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Steve
Mags
Speaks



Rev-N-Nator Test Story

Multi-Tasking ECU

Hot Spark, Rev-Limiter and Tachometer All-In-One!

Protect Your Numbers Matching Engine with the Rev-N-Nator!

Ask any Mopar Performance Parts counter man what his most popular item is and there's a good chance he'll tell you it's the electronic ignition conversion kit. Since its arrival around 1974 for slant six (P3690789), small block V8 (P3690426), low-deck big block V8 (P3690427) and raised-deck big block / 426 Hemi V8 (P3690428) applications, literally tens of thousands of pre-'72 Mopar muscle machines and home brewed hot rods have been fitted with this reliable and easy to install package.

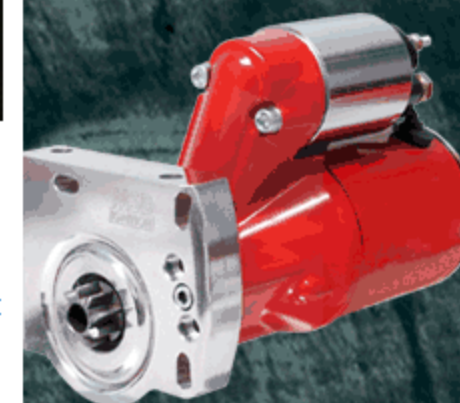
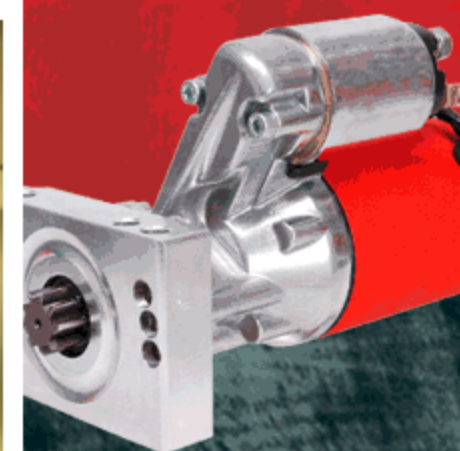


Still offered today, the points-to-breaker-less ignition conversion kits include a performance-curved aluminum distributor to replace the point-type factory item, capacity-matched ballast resistor, time saving wiring harness and most importantly, an Orange box electronic control unit (ECU) for a strong spark up to 6000 rpm (MP sells the Orange box separately as P4120505). Engines turning higher rpms can step up to the 8000 rpm-capable chrome box (P4120534) or 12,000 rpm-capable Super Gold box (P4120600). With less than two hours of effort, the benefit of breaker-less ignition is available at a very affordable price.

But as good as these components are, none of the electronic control units- Orange, Chrome or Super Gold (or any aftermarket unit we've ever seen for that matter) – can control runaway engine speed. If you want a rev-limiter to protect your numbers-matching engine from damage caused by missed shifts, driveline breakage or deteriorating track conditions, you'll need to choose between an electronic piggy-back unit or an old school mechanical tachometer / distributor combo with a cable-driven rev-control function.

Until now. With the R/T Garage's new Rev-N-Nator ECU, you get a built-in rev-limiter, tachometer and claims of as much as 10 to 40 additional horsepower over other ECU's. I had to learn more so I asked the folks at R/T Garage for a sample unit and put it to the test on the Dynojet chassis dyno at R.A.D. Automotive Machine.

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The Rev-N-Nator is visually similar to traditional ECUs except for the row of seven LED lenses, the weatherproof push button set-switch, and external ground wire. Pushing the button repeatedly sets the rpm limit point at 3,000, 5,000, 5,500, 6,000, 6,500, 7,000 or 7,500 rpm. We double checked the accuracy of the limit function against the dash-mounted Sun tach and found it to be within 200 rpm of its claimed activation point. The 7,000 and 7,500 rpm limits remain un-tested since the test car's cross-rammed 512 cannot spin that high. The LEDs illuminate whenever the engine is running and show crank speed in 1,000 rpm increments. This feature is helpful when setting ignition timing – as long as you've mounted the Rev-N-Nator under the hood where it's visible.



