

Dodge muscle cars live on with new versions of the Charger powered by electricity or gasoline

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The all-new Dodge Charger SIXPACK H.O., shown here in a photo released by Stellantis, offers performance choices via multi-energy powertrain options. Dodge is unveiling two battery-powered versions of the Charger but the Stellantis brand, which has carved out a market niche of selling high performance cars, will keep selling a gas-powered Charger, minus the big V8.

Credit: Stellantis via AP

America's muscle car culture is adapting to the new world of electric vehicles, but the gasoline-powered high-performance road beasts will be around for at least a few more years.

Dodge on Tuesday unveiled two battery-powered versions of the Charger muscle car that will still roar like a big V8 engine without pollution from the tailpipe.

However, the Stellantis brand, which has carved out a market niche of selling high-performance vehicles, will keep selling a gas-powered Charger as well, sans the big Hemi V8.

Both will be built on Stellantis' global large vehicle underpinnings, and the Windsor, Ontario, factory that will manufacture them will be able to flex between gasoline and electric depending on consumer demand. The flexibility will let Stellantis hedge its bets if electric vehicle sales take off or slow.

Last year Stellantis stopped making the gas powered Chargers and Challengers, and many thought that would be the beginning of the end for the thundering sedans.

But Dodge CEO Tim Kuniskis said there were hints that a gas version would live on. "It was always there. It was always in the plan. It was always coming," he said.

The company, however, downplayed the gas version as it showed off two-door and four-door electric models that look a little like Chargers of the 1960s with aerodynamic lines and hatchbacks instead of trunks.

The electric versions, named Charger Daytona after the NASCAR raceway in Florida, will come with two powertrains, one delivering up to 670 horsepower with the ability to go from zero to 60 miles per hour (97 kilometers per hour) in 3.3 seconds. The other is no slouch with 496 horses and a zero to 60 time of 4.7 seconds.

Dodge claims the high-performance electric version is world's quickest and most powerful muscle car. An even higher-performance version is coming next year.

The 496-horsepower Daytona is expected to have a range of 317 miles (510 kilometers) per charge, while the high-performance version can go 260 miles 418 kilometers).



The all electric 2024 Dodge Charger Daytona Scat Pack, shown here in a photo released by Stellantis, delivers 670 horsepower and is expected to reach 0-60 mph in 3.3 seconds. Dodge is unveiling two battery-powered versions of the Charger muscle car that will still roar like a big V8 engine but not emit pollution from the tailpipe. Credit: Stellantis via AP

Both will have the company's Fratzonic Chambered Exhaust that sends air through chamber to simulate the roar of a V8.

Both are heavy due to the big batteries, each with gross vehicle weights of more than three tons.

The new gas-powered Charger Sixpack will look similar to the electric versions and be powered by a new 3-liter six-cylinder engine with two turbochargers. Standard versions will put out 420 horsepower while a high-output engine will have 550.

The company says the new engine will make more horsepower and produce more torque than the outgoing 5.7-liter and 6.4-liter Hemi V8s. Company officials said they haven't completed fuel economy tests on the new engine in the Charger yet.

All versions have all-wheel-drive but can be switched to rear-drive so owners can still do burnouts and drifting. There will be options that set the cars up for the racetrack.

Production of the two-door coupe Daytona versions is expected to start this summer, while the electric four-door and gas-powered versions will start early next year.

Kuniskis said he's not sure which versions will sell better, electric or gas.

With federal tax incentives on electric vehicles, there likely will be very attractive lease payments that could sway some buyers, he said.

The company almost certainly will be criticized by environmental groups for coming out with EVs that emphasize performance over efficiency and for keeping the gas powered muscle car.

But Kuniskis said under normal circumstances, about 17 million new vehicles are sold in the U.S. each year. "You know what? People need choices," he said.

Kuniskis said he would expect criticism if Dodge hadn't come out with an electric version of the Charger. "It's designed for performance and it has low range, but it's still a battery electric vehicle. They're going to hate on that? Seems kind of odd."

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