



STREET WISE

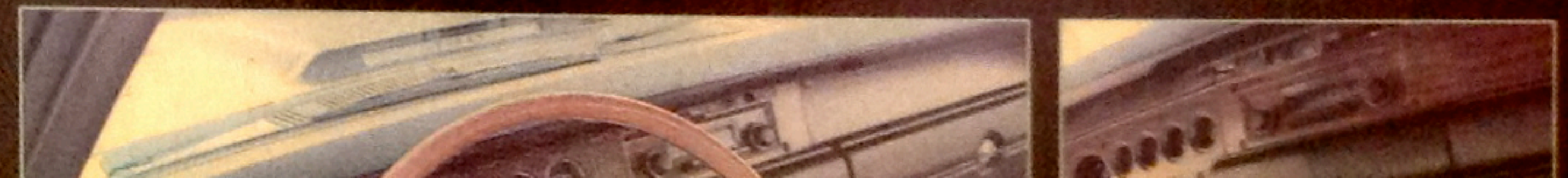
NICK COLLEBRUSCO'S 1970 PLYMOUTH GTX IS RESTORED TO SHOW STANDARD, BUT IS JUST AS HAPPY ON THE STREET

BY STEVE STATHAM / PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE STATHAM



ALAN "NICK" COLLEBRUSCO OF AUSTIN, TEXAS, IS SERIOUS WHEN HE TALKS ABOUT HAVING HIS 1970 PLYMOUTH GTX RESTORED FOR HIS OWN PLEASURE, NOT THE EXPECTATIONS OF OTHERS.

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Collebrusco didn't build the car hoping to make a bundle reselling it somewhere down the line. He didn't invest big money so he could trailer it to a national show to endure some judge's cold scrutiny. He did it all for himself.

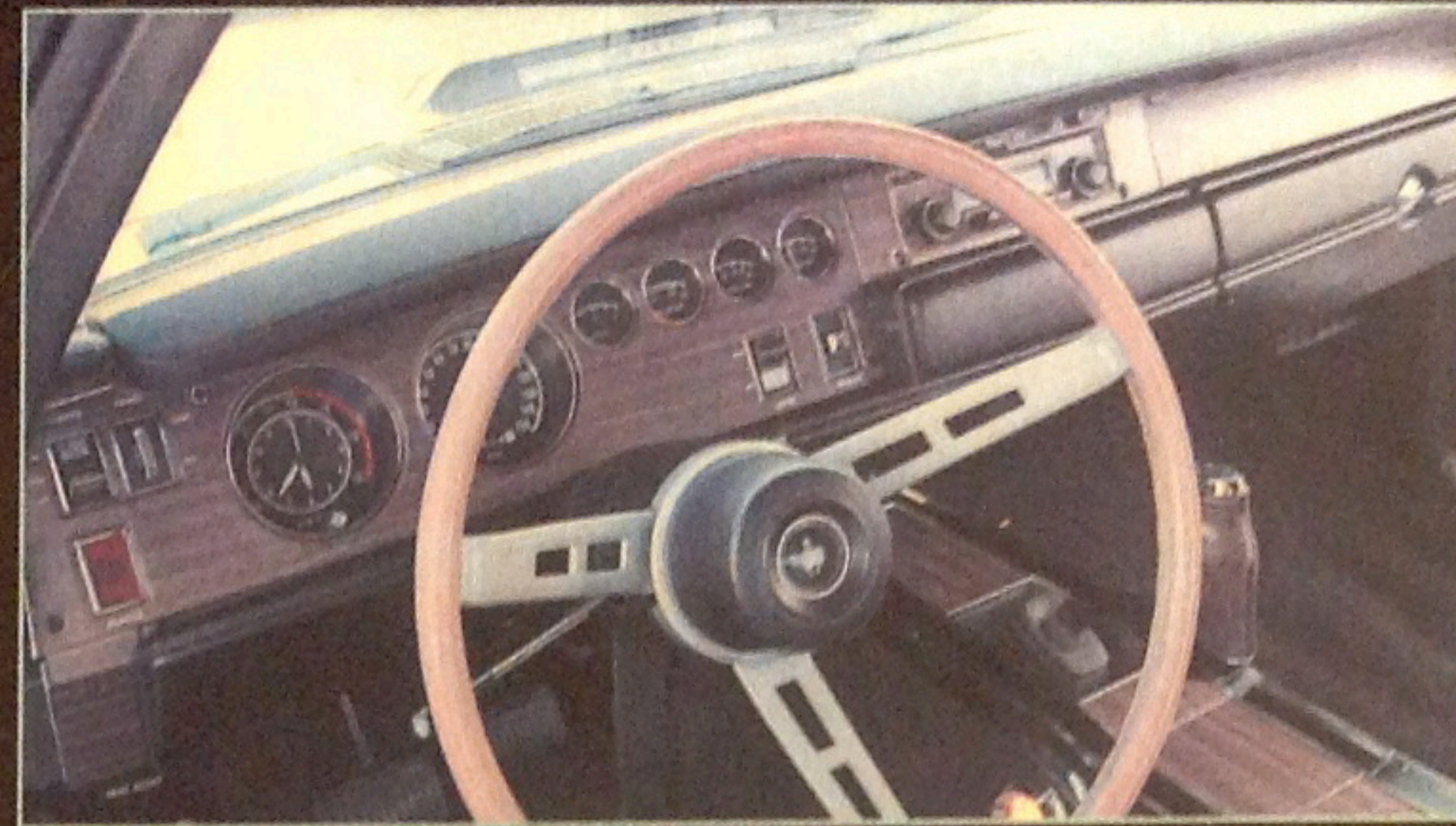
"I'm not a speculator," he said. "This is my boat. This is my country club."

