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**Alan Tansley's 1970 440 Six-Barrel Plymouth 'Cuda and '69 Dodge R/T 426 Hemi-Charger are most muscle fans' idea of double heaven. We went along to get the lowdown on these two mighty beasts from Mother Mopar**

**L**IKE many of us, Alan Tansley's interest in American cars developed not long after he left school, and over the years he has owned quite a variety of different cars. But that was all before he became truly devoted to Mopar muscle.

Reading contemporary road test reports in magazines like *Hot Rod* and *Car Craft* really fuelled Alan's imagination for Chrysler's most potent machines. He particularly respected the standard of their engineering, not to mention their performance capabilities during the muscle car wars of the late Sixties and early Seventies. Even better was that this kind of performance hardware was readily available to the general public.

It was the styling of the Plymouth 'Cuda which most appealed to Alan, and he soon set his heart on a Six-Barrel powered version. The only problem was that Six-Barrel 'Cudas were not exactly easy to come by in the UK. Alan, a self-employed commercial cleaner from Suffolk, asked Chrysler specialists Rare Performance Motors of Aldershot, Hampshire, run by Pete Jordan and Martin Savill, to source a suitable car in the States. They located a 1970 'Cuda in Rapid City, South Dakota, and it arrived in the UK in 1988.



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The Tor Red 'Cuda was a matching numbers car, one of 1755 built in 1970, and was in very original condition. Even better was the fact that it came with plenty of desirable options, pretty much to the specification that Alan had wanted. This spec included the Super Track Pak, power discs, 4.10-gear Dana axle, Shaker hood cold air induction, heavy duty cooling system, Rallye dash and Slapstick shifter.

On the down side, the Plymouth had covered a fairly prodigious mileage and the engine and running gear were getting tired; it looked as though a full mechanical rebuild was looming on the horizon. The bodywork had fared slightly better and, other than the trunk floor which had rotted out, the rest of the body was reasonably sound. With the car originating from California, the warm climate had no doubt helped its preservation.

Alan decided to carry out a 'rolling restoration' so that he could enjoy using the car during the summer months, tackling one job at a time during the winter. Over the next six winters the 'Cuda was systematically restored to superlative condition. Although the original plan was to achieve a near factory-

standard car, Alan decided to upgrade the specification in a number of key areas, more of which later.

An interesting discovery was made when the 'Cuda's engine was removed. The car had actually been shot at with a 12-gauge single lead shot, the type which US police fire from road blocks when a 'suspect' refuses to stop. The shot had ricocheted off the road beneath and exited through the heater box, scuttle, and finally out through the bonnet; the hole had since been covered by a piece of tin and filler ...

The 'Cuda's A727 Torque-Flite three-speed auto transmission, renowned for its longevity, was nevertheless rebuilt at very reasonable cost by Derek Camp of Technical Automatic Services, West Mersea, Essex, and upgraded to Hemi spec with extra clutch packs and heavy duty sprag. Local American car specialist Tom Newman was entrusted to rebuild the 390bhp 440 Six-Barrel engine and 3x2 Holley carburettors, which give a total flow of 1150cfm.

Tom also fitted an MSD 6AL ignition system at a later date, and was also responsible for rebuilding the front suspension and steering assembly. The Dana 60 rear axle, another really heavy duty component built to give a long service life, was rebuilt by Hauser Racing at Rushden, Northamptonshire. To improve the 'Cuda's steering, the power-assistance has been upgraded with a firm-feel kit in order to achieve a more positive response.

Following the fitting of a new trunk floor, Andy Jay bare-metalled the body and resprayed the car in its original high-impact colour of Tor Red, albeit in two-pack, at his sprayshop in Colchester.

Alan reckons that most new parts he needed for the restoration had to be sourced in the States, with only service items readily available in this country. The dashboard was sent to Just Dashes in San Jose, California, to be re-vinyl,

while new seat covers and carpets came from Legendary Interiors of Newark, NY. Fine attention to detail included all the dashboard instruments being re-lettered and recalibrated in the States.

Although Alan has returned his 'Cuda to very near original specification, he does draw the line at fitting bias-belted tyres. The current set-up features 8x15in. Rallye rims on the rear, shod with 275-60-15 tyres and seven-inch Rallye rims on the front with 225-60-15 tyres. Since the restoration, which was completed in 1993, Alan has experimented with running the engine on fully synthetic oil. The result? 'It doesn't seem to thin out at higher temperatures and it definitely adds a few more horsepower.'

