



Dodge Charger 2.2

Go ahead, have some fun.

• Having a bad day? Need a little pick-me-up? We suggest you mosey on down to your local Dodge dealer and demand a quick test drive in a Charger 2.2. Then see if you don't come back smiling.

The Charger 2.2 is one of the year's most pleasant surprises. There's been a lot of carping recently, in this magazine and elsewhere, about the dearth of American drivers' cars. Front-drive revolution or no, our cars don't serve up the same brand of ride, handling, performance, and overall driving satisfaction that the imports provide—or so the conventional thinking goes.

The Charger 2.2 makes no apologies on these counts. It snorts merrily through its exhaust. It will suck the headlights out of a Scirocco in a stop-light drag-off. It'll stay glued to an Audi's rear bumper through your favorite esses—and will feel good doing it. It will even squeeze 30 miles or more out of a gallon of fuel, if you stroke it. And it's made right here in the land of the brave—by the New Chrysler Corporation, no less.

The Charger, as you have no doubt

noticed, is nothing *Richard Paydee* has ever leadfooted around the high banks of Daytona Speedway. It's simply the latest rendition of the familiar 024 fast-back, next of kin to the penny-pinching Miser, which Chrysler promoted for nickel-rocket duty in mid-1981. Even if the parts aren't all new, the Charger is encouraging for the message it brings. The new Charger actually trades away fuel economy for upped performance. Even Chrysler, preoccupied as it is with stamping out the bread-and-butter sedans of survival, realizes that in post-ayatollah America there's a growing market for honest enthusiast cars. That can only be good news.

As nice as all this sounds, understand that the magnitude of Chrysler's commitment to drivers' cars is not what you'd call staggering. It takes only a handful of new parts to transform a standard-issue 024 into a throbbing Charger, and most of the pieces had already been developed for the 024 DeTomaso and Plymouth TC3 Turismo packages. They were just waiting for a bright engineer to make them jell.

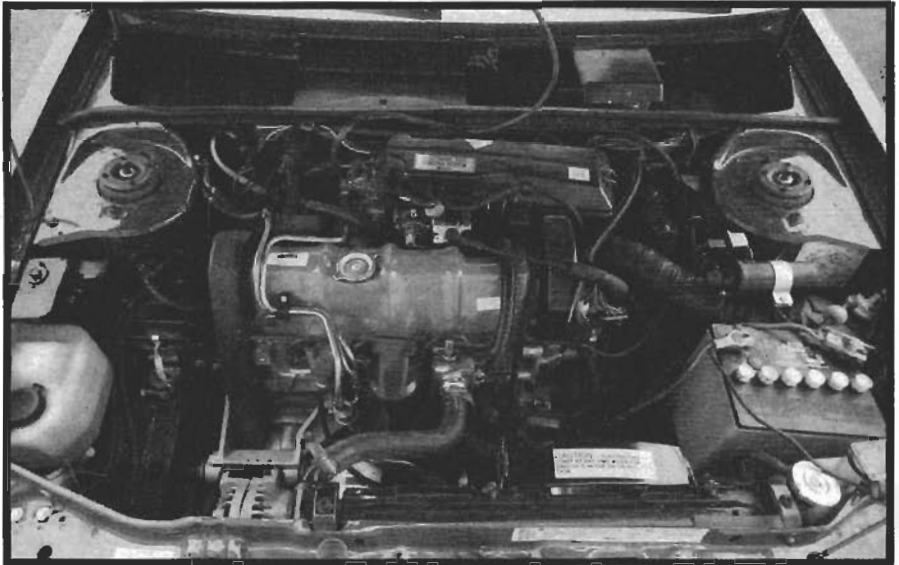
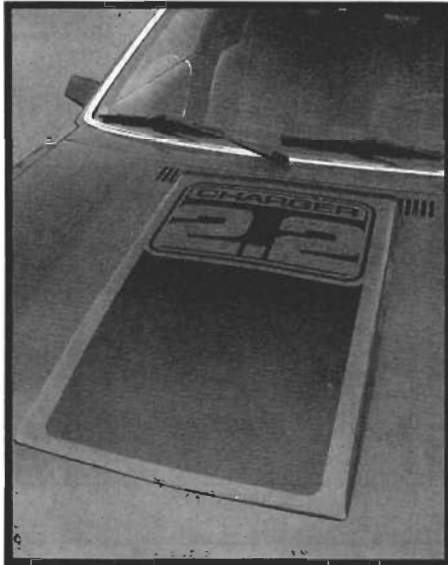
Just for the record, Chargers start life with all the primo pieces Dodge can muster. The chassis is treated to the 024 handling package—stiffer springs, tauter shocks, anti-sway bars front and rear, and squat P195/60R-14 Firestone HPR Radials. Chrysler's home-built 2.2-liter, 84-hp four-cylinder is dropped into the engine bay and bolted to your choice of either a four-speed manual or a three-speed automatic transaxle.

