

DEEP PURPLE



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Photos by: Rob Wolf
Photographed @ MCACN
Rosemount, IL

The MCACN event in Chicago has a well-known tradition for bringing out the best of the very best, along with the fascinating barn finds, and just about everything in between. The 2022 event might well have been the very best in terms of the cars there, the quality, and the variety. And among the machines that debuted at MCACN 2022 was this 1968 Hemi Dart Super Stocker, that's the pride-and-joy of Dave Dixon from Wisconsin. Along with a whole lot of other people, we looked this thing over seriously hard and, having been doing MCG since 1988, and seemingly having seen almost all of the '68 Hemi Super Stockers known to exist, this one had gone completely under the radar, and we can honestly say this is probably the most

intensely correct and over-the-top restored '68 Hemi Super Stocker in the country. That's a very big statement given how precious these cars are and how many hours so many owners have spent restoring them, but Dave Dixon and Troy Angelly, of T/A Restorations in Illinois, turned the knobs on this one up to "eleven." MCACN was the first time anyone has seen this car since around 1974, and if you want to grasp why we're saying this car is intense; they duplicated the exact factory colors on the springs inside the brake drums and recreated the odd goldish lacquer finish the brake shoes themselves have on them, along with all the other anodized and painted finishes in there. They spent weeks getting the insides of the brake drums restored to factory OEM appearance and

used mostly NOS and mint original parts doing so. You tell us, how many OEM Gold cars have that much attention paid to parts that no judge is ever going to see? All of which leads to the obvious, the parts you can see are so incredibly accurate and painstakingly restored, this little Dart is almost beyond belief.

We'll begin this particular story with Dave Dixon; a most unlikely Hemi Super Stock guru if there ever was one. Dave is a retired auto shop teacher in Wisconsin, and he spent decades of his life turning kids into mechanics and creating countless hundreds of gearheads through his decades of teaching. During all that, as muscle cars were gaining popularity in the eighties and nineties, one of his students was fascinated with the 1968 Hemi Super Stock Darts and Barracudas,

DART

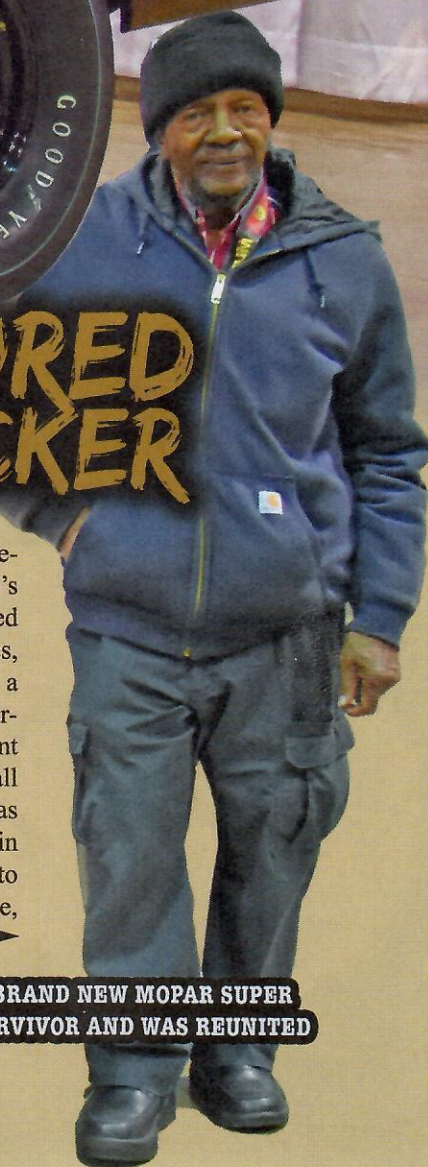
HALL & WILLIAMS
CLEVELAND, OHIO

IMPECCABLE RESTORED '68 HEMI SUPER STOCKER

which up until that time, Dave hadn't known existed. His enthusiasm was contagious as he talked about these cars all the time, and years after he graduated, he began running down the histories of these cars, he studied the histories of the individual cars, began wheeling and dealing parts for them, and created one of his own. The more Dave thought about these cars, and followed his former student's passion for these cars, the more he found himself fascinated with them, finally so much so that he wanted one. Being an average everyday guy, launching into the search for a legit fac-

tory 1968 Hemi Super Stocker isn't something that usually happens when someone's retired and much of their income is derived from a retired teacher's salary. Nevertheless, Dave told his former student to give him a call if he ever found one that could be purchased for anything near a halfway decent price. Much to Dave's surprise, that call came in 2004, and he was informed there was a somewhat derelict factory '68 Hemi Dart in Cleveland, Ohio, and as so often turns out to be the case, the car was sitting in a garage,

