

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1969 Plymouth Road Runner Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1969 Plymouth Road Runner

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

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1. Manufacturer History: Plymouth

Plymouth was created in 1928 by Walter P. Chrysler as his answer to Ford and Chevrolet: a low-priced car with engineering a step above its price class. The first Plymouth, the Model Q, carried hydraulic brakes at a time when its rivals still used mechanical brakes, and the brand's reputation for value engineering was set early. Through the Depression, Plymouth grew into America's number-three brand by selling honest, durable transportation.

The 1950s brought Virgil Exner's 'Forward Look' styling, tailfins, and torsion-bar front suspension ('Torsion-Aire'), which gave Plymouths handling their competitors could not match. The 1960s were Plymouth's performance decade: the Max Wedge Super Stock cars, the 1964 Barracuda (which beat the Ford Mustang to market by two weeks), the GTX, and the 1968 Road Runner — a back-to-basics muscle car that proved performance could be affordable.

Chrysler's engineering culture shaped every Plymouth of this era: the slant-six, the LA small-block V8 family, the B and RB big-blocks, the 426 Hemi, the TorqueFlite automatic (widely considered the best automatic of its day), and unit-body construction that made Mopars lighter and more rigid than their body-on-frame rivals. For the restorer, this is good news: mechanical parts interchange broadly across the corporation, and factory service manuals are unusually thorough.

The 1970s brought emissions controls, insurance surcharges, and the end of the high-compression era. Plymouth soldiered on with Volare, Horizon, and a string of rebadged Mitsubishi's before the brand was discontinued in 2001. But the 1964-1973 performance cars — Barracuda, GTX, Road Runner, Duster 340, and the Superbird — remain the heart of the hobby, and factory-correct restoration of these cars is supported by one of the deepest reproduction ecosystems in the business.

2. Model History: Plymouth Road Runner

The Plymouth Road Runner arrived in 1968 and rewrote the muscle-car formula: take a mid-size Belvedere coupe, install the biggest standard engine in the class (the 383 four-barrel, 335 hp), add heavy-duty suspension and brakes, strip out the luxury, and price it at \$2,896 — within reach of the young buyers the muscle car was built for. Plymouth paid Warner Bros. \$50,000 for the cartoon bird's name and likeness, plus \$10,000 for the 'beep-beep' horn, and Motor Trend named the Road Runner its 1969 Car of the Year. The back-to-basics performance car was a phenomenon.

The 1969 Road Runner was the peak: over 80,000 cars built, the new A12 option (440 Six Barrel, lift-off fiberglass hood, Dana 60 axle — the ultimate factory drag package), and the 'beep-beep' horn as standard equipment. The Road Runner had done what the GTX could not — it made Plymouth the youth-performance brand, and it outsold its upscale sibling by multiples.

For 1970 the Road Runner wore the B-body's one-year loop-bumper restyle and shared its showroom with the most radical Plymouth ever built: the Road Runner Superbird, the winged NASCAR homologation special. The standard 383 continued, the 440 Six Barrel and 426 Hemi remained on the option sheet, and the convertible — 824 built per Hemmings, in conflict with other sources — became an instant collectible. This guide covers the standard 1970 Road Runner; the Superbird has its own dedicated guide.

The 1971 Road Runner moved to the fuselage-styled B-body — the rounded, aircraft-inspired generation — and the engine program began its long retreat: the 383 dropped to 300 hp, the 440 to 370, the Six Barrel to 385. For 1972-1973 the big-block era effectively ended for the standard Road



the 340 (1972) and then the 318 (1973) became the base engines, with the 400 and 440 as options — and ordering the 440 created the 'Road Runner GTX,' the GTX name living on as a package rather than a model.

For the restorer, the Road Runner is the volume Mopar performance car: reproduction support is excellent, parts interchange across the huge B-body family, and the cars' values support serious investment. The authentication standard is the RM VIN prefix (1968-1971) — with the engine code as the fifth character — and the fender tag and broadcast sheet as supporting evidence. The 1972-1973 cars' 'Road Runner GTX' package is documented by the U (440) engine code, not by a separate model prefix.

3. What Makes the 1969 Unique

The 1969 Road Runner is the peak — over 80,000 cars built, Motor Trend's Car of the Year, and the year Plymouth offered the A12 option: the 440 Six Barrel (390 hp) with a lift-off fiberglass hood, functional scoop, and Dana 60 axle. The A12 cars are the ultimate factory drag-race Road Runners, built in limited numbers in the spring of 1969, and they are among the most collectible Mopars of any year.

The standard formula continued: 383 four-barrel (335 hp) standard, heavy-duty running gear, minimal trim, maximum attitude. The 426 Hemi remained the top option. For 1969 the Road Runner added the convertible body style to the lineup, and the car's cultural moment — the 'beep-beep' horn, the cartoon bird, the anti-establishment positioning — was at its height.

RESTORATIONESSENTIALS — 1969 Plymouth Road Runner

The 1969 distinctions are in the details: rectangular side marker lights (replacing 1968's round markers), the revised grille and trim, and the interior updates. The A12 package is the year's signature: the Six Barrel 440, the fiberglass lift-off hood with its huge functional scoop, the Dana 60 with 4.10 gears, and the deletion of wheel covers and trim in true drag-race fashion. A12 authentication is a specialty — the package's components are extensively reproduced, so documentation is everything.

Production is genuinely in conflict across sources: 81,105 (body-style figures), 78,906 (aggregate references), and 82,109 (a third published figure). This guide reports all three rather than choosing — the disagreement is in the record, and a restoration guide should not pretend otherwise. Whichever figure is correct, 1969 was by far the Road Runner's biggest year.

Restoration notes specific to 1969: the A12's fiberglass hood and scoop are package-specific — verify originality carefully, because reproductions are excellent and widespread. The rectangular side markers identify the 1969 model year. The B/RB torque table uses the corrected 70 ft-lb iron-head figure; Hemi cars use the dedicated Hemi table. And as with all volume Mopars, the fender tag and broadcast sheet are the authentication standard — the 1969 cars' values support only documented examples at the top of the market.

The 1969's A12 package is the authentication centerpiece: M-code VIN, lift-off fiberglass hood, 440 Six Barrel, Dana 60. Every element must agree — the hood alone proves nothing, because fiberglass hoods are reproduced. The broadcast sheet is the gold standard for A12 cars.

1969 was the Road Runner's biggest sales year and its most charismatic: the A12 cars are the collector's prize, the convertibles are rare and coveted, and the 383 cars remain the value entry. Market liquidity is excellent — there is always a buyer for a real 1969.

The A12's fiberglass hood and specific hardware (hood pins, scoop, Dana) are the restoration's expensive core; everything else is standard 1969 B-body. The 440-6 engine itself is well-supported. If you are restoring an A12, budget for the hood first — it is the part that makes the car.