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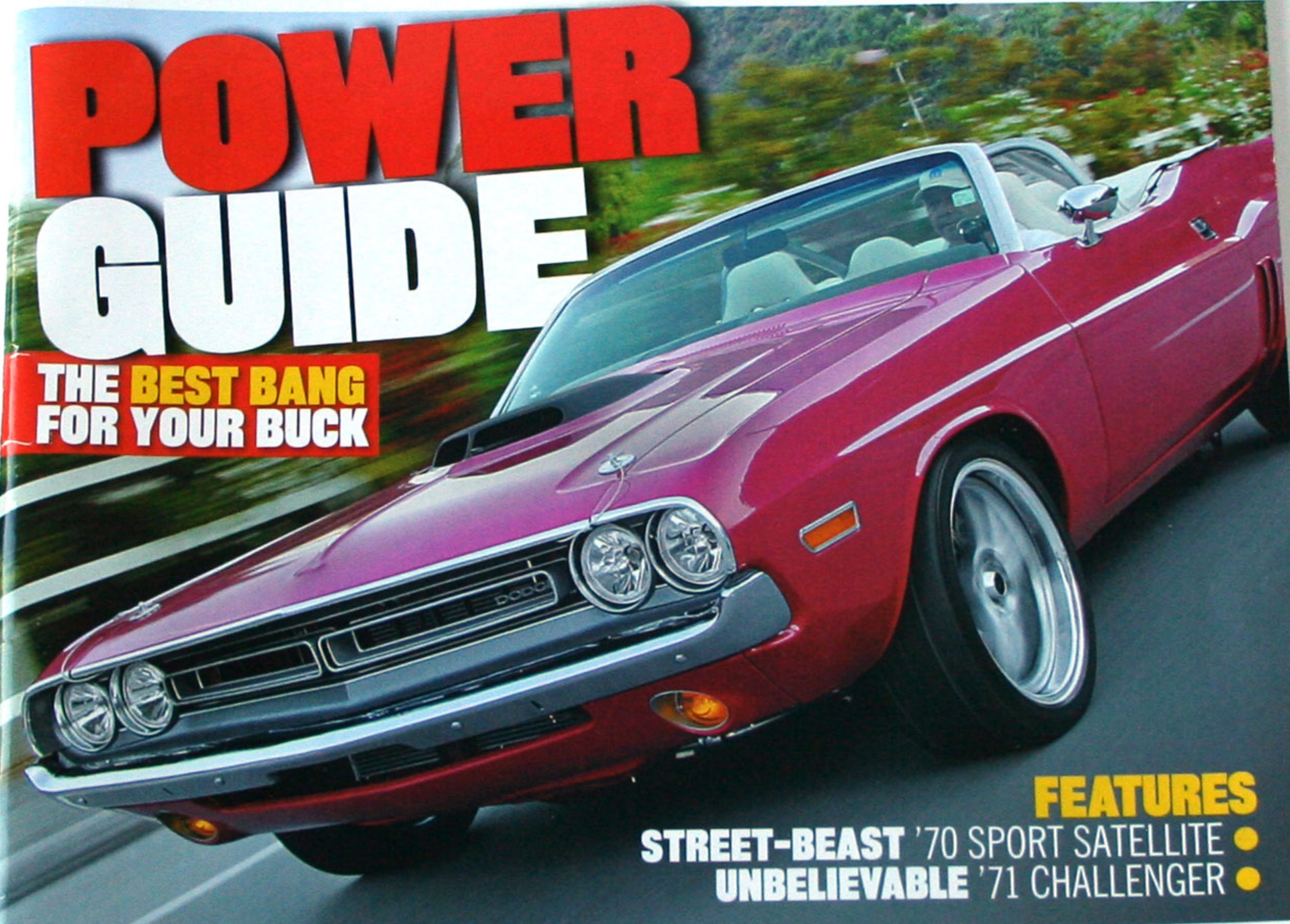
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POWER GUIDE