HALL & WILLIAMS WERE THE ONLY AFRICAN AMERICAN RACE TEAM TO GET A BRAND NEW MOPAR SUPER STOCKER BACK IN 1968. JEROME WILLIAMS, PICTURED HERE, IS THE SOLE SURVIVOR AND WAS REUNITED WITH THE CAR THIS YEAR AT MCACN.





NOTICE THE LATE SIXTIES VINTAGE PRESTOLITE REV LIMITER BOLTED TO THE DRIVER'S SIDE VALVE COVER, AND HE EVEN HAS THE TINY "THROW-AWAY" AIR CLEANERS AND AIR FILTERS THAT CAME WITH THESE CARS WHEN NEW, WHICH ARE EXTRAORDINARILY RARE BECAUSE EVERYBODY DID JUST THAT; THEY THREW THEM AWAY!

less than five miles from Dave's mother's house!

He arrived to find a semi-disassembled mess (to put things kindly), but it was a semi-disassembled mess that had an affordable price tag because things were something of a mess. The car had been largely taken apart many years before but was still sitting on some old racing tires, it had been updated and modified many times through the years and the engine was out, but a big Hemi was sitting in the garage with the Dart that was part of the deal. So, knowing he wasn't going to get a chance like this again, Dave Dixon wrote the check and they gathered up all the pieces and parts, putting the rolling body on a trailer, and hauled everything back to his home in Wisconsin where the task

of figuring out exactly what he'd bought truly began. This also became the time when his infatuation with the history of this particular car began, and thankfully for the entire hobby, that paid off in spades.

As Mopar folks, we've all heard the tale of how hard it was to get one of the precious 100 factory Super Stock Hemi cars that were converted and finished up over at Hurst in Detroit; fifty Barracudas, fifty Dodge Darts. It has long been the company line that those cars went to high-profile racers of the day, and you had to be in very good standing with Chrysler to have a shot at one of these factory-prepped made-for-racing machines. With the Barracudas, that may have been the case, but with this car, we've now heard of two people who simply went to their local



Dodge dealership and bought a Hemi Dart, with no particular connection or major name recognition of which to speak. In this case, it was Jerome Williams and his friend, Thornton Hall, two longtime drag racers in Cleveland who had read all the hype about the Hurst/Chrysler Hemi cars and wanted in on the action. They went down to Ed Goldie Dodge on Euclid Avenue in beautiful downtown Cleveland one fine day and put in an inquiry about buying one. Phone calls were exchanged, a deposit was placed, and a few weeks later, Jerome and Thornton were at Hurst in Detroit picking up their gray-primer Hemi Dart, just like everyone else had to do. Theirs was a four-speed car, and they

because they simply didn't run good. Hall and Williams had an invaluable ally in the famed Ted Spehar up in the Detroit area. Ted reportedly helped them build that first Hemi and get the car set up, so before the 1968 season was over, the Dart was on the track wearing Candy Apple Red paint with both guys sharing the driving chores.

During the off-season, prior to the 1969 racing season, Thornton wanted the Dart to really stand out from the crowd, and so it was that the car received an incredible deep purple metal flake paint job, with pearl white painted flanks and subtle spider webbing done all over the white sides. Keeping the lettering classy and simple, the "Hall & Williams"

'Cuda drag car, and so began the descent into obscurity that besets so many drag cars. The Dart traded hands a couple of times, never leaving the Cleveland area, it was "updated" several times, but by some miracle, the Hemi it had run as a Pro Stock car stayed with it, along with the original factory four-speed crash box. This brings us to 2004 when Dave Dixon brought it all home and began sorting things out.

