

Back to the future with the 2011 Dodge Challenger SRT8

by Jim Robinson
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Turn the key and there is a slight hesitation as a big piston slides up into position.

Next, the engine, all 6.4-litres of it, literally bursts into life then settles down to a lumpy idle with just a hint of a rumble deep down.

For those who remember the sound of a big-bore V8, the "392" in the 2011 Dodge Challenger SRT8 brings memories flooding back to the days when Mustangs, Cudas, Camaros, 442s and, yes, Challengers ruled the roads in North America.

About the time that the first Challenger came out I can remember paying 51 cents a gallon (yes, per gallon) of gasoline, not the prices of today.

And back then, cars were known by their displacement numbers in cubic inches not just brand names. For instance the 7.0-litre V8 was called a 427.

For several years, Chrysler has had an in-house performance team called Street and Race Technology or SRT. When a Chrysler or Dodge has SRT in its name, you know it is brimming with modifications.

Currently, Chrysler is rolling out a number of SRT ver-

sions of its lineup like the Jeep SRT8 and Chrysler 300 SRT8 but the foremost is the car tested here, the Dodge Challenger SRT8 also known as the "392" for its 6.4-litre V8 that pumps out 470 hp and 470 lb/ft of torque.

Just to recap Dodge Challenger for 2011, there are three basic models differentiated primarily by engine. All are front-engine, rear-drive.

The Challenger SXT (\$26,995) comes with a 3.6-litre V6 engine producing 305 hp and 268 lb/ft of torque with a five-speed automatic transmis-

sion. The SXT Plus starts at \$28,995 and adds a number of trim pieces such as leather-trimmed seats, Uconnect with Voice Command and a 265-watt Boston Acoustic sound system.

The Challenger R/T (\$36,395) is equipped with the ubiquitous 5.7-litre Hemi V8 now producing 379 hp and 410 lb/ft of torque through a standard five-speed Auto Stick automatic or an optional six-Speed Tremec TR-6060 manual transmission. The Challenger R/T Classic (\$38,390) adds standard features like HID headlights and 20-inch wheels.

Like the R/T 2011, Dodge Challenger SRT8 392 is available with either the standard five-speed automatic transmission with Auto Stick or an available Tremec

TR-6060 six-speed manual transmission. The Tremec was first offered on the 2008 Dodge Viper SRT10.

The 392 comes with an improved heavy-duty clutch that provides easier shift engagement. Also, the force needed to work the clutch pedal doesn't require legs of steel to make it work.

Now it may sound odd to talk about "green" and a 6.4-litre V8 at the same time, but Chrysler's Fuel Saver technology is included in automatic transmission equipped V8 models. It allows the engine to operate economically on four cylinders or use all eight cylinders when needed.

Fuel consumption is listed at 15.1/8.8L/100 km (19/42 mpg) for the manual and 15.6/8.8L/100 km (18/31 mpg) city/highway with the automatic. These fuel numbers represent a four-mpg highway improve-

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The 2011 Dodge Challenger SRT8 comes with a 6.4-litre V8 with 470 hp and 470 lb/ft of torque but with modern ride and handling that makes it possible for anyone to drive it.



AT A GLANCE:

BODY STYLE:
High performance coupe

DRIVE METHOD:
front-engine, rear-wheel-drive

ENGINE:
6.4-litre, OHV V8 (470 hp, 470 lb/ft)

FUEL ECONOMY:
Manual, 15.1/8.8L/100 km (19/42 mpg) city/highway;
Automatic, 15.6/8.8L/100 km (18/31 mpg) city/highway

PRICE:
SRT8 392, \$47,995;
392 Inaugural Edition, \$49,990.

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