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FACTORY LIGHTWEIGHT
1964 HEMI DODGE

BACK FROM THE DEAD
HURRICANE SUPERBIRD



JUNE 2025

HOLLYWOOD MOPAR STAR CARS



After doing this magazine for thirty-six years, one would think one's seen just about everything there is to see. This is why, when something completely unexpected comes along, we get really stoked about it, and by the time you've finished reading this, we'll bet you'll be pretty darned stoked about these ultra-strange public relations '70 Challenger R/T convertibles, which enjoyed a brief, but glorious, stint as a Hollywood celebrity. We could start in half a dozen places with this tale, but we'll start with its two most recent owners and the previously unknown story that continues to evolve around the car.

We'll start with Steve Vanderschaaf, the convert's previous owner, and then bring you up to speed with his close friend and pres-

ent owner, Carl Bischel. Our story begins when Steve was but a high school kid in Huntington Beach, California, right after the height of the muscle car wars. The school's parking lot was strewn with hot rods, mag wheels, rumbling exhaust pipes, and burnouts leaving the school were more frequent than not. And, through all this, Steve was ahead of his time, cruising to school in a 1969 Toyota Corona! Honestly, when was the last time you saw one of those things? During those years of self-discovery, one of Steve's best friends had a '69 Charger with a warmed-over 440 in it that was a terror on the weekends, and Steve fell in love with that car. Within a few years, he bought that Charger, which was a drastic change from the Corona, and Steve was well on his way to becoming a street rac-

ing fanatic and all-around speed freak. Just before all this happened, a red-on-red Challenger convertible ended up for sale at Huntington Beach Dodge (which ironically was where the car was delivered new), in the later part of 1973. A younger gent, who was a photographer, decided it was the perfect vehicle to run around in and haul camera equipment everywhere and, since it was a convertible, he could even set up cameras on tripods and have them ready to go, using the car itself as a platform for taking pics. He didn't think much about the color combo because, after all, it was 1973 and that was when the initial round of dumping muscle cars and trading them in really started ramping up as the Arab Oil Embargo hit. So, this

PUBLIC RELATIONS RED OVER RED 383 CHALLENGER R/T CONVERTIBLE

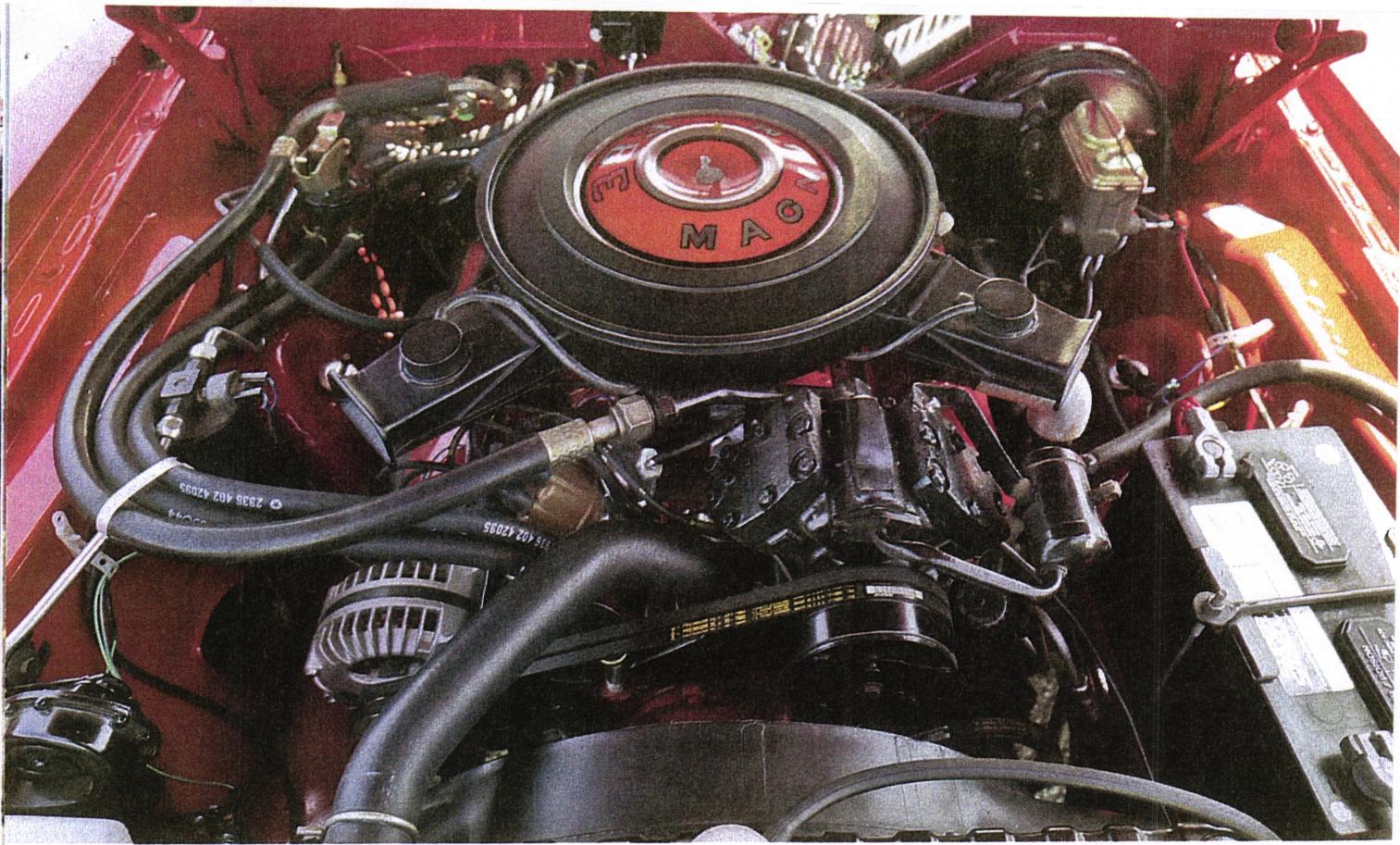
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Photos by: Rob Wolf
Photographed @ Spring Fling
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1970 DODGE CHALLENGER R/T