The visual element in the identity switch from 024 to Charger is accomplished with a sprinkling of add-on exterior bits. Fiberglass panels partially blank off the rear quarter-windows. A handsome (but nonfunctional) reverse scoop is stuck on the hood, and a pair of pseudo air extractors is slapped on, one for each front fender. Finally, about ten square yards of black tape stripes and lettering are rolled onto the red-and-black paint scheme to make sure even myopic nerds can tell that a Charger has just rumbled by.

Inside, the Charger is dressed quite attractively. The seats are sculptured in black-and-white corduroy, with match-

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON KILEY

CHARGER



ing material sewn onto the door panels. Everything else is black. The all-black dash, which is fitted with a speedometer, a tachometer, and gauges for fuel level and amps, underscores the businesslike feeling.

Basically, none of this is new, as it's all available on almost any 024 or TC3. In fact, the functional changes exclusive to the Charger number but two: a 3.56:1 final-drive ratio replaces the long-legged 3:05:1 ratio in the four-speed car, and a reworked exhaust system is fitted—which is another way of saying Dodge throws away the muffler and replaces it with a piece of straight pipe. (There is an empty swelling in the pipe where the muffler used to be that Chrysler considers a resonator.)

Now, a new gear and a Hollywood muffler may not sound like a very comprehensive high-performance development program, but the changes make all the difference in the world. The straight-pipe exhaust sounds so good, you drive around with the windows open all the time just to hear it better.



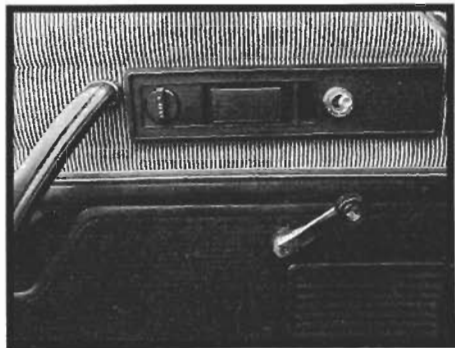
At idle it burbles like a motorboat, and it swells to a full-throated blat as you go up through the gears. Back off, and it snaps and pops like a race car. No one is immune to it. Almost everyone who drove it thought it was flat terrific.

There's no letdown when you pedal it hard, either. The gear swap is megavitamin therapy for the 024. Zero-to-sixty sprints happen in 10.7 seconds now,

down from the normal 2.2-liter 024's leisurely 12.4 seconds. Quarter-miles go by in 17.6 seconds, 1.2 seconds quicker than before. But you don't need a stopwatch to feel that the Charger is on its toes all the time, ready to zing it when you are.

Whether it's the new graphics or the arrest-me-red paint or the boy-racer exhaust, or all of these things, there's no

CHARGER



denying that the Charger gets a rise out of the populace—whether they're walking or motoring. Heads turned wherever we went, and stoplight challengers came out of the woodwork. During one late Friday-night cruise, the Charger did battle on three impromptu occasions. It sent a BMW 2002tii home whimpering, then got slaughtered by a brace of V-8 Camaros. (Well, what did you expect?) A couple of days later a student in a Fairmont spun out while trying to keep up with us through some wet esses at 65 mph. The Charger, it seems, brings out

the kid in everybody.

In most other ways the Charger is the same willing sports coupe we've known for the past few years, a car we dubbed the American Scirocco the first time we drove it. That assessment still stands. The Charger, alias 024, hammers down two-lanes with the kind of poise and authority that would seem appropriate for something from the Fatherland. The nose points where you tell it to, and the wheels stay planted over bumps that would have most Amurrican iron darting around excitedly. Even the power

steering is encouraging, with just enough feel to let you in on what's going on.

The Charger is also an impressive highway rocket. You can reel in Interstate and send it out the back at 95 mph, and the Charger will stay as stable as the Rock of Gibraltar—almost immune to trailer-truck wakes and gusts, if not the police. Although it's far from hushed, our sound-level meter says that the straight-through exhaust adds only 1 dBA of noise at 70 mph.

