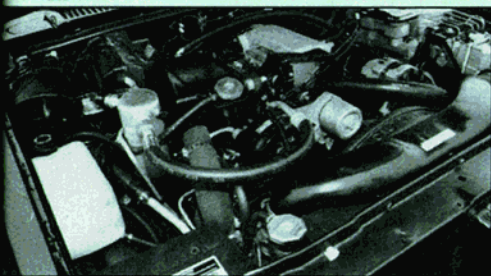
Drivers monitor the turbo's boost with a gauge package taken from a Pontiac Sunbird Turbo. Other interior goodies include a leather-wrapped steering wheel, a floor-mounted shifter (also from the Vette) and a center-mounted console. The seats have been reconfigured and recovered for extra comfort and support.

Syclone's styling package features all-black paint with a subtle red logo on the aero package, which was wind-tunnel tested to lower the drag coefficient. The finishing touch is a set of 16-inch aluminum wheels.

It will also come fully loaded with power windows, a tonneau and an AM/FM stereo cassette. The only options available for Syclone are a sunroof and a CD player. GMC is targeting a \$25,000 price.

Besides the performance, the best news is that GMC will make as many Syclones as ordered. There will be no limited production run that often prompts dealers to gouge buyers with inflated prices or encourages collectors to park their vehicles in a garage. This truck is meant to be driven, and it will satisfy even the most demanding sports-car tastes.

Watch for a full report in our next issue. **HT**



The turbocharged, intercooled-4.3-liter Vortec pumps out 280 horsepower, with a peak torque of 360 lbs.-ft.

engine, all-wheel drive, 4-wheel anti-lock brakes, full instrumentation, a redesigned interior and a muscular ground-effects package.

For those who have heard about Syclone, every superlative and favorable report you've been told is true. There are no disappointments. It's safe to say the Syclone is the most revolutionary truck produced since the '55 Chevy Cameo.

We had a chance to test drive a Syclone prototype at Milan (Michi-



We ran a best of 13.25 with the Syclone, but a GMC Truck engineer posted a 13.06 on a day with better air quality.

a Detroit showroom. Magda had the best 60-foot time of the day with a 1.819 clocking. That compares to 10- and 11-second musclecars shod with slicks. Our Syclone rolled on the stock 245/50X16VR Firestone Firehawk tires.

The key to these incredible neck-snapping launches is the all-wheel drive system. Syclone starts out as a 4-wheel drive, GMC Sonoma pickup. The two-speed New Pro-