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Contact: Dan Bodene
(248) 512-2920 (office)
(248) 760-2624 (cell)
dwb11@chrysler.com

2003 Dodge Viper SRT10 Gives New Meaning to Extreme Performance

Auburn Hills, Mich. -

Since its introduction as a concept car at the 1989 North American International Auto Show in Detroit, the Dodge Viper has captured the hearts and imagination of enthusiasts around the globe. It has also captured its share of trophies on the track as a three-time FIA GT2 and Le Mans class champion.

The next chapter of Dodge Viper continues to set the definition of extreme, yet features greater levels of refinement and finish. In other words, Viper retains its essence - its "Viperness" - while taking natural steps forward.

Those who have never driven or ridden in a Dodge Viper can scarcely understand the way the car translates torque into forward momentum, nor can they fully appreciate the turning and braking capabilities of its massive tires and disc brakes.

The new Viper SRT10 takes that unbelievable rush of performance to an entirely new level - beyond even that of the current American performance car standard. If one ride doesn't thrill, exhilarate, energize or excite you more than any other car on the road, check your pulse.

Convertible Top Opens the Possibilities for New Redesign

Engineers at Dodge, who had grown fond of their RT/10 Roadster and GTS Coupe and proud of the cars' performance capabilities, were fully aware of the wide tiretracks they would have to fill when the decision was made to create a new, true convertible version of America's ultimate sports car.

What began as a simple plan to alter the RT/10's roofline quickly grew to a "blue-sky" redesign when designers and engineers discovered that the accompanying 2.6-inch lengthening of the wheelbase would change more than 50 percent of the car's body panels and many chassis components. Vehicle synthesis engineers, never ones to sit idly by, set to work immediately using the stretch as their opportunity to find incremental ways to update and improve the car. And quicker than you can say "hasta la vista," the teams found out that with a little bit of tweaking here and an upgraded assembly there, they would have an entirely new car to build.

While the Chrysler Group's famously creative design office staged an internal search for the best new Viper design sketch, performance-minded engineers at then Team Viper began to analyze the opportunities that a redesign could offer on the performance front. About the same time, combined marketing, engineering and communications teams from Dodge began polling key constituencies on what the next Viper should be - and as important, what it shouldn't be.

Among one of the most vocal and enthusiastic opinion groups - the owners AKA Dodge's Viper Nation - the replies consistently demanded ...

- More horsepower
- Bigger brakes
- Lighter weight
- A new convertible top mechanism
- A dead pedal
- Greater interior comfort
- Digital instrumentation
- Cruise control
- Cup holders
- A "bow-tie" lookalike

It was universally agreed that no matter the degree of change, certain Viper attributes - the car's legacy and signature to the world - must remain.

The message was loud and clear - Viper must be a front-engined, two-seat, rear-wheel-drive sports car. It must have a V-10 making at least as much power as the current 450 hp versions. That a six-speed manual transmission be the only choice. That it be devoid of cupholders, cruise control and traction control. Viper would be a driver's package, and never a luxury boat posing as a sports car.

Viper Remains True to the Original Mission

- Build a true convertible version of the original Dodge Viper RT/10 Roadster
- Refine the original caricature without losing its outrageous design
- Raise the benchmark for unmatched performance
- Maintain the back-to-basics approach from the original Viper
- Preserve the American sports car heritage

The 2003 Viper SRT10 once again underscores the core philosophies of the Dodge brand by being the ultimate automotive icon for extreme performance and extreme attitude.

"Back in 1992, the purpose was to re-orient what the Dodge brand was all about," said Jim Julow, Vice President - Dodge Motorsports and SRT Marketing. "We had just come out of a lot of years without any significant performance-oriented products. We needed to send a message that we had a new concept - a very historically accurate concept - but one which had not been seen in America for a long time. We wanted to come up with something that was so outrageous, so cutting edge, so purpose built that it said we still had a lot of car nuts around here; people with the know-how to put the most outrageous street car ever on the road.

"The continuation of the Viper allows us to hatch a whole new line of performance cars that go across more vehicle types than just two-door roadsters," continued Julow. "This whole SRT line of vehicles will aspire to be the Viper of their category."

Improving on a Legend

In creating the next chapter of Dodge Viper, the goal was also to enhance its unfiltered blend of performance.