Unfortunately, given Chrysler's priorities these days, it's not surprising to see that the Charger's weak points are also unchanged. You don't spend all your time tearing around, no matter how crazed you are, and it's at the quieter moments that you notice that the Charger's environment isn't nearly as hospitable as it ought to be. The driving position is second rate, with the seat a bit too low and the wheel a tad too high. With luck, the new seatback recliner, offered for the first time on 1982 models, will enable you to adjust yourself into something other than the orangutan arms-out driving position, while still keeping your legs from getting cramps. The seats, while grippy, are in dire need of more lateral support. You couldn't heel-and-toe even if your shoe size were 25, so far apart are the pedals. And the

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interior hardware lacks the high-quality look and fit of even lowly Japanese sedans.

There are other things to remind you that the Charger is a lowball sedan, conceived before America was taught a few quality lessons by the Japanese. The dash and the shifter buzz intermittently, and the general fit and finish, inside and out, are nothing to rave about. The ventilation is marginal.

In spite of these gripes, the little Charger is still a mighty lovable rat racer. Not only is it good therapy to blast around in it, but it won't eat up your steak money either. Our leadfooted staff, egged on by the Charger's naturally aggressive personality, couldn't drop

the mileage below 24 mpg.

All this, plus a price thousands less than the Scirocco, makes the Charger look like one of the best ways to get cheap thrills on four wheels. For 1982 the good news is that you can have a low-profile Charger sans graphics simply by ordering a Plymouth TC3 Turismo with all the proper equipment.

That Chrysler is keeping the faith and offering hot-rod small cars in two guises in 1982 is further proof that the message we've been pressing is finally reaching Detroit's executive suites. Cheap, efficient cars are all well and good, but nowhere is it written that they can't also be fun. It kind of makes you smile, doesn't it?

—Rich Ceppos

COUNTERPOINT

• I missed all the good stuff when I worked at Chrysler. While I was busy demonstrating on campus to unionize the dorm janitors, the test track was teeming with 426 Hemis and 387 Magnums. By the time I hired on as a test driver at the proving grounds, the only thrills came from losing four-by-fours in the bottomless mudhole of the off-road course.

So now, while I'm trying to figure out how to keep my caster-ated desk chair from falling off the edge of the Rubbermaid carpet protector, my old pals from UAW Local 1284 are screaming around South Tortuous Road in an L-car that sounds like a 440 Power Wagon with cherry bombs and goes like a bat out of hell. Plant Protection must be going bananas! There's no justice.

The straight-pipe exhaust and the shorter final-drive ratio aren't the only features that have me sold on the Charger 2.2. Chrysler also found enough money to fix the rubbery shift linkage that had plagued the L-cars since their introduction in 1977. And thick, supportive seats now take the place of the abominations that sent half of Chrysler's test drivers to the table of Gentle George, the local chiropractor, every week.

One question: Do they only come in red?

—Jean Lindamood

Get back! Italians have gotten loose in the Chrysler muffler lab! Make that the No-Muffler Lab. This Challenger 2.2 sounds like an Alfa that's been out on an all-nighter. And it doesn't give a hang if Mrs. Alfa hears it come ripping home for breakfast. Still, it's funny how an exhaust system of such obvious heritage can sound so much like a Lawn Boy riding mower at idle, and then like one bank of Cale Yarborough's 180-degree headers when the revs are up.

The Challenger's engine feels healthier than any four-cylinder Detroit's ever

shipped out before. It's much smoother, stronger, and more willing than, say, Ford's anguished 2.3-liter or GM's early, underachiever versions of the Iron Duke. And the Chrysler 2.2 gets good fuel economy to boot.

