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1968 AMC Javelin Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1968 AMC Javelin

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Wheelbase	109 in — first year of the Javelin
Engines	232 six (155 hp); 290 V8 (200 hp); 343 V8 (235/280 hp)
Transmissions	3-speed manual, 4-speed manual, 3-speed automatic
Production	55,124 (29,097 base + 26,027 SST) Identifier VIN A8M797_ — first-year pony car from Kenosha Single-year coverage. Factory-correct specifications. No...

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Single-year coverage. Factory-correct specifications. No guesswork.

SAMPLE EXCERPT — full guide available at the link on the cover sheet



About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1968 AMC Javelin — one model, one year, nothing else. Every specification in this guide was checked against marque references, factory literature excerpts, and enthusiast documentation before it was written.

Our operating ethic is simple: we don't lie and we don't steal, we offer value. That means three things for this guide. First, no invented specifications — every number has a source. Second, where reputable sources disagree, the disagreement is disclosed in the text and in the Sources, Conflicts & Omissions section rather than papered over. Third, where a detail could not be verified, it is omitted and the omission is recorded — an honest gap beats a confident fabrication.

How to use this guide: start with the VIN and fender-tag (or door data plate) decoding sections to establish exactly what your car was when it left the factory. Use the engine, transmission, axle, paint, and casting sections to verify that what is on the car today matches what should be there. Use the rust and restoration-sequence sections to plan the work. And keep this guide in the shop — it is a working document, not a coffee-table book.

A final note: these cars are sixty years old. Parts have been swapped, tags have been lost, and memories have faded. Trust

the metal — casting numbers, date codes, and stampings — over stories. When in doubt, photograph everything and verify

against the factory service manual for your year.

1. Manufacturer History: American Motors

American Motors was formed in 1954 by the merger of Nash and Hudson — the last independent American automaker of consequence, a company that survived by being cleverer than the Big Three rather than bigger. Under George Romney, AMC found its identity: the Rambler, an honest compact that sold on value while Detroit sold on size.

AMC's performance era arrived in the late 1960s. The 1968 Javelin and AMX gave AMC a genuine pony car and a two-seat sports car, both powered by the new AMC V8 family (290/343/390). The 1969 SC/Rambler — built with Hurst — was AMC's drag-racing statement: a 315-horsepower 390 in the compact Rogue body with red-white-and-blue paint, built to dominate NHRA's F/Stock class. It did. AMC's engineering was genuinely innovative: the unit-body construction, the 1966 V8 family with its thin-wall casting, and — from 1970 — the purchase of Jeep, which would eventually be AMC's salvation and legacy. For the restorer, AMC's small production volumes mean thinner reproduction support than the Big Three, but a passionate marque community and the American Motors Owners Association.

AMC survived as an independent until 1987, when Chrysler bought the company — mostly to get Jeep. The 1968-1974 performance cars (Javelin, AMX, SC/Rambler, Rebel Machine) are the heart of AMC collecting: low production, high character, and still attainable. Factory-correct restoration rewards patience and marque-community connections.

1968 American Motors Javelin

2. Model History: American Motors Javelin

The Javelin was American Motors' answer to the Mustang — and it arrived with unusual drama. In 1966 AMC showed two 'Project IV' concept cars, the Vignale-built fastback and convertible, touring the auto-show circuit; the production Javelin's coke-bottle styling, by Dick Teague's team, kept the concept's promise. The Javelin went on sale September 26, 1967, as a 1968 model: a 109-inch-wheelbase four-seat pony car with the new thin-wall AMC V8s, priced under the Mustang and aimed squarely at younger



MC had never reached.

The Javelin was always the thinking man's pony car — the one Car and Driver compared favorably to cars costing half again as much. The SST trim added the luxury touches; the 1969 Big Bad colors gave it the wildest factory paint in the industry; and the Trans-Am racing program (1968-1970) put AMC on road-racing podiums against the Mustang, Camaro, and Challenger. The Mark Donohue Javelin of 1970 — 2,501 cars with the Penske driver's signature on the rear spoiler — is the most famous special-edition Javelin ever built.

For 1971 the Javelin was redesigned on a 110-inch wheelbase with bolder, more sculpted styling, the Javelin AMX replaced the two-seat AMX as a trim level, and the 401-cubic-inch V8 became the top engine. The 1972-1973 cars carried the design through the industry's transition to net horsepower ratings. The Javelin ended after 1974, but the 1968-1973 cars in this series cover the classic era: the original coke-bottle cars and the bold second generation at the peak of AMC's performance ambition.

3. What Makes the 1968 Unique

The 1968 Javelin is the first-year car — the one that went on sale September 26, 1967, and proved American Motors could build a pony car. Everything about it is launch-specification: the original Dick Teague coke-bottle styling with the twin-dial grille, the 109-inch wheelbase, the 232 six and the 290/343 V8s, and the base/SST trim split. First-year cars carry early-production details that changed during the long 1968 run, so date-code discipline matters: verify casting dates against the build date, because running changes were frequent in the launch year.

The 1968 engine lineup: the 232-cubic-inch overhead-valve six (155 horsepower), the 290 V8 (200 horsepower with the two-barrel), and the new 343 V8 (235 horsepower with the two-barrel, 280 with the four-barrel). The 343 was new for 1968 across the AMC line — a bored 290, sharing the 3.28-inch stroke — and it gave the Javelin genuine intermediate-beating performance. The SST trim added bucket seats, wheel covers, and exterior brightwork; the base Javelin was the value play.

Transmissions for 1968 were a three-speed manual, a three-speed with overdrive, a floor-shifted four-speed manual, and the three-speed automatic. The 1968 Javelin launched AMC's Trans-Am racing effort — the factory-backed cars that would campaign through 1970 — and the street cars share the heavy-duty suspension and brake engineering the racing program demanded.

1968 American Motors Javelin

Production totaled 55,124 cars (planethoustonamx: 29,097 base + 26,027 SST; one secondary source reports 55,125 — see Conflicts). The 1968 is the highest-production Javelin year and the most affordable entry into first-generation Javelin ownership — which also makes it the most cloned: verify the VIN's engine code, the data plate, and the build date before paying any SST or 343/390 premium, because base cars wear SST badges with depressing regularity.

Year-to-year changes at a glance.

- Javelin introduced (September 26, 1967) — AMC's first pony car.
- 109-inch wheelbase; base and SST trim; 232 six, 290 V8, new 343 V8.
- Trans-Am racing program begins.
- Highest Javelin production year: 55,124 cars.

4. VIN Decoding

1968 Javelin VINs read A8M797_ with the year-specific engine code. Verify the series and engine positions against 1968 AMC literature.

Position

Meaning