As part of the Dodge Viper's complete redesign, more than 100 changes and improvements have been made to the chassis, brakes, suspension, tires, engine, transmission, cockpit, electronics and more than a dozen body panels.

Yet Viper retains a traditional front-engine, rear-wheel-drive layout with a six-speed manual transmission. The commitment was made early on to use a racing-style chassis including fully independent four-wheel suspension, wide tires and wheels for maximum grip and massive brakes for stopping power.

A race-derived two-seat cockpit looks over a highly functional instrument panel with center-mounted tachometer and a 220 mile-per-hour speedometer. A traditional push-button starter reinforces the purposeful layout and race-car inspirations.

A new version of the Viper's four-wheel anti-lock disc brake system, originally introduced for the 2001 model year, is enhanced for this next-generation car.

With a new bored and stroked aluminum engine block that increases the Viper's displacement from 488 to 505 cu. in. and pushes its V-10 power output to 500 horsepower and 525 lb.-ft. of torque, Viper has no equal on the road.

"For a brand like Dodge, maintaining best-in-class performance claims are absolutely the most important thing we can do," said Julow. "As a brand, we must differentiate ourselves based on performance and driveability in creating a true enthusiast car. We need these proof points because frankly, not everyone wants to have a 500-horsepower, two-door convertible. Not everyone necessarily wants to have a turbocharged, manual transmission small car. Not everybody's looking for an aluminum block full-size truck.

But they're looking for a brand that's willing to put a little bit extra into everything it builds, and the proof points for that are the SRT (Street and Racing Technology) line, which pushes the envelope as far as we can."

On the Outside

With styling cues derived from the Dodge Viper GTS/R concept car first shown at the 2000 North American International Auto Show, the all-new 2003 Dodge Viper SRT10 convertible packs an outrageous new design into a low-slung roadster shell.

Lowered hood lines, swept-back fenders and deep-cut side scallops take their cues from the classic original, yet bring the Viper into the 21st century. Improved aerodynamics and a partial undertray add functional performance enhancements.

Viper's visceral lines speak volumes of the passion that Dodge designers bring to their craft. The new Viper gives enthusiasts an American sports car that remains true to the credo of pure performance.

The new Viper has a new roofline profile with an easy-to-operate drop top. The Dodge Viper was initially introduced with a full-width sport bar

that brought open-air motoring to the Dodge lineup. The second chapter of Viper history was written when the GTS Coupe was added in 1996, and added classic gran turismo styling to match the car's prodigious performance capabilities.

The new Viper's bi-fold clamshell top with single center latch now makes it a true convertible, harking back to a time when sports cars delivered serious performance capabilities and stood for untamed freedom.

For drivers seeking the farthest edge of the performance envelope, Viper remains nothing less than a streetable supercar - sophisticated yet brutal.

The Dodge Viper SRT10 is available in red, black and bright silver metallic.

The Dodge Viper SRT10 will go on sale in Fall 2002 as a 2003 model. It will be built at DaimlerChrysler's Conner Avenue Assembly Plant in Detroit, Mich.

Competition Coupe

Debuting alongside the Dodge Viper SRT10 Convertible will be the Viper Competition Coupe.

With a coupe-shaped composite body based largely on the Dodge Viper GTS/R concept car shown at the 2000 North American International Auto Show, and a track-ready chassis based on the new 2003 Dodge Viper SRT10 convertible, this new car will emerge as a serious competitor from the first lap.

The objective was to create a racing car for Viper owners, strengthen the performance image for the Dodge brand, create awareness of the Performance Vehicle Operations group, continue Viper's road racing heritage and maximize use of existing SRT10 parts to minimize cost.

The Competition Coupe makes extensive use of production pieces to keep the estimated retail price at \$100,000. The Viper Competition Coupe will deliver racers an extremely high level of performance for the price. A full complement of racing enhancements, including window net, 27-gallon (100-liter) fuel cell, racing slicks, differential cooler and ducted brakes ensure that the Dodge Viper Competition Coupe is track-ready as delivered.

Though largely based on the SRT10 convertible, the Competition Coupe develops 20 more horsepower (520 bhp) and 15 more lb.-ft. of torque (540 lb.-ft.) than the street-going version. Power is enhanced via a performance camshaft and tuned exhaust.

