

1971 AMC Hornet SC/360

By Daniel Strohl

Photography by Matthew Litwin

As the muscle car market pulled an

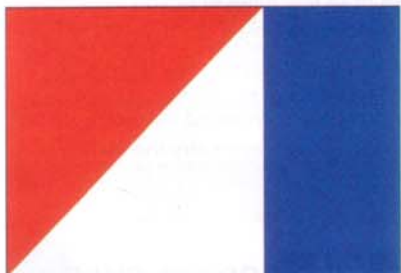
Icarus hand-in-hand with the real estate market a few years ago, soaring to scorching heights, AMCs suddenly became almost hip: Regular Joes who wanted a little action of their own found themselves priced out of the more mainstream cars and consequently "discovered" the independent brand.

And in turn, the AMC loyalists suddenly found themselves priced out of certain cars in their midst. Mark Donohue Javelins, first-generation AMXs, Rebel Machines and SC/Rambler all shot up in value as guys with \$35,000 to spend chose a perfectly restored independent over a ratty Hemi 'Cuda.

But the dedicated AMC fans still knew how to go fast in a Kenosha kart and not flatten their wallet at the same time. One alternative to the big-buck AMC muscle machines lay in

the Hornet SC/360, the spiritual successor to the SC/Rambler and Rebel Machine, conceived to fly under the insurance man's radar. AMC even stated as much in its only print ad for the SC/360: "Introducing a sensible alternative to the money-squeezing, insurance-strangling muscle cars of America."

The SC/360 would hardly cost the company a dime in development costs: After all, the Hornet's engine bay was designed to easily swallow a V-8, and the company already had plenty of 360s (which were nearly identical externally to the smaller 304, available in a regular Hornet) going into Jeeps and bigger cars. Get the designers to fiddle up some stripes, pluck the Twin-Grip rear differential and a four-speed off the shelf, add a hood scoop, and suddenly we're talking 14-second quarter-miles and less than 12 pounds per horsepower.



Engine

The 360 in the SC/360 came in one of two flavors – N-code 245hp two-barrel or P-code 285hp four-barrel, both with dogleg heads.

Ram Air parts are difficult to come by, but it's still relatively easy to get restoration and performance parts for the 360.

Brakes

Not happy with the manual drums front and rear? All Hornets, including SC/360s, could be optioned up with power drums or power discs; thanks to AMC's in-house parts sharing, discs from any AMC passenger car are easily installed.

Transmission

Rare are the three-speed manual transmissions in SC/360s, only available on two-barrel SC/360s; more common are the Borg-Warner M-12 automatics and T-10 four-speed manuals. The M-12 is not easily swapped for more modern automatics.



The SC/360's big exterior differences from a bog-standard Hornet two-door sedan include the subtle stripe and unsubtle hood scoop.



Interior

Look for vinyl or fabric in black, blue, green or red. Carpets and some seat cover materials are easily obtained, but headliners and trim are not reproduced. Good luck finding the 8,000 RPM in-dash tachometer, which was part of the Go Package.

Chassis

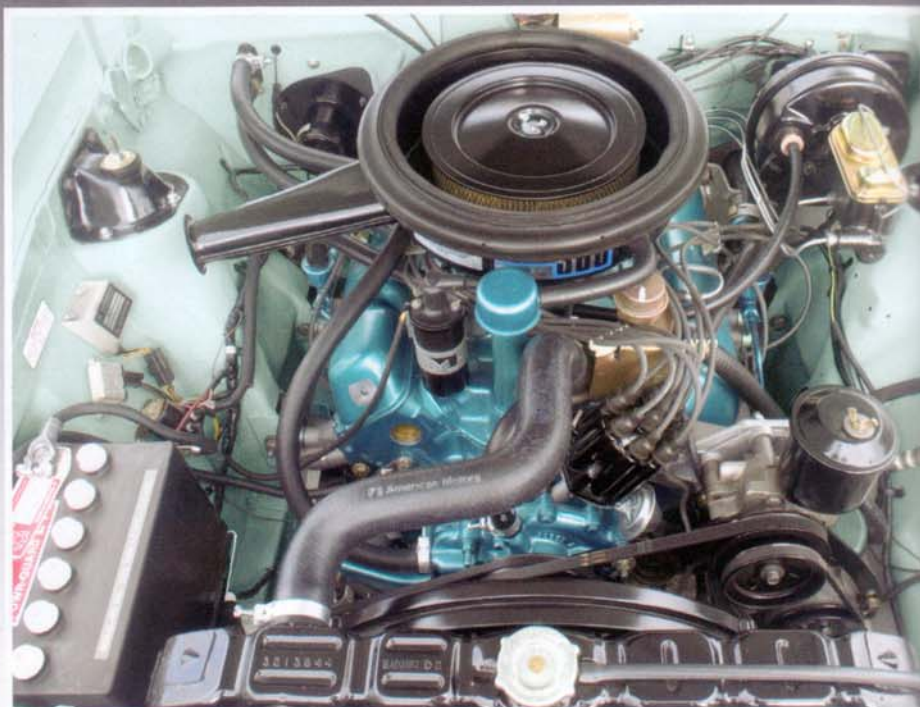
Complete unit-body chassis is similar to first-generation Ford Mustang, uses heavy-duty coil-sprung front and leaf-sprung rear suspensions that are also similar to first-gen Mustang. Be careful of rust in the subframe rails.

