

# mopar MAX

MAGAZINE

Volume V Issue 4 - April 2010

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## Mopars at the Strip

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Project Fighting Fish is almost done!

Cover photo by Tim Marshall, Inset by James Drew

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# YELLOW JACKET

**Dave Crawford's 1970 Hemi 'cuda is a former drag monster returned to its legacy**

Words and photos by Geoff Stunkard

Hemi E-bodies are something that have garnered a sort of mentality among Mopar enthusiasts. Some have gone so far as deride the short-lived model design as 'Chrysler's Camaro,' while others would have nothing but 'cudas and Challengers sitting in their garages. The truth is, these cars have indeed become iconic to the breed, coupled with financial notoriety at auction and privately, Nash Bridges' droptop '71 Plymouth on prime time, and new Challengers in the dealer lot in 2010.

But E-body models are not easy to come by nor cheap to restore these days. That same level of exposure has made the pieces that make up the sum total quite expensive, Hemi or not. For instance, things like NOS grilles have been priced 'legendarily,' and good Shaker pieces warm the heart and fatten the wallet of anyone lucky enough to have them available for purchase. It's not a game for the faint of heart.



The appearance of the Shaker on that big Hemi (or any other Mopar engine) was one of the most impressive things to come out of the musclecar era's styling departments.

Dave Crawford of Piqua, Ohio, had been through the Shelys and Corvettes; he had decided that finding a real Hemi'cuda would be a challenge worth undertaking. So he began a search some years back to locate one that would meet his desires as owner and be worth the cost and effort to restore. The car he came up with was pretty special.



The Hemi Shaker on the 'cuda got its own chrome callouts; once the Chevelle guys saw this tag, they sulked away into the darkness quietly.

Back in the Seventies, two brothers in Illinois had wanted to go drag racing, so they had bought a fairly loaded used 1970 Hemi'cuda. This car had been purchased by a Springfield, Ill., businessman for his wife, who hated it. The color was loud – FY1 Lemon Twist Yellow (a HIP –High Impact Paint – option), with a black hockey stripe and Shaker hood. Inside, the car had black skin, power windows, six-way adjustable seat, center and overhead consoles, deluxe leatherette interior, and AM/8-track radio.



The hockey-stripe decal, so named for its shape, was available on 1970 'cudas only. The Hemi callout here was what anybody in the other lane saw (but only for a moment as it rocketed past) as soon as the car shifted into third gear.



15" Rallye wheels were part of the Hemi'cudas option package, shod with E60-15 rubber.

There is no record of how well they did with it, but they did blow the engine up. They sold the car, showing 2400 miles, and the rest of the original driveline in the late 1970s. Once it entered the hobby, and was restored to 1990 standards by another owner, it ended up with noted collector Bill Wiemann. With the original motor gone, the car had a legitimate 1970 warranty block in it and solid provenance – partial broadcast sheet, fender tags, the original window sticker, etc.




The interior in the car was deluxe; the car was reportedly ordered by a trucking company owner for his wife, who did not like it.

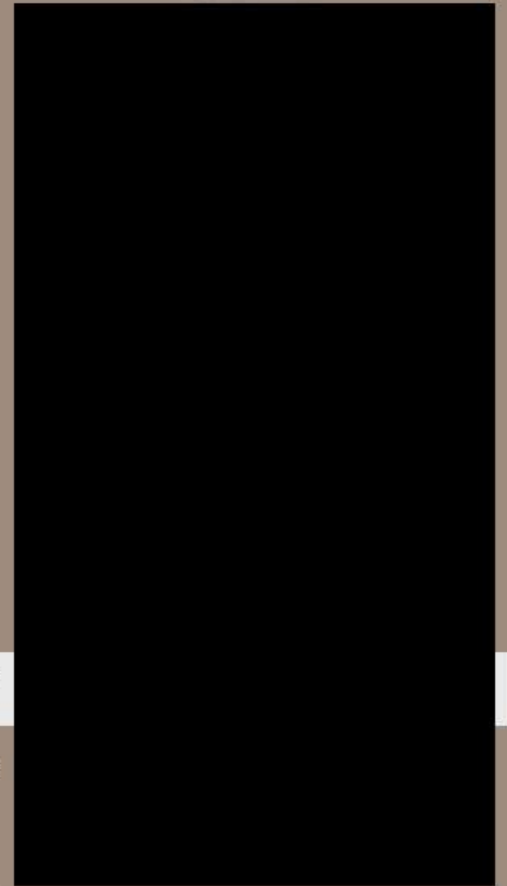
That when Galen Govier entered the picture. Galen maintains his registry of cars, and he was looking at a 1970 GTX that had the wrong Hemi engine in it. As he went through the process, he discovered that the engine in that X was from the 'cuda; the only serious damaged had been to one head and cylinder and the brothers had sold it. The GTX owner had dollar signs in his eyes, and he wanted a LOT of money for it. Wiemann reported tried several times to get a more reasonable price for it to no avail, and finally decided to sell the 9,000-mile car rather than restore it for his collection.

So Dave went ahead and bought it, planning on redoing the car back to premier condition. He got the name of the engine's owner, and somehow managed to get the motor bought for more realistic money. The body, in the meantime, end up at the now-closed Aloha Automotive shop in Wisconsin, where Andrew White had been working.

"That car was in -2 condition," he recalls. "We did have to panel-repair the quarters where the wheelwells had been cut out for tire clearance, but other than that, it was pretty straight forward. The previous restoration had been poorly done, but a lot of original equipment was still on that car."

Andrew, who now operates Apex Autosports in Grafton, Wisconsin, did a second car for David, another '70 Hemi'cuda in FC7 'In Violet Metallic' (Plum Crazy in Dodge nomenclature). The warranty block ended up in that car and the Lemon Twist deluxe machine is now back in its entirety, right down to NOS Goodyear tires. Thanks to Tim Lopata and his crew at the Forge Invitation Musclecar Show, we got a first-hand look at it; in the last couple of years, the FY1 car has won several 1st place awards; the FC7 example will be featured in the June issue of Mopar Enthusiast magazine ([www.moparenthusiast.com](http://www.moparenthusiast.com))

Hemi cars may not be as unique as they one were; aftermarket engines and engineering have made them more commonplace than they ever were back in the day. Nonetheless, to have a '70 'cuda that is the real deal is special, to have one this nice puts you at the top of the charts, and, sorry to you naysayers, they will never be as easy to find as a Camaro! 



From behind, the stylish lines of the design are still evident.



Dave Crawford with his 'cuda.