


KRUSTY 'CUDA



It takes an awful lot to steal the show at MCACN, but Kyle Shay, out of Minnesota, did just that with his recently discovered 1970 'Cuda Super Stocker time capsule, which made its public debut at MCACN, and we kid thee

not, this was hands-down the most photographed and videoed machine at the entire event. If Kyle would've charged a dollar for everybody who got their photos taken standing next to the car, he probably would've raised enough money to buy a whole 'nuther car! This one ticked off all

the boxes to garner attention; rare car converted to a drag car when new, wild custom paint done when new, and it had been well-preserved (sort of) for the better part of forty years. Curiosity seekers from all muscle car camps stopped by to take photos and marvel at this one as it's



IN EARLY 2024, A FRIEND TOLD KYLE THAT THE FAMILY OF A RECENTLY DECEASED COLLECTOR, ALAN JOHNSON, WAS PUTTING EVERYTHING HE HAD UP FOR SALE. KYLE WENT OVER TO INVESTIGATE AND WAS STUNNED TO FIND THIS 440+6 'CUDA, WITH A HEMI IN IT, SITTING ATOP A TRAILER NEXT TO A BLACK HEMI SUPER BEE! THE 'CUDA HAD BEEN CONVERTED INTO A SUPER STOCKER WHEN BRAND NEW AND HAD BEEN OFF THE TRACK FOR DECADES. KYLE BOUGHT THE PAIR, AND THE 'CUDA WAS STUCK TO THE TRAILER BY BADLY RUSTED CHAINS SO HE HAULED IT HOME, TRAILER AND ALL!

the barn find machine we all get cold sweats about finding.

Kyle Shay's no stranger to Mopar muscle wagons, and he's had more than his fair share through the years. He was a bit unprepared for the phone call he got in early 2024 from his nearby friend, Jeff Reinardy, telling him local Mopar hoarder and all-around parts and car gath-

erer Alan Johnson had passed away and his family was looking to sell all his old cars and parts; the whole lot. That didn't blow the doors off that morning conversation, but Jeff had already been over there to look around, and some of the photos he sent Kyle showed what appeared to be a wild-looking old 'Cuda wearing the remnants of a very cool retro race car paint

scheme, super wide slicks out back, and skinnies up front. If nothing else, Kyle wanted a look at that car. He made a few calls, and not long after lunch that same day, he was standing in the overgrown, heavily weed-infested yard that surrounded two old buildings packed full of all kinds of things that looked like they'd

been there a hundred years. Joel Koehnen (whom the family had tasked to sell off all the cars and parts) showed Kyle around and led him over to the 'Cuda he was wildly interested in, and there it sat atop a car trailer. The car was secured to the trailer with rusted chains, and all four of its tires were flat and dry-rotted. Joel told Kyle the car had a Hemi in it, but he didn't know a whole lot about its racing background. Leaping onto the trailer, there was indeed a Hemi sitting under the Shaker bubble, but a lot of things had been unhooked, and mechanically, the car just looked incomplete, which was a puzzle at first. The 'Cuda had a "V" code,

and such, and get the buildings cleaned out as well. Since he owns some tractors, skidders, and equipment that would make the job a lot easier, and rather than pay someone else to do it, both parties agreed on the spot – Kyle could have everything he wanted for a very reasonable price, provided he cleaned up the overgrown wilderness in which it all sat.

The process began before the end of the week with several friends and his son helping out. All the parts and halfway salvageable cars were hauled over to Kyle's place, and all the undergrowth went down. Getting into the buildings, there were tons of spare parts:



