

1969 Dodge Charger Daytona vs. 1970 Plymouth Hemi Superbird

In 2007, these cars would have cost nearly twice as much, but they are still priced above five years ago. Hemi magic still outweighs Daytona's rarity

by Colin Comer



Photos: Mecum

It's a long time since any Dodge Daytona or Plymouth Superbird raced on the high banks in NASCAR competition, but they routinely fly across auction blocks these days. There's no question the 1969-only Daytonas, with 503 produced, are more desirable than the 1970-only Superbird (with 1,935 produced), but what if a 440-powered Daytona faced off against a 426 Hemi 'Bird, at least in terms of current values? The 2009 Mecum Spring Classic Auction gave us that scenario. Here's what the auction company catalog had to say about the two cars:

Lot S150: 1969 Dodge Charger Daytona

Chassis number: XX29L9B400581

Only 503 Daytonas were built, so every one is a rarity, especially this unrestored Bright Green Metallic 440 Magnum 4-speed.

Of the 503 Daytonas, 70 were powered by the 426-ci/425-hp Hemi and 433 outfitted with the 375-horsepower 440 Magnum V8. The car offered here is one of only 139 440/4-speed manual transmission cars. It is, more importantly, in exceptional original and unrestored condition throughout. It received a careful professional repaint in the late 1970s to remedy the substandard finish that was gen-



erally a feature of Creative Industries' work in converting the Charger to Daytona specs. At the same time, the door jambs and trunk were left unchanged to preserve as much of the car's originality as possible. The finish remains outstanding, with a wonderful patina.

The body of this Daytona has never seen damage of any kind. The trunk is undisturbed to the extent that the internal wing supports still hold the liner down, and both jacks remain in place. The car retains its entire factory-installed matching-numbers drivetrain; glass, trim, wheels, chrome and all other hardware are original. The deluxe bucket seat interior is showroom fresh and has remained completely unmolested throughout the car's life, except for routine cleaning and detailing.

Accompanied by complete owner history and the original factory broadcast sheet, it is in need of nothing but a caring new steward.

Details

1969 DODGE DAYTONA

Year produced: 1969
 Number produced: 503
 SCM Valuation: \$150,000–\$600,000
 Original list price: \$3,993
 Tune-up cost: \$150
 Distributor cap: \$12
 Chassis #: Top of driver's side dashboard
 Engine #: Stamped in passenger's side front of block above oil pan rail
 Clubs: Daytona/Superbird Club
 13717 W. Green Meadow Dr.
 New Berlin, WI 53151
 More: www.superbirdclub.com
 Alternatives: 1968–70 Shelby GT500;
 1970–71 Dodge Hemi 'Cuda;
 1969–70 Ford Mustang Boss 429
 SCM Investment Grade: A (Hemi); B (440)

Comps



1970 Plymouth Superbird
 Lot 246, s/n RM34U0A167140
 Condition 3-
 Sold at \$110,000
 RM, Rochester, MI, 8/2/2008
 SCM# 117389



1970 Plymouth Hemi Superbird
 Lot 1010, s/n RM23R40162284
 Condition 2-
 Sold at \$307,000
 Barrett-Jackson, Scottsdale AZ, 1/28/2005
 SCM# 36953



1969 Dodge Charger Daytona
 Lot S122, s/n XX23L9B390024
 Condition 1-
 Sold at \$150,150
 Mecum, St. Charles, IL, 10/3/2008
 SCM# 117960



Details

1970 PLYMOUTH SUPERBIRD

Year produced: 1970
 Number produced: 1,935
 SCM Valuation: \$85,000–\$300,000
 Original list price: \$4,298
 Tune-up cost: \$150
 Distributor cap: \$12
 Chassis #: Top of driver's side dashboard
 Engine #: Stamped in passenger's side front of block above oil pan rail
 Clubs: Daytona/Superbird Club
 13717 W. Green Meadow Dr.
 New Berlin, WI 53115
 More: www.superbirdclub.com
 Alternatives: 1968–70 Shelby GT500;
 1970–71 Dodge Hemi Challenger;
 1969–70 Ford Mustang Boss 429
 SCM Investment Grade: B

Lot S180.1: 1970 Plymouth Superbird

Chassis number: RM23ROA170172

Plymouth acolytes bristled when Dodge introduced the winged Daytona in 1969, and with high-profile racers like Richard Petty signaling their desire for a similar weapon, Plymouth responded with the Superbird. Two 440 engines and the 426 Hemi were available. This Superbird is one of just 58 Hemi 4-speeds. Finished in Alpine White with a black vinyl roof and black interior, it has 16,342 actual miles and ranks as one of the finest restored Superbirds in existence.