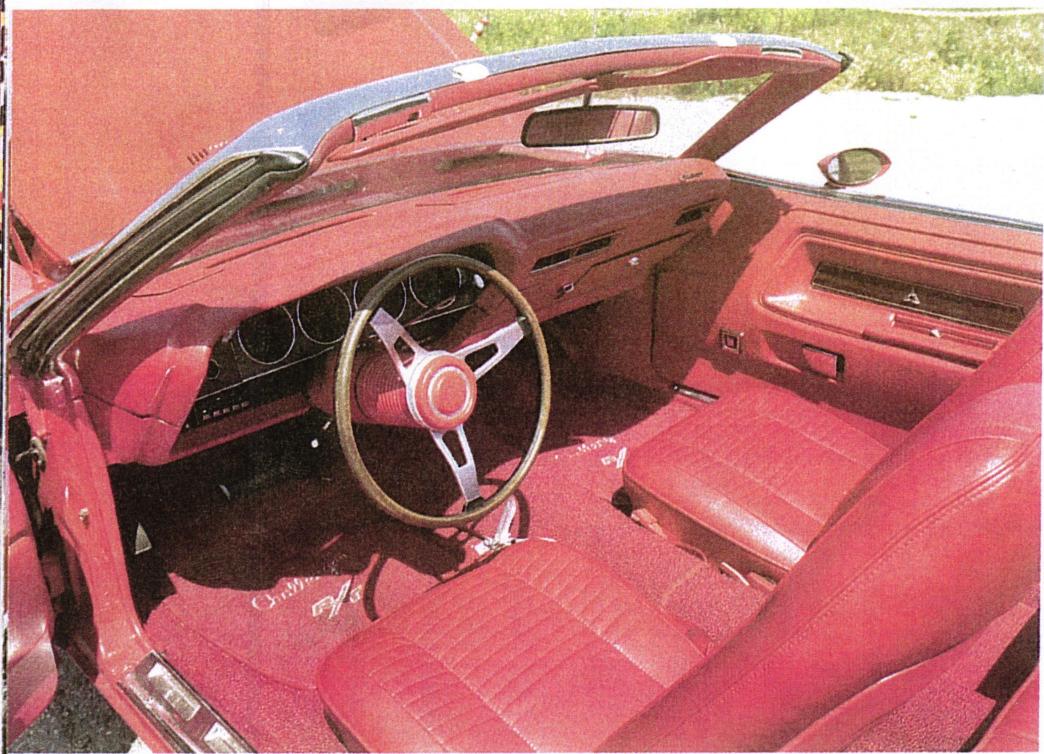
photographer guy across town got the convert, and shortly after that, Steve left the Toyota behind for a hot rod '69 Charger.

