



Dodge Shelby Charger GLHS

The latest weapon from Commander Shelby's arsenal.

• Whenever we get into one of Shelby Automobiles' creations, we're reminded of the Sten gun. If you remember your WWII small-arms history, the Sten sub-machine gun was a notoriously ugly weapon, and got its name from its creators (Shepherd and Turpin) and the place where it was manufactured (Enfield). It was made of stamped steel, used a minimum of machined parts, and, believe it or not, was welded together. However crude its appearance or operation, it did have its virtues. It was cheap to build, light, reliable, and just as lethal as any finely crafted Schmeisser or Thompson.

Like the Sten, the Shelby Charger isn't just crude, it's *keroude!* It wears its warts and rough edges like badges of honor. Its shift mechanism, for instance, is a nasty, recalcitrant unit that has to be hammered into gear. The clutch effort is heavy, and you can measure its travel with a yardstick. The engine is so rough and noisy that everything that isn't welded into place is shaking, rattling or squeaking. In our test car, even a coat-hook screw shook itself loose from its mooring in a apparent effort to abandon ship. Under hard acceleration you get a double dose of torque steer, and under braking you're presented with early lockup.

With so much against it, you might wonder what Shelby is trying to accomplish with his edition of the turbo Charger. We refer you back to the Sten gun, with its high rate of fire and good amount of bang for the buck. If you want to embarrass that £30,000 Panzer-kampfwagen in the next lane at the stop light. The Shelby scorches the earth with a 6.7-second 0-to-60-mph time. For the



price—or for considerably more—you won't find many other cars that can touch it. The quarter-mile goes by in 14.9 seconds at 95 mph. On wide-open, cop-free roads, the Charger will blaze to 100 mph in 17.3 seconds and will, in time, find its way to 134-mph terminal velocity. Lethal? Like a rapid deployment force.

The accelerative motivation comes from Shelby Automobiles' straightforward engine-enhancement program. The car starts out with Chrysler's time-tested 2.2-liter Turbo I motor. Shelby adds a different intake plenum, tuned intake runners, a different turbocharger, an air-to-air intercooler, a larger throttle body, and larger fuel rails. Boost pressure is upped from 9 to 12 psi. Power goes from 146 hp at 5200 rpm to 175 hp at 5300.

Vehicle type: front-engine, front-wheel-drive 2 + 3-passenger, 3-door coupe

Price as tested: \$13,620 (base price \$12,995)

Engine type: turbocharged and intercooled 4-in-line, iron block and aluminum head, Chrysler electronic engine-control system with port fuel injection

Displacement	135 cu in. 2213cc
Power (SAE net)	175 hp @ 5300 rpm
Transmission	5-speed
Wheelbase	96.5 in.
Length	174.7 in.
Curb weight	2580 lb.
Zero to 60 mph	6.7 sec.
Zero to 100 mph	17.3 sec.
Standing 1/4-mile	14.9 sec. @ 95 mph
Top speed	134 mph
Braking, 70-0 mph	217 ft.
Roadholding, 300-ft-dia skidpad	0.77 g
EPA fuel economy, city driving	20 mpg

Torque rises from 169 pound-feet at 3700 to 175 at a very low 2200 rpm.

Pulling the Charger's trigger is like unleashing a barnful of demons. Boost is nearly instantaneous. When the rush kicks in, you don't particularly care if the plastic rattles or the doors fall off. Hammer the Charger through the gears and you'll pull a faster disappearing act than Ferdinand Marcos did.

In comparison with the engine alterations, Shelby's chassis tweaks are almost trivial. Adjustable Koni shocks and new alloy wheels (of the stock width and diameter) are installed, and there are two alignment alterations: front camber is set more negative and the rear wheels are given more toe-in.

In corners the Charger feels as if it's sticking like magic, but on the skidpad it laps at a fairly low 0.77g. The last Shelby product we tested, the Omni-based GLHS (April 1986), which weighed only 40 pounds less than the Charger, checked with a much better 0.81 g (on well-worn tires). Our test sample-bearing dash place "EXP 1"—was an early example of the breed, so there may be some opportunity left for polishing rough areas.

Like the Sten gun, the Shelby Charger has the essentials down pat; a great engine, excellent seats, crisp handling, and bulletproof reliability. If you can overlook its ungentlemanly manners—its lack of refinement, noise isolation, and general sophistication—you'll find the Charger as entertaining and effective as anything else in its price class. Besides, nobody ever won a war with good manners.

- Tony Assenza