

MOPAR COLLECTOR'S GUIDE
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& RESTORATION
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Mopar

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**FOUND!
FIRST
'71 CONV. CUDA BUILT**



PG. 48

**FACTORY
SUPER STOCKER**



PG. 12

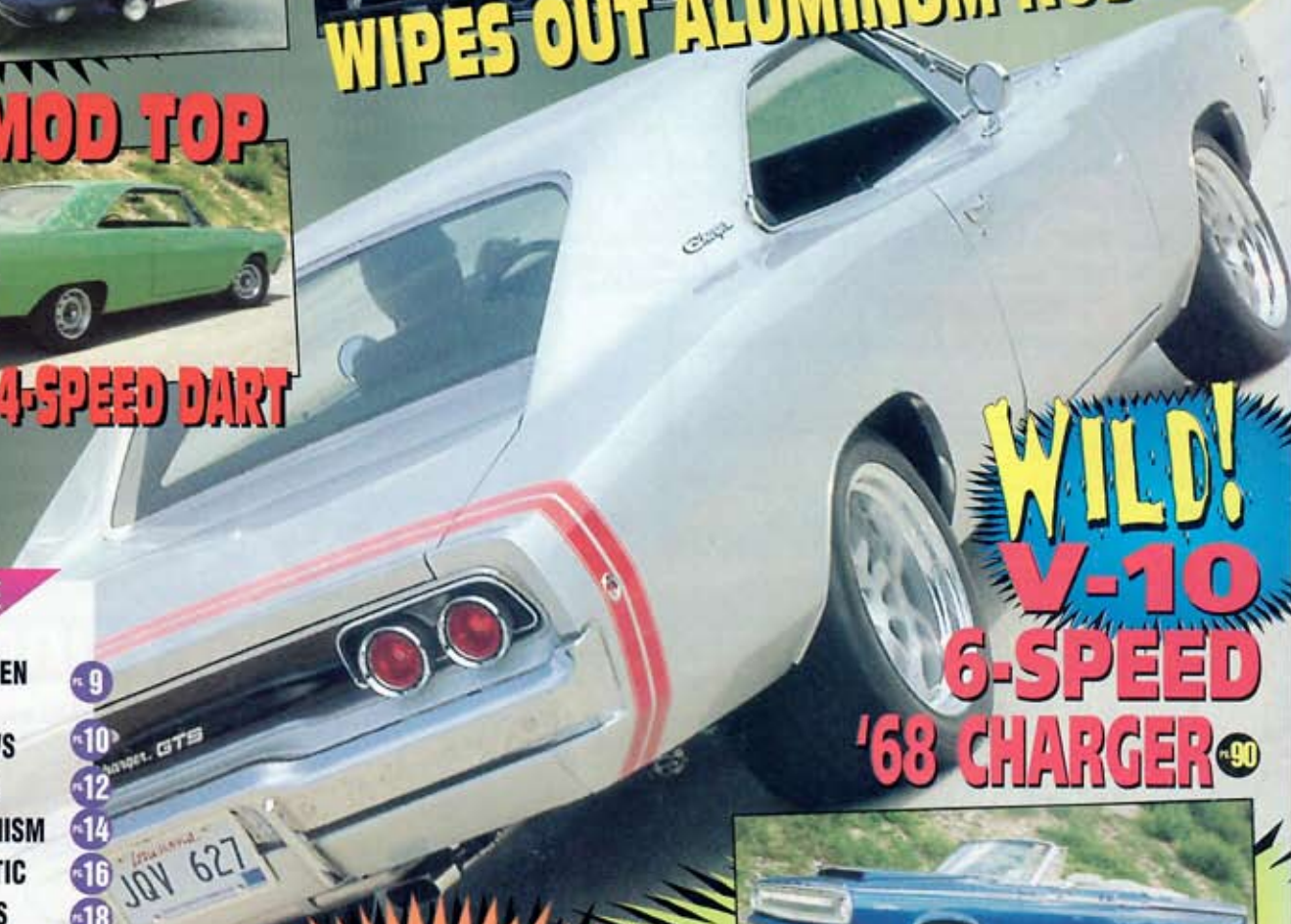
WIPES OUT ALUMINUM NOSE!

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340 4-SPEED DART



**WILD!
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GROOVY DODGE



by Randy Holden
photos by Robert Wolf



Top cars must have been all pretty much alike. Well, we were dead wrong.

Plymouth's Mod Top Barracudas of 1969 are the most widely known versions of this short-lived automotive phenomenon. The pale yellow Barracudas with the yellow flowered tops and interiors have been well documented over the years. As more attention was focused on muscle era Mopars, B-body '69 Satellites emerged wearing bluish flowered tops. The Satellites have been observed in both blue and white body colors. So, obviously, Plymouth offered the Mod Top on both B-body and A-body platforms. It never occurred to us that Dodge would have done the same thing. Actually, this hadn't occurred to many Mopar enthusiasts, as no Mod Top Dodge A-body had ever materialized.