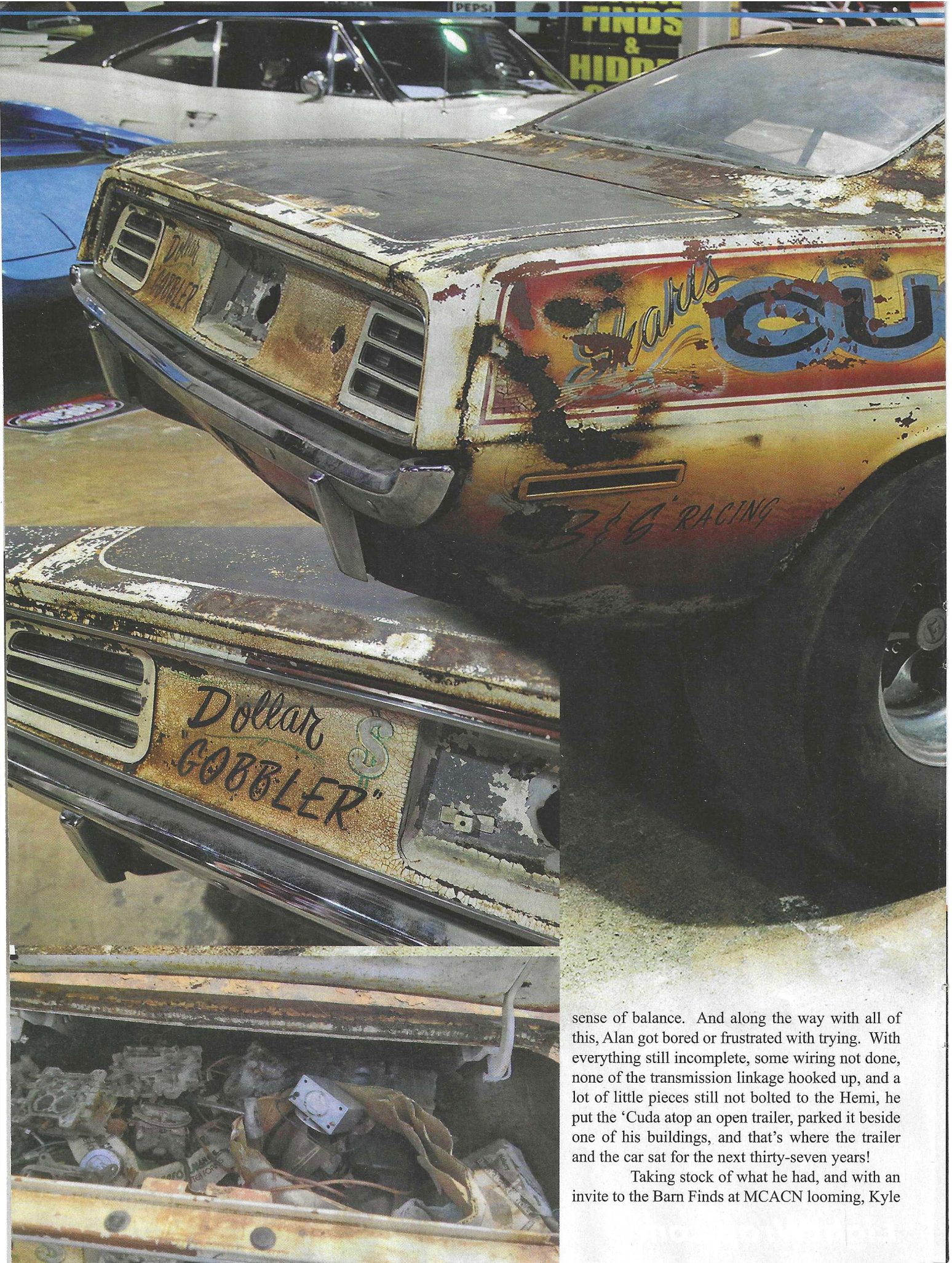
indicating that, from the beginning, it had been a 440+6 car, but sitting in the weeds right next to it was a 1969 black-on-black, stripe delete, Hemi four-speed Super Bee. It didn't take long to put two and two together; the 'Cuda was housing the Super Bee's drivetrain. There was a rapid-fire exchange of calls with a couple of Alan's family members. They realized this guy had legitimately known Alan, and his knowledge of the cars and parts seemed to make him the perfect guy to sell everything to. Talks were going quickly and well, but Kyle iced the deal by offering to clean up the property all around the buildings, grade and level everything, get rid of all the trash trees

engines, blocks, transmissions, shifters, carburetors, you name it, the shelves and work benches were loaded with parts Alan had been gathering up since the sixties. Most of that went home with Kyle. With all the cars and parts moved, he joined in the landscaping and clean-up efforts, and when it was all over, everybody was thrilled at how everything ended. But nobody was happier than Kyle because he was staring at a legit time capsule 'Cuda race car that had obviously been a high-dollar build when it was new.

