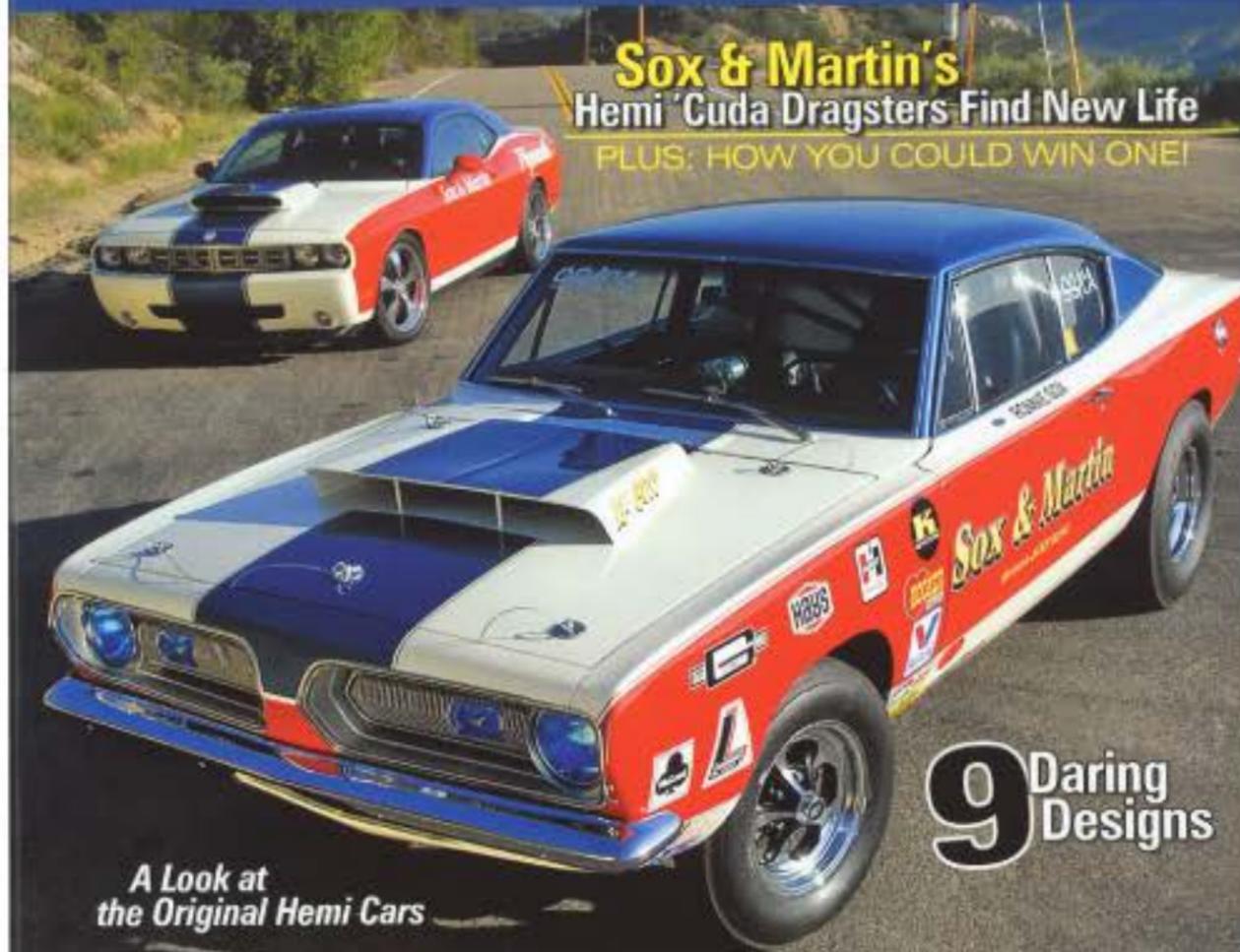


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PLUS: HOW YOU COULD WIN ONE!