Thankfully, the Dart's history had remained with it as well, and that logically led Dave to try and find out if Jerome Williams and Thornton Hall were still around. Unfortunately, Thornton had passed away a few years before, but Jerome was alive (and still is) and kick-



proudly hauled it home to Cleveland to begin the transformation work to put this new toy on the track asap. What makes this doubly interesting that a pair of "outsiders" landed one of these cars is a little fact that Jerome and Thornton are African Americans; to our knowledge, the only black racing team that got one of the Hemi Super Stockers new. That interesting trivia aside, the guys were fairly well known in the Upper Midwest, and as with all of the '68 Hemi Super Stockers, the cars had been slapped together quickly and we've never heard anyone say they ran good right out of the box, most had to have their Hemis rebuilt immediately

name was applied in gold leaf to the doors, and the car merged continuing to run in SS/B in 1969, and the new paint guaranteed that it would be a frequently photographed car (which paid off for Dave Dixon). Hall and Williams made a major change in 1970, switching the Dart up a bit, installing a larger stroker motor Hemi with a tunnel ram, and they began racing it in the brand-new Pro Stock class. They continued to race the Dart until somewhere around 1973, by which time it was aging itself out of their desired classes, so they sold it to another Cleveland local who pulled the engine and transmission out and stuck it in a '70

ing in Cleveland, and he was thrilled to hear their old Dart had survived. He and Dave became fast friends overnight, the information and stories started flying back and forth, and Dave began a parts-finding quest that would last for the better part of the next ten years. He also got in touch with longtime track photographer Charles Gilbert out of Cleveland, and Charles proved an invaluable contact, sending Dave a bunch of photos he'd taken of the car in the pits and launching off the starting line virtually throughout its entire career on the track, so that allowed Dave almost a month-by-



month look at how the car changed and evolved during its heyday.

When you're acquiring parts for a factory Super Stocker, you tend to run into a lot of the same people over and over again regarding parts and information because it's a rather tightly-knit bunch of enthusiasts who own them or know a lot about them. Jim Kramer, of Kramer Automotive Specialties, became a "go-to" source for parts and information, and Dave got to know just about everybody still alive who originally had raced these things, and upon hearing what he was embarking on, the veteran

racers proved to be the biggest sources for leftover legit 1960s parts to put the Dart back into exactly "as raced" condition. Early on in the process, once he saw the photos of what the Dart had looked like, Dave became obsessed with putting the car back exactly as it had been. A lot of people restore old race cars, but when we tell you Dave Dixon took it to another level, believe us, the boy took authenticity to the extreme with this one.

As the years passed and the parts piled up, it finally came time to start the actual work. The Dart had suffered a fair amount of battle scars through the

years, the quarters had been cut, she'd been caged and updated, and the floor was a mess, thanks to a long-ago clutch explosion and another occasion where it had dropped the driveshaft and it punch its way through the floor pan! She needed a lot of work if Dave's vision was going to be realized, and that brought Dave to Troy Angelly of T/A Restorations in Illinois. Having seen his expertise in panel replacement, Dave knew Troy was the man for the job, so around 2016, the Dart was packed over to Troy's shop where the off-and-on restoration finally began. Doing the car on an

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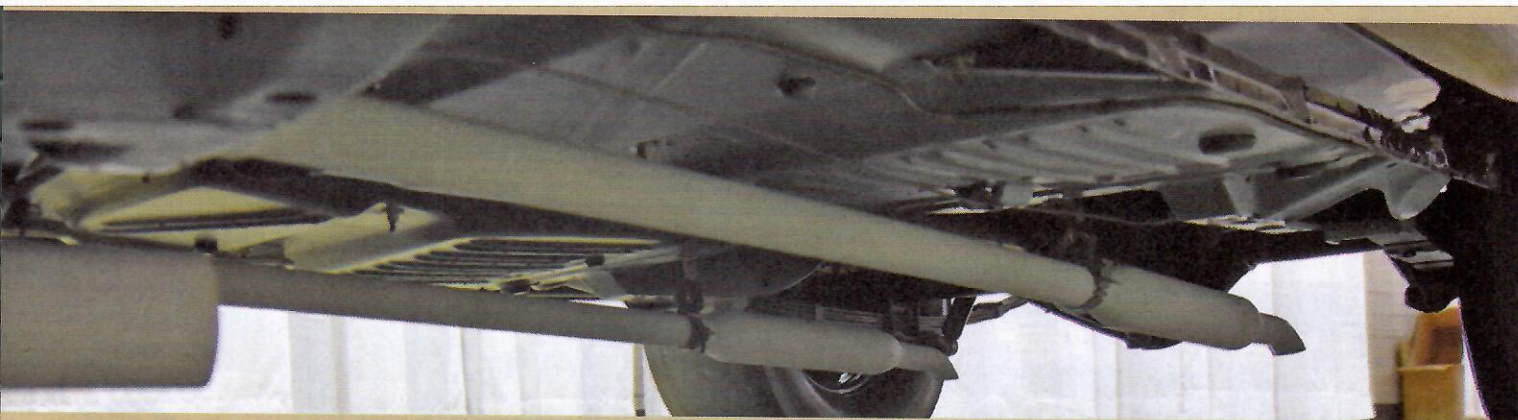
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THERE IS AN ORIGINAL EXHAUST SYSTEM HANGING UNDER THE DART, AN ITEM THAT WAS USUALLY THROWN AWAY WHEN THE CARS WERE FAIRLY NEW, WHICH THE FACTORY PUT ON THESE CARS TO COMPLY WITH THE LAW AT THAT TIME. EVEN RARER THAN THAT, DAVE HAS THE PAIR OF SMALL SLIP-ON BRASS ADAPTORS (SHOWN LEFT) THAT HURST MADE FOR THESE CARS TO CONNECT THE SUPER BASIC EXHAUST SYSTEM TO THE HEADERS.

