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Madison Heights company explores new-car modification

Ex-Chrysler executive starts company to explore prototypes, create specialty versions

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At first glance, you might think the car in the accompanying photograph is a well-restored but 40-year-old Dodge Charger Daytona, one of the arrow-nose, high-wing cars created for NASCAR stock car racing and the then-new Talladega speedway track.

But then you notice some of the details, including the sunroof. That's not a late '60s Charger. Why, it's a brand new, but modified Dodge Challenger.

In fact, it's the HPP Daytona Challenger.

HPP is Heide Performance Products, a company launched less than a year ago in Madison Heights by former Chrysler executive Gordon Heidacker and three partners, including the heads of Specmo Enterprises, Inc. and Motovicity, both also based in Madison Heights.

Heidacker, 48, worked on projects such as the Dodge Viper and Plymouth Prowler at Chrysler and spent three years in Germany when the company was owned by Daimler. He later was involved in strategic projects, including negotiations with a Chinese automaker, and then was director of global procurement for powertrain electronics, where he oversaw a \$10 billion annual budget.

But he realized that such high-level managers were hands-off when it came to automotive hardware, so he decided to leave Chrysler and start his own company to do engineering design and prototyping.

The Daytona Challenger was HPP's first big project and serves as a prototype for what Heidacker hopes to do in the future.

He wants to sell body kits so others can buy Challengers and turn them into Daytona Challengers. He wants to develop a system for creating small-volume specialty cars for car dealerships -- not just Chrysler dealers, but for any dealer who sees such modified cars as sales tools.

HPP also will do one-offs and show-car builds. Eventually, Heidacker will explore doing limited-production vehicle builds for original equipment automakers.

The HPP Daytona Challenger features a new but Daytona-style nose section, a tall rear wing, interior modifications, lowered suspension and a 5.7-liter Hemi V-8 supercharged to produce some 600 horsepower.

For information, visit <http://www.hppcars.com> or www.hppcars.com. If you go to the Web site, be sure to click on the "concepts" link and take a look the cars, trucks, ATVs, watercraft and the accordion-bodied recreation vehicle drawings the company is exploring.

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