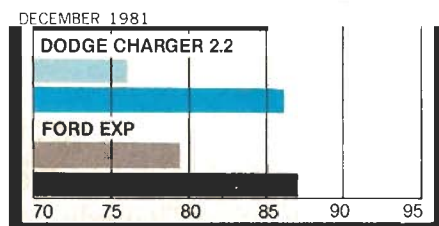
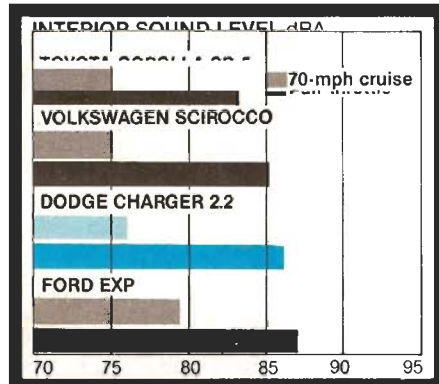
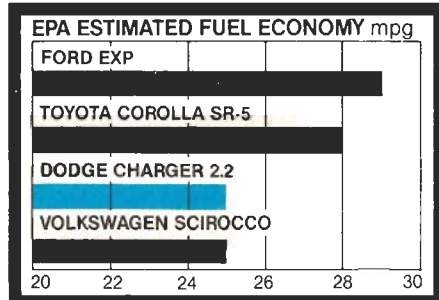
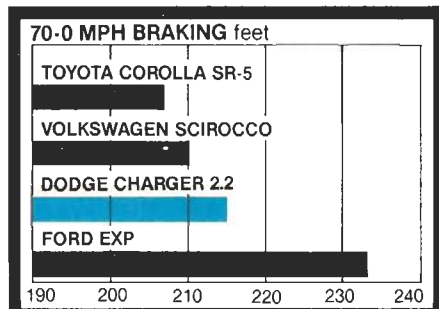
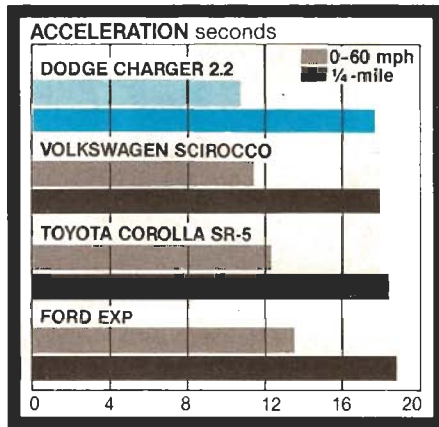
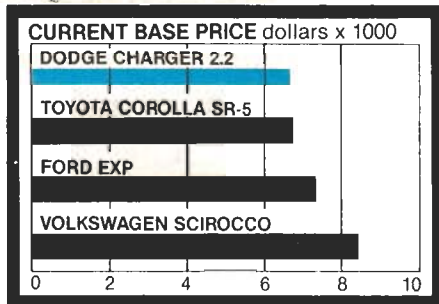
I could do with improvements in the taffy-pull steering, the ugly wheel, the archaic ventilation, and the poor lateral support, but one of these welterweight mechanical packages in the less gaudy trappings of the Turismo would be an appealing combination of Americana-meets-Oktoberfest virtue. The Challenger's road behavior is less sophisticated than a Scirocco's, but for the price . . .

Chrysler is working hard.

—Larry Griffin

There will be some among you who never heard of Jim Wangers. Jim Wangers was the fertile brain behind the Pontiac GTO. He was the one who got us to do our original GTO-versus-GTO test in 1965. Although he never gets any credit for it, he had a lot to do with John De Lorean's explosive success at Pontiac back in those days. Unfortunately, government regulations and America's growing energy consciousness cut one leg off of Wangers' stool, and he lost his equilibrium. The kids he hyped cars for in the Fifties and Sixties don't go racing on Woodward anymore. Nobody does. His head is still full of ideas, but they're 1969-model ideas. Chrysler asked him to help them hype the Charger, and the Charger 2.2 is what he came up with. Like the DeTomaso 024, it's a perfectly good car, but it looks a little self-conscious under all that nostalgic adornment. The Charger 2.2 is fun to drive, is well balanced, makes a nice noise, and won't cost you an arm and a leg to own or to operate. It's just too bad that it looks as though it's on its way to a Good Old Days costume party.

—David E. Davis, Jr.



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TC3 Turismo 2.2-Liter

Getting better all the time

by Ro McGonegal

PHOTOS BY JOHN GATES





If the Plymouth TC3 were a student and we were the master, we would give it an A for effort. The Word of Lido has made connection somewhere between

the podium and the assembly-line push-button. Starting with this model year, we have been assured uncompromised quality control, a method of refinement not seen since the day of the handbuilt coach. In reality, we know this decree is banal and fully at the mercy of the mass-production angel, but we can take solace that the heavenly overseer no longer goes to sleep inside the paint booth on Friday afternoons.