average guy's salary, it wasn't a rush job, but both Dave and Troy were obsessed with getting every little detail right.

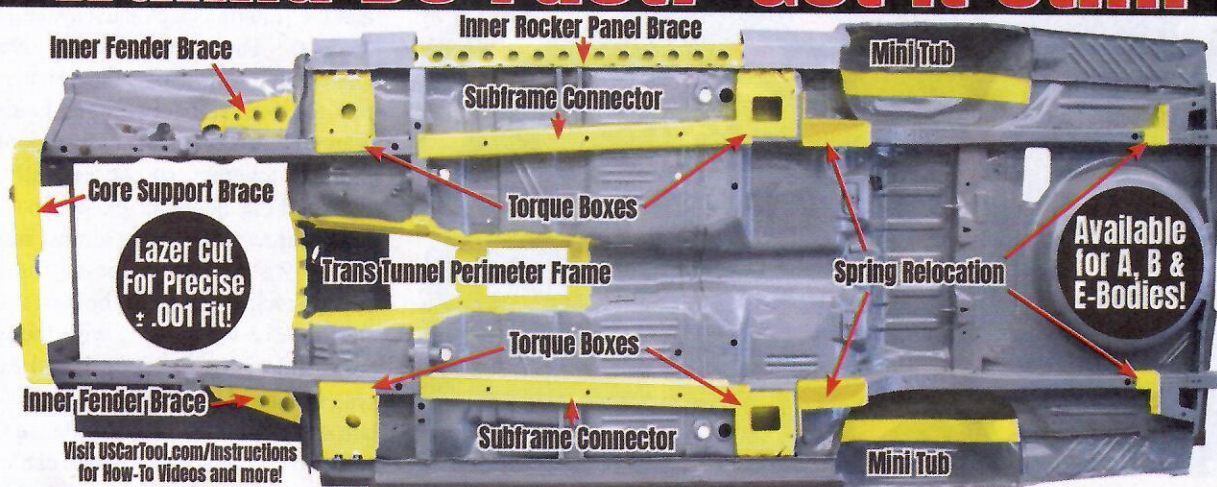
The Hemi in this one is actually the Hemi it raced with as a Pro Stocker, minus the tunnel ram of course. Opel Engineering built the 486" Hemi back to race specs, using most of its vintage internals, which include a Kellogg crank, 12.5:1 domed pistons, and vintage light-weight Chrysler rods. Interestingly, this

is a '68 iron Hemi block, and the heads are '68 as well, dated one month after the casting date on the block! Dave's parts hunting paid some major dividends with the engine (and everything else), as you'll notice a late sixties vintage Prestolite rev limiter bolted to the driver's side valve cover, and he even has the tiny "throw-away" air cleaners and air filters that came with these cars when new, which are extraordinarily rare

because everybody did just that; they threw them away! The Hemi punched out 625 horses on the dyno, which is plenty enough and probably as much or more than it made back in 1970. The four-speed was rebuilt, along with the original Dana 60 which holds 4.88 gears.

T/A Restorations massaged the body back to its completely stock configuration, and the Dart still has its original

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acid-dipped doors, fiberglass front end, and all the original Corning glass lightweight windows are still in place. Thanks to some of the original purple paint still being present inside the deck lid, that gave Troy a spot-on method of matching the gorgeous 1969 paint scheme, and Troy himself applied the new "Purple Flake" paint, then worked on the blinding pearl white panels on the side, then did the spider webbing, which

doesn't show up well in the photos, but believe us, it makes a huge impression when you see the car in person. They brought in John Shepherd to do the gold leaf lettering on the doors and tail panel, which was all done by hand, just as it was back in 1969. But it's the details on this one that makes it an over-the-top killer.