The backside is potted with a pliable rubber-like material to protect the electronics from moisture and vibration. The ground wire is unique to the Rev-N-Nator. The R/T Garage says the electronics are superior to factory items and that 10 to 40 extra horsepower are typically unleashed – after ignition timing is retarded a few degrees to accommodate the characteristics of the Rev-N-Nator.

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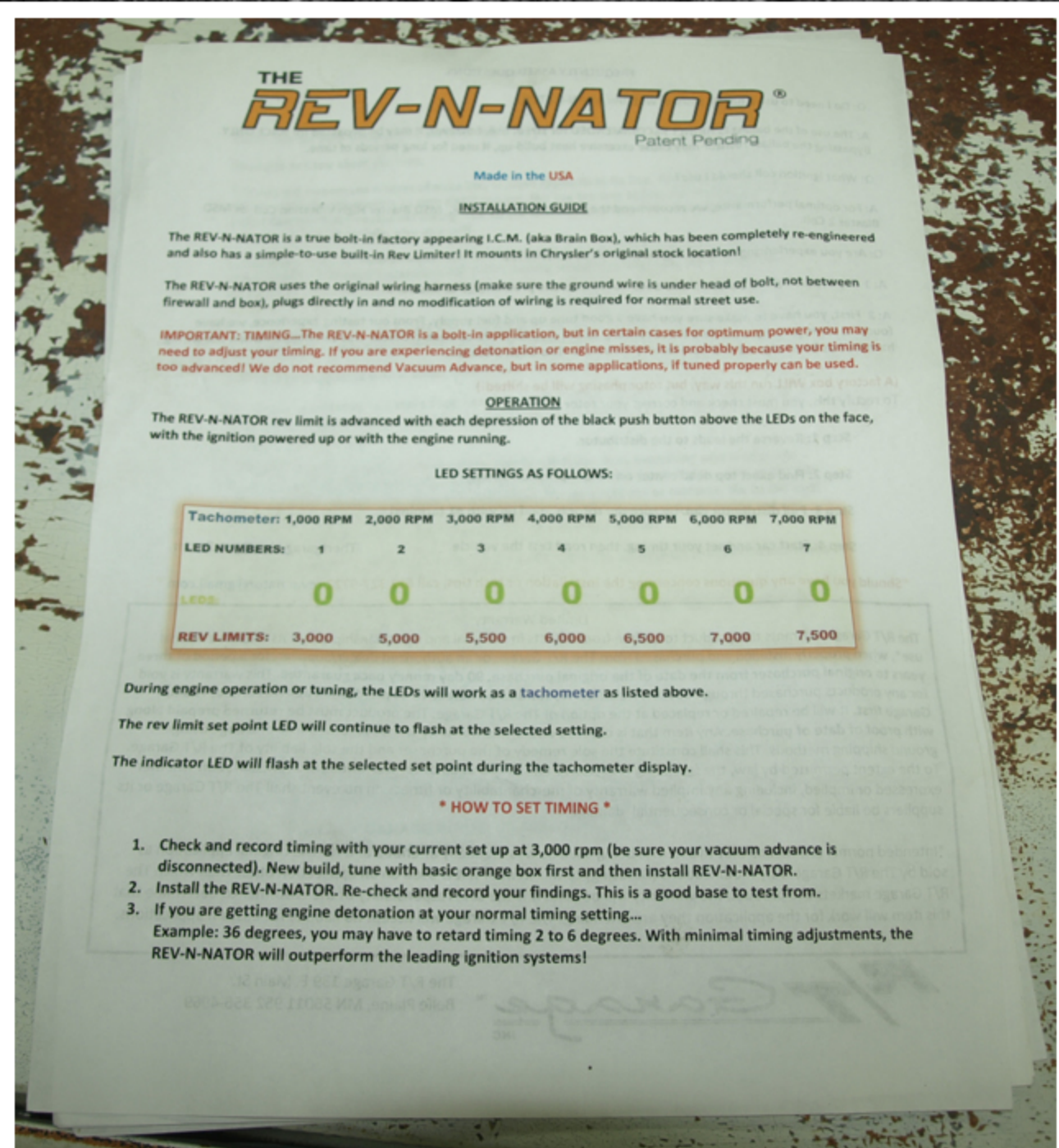
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The Rev-N-Nator is supplied with easy to understand instruction sheets. The use of vacuum advance is discouraged, as are stock coils and ignition wires. Our Maxie look-alike checks all three boxes. To mask its Winnebago camper origins and get slightly closer to the look of an actual iron Max Wedge dual-point distributor, I removed the vacuum advance canister and immobilized the advance plate / arm. The coil is an MSD Blaster II that's been painted black and Mopar Performance 7.5mm wires are used.