Body

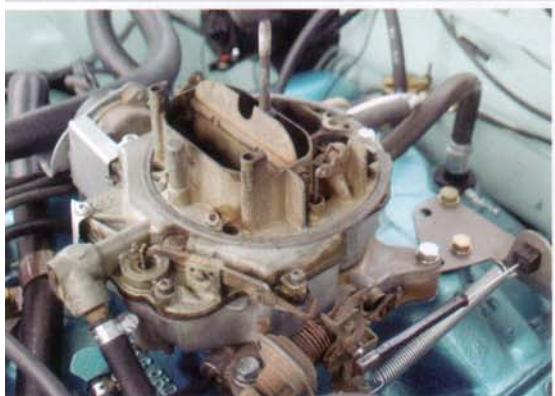
SC/360 was only available in the two-door sedan body style, which continued through the Concord years. Some body parts are interchangeable with Gremlins and Spirits. Floors and rockers are the most likely hiding spots for rust.



Hurst shifter stirs T-10 four-speed; also available were a three-speed manual and M-12 automatic.



SC/360's engines differ little from other AMC N-code (245hp) and P-code (285hp) 360s, except for the optional Ram Air air cleaner—its replacement parts are difficult to come by.



Four-barrel version of the 360 proved more popular than two-barrel; both used Motorcraft carbs.

Original literature shows that AMC, for whatever reason, intended a limited run of SC/360s, and thus built just 784 SC/360s from August 1970 through February 1971, which makes the SC/360 rarer than the SC/Rambler, the Rebel Machine, even the total number of AMXs painted in the Big Bad colors in the prior two years. Best estimates of survivability nowadays figure that only 125 remain.

Most of those that remain have hardly led pampered lives, which means missing parts and a likely restoration ahead. So if you're intent on buying an SC/360, start honing your parts-hunting skills now.

ENGINES

While the SC/360 derived its name from the displacement of the 360-cu.in. V-8 underhood, AMC actually offered two different flavors of the 360 in the SC/360. The first, fed by a Motorcraft 2100 two-barrel carburetor, generated 245 gross horsepower and 365-lbs.ft. of torque. Look for the engine code N as the seventh digit in the VIN to identify a car originally equipped with the two-barrel V-8.

The more desirable flavor of 360, with the Motorcraft 4300 four-barrel on top, produced 285hp and 390-lbs.ft. of torque.

SC/360s originally equipped with the four-barrel had the engine code P in their VINs. Nearly three-quarters of all SC/360s—578 of them—had the four-barrel 360, according to the Hornet SC/360 Registry.

Internally, both 360s made their power from an 8.5:1 compression ratio and used two-bolt main caps supporting a nodular iron crankshaft and connecting rods. Both used hydraulic flat-tappet camshafts to bump 2.025-inch intake valves and 1.680-inch exhaust valves, seated in AMC's famed "dogleg" heads, so named for the shape of the center exhaust ports. Externally, the two-barrel used a single exhaust, while the four-barrel benefited from a full dual exhaust.

AMC experts suggest that you don't rely on the tag riveted to the rocker arm cover to identify an AMC V-8; those tags are easily shuffled by bolting on different rocker arm covers. Instead, first look for the displacement of the engine, which should be cast in the block, upside-down, underneath both engine mounts. Any 360 block from 1971 to 1975 should have a casting number of 3195528. Heads from a 1971 360 should have a casting number of 3196291 and measure 51cc.

One quick note: The P-code engines used a special one-year-only air cleaner assembly with an oval-shaped snorkel; N-code engines used a round-shaped snorkel. Also, N-code engines could not be ordered

with the Go Package or the Ram Air hood.

TRANSMISSIONS & DIFFERENTIAL

SC/360 buyers could choose between three transmissions, partially limited by their engine choice. For customers sticking with the two-barrel, no four-speed appeared on the option sheet, leaving the standard floor-shifted Borg-Warner T-15 three-speed manual and column-mounted Borg-Warner M-12 three-speed automatic, marketed as the Shift-Command. Customers with the four-barrel engine could order up the Borg-Warner T-10 four-speed manual transmission. The third digit in the VIN indicates the transmission: An F denotes the floor-shifted three-speed, an M denotes the T-10, and an A denotes the column-shifted automatic.