The Competition coupe also adds improved driver and engine cooling, a differential cooler, trap door oil pan and low-inertia flywheel.

Anti-lock brakes are modulated by an electronic front-to-rear braking distribution control.

Dodge has added a backbone FIA-legal safety cage with engine bay bracing to the production car's backbone tubular steel space frame. A single competition seat with six-point driver restraint system, driver-activated fire-suppression system and electronic dash and data acquisition system round out the racing modifications.

Double wishbone-type suspension is upgraded with spherical bearing control arm attachments, two-way adjustable coil over dampers and a driver-adjustable blade-type rear anti-roll bar. Three-piece aluminum wheels are shod with Michelin 315/30ZR18 front and 355/30ZR18 rear racing slicks.

Exterior aerodynamic enhancements include front splitter, larger rear diffuser and adjustable rear wing. Composite body panels, several of which are carbon fiber, are based on the Viper GTS/R Concept Car.

Every effort has been made to produce an affordable yet competitive GT-class race car, and Dodge executives expect high demand from its competition-oriented Dodge Viper owner base.

"The idea for a next-generation racing version came from the Viper owner body about two years ago," said John Fernandez, Director,

Performance Vehicle Operations, DaimlerChrysler Corp. "A large proportion of owners enjoy racing their cars in organized competition."

Dodge officials expect to build 25 cars in the first year, but have the ability to expand production as demand grows. Plans include technical support for competitors at all major events. Parts may also be offered through DaimlerChrysler's Mopar Performance Parts division, and available through dealerships nationwide.

Performance targets for the Viper Competition Coupe are 3.8 sec. acceleration from 0 to 60 mph, a top speed of 185 mph, lateral acceleration of 1.25g and a curb weight under 3,000 lbs. There are no plans at this time to homologate the Dodge Viper Competition Coupe for American Le Mans Series or 24 Hours of Le Mans racing.

Production begins at DaimlerChrysler's Conner Avenue Assembly Plant (Detroit) in late 2002. The Dodge Viper Competition Coupe cannot be titled for highway use.

Performance Vehicle Operations; The Enthusiast Heart of the Chrysler Group

While Dodge owners have been busy grabbing life by the horns, Chrysler Group executives and engineers have been grabbing life by the throttle by ramping up plans for a new performance group and some of the most outrageous production vehicles ever developed by DaimlerChrysler Corp.

Officially known as Performance Vehicle Operations (PVO), the engineering team combines Chrysler Group's specialty vehicle and motorsports know-how, much like the profitable high-end vehicle conversion group at Mercedes-AMG.

"No other automaker has leveraged such resources to this extent," said Jim Schroer, Executive Vice President-Sales, Marketing and Service, DaimlerChrysler Corp. "We are combining our extensive motorsports experience, along with our legendary Viper development team and our Mopar Performance Parts, to create a line of extreme performance vehicles that will blow past everyone else."

"PVO brings together the best performance development processes, durable high-performance parts and some of our most talented and experienced motorsports and performance car engineers to produce truly exciting cars and trucks," added Schroer. Performance Vehicle Operations will become a profit center within the Chrysler Group focusing on enhancing Dodge, Jeep® and Chrysler brand product lines and image through high-end, limited-volume specialty vehicles.

Chrysler Group executives see an opportunity to expand the Chrysler Group's portfolio of specialty vehicles, performance models and performance parts.

PVO performance models engineered for the Dodge brand will carry the SRT badge. While Chrysler and Jeep performance lines will be announced in the future, Dodge SRT models are already being prepared for retail sale, beginning with the 2003 Dodge Viper SRT10, available in Fall 2002.

For Dodge, the SRT model-line philosophy represents a new twist, offering significant performance enhancements and a visual appeal. But compared with Dodge's R/T credo of "contemporary interpretations of performance," SRT will come to stand for "ultimate interpretations of performance."

The Dodge SRT performance signature includes high-output engine performance, sport suspensions, aggressive aerodynamic packages, performance wheel and tire packages, sport interiors and performance exhausts and brakes.

