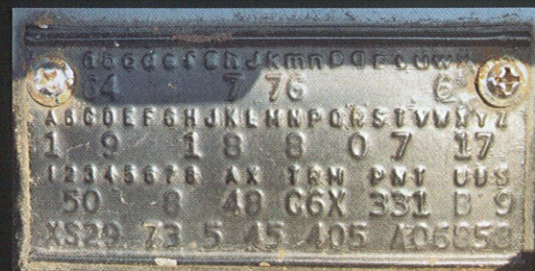


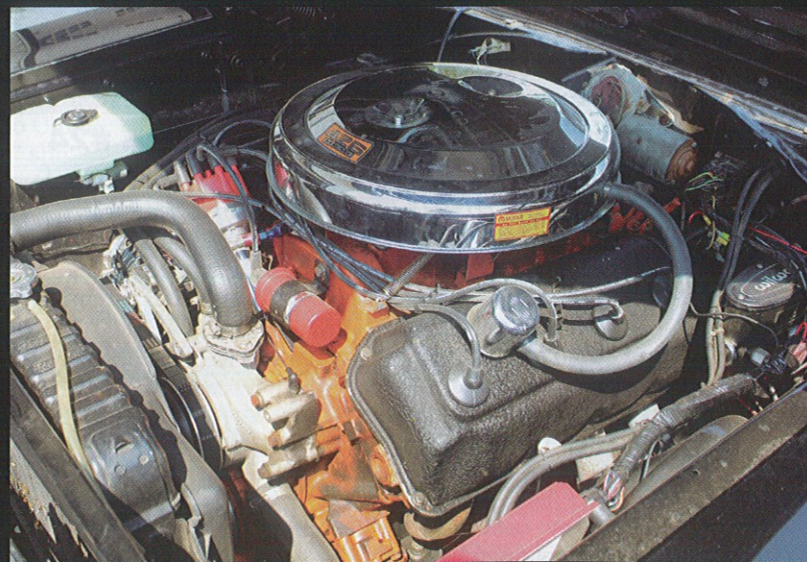


HEMI HOMECOMING

Photos/story by Cliff Guinand



The second from the bottom line on the body plate includes the axle info 48 which codes out to an 8.75 differential with 3.23:1 sure-grip, C6x - Black interior, 331 paint...a spring only Bright Red colour. The bottom line of the 1968 Dodge Charger R/T body plate breaks down as (XS29) — 2-door HT, (73) — V8 426 2-4bbl, (5) — 3 speed Auto, (45) — F70-15 Red Line tires, (405) — April, 5, 1968, (A05853) number production sequence.



Panchyshyn believes the interior is all original and if so it's in amazing condition for a 54-year-old muscle car.

There's always something heartwarming about someone or something returning home after a prolonged absence. Disney made numerous TV shows and movies with some poor family pet making a trek across the country to return home to sobbing owners. Maybe nobody was sobbing when this '68 Hemi Charger R/T returned to Alberta after almost 40 years in the US, but Hoser Mopar fans might get a few goosebumps.

While south of the border, this Hemi Charger took a bit of abuse and was owned by a retired NFL player but managed to return to Canada pretty much intact. From the pics here you may say 'well, it doesn't look too, too bad'. For the most part you are right, as the odometer recorded just over 82,000 miles in its 54 years. It's even managed to retain its factory installed Hemi and 727 TorqueFlite automatic. A lot of neat things are just under the surface of this rare Hemi Charger R/T, literally.

Despite the shiny black paint, this car originally rolled off the assembly line with spring-of-1968-only 331 Bright Red paint. Some called it Charger Red, or Performance Red but everybody calls it a super rare paint code.

This Hemi Charger is now owned by Sturgeon County, AB's Lorne Panchyshyn and while all Hemi cars are somewhat rare, this one is truly unique. Firstly, it is one of only 475 Hemi Charger R/Ts built in '68, the first and some might say best year of the second generation Chargers.

Panchyshyn was raised around the family business, Badger Auto & Truck, so his car passion was somewhat inevitable. His dad, Vic Panchyshyn, was a car guy and while he sold Badger Auto & Truck in the '80s, he stayed in the car business, moving and starting Aero-tique and then Lorne started Muscle 'n More. Vic passed away in 2021 but Lorne is carrying on the family tradition.

At 15 years old, Panchyshyn fell in love with the 2nd-

gen Chargers and built a red '68 383 Charger to get him to high school and most likely into a lot of mischief after school. After graduating he sold the Charger but, as just about everyone reading this can attest, we almost all regret selling that 'first' car because it was packed with great memories.

Though the first generation '66 Charger was a sales hit — introduced mid-year it sold more than 37,000 units — sales inexplicably dropped to just under 16,000 for the '67 Charger. Luckily the 2nd generation Charger would save the Dodge B-Body day.

Development of the '68 Charger began in late 1964 under the direction of design chief Bill Brownlie, Dodge studio manager Charles Mitchell and head of B-Body development Frank Ruff. The design team was led by Richard Sias and included, among others, Diran Yazejian and Harvey Winn.

Automotive journalists would describe the '68 Charger's curvy side profile as akin to a Coke bottle laid on its side. The "Coke bottle" design, along with the flying buttress style rear window design — a concession to Brownlee's desire to keep the Charger a fastback — was a sales sensation. Chrysler executives expected to at least double the 1967 Charger sales numbers but the '68 Charger sold more than 96,000 units. To keep up with demand, Chrysler had to tool-up their St. Louis plant to keep pumping out more Chargers.

The Magnum 440 V8 was the standard engine in the 1968 Charger R/T and of course the 426 Hemi was an option. In '68 17,587 Charger R/Ts moved out of dealerships.

Of the 475 Hemi versions, 211 came equipped with 4-speeds and 264 with the Torqueflite automatic. The 4-speed versions were backed by a Dana 60 with 3:55 gears and the automatics got the 8 3/4 with a standard 3.23 gear ratio. Optional gearing was available.