

2020 MOPAR SHOW PLANNER INSIDE!

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ISSUE!



1-OF-5

1971 CANADIAN EXPORT NEMI CHALLENGER



SPECIAL ORDER MR. NORM'S 440 RALLYE CHARGER



ULTRA RARE

1966 HP2 NEMI 4-SPEED SATELLITE

DISPLAY UNTIL 4-2-19
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APRIL 2020



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CHALLENGER CHARGER ROAD RUNNER SATELLITE GTX CUDA

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NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Andrew White and his wife, Megan, over at Apex Autosports in Wisconsin, have established quite a friendship with Texas collector Darryl Wischniewsky through the years. Darryl, who lives down in Houston, is hardly the expected repeat customer for a state-of-the-art restoration shop located in Grafton, Wisconsin, nevertheless, over the course of the last decade, this trio has come together to produce some extraordinary Mopar and muscle car restorations that are absolutely second-to-none when it comes to OEM nut-and-bolt build quality. Through the years, Apex has done half a dozen restorations for Darryl, and the one that patiently waited was this particular '71

Challenger R/T. Darryl bought it from another Mopar collector in Indiana several years ago, after the car had spent its entire life in Canada, and since he had a lot of other cars that needed more help than this one, the purple Challenger remained in Houston and was used as an occasional cruiser and fun car while Apex worked on other projects. If you want proof the great American dream can come true, then Darryl Wischniewsky is your boy. He started selling cars in 1975, and in 1985, he opened his first very-own dealership. That has since ballooned into an automotive empire of dealerships covering the entire greater Houston area, which is cumulatively known as the Bayway Auto Group. And, in addition to every type of new car you could think of, Darryl has amassed a personal collection of

around seventy muscle cars – all the toys he dreamed of when he was an impressionable youth – not to mention his Pro Mod Hemi Dodge! So, amidst all this automotive activity, the purple Challenger just laid low, waiting for someday. Everyone knew the restoration would eventually come around, and for that purpose, both Darryl and Andrew began gathering NOS original parts and all sorts of correct date-coded parts and hardware for the Challenger. There are a lot of guys who are content to simply have a “perfectly restored” car

that looks perfectly restored, even to the most picky judges on the planet, but, Darryl is extraordinarily detail oriented, which is why he and everybody at Apex have clicked so well. Before this thing made the trip north, they'd already bought a correct date-coded alternator, correct date-coded carb, date-coded 15" Rallye wheels, mufflers, the lights, the trim pieces, you name it; it's all either NOS or it's immaculately restored date-correct original equipment with which this Chally would've been built to begin with. When it comes to reproduction parts, Darryl doesn't

really care for them and they're used only as a last resort if something absolutely can't be found. With several years of prep work, going into parts hunting before this one left Texas for Wisconsin, needless to say, there aren't very many repro parts on this car. But, before we get into all that, let's do a little background on what's known about the car itself. A lot of previous history is currently missing, so if you guys know in-depth details, send them on to us and we'll forward them along to Darryl. What is known, for certain, is that this was one of only five

1971 Hemi Challenger R/T's shipped new to Canada. This one, like most Canadian Mopar muscle cars, went over into Ontario when new, and despite its rather basic options list, this one was, apparently, a specially ordered car. As popular as the E-body is today, especially anything with stripes on it, it's sobering to look back at

1 OF 5 CANADIAN EXPORT 1971 HEMI CHALLENGER





what a catastrophic showroom disasters they were for Chrysler, and this explains why there are so darned few of them today; there never were very many. When the Challenger debuted in 1970, Dodge managed to sell just over 77,000 total Challengers; 14,889 of which were R/T hardtops, with another 1,070 R/T convertibles being built. Out of those 15,000 cars, only 287 Hemi hardtops were built, and only nine Hemi convertibles. But then, within the span of one brief year, the magic was gone. Total Challenger sales in 1971 dropped to just over 25,000 cars. The R/T convertible was gone, and total '71 Challenger R/T production fell to only 4,630 cars. As hard as it is to believe today, sales fell by almost 200% in just one year. Since we love these things, Mopar fans are quick to say this was due to rising insurance costs, gasoline prices, you name it, but that's grasping at straws. While Ford and Chevy's sales of muscle cars fell as well from 1970 to 1971, they were nowhere close to the catastrophic losses that the E-bodies suffered. It wasn't the time, it wasn't economics, it was the car. Chrysler had rushed the E-body into

production before working out a lot of little bugs, and by mid-year 1970, the buying public was wise to it, and that doomed the E-body forevermore going forward. Which brings us to the 1971 Hemi Challenger R/T. Only seventy examples were bolted together in 1971, and five more were built for export to Canada, with this one being one of those five. We often hone in on Superbirds or a host of other old Mopars as being "rare," but it was truly rare to see a '71 Hemi Challenger, even in the middle of 1971. And, with only five of them going to the entire nation of