9 Daring
Designs

*A Look at
the Original Hemi Cars*

Mighty Mopars Do Battle at the Pure Stock Drags



THE AVATARS

SOX & MARTIN'S PHENOMENAL HEMI 'CUDA DRAGSTERS FIND NEW LIFE — AND YOU COULD WIN ONE!



TEXT AND IMAGES BY STEVE TEMPLE

Sox & Martin



It was an incredible convergence of man and machine, a rare moment in history when one of the most talented drivers in drag racing manned the wheel of one of the most successful racecars ever built. When Ronnie Sox, master of the four-speed, grabbed the shifter of the Sox & Martin 1968 Plymouth Hemi 'Cuda, they cleaned house.

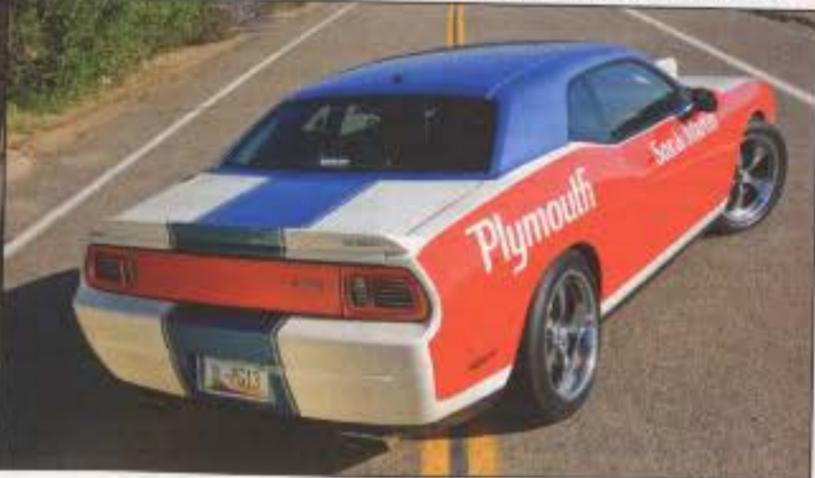
Sadly, Ronnie is no longer with us, having succumbed to prostate cancer at the age of 67, but his beloved wife Diane and partner Buddy Martin preserve his memory in a number of ways. Actually, through two in particular, as shown here: One, a well-crafted tribute to one of the most famous racecars driven by Ronnie Sox; the other, inspired by the legendary Sox & Martin 1970 Pro Stock

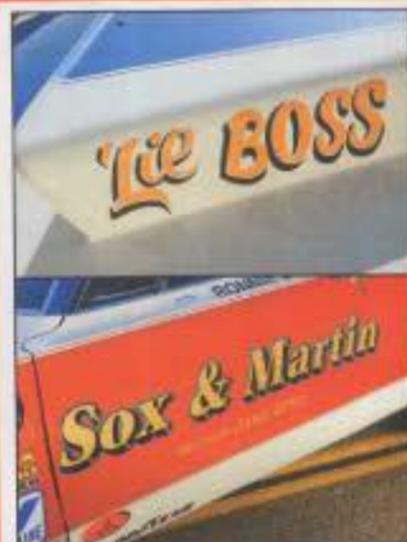
Hemi 'Cuda. The latter, one of three new Sox & Martin Collectors Series Hemi 'Cudas, is built on a modern Mopar platform, the new Challenger. You can not only obtain all of these vehicles today through Mr. Norm's Garage, but also possibly win the new Pro Stock 'Cuda in a charity raffle to support the Ronnie Sox Foundation.

First, let's take a fond look back at the 1968 Super Stock Hemi 'Cuda. Even without Sox in the driver's seat, this A-body based, Hemi-powered Mopar milestone was a world-beater, demolishing everything in its path in both the NHRA and the AHRA. Chrysler initially produced about 50 or so fastback Barracudas for the Super Stock drag racing wars (then another 30 or so later that same year). Armed with the all-conquering 426 "elephant motor" and assembled by Hurst Performance, they were built

for battle: lightweight seats, Chemcor side glass, and fiberglass front fenders and scooped hood. And if that wasn't obvious enough to indicate the 'Cuda's combat mission, the conspicuous absence of a rear seat and a sticker indicating "Not for use on public roads" drove home the point. And the performance matched the ominous look: right out of the box, it could run the quarter in the mid 10s.