Some AMC enthusiasts have heaped scorn on the M-12 automatic over the years and often recommend upgrading to the Chrysler-supplied TorqueFlite automatic, which AMC started using in 1972. However, doing so requires a crankshaft from a 1972 or later 360, which used a different rear flange that accommodated the torque converter hub of the TorqueFlite, dubbed Torque-Command in AMC applications. While some AMC enthusiasts decry the M-12 as weak, AMC did use it behind the 390 and 401. It also



Interior will use either vinyl or serape cloth seats; vinyl seat cover material is available, while serape is not. Much of the interior is shared with Hornets, but unique to 1971 models.



Fourteen-inch styled steel wheels were available as an option over the eight-slot wheels.



Glass is not unique to SC/360; it can be swapped with any Hornet two-door sedan's glass.

shares a very similar design (and can even swap components with) Ford's FMX and Ford-O-Matic automatic transmissions.

When it comes to AMC rear axle assemblies, the general rule states that four- and six-cylinder cars used AMC's Model 15, while V-8 cars used AMC's beefier Model 20 (though six-cylinder cars could option up to the Model 20). Any true SC/360, then, used the Model 20, identified by a round-shaped cover (versus the Model 15's contoured cover) and a fill plug on the differential housing (versus the Model 15's plug in the cover).

As for axle ratios, automatic-equipped cars came with 3.15:1 gears, while four-speed cars came with 3.54:1 gears. Three-speed cars may have come with gears as high as 2.87:1. Twin-Grip, AMC's limited-slip traction system, did not come standard, but could be ordered as an option.

CHASSIS & SUSPENSION

Like all of AMC's small cars, the Hornet rode on a full unit-body, similar to the Mustang, with no detachable front stub frame. And while the Hornet succeeded the Rambler American, AMC discarded the sometimes troublesome trunion front suspension of the Rambler for a proper ball joint coil-sprung independent front suspension—again of a similar design to the early Mustang, with an upper A-arm

and lower control arm with a strut rod. The rear suspension used typical parallel semi-elliptic leaf springs. The Hornet's optional heavy-duty suspension components came standard on the SC/360.

One common trouble spot for the front suspension design lies in the strut rods. Rust has a habit of forming where the strut rods pass through the chassis bracket, thus damaging both the rods and the bracket. And if switching from rubber bushings to stiffer urethane bushings, most small-body AMC experts suggest using a half-rubber/half-urethane combination at the strut rod; using only urethane bushings on the strut rod will result in a jarring ride and undue stress on the welds that hold the subframes to the body.

Because it uses a full unit-body, the Hornet chassis is more prone to rust, particularly in the subframe rails forward of the firewall. Check the welded seams in those areas.

BRAKES

Manual front drum brakes came standard on every Hornet, including the SC/360, though power drums and power discs were available options. And though one would think that brake systems remained relatively interchangeable over the years, the power brake booster for early Hornets, including the SC/360, is difficult to procure.

The front spindle for the Hornet

remained the same between drums and discs and throughout the end of AMC two-wheel-drive production, so any complete brake system from a later AMC small car, especially from 1979-'82, is often recommended as an upgrade to the stock brakes.

WHEELS & TIRES

Standard on the SC/360 were the company's 14 x 6-inch eight-slot mag-styled wheels, shod with D70-14 Goodyear Polyglas tires. A space-saver spare tire resided in the trunk. However, literature of the time indicates that AMC made the 14-inch styled steel wheels and raised white-letter Polyglas tires available as an option.

BODY & INTERIOR

The Hornet SC/360 had its own style number, separate from the base Hornet and Hornet SST. This is reflected in the VIN, making it difficult to clone an SC/360: The fifth and sixth digits in the VIN should be 61. The Hornet SC/360 also came in just one body style—two-door sedan.

Externally, only a couple of elements separated the SC/360 from a regular Hornet coupe. The first, the understated stripe, came only in black, white or red to contrast the body paint. The second, a

OWNER'S VIEW



I've always been interested in AMCs, mostly due to the fact that my father was friends with Dick Teague, AMC's chief designer. So when I went to look at this car for my brother, I liked it so much, I bought it for myself. At the time I knew the car was rare, but I didn't know just how rare.

