BAD NEWS-CHALLENGER COP CARS

FEB 2010

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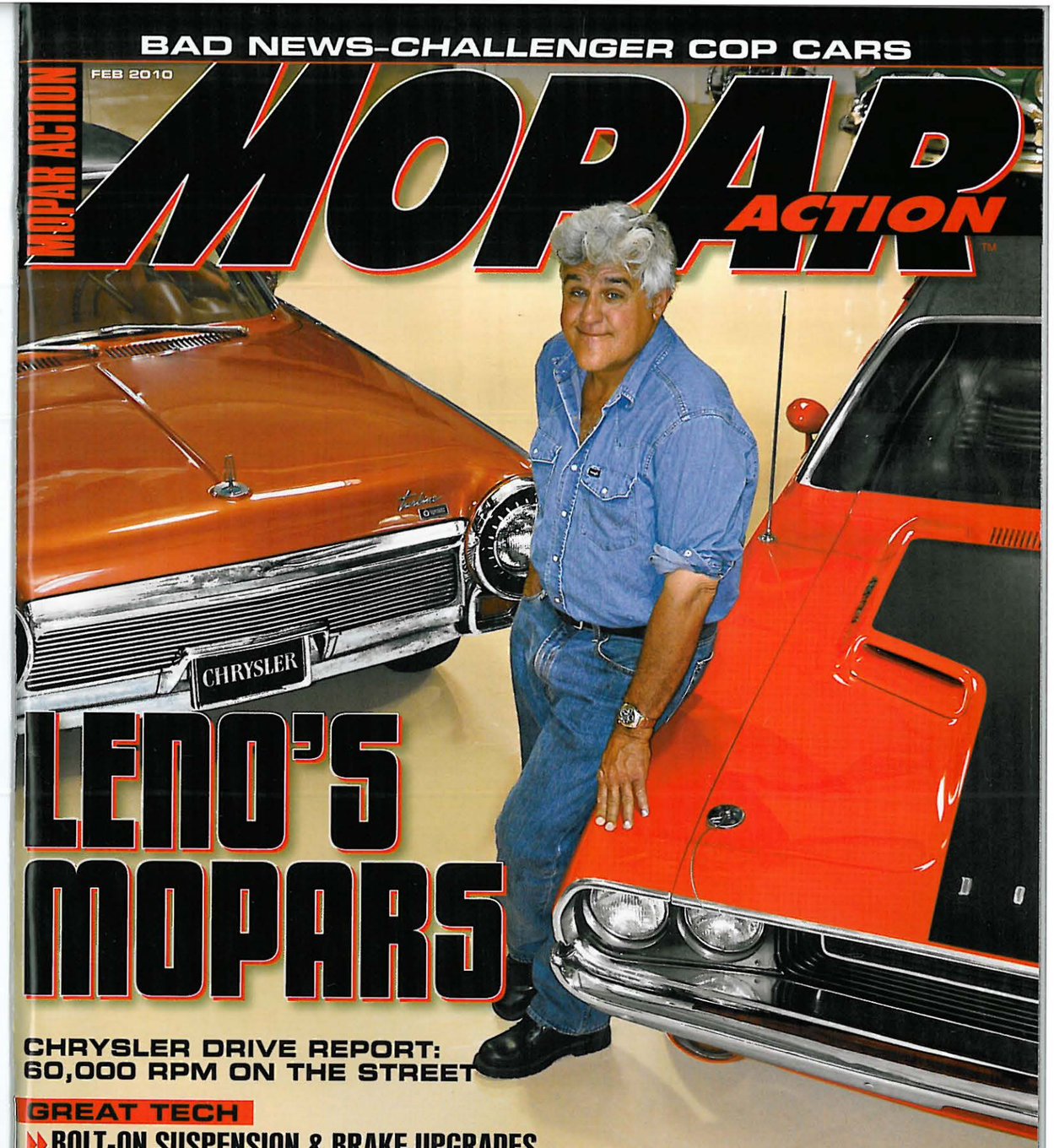

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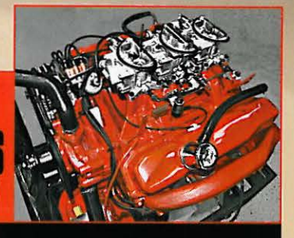


BACK TO THE FUTURE

Relive those thrilling days of yesteryear with modern interpretations of Sox & Martin's Pro Stock and the Li'l Red Express.

