



Porsche Sweeps Daytona

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AutoWeek

For Week Ending February 17, 1978

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75 Cents

CJ-7 Meets Scout SS II

Testing A Pair Of Offroaders

THE HIGH SIERRA—A four wheel drive vehicle can go just about anywhere you could want to be, as long as it's not too far underwater. Right?

Wrong. This is the sort of feeling some four-wheelers entertain, and it's the sort of response a lot of 4WD advertising provokes in the public mind. But the "just about" part is crucial. Experienced 4WD folks will tell you that. So will we.

This is our own version of the "Boy, you shoulda been there, boy, it was a nightmare" sort of anecdote all four-wheelers worth their salt have on tap. It doesn't matter what kind of four wheel drive vehicle you have. Jeep CJ or Mercedes Benz, they all will get stuck. Just give one a chance. You'll come away a sadder man but wiser. But no more happy.

There is a category of four-wheeler so eager for the fray that two hours winch time would be considered a fair tradeoff for a quarter of a mile forward travel. *AutoWeek* expects never to fit neatly into this category.

We envisioned our latest offroad trek as a shootout between two of the biggest guns in the 4WD armory. We first accumulated an International Scout SSII, bombed around in it for a couple of weeks and generally liked it pretty well. But, we eventually decided, let's make this a real duel-in-the-sun type test.

Accordingly, we went to the local Jeep dealer and asked for a comparable Jeep to run through the snow alongside the SSII. When we got it, it turned out to be the same CJ-7 we had used a couple of months earlier in our first attempt at the Sierra Trek.

In the end, our duel in the sun had



The Scout SSII performed well bouncing through the sage, but when it joined the Jeep CJ-7 in the snow the story changed.

degenerated into a hopeless fiasco which left both invincible 4x4s struggling for purchase.

It also left several *AutoWeek* editors struggling for words adequate to express their deepest sentiments about the trip.

The CJ-7 was equipped with a 304cid V8 engine and an automatic transmission boasting the Quadra-Trac feature. This feature is supposed to operate automatically, using a fulltime four wheel drive design. Ostensibly, when one wheel loses

traction the Quadra-Trac feature immediately redistributes the driving force to the wheels which need and can use it the most.

This sounds fine, but when it got down

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24 Hours of Daytona



Ferrari didn't figure heavily in the 24 Hours of Daytona—those are the 308s of Felice Besenconi/Luciano Dal Ben and Bob Bondurant/Dino Malet—but they did make a nice show on the grid. Porsche, as it has in recent years, dominated the race with the first seven and 18 of the first 21 finishing positions. Glenn Howell's story starts on page 32.

THIS WEEK

COMPETITION

RADIAL SERIES: Tom Waugh took advantage of his Gremlin's power to win the RS opener at Daytona. Page 31.

ROSBERG WINS: Keke Rosberg took an overall win in rounds seven and eight of the Stuyvesant Series. Page 19.

SLIPPIN' AND SLIDIN': Tom Jones' new Rabbit proved too much for the rest of the IIRA racers. Page 20.

NEW RULES, NEW CARS: Daytona was the first race for IMSA under the new rules. How'd they work? Find out on page 17.

GENERAL

BIG APPLE CAR SHOW: It's that time again: the New York Auto Show was a hit despite slow sales. Page 10.

AN OPEL A DAY: Keep the gas bill at bay. Page 6.

FORD FOR THE '80s: Ford will have a new four-cylinder, a couple of V8s, and turbocharging on some engines. Page 5.

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE...: The Diesel may be the wave of the future, but there's some troubled water just ahead. Page 3.

Jeep CJ-7, Scout SS II Struggle For Purchase

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to being stuck in unpackable granular snow 7000 feet above sea level, we were unimpressed. Standing dismally around watching one loose wheel spinning unhampered in its icy track, we found ourselves wishing mightily for the simple reliability of a clutch and two Detroit lockers.

The SSII also came equipped with automatic transmission, attached to a 345cid V8. Like the Jeep, it wore Goodyear 10x15 Tracker A/T tires. As it turned out, this was a mutual disadvantage which would have equalized things for a fine comparison had it not contributed to the overall impossibility of a final judgment.

That is, these tires are designed with average-to-light four wheeling in mind. They look muscular and rugged and all those other adjectives ad guys like to use, and they are remarkably quiet in highway driving.

That very silence, welcome on a long onroad trip, serves as the first sign that the tires might provide some problems off the pavement. There are no noisy cleats generating a highway roar, so there are no cleated treads to bite into crusty snow.



It doesn't look like a four wheeler should get stuck here, but take our word for it, they did.

In point of fact, on this one particular trip to the woods studs as long as ten-penny nails wouldn't have helped. What started out as a three-hour drive up into the mountains—during business hours, as a matter of fact, and what nicer way to spend one's lunch hour?—turned into something else again.

We wanted clear-cut points of comparison; we wanted some "good action photos;" we wanted some fun. What we got was eight hours of lessons in how not to fool around with Mother Nature.

Cruising on our silent tires west along I-80, we spontaneously took the cutoff to Stampede Dam, a little east of the Donner Pass. (That's where all those people got stuck in the snow and ate one another, remember?) Sightseeing around the lake, with equal spontaneity and grace we sped up the first set of drifted-over tracks we came across.