This one was in solid condition, but it had been raced hard over the years, so a lot of original parts were missing and had been replaced with high-performance parts. If I were to do this all over again, I'd definitely look for one that was as clean and as original as possible. — Kent Ehrhardt

CLUB SCENE

American Motors Owners Association

1615 Purvis Avenue
Janesville, Wisconsin 53548
608-752-8247
www.amonational.com
Dues: \$35/year • Membership: 2,000

National American Motors Drivers and Racers Association

P.O. Box 987
Twin Lakes, Wisconsin 53181-0987
262-843-4326
namdra1@aol.com
Dues: \$30/year • Membership: 1,693

Hornet SC/360 Registry

www.planethoustonamx.com/sc360/
/sc_registry_main.htm

reflective red plastic panel, filled the area between the taillamps; a chromed gas cap with the flying Hornet emblem sat in the middle of that panel, and the SC/360 used only the AMC-logoed emblem and block-letter Hornet emblem instead of the regular Hornet's bee emblem.

While the matte black, Rockwell-supplied fiberglass hood scoop seems to identify all SC/360s, it actually came as part of a Ram Air package that AMC made optional on the SC/360; the optional Go Package automatically included the Ram Air package. The scoop itself features a unique design, but feeds the same tub

WHAT TO PAY

1971 AMX Hornet SC/360

Low	Average	High
\$8,000	\$13,000	\$20,000

- Add 5% for 285hp V-8
- Add 15% for four-speed



Reproduction decals are available in black, white or red and will contrast the paint color.

and flapper door that the SC/Rambler, Rebel Machine and 1971-'73 AMX used.

For both 1970 and 1971, AMC used a stamped aluminum grille on the Hornet – with minor differences between those two years – before switching to a plastic grille in 1972. While the plastic grilles used small cutouts to access the hood latch, the aluminum grilles used a pull handle under the front bumper to trip the latch.

Rust is commonly found throughout the floors, rockers, quarter panels and rear wheel openings. Fortunately, AMC hardly changed the Hornet throughout the 1970s and into 1982, after Kenosha rechristened it the Concord. Even Gremlins and Spirits share much of the essential body structure, so finding a donor car shouldn't be hard.

Very little of the interior differs from a standard Hornet, save for the 8,000 RPM tachometer, which was optional on cars without the Go Package. A small aluminum SC/360 decal was affixed to the glovebox door. AMC did limit the SC/360's available interiors to the SST's vinyl and the serape checked fabric, and the only optional steering wheel was the Rim-Blow. Air conditioning was not available from the factory.

Build sheets, the best method for documenting an SC/360's options, can usually be found under the carpet or under the back seat. A stamped metal data tag riveted to the driver's side door will include not only the original paint and interior options, but will also have the car's model number (which should be 7106-1) and will indicate which assembly line built the car (all Hornets came off the East assembly line).

PARTS PRICES

Alternator (140-amp, replacement).....	\$229
Carpet (set).....	\$189
Door weatherstripping.....	\$119
Fiberglass door.....	\$349
Head gasket.....	\$16
Hurst T-10 four-speed shifter.....	\$550
Lower ball joint.....	\$19
Oil pan gasket (set).....	\$12
Package tray.....	\$20
Ram Air flapper door.....	\$75
Ram Air hood scoop.....	\$250
Ram Air vacuum actuator.....	\$130
Ring and pinion gear (set, 4.10:1).....	\$269
Sheetmetal Ram Air dome and plate...	\$450
Stainless four-speed shift boot ring....	\$38
Stripe kit.....	\$169
Tachometer wire harness.....	\$42
Three-core radiator.....	\$375
Upper radiator hose with AM script.....	\$21
Urethane engine mounts.....	\$125

RESTORATION & PERFORMANCE PARTS

Thanks to the small, but dedicated, number of AMC parts suppliers, many of the Hornet parts underlying an SC/360 are readily available either as NOS or reproductions. Kennedy American, American Parts Depot and Galvin's AMC Rambler Parts can supply carpet, weatherstripping, replacement seat cover material, suspension bushings and a surprising amount of miscellaneous parts. However, headliners, door panels and the plastic interior trim are not reproduced.

The SC/360-specific parts are even harder to find. Phoenix Graphix reproduces the stripes in all three colors, and Eddie Stakes has reproduced the hood scoop and some of the smaller Ram Air parts, while AMX-MGS now reproduces the Ram Air vacuum actuator. Original, non-reproduction Ram Air parts rarely come up for sale, and a few minor Ram Air parts, such as the seal between the air cleaner and the hood, are not reproduced at all.

If you need sheetmetal, look for a donor car; no reproduction sheetmetal is currently available. If you don't mind fiberglass, though, you're in luck: Hoods, doors, fenders and bumpers are all out there, largely due to racers who campaigned Hornets over the years.

Headers and intakes are common performance upgrades, and thanks to specialists such as Alfano Performance, AMC V-8 engine-building is no longer the dark art it used to be. And if you wanted to be stealthy about your mods, an AMC 401 looks nearly identical to a 360 and bolts right in. 🛠️