Things moved quickly and the photographer who bought it in 1973 soon found the convertible to be a rather impractical car, so he sold it back to Huntington Beach Dodge, and around 1975, that's where owner #2 came along and picked up the convert for very little cash. Being a younger fellow, he drove the R/T quite enthusiastically, often putting his foot well into the carb on the original 383. So much so that, by 1977, the R/T was reasonably worn out, and once again, it went up for sale. A friend of a friend told young Steve Vanderschaaf about it, and as he was looking to get shy of the bigger Charger and wanted something smaller, he went to have a look. Honestly, Steve tells us today he was bummed to see it was a convertible because he wanted a Challenger hardtop! The car was indeed tired, the motor ran but it wasn't a fire-breather, and with the odd color combo and it being in reasonably distressed condition, it wasn't doing a whole lot for him. Negotiations con-

tinued that day, however, and when the seller dropped the price to \$1,200, Steve couldn't say no anymore! As incredible as that sounds, Steve paid the \$1,200 for this car and drove it home! While they were signing things over, the youthful seller tossed out one interesting thing that had occurred not long after he'd bought it. He came out of a parking lot and the country singer, Glen Campbell, was standing there looking at the car! That was in Glen Campbell's heyday, so naturally, this got the guy's attention. On reaching the car, Glen smiled at him and motioned to the car, "You know that's the old Mod Squad convertible, don't you?" This was before the days of VHS tapes or DVDs or any of that, so while the kid had heard of the show, there was no way to look it up and see if the television show car did look like this. Glen talked for a few minutes about the car and was then on his way, how he would've known this information remains a mystery to this day, as he had no apparent connections with the show. The only plausible theory is that perhaps he knew something of the car's ownership before it ended up on the car lot in

1973. But who knows? Either way, both Steve and the seller didn't pay much attention to the odd exchange from a country singer in a parking lot, and all Steve had on his mind was making the Challenger go faster and look better.

The Charger's body was a bit more dinged up and the B-body definitely looked worse than the E-body, so Steve yanked the original 383 and transmission out of the convert and transplanted the built 440 and TorqueFlite into it, he then sold the Charger body off to another hot foot who had big plans of making an all-out street racer out of it. Steve rattle-can sprayed most of the interior a more traditional black and added some fat tires, and with the big engine up front, the Challenger was a tire incineration machine and Saturday night shootout special – exactly what Steve wanted. He moved to San Diego when he got older, and the convert went with him. He continued to mess around with it, making it go a little faster and a little faster, and generally used the car up, until he finally parked it in the garage in 1989, nearly dead, and that tempo-



rary rest turned into years of hidden hibernation. Life went on, the convert sat stuck in the garage and most of the locals never knew it was there.

By this time, of course, muscle car prices were already climbing significantly, and Steve knew the convertible was a lot more than just an old hot rod, as it had been for so many years. While Galen Govier was out in California attending a show, he had him come by the house and have a look at the car and decode it, because there were some seemingly oddball things about it. Galen was taken aback by the R/T, to say the least, because the fender tag (the broadcast sheet is missing), lined up directly with what he was seeing on the car, and hardly any of it was anything he'd seen before. The first big factor to take note of was the "Q" in the order number, which meant that the car was a special-order public relations vehicle. That might also explain why it was a factory air conditioning car with clear glass all around, as a/c cars automatically got tinted windows to help cool them off. He speculated then and there that this thing had likely been built for film work, as PR cars in California with clear glass generally were – the cameras at that time didn't care for tinted glass, and if you watch a lot of old TV

series from the 1950s and 1960s, many times you'll note the windshields and other glass have been removed entirely to prevent bright studio lights from glaring off the windows. The car had come with factory full dish hubcaps, not Road Wheels, but the red split-bench interior was correct, the red-trimmed Rimblow steering wheel was factory, and the power windows and AM/8-track stereo were legit. And, to top off all the weirdness, it was a column shift 383 Magnum car with a 3.23 open chunk rear end and a full Rallye dash. Steven relayed the Glen Campbell Mod Squad story, Galen thought it could be possible, but since this was still back in the nineties, neither had any way of confirming this because the series hadn't come out on DVD, and it didn't seem to be in reruns anywhere. So, Steven got his Galen Govier breakdown of the car, and it continued to sit.