Biography

John Fernandez, Director, Performance Vehicle Operations (PVO)

John Fernandez, Director of PVO, is responsible for directing performance car and motorsports engineering for Chrysler Group. Beginning in 2002, PVO is making an impact on the Dodge NASCAR Winston Cup program by combining the technical expertise of Chrysler Group's specialty vehicles with the engineering program of Dodge Motorsports. Fernandez also oversees product direction for Mopar Performance Parts and other technical aspects of motorsports. Fernandez joined Chrysler Corp. in 1969 as a co-op intern who grew up watching Richard Petty racing on the dirt tracks of upstate New York. Fernandez became a full-time project engineer in 1972 after receiving his B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from University of Detroit. Five years later, he earned his MBA at his alma mater. Fernandez came to Team Viper as Executive Engineer in 1997 and has brought his passionate focus to specialty vehicle engineering ever since, pioneering low-volume vehicles such as the new Neon-based Dodge SRT4 and the Dodge Viper SRT10.

The SRT Mission: Be the Fastest

Engineered by DaimlerChrysler's Performance Vehicle Operations team, the Dodge SRT - for Street and Racing Technology - lineup represents some of the most outrageous products ever developed by DaimlerChrysler. Whether it's the new 2003 Dodge Viper SRT10, soon-to-be-launched Dodge SRT4 or Ram SRT10, enthusiasts can look to Dodge as the claimholder to America's fastest, most powerful production cars in each of their market segments.

The Dodge Viper SRT10's promise of more than 500 cubic inches of engine displacement - generating 500 horsepower and 525 lb.-ft. of torque - will make it truly unique in its performance specifications. The Viper SRT10 is expected to achieve some of the highest all-around performance claims ever for a production vehicle.

The Dodge SRT4 is designed to smoke the tuner market with an estimated top speed of 148 mph, sub-six-second 0-to-60 mph times and a \$19,995 price tag. At 215 horsepower, the turbocharged SRT4 will be the fastest car in the world under \$20,000.

Big, fast and menacing describes the awesome Dodge Ram SRT-10 with its 8.3-liter all-aluminum V-10 engine that shares much of its design with that from the Viper. The Ram SRT-10 definitely hauls.

"These are the kinds of cars and trucks that our competitors can only dream about building," said Dodge's Jim Julow. "No matter where you look, Dodge wears its commitment to performance where everyone can see it."

"We've expanded the R/T line to nearly every product we build," said Julow. "We've made good on a promise to return to NASCAR's Winston Cup Series with a fully competitive program from the first green flag. And now it's a natural fit to introduce the Dodge SRT line, making Dodge the first of our Chrysler Group brands to feature the talents of the Performance Vehicle Operations team."

From a business case standpoint, the SRT family of vehicles will help increase the DaimlerChrysler revenue base by expanding the current product portfolio into the growing specialty market segment of customers willing to pay for high-performance vehicles.

These vehicles will increase recognition of the Dodge brand and strengthen its association with performance attributes.

SRT models give Dodge the opportunity to own a share of the aftermarket parts and accessories business and go after some of the market that is currently being satisfied by outside suppliers.

The SRT concept takes the previous R/T (Road and Track) theme to another level by offering specialty, high-performance vehicles bearing the Street and Racing Technology acronym.

"The SRT concept is pretty simple," said John Fernandez. "SRTs will be the fastest cars in their segment. When we do a four-cylinder compact, it will be the fastest small car. When we do a Ram pickup truck, it will be the fastest fullsize pickup truck. We know we can't approach Viper numbers with everything, but we can be the fastest vehicles in our segments. And we will keep them affordable, too, because Dodge is a mainstream brand."

Prime in Product

"The Viper is a rallying point within the company," said Jim Julow. "It sets a tone for all of our engineers. It has become the core of the brand

within the company, as well. "It's kind of like our Dodge Motorsports NASCAR Winston Cup program. It's a tremendous motivator within the company walls. It's something that makes the employees feel good about being involved with Dodge or having something to do with Chrysler Group vehicles."

Viper Owners: Dodge Ambassadors at Large

"Many Viper owners are kind of like the test pilots of 'The Right Stuff,'" said Julow. "They're the crazy fringe; the fanatics. I think they called them the 'Mad Monks.' But what they do is they take a passion for a particular product and extend it to the whole brand. One of the most satisfying things about Viper owners is that back in the early 1990s, they had four or five vehicles for their fleet, one of which was a Dodge: and it was a Viper. And in many cases, you go back to those same households and they'll have four or five vehicles in their fleet, four or five of which are a Chrysler Group product: mostly Dodges.