The commitment is to build a domestic car within the rigid boundaries set by foreign makers, boundaries that have been accepted and expected by American car buyers. We have seen it lately in the Imperial, in the K-car, and now in the ongoing TC3 line. During the last 18 months we have tested three TC3s (including this one) and have seen the emergence of a providential behavior pattern.

Indeed, the TC3 is virtually the same as last year's offering, but it is quieter and smoother and drinks the same amount of fuel as did the old configuration. The 2.2-liter 4-cylinder engine and transaxle are manufactured by Chrysler and are extra-cost options. But if one prefers the sexy accoutrements wrapped into the Turismo package, then one is treated to these mechanicals automatically. Herein lies the basic difference between the 1980 and the 1981 Turismo. What we have is more power, more torque, and more quietude. That, in a pistachio nutshell, is its essence. The 2.2 engine is strong and silent, especially at freeway speed, and it has a torque curve that can be bandied with when the need arises.

Although the 2.2 is a half-liter larger than the base 1.7-liter Volkswagen powerplant, it prospers from relatively the same fuel mileage and only slightly better straight-line performance than the 1980 1.7 configuration.

But why?

We can chalk the figures up to the magic of gear ratios and volumetric efficiency. The transaxle used with the 1980 1.7 engine had lower ratios for all its gears and was quicker 0-50 than the 2.2. But after the 50-mph mark, the larger engine begins a heavy breathing exercise. To test the true mettle of the TC3, one must join the commuter traffic ranks. In that mess, the torquey 2.2 allows use of 2nd or 3rd gear with little fear of having to put the lever all the way back into Low. The torque produced by the 2.2 is sufficient enough to do all low-rpm lugging in these gears. Once on a roll, the TC3 can be left in 4th, which is a .88:1 overdrive, while the operator simply matches road speed to traffic conditions. The need for downshifting in order to pass is infrequent, and the noise once associated with the TC3 is absent. No doubt the Turismo's extra sound deadener is a

factor, but the engine's larger displacement means that it doesn't have to work as hard to keep the same pace as the 1.7 engine did.

The same gear ratios that allow the 2.2 only marginal performance over the 1.7 of last season (in 1981 models the final drive ratio of the 1.7 cars has been dropped from 3.37 to 2.84:1) have made it something of a mileage maniac. It registered 32.2 mpg on our 73-mile loop and a smile on our tester's face.

Even with the inclusion of the 2.2 engine and corresponding transaxle, the TC3 Turismo is mechanically the same as it was a year ago. The interior layout, save for some seat "modifications," is also the same, but it has been screwed together tighter than it ever has been. The windows don't rattle in the door frames; the dash doesn't moan unless it's being treated to a corduroy road; and everything stays in exactly the same place it did when it was fitted to the car.

One of the most satisfying things about the Turismo's interior is its decided understatement. Controls for all functions (and we do mean *all*; see option list) are fitted into a narrow band of simulated wood that runs from one door panel to the other. Only the gearshift lever is obtrusive and, in the tan interior, sticks out like a crow on a snowfield. Still extant is the deep-dish steering wheel, which looks odd but feels quite normal and is completely necessary in lieu of a non-collapsible steering column. In the event of a serious frontal impact, the wheel, not the column, is supposed to deflect enough to minimize human damage.

The steering wheel's very depth brings to light a problem of driver comfort. Unless the driver bears oversize hands, it becomes necessary to drop the left hand from the wheel in order to activate the windshield clearing systems, high headlight beams, or directional signal. A slight crick in the lever would bring it a couple of inches closer to the fingertips, allowing "hands on" at all times. But at the other end of the wheel is a quick and responsive power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering, which has excellent road feel while retaining a goodly amount of steering input effort. The crow-on-the-snow shifter still feels rubbery through its gates, and reverse is still hard to find on occasion. But when the driver must put the stick to work, it will not fail.

To be sure, we are all trying to find our place in this world, and the seats of the TC3 are beginning to look like one place to start. They are still without provision for adjustable rake, and we feel that in a car with a base price of more than \$6000, this is criminal. The seat bottom angle has been renegotiated so that the occupants feel like they are properly seated and not like they're heading for their first run down a coal chute. The seat bottom also feels firmer than in previous models and serves to place thighs and feet in a much better (read straighter) relationship to the floor of the car. Lumbar support is



TC3 Turismo 2.2-Liter

gentle but firm enough to erase all lower back problems, at least on trips of one hour or less. The La Corde upholstery, new this year, fits its stuffing with sincerity, as it was meant to be, all tight and smart-looking.

