

# BLACK BEAUTY

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Photographed @ MCACN  
Rosemount, IL



**1 OF 1**  
**440 4BBL SHAKER**  
**'70 CHALLENGER R/T 4-SPEED**

**T**hey say the third time's the charm, so maybe that's the case with Bob Conca and his incredible little fleet of E-body Mopars. Bob's appeared twice before in the pages of MCG, both times with his incredible pair of Shaker hood 1970 'Cudas that were both sold new in Hawaii, where he found them, rescued them, and

brought them home to White Plains, New York where they received OEM prize winning restorations. His purple 340 Shaker 'Cuda was way back in our April 2010 issue, and his gold 340 Shaker 'Cuda graced the pages of our mag just last year in our October 2021 issue. While we were talking with Bob about his gorgeous gold 'Cuda, the story emerged that he'd be

unveiling something rather incredible at the 2021 MCACN event, and, it was something he'd been waiting for since 1970 – literally.

If you recall that issue from just last year, or the one we did many years ago on his purple Shaker 'Cuda, when Bob was a teenager, he worked at a gas station and saved every nickel he could with the goal of

buying a hot new muscle car. When he saw the new Challengers pop out in the magazines and on television, he knew that's what he wanted, so he stomped down to the Dodge dealership and ordered a 440 Six Pack Challenger with a four-speed, a 4.10 Dana rear axle, Top Banana paint, and most importantly, a Shaker hood,

because that's what the cars in the magazines had and that was something completely different. Well, as we all know, the Challenger Shaker hood fiasco occurred in 1970 and while you could get them on 'Cudas, very few actually made it onto Challengers, and those were built later in the year. So, after six weeks

of waiting, his new Challenger arrived, with a standard R/T hood on it, and Bob Conca was not a happy camper. Making things worse, Challenger R/Ts were in hot demand at that time, so the dealership had a rather snotty attitude about it and had something of a "take it or leave it, if





you don't want it, somebody else will" attitude. So, he managed to get \$90 off the price tag, slapped on some mags and fat tires, and for the next six years he drove the daylight out of that car. And, of course, it rusted. He sold it to a teenager during the gas crunch days, and said teenager promptly wrapped it around a telephone pole, sending the car to the scrap yard, so one Six Pack Challenger's fate is known for sure. Still, Bob never recovered from not getting that Shaker hood Challenger he'd set his jaw for back when he was a teenager, and it's one of the main reasons he got into collecting E-bodies when he became a bit older and wiser, and the main reason he ended up with the pair of Hawaiian Shaker hood 'Cudas. But, a 'Cuda isn't a Challenger and, today, as was the

case in 1970, you find a lot more Shaker 'Cudas than you do Shaker Challengers, so as the restoration of the gold 'Cuda was nearing completion, Bob finally decided it was time to do something about his long overdue shot at having a Shaker Challenger like the one he'd wanted as a kid. And, now, as then, that isn't an easy thing to do!

T'was in late 2017 that Bob began putting feelers out in magazines and online that he was looking for a factory Shaker hood Challenger. He wasn't particular about the color, or the engine size, or any other options, he just wanted it to be a factory Shaker car and to be in fairly decent condition. Since he's also got a pristine green metallic '70 Hemi Challenger, Bob wasn't hung up on getting another Hemi, so he was

actually hoping for a more conventional engine (not to mention that would make getting the car a lot more affordable). Then, in early January, 2018, Bob got a call from Ron Trowbridge. Ron, it seems, had a Shaker hood Challenger and spied Bob's advert looking for one. A few details were swapped, and according to Ron, it was a factory black-on-black car with a white longitudinal side stripe, an Argent Silver Shaker bubble, a factory deck lid wing, and the car was a 440 four-barrel machine with a four-speed and the Super Track Pack 4.10 Dana 60 rear! Bob initially thought someone was pulling his chain – how could a triple black Shaker Challenger, reportedly all original, with fairly low miles, that had been parked for ages, still be out

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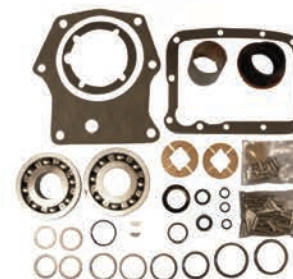
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there hiding in 2018? Needless to say, Bob was a little bit excited. Ron informed him he was in Washington, and since he's in New York, Bob

excitedly told him he'd see him the next day – Bob was going to hook up his trailer and head out the next morning! But, there was a little mis-

understanding, Ron was in Washington State, not Washington D.C., so that did change plans just a touch! To his astonishment, Ron refused to take a deposit for the car, saying it was a "handshake" deal, even though they'd never met except for phone calls and emails! Furthermore, since he was literally on the opposite side of the country, Ron volunteered to load up the Challenger and trailer it to Billings, Montana to save Bob from having to drive all the way across the country – he'd just have to drive halfway across the country! Is this a nice guy or what? So, with winter raging and his wife protesting due to the cold and the road conditions, Bob Conca was in no mood to wait for spring and miss out. He pointed his truck west in January 2018, and several days later he arrived in Billings, Montana, and there was Ron with the Challenger, covered in ice and snow, but looking exactly as it had been described. Working in conditions that resembled something of a North Pole exploration movie, they transferred

the Challenger from one trailer to the other, Bob loaded up on the paperwork and spare parts, wrote the check, and then he proceeded to motor back towards New York in the middle of an all-out blizzard with driving snow and wind that made him a much more religious man by the time he reached home!