Add the Plymouth factory team of Sox & Martin to the equation, and it was a truly volatile formula. After all, Ronnie was considered the most gifted four-speed driver in the history of drag racing, winning the NHRA Spring Nationals Super Stock title three times (1967-70), the 1969 Nationals, and the 1968 Nationals, among many other



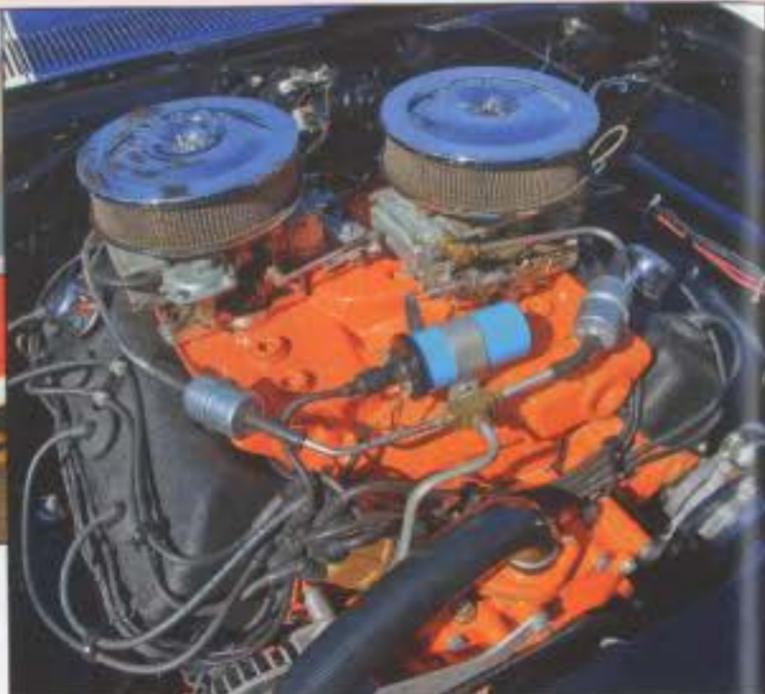


victories. He piloted a wide range of makes and models, but his weapon of choice on the strip in 1968 was the Hemi 'Cuda, empowering him to reach the pinnacle of his Super Stock career.

A fairly simple piece of technology, however, became the game-changer. The Lenco transmission came on the scene in 1973, and Sox no longer had a competitive edge in his lightning-quick handling of the four-speed. When racers went to the clutch-less Lenco trannies, it was an end to the era of power shifting a manual at full throttle, when time slips measured not just quickness, but also pure talent.

Looking back, Sox felt privileged to be the right man at the right place: "I'm certainly glad that I was able to race at the time that I did," he once observed (as noted on the NHRA web site, www.nhra.net). "Today's racing technology has diminished the role of the driver way too much. Back in the days of the four-speeds, the driver had a lot more to do with the outcome of the race, and I couldn't imagine anything being more fun than that." Neither can we.

In homage to both man and machine, the 1968 'Cuda shown here started out as a muscle-car project for a friend of Greg Fernald. His firm, SS and AFX, is well known for restoring and modifying vintage Mopars to period dragstrip specs. He's worked on a variety of vehicles, but has been involved with Chrysler competition cars since the Sixties,



Super Stocks in particular. "I'm just a racer," he says with a grin.

That enthusiasm for the strip led to the 1968 Hemi 'Cuda project. When Fernald's buddy ran out of funding, he willingly picked up the torch. Then Dr. Ralph Carungi heard of the car, and wanted it for himself, but with one condition: he wanted to be able to drive it on both the street and strip. "It ran in the 10s, but he also needed air conditioning for summer heat in the Arizona desert," Fernald explains.