The rest of the interior is just as harmonious. The fit and finish of the headliner, door kickpanels, carpeting, and cargo compartment are above average. Everything looks like it has been attended by human hands and assembled piece by piece. A little quality at last? A little something for your money? (What a nice feeling; maybe Lido does care after all.)

The Turismo's option list is lengthy, but these items are comfortably blended and always within easy reach. One group, labeled "popular equipment," includes a lot of little ditties that a buyer might normally choose as separate pieces. This collection contains the deluxe wiper system (intermittent feature), deluxe seat belts, dual horns (under the hood), power steering, power front disc brakes, dual mirrors, special interior lighting, and trip odometer. They are peculiar to this package, but we see no reason why some of these things (trip odometer, wipers, etc.) couldn't be included as standard equipment as on many Japanese and European cars of this class.

Another option that should be mandatory is the Sport suspension (option code S14). This outfit includes the same shock absorbers that are used with the standard suspension but features higher spring rates (115 versus 95 pounds per inch, front; 110 versus 90, rear); different rebound rate (only) for the rear springs; and a larger diameter front, as well as the inclusion of a rear anti-roll bar. The fat little P-metric 195/60 radials, which are part of the Turismo package, roll on 14-inch wheels. The test Turismo was fitted with styled steel rims, but swoopy vaned alloys are also available.

This complete system almost converts a wallower into a predictable corner-stormer (at least for the layman) that rides with boulevard smoothness most of the time. The components are not harsh enough to lift a wheel off irregular pavement but, instead, work toward investing the driver/occupants with a competent, safe-feeling ride.

The TC3 Turismo is a stylish, timely, and very marketable piece of automobile at present, but its owners, like the rest of the domestic car industry, are falling into an inescapable trap. In order to duplicate what the Japanese can offer, they must place the sticker price above that of their competition, just so the expected amenities (trip odometer, intermittent wipers, etc.) can be included. In Turismo form, the TC3 is a pleasant, competent car, but not very exciting. Swoopy looks or no, we doubt whether we'd be happy in a stripped-down version. The high-line Turismo is stuck, via poor gearbox ratios and price scheduling, somewhere between the Omnicar and the Scirocco, but maybe that's just where it should be.

ROAD TEST DATA Plymouth TC3 2.2 Turismo

SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Vehicle type	Front-engine, front-drive, 2+2 hatchback
Base price	\$6070
Options on test car	Turismo package, tonneau cover, floor mats, maintenance-free battery, elec. rear def., popular equipment group, A/C, undercoat, pwr lift gate, AM/FM stereo, Sport suspension
Price as tested	\$8410

ENGINE

Type	In-line 4-cyl, water cooled, cast iron block, aluminum head, 5 main bearings
Bore & stroke	87.5 x 92 mm (3.44 x 3.62 in.)
Displacement	2.2 liters (135 cu. in.)
Compression ratio	8.5:1
Fuel system	2-bbl carburetor
Recommended fuel	Unleaded
Emission control	Electronic spark control, catalytic converter
Valve gear	Overhead camshaft, belt-driven
Horsepower (SAE net)	84 at 4800 rpm
Torque (lb.-ft., SAE net)	111 at 2800 rpm
Power-to-weight ratio	26.2 lb./hp

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	4-speed manual (0.88:1 overdrive 4th)
Final drive ratio	3.05:1

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	96.7 in.
Track, F/R	56.1/55.6 in.
Length	164.8 in.

Width	65.8 in.
Height	53.5 in.
Ground clearance	5 in.
Max. load length w/rear seat(s) folded down	62 in.
Curb weight	2247 lb.
Weight distribution, F/R	1394/853 lb.

CAPACITIES

Fuel capacity	13 gals.
Crankcase	3.8 qts.
Cooling system	8.7 qts.
Trunk capacity	N.A.

SUSPENSION

Front	Independent, iso-strut w coil springs, stabilizer bar (1.0-in. diameter)
Rear	Independent, trailing arms, coil springs, stabilizer bar (0.63-in. diameter)

STEERING

Type	Rack and pinion, power assist
Turns lock-to-lock	3.1
Turning circle, curb-to-curb	34.1 ft.

