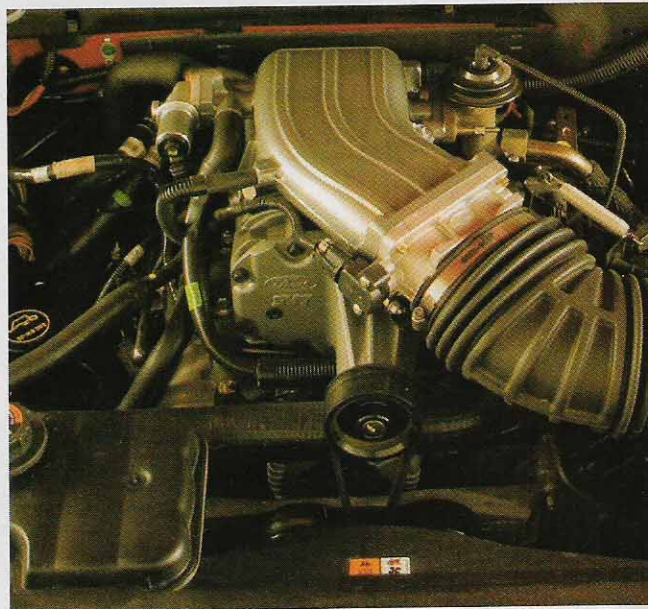Both the Lightning and the SRT-10 do a decent job of impersonating performance cars, but how good are they as trucks?

In 1978, the quickest production vehicle built in America was Dodge's Little Red Express Truck, a full-on homologation special of '70s disco-trucker chic, complete with chromed exhaust stacks, cheesy graphics, wooden bed stakes, and a smog-choked 360 small-block rated at 225 hp. In our June '78 issue we tested an Express that ran 15.77 at 88 mph, faster than any contemporary Mustang, Camaro, Firebird, or Corvette. Appalling but understandable given the draconian smog legislation that had emasculated the musclecar.

Today you can buy lots of cars that are quicker than a truck, yet trucks are the biggest sellers. This is of little surprise to us, since trucks provide the recipe of a roomy, V-8-powered rear-wheel-drive vehicle that the domestic car manufacturers have all but abandoned in the passenger-car segment, although there are signs of a much-welcome shift with the introduction of such cars as the Chrysler Hemi 300C, Dodge Magnum RT, Pontiac GTO, and

Cadillac CTS-V. Still, as the truck market has grown, so has the competition to build the biggest, toughest, and fastest trucks possible, and for the past decade, Ford has owned the muscletruck segment with a series of Special Vehicle Team–designed Lightnings based on the F-150. Dodge's Ram SRT-10—the Viper-powered brainchild of Daimler-Chrysler's Performance Vehicle Operations division—is aimed squarely at unseating the current 380hp Lightning as the king of muscletrucks.

On paper and at the track, Dodge has definitely created a Lightning killer by packaging the 500hp, 505ci, pushrod V-10 and T56 six-speed manual transmission right out of the Viper into a ½-ton shortbed Ram. In raw horsepower and quarter-mile performance, the Lightning is clearly outclassed by the Dodge, which has it covered by more than a half-second at the dragstrip; we ran the Dodge to an altitude-corrected 13.44 at 104 mph compared to the Lightning's 14.10 at 98 mph,

> Perhaps the best thing about the Lightning engine is that it's just a few bolt-ons away from delivering 11-second power while being perfectly streetable.