The buildup of the car required a number of meticulous modifications to match the original Hurst cars as closely as possible. First, he completely disassembled it and dipped and stripped the body. Meanwhile, he stiffened the frame to handle the prodigious torque of the Hemi. He also reinforced and relocated the rear spring mounts inboard three inches, and replaced the springs with Super Stock leaves. But enlarging the rear wheelwells wasn't needed, since they were already wide enough for big meats. Early versions of the Hurst cars used the 8 3/4-inch diff, but it proved unequal to the task, so stronger Dana 60 was used later on, so that's what was chosen instead.

Up front, Fernald installed disc brakes, and swapped out the fenders

and hood with competition-grade fiberglass pieces. Since the 'Cuda was originally a small-block car, fitting in a 426 Hemi required new engine mounts, a special K-frame and massaging of the passenger-side shock tower. (Hurst's assemblers pounded on the chassis with a sledgehammer to create sufficient clearance in this area. Hey, if it works...)

Inside the cockpit, Fernald put in lightweight buckets from a Dodge A-100 van, along with aluminum racing brackets, just like on the original. He also deleted the heater and radio. Original Hemi 'Cuda cars had acid-dipped doors, but this one was intended for street duty, so only the front bumper was treated. Even though the side windows have lighter-weight glass instead of the ultralight Corning's Chemcor, he removed the crank mechanism and used seatbelt straps on the doors for raising and lowering them, just like on the original-style factory Super Stocks. For the side-mirror delete, he fabricated a custom plate by hand. "We do everything in house on these cars," he points out.

Other historically accurate details that required attention included installing a large, 78-pound Mopar truck battery in the right rear of the



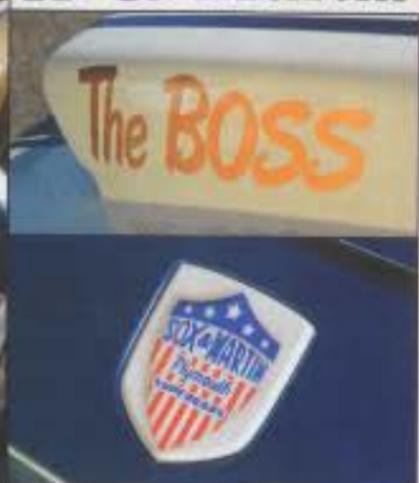
trunk, plus a clear (not tinted) windshield. The 426 Hemi engine has wide, deep-groove pulleys and a magnesium cross-ram, dual four-barrel carbs, and is also cooled by a high-efficiency radiator.

A couple of differences in the drivetrain are evident, for the sake of improved driveability. The car has a TorqueFlite automatic, instead of Sox's preferred A833 four-speed. And it's also fitted with a Gear Vendors gear splitter, which enables the vehicle to be driven on the street, either with a manual or automatic transmission.

In such a faithful reproduction as the Sox & Martin 'Cuda, it is important to retain originality, so it has a 4.56 rear diff to hit the 10s at the strip, but needs overdrive for driving in town. The Gear Vendors unit provides an ideal solution, because it doesn't require changing the period-correct transmission that was a big part of the legend. When engaged, the gear splitter drops the engine revs just like a 3.55 rearend, letting the car cruise at a reasonable rpm.

The overdrive is controlled by a button in the shifter ball, so the location of the shifter and type of main transmission all feels correct and is authentic. With a manual tranny, this push-button setup also makes for crisper launches off the line, since a Gear Vendors overdrive can be shifted without the clutch.

Sox & Martin



(which builds other Mopar muscle cars as well), he sought and received approval from Buddy Martin and Diane Sox to take the Hemi 'Cuda to the next level, dressing it in the original paint and Sox & Martin racing livery. The final result is highly authentic and displays a remarkable level of accuracy, thanks to assistance from Jim Rhinehart (a national show judge for Mopar A-bodies), among other experts.

Reproducing the graphics became a significant challenge with only a short time frame available for getting ready to debut at the 2010 Mopars on the Strip. Converting the car to battle dress required painting with a secret custom mix known only to Buddy Martin and a few other key people.