I joke that the *Rampage* "shines from the inside out". The raw patina is intentional and adds to its functionality. Thanks to the excellent traction afforded by the altered wheelbase surgery, it's a great test bed for engine and driveline parts intended for drag race use and general street cruising. The original *Rampage* was an exhibition match racer campaigned around Chicago by Jack Sharkey back in the 1964-'66 period. I built this tribute in 2007 with the blessing of Jack's daughter. To buy my book and see how it was constructed; "How to Build Altered Wheelbase Cars" or my two 90-minute DVDs on the subject, visit SteveMags.com.

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The *Rampage* tribute started out with a budget-built cast-gut 440 from a Winnebago motor home but has been through a few transformations over the last six years. The present specs are: 512 cubic inch stroker from 440 Source with 10:1 pistons, 440 Source aluminum heads, Isky Mega 292 flat tappet hydraulic cam, A&A 440-port cross ram intake with dual Edelbrock 750-cfm carbs and stock Chrysler electronic distributor with Orange box. Future plans call for this engine to get swapped into the gold colored '63 Dart hardtop shown above. Then the *Rampage* will receive a Hilborn EFI equipped K-head Hemi...just in time for the 50th anniversary of the 426 Race Hemi in 2014.



Like the original match bashers, the *Rampage* is totally gutted of all excess weight. The heater unit and cardboard glove box were eliminated with the carpeting. In my ongoing quest to hide "modern" equipment I mounted the ECU's inside the car. A close look at the transmission tunnel – or lack thereof – hints at why the car has not yet been tested at the drag strip. Early (pre-'67) A-bodies were not designed to accommodate the 727 Torqueflite so I had to do plenty of trimming to get it to fit. Someday I'll get around to welding up a proper patch. For safety sake, the 1964-vintage pushbutton 727 has been fitted with an A&A bolt-in sprag kit. This eliminates the threat of case explosion after a sprag failure, a vital detail on this floor-less Dart.

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This close up shows how I temporarily mounted all three ECU's close together so we could jump between them quickly during the test. The contenders are (L to R) the Rev-N-Nator (PN OR #526), MP Orange box (P4120505) and MP Chrome box (P4120534). The Rev-N-Nator is the only unit requiring an external ground wire. Note the correct ground wire orientation with the lead pinched between the mounting ear and bolt head.

All chassis dyno operation was performed at R.A.D. Auto Machine by Bunky Amelotte on one of the hottest days ever recorded in the month of



September in Massachusetts. Ambient temperature of nearly 100-degrees, plus nearly unbearable humidity limited our testing. With the distributor set to deliver 35-degrees BTDC at 3,000 rpm, the Orange box delivered 343.24 hp and 370.79 lb/ft to the tires. All runs were made with the Torqueflite in Drive and Bunky flooring the gas pedal at 3000 rpm and holding it there until the test concluded at 6,000 rpm.