Alan is a member of both the Mopar Muscle Association and Motorvatin' USA and, in 1993, the 'Cuda won Best of Show and Participants' Choice Award at the 1st Mopar Nationals at Santa Pod, as well as Best of Show at Motorvatin' USA's '96 Summer Nationals. Other awards have followed since. At Santa Pod the car ran the quarter mile in 13.70 seconds at 100mph.

Having thoroughly enjoyed owning and driving the 'Cuda, Alan became an even more dedicated follower of Mopar Muscle and, though he thinks of his car's Six-Barrel engine as the working man's Hemi, at the end of the day there's no substitute for the real thing. So when the opportunity arose for him to purchase an extremely rare Dodge R/T 426 Hemi-Charger, he couldn't resist. He calculated that his finances would just about cope with running two cars without breaking the bank. Suddenly, there was no stopping him.

According to Mopar numbers guru Galien Govier, of the 432 Hemi-Chargers built in 1969, just eighty are known to still exist. The Hemi-Charger was essentially a thinly disguised racer, with its awesome, 426cu.in., phenomenally potent, hemispherical combustion chambered engine producing 425bhp and 490lb.ft. of torque at 4000rpm. Introduced in 1964 for the race circuit, followed two years later with a street car package, the Hemi engine has stood the test of time well, and is as revered today by muscle car aficionados as it was back in the Sixties.

Alan experienced a feeling of *deja vu* when the Hemi-Charger turned out to be exactly the same one he had actually gone to look at with a view to purchasing before he acquired the 'Cuda. Originally shipped to Fort Wayne Dodge Inc. of Indiana, the car arrived on our shores from Florida in 1981 and, when Alan first saw it, was in pretty rough condition. The engine did not run and there was mildew all over the interior. At that time he didn't have any contacts in Mopar circles and,

not wishing to go in above his head, caution seemed the better part of valour and he walked away from the car.

The Hemi-Charger had previously been part of the Sorn Castle collection of vehicles in Ayr, Scotland, built up by Bobbie McIntyre. But following his untimely death, aged just 56, the collection was auctioned off by Sothebys. The Hemi-Charger fetched £7500 and changed hands a few times before Alan eventually purchased it from the same source as the 'Cuda (RPM at Aldershot), doing a deal which involved trading in a MkI Jaguar.

By the time Alan acquired the Hemi-Charger, its engine was just about running, only one brake worked (the rest were all seized) and, whilst cosmetically it looked reasonable, the bodywork was in need of some major repairs. The trunk floor had completely rotted and the petrol tank directly below had seen better days. Both rear quarter panels were rusted (a typically common problem on these cars), the deck panel between the trunk lid and rear screen was rotten and the nearside front chassis rail was twisted due to frontal impact.

The front nearside wing had been replaced, but the offside wing needed rebuilding; the bonnet had been replaced, the front panel assembly needed work and a new grille would be required.

In short, the entire car need a ground-up, nut-and-bolt rebuild, a task which got under way in 1992 and would take the next five years to complete. As with the 'Cuda restoration, Alan used the same specialists to revive the Hemi-Charger. Tom

Newman would complete the body repairs and rebuild the engine; Andy Jay would respray the car; Derek Camp would rebuild the four-speed A833 manual gearbox; and Hauser Racing would revive the rear axle. Whilst Alan would love to have tackled much of the restoration work himself, he admits to not possessing the required skills and, being a firm believer in the old adage 'horses for courses', he entrusted people he knew well to do much of the work.

Secondhand rear quarter panels and a section of chassis rail were sourced from Stevens Performance in Alabama, a company which runs a very useful Chrysler salvage yard. The quarter panels, measuring about nine feet long, were carefully removed from a donor car by drilling out all the factory spot welds. Other components, such as new rear leaf springs and replacement petrol tank, came from Chrysler specialist, Jim's Autoparts of Salem, New Hampshire.

One concession to modern motoring - with safety very much in mind - has been the conversion from drum to disc brakes using all-Chrysler components. An understandable modification.

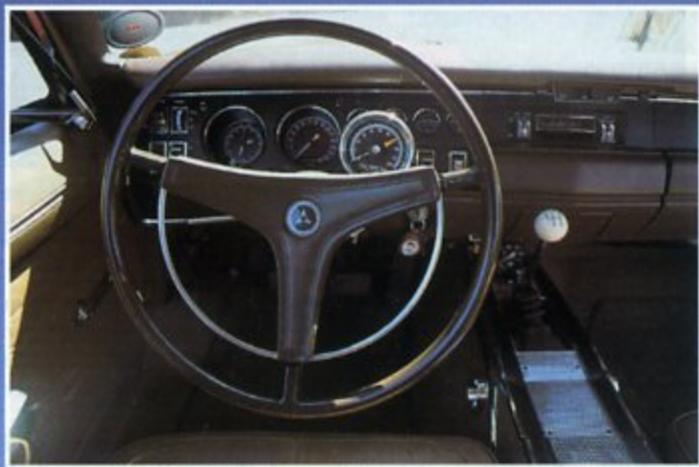
Once the Hemi-Charger's body repairs were completed, the

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ABOVE LEFT: AFTER ITS FULL RESTORATION, ALAN'S TOR RED BARRACUDA IS ONE OF THE CLEANEST - INSIDE AND OUT!