Dave has an original exhaust system hanging under the Dart (again an item that was usually thrown away when

the cars were fairly new), which the factory put on these cars to comply with the law at that time. Even rarer than that, he has the pair of small slip-on brass adaptors that Hurst made for these cars to connect the super basic exhaust system to the headers. They just slide on over the headers and you shove the exhaust pipe into the backside – nothing holds this assembly together except just jamming the parts together, so consequently, very few of these adaptors exist, since most racers threw them away almost immediately. We've seen a lot of '68 Hemi Super Stockers through the years, this is the first one we've seen with these little pipes and with a factory original exhaust system hanging under it. The car has a late sixties vintage Hurst shifter in it with a line-lock, it has a late sixties cable drive tachometer on the dash, and the rear wheels are the ultra-rare factory Chrysler wheels specially made for these cars, which are only 15x6s, but they have a very strange offset making them look larger, and those rear tires are original late sixties Goodyear blue stripe eleven-inch slicks that Dave found with a former racer who had put them away when they only had a couple of passes on them! The carbs are '68 dated carbs and are correct



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for the S/S cars, the lightweight seat frames are originals, as are the little A-100 bucket seats, and Troy even went so far as to spend countless hours cleaning off the original crash box transmission so that the paint markings put on it in 1968 are there to this day. Every little paint splotch and grease pencil mark was duplicated, they redid all the Cosmoline-coated parts to look factory correct, and as we mentioned before, they even redid the insides of the brake drums with all the factory correct colors and finishes on all the parts. Honestly, if Dave could have found air from 1968, he would've had that pumped into the tires!

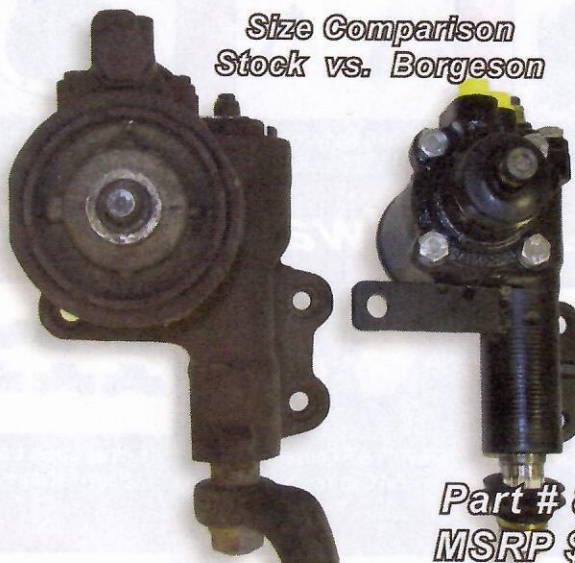
The whole project was finished just a few weeks before MCACN 2022, and the car was included in Jim Kramer's retro racers display, where Dave and Troy happily unveiled the Dart, and making it all that much better, Jerome Williams was on-hand to be reunited with his former race car, which he hadn't seen since 1973! Needless to say, it was an emotional day and everybody who knows '68 Super Stockers spent a whole lot of time looking this one over, and nobody had anything negative to say about it. Most everybody we heard was agreeing with us, that this is probably the most "authentically" restored '68 Hemi S/S car out there, which was extremely gratifying to Dave and Troy since they'd put so much blood, sweat, and tears (and cash) into making the car look and act just as it was when on the track in early 1969.

Now that the reveal is in the

rearview, Dave tells us he's hoping to bring the Dart to Carlisle in 2023 and also to some of the bigger Mopar shows, and he wants to bring it back to Cleveland to show it and make some events at the track there so Jerome and his family can relive their glory years with the car and reunite it with all the old timers still in the area who remember the car. Best of all, this incredible Dart proves that you don't have to be a multi-millionaire to have an absolute

dream car or a machine that stops traffic at the most prestigious muscle car event on the planet. Dave's garage isn't overrun with other expensive Mopars or muscle cars, it's pretty much just this one. And it all started because a student in his shop class was obsessed with these things. Sometimes, the road from there to here is seriously winding and strange, but Dave Dixon is extremely grateful that kid turned him onto these things. ✖

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