With no other changes at all, we unplugged the Orange box and switched to the Chrome

box. Coolant temperature remained steady at 195 degrees and we got 344.17 hp and 369.72 lb/ft of torque. Considering that the Chrome box's claim to fame is its ability to support ignition function a full 2000 rpm past the Orange box's 6,000 rpm limit, the mere 1-hp gain is no disappointment. The Rampage's 6,000 rpm ceiling simply doesn't allow the Chrome box to do its thing.

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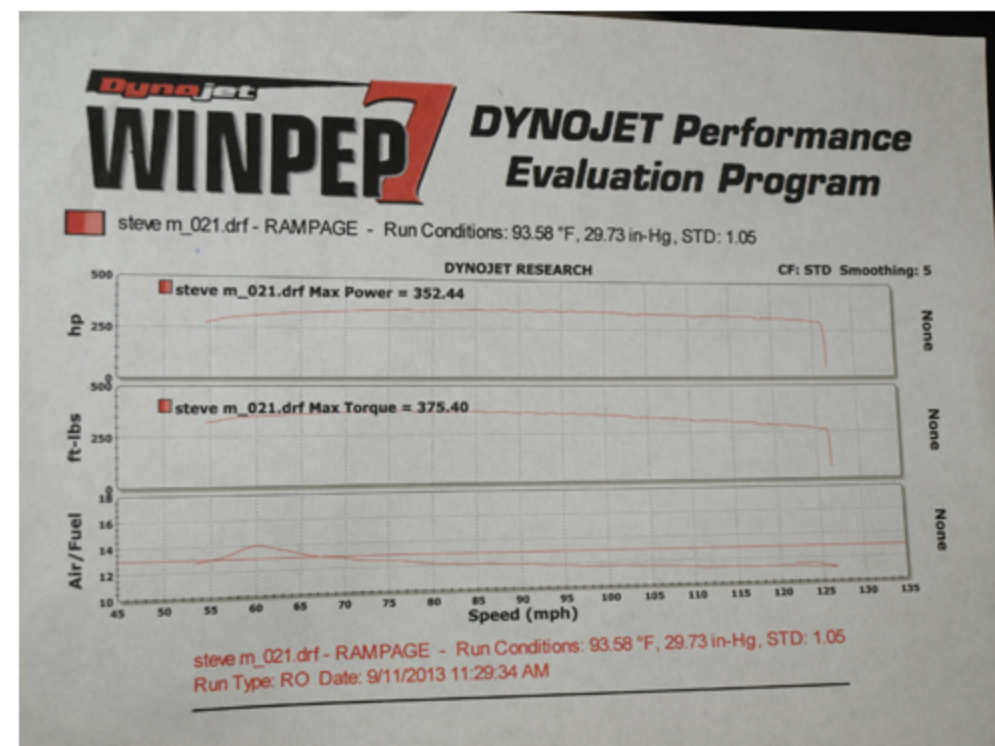
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After 5 minutes to allow the *Rampage's* coolant temperature gauge to return to 195-degrees, the wiring harness connection was transferred from the Chrome box to the Rev-N-Nator and 352.44 hp and 375.40 lb/ft resulted. That's 8.27 hp and 5.68 lb/ft over the Orange box with no movement of the distributor or other fiddling whatsoever. Not bad! According to the Rev-N-Nator's makers (the R/T Garage), the largest gains are had when ignition timing is reduced by 2 to 6 degrees. We can understand the potential but would feel obligated to perform the same timing changes to the Orange and Chrome boxes to be fair all the way around. And in the stifling humidity of the day, it just wasn't possible. Regardless, the Rev-N-Nator has proven itself to be a worthy addition to any Mopar running a stock-style electronic ignition system. Toss in the novel rev-limiter (patent pending) and tachometer function and its \$200 price tag is easily justified.

SOURCE

The R/T Garage, Inc., 139 East Main St., Belle Plaine, MN 56011; 612/327-6722; rev.n.nator@gmail.com
R.A.D. Automotive Machine, 80 Ravenwood Drive, Ludlow, MA 01056; 413/583-4414; radautomachine.com

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