Fortunately, Phil Painter's original BO29 Sox & Martin Super Stock 1968 Hemi 'Cuda happened to be in Mr. Norm's Garage (near Chicago) at the same time, where it was being repaired after heavy winds tore apart the auction tent at Russo and Steele, causing some cosmetic damage to this extremely rare and documented collectible. Parking it right next to Sefton's 'Cuda made matching the paint and graphics a simpler and more accurate procedure than working off photos -- but still not without a few hurdles.

Gregg Bahrke of Limelightgraphics, an old-school sign painter, who by chance was a huge Sox & Martin fan as a youngster, was tapped for the job. "I used to drool over Sox & Martin's 'Cuda. I was majorly into it," he recalls. "And then 40 years later I

got to work on it – what an irony!”

Bahrke scoured the country to obtain authentic, period-correct sponsor graphics. “I could only get three of the decals out of the original 14, and those were wrong,” he says. Since these facsimiles were not up to the quality and colors of the originals, he took digital pictures of Painter’s car and spent many hours on a computer to recreate them with meticulous accuracy. He had to take physical measurements and scale them so the images were mathematically perfect, and hand clipped them for the color separations. Once that was done, he individually cut each one, all 14 on each side. “Luckily I had the car a few steps away,” he says. “I could just compare it, and knew them inside and out.”

This would prove to be one of the highlights of his career in handling automotive graphics, an arcane and rare skill. “I’ve dealt with some heavy hitters, but this one was a notch or two up,” he notes. “The time constraints were tight, but I was honored to be chosen to do it.”

And it wasn’t just the color of

the graphics, but the difficulty of finding the exact vinyl and other period-correct materials, such as the brilliant gold lettering on the doors. He used genuine 23-carat Italian leaf, with old-school engine turning. “It’s like a Fresnel lens in a lighthouse,” he explains. “It creates a funny illusion to the eye, breaking up light.” Working with it requires a high degree of patience and skill, and afterwards he applied acrylic clearcoat to protect the finish.

The lettering was done with paint, along with a similar process as the sponsor stickers. Bahrke made custom patterns so each side would match perfectly for basic outlines, and then had to true them out by hand. Despite the painstaking efforts, once done, he stood back in admiration: “It truly was fun, one of those jobs you live for,” he beams.

Then, at the eleventh hour, Mr. Norm’s Garage decided to have him tint the headlights like the original. “I concocted this method, and it worked out sweet,” he adds. “I air-brushed on a clear candy urethane tint. When they turned on the

lights, they projected this really cool blue tint.”

Although Bahrke didn’t handle the graphics on the newer Sox & Martin Super Street ‘Cuda, he has some choice words to describe it. “That’s one bad scooter too,” he laughs knowingly.

After, all we’re talking mondo power levels here. The new Sox & Martin Collectors Series Hemi ‘Cudas, available in three different models, range from 625 to 900 horses. So the bigmouth hood scoop and comp paint scheme on the Super Street ‘Cuda shown here isn’t just for looks. This street machine can not only tool around town, but tear up the strip too. And in dramatic contrast to its storied predecessor, it not only has more power, but also can do much, much more.

Anybody who’s ever piloted a 40-year-old muscle car well knows they can’t even come close to the great handling and braking of the new Challenger, which boasts big Brembo brakes and a multi-link, independent rear suspension (rather than the live axle and leaf springs that underpinned the original ‘Cuda). As such, the ride



quality of the new ‘Cuda is far more enjoyable for daily driving, but with no sacrifice in cornering, enhanced by a Hotchkis lowered suspension.

Add to that seats upholstered in Katzkin glove-soft leather, plus air-bag safety restraints and a high-fidelity multi-speaker audio system, and you’ve got a Mopar muscle machine that’s light years ahead of its 1968 counterpart.

The Sox & Martin Collectors Series Hemi ‘Cudas are all serious, super-charged performance machines. Starting with the Sox & Martin Super Street Edition, it uses a totally stock, 5.1L Hemi, but with a flywheel output raised from 425 to 625hp – or even higher with the right octane and boost level. Using a 2.8-liter, intercooled blower case, the 625hp package runs a 3.5-inch pulley that produces eight pounds of boost. When sipping 93 or 94 octane and boosted nine or ten pounds, the output can go even higher, to 671 horses. Talk about getting pinned back in the seat!