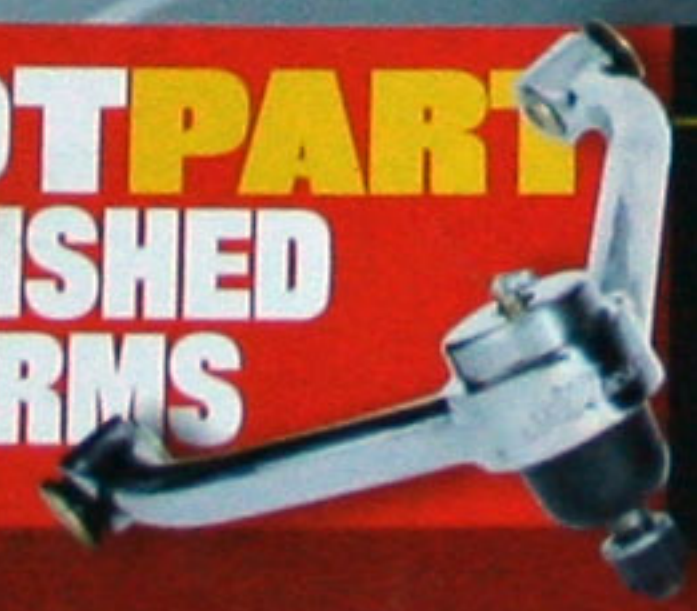
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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A PREVIOUS TECH
ARTICLE MEETS SHEETMETAL?

PHANTOM HEMI DROP-TOP

TEXT: SCOTT ROSS
PHOTOS: DREW PHILLIPS

If you know your E-Body history, then you know that only 2,165 Dodge Challenger convertibles rolled out of Hamtramck Assembly during the '71 model run. Factors such as high insurance costs for anything considered sporty, and air-conditioned hardtops and coupes—which led to dropping droptop sales across all of Ma Mopar's car platforms from the mid-'60s onward—are cited as reasons why the E-Body, and all of Chrysler's U.S. built car lines, went steel roofs only starting in 1972.

The majority of that last run of Challenger convertibles, some 1,800 or more, were built with engines better suited to grocery-getting than performance via the 225-inch Slant Six or the two-barrel-equipped 318. Meanwhile, fewer than 350 Challenger convertibles got either a 340 or



**"IT'S GOT A HEMI NOW . . .
A LITTLE TOO MUCH HEMI,
TO BE HONEST!" —ED STERNFELD**

...PHANTOM
HEMI DROP-TOP



Ed Sternfeld started with this well-worn B5 Blue drop-top when he began his Challenger project.



Gauges, Tremec shifter, and a FAST XFI computer from FAST Man EFI are joined by custom Cobra buckets and a Grant GT wheel. Cobra buckets and four-point rollbar add function to the Challenger's interior, though the bar might not meet LVMS rules if Ed turns 11.00 seconds or better in the quarter-mile.



383, and any engine bigger than that was N/A as a factory option in 1971.

Back in 2003, we did an article with the Richard Nedbal-built fuel-injected Hemi that now resides under the hood of this Challenger. Since then, plenty has gone on—and in—it. "It's a big roller engine with an all Stage V valvetrain. Rich's company, FAST Man EFI, decided to utilize a new computer, with traction and nitrous control," Ed Sternfeld says as he lists the updates added over the past five years. "We added a 150-shot of nitrous that enters the engine through a Holley Race NOSzle, which is the little blue thing you see below each injector." With a dual-quad intake, plus other go-fast goodies. "It first dynoed at 680 hp on Rich's dyno on pump gasoline. Plus there's the 150[hp]-shot of nitrous on top. We made some changes, and now, the way it's tuned, it's got a lot more timing advance in it

because of the E85 that it runs on. I figure it's pushing at least 700 before you get a hit of nitrous on it."

One upgrade did cause more than a few headaches during its fabrication and installation: a dual-pickup oiling system. "That just caused all kinds of nightmares after I'd done the engine in the car test-fit the other way. I could have murdered myself!" Ed says with a laugh.

Ed says that the deliberate pace that he took in building and updating this Challenger prevented what could have been a comedy of errors had this project been rushed—given how much of what went into it was custom-fabricated. "We took our time with it," Ed says. "When it was too hot, we didn't work on it."

Among the stuff that went in: a Keisler TKO 600 six-speed manual transmission and a dual-disc clutch; a Dana 60 rear end

wearing a set of monoleaf springs; and CalTrac traction bars. As Ed puts it, "There's no sound system in the car—the engine is the sound system!"

The Challenger's interior is quite the place to listen to that 528-inch "sound system," at any speed. It's done up in pink-and-white leather, and Ed says the back seat was customized to look like the special-ordered Cobra buckets up front.

