

We mostly proved that both these trucks are capable of destroying a complete set of tires in two days of on-track flogging.



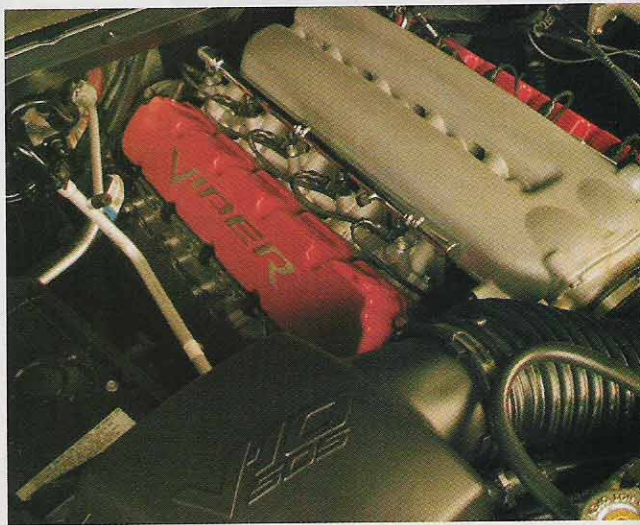
although it should be noted that the Ford can be made significantly stronger with little more than the swap of a blower pulley. With heavily tuned suspensions producing astounding grip in these high-CG vehicles, both handle far better than should reasonably be expected of a pickup truck. At the Streets of Willow road course, both were as fast or faster around the 1.5-mile, 10-turn track in the hands of our testers than a stock '04 Mustang Mach 1 we tested the same day. Although the 5,150-pound Dodge lapped about a second quicker than the 4,700-pound Lightning, we'll chalk up its slight edge to the massively bigger tires and brakes and the manual transmission.

On the street the comparison takes on an altogether different complexion. Around town, the Lightning is a virtual sports car compared to the brawny and muscular Ram. Where the Ram is off-the-scale ostentatious in size and looks, the Lightning is comparatively conservative. Like a Hummer H2, blinged-out Escalade, or lifted 4x4 dualie on 44s, the Ram SRT-10 is the perfect ride for guys with a pathological need to "compensate." The swoopy looks of the last-generation F-150 combined with the SVT-restyled fascia,

side exhaust cutouts, 18-inch wheels, and just-right-for-a-truck stance make the Lightning far more inconspicuous.

Both the Lightning and the SRT-10 do a decent job of impersonating performance cars, but how good are they as trucks? In the most obvious measure of truckness—payload and towing capacity—the Lightning scores a default victory, for despite the Dodge's girth and burly Dana 60 rearend, the SRT-10 carries no factory towing or payload rating in any published factory literature—a telling omission. The Lightning's 5,000-pound tow rating and 1,350-pound payload prove that lithe handling and skill as a sprinter need not thoroughly sacrifice utility as a truck, while the SRT-10's ridiculous wing across the back of the bed says Dodge doesn't want you to haul anything but attitude. The Lightning doesn't ride or drive like a truck, but it can be used like one, including towing an open-trailer race car.

So which of these two very fun-to-drive muscletrucks would we recommend? If you're looking for a weekend toy that provides a real kick in the pants, draws attention wherever you go, and can shock Mustangs and Camaros at stoplights, you're the



perfect SRT-10 customer. If you're looking for a practical alternative to a passenger car, have no need to seat more than two adults, and insist that a truck actually be capable of use as a truck, you're a Lightning buyer. The fact that the Ford's sticker is \$12,000 cheaper might not hurt, either.

As for us, we'll take a Viper, a Cobra, and a ¾-ton longbed. In that order. **HRM**

> Top: After years of taking good care of press vehicles, our supertruck burnout antics left a black mark on our record. And on lots of pavement.

> Bottom: We can't help but recall four years ago when we first proposed to the PVO team that they build a Ram truck with Viper V-10 power as a HOT ROD project. Now you can buy them off the showroom. Coincidence