The next level of performance, available on the Super Stock Edition, breaks

through the 700 mark to 725hp – you’d better hang on tight. Since the blower case is bigger (3.6 liters), a larger, 3 3/8-inch pulley is used for generating 13 pounds of boost. That higher level of cylinder-head pressure requires stronger, forged H-beam rods and dished pistons that lower the compression ratio from 10.5:1 to 8.5:1.

In addition, since the twin-screw rotors compress air, which creates friction, they can run more than 100 degrees hotter at the front end of the case when compared with the back, causing metal expansion and reducing clearances. So the Sox & Martin Collectors Series ‘Cudas use the latest Kenne Bell liquid-cooled technology. It taps coolant (or pure water, if freezing temps are not an issue) from a T-fitting on the inter-cooler system, and then circulates fluid through the front of the blower case to a plate that serves as a heat exchanger.

This setup is so efficient, Kenne Bell can go to a staggering 20 pounds of boost that’s good for a heart-stopping 900 hp. Available only in the Pro Stock

model of the Sox & Martin ‘Cuda, it employs a three-inch pulley on a 6.9-liter Hemi stroker motor (rather than increasing the bore, Kenne Bell prefers to change the stroke, in order to preserve the thickness and strength on the cylinder walls.) Hooking up this stampeding herd of horses requires a Dana 60 rearend (as on the 1968 Hemi ‘Cuda), along with a special four-link rear suspension, and mini-tubs for ultra-wide tires to achieve max traction. Otherwise, you’ll boil the hides right to the rims.

Altogether, Jim Bell of Kenne Bell has high words of praise for the Hemi engines: “Boy they make the horsepower,” he enthuses. Not only that, he’s done more than 60 hard pulls on the dyno at 20 pounds of boost, with no mechanical failures. “That’s a pretty strong package,” he points out. Indeed.

In keeping with the outrageous power outputs, the exterior of the Sox & Martin Collector Series Hemi ‘Cudas have the same red, white and blue paint scheme and period-correct Sox & Martin graphics as the fearsome original NHRA Pro Stock National



Championship-winning Hemi 'Cuda. Mike Staveski's crew at Mr. Norm's Florida facility handled the details, along with extensive body mods.

Creating the contours of a 'Cuda was no small project. The stock Challenger had to be significantly altered to infuse it with an authentic 'Cuda E-Body persona. A new grille, inspired by the 1971 Hemi 'Cuda, integrates smoothly into the front. The aggressive hood scoop was patterned directly from the scoop Sox & Martin used on their 1970 Pro Stock Hemi 'Cuda. Also, note a significant difference from a stock Challenger: instead of its signature kick-up at the rear, the welded-steel quarter panels display the 'Cuda-specific horizontal,

mid-belt character line. In addition, complementing the quarters are actual 1971 Hemi 'Cuda taillights, along with a 'Cuda-style Tail Panel.

Detailing extends to the custom wheels as well, which capture the look of the Keystone Kustomag wheels that Sox & Martin used on their legendary racecars. While measuring 20-inches to clear the massive Brembo brakes, these rims still have the unique flavor and proportions of the originals.

Inside, the cockpit features custom leather seating with the Sox & Martin Supercars shield embroidered on the seat backs. In the console is a Pistol Grip Shifter with a carbon fiber finish. It falls so easily into hand, you'd think Ronnie designed it himself.

To identify the special-edition character of the cars, each Sox & Martin Collectors Series Hemi 'Cuda is personally signed by Buddy Martin and has a special fender tag that identifies its equipment and serial number.

In developing these modern incarnations, noted car collector Bill Sefton and Mike Staveski from Mr. Norm's Garage partnered with Diane Sox and Buddy Martin to produce contemporary counterparts – avatars, as it were – of those offered by Chrysler Corporation during the Golden Era of muscle cars. The Sox & Martin Super Street 'Cuda is the first of these new vehicles, and is the centerpiece of a nationwide charity drive for the

benefit of the Ronnie Sox Foundation.