That was our first mistake. Our only mistake, as it developed, but one was more than enough. Within a half mile we were as stuck as stuck could be. We were through the crust into a couple of feet of snow that would no more pack than would ground glass or table salt. What to do, what to do?

Right here, the readers across this great land of ours are snorting scornfully to themselves, "Why didn't they just dig themselves out? Why didn't they just break some branches off the trees and shove them under the tires? Why didn't they...?"

Well, readers, we did. We really did. For

a long, long time we did all that stuff, and more. We dug, jacked, pulled, pushed; we collected branches, rocks, hatfuls of dirt, and even one old broken-down Jeep seatback some ecology-minded offroader had left under a tree. After a few hours, the sun and our hopes sinking simultaneously, we looked at one another, threw down our tools and said, in chorus, "Aw, shucks," or words to that effect.

But professional journalists all, we stifled our tears and elected the smallest and weakest of our number to walk the three miles back down the road to a farmhouse and an assortment of outbuildings one of us claimed to remember seeing.

Wet, cold and courting frostbite, the unlucky member of the party managed to hike to the farmhouse and, *mirabile dictu*, it turned out to be the Truckee Sno Jet Snowmobile Company, equipped with more offroad vehicles than you can shake a stick at. Enlisting the aid of the owner was not so easy, however; he voiced no great fondness for offroaders, whom he accused of every manner of depredation and vandalism—particularly to the snowmobile trails on which his livelihood depended.



The Scout looks right at home on the snowy mountain roads.

Now there were four vehicles stuck. It was beginning to look like a Safeway parking lot out there.

They tried, and we tried to help them, and nothing did any good. At long last, the rescuers remembered they owned a Tucker Sno Cat. Actually, they had known it all along, but they hadn't even wanted to think about hiking all the way back to get it, particularly since they also remembered it hadn't been started since the previous winter.

But finally they went back to get it, leaving us all to sit alone in the dark woods to mull over the error of our ways. Also to mull over the revised towing charge, which had jumped to \$125. "We don't even start the Tucker for less than \$50," one of the Blizzard Brothers said.

The waiting was more pleasant this time, nonetheless. And of course when the Tucker showed up it dragged us all out without breathing hard. We signed our lives away and headed for home, wondering, some of us, how our families were faring. And that was the end of it.

Except for writing up the offroad comparison test. It can't really be done (see above). But we did form some definite opinions about both vehicles before we hit the tall timber.

The Scout was at a disadvantage in tight situations, for instance, because of its longer wheelbase. But that feature also gave it a smoother ride in any non-tight situations.

The greater room inside the SSII made a strong impression, too. The CJ is tough in the high country, but we wondered just how an offroader with a family of, say, four was expected to survive in a 2+2-sized 4x4.

One of us early on formed a very positive impression of the SS II, when he

and his young son were blasting through a succession of monster mud puddles high in some clay hills near his house. Eventually he found an impassable puddle, about the size, to hear him tell it, of Lake Erie. The Scout immediately sank to the forecandle and the engine died. He was ready to give up the ghost, since the vehicle was full of muddy water nearly to the seats.

Imagine his surprise when he gave the starter a shot and the Scout cranked right over! It died again pretty soon, he says, but, with bubbles coming up from the deeply submerged exhaust pipes, the thing actually dragged itself out with no apparent damage beyond needing to be pretty thoroughly hogged out. (Even this last was no big problem, since the Spartan rugless interior will permit simple hosing-out.)

So just decide for yourself which 4x4 you'd rather own. Purely as an offroad RV, the Jeep seems to have the advantage on the Scout, but if you want to haul anything you'll need a pintle hook and a trailer. And in either vehicle, you might some day wish you had ordered standard transmission.

With the automatics, we had no clutch to slip when traction was low. We also couldn't release in a higher gear. Also, a standard stalled on a hill can be started in gear.

Of course, an automatic can lurch immediately up an incline without rolling back—but a little practice with the parking brake in a standard 4x4 will overcome this problem. Mileage with the standard also will be appreciably better.

All in all, our time spent in the 4x4s was plenty of fun. Right up to the last eight or nine hours. What we want to know now is, Where is the nearest Sno Cat dealer?

AUTO TALK

● General Motors says it plans to phase in lockup torque converters on its cars and trucks over the next few years. It didn't give a model by model timetable.

● General Motors isn't as enthusiastic as other makers over the super lubricant oils. GM disagrees with claims of a 2% mileage gain by 1980 and 6% by 1981; it figures 0.7% for 1980 and 1.7% for 1981. GM also says eventually they might be capable of giving cars a 3 to 6% gain by 1985. However, GM cautions that they need to be thoroughly tested. It says the so called slippery oils may affect durability.

● GM has denied it delayed its small front drive van because of federal fuel economy or emission standards. Instead, GM said, the mini-van was not really a light truck but closer to a station wagon in the seating. The postponement was because of uncertainty of its "niche" in the market, and therefore of its sales potential, according to a GM vice-president.

● Ford's new integral overdrive automatic transmission will be available on trucks by the 1981 model year. It is expected to be offered on cars by the fall of 1979.

● Some trade sources speculated that General Motors' front-drive compacts, the downsized cars due to be introduced as 1980 models a year from now, might have automatic transmissions on nearly all of the units. The sources suggested GM wanted mostly automatics for improved cornering.