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TEST DRIVE

Traction Options

2018 Dodge Challenger GT

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

Some things improve with time. All-wheel-drive technology is one of them. Decades ago (Warning : Musty Reference Ahead) the best way to beat winter weather driving was with four-wheel-drive. Only found then in select trucks and utility vehicles, these were mechanical systems, and using them required some audience participation. The driver had to shift the transfer case to allow for power flow to all four wheels. And in many cases, the driver or passenger (herein known as the Designated Sucker) had to hop out and turn the front wheel hubs to lock them. It worked, but the system created considerable drag, which dragged down fuel economy.

Today's on-demand all-wheel-drive systems are far more automated and reliant on electronics than traditional 4x4 setups. Smart enough to



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DESPITE THE MUSCLE CAR NAME, the 2018 Dodge Challenger GT comes equipped with all-wheel-drive. The most popular choice for powerplants is the 3.6-liter V-6 with automatic transmission. No manual is offered on the model.

2018 Dodge Challenger GT
MSRP: \$33,495 · As Tested: \$40,555

step in only when needed and increasingly efficient, they add traction with less friction than old school 4WD, so they take a lighter bite out of your mpg's. So it is that AWD systems have become more and more common, especially in this era's vehicle of choice — the crossover. An interesting offshoot of this trend has been the realization by certain automakers that cars might benefit from AWD just as crossovers do. Count



Dodge among the converts in this underserved segment. The company's sport ute Durango and crossover Journey have been joined in recent years by Charger and Challenger — both of which have added AWD versions to their otherwise RWD lineup of muscle-minded models.

Challenger and Charger roll on the same chassis. Their AWD system employs an active transfer case with front axle disconnect. Under normal driving conditions, the cars are fully rear-wheel-drive — traditionally, the preferred setup for performance cars. When sensors detect the need for additional traction, the system engages the front axle, channeling up to 38 percent of available engine torque to the front

I wonder why Dodge buried the lead by calling this model GT instead of AWD.

wheels, as needed. AWD works in concert with Electronic Stability Control and Vehicle Dynamic Control to maximize grip on wet or dry roads.

In the heyday of the muscle car era, all the buzz in Mopar circles surrounded the big blocks — Hemis, Wedges and Magnum V-8s. Their high visibility shadowed the fact that the majority of Mopar models had small V-8s (like the 318) or even sixes (like the 225 "slant six") under the hood. The motor menu in today's Dodge lineup includes some sobering horsepower ratings (375, 485, 707, 840). Yet the most popular engine choice by far for Challenger and Charger is the 3.6-liter V-6. Linked solely to an

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