Unfortunately, when Alan passed away, most of the car's history went with it. However, since a name was

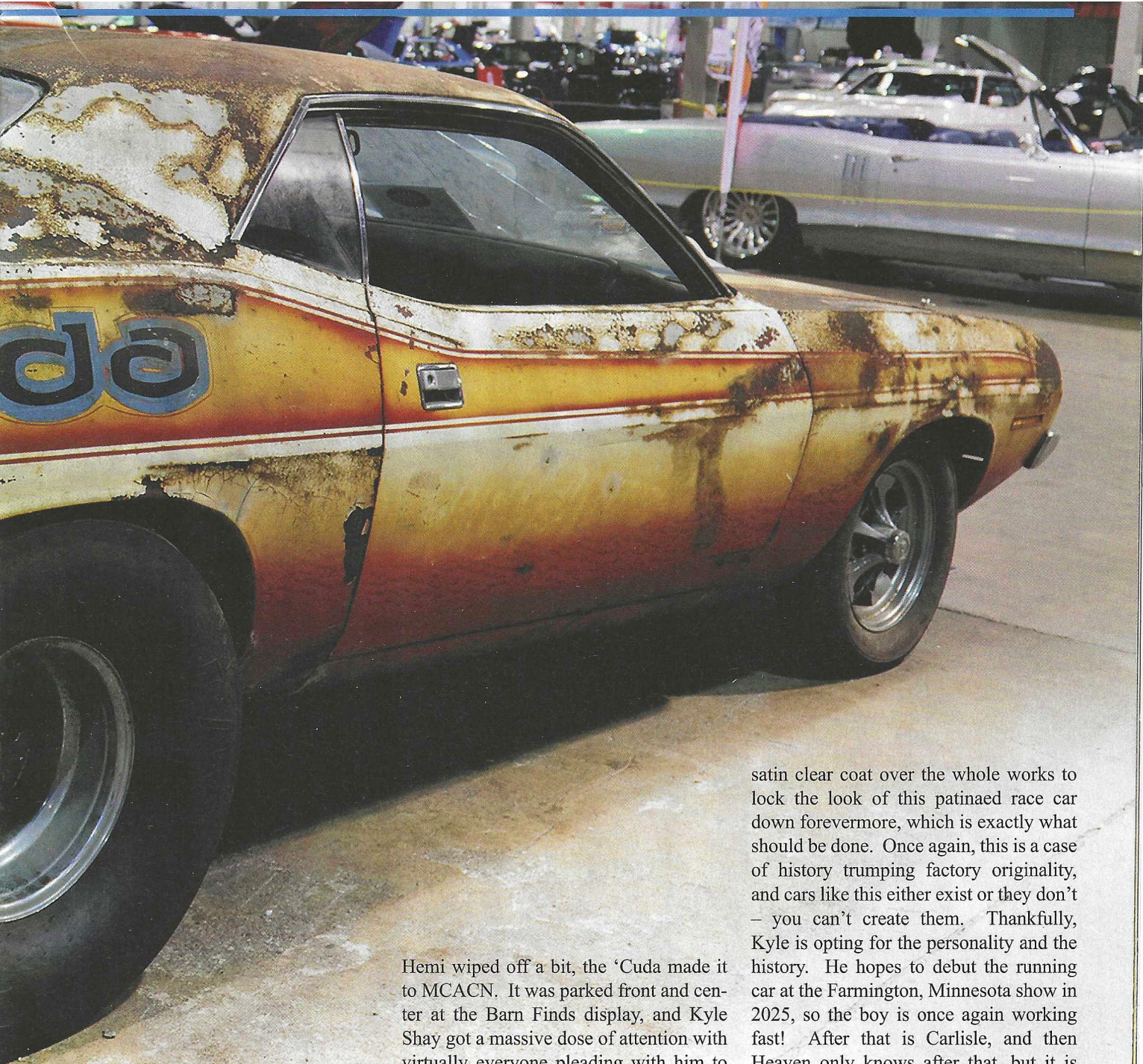
still ghosted on the doors, that gave Kyle an excellent starting point. The name "Bob Marois" could still faintly be read on the doors, and sure enough, drag-racing fanatics remembered Bob and the car, and some even had vintage photos of it from its glory days. Bob had bought the Burnt Orange/White interior 440+6 'Cuda brand-new, complete with the Torqueflite and a 4.10 Dana 60 rear axle. Bob bought it to go Super Stock racing right off the bat, so the car's original condition only lasted a few short weeks. The engine was tweaked to within an inch of its life, the interior was switched to black (doesn't show grease and dirt as easily), the gears went stiffer, and the rear wheel houses were split open and had a 6" strip of steel added down the middle to create big wheel tubs, moving them all the way over to the frame, and, of course, that necessitated moving the springs inboard with some aftermarket adjustable spring shackles. The big story, as you can tell, was the paint. A local painter of notable talent laid on the pearl white with contrasting shades of orange, yellow, and brown accents, making the 'Cuda look every bit like a state-of-the-art Pro Stocker. Bob's name was added down the flanks in gold leaf, and the quarters were embellished with "Shari's 'Cuda" (Shari was his wife or girlfriend at that time). Finally, the lettering "Dollar Gobbler" was added to the tail panel. Bob reportedly ran the car only in the Upper Midwest, and in 1975, he sold it to Alan Johnson.

