

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1970 AMC Rebel Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1970 AMC Rebel

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Model	AMC Rebel 1970
Wheelbase	114 in
Engines	232 six; 304/360/390 V8; Machine 390 (340 hp)
Key variant	Rebel Machine (1,936 or 2,326 built)
Transmissions	3-spd manual, T-10 4-spd, Shift-Command auto
Notable	1970: new front end, new V8s Every specification in this guide was checked against factory literature, marque references, period road tests, and...

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The chapter order follows the RestorationEssentials house standard: history first, then year-specific identity, then the technical chapters you will use at the car.

- Chapter 1: American Motors: The Independent That Wouldn't Die
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Chapter 1 — American Motors: The Independent That Wouldn't

Die

American Motors was born in 1954 from the merger of Nash and Hudson — the largest corporate merger in US history to that point. Under George Romney, AMC bet on the compact Rambler while Detroit built bigger, and for a few glorious years the bet paid: Rambler was the only American car to increase sales through the 1958 recession. Romney's famous dismissal of big cars as “gas-guzzling dinosaurs” defined the company — until the market disagreed and AMC nearly died learning the lesson.

Roy Abernethy reversed course in the mid-1960s: the 1965 Rambler Classic became the 1967 Rebel — a proper intermediate with convertible, hardtop, and wagon bodies. Then came the turnaround decade: the 1968 Javelin and AMX gave AMC a pony car and a true sports car, the 1970 Gremlin invented the American subcompact, and the 1970 acquisition of Jeep gave AMC the asset that would outlive the car business itself. Chrysler bought AMC in 1987 for Jeep — and got the engineering team that would save Chrysler in the 1990s.

For the restorer, AMC's independence means two things: the cars were engineered with unusual honesty (the 390 V8 is a gem, the bodyshells are stout), and production volumes were a fraction of the Big Three's — so year-specific trim was made in the thousands and the reproduction market is thin. Documentation — build sheets, door tags, and the marque clubs' archives — carries enormous weight.

Chapter 2 — The Rebel: Rambler's Replacement Steps Up

The Rebel replaced the Rambler Classic for 1967, and the renaming was the point: this was no longer your father's Rambler. On a 114-inch wheelbase with crisp, modern styling, the Rebel offered two-door hardtop, four-door sedan, and station wagon bodies with engines from the thrifty 232 six to the new 343



, from 1968, the 390.

The Rebel's moment came in 1970. The restyled front end, the new 304/360/390 engine lineup, and — above all — the Rebel Machine turned AMC's sensible intermediate into a muscle-car magazine cover: red, white, and blue paint, a 340-horsepower 390, a hood scoop you could see from the next county, and 15-inch wheels. The Machine is the car that made the Rebel collectible, and every 1968–1970 Rebel benefits from its reflected glory.

For the restorer, the three years in this guide are three distinct cars: the 1968 with its original 290/343/390 lineup, the 1969 facelift year, and the 1970 with new styling, new engines, and the Machine. Trim and sheet metal are year-specific; buy by exact year.

Chapter 3 — What Makes 1970 Different

The 1970 Rebel is the restyle year — a new front end with a bold loop bumper/grille treatment — and the year of the all-new engine lineup: the 232 six carried over, but the V8s were new-generation: the 304, the 360, and the 390. And above them all, the Rebel Machine: a 340-horsepower 390, red-white-and-blue paint, hood scoop, 15-inch wheels, and heavy-duty everything. The Machine is the most famous Rebel ever built and the reason 1970 is the collector year.

Machine production is a documented conflict this guide flags openly: one published production table cites 1,936 Machines; another marque reference cites 2,326. Both figures circulate in reputable sources. This guide reports both and resolves neither — beware any “1 of X” claim built on either total without qualification.

For the restorer, 1970 is a one-year front end, one-year trim, and new-generation engines — the least interchangeable Rebel of the three. The Machine's package-specific parts (scoop, stripes, spoilers, wheels, interior) are the hardest Rebel parts to find; a complete Machine is worth the premium over a project.

Chapter 4 — VIN and Door-Tag Decoding

The 1968–1970 AMC VIN is 13 characters. It opens with the make (A = American Motors), followed by the model-year digit (8 = 1968, 9 = 1969, 0 = 1970), the assembly-plant letter (M = Kenosha, Wisconsin; B = Brampton, Ontario), then the model/body and engine codes, closing with the sequential production number.

The VIN's engine-code position is the critical digit: it identifies which engine the car was born with — six, 290, 343, 390, or (for 1970) 304, 360, or 390. Because AMC's engine codes are year-sensitive, decode the VIN against a year-specific AMC VIN reference (the AMC clubs publish the definitive charts) rather than a generic decoder.

The door data tag

The driver's-door tag carries the paint code, trim code, and build-date information that complete the picture. The paint and trim codes are year-specific — an AMC paint code from 1968 does not mean the same color in 1970. The build sheet, when it survives (check under the seats and carpet), lists every option as built and is the gold standard for authenticating a Rebel Machine.

Machine authentication. A genuine 1970 Rebel Machine is verified by the combination of the VIN's engine code (390), the door tag, the build sheet's Machine package code, and the car's equipment: the red-white-and-blue paint scheme, hood scoop, 15-inch wheels, and heavy-duty suspension. Any one of these missing downgrades the claim. Tribute Machines are common and honestly built — price them as tributes.

Chapter 5 — Engine Lineup

The 1970 Rebel's all-new-generation V8 lineup: 304, 360, and 390 — plus the Machine's high-output 390.