Outside, the originally B5 Blue-hued ride had been a California car since new, so its sheetmetal was free of rust, as well as major collision damage. It, however, wore the scars and "sunburn" that come with the territory after that long in the Southern California sun (and parking lots). Once the old paint came off and the body was prepped for paint, on went the Panther Pink at a place where the people should know a thing or two about painting Mopars—the

body shop at Ed's own Dependable Dodge dealership.

Ed also says the choice of this particular inside-and-out color scheme was significant—in a big way. "The biggest things about the project were the body color and the interior," he says. "The ladies just go crazy for it, and they will probably let you spend your \$150,000 if you build a car they actually like!"

Now that it's been updated, Ed's been showing his '71 off around Southern California. "It took the Best of Show at the Spring Fling—that's our only all-Mopar meet out here in Southern California," says Ed. You'll see it this coming March in Las Vegas at Mopars At the Strip, where Ed says he'll show it and run it on The Strip at the Las Vegas Motor Speedway—as long as he can. "I'll probably get thrown off the track for running 11s without a full cage."



Just over 1,800 '71 Challenger convertibles were built with a Slant Six or a 318. This was one of them. A Shaker-style scoop is attached to the hood, yet shakes with the rest of the car when the Hemi fires up.

...PHANTOM
HEMI DROP-TOP

You saw this Rich Nedbal-prepped Hemi when our first story on this Challenger's engine ran in 2003. Since then, a new dual-quad intake and NOS 150-shot nitrous system have gone on.



FAST Man EFI's XFI computer adds traction control and engine management to Ed's Challenger.



Blue nozzles under each injector are Holley Race NOSzles, supplying each fuel injector with enough go-go gas to bump the Hemi's output from 700 hp to around 830 hp.



Multi-piece ROH wheels wear low-profile Nitto tires while fronting big Baer disc brakes.

With the updates to the Hemi, what's it like to drive? In a word, Ed says, it's a handful. "With the traction control, once you get out of first gear, it really takes over pretty well."

Meanwhile, Ed has another E-Body project in the works. "We just started on a '70 'Cuda AAR, and the XV Motorsports

[chassis] stuff for it should arrive shortly," he says. "That one will get a sound system!"

Should you luck out and find another survivor of that group of 1,800-plus non-340/383-powered '71 Challenger convertibles for a project car, Ed has this advice: "Build the engine last—don't build the engine first. Get the car ready; then build

the engine." He says that things can change too quickly when it comes to newly-available chassis and powertrain hardware, adding, "There are so many things that I would do differently on this car now."

Good advice . . . especially if the car in question has been waiting to rid itself of a 318 or Slant Six for almost 40 years.

FAST FACTS
'71 DODGE CHALLENGER
CONVERTIBLE
OWNED BY ED STERNFELD,
CANOGA PARK, CALIFORNIA

MOPAR POWER

ENGINE: You saw it here first in 2003—a Rich Nedbal-built 528-inch Hemi. It's since been treated to a new FAST XFI ITC (traction control) engine computer, a dual-quad intake, and an XFI-controlled 150-shot Nitrous Oxide Systems nitrous oxide injection system.

TRANSMISSION: Stock 904? Long gone—replaced by a Keisler-prepped Tremec TKO six-speed manual box behind a dual-disc clutch.

REAR END: The natural choice for a modified Hemi—a Dana 60, in this case Moser-built.

SURE GRIP

SUSPENSION: (Front) Stock-style torsion bars (Rear) Monoleaf rear springs with CalTrax traction bars.

BRAKES: Big Hemi power deserves big braking power, thanks to a set of big Baer discs at each corner.

WHEELS TIRES: Five-spoke, multi-piece ROH rims wear big Nitto NT555 "Extreme ZR" rubber, 235/40ZR18 in front, 295/35Z/18 in back.

HIGH IMPACT

BODY: Original '71 Challenger convertible unibody stripped to bare metal, restored and paint-prepped by Dependable Dodge's body shop, Canoga Park, California.

PAINT: Instead of another coat of OEM B5 Blue, it got M3 Panther Pink, sprayed on by Dependable Dodge's body shop.

INTERIOR: Custom-made Cobra front bucket seats and refurbished rear seat wear pink/white leather, as do the door panels. Other interior highlights include a chrome six-point rollbar, Grant GT steering wheel, Pro Comp gauges, and no sound system (other than the Hemi). **MM**

Fuel cell, NOS nitrous tank, and other hardware now occupy the Challenger's trunk.