Photo: Paul Stenquist

Another modern interpretation of a classic, this one based on the Li'l Red Express. The Red Xpress Truck highlights include MP's Ram R/T hood, special graphics and interior details, lowered suspension, custom wheels and tires, and true dual exhaust with chrome stacks.

Modern interpretation of the Sox & Martin 'Cuda is based on the appearance of the original NHRA Pro Stock National Championship winner. It's available as a 1200 HP exhibition drag car or in two performance levels for the street.

By Al Dente

Photos by TheBruntBros

For all you Mopar nostalgia fans and nostalgia wannabees, two rollouts at the Mopar Nationals should give you a well-needed fix. Both are "modern interpretations" of Mopar icons from the '70s. The first is a Sox & Martin "'Cuda," the second is the Red Xpress Truck, a takeoff on the popular '78-'79 Lil Red Express. And you can park one or both in your driveway. Don't have a driveway? You can park 'em in ours.

Shoe a Sox car

Let's look at the Sox car first, shall we? It's available in three versions—two are made for street and strip, with the emphasis on street. The third is a 9-second race car, complete with a 1200-horsepower Gen 3 blown 417-inch Hemi under the hood, 8.50-sec. certified cage and all the goodies. It's the first salvo in a new series in the making called The Legends of Drag Racing. Built by Modern Muscle, in Hudson, FL, to "Legend X" specs, the company hopes to field some 6 to 10 recreations of legendary drag cars on contemporary platforms from not only Mopar, but Ford and GM as well. All lettered in "glory days" trim, the plan is to have the cars run each other in exhibition competition. The series hopes to generate excitement of fans rooting for their favorite heroes, even though the heroes themselves won't be behind the wheel.

A bit of a stretch? Maybe so. But if Sox were racing today, he wouldn't be driving a 40-year-old car, he'd be in a current, race-prepped model with a modified current powerplant. Same deal for the

Photo: Paul Stenquist

The 5.7 Hemi-powered Red Xpress will show its red and gold tailgate to stock '78-79 Li'l Reds and, mainly, red-faced Fords and Chevys.

GM and Ford entries. The S&M "'Cuda" was created with input and cooperation of Buddy Martin and Diane Sox. Since Chrysler no longer builds Plymouths, the car is a "'Cuda-ized" version of the current Challenger, with "Plymouth" lettered on the quarter panels.

OK, so you don't need a turnkey low 9-second race car. Modern Muscle has you covered with two Collector Series Sox & Martin "'Cudas." These will be based on 2010 SRT8 Challengers with your choice of 625, or a bone-ripping 900 ponies ready to blow off just about any troublemaker foolish enough to enter your zip code. The 625 HP version relies on a Kenne-Bell blower huffing a conservative 8 psi boost to deliver the goods from an otherwise stock 6.1L Hemi. The bad-boy version gets its oomph from turned-up K-B unit plus a longer arm—Callies stroker crank and rods, and Diamond pistons for a 417-inch displacement, nominally referred to as "426." A full 426 cubes can be had by the boring bar, but is not recommended due to lack of meat in the stock block. The 900 HP killer street version comes back-halved with a triangulated 4-link, Afco coilovers and Dana 60. Each S&M car is serial-numbered and registered. Cockpit amenities include S&M logos, and a dash plaque signed by Buddy Martin and Diane Sox.

Take the Xpress

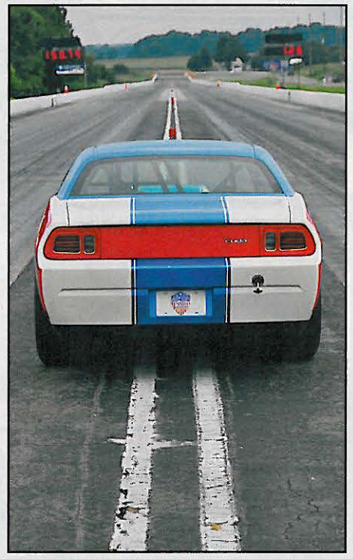
For all you truck fans that want to warp back in time, Mr. Norm's Garage has come up with a modern interpretation of Dodge's most famous pickup—the Li'l Red Express. 'Course, they can't call it that, so they cooked up the name Red Xpress Truck—close enough to keep the lawyers at bay. The red paint and close-enough gold graphics on the doors and tailgate are just the start. An Airaid cool air intake and cat-back exhaust with Spintech muffs add a couple of ponies along with a cool exhaust note. Sharper handling results from an Eibach lowered suspension and custom 24 x 9.5" wheels shod with Pirelli 305/40ZR22 Scorpion Zero Assimetricos. 'Course the stock brakes look kinda puny with those big rollers. So what to do—spring with a thick wad of C-notes for high-zoot binders? Nah, how 'bout a set of caliper covers for that big-brake look? Too bad it isn't as easy for guys with small brakes.

