



[Search All Classifieds](#)

Members: [Log in](#) | New User? [Register](#)



## FEATURE ARTICLE from Hemmings Muscle Machines

[Home](#) > [Contents](#)

### JEEP BUILDS A MUSCLE CAR

Hemmings Muscle Machines - DECEMBER 1, 2005 - BY [PAT FOSTER](#)



 [Print This Article](#)

The awesome XJ-001



**Have you ever wondered** what product direction Kaiser Jeep would have taken if it had remained an independent company? If you think about it, whatever new automotive products they came out with probably would have been pretty exciting. After all, in the 15-year period between 1953 and 1967, Kaiser Jeep introduced a steady stream of surprising new Jeep vehicles. These included the CJ-5 and CJ-6, the Forward Control trucks, the two-wheel-drive Dispatcher series, Wagoneer, Gladiator and the Jeepster Commando. Almost like clockwork, every few years a new product was introduced. Probably that trend would have continued into the 1970s. And one shouldn't forget Kaiser's passenger-car legacy either; the company had earlier produced more than 700,000 Kaiser, Frazer and Henry J cars. But the question

A vertical advertisement for Hemmings Motor News. It features the word 'SUBS' in large yellow letters at the top. Below it is a stack of magazine covers. The text 'World's Collected Market' is visible. At the bottom, there are bullet points: 'Over 10,000 each month', 'Thousands of parts for', 'Auction results', and 'Buyer's Guide'.

remains: What kind of new products would Kaiser Jeep introduce?

How about a muscle car?

It's true. A year or more before American Motors purchased the Kaiser Jeep Corporation in 1970, Jeep stylists, under the direction of Jim Anger, began work on a new concept car, a design unlike anything the company had ever produced before. Jeep stylists knew the market for off-road recreational vehicles was expanding rapidly-by some measurements, four-wheel-drive vehicles were the fastest-growing segment in the marketplace. They decided to introduce a concept vehicle that would explore the possibilities for an on- and off-road sports machine for a new era. Called the Jeep XJ-001, it was a muscle car with a difference.

The reason we call it a Jeep muscle car is because, although it was built on the small CJ-5 chassis-which at the time offered only a 225-cu.in. V-6 as its biggest engine-the Jeep concept sportster was going to be motivated by good old American V-8 muscle. And not the 304-cu.in. V-8 that later was available in CJs. No, this special Jeep was motivated by a gutsy and powerful 360-cu.in. AMC V-8. Talk about absolute power! The choice of an AMC V-8 was not all that unusual because Jeep had been buying V-8 engines from American Motors since 1964.

After considering several ideas, the designers settled on a two-seat "sports-car" bodystyle with scooped-out door openings, a built-in roll bar, and minimal front and rear overhangs. The short, sloping hood was held down with racing-style locking pins. Fitted with big H60x15 Goodyear Polyglas GT tires and extra-wide chrome wheels plus an array of lights and stripes, the Jeep XJ-001 resembled European rally cars that were so popular overseas. A lone hand-built prototype was made. Painted bright yellow with pinstripes along the sides that traced the body lines and door openings, plus black hood stripes that ran from the grille back to a large air scoop, it was a standout attraction at the 1970 New York Auto Show.

At the XJ-001's rear were large, round taillamps, a low-mounted open "roll bar" incorporated into the rear body lines, and chromed dual exhaust pipes. The thick windshield frame was said to double as a roll bar. The chassis featured an 81-inch wheelbase, same as a CJ-5, and the stylish body was constructed of fiberglass for lower weight. The 144-inch-long and 72-inch-wide vehicle was fitted with something unique and very unusual-an experimental full-time four-wheel-drive system described as "Quadritrac." Full-time four-wheel drive was virtually unknown in America in 1970, and didn't appear in a production Jeep until 1973 (as the Quadra Trac system). Even with four-wheel drive, the little Jeep roadster's overall height was a mere 57 inches.

The XJ-001's interior was just as wild as the exterior. The driver gripped a thick-rimmed



sports steering wheel as he looked out over the sharply sloped hood. One-piece molded-foam bucket seats straddled a full-length console that swept up to a padded instrument panel containing a full complement of Stewart-Warner gauges. The ignition switch, radio, heater controls and a four-speed stick shift were neatly integrated into the console. It was all very un-Jeep-like, at least for the times.

The one and only XJ-001 built was a running, driving vehicle and, as soon as possible, Jeep began to display it on the auto show circuit and show it to reporters. It also appeared on the cover of *Popular Mechanics* magazine. Although we couldn't find any indication that anyone actually road-tested it for a contemporary magazine, one can imagine that driving the XJ-001 must have been like being strapped to a rocket sled. After all, the CJ-5 had been designed to be powered by the old Willys-designed four-cylinder F-head, an engine that put out just 72 horsepower. Jeep's optional V-6 was rated at 160hp, but a V-6-powered CJ was capable of running 0-60 in 10.8 seconds. So, with a 245hp (2-bbl) or 285hp (4-bbl) AMC 360-cu.in. V-8 stuffed under the hood, the XJ-001 must have been an absolute fire breather. Consider this: In 1971, *Motor Trend* road-tested an AMC Hornet equipped with the 285hp, 360-cu.in. V-8, that turned in a 0-60 mph time of 6.7 seconds-and covered the 1/4-mile in 15 seconds flat. That Hornet, by the way, weighed 3,105 pounds, which may have been anywhere from 300 to as much as 1,000 pounds heavier than the XJ-001.

But in the end, the XJ-001 never got beyond the "concept car" stage. American Motors bought Jeep in 1970, and soon it became apparent that the XJ-001 didn't fit into their product plans for the future. However, the XJ-001 came with the purchase of Jeep, so AMC decided to continue using it as an attraction, something to draw the crowds at auto shows. The XJ-001 enjoyed a career on the road, being trucked from show to show in a big delivery van. And it continued to attract a lot of attention-the public really liked it. At one time early in its career there was supposed to be a companion vehicle, a sporty hardtop coupe called the Jeep XJ-002, but apparently that was never built.

Sadly, the Jeep XJ-001 sportster no longer exists. While traveling on its way to the Texas State Fair where it was going to be displayed, the moving van that was carrying it overturned. The resulting fire destroyed the one and only XJ-001.

But in a sense, years later a successor to the XJ-001 appeared, although it was never called that. In 1998, Jeep unveiled a concept four-wheel-drive sports car powered by a big V-8. They called it the Jeepster. But if you compare photos of the 1970 XJ-001 side by side with the 1998 Jeepster concept, we think you'll agree with us when we call it "Act II" of the Jeep XJ-001 saga.

This article originally appeared in the DECEMBER 1, 2005 issue of Hemmings Muscle

Machines.

**[Order Backissues of Hemmings Muscle Machines Here.](#)**

1281715

**ONLINE:** [Home](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Parts Locator](#) | [Clubs](#) | [Online Tour](#) | [About Us](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#)

**SUBSCRIBE TO PRINT EDITIONS:** [Hemmings Motor News](#) | [Hemmings Classic Car](#) | [Hemmings Sports and Exotic Car](#) | [Hemmings Muscle Machines](#)

Copyright © 1996-2007 Hemmings Motor News