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The opening pages of

1972 Plymouth Barracuda Restoration Guide

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1972 Plymouth Barracuda

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Base engine

225 Slant Six, 110 net hp Top Barracuda engine 318 V8, 150 net hp Line production 18,490 (sources differ by 40 cars) A RestorationEssentials...

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

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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 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 — 1972 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 1972 Unique

The 1972 Barracuda is the E-body after the great rationalization. The Gran Coupe was discontinued, the big-block engines were gone from the entire E-body line, and the performance story narrowed to small-blocks: the 318 V8 standard in the 'Cuda with the 340 as the performance option (also available in the base BH). What remained was a cleaner, simpler lineup — the base BH Barracuda with the slant-six, 318, or 340, and the BS 'Cuda with the 318 or 340 — and the cars are honest, well-balanced machines for it.

For 1972 the industry switched to net horsepower ratings, which makes the numbers look like a collapse: the 225 slant-six is rated 110 net hp, the 318 at 150 net hp, and the 'Cuda's 340 at 240 net hp. These are not directly comparable to 1971's gross figures — the engines were detuned (lower compression, milder cam timing, emissions equipment), but the net rating system itself accounts for RESTORATIONESSENTIALS — 1972 Plymouth Barracuda

part of the drop. Judge 1972 cars against other net-rated cars, not against 1970 gross figures. What makes the 1972 Barracuda distinctive as a restoration subject is its transitional specification. Electronic ignition became standard across the line in 1972 — a genuine reliability improvement that restorers should preserve rather than 'correct' away. Front disc brakes were widely ordered. The 1972-only grille and taillight treatments are one-year parts, and the simplified option structure means fewer configuration traps than the 1970-1971 cars.

Production steadied at 18,490 cars (aggregate) against a body-style sum of 18,450 — a 40-car disagreement between sources that this guide reports rather than resolves. The base Barracuda hardtop accounted for 10,622 of those cars, making it the volume E-body of the year. The market's focus on the 'Cuda has kept base 1972 Barracudas affordable relative to their condition — a complete, rust-free BH is one of the more rational entries into E-body ownership.

Restoration notes specific to 1972: verify the electronic ignition system is intact (it is standard, not an add-on); confirm 1972-only trim part numbers before buying; and note that the 8.5:1-compression 340 in the 'Cuda uses different pistons and tuning than the 1970-1971 10.5:1 engines — parts do not interchange blindly across the compression change. As always, the BH/BP/BS VIN hierarchy is the authentication anchor.

The 1972 restorer's advantage is simplicity: three engines, one grille family shared with 1970, and no big-block-specific hardware to hunt. The disadvantage is parts economics — with values lower than the 1970-71 cars, reproduction support is thinner, and some 1972-only trim (grille inserts, stripe kits) requires patience or NOS hunting.

In the market, 1972 is the value play in E-bodies: genuine BS 'Cuda VINs at a fraction of 1971 money, with the same 340 performance that made the name. The cars are finally being recognized as the last honest small-block performance E-bodies, and documented 340 cars have been