But wait, there's more—like those signature stack exhausts—a true dual system with dual cats and muffs, no sleazy Y-pipe for Mr. Norm. The system plugs in at the cats and the stacks come up through the bed in a very neat installation. The stacks are optional in case you want a full functional bed or a tonneau cover. Inside, the usual custom logos abound on tushy-cushy Katzkin leather seats and floor mats. And don't forget that serial-numbered dash plaque.

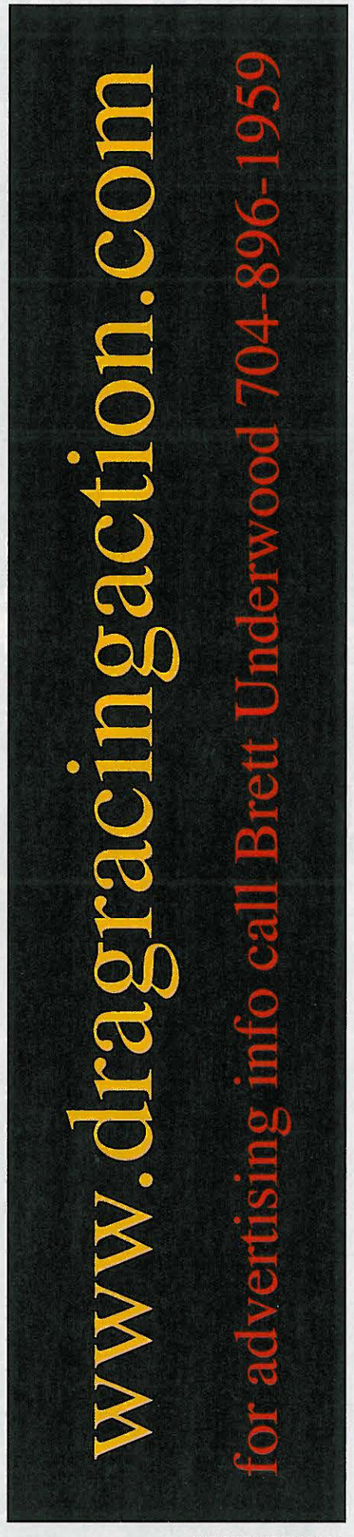
The race version "'Cuda" was built from an '09 6-cylinder Challenger SE, and rides on a triangulated 4-link rear/Mustang II-based front cradle. A full NHRA certified funny car cage ties it all together. Wheels are Keystone Classics with the rears widened to 12 inches by Stockton wheel. The rear is a 3.73 Moser Dana 60 with a spool.

Race engine is a 6.1 Hemi stroked to 6.9L (417 inches) running 10-1 compression and 15 psi boost with the Kenne-Bell blower. It's rated 1200 HP on 115 octane race fuel. The motor spins a J.W. 727 with a 4600-stall converter. Street versions will come in 625 and 900 horsepower levels.

Turnkey race car is just that. Simply add fuel and heavy shoes. Hurst handle instructs the TorqueFlite. Passenger sits on the floor.



"'Cuda-ized" Challenger comes with special grille, tail panel and quarters. Modern Muscle hopes to build some 6-10 exhibition drag cars representing Ford and GM as well as Mopar "classics."

The Red Xpress Truck package is available from any Dodge dealer on an SLT Standard Cab, Quad Cab or Crew Cab with a short bed, on a two- or four-wheel-drive chassis. If you've already purchased a new Dodge Ram, you can have the Red Xpress Truck package installed locally or have Mr. Norm's Garage install the package at their Florida, Chicago or Phoenix locations. The base price, which gives you the graphics and interior, starts at $2,549 installed. You can mix and match all the optional stuff according to your taste and budget. You'll find the complete list of options and suppliers on our website.

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