Mr. Norm's Garage operates two facilities, one in Hudson, Florida, and the other near Chicago, Illinois, where design, prototyping and turnkey Collectors Series Sox & Martin Hemi 'Cudas are built. The company is working directly with Buddy Martin, who, along with Ronnie Sox, built Sox & Martin into a world-class, championship winning, drag racing team. Mr. Norm's Garage plans to carry on this legacy by offering a comprehensive line of Sox & Martin vehicles, parts and accessories.

As the first of many projects in the works, the Sox & Martin Super Street 'Cuda was unveiled at the Mopars at the Strip on March 26, 2010, and will be displayed throughout the rest of the

year by Diane Sox at major events all over the United States. At each event, enthusiasts and collectors will have the opportunity to meet Diane Sox and purchase raffle tickets to win this impressive example of Mopar muscle.

Upon completing its nationwide tour, the car will return to Mopars at the Strip in 2011. There, Diane will draw the winning ticket, and the lucky winner will be awarded the Sox & Martin Super Street 'Cuda. The net proceeds from this 'Cuda charity program will be donated to the Ronnie Sox Foundation, which supports the children at St. Jude and teaches awareness and early detection for prostate cancer.

Both Bill Sefton and Mike Staveski from Mr. Norm's Garage recognize that

it's a real privilege to work with Diane Sox, Buddy Martin and the Ronnie Sox Foundation. "The proceeds from the Sox & Martin Super Street 'Cuda will help make a real difference in the lives of many people," Sefton notes.

In a different sense, these cars make a difference in the lives of Mopar enthusiasts as well. Some people say that we can't go home again, that the passing of time prevents us from ever being able to revisit our roots. Yet reviving the Sox & Martin name, along with its renowned standards of high-performance, creates a connection with historically important Mopars. Actually, you can go home again in these 'Cudas – and you might experience something even better. **O**

Sox & Martin

Hemi 'Cuda Super Street
Component Description and Manufacturer

Body

Custom Paint

Applied By: Mr. Norm's Garage

'Cuda Body Conversion

Includes: Steel 'Cuda Quarters, 'Cuda Tail Panel w/ 1971 Hemi 'Cuda Tail Lights Quarter and Rear Panel
Manufacturer: Mr. Norm's Garage
'Cuda Conversion By: Mr. Norm's Garage

'Cuda Grille

Manufacturer: Mr. Norm's Garage

Sox & Martin Rear Spoiler and Core Support Badges

Manufacturer: Mr. Norm's Garage

Interior

Custom Leather Interior with Sox & Martin Embroided Logo

Manufacturer: Katzkin Leather

Pistol Grip Shifter

Manufacturer: Mr. Norm's Garage

Sox & Martin Embroidered Logo Carpet Mats

Manufacturer: Designer Mat

Sox & Martin Serial Number Dash Plaque

Manufacturer: Mr. Norm's Garage

Powertrain

Supercharger & Air to Water Intercooler

Manufacturer: Kenne Bell
Type: 2.8 Liter Twin Screw

Engine Management System

Manufacturer: Kenne Bell

Cold Air Intake

Manufacturer: Kenne Bell

Chassis

Sox & Martin Custom Wheels

Manufacturer: Mr. Norm's Garage
Type: 2 Piece Forged
Sizes: Front: 20" x 8.5"
Rear: 20" x 10"

Tires

Manufacturer: Pirelli
Model: P Zero
Size: Front & Rear: 265/45ZR20

Cat Back Exhaust System

Manufacturer: Corsa Performance

Lowered Suspension

Manufacturer: Hotchkis Performance
Amount of reduced ride height: 40mm (1.5")

SOURCES:

Gear Vendors

800-999-9555
www.gearvendors.com

Limelightgraphics

Gregg Bahrke

815-728-0163
www.Limelightgraphics.com

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