That means regular street driving when he feels like it. Not long after he drove it out of the restoration shop, for example, he took it to a Super Bowl party at a friend's house so he could show it off to his buddies. By the end of the game a deluge had moved across town, so he was forced to drive it home in heavy rain.

He admits to gritting his teeth all the way home, but hey, it's a car. It's supposed to do those things. A few days later it was cleaned up for our photo shoot, none the worse for wear.

That eagerness to drive the car is good news for local musclecar fans, who will get a chance to see a fairly uncommon Mopar in action. Nick's Limelight Plymouth has the GTX's standard 440 four-barrel underhood, teamed with a 4-speed transmission, the vacuum-operated N96 Air Grabber fresh air scoop, V21 Performance Hood Paint Treatment, J45 hood pins, and the race-oriented A34 Super Track Pak. Other options include the C16 woodgrain console, the N85 tachometer with clock (the famous "Tick Toc Tach") and front bumper guards.

Plymouth built 6,938 1970 GTX hardtops with the 375hp 440ci four-barrel V-8 for U.S. consumption, of which 1,471 were 4-speeds, according to Galen Govier's registry (The 440-6



and 426 Hemi were optional). Nick had Govier give the car one of his trademark inspections to verify its authenticity.

Given the car's condition, it needed that look-over. Nick found the car online, and it appeared fine onscreen. He thought he was purchasing a nice car he could immediately drive and enjoy, but when it arrived on the trailer, "I was going to send it back," he said. "I was immediately faced with the fact that I had to restore it."

The major problem was its Michigan heritage. "In the end, it was a typical Michigan car. Lots of rust in all the usual suspected places," said Jeff Snyder, whose Jeff's Resurrections ((512) 365-5346) in Taylor, Texas, handled the restoration. Stripping down the car to bare metal revealed not just rust, but all sorts of older body repair shortcuts, as we reported in our July 2009 issue, when we followed the metal repair of this GTX in our "Unraveling Welds"

A34 SUPER TRACK PAK COMPONENTS*

- Front disc brakes
 - Power brakes
 - 4.10 ratio with 9 3/4-inch Dana 60 axle
 - Sure Grip differential
 - Maximum Cooling package (less fan)
 - Radiator, 26-inch width, with fan shroud and power steering cooler (if equipped)
 - 7-blade, 18 1/2-inch diameter engine fan with torque drive fan unit
 - Hemi suspension
 - Firm ride shock absorbers
 - Front sway bar
- * Available on 440 and Hemi V-8s with 4-speed transmission



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tech article.

Still, the car was pretty much complete, with a couple exceptions. The Dana 60 rearend that was part of the Track Pak was missing, replaced by an 8¾-inch rearend. The radiator was incorrect, and the power steering cooler was missing as well. The car has its original tinted glass, except for the windshield.

But on the positive side, the car still carried a broadcast sheet hidden under the seat, had its matching-numbers engine and transmission, its Air Grabber system intact, and a lot of usable original interior pieces. Jeff's Resurrections found a date-coded Dana to replace the original, as well as a power steering cooler.

Most of the restoration involved fixing or replacing the cancerous sheetmetal and aligning the panels, followed by a trip to the paint booth. The engine was rebuilt to stock specs, with subtle upgrades like

a Mopar Performance electronic ignition (see sidebar).

To accommodate Nick's desire for street driving, Jeff's Resurrections worked up two sets of wheels — the

track," Nick said. "I got into the drag racing at 10 to 12, collected the trading cards by Fleer, and I was also a big fan of Hot Wheels and the Mongoose and Snake set."

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correct Magnum 500s for show, and a set of painted wheels with dog dish hubcaps and fat radials for street action.

For Nick, the GTX brings an early Mopar infatuation full circle. He grew up in central Illinois, where his dad would take Nick and his brother to the local dragstrip. He showed us a blurry picture of the trio, standing in front of Bill "Maverick" Golden's wheel-standing, Hemi-powered A100 Dodge truck. "He took me out to a track locally called the Assumption Raceway, a small Midwest

"I think I got somewhere along the way branded on the Mopars," he said. His first car was a 1973 Charger with a "dog of a 318 in it."

Flash forward to today. When Nick got the classic car bug, he shopped for GTOs for a while, and even bought a 1967 Olds F-85. "Then I started to realize I really wanted a Mopar, that's what I had deep in my brain," he said. Talk about follow-through; he has come a long way since that "dog of a 318." The GTX is now the Big Dog on the block. ■



Updating a vintage car with modern components is easier than ever, but it's important to remember that changing one part can affect other parts downstream.

For example, you've probably heard of cases where a car owner switches to a modern electronic ignition system in his

MODERN REVS

vintage ride, only to discover his tachometer no longer works. Such was the case with Nick's GTX, necessitating a call to Auto Instruments in Collinsville, Virginia.

"The early tachs were designed for points-style ignition systems," said Gentry Zentmeyer, owner of Auto Instruments. If you want a comprehensive understanding of why the shape of the square wave is different between the two systems you'll have to sit down with an electrical engineer over a beer. But the bottom line is, in most cases your original tachometer will have to be updated to work with a new electronic

ignition. Auto Instruments specializes in such conversions. "We build a modern tach inside the old tach," Zentmeyer said.

The benefits of an updated tach extend beyond just compatibility. "They rev quicker and they're more accurate," said Zentmeyer. Over the past year-and-a-half they've found plenty of demand for these \$275 conversions. "We take apart perfectly good tachs all day long and convert them."

If your tach went belly-up after converting to electronic ignition, you might want to contact Auto Instruments at: www.autoinstruments.com