ABOVE RIGHT: THE 'CUDA'S 440 SIX-BARREL POWERPLANT PUMPS OUT 390HP, AS PER ORIGINAL SPECIFICATION



HAVING THOROUGHLY ENJOYED OWNING AND DRIVING THE 'CUDA, ALAN BECAME AN EVEN MORE DEDICATED FOLLOWER OF MOPAR MUSCLE AND, THOUGH HE THINKS OF HIS CAR'S SIX-BARREL ENGINE AS THE WORKING MAN'S HEMI, AT THE END OF THE DAY THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE FOR THE REAL THING.



THE '68 DODGE R/T 426 HEMI-CHARGER THAT NOW KEEPS THE 'CUDA COMPANY IN ALAN'S GARAGE

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bodyshell (both inside and out) and all panels were sprayed in Copper metallic two-pack (paint code T3, used only for one year) followed by clear lacquer.

Primarily a race engine, the Hemi (which was a \$648 option on the Charger; the basic price being \$3575) was totally rebuilt using mostly new parts, all balanced prior to installation. The engine was rebored +35 thou using a torque plate, the rebuild specification including Childs & Albert forged dome pistons, new valves and bronze sleeved guides, Mopar performance solid lifter cam, high-volume oil pump, aluminium water pump housing, Milodon low profile sump and cam gear drive, March under-driven pulleys, MSD 6AL ignition system and a set of polished Keith Black valve covers.

Alan decided to replace the twin four-barrel Carter carburetors in favour of a single four-barrel Holley



ABOVE: HEMI-CHARGER'S SERIOUS RENOVATION INCLUDED TWO COMPLETE NEW REAR QUARTERS

ABOVE LEFT: RESPRAY TAKES SHAPE, IN ORIGINAL COPPER METALLIC

ALAN RECKONS THE HEMI-CHARGER IS MORE OF A HANDFUL TO DRIVE THAN THE 'CUDA, THANKS TO ITS FOUR-SPEED MANUAL 'BOX, HURST SHIFTER, SEMI-METALLIC CLUTCH AND NO POWER STEERING

appropriately spent 426 man hours preparing and painting the body; and special thanks to Larry Shephard of Hemi's Only, Clinton, Ohio, for his advice on the Hemi rebuild and favourably priced parts. Alan reckons he couldn't have done it without you all – well done, guys! 🙌



750cfm D/P, supplied by Stateside race and street fuel system specialist, Barry Grant. This was done in order to make the car more user friendly for street use and to ensure simpler engine tuning. The steering and both front and rear suspension were all rebuilt using poly graphite bushes.

The interior received a new headlining, seat covers and carpets, while other trim bits and the seatbelts were all rejuvenated.

As with Alan's 'Cuda, the Hemi-Charger sports 8x15in. rims on the rear, shod with 275-70-15 tyres for maximum traction; up front are 7x15in. rims with 225-70-15 rubber.

The restoration was completed in November '97 and Alan is clearly delighted with the car, finished to the same superlative standards as the 'Cuda. Understandably, it attracted tremendous interest on the show circuit last year.

Alan reckons the Hemi-Charger is more of a handful to drive than the 'Cuda, thanks to its four-speed manual 'box, Hurst shifter, semi-metallic clutch and no power steering – but he still gets a real buzz every time he gets behind the wheel. The Hemi-Charger won Best of Show award and Best 'B' Bodied Car at last year's Mopar EuroNationals, and managed a 14.70 second run at 100mph over the quarter mile – not bad considering the engine had covered just 700 miles since its rebuild and was not fully run in. That time will come down, insists Alan.

Both the 'Cuda and the Hemi-Charger are two of the finest examples of Mopar muscle around, both of them a credit to Alan and the team responsible for the restoration work. Alan would like to express his thanks to all concerned, especially Tim Fennel and members of the Mopar Muscle Association; Malcolm Jay for his help with importing numerous parts from the States; Kevin Towser for refitting the glass and new vinyl roof on the Charger; Tom Newman who put the car back together again; Andy Jay who

