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The opening pages of

1971 Plymouth Barracuda Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1971 Plymouth Barracuda

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Base engine

225 Slant Six, 145 hp Top Barracuda engine 318 2-bbl, 230 hp (383 availability unconfirmed) Line production 18,690 (sources differ — see inside) A...

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

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



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 Barracuda

The 1970 Barracuda was a clean-sheet reinvention. Plymouth abandoned the A-body compact formula that had defined the Barracuda since 1964 and moved the nameplate to the brand-new E-body platform — a dedicated 108-inch-wheelbase pony-car chassis shared only with the Dodge Challenger. Lower, wider, and far more aggressive than the car it replaced, the E-body Barracuda was Plymouth's answer to the Mustang, Camaro, and its own corporate twin, and it arrived with an engine lineup that stretched from a 225-cubic-inch slant-six to the 426 Street Hemi.

Plymouth organized the E-body Barracuda as a three-tier trim hierarchy, and understanding the hierarchy is the single most important thing a buyer or restorer can do. The BH code denoted the RESTORATIONESSENTIALS — 1971 Plymouth Barracuda

base Barracuda — the volume car, available as a hardtop or convertible. The BP code was the Gran Coupe, a luxury-trim Barracuda with plusher interior appointments, standard 318 V8, and distinctive trim, offered for 1970 and 1971. The BS code was the 'Cuda — the performance series with its own standard and optional engines, heavy-duty suspension, and bolder styling. Three codes, three missions, one platform.

The E-body Barracuda's peak came early. The 1970 and 1971 cars could be ordered with the full Chrysler performance arsenal: the 340 small-block, the 383 and 440 big-blocks, the 440 Six Barrel, and the 426 Hemi. The 1971 cars wore a controversial but now-beloved refresh — a new grille with four headlights, gilled quarter panels on the 'Cuda, and billboard stripes — and 1971 was the last year for the big-block engines, the Gran Coupe, and the 'Cuda convertible in large numbers.

For 1972 the E-body Barracuda was rationalized hard. The big-blocks were gone, the Gran Coupe



, and the performance story narrowed to the 340 small-block in the 'Cuda. The base Barracuda continued with the slant-six and 318. Through 1973 and into 1974 the cars sold steadily but without the fireworks of the launch years, and the E-body platform was discontinued after 1974 — a victim of insurance surcharges, emissions regulations, and the end of the high-compression era. For the restorer, the E-body Barracuda is the most-supported Mopar in the hobby: reproduction sheetmetal, trim, interior, and mechanical parts are all available, and the cars' values justify the investment. The challenge is authentication, not parts. Base BH cars are routinely dressed as BS 'Cudas, and Gran Coupes are re-trimmed into clones. The VIN's second character (H, P, or S) never lies about which car the factory built — decode it before you pay 'Cuda money, and demand the fender tag and broadcast sheet on any car priced as a performance model.

3. What Makes the 1971 Unique

The 1971 Barracuda wears the E-body's most dramatic refresh: a new four-headlight grille, revised taillights, and — on the 'Cuda — the gilled quarter panels and billboard stripes that define the 1971 cars in the public memory. Under the skin, 1971 is the last year of the full E-body engine spread: big-blocks could still be ordered, the Gran Coupe was still in the catalog, and the 'Cuda could still be had with a Hemi.

For the base BH Barracuda, 1971 is a year of continuity: the 225 slant-six standard, the 318 optional, and the same clean styling mission as 1970. The Gran Coupe continued its luxury brief for one final year. The performance story lived in the BS 'Cuda series, where the 340, 383, 440, 440 Six Barrel, and 426 Hemi were all still available — making the 1971 'Cuda the last year a buyer could order a big-block in an E-body.

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1971 is the year the muscle car began its visible retreat: compression cut, ratings sliding, insurance reshaping orders. A 1971 Barracuda was built at the hinge of the era — big engines still offered, detuning already underway.

Production fell hard: the body-style figures sum to 18,690 cars against the prior year's 55,499 (or 48,867, depending on which 1970 figure you use). The 1971 base Barracuda hardtop (9,459) and convertible (1,014) and the Gran Coupe hardtop (1,615) are genuinely scarce cars today — the market's fixation on the 'Cuda has left the BH and BP cars undervalued relative to their rarity, which is exactly the kind of asymmetry a careful restorer can exploit.

Restoration notes: the 1971-only grille, taillights, and 'Cuda gills are one-year parts — verify part numbers. The 383's availability in the 1971 base Barracuda is reported inconsistently; this guide lists the verified 225/318 lineup and records the question in Omissions. Authenticate any 'Cuda claim with the VIN, fender tag, and broadcast sheet.

The 1971-only front end makes clones easy to spot — but 1971-specific trim is the scarcest E-body trim in the aftermarket.

1971 is the blue-chip E-body year: last big-blocks, last Hemi, wildest styling. Documentation standards that suffice for 1972 will not suffice here.

Mechanically, 1971 is a transition year: compression dropped, cams softened, first emissions hardware — but the cars run on proven 1970 architecture. Date-code correctness matters most here, because running changes separate a real 1971 from a dressed-up 1970.

Year-to-year changes at a glance.

- Quad headlamps and new divided grille — the most recognizable one-year E-body front end.
- 'Cuda gains gilled quarter panels and larger billboard stripes; 1970 hockey-stick stripes discontinued.
- 440 four-barrel dropped from the E-body line; 383 detuned (335 to 300 hp in 'Cuda tune).