Awards include OE Silver Certification at the 2002 Mopar Nationals, where it was also awarded the highly coveted “Big Daddy’s Choice” award by drag racing legend “Big Daddy” Don Garlits. In 2003, it was voted “Best Muscle Car” at the Amelia Island Concours d’Elegance, signifying this car’s status as possibly the finest restored Plymouth Superbird in the world.

SCM Analysis The 1969 Dodge Daytona sold for \$159,000, and the 1970 Plymouth Hemi Superbird sold for \$318,000, both including buyer’s premium, at Mecum’s Original Spring Classic Auction in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 16, 2009.

So what do these two sales illustrate? First, they show that the Mopar market is perhaps the most wounded in the entire muscle car world. As they say, the bigger they are, the harder they fall. Mopar muscle values led the run-up in the market by a wide margin, especially anything that had that four-letter word on it: HEMI. Two years ago, both of these cars would have cost nearly twice as much, but they are still priced above what they were five years ago. Case in point, I actually used to own this Daytona, lot S150. I purchased it in 2006 for \$215k, and sold it to the Mecum consignee for \$225k a few days after I bought it. By 2007, it was worth perhaps \$250k, and by late 2008, it had slid down the slippery slope of decreased value along with our economy at large.

The good news today is that the market seems to have settled to a point where sellers are willing to take what buyers are offering, and deals are happening again. So how about the fact that the Hemi ‘Bird was exactly twice as much as the 440-powered Daytona? It shows that the Hemi mystique (and low production numbers) still outweighs the Daytona vs. Superbird difference in value.

The real numbers to ponder here are those of production totals: 503 Daytonas vs. 1,935 Superbirds. Had the ‘Bird had the base 440 engine with a 4-speed, matching the Daytona’s powertrain, I suspect it would have sold for \$85k–\$100k. One point worth noting on lot S180.1 is that no mention is made of it having its original engine, drivetrain, or even body panels. And while they do mention 16k miles, none of that is really much of a factor once a car is restored.

Also, while an OE Silver award is a huge achievement, it is not a Gold level award, meaning the judges found something not to their liking—all just nits to pick, but at \$318k one has the right to do so. You have to wonder... had this ‘Bird been an unrestored car with its original drivetrain, what might the result have been? I think the tide is finally turning, and original cars, even if suitably scruffy, are bringing a premium in what has been a sea of very shiny trailer queens. In the end, at \$318k, I still say that for one of the 58 Hemi 4-speed Superbirds, this was a smart buy and represents a great discount for someone who wanted to add one to his collection and waited to do so.

Which brings us to S150, the scruffy Daytona. Other than the 32-year-old repaint, this was a very nice, original car, right down to the “Hush Thrush” speed-shop mufflers somebody clamped in place during the Carter years. People talk about “honest” cars, and this was one of them.

All of the parts it left the factory with were still there, and that is an important aspect with Daytonas, as many parts are unique. At \$159k, the buyer got a great car for the money, although doing a restoration would not only destroy what is special about this car, it would also be financial suicide.

So the big question here is what would lot S150 have been worth had it been one of the 22 Hemi 4-speed Daytonas produced, all else being equal? I’d say about \$500k–\$600k, which is roughly twice what S180.1 sold for, and about half of the highest priced 4-speed Hemi Daytona sold since 2005.

Hemi or 440—no matter your favorite source of propulsion for one of these winged warriors, there is no question now is a pretty decent time to buy. Personally, I like the idea of a one-of-139 4-speed, 440-powered Daytona, just for the more pleasing aesthetics, nicer (Charger) interior, and lower total production number. And if you are afraid of “shrinkage” at the local cruise night when a Hemi version shows up, just don’t open your hood. ♦