Shortly after the turn of the millennium, a friend of his, who was also a car guy and knew of the Challenger, stood with Steve in the garage looking at the dusty Dodge. "Is that all the car's good for? Holding up beer cans?" That got Steven's attention, the car was filthy, and empty beer cans were deposited all over it from working on other projects

and doing yard work. His friend prompted him into action, and that pivotal moment changed the shape of the car's future. Within weeks he had it all cleaned off. Steve had a small number of big-block Mopars hanging around, along with transmissions, so he freshened up a 383 and dropped it in, then the R/T went over to his friend Keith DeCuir, who happens to be a tool & die maker, but he's an awesome paint and body guy as well. He stripped the Dodge to the bone, did the needed scattered bits of body-work, and then applied the gleaming FE5 red paint, which you're looking at now. That was over 20 years ago! Steve got an all-new Legendary set of seats in red, and Keith put those in as well, as well as putting on a new black convertible top. With some fresh tires and a lot of little revamping, the Challenger hit the trail again back around 2005/2006, but Steve primarily used it as a fun cruiser until 2009, when, finally, the Mod Squad television series came out as a boxed set of DVDs! It took long enough, but there they were. And sure enough, in late 1969, there was no doubt that his red/red Challenger convertible was indeed the Mod Squad car, used through most of the 1970 season as well, but there would seem to have been two cars used in the show. Steve took note that the license plate on the television scenes read "112 AEG" – this was a standard California blue tag, not a movie prop or fake, and as familiar as that sounded, he pulled out the paperwork from when he'd bought the car back in 1977. Amazingly, the plate that was on the car then was California tag "113 AEG!" They were sequentially done license plates! If they're registering multiple cars at the time, these two cars were side-by-side when whatever studio registered them went to the DMV back in 1969! Thus, the two red/red convertibles for Hollywood work remain and it's most likely true. Whether the plates were swapped around for the sake of continuity seems likely, but the 113 AEG tag never appears on the series. So, Steve Vanderschaaf, facing what was now a mountain of evidence, decided



it was likely at least one of two cars used on the *Mod Squad* series, but both of them were identical. Then, someone else told him it looked like the car driven by Christopher George in the one-season-only television series "The Immortal." Sure enough, in the first episode of that series, which aired on September 30, 1969, the red/red Challenger sees a lot of screen time in that movie, and it's most definitely the same car.

With his newfound Hollywood celebrity car looking pretty good and having its heritage fairly well tied down, Steve went to the Spring Fling with it, and he happened to park next to a Red Viper '70 'Cuda that was in phenomenal shape and owned by Carl Bischel. That was their first meeting, they got along fantastic at the show, and by the time the weekend was over, it was almost like they were old friends who'd gone to high school together! No question, old Mopars are a brotherhood, but these two guys, with their bright red E-bodies, became best friends practically overnight. Carl was naturally fascinated by the convert and called dibs if Steve ever decided to sell it, which both were fairly certain would never happen. But along came 2015, and Steve had the irresistible urge to be the first guy in California to own a new B5 blue Hellcat six-speed Challenger – it was a limited edition, so he had to act fast. To round up the money, he called Carl to see if he still wanted the R/T, and by the time he'd

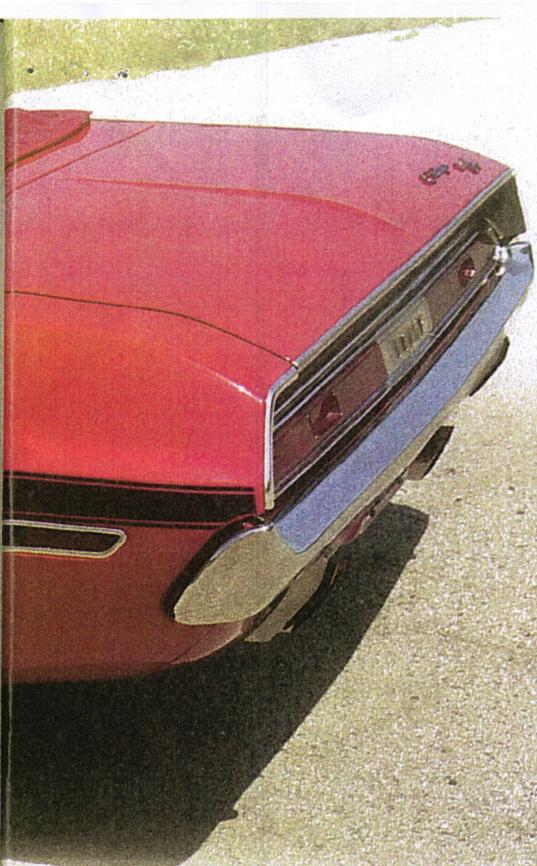
hung up the phone, Carl was knocking on the front door.

