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1970 Plymouth Superbird Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1970 Plymouth Road Runner Superbird

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Production	1,935 (some references report 1,920) 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 Road Runner Superbird

The Plymouth Road Runner Superbird is the most radical production Plymouth ever built — a NASCAR homologation special created for one reason: to make the Road Runner competitive on NASCAR's superspeedways. Chrysler's engineers, following the Dodge Charger Daytona's 1969 lead, reshaped the 1970 Road Runner with an aerodynamic nose cone, a tall rear wing, and a smoothed underbody, then built the street cars NASCAR's rules required. The result was a production car that looked like nothing else on the road — because nothing else on the road had to do 200 mph at Talladega.

RESTORATIONESSENTIALS — 1970 Plymouth Road Runner Superbird

The homologation math was brutal and specific: NASCAR required manufacturers to build one street car for roughly every two production cars sold — the commonly cited requirement produced the Superbird's production run of 1,935 cars (some references report 1,920, a disagreement this guide discloses). Every Superbird was a 1970 Road Runner hardtop (RM23) transformed at the factory level: the extended nose cone, the rear wing standing nearly two feet tall, the flush rear window, and the mandatory vinyl roof that covered the aerodynamic rear-window plug.

The street Superbirds came with three engines: the 440 four-barrel (375 hp) standard, the 440 Six Barrel (390 hp) optional, and the 426 Street Hemi (425 hp) optional — with 93 Hemi Superbirds reported in secondary sources. The race cars ran the Hemi and dominated: Bobby Isaac won the 1970 NASCAR Grand National championship in a K&K; Insurance Dodge Daytona, and the winged Mopars were so fast that NASCAR effectively legislated them out of competitiveness for 1971. The Superbird's racing career was one season long and utterly dominant.



But cars were a commercial disaster and a historical triumph. Dealers could not sell the outrageous-looking Superbirds in 1970 — many sat on lots for a year or more, some sold at discounts — which is precisely why survivors are so valuable today. The market that rejected the Superbird in 1970 now recognizes it as the winged-warrior icon of the aero era, and documented, numbers-matching Superbirds are among the most valuable Mopars ever built. For the restorer, the Superbird is a specialty within a specialty. The aerodynamic components — the nose cone, the wing and its uprights, the rear-window plug, the modified fenders — are Superbird-specific and among the most reproduced parts in the hobby, which means authentication is everything. The VIN is a standard 1970 Road Runner VIN (RM23 with the engine code); the Superbird's identity is documented by the fender tag, the broadcast sheet, and the factory's aerodynamic modifications. A standard Road Runner converted to Superbird appearance is a tribute, not a Superbird — and the market prices the difference in six figures.

3. What Makes the 1970 Unique

The 1970 Superbird is a one-year car — the only Superbird ever built — which makes this guide necessarily a single-year book. Every Superbird is a 1970 Road Runner hardtop (RM23) with the factory aerodynamic transformation: the extended nose cone replacing the loop-bumper front end, the rear wing on tall uprights, the flush rear-window plug (covered by the mandatory vinyl roof), and the modified front fenders. No 1969 Superbirds exist; no 1971 Superbirds exist.

The aerodynamic modifications are the car's identity and its restoration challenge. The nose cone, the wing assembly, the uprights, the rear-window plug, and the fender modifications are all

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Superbird-specific — and all extensively reproduced. Original aerodynamic components in restorable condition are extraordinarily valuable; reproduction components are excellent but must be disclosed as such on a documented car. The nose cone's mounting, the wing's height and angle, and the rear-window plug's fit are the details judges examine.

The three-engine program — 440 four-barrel standard (375 hp), 440 Six Barrel optional (390 hp), 426 Hemi optional (425 hp) — means Superbirds exist at three distinct market levels. The 93 Hemi Superbirds reported in secondary sources are the apex cars; the Six Barrel cars are the performance sweet spot; the 440 four-barrel cars are the 'entry' Superbirds — a phrase that means something very different in the winged-car market than anywhere else.

Production is reported as 1,935 cars in the most commonly cited figure, with some references reporting 1,920 — a 15-car disagreement this guide discloses rather than resolves. The Hemi count of 93 is a secondary-source report, not a factory-confirmed figure. On cars this valuable, even small uncertainties matter, and this guide records what is reported, what is confirmed, and what is not.

Restoration notes specific to the Superbird: the aerodynamic components' originality is the central question — verify by part number, construction, and mounting details against marque references. The mandatory vinyl roof covered the rear-window plug; its condition and correctness matter. The standard 1970 Road Runner mechanical components (suspension, brakes, driveline) follow the B-body patterns in the companion 1970 Road Runner guide. Authentication is the RM23 VIN, the engine code, the fender tag with Superbird-specific codes, and the broadcast sheet — applied with the rigor a six-figure car demands.

Superbird authentication centers on the RM23 VIN with the V-code (440-6) or R-code (Hemi) engine — and on the aero components themselves: the nose cone, the wing, and the fender scoops should carry the correct markings and construction. With 1,935 built and a fraction surviving, every claim deserves verification against the registry.