Having been a Mopar guy all his life as well, Alan buffed Bob's name off the doors but otherwise kept the car just as it was, racing it up north and reportedly making a trip out to California to race it out there as well. For reasons lost to time, he yanked the 440 and the factory four-speed, and having obtained the black Hemi Super Bee, he pulled everything out of that car and swapped it over to the 'Cuda, but he never finished the job. The 'Cuda and Super Bee K-members have their mounts at very different heights, so upon bolting the Hemi into the 'Cuda, the motor sat up too high and barely allowed the hood to close. It also wreaked havoc with the 'Cuda's front suspension, so Alan made some rather crude homemade components to try and correct the car's



sense of balance. And along the way with all of this, Alan got bored or frustrated with trying. With everything still incomplete, some wiring not done, none of the transmission linkage hooked up, and a lot of little pieces still not bolted to the Hemi, he put the 'Cuda atop an open trailer, parked it beside one of his buildings, and that's where the trailer and the car sat for the next thirty-seven years!

Taking stock of what he had, and with an invite to the Barn Finds at MCACN looming, Kyle



had to work fast to get the 'Cuda into presentable shape. Tons of mouse roughage had to be vacuumed out of the interior, plenty of odor bombs went in there, he got the brakes freed up so the car could be safely moved around, a set of replacement tires went on to handle the completely dry-rotted and flat rollers, and then he gave the car several baths to remove decades of built-up filth. Doing that, however, gave him the pleasant surprise of discovering how solid the 'Cuda is for a car that sat outside in Minnesota! There are a few rust issues in the expected places, but nothing major, and all the floors are even solid in the car! With the

Hemi wiped off a bit, the 'Cuda made it to MCACN. It was parked front and center at the Barn Finds display, and Kyle Shay got a massive dose of attention with virtually everyone pleading with him to leave the car alone, which wasn't a worry since he'd already planned on that!

As this is written, the 'Cuda is back at Kyle's shop, and the Hemi is likely already out (he plans to restore the black Super Bee and put it back stock since it will be an all-matching numbers, tripe-black car). The plan for the 'Cuda is to build a slightly rowdy and loud 440+6 engine for it again, put the original four-speed back in, take the rear gears down a few notches, patch up some of the worse places in the interior, redo the brakes, install all new wiring, and then leave it just as it looks! Kyle will clean up the paint the best he can and then just spray a

satin clear coat over the whole works to lock the look of this patinaed race car down forevermore, which is exactly what should be done. Once again, this is a case of history trumping factory originality, and cars like this either exist or they don't – you can't create them. Thankfully, Kyle is opting for the personality and the history. He hopes to debut the running car at the Farmington, Minnesota show in 2025, so the boy is once again working fast! After that is Carlisle, and then Heaven only knows after that, but it is kind of amazing this major piece of drag racing nostalgia has lived in Minnesota its entire life and still looks this good!

Much to Kyle's surprise notable model builder, Brad Miles, presented him with a 1/18th die-cast model of his 'Cuda just as it looked back in the summer of 1971. This was a beautiful car in its heyday, and it's still a beauty. If Kyle was ever to restore the car, he tells us he'd put it back in the original race paint, but for as long as this paint holds up, it'll stay like this, locked in time, for many, many years to come. Well done to Kyle for realizing what a unique piece of Mopar history he's got. ✖