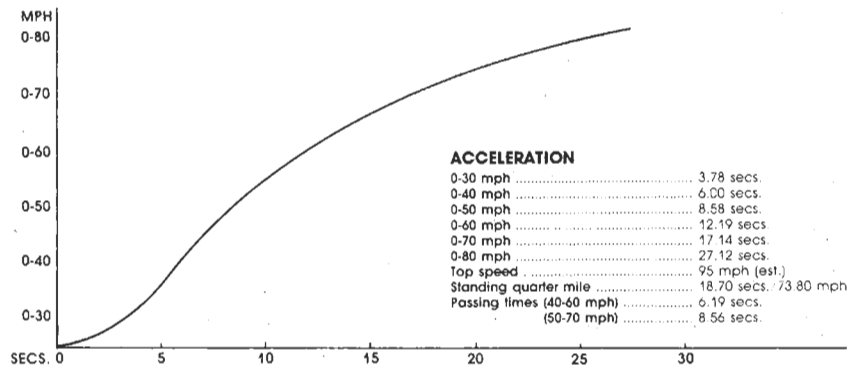
BRAKES

Front	Solid discs, 8.98-in. diameter
Rear	Cast iron drums, 7.87-in. diameter

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	5.5 x 14JJ
Wheel type	Steel disc
Tire make and size	Firestone HPR P195/60R14
Tire type	Steel-belted radial
Recommended pressure (psi), F/R	35/35

TEST RESULTS



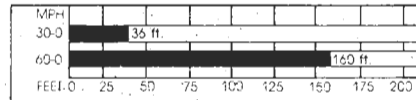
FUEL CONSUMPTION

EPA City	25 mpg
MT 73-mile test loop	32.2 mpg

SPEEDOMETER

Indicated	30	40	50	60
Actual mph	30	40	49.3	58.7

BRAKING



Dodge Charger 2.2: 5 year/50,000 mile protection and 0-50 performance that blows the doors off Trans Am and Z28.*



Zero to fifty in 6 seconds.

With mileage you don't expect from anything that comes even close: 41 est. hwy. and **26** EPA est. mpg.**

The 1982 Dodge Charger 2.2.

\$7,472† worth of dynamite that explodes with rocket launching quickness. So fast on green, that either Trans Am and Z28 are Emily Post polite and let Charger 2.2 go first, or Charger 2.2 is so fast that it simply blows them away*:

MODEL	HWY EST.**	EPA EST.**	ENGINE	PRICE†	0-50*
Charger 2.2	41	26	2.2 Liter 135 CID	\$ 7,472	6.02
Camaro Z28	24	16	5.0 Liter 305 CID	\$ 9,700	6.47
Pontiac Trans Am	24	16	5.0 Liter 305 CID	\$ 9,658	6.67

Charger 2.2's performance is incredible. While Trans Am and Z28 have V8's from another era, Charger 2.2 is designed for the realities of the 80's. Taking full advantage of sophisticated engineering and space age technology. Its torquey 2.2 liter over-

head cam 4 cylinder engine comes in one of the slipperiest missiles ever shaped. The power to weight ratio works out like pony cars of the 60's.

5 year 50,000 mile protection.

Dodge protects your new 1982 Charger 2.2 for 5 years or 50,000 miles, whichever comes first. That includes engine and power train protection, outer body rust-through protection, and Free Scheduled Maintenance. Limited warranties. Deductible may be required. Your Dodge dealer has details.

Performance is standard.

And Charger 2.2 comes with lots more: front-wheel-drive and rack and pinion steering; rallye road wheels and P195760R14 raised white letter radials, and an S14 sport suspension. They make Charger 2.2 such a predictable corner-stormer USAC was impressed enough to certify it as the only sports car with front-wheel-drive.

There's more: standard rallye instrument cluster with tach and quartz clock; performance exhaust system; reclining buckets with lateral support. For off-road racing, your Direct Connection dealer has more great stuff.††

If Dodge Charger 2.2 is your kind of driving machine, buy or lease one at your Dodge dealer.

There's nothing else on the road that'll give you more value or fun for your bucks. Buckle up for safety and show the world who's boss.



America's Driving Machines

The New Chrysler Corporation. Quality engineered to be the best.

*Based on acceleration tests performed by NHRA. Comparison only applies to cars with standard engines and transmissions. **Use EPA EST MPG numbers for comparison. Actual mileage may vary depending on speed, trip length, and weather. Actual HWY mileage probably lower. CA mileage may be lower. †Sticker price excluding taxes and destination charges. Levels of standard equipment vary on vehicles compared. ††Use of Direct Connection parts may void limited warranty.