This brings us to Rich Bellersy of Wasaga Beach, Ontario. Rich is a hard core Dodge Dart fanatic. While he's had a wide variety of Mopars through the years, Rich is genuinely infatuated with the smaller square Dodges. So, a little over two years ago, Rich spotted an ad in a local newspaper which read something to the effect of "1969 Dodge Dart

340", with little other information. Naturally, he made the call and was soon on his way to investigate.

What Rich had stumbled across was the classic example of an enthusiast who had lost interest in a restoration project. Laying before Rich was a largely disassembled '69 Dart Swinger wearing a recent Hemi Orange paint job and a black vinyl top. This in itself was enough to pique his interest, and even though the paint job was far from finished, things looked like they had gotten off to a good start. Being a real numbers kinda guy, Rich turned his attention to the fender tag in the empty engine bay. This is when Rich had to do his greatest job of holding back his astonishment. There, plainly printed on the tag was an unusual code, "VIH", along with the paint code of "F6". It was all he could do to keep his jaw from falling onto the fender! A Mod Top Dart Swinger? Needless to say, a deal was arranged on the spot.

Once the Dart was carted home, the research began. It appears the Dart had been sold new in Pennsylvania and spent most of its life near the car mecca of Carlisle. Some years back, a Mopar fanatic in Kingston, Ontario,

DART

1 OF 50 MOD TOP DART SWINGER!



The most difficult part of restoring a car such as this is obviously in getting new top material. No reproductions of the rare green floral material exist, but fate was kind and a roll of original 1969 dated NOS material was located in California. According to sources in the know, the material used in the Dart's restoration may very well have been the last surviving roll of NOS material!

bought the mostly original Dart and took it north. This fellow then sold it to the man whom Rich bought the car from, and immediately regretted selling the car. As the still green Dart was being loaded up, the new owner announced his intention of changing the car's color scheme to a more conventional orange and black.

Rich spent the better part of his first year of ownership gathering parts and information. The fender tag was authenticated by Galen Govier, who also presented Rich with the information that according to Dodge records, some fifty Mod Top '69 Dodge Dart Swingers had been built, but only two are currently known to exist, and the other example is unrestored and in poor condition.

Of course, restoring a car this unusual and rare has its difficult moments. The most difficult was finding new vinyl top material. No one reproduces this stuff, and finding original material is akin to hunting for unicorns. Then, by sheer chance, a telephone call to California led Rich to the find of a lifetime. Years before purchasing the Dart, Rich had found a small piece of the green Dodge

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Aside from the color and the floral top, the rest of the Swinger is very businesslike. The little 340 still rumbles away as smooth as it did in 1969. Take note there are no power options on the engine to drag the horsepower numbers down.



Mod Top material (we're talking a little sample piece) and bought it as a curiosity. Describing the swatch of vinyl to an associate in California, the man proclaimed with some surprise that he had recently been approached by a gentleman who said he had some green flowered vinyl material in his garage. Not knowing what it was or what to do with it, he had passed on looking into the matter.

As luck would have it, the man still had the material tucked away in his garage; where it had been since new in 1969! Through sheer luck and clean living, Rich found a small stash of NOS 1969 Dodge Mod Top material in an individual's garage half a continent away! Naturally, he bought every scrap of the stuff and when it arrived, he was thrilled to find the flowered vinyl in like-new condition and date coded on the backside "3-69"!

In May of 2001, all was ready for the full bore restoration. Working on his homemade rotisserie in his garage, Rich stripped the Dart down to its bare bones and started from scratch. All the orange paint was stripped off to reveal a remarkably clean body, with only the trunk floor pan needing replacement; other than that, everything you're looking at is factory sheet metal.

The original 340 was rebuilt to stock specs and the factory four speed torn into and freshened up to ensure its longevity. The original 3.23 Sure Grip rear was likewise gone through to complete the driveline's rejuvenation.

A black Legendary interior was installed to bring the Dart up to show standards, and then the precious green flowered material

was installed. Unlike Plymouth, Dodge did not offer the flowered material in their cars' interiors. All Dodge Mod Tops currently known have black or white vinyl interiors.

Rich completed the restoration literally the day before the All Chrysler Nationals at Carlisle last summer. He packed up the car and wife Sandy and headed for the state of his car's origin. Since there were still a number of small detail items to work out, Rich was very surprised when the flower power Swinger took second

place in its class in the tough Carlisle judging.

Since the Swinger's debut at Carlisle, more detailing has taken place and over 1,700 miles have been rolled up on the odometer! Being a Dart fanatic and owning the only known restored Mod Top 340 Swinger is a serious thrill for Rich, and he's got no intentions of letting this one get away. Other cars may come and go in his collection, but we'd be greatly surprised if this green bit of history leaves Ontario anytime in the near future! ☼