Once tucked away in his garage, the car thawed out, Bob thawed out, and in the coming weeks, he took stock of what he'd gotten and absolutely marveled at his luck and what a fantastic guy Ron had been to go through all the trouble to make sure the car ended up in his garage. Throughout their conversations, Ron was adamant he wanted the Challenger to end up in the right hands; he was a lot more concerned about that than he was the money. Ron had bought the car off a teenager back in the early 1980s when it had obviously been used quite a bit as a stoplight shootout car. Amazingly, Ron never drove the car, realizing even then it was something special and needed to be preserved, so from around 1981 onwards, the E-body sat in his Washington garage while he acquired parts, intending to restore it one day, but never finding the time to do so. The early days history on the car is a little confusing and mysterious. Ron believes the young man he bought the car off of was the second owner, who had been street racing it, and the original owner was reportedly also a young man who bought it new at a dealership in Oregon. Obviously an ordered car, it wasn't ordered until very late in production, so this kid got his Shaker hood while Bob hadn't managed to get his. The scheduled build date was June 10, 1970, so the line was very close to switching over to 1971 production when this one was put together. As we always say, we'd love to have been a fly on the wall when the order form was filled out, because the option list on the car doesn't seem to have a lot of rhyme or reason. He got the 440 Magnum engine with the Shaker (which is actually far rare than a Six Pack with a Shaker), a Pistol Grip four-speed without a center console, the 4.10 Dana rear axle, white stripes, the deluxe

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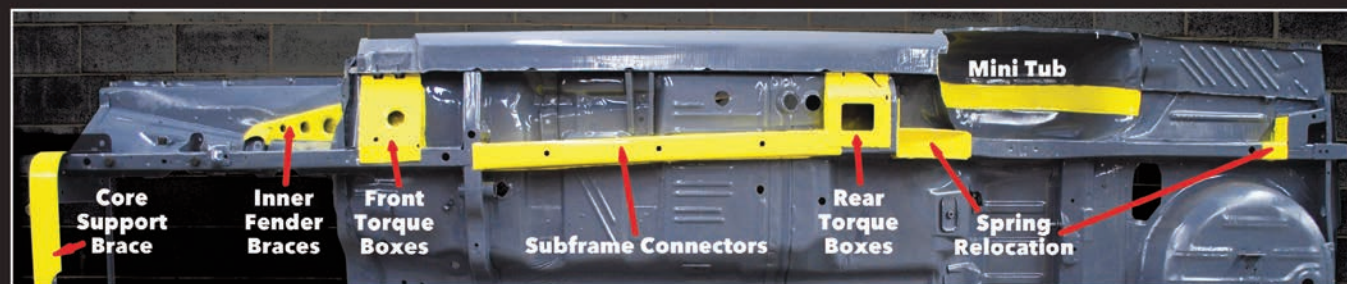
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black interior, an AM/8-track stereo, and the factory deck lid spoiler. He also opted for the 15" black steel wheels instead of Rallye wheels, which presumably means he intended to put mags on the car right away. The Chally came with power steering and power brakes. There's no tinted glass, only the basic chrome single rearview mirror, no chin spoilers, no light package, no pedal dress up package. But he did get the factory tach. And, obviously, the color combo is pretty hard to beat on the sinister-looking scale. It wasn't a cheap car for a youngster to buy, but neither was Bob's original yellow one, so that in itself proved something of another little personal connection with the car.

Bob started in on the restoration before the winter of 2018 was over, and before the snow had melt-

ed, the engine and transmission were out of the 77,000-original mile car and he was well on his way to tearing them down and rebuilding everything. Bob did most of the disassembly work in his own garage, then brought the body over to his friend Mike Mancini at American Muscle Cars, where they massaged the body back to absolutely perfect condition (it only needed a couple small patch panels and a couple of small dings repaired), then they laid on the multiple coats of glossy black, installed a new vinyl top, and put the long white stripes back in place. Meanwhile, Bob was finishing up rebuilding the motor and transmission himself at his garage, and in 2020, the whole ball of wax ended up back in his garage and the reassembly and detail work began.

It's a Hamtramck-built Challenger, but there were no broadcast sheets to go by, but thanks to a lot of older photos and photos he'd taken of the car before pulling it apart, Bob was able to go hardcore into the detailing. Having been garaged since the early eighties, all those little grease pencil and paint splotch markings underneath were pretty well preserved, so Bob was able to duplicate all of them and he's got the photographic proof that they were all original to the car. And so, in the summer of 2021, the Challenger

was finished and Bob had done his usual over-the-top job of performing an OEM-quality restoration with the help of American Muscle Car and some of his nearby Mopar buddies. Familiar with his Hawaiian 'Cudas, Bob Ashton, of the MCACN event in Chicago, asked Bob if he'd be willing to unveil the car at the show, and who wouldn't want an invitation like that? So, in front of a crowd of hundreds of Mopar fanatics, the tarp was literally yanked off this black pearl to numerous "ooohs" and "ahhhs" and quite a bit of applause. And, the hard

work paid off, because the Shaker Chally won OEM Gold at MCACN its first time out, it won the "Outstanding First Time Shown Dodge" award, and Bob found himself getting invited to the super prestigious Greenwich Concours d'Elegance! Very few muscle cars get that honor, as it's largely prewar brassers, Bugattis, Duesenbergs, and things of that nature, so, hey, obviously the car made quite an impression!

So, with Bob now having six E-bodies in the collection, and finally getting the Shaker Challenger he's

wanted since he was seventeen, he tells us he's probably gonna' stop buying and just enjoy what he has. He tells us he'll likely show the black R/T for a couple of years since its so nice, then begin driving it and making some cruise nights with it, because hey, after the first couple of years, acquiring more trophies just gets pretty dull. So, Bob Conca had to wait fifty-one-years to get his Shaker hood Challenger, but as they say, patience is a virtue. And, in this case, you cannot argue that patience didn't pay off bigtime! ✖

