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1970 Plymouth Hemi Cuda Restoration

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1970 Plymouth Hemi Cuda

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Production

666 — 652 hardtops, 14 convertibles Status The most valuable Plymouth muscle car A RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide.

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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 Mitsubishis 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 Hemi 'Cuda

The 426 Street Hemi is the engine the muscle-car era is measured against, and the 1970 Hemi 'Cuda is the car that put the Hemi in Plymouth's all-new E-body — the ultimate expression of the ultimate engine in the ultimate platform. When the Barracuda moved to the E-body for 1970, the Hemi moved with it, and the combination of the 425-horsepower elephant motor, the wide E-body engine bay, and the 'Cuda's aggressive styling created the most valuable Plymouth muscle car ever built.

The Hemi 'Cuda's formula was total: the 426 Street Hemi (425 hp, 490 lb-ft) standard with the N96 Shaker hood scoop, heavy-duty everything — suspension, brakes, cooling, driveline — and the buyer's choice of the A833 four-speed or the A727 TorqueFlite. There were no compromises in the RESTORATION ESSENTIALS — 1970 Plymouth Hemi 'Cuda

specification because the Hemi 'Cuda was not a compromise car; it was Plymouth's statement that the horsepower war had a winner, and the winner was available at your Plymouth dealer.

Production was 666 cars: 652 hardtops and 14 convertibles. The number is widely reported in marque references and consistently cited — and it is the foundation of the Hemi 'Cuda's market position. The 14 convertibles are among the most valuable American cars ever sold at auction; the hardtops, particularly four-speed cars in High Impact colors with documentation, are blue-chip collectibles that anchor the entire Mopar market.

The Hemi 'Cuda's racing record is part of its legend. The Street Hemi's NASCAR and drag-racing dominance in the 1960s gave the engine a competition pedigree no other production V8 could match, and the E-body Hemi cars carried that pedigree onto the street. The Shaker hood — standard on the Hemi 'Cuda — became the visual signature of the breed, and original Shaker assemblies are among



valuable single components in the Mopar hobby.

For the restorer, the Hemi 'Cuda is the highest-stakes restoration in the Plymouth world. The financial incentive to fake one — to convert a 383 'Cuda into a 'Hemi 'Cuda' — is enormous, and the hobby has seen every variation of the fraud: restamped blocks, reproduction tags, fabricated broadcast sheets. The authentication standard is absolute and non-negotiable: BS VIN prefix, R engine code, fender tag, broadcast sheet, matching partial-VIN stampings on the engine and transmission, and casting dates consistent with the build date. On a Hemi 'Cuda, the documentation is worth as much as the metal — buy it with the same care.

3. What Makes the 1970 Unique

The 1970 Hemi 'Cuda is the only Hemi 'Cuda this guide covers because it is the car the legend is built on — the debut-year E-body Hemi car, the one with the 1970-only grille and trim, and the one whose 666-car production run is the most cited figure in the Mopar hobby. The 1971 Hemi 'Cuda exists and is covered in the companion 1971 'Cuda guide; this book is about the 1970 car in full depth.

What makes the 1970 Hemi 'Cuda mechanically unique is the Street Hemi itself: the 426-cubic-inch hemispherical-head V8 with its cross-bolted mains, dual four-barrel carburetors, and 425-horsepower rating that the hobby has never stopped debating. The Street Hemi's fastener specifications differ from the B/RB big-block's — the main caps torque to 100 ft-lb, the rod bolts to 75 ft-lb — and this guide carries the dedicated Hemi torque table rather than applying generic big-block values. On a Hemi, the torque table is not a suggestion.

RESTORATIONESSENTIALS — 1970 Plymouth Hemi 'Cuda

The N96 Shaker hood scoop was standard equipment on the Hemi 'Cuda — the engine's air cleaner protruding through the hood, shaking with the engine's motion, giving the package its name. The Shaker assembly is Hemi-'Cuda-specific in its details, extensively reproduced, and one of the most valuable single components on the car. Verify originality by part number and construction, not by appearance alone.

The 1970-only details matter enormously on a car this valuable: the 1970 grille and taillights, the 1970 trim, the High Impact color palette (Plum Crazy, Limelight, Top Banana, Hemi Orange, Rallye Red) — every one-year part must be correct, because the market deducts for every deviation. A documented High Impact, four-speed, numbers-matching 1970 Hemi 'Cuda hardtop is a seven-figure car in the current market; the 14 convertibles are beyond that.

Restoration notes specific to the Hemi 'Cuda: the engine rebuild must follow Hemi-specific practice — the torque table in this guide, Hemi-specific gaskets and fasteners, correct dual-quad induction components. The Dana 60 rear axle is standard equipment on four-speed Hemi cars — verify originality. And the authentication standard bears repeating because the stakes demand it: BS prefix, R engine code, fender tag, broadcast sheet, matching partial-VIN stampings, consistent casting dates. Anything less is a parts car with ambitions.

Hemi 'Cuda authentication is the most demanding in the hobby: the R-code VIN, the matching-numbers 426 (verify the pad stamp and VIN derivative), the Dana 60, the broadcast sheet, and the fender tag must all agree. With values in the high six and seven figures, professional marque inspection is not optional — it is the cheapest insurance in the transaction.

The market for Hemi 'Cudas is the pinnacle of American muscle collecting: the 14 convertibles are among the most valuable American cars in existence, and even the hardtops are auction headliners. Values are driven by documentation quality as much as by condition — a documented car and an undocumented car are different assets.

Restoration is a specialist's task: the Hemi-specific components (exhaust manifolds, air cleaner,