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Plum Crazy on a purple Sunday morning...



THE COLOR PURPLE

Dave Crawford's 1970 Hemi 'Cuda Represents
21st Century Restoration Quality

STORY BY GEOFF STUNKARD / PHOTOS BY JOHN STUNKARD

“Aw, man, I’m tired of seeing all of these trailer queens!”

Sometimes, being in the magazine business as an editor can be frustrating. We all have our part of the hobby we enjoy. I like oddball stuff, vintage drag cars and technical advances. Some readers are like our tech guy Dave Verna, who is into hands-on tweaking of all sorts

of things, covering hot street cars. Some are like our contributor and restoration guru Frank Badelson, who really appreciates the preservation and exact restoration of classic cars. Some get mad when we run “too much” new car stuff, some don’t want to see anything they cannot afford to own, and some probably wish we would just be relevant to something they have an interest in.

So before you start blogging about how much we suck as you look at Dave Crawford’s incredible Hemi ‘Cuda, consider this: when it comes down to it, I have yet to meet a Mopar guy would not want to own, at least for a while, one of the big-time iconic musclecars that have garnered so much acclaim. A real Hemi or Six Pack something that could be simply kept and enjoyed. Whether you are



into building rat-rod street cars or pristine professional race iron, factory-restored cars are one of the major places that our hobby receives awe and recognition even from the general public. So, while we try to cover as many bases as possible each month, we think you'll agree that Crawford's '70 E-bomb is pretty cool.

Yeah, we've seen a lot of restored Hemi 'Cudas, too. After all, they built 652 of 'em that year, and 284 of them were four-speed just like this one. When you begin breaking down the rest of the specs, though, it was one of only four that got the FJ7 Plum Crazy Purple paint coupled to a white interior. The Hemi is topped by the Shaker scoop, backed up by the Super Trak Pak driveline (A833/4.10 Dana 60 rear) including



The 426 Hemi in 1970 had benefited from some changes, a big one being the swap to the hydraulic cam.

front-disc brakes. The body-color stamped steel wheels are shod with Goodyear 15x7 tires with dog dish caps. It's a long way from when it was found in Oklahoma, rotting its years away in a "I'm gonna restore 'er someday" enthusiast's junkyard

after only a 23,000 mile existence; Dave bought it back in October 2006, and eventually turned the project over to Andrew and Megan White at Apex Autosports in Grafton, Wisconsin.

"Andrew has been doing a great job



From behind, the horizontal taillights would be a trademark of the design. Hey, it was the only view most other guys ever saw!



The new Shaker scoop immediately added to the legend the Hemi 'Cuda created; part of any serious restoration is gathering all the correct parts to make it authentic.



This is how the car appeared following years of storage in an Oklahoma "junkyard."

for me. After the car was done, I let him take it to the big shows this past year, and a lot of people saw it. He's done a lot of things to make it even better, and has done right by me. I think he will be very successful."

Andrew is a younger member of the restoration industry, but that has not kept him from moving into the top echelon of his vocation in terms of quality. He would spend two years on the project, transforming it from worn metal with a title into what it is today.

"Like any junkyard find; the car was dirty, beat up, missing important parts,

but the shell itself was 95 percent rust free. The roof had been walked all over and was dented, which was something we don't see every day. Dave and I both started rounding up parts; that continued all the way through the process. The most frustrating part was putting together a good interior; we did not want to use any reproduction plastic parts on it, and we didn't, so all those original white pieces were rounded up from various sources."

The original motor was gone, but Dave luckily had a 1970 warranty replacement block (see sidebar). To properly bring a Hemi car back from its near death

condition requires a great amount of attention to detail, as professional restoration practices will only get you partway there. The remainder is spending the time and the money to obtain the properly date-coded pieces to make it look literally exactly as new.

"The Hemi K-frame and Dana were still in the car," says Andrew, "but no exhaust components, no Hemi brake booster or Shaker parts; we had to find all of that. Once the body was ready and painted, we do some tricks to get a glassy smooth finish; that is sort of our Apex trademark. With this car, because of the

"THE BIGGEST THING PEOPLE NOTICE IS THE BODY AND PAINT; THEY CAN'T BELIEVE HOW LASER-STRAIGHT IT IS."



One of the most challenging areas of the restoration was this white interior, which made use of only original white plastic pieces.



Andrew cruises in Dave's rarity for our cameras. Hard work, right?

UN-MELLOW YELLOW

We actually shot Dave's other 1970 Hemi 'Cuda at the Forge two years ago. It is painted FY1 Yellow and turned up as an ex-drag car (raced by two brothers) showing just under 2,500 miles when it hit the collector's market in the late 1970s. What makes it even more interesting is the option level – leather interior, light group, lower and overhead consoles, AM/8-track, Shaker, Super Track Pack, Rallye wheels and more.

A full restoration was done on that 'Cuda, too, with Andrew at the helm, reusing as much of the original pieces as possible, including the leather skins and six-way driver's seat. The warranty block in this car ended up in the purple 'Cuda after Galen Govier discovered this FY1 car's original factory engine (which the drag racers had sold) residing between the fenders of a 1970 GTX. The prior collector before Dave had tried to buy it without success; Dave negotiated a more realistic value with the GTX's owner and the mill was reunited with the metal.

He had a chance to buy the purple car while this one was still being restored, which how he ended up owning two terrific 426ci E-body Plymouths. Here are a few shots of this car; an additional feature on it ran at moparmax.com's April 2010 issue.



heavy metallic content of the paint, it is hard to spray FJ7 consistently."

"I wanted to own a real Hemi 'Cuda; I ended up with two of them," Dave says. "That they both ended up being so nice is a real part of the enjoyment for me."

When it was all said and done, Dave had a substantial investment in the finished project. Even with the development business he works in no longer as strong as it had once been, he will probably own this car for a considerable length of time, which is why Apex has toured with it much of the last show season.

"The reception to it last year has been incredible," says Andrew. "The biggest thing people notice is the body and paint; they can't believe how laser-straight it is. We will probably take it to the Nationals for Senior judging this year, as well as a Hemi Superbird we just finished."

"The market for these cars is not what it once was, this was a rare combination and, yes, it was not cheap to bring it back to this condition," says Dave philosophically about the Plum Crazy E-Body. "That said, I am satisfied to say that there is probably not a better one with these options than this one. If there

was one worth keeping, this one is it."

Having seen this one firsthand, we would agree.

At last year's Forge Show, we even got Andrew to swing it around the block for us a few times to show us that, while it's been living in the trailer, it definitely performs as well as it looks. Thanks, Dave! ■

SOURCE

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