Canada, naturally, this purple-and-white machine was kind of a big deal up north for a very long time. It was known from the enthusiast in Indiana, who bought it out of Ontario, that the car had been a Canuck all its life, but once it was tucked away in the Hoosier state, the car kind of fell off the Mopar radar for a while. It went down to Texas, with Darryl, but it wasn't until the machine was unveiled at MCACN in 2019 that virtually every Canadian in attendance stated they remembered the car and had been friends with its owners during

its time north of the border.

The whole thing with the restoration had been talked about long before it began, and when it actually began was back in January 2019. Darryl had the Chally trucked up to Wisconsin, and initially, Andrew and Megan were a little confused as to why this thing had been scheduled for a full

fact that this restoration was now thirty-plus-years-old, the car was showing some notable wear, once you really started looking at it, and, there were some places towards the back that just didn't look right; signs of old bodywork that wasn't done well and was likely coming apart. Knowing it was a Canadian car, Andrew knew there were

January, and he was amazed at how many parts had been swapped around on the car; the original engine, transmission, and 3.54 rear axle was still there, but the carbs had been swapped, the original Rallye wheels were gone, and virtually all of the little mechanical parts under the hood had been replaced with a wide variety of "close



ground-up resto. Coming off the truck, the car looked good, it sounded good, it ran good, and everything about it looked pretty darned good... from about ten feet away. Once Andrew got to seriously looking at the R/T, he began seeing what Darryl already knew; it was a 1980's restoration that was probably decent for that time, but-given the standards of today and the

likely rust problems that had been fixed somehow back when, but the only way to remedy that permanently and get the car literally back to step-one was to go the route that Apex does with most all of their over-the-top OEM restorations; this thing would have to be chemically stripped to the bone.

Andrew and the Apex crew disassembled the entire Challenger that

enough" parts that would mass muster for a local parking lot show, but were definitely not up to standards for hard-core judging. But, if you were around the hobby back in the mid-eighties, you'll remember, that's just the way things were done back then. None of us were worried about date-coded parts or hung up on NOS parts. Heck,



at. That process took a little longer than expected, and Apex didn't get the body back until March, so that meant they really had to kick things into overdrive!

As expected, there were some old rust repairs out back that had to be dealt with, which required replacing the trunk floors, patching the lower quarter panels, and adding an NOS deck lid. Aside from that, however, the RT was surprisingly clean, and since it had been pampered for the last thirty years, it was very cooperative during the rest of its restoration.

And didn't really throw any curveballs as things progressed. All the "good enough" parts were put aside and replaced by all the rebuilt original date-coded pieces, everything was bolted back together, the gleaming Plum Crazy paint was put on once again, absolutely flawlessly we might add, and the stripes and little details were finished up just weeks before the 2019 MCAACN event where the car was scheduled to be unveiled and make its national debut.

Andrew and crew got the Challenger set up and positioned in their display at MCAACN and left it covered with a large black cloth until the reveal, which was also the first time that Darryl had seen the car since he shipped it up north for restoration. Needless to say, everybody was impressed, the Canuck Challenger was a big hit, and the thing cleaned up at the show, capturing OEM Gold in the very strict judging at MCAACN, and it also won the Platinum Award for Best Dodge at the event – not too bad for its first car show! Once again, the prowess of the Apex AutoSports team was proven and another feather goes in their cap, but we've come to expect nothing less. After MCAACN, Darryl hauled his prize Challenger back home to Houston, where it now sits among his other muscle cars and is one of the crown jewels of the collection. Darryl tends to primarily do shows and events around the Texas area, so at this point, Andrew tells us he's not sure when the purple RT will be seen again at a major venue, but we're hopeful this one can make it to CarLife at least once to let everybody have a good look. So, once again, kudos to Apex for building the things much better than Dodge ever dreamed of doing – and congrats to Darryl Wachniewsky for scoring a seriously unique and gorgeous Hemi RT. When it comes to '71 Challengers, it's really hard to beat the purple-and-white color combo, and when you add in that it's a Hemi top-speed car, that just makes for extra long on the cake. 🍌

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