So, the convert finally changed hands again, going to Carl Bischel (the guys remain best friends today and frequently show up at car shows and cruise events together), and being a really detail-oriented guy, Carl set to work primping the R/T. The first big thing to do was to get the car running better, and here's where two big surprises happened. Steve wasn't sure if he still had the car's original engine, but looking around the garage, amazingly, among the half dozen or so big blocks he'd gone through and played with throughout the years, the matching numbers 383 was still there, and just by sheer luck at some point long ago, Steve had already swapped the matching numbers transmission back into the car. It was a bit out-of-the-ordinary for Joe Boghosian over in Fresno to rebuild the original 383 and TorqueFlite to like-new condition. Primarily, because Joe's been one of the most legendary Indy Car engine builders since the late sixties! Needless to say, while it's still a relatively stock spec 383, the Challenger's engine has been meticulously gone through and it's one of the slickest running "B" motors we've heard in a long time!

Carl bought some more red interior trim parts for the car from Legendary, detailed the belly a bit,

and since then, he's done a couple more shows with it, including the "Spring Fling" and the "Good Guys" show over in Madera. When not soaking in envious looks at car shows, the bright red convert shares space in Carl's garage with his black 1970 Hemi Challenger clone, and his bright red '70 'Cuda. So, Carl has an E-body for any mood. Little did he or Steve know, when the car changed hands back in 2015, they'd only scratched the surface of this red celebrity's acting career. Here's where things get even more interesting.

There's little to no doubt this is the car used in "The Immortal," and it was then passed off for extensive use in the "Mod Squad" series. But that was just the tip of the iceberg. Thanks to the interweb, it's turned up in many other roles. In 1970, it was used in a short scene in the classic horror movie "Crowhaven Farm." It also appears very briefly in a television horror flick named, "How Awful About Allan," which starred Anthony Perkins of "Psycho" fame. Then it was off to the races. A whole episode was built around the car in 1971 as it was the main "bad guys" car in *Adam 12*. By this point, the Road Wheels and bumper guards had been added,



for purposes unknown, but perhaps just to give the car a bit of extra splash, or possibly, a studio exec was driving the car and just decided it needed to look a bit spiffier. We'll never know exactly when or why the bumpers and wheels changed, but it seems to have occurred in late 1970. One tell-tale item that identifies the car throughout, however, is the odd chromed counter-sunk gas cap. Why it was chromed will also forever remain a mystery, but that gas cap, and its odd red/red column shift split bend seat combo, along with a red Rimblow steering wheel, make it pretty darned unmistakable on film. That said, then came a short appearance as a background driver in a 1971 episode of "Ironside," and then the convert went out with a bang as the starring car in a made-for-television epic movie in early 1973 called "Drive Hard, Drive Fast," about the career of an Indy car driver. The convert sees a lot of screen time in that one, and apparently, that was its last acting job. All of which lines up pretty darned well with it ending up at a Huntington Beach Dodge dealer in 1973, where it was finally sold to the general public after spending three years as a studio car – nobody's sure if Dodge ever surrendered ownership of the car or if it was still being loaned out by Dodge, but darned few public rela-

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tions film cars had that long of a career

Carl tells us, sometime in the coming years, he wants to strip the car down to bare metal again, repaint it, and cosmetically redo everything again to bring it up to current show standards. Remember, most of what you're looking at is over twenty years old, so even with the care given it, the paint has some scratches and there's a bit of wear and tear. Still, for a fifty-four-year-old Hollywood celebrity, she

looks pretty good. No word on whether or not Carl's been hunting for bell-bottom slacks and brightly striped shirts yet, but if he wants to do the car justice, he and Steven need to start shopping at thrift stores and get some groovy threads. What's cooler than having the Mod Squad car? Wheeling up to a show and hopping out looking like you're part of the Mod Squad... bonus points if they can get their wives to wear miniskirts and go-go boots! ✽