"And so we've been able to extend this passion for Viper, its capabilities and design intent. They've become not just Viper advocates, but Dodge advocates. And that's really the whole point behind it in the first place."

Viper Owners Invitational

"Viper Owners Invitational (VOI) is the place to where the enthusiasts flock; like the swallows to Capistrano," said Julow. "You have to have a place for them to fraternize and conspire - and it's a little of both. So we provide them an outlet. Not that it's their only outlet; they provide a lot of their own outlets. For example, they do local Viper clubs. They do local Viper track days where they race each other. They do meets where they go to NASCAR races. There are a lot of ways that these people enjoy their passion. The Mecca of that whole system is VOI. I wish we could do them more often."

Owner Loyalty

"The Viper owners have been a loyal bunch of people to the company. They've changed their household and their business fleets over from various different products to Dodge and other Chrysler Group vehicles.

"We felt loyalty was owed them for their years of passion, support and brand advocacy. So we sold the first year of Viper SRT10 production to existing owners. I don't know that anybody's ever done that. And it's certainly something we can't do forever. "I think it was a nice thing and an appropriate thing to do - to reward their loyalty over all these years - and let them stand first in line for the new ones. It really is kind of gratifying that you can take a whole year's worth of production and sell it within a 30-day timeframe. That tells you how passionate they are about their cars."

The Dodge Viper Lineup

Dodge Viper RT/10 Roadster

The original Dodge Viper. Introduced as a concept car at the 1989 North American International Auto Show in Detroit. Served as 1991 Indianapolis 500 Pace Car. Began production in mid-1992 calendar year as a two-seat roadster. 2002 marks the final year for this design.

Dodge Viper GTS Coupe

Originally designed as a one-of-a-kind show car, introduced in January 1993. Widely praised as a natural extension to the Viper line, the production version debuted in spring 1996. It was chosen that year as the Official Pace Car of the Indianapolis 500. 2002 marks the final year for this design.

Dodge Viper GTS-R (later called GTS-R/T)

An all-out racing version of the GTS Coupe producing approximately 700 horsepower and featuring a carbon fiber and Kevlar composite body. Raced as a "Chrysler Viper" in Europe. This car, which retails for \$325,000, earned the 1997-1999 FIA GT2 (later GTS) championships, 1998-2000 LeMans GTS Class and 2000 Daytona 24 Hours outright.

Dodge Viper GT2

Commemorative 1998 model celebrating Viper's 1997 FIA GT2 World Championship. White with blue stripes, only 100 individually numbered copies produced. Featured high-mounted rear wing, special badging and graphics, front splitter and ground effects, blue interior accents with "Viper GTS-R" seat inserts, five-point restraint system and other special features.

Dodge Viper ACR

American Club Racer (ACR) model was introduced as a limited-edition, street-legal performance model in the 1999 model year. ACR models feature modified suspension and 460 hp/500 lb.-ft of torque. Lightened for club racing, the ACR is at home both on the road and on the track.

Dodge Viper ACR Plus

Mopar Performance Parts accessorized 1999 Dodge Viper ACR model tuned to produce more than 500 hp/530 lb.-ft. of torque.

Dodge Viper GTS/R

Dodge Viper Concept Vehicle was first unveiled at the 2000 North American International Auto Show in Detroit. The GTS/R concept took racing-inspired technologies and applied them to a street car, wrapping them in an exciting new coupe shape. This same shape was the basis for the Dodge Viper Competition Coupe.

Dodge Viper SRT10 Convertible

Originally unveiled at the 2001 North American International Auto Show as the RT-10, it offered a first look at the third chapter in the Dodge Viper history. It is a true convertible with a more powerful V-10 engine (500 hp, 500 lb.-ft. of torque and 505 cubic inches displacement) and a new design inspired by the GTS/R concept. It's scheduled to go on sale Fall 2002 as a 2003 model. Known internally by the code VGX, the RT-10 was renamed the Dodge Viper SRT-10 in January 2002.

Dodge Viper Competition Coupe

A closed-cockpit competition model based on the next generation Dodge Viper Convertible. With concept car body work, full racing cage and other safety features, this is an affordable, limited-production race car for competition-oriented owners. Late 2002 availability. Limited volume of 25-30 individual race cars.

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