

# Chrysler's Rip Roaring SRT Family of Vehicles

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Step back in time some fifty years ago and you would see that the American automotive market was much different than it is today. Three companies dominated the scene: GM, Ford, and Chrysler with the newly formed American Motors making up the bulk of the sales. Volkswagen was new to the U.S. market with its legendary Beetle while Toyota was still a few years away from marketing its very first cars. Although the term "muscle car" wasn't used until the 1960s, a series of "Hemi powered" vehicles from the Chrysler Corporation began to hit the streets. These particular models influenced this unique segment for several years until market changes in the early 1970s effectively eliminated that category. Today, muscle cars are back and the Chrysler Group is leading the way with its expansive line up of SRT vehicles. Although consumer tastes have changed as has the overall automotive market, Chrysler's SRT family of vehicles remains a popular choice for performance enthusiasts everywhere. Read on and we'll explore the vehicles that are shaping the new muscle car era.

Several years before Daimler-Benz and the Chrysler Corporation merged to form DaimlerChrysler, a team of Chrysler employees was tasked to invigorate the automaker's line up with bold and exciting models. The first vehicle produced by "Team Viper" was the Dodge Viper, Mopar's answer to the Chevy Corvette; a few years later it was followed by the Plymouth Prowler, a limited production retro-style roadster produced by a parallel group, "Team Prowler". Clearly, Chrysler was attempting to erase its uninspiring K-car image with the production of these two models and although production was very limited, the vehicles managed to positively impact the Dodge and Plymouth brands.

Team Viper and Team Prowler later merged operations to become SRT – Street and Racing Technology – a high performance automotive group that is part of the Chrysler Group at DaimlerChrysler. Although the Plymouth brand was eventually dropped, DaimlerChrysler decided to expand the SRT line up to include certain vehicles sporting Dodge, Jeep and Chrysler nameplates.

So, what qualifies a vehicle to wear the SRT designation? Several things including:

--Potent engines. Only the most powerful engines are reserved for SRT vehicles. While some are normally aspirated, many have been turbocharged or supercharged to beef up horsepower.

--Responsive handling. Relying heavily on its Mercedes connection, the SRT team employs state of the art steering and suspension systems in every model. Add in more powerful brakes and you have a vehicle that masters every turn and stops on a dime every time.

--Bold styling. No ordinary vehicle is eligible for the SRT treatment as massive aluminum wheels, front and rear spoilers, and bold air intakes are included to enhance performance. On the inside, race inspired aluminum pedals and sports car derived seating gives SRT drivers a true performance feel to match the energy brimming underneath every hood.

Currently, the SRT line up includes the following models with more vehicles expected to receive that designation:

Dodge: Ram SRT10 Quad Cab; Ram SRT10 Regular Cab; Viper SRT10 Coupe; Viper SRT10 Roadster; Charger SRT8; and the Magnum SRT8.

Chrysler: 300C SRT8; Crossfire SRT6 Coupe; and Crossfire SRT6 Roadster.

Jeep: Grand Cherokee SRT8.

Much like the muscle car era of long ago, SRT enthusiasts are beefing up their already potent vehicles with nifty aftermarket parts and supplies including supercharger systems, exhaust headers, cat-back exhaust systems, cool air intakes, lowering kits, traction bars, and more. Popular aftermarket performance suppliers are matching the introduction of every SRT model with new products of their own. Definitely, the SRT crowd is a unique group of automotive enthusiasts who simply won't settle for the status quo.

The Chrysler Group will be changing the SRT line up over the next several years with the introduction of three more Dodge models: the Caliber SRT4, the Avenger SRT6, and possibly a version of the Nitro SUV – Dodge's twin model to the Jeep Liberty. Last but not least, the ultimate blending of two generations of muscle cars will become evident when the Dodge Challenger makes its debut within the next three years. Yes, an SRT version of this most desired retro coupe will also find its way into the classiest of new classics. **Copyright 2006 – Matthew C. Keegan** is a freelance writer for Premier Truck Accessories an important supplier of SRT aftermarket parts for the Ram SRT-10 as well as the SRT vehicles. Please stop by today to explore our vast inventory.