



Hemi Hurst



PERFORMANCE WEST GROUP'S 2005 CHRYSLER 300C HURST EDITION CONCEPT

Text and photography by Richard Truesdell

Road presence—it's a new term, describing cars that have "the look." The look is hard to define but you know it when you see it, and if any current production car has road presence it has to be the Chrysler 300C.

Even several months after its introduction the 2005 Hemi-powered Chrysler 300C still has the ability to snap necks in all directions. But, as in all things, as this translates into sales success, the 300C will become a familiar sight. The question is how do you keep it fresh and appealing? Larry Weiner at the Performance West Group, a company that designs and builds image vehicles seen at major auto expositions like the SEMA Show, seems to have the answer. Take the already outstanding road presence of the production 300C, dress it up in a contemporary version of an iconic '60s paint scheme, and set it all on a set of 22-inch wheels. The result is the 2005 Chrysler 300C Hurst Edition.

To readers of *Musclecar Enthusiast*, the Hurst name needs no introduction. Now part of the Mr. Gasket family of companies, the Hurst name is legendary, attached to shifters, wheels and other icons of the musclecar era. It's this heritage that Weiner was able to successfully integrate into the concept of an updated version of the 1970

Chrysler 300 Hurst (see sidebar).

Detail Counts

Under the hood the 300C Hurst Edition looks essentially stock save for the color-keyed white and gold shroud that hides performance enhancements that pump up the volume of the 5.7-liter Hemi V-8 to nearly 400 horsepower. "Because of packaging issues," says Weiner, "We could not go the supercharger route...there's simply not enough room. Plus with this project, there's serious production possibilities so this influenced our direction. With the 425-horsepower SRT-8 version announced at Pebble Beach, we wanted to position the Hurst edition as an intermediate step between the 'stock' 300C Hemi and the upcoming SRT-8."

Giving the 300C Hurst Edition the necessary stopping power to match its forward velocity capabilities, it's equipped with a big brake upgrade from Stainless Steel Brakes—three-piston billet calipers working in concert with large 13.5-inch

drilled and slotted rotors. Complementing and highlighting the brake upgrades are modular 22-inch Oasis Forged Wheels, Toyo Proxes S/T high performance directional tires, lowered suspension by Eibach and stiffer anti sway bars by Hotchkis. The result is a wheel/tire combination that completely fills the wheel wells, and contributes to a look that is simply unmatched by any four-door sedan, at any price.

In a tribute to the 1970 Chrysler 300 Hurst, the exterior is finished in House of Kolor White Pearl, accented with Hurst Gold Pearl. Opening the door, you'll see that the interior, which is somewhat restrained on production 300Cs, has been enhanced with a Katzkin handcrafted custom leather interior that mirrors the gold-on-white theme established on the exterior. And naturally, you'll find the touch of a Hurst shifter to actuate the five-speed automatic transmission. (The shifter was still under development at the time of our photo shoot. Imagine a classic chrome dual gate, with tall shift arm.)



All images FPO





1970 Chrysler 300 Hurst Edition

The Chrysler 300 letter series—conceived as a melding of high-performance and luxury—ran from 1955 to 1965. The car progressed through 331ci, 354ci and 392ci Hemi V-8s, before giving way to the 413 ci wedge-head V-8 in 1959. The famed letter series was discontinued at the end of the 1965 model run. After 1965 the 300 remained as a separate model, diminished in content but still the sportiest in the Chrysler line.

In 1969 the entire Chrysler Corporation big car lineup (Chrysler, Dodge, Imperial and Plymouth) received a handsome, Coke bottle-style body and grew even larger. In the second year of that generation's run, Hurst Corporation introduced an extremely limited production model, all 501 hardtops (plus two convertibles) featuring the same distinctive white/gold paint scheme that inspired the 2005 300C Hurst Edition. Each of the specially built units featured a three-speed TorqueFlite automatic transmission and all were powered by a 375 hp version of Chrysler's 440ci V-8. Each Hurst Edition received a unique rear spoiler.

While not a true member of the famed letter series, it is collectible due to its Hurst lineage and extremely limited production. Many muscle car historians consider it to be the biggest musclecar ever. Certainly the trunk is long enough it could serve as the flight deck of an aircraft carrier.

Driving any car where the wheel/tire combination has been upgraded four notches from stock, in this case from 18 to 22 inches, is often an exercise in futility; such is not the case with the 300C Hurst Edition. Even though this is a one-off show vehicle that was scheduled for a trip to the Chrysler Group Tech Center in Auburn Hills Michigan for a pre-SEMA Show evaluation, Weiner was kind enough to give *Musclecar Enthusiast* a world exclusive first opportunity to drive the 300C Hurst Edition.

Given that the 300C has already received wide acclaim for its driving prowess, we had high expectations for the Hurst Edition and we were not disappointed. The first thing that strikes you is its exceptional balance. More often than not when bigger wheels are substituted, necessitating ultra thin, stiff sidewalls to maintain the overall stock wheel/tire diameter, ride suffers noticeably. Having driven several 300Cs already, we were shocked at how compliant the Hurst Edition remained. While stiffer than stock, it was not unduly harsh. In fact, it pushed the Hurst Edition even closer to what we would consider the direction of a pure Euro sedan, best exemplified by the M5 or an AMG E-Class. Going over expansion joints or even potholes so common on Southern California freeways, we knew that the lowered Eibach springs and stiffer anti sway bars from Hotchkis were almost perfectly calibrated to match the characteristics of the 10-inch wide wheels and the 285/35R22 tires.

Putting the pedal to the metal from a standing start with the traction control

disabled, results in ultra sharp response, courtesy of the reprogramming of the engine management system by long-time Performance West collaborator Kenne Bell. And while the stock 300C has a pleasant enough exhaust note, the Hurst Edition benefits by the perfect pitch provided by MagnaFlow cat-back exhaust that goes a long way towards emulating the classic American V-8 sound best typified by the original street Hemi almost 40 years ago.

Production Potential

In talking with Weiner, we discussed the production potential of the 300C Hurst Edition and while preliminary, it was no secret that serious consideration was already being given to the concept, well in advance of its public unveiling at this year's SEMA Show. "It will be interesting to gauge the reaction at the SEMA Show," says Weiner. "While you are the first to see and actually drive the 300C Hurst Edition, I think that you'll agree that we really captured the essence of the original Hemi-powered letter cars, in a thoroughly modern and contemporary package. Having some idea of Chrysler's future plans for the 300C, especially the SRT-8 version, I would think that positioned between the stock 300C Hemi and the high performance SRT-8, the Hurst edition would be perfect."

While the Chrysler Group has not announced pricing for the SRT-8 version, it is expected that \$50,000, unprecedented for a Chrysler sedan and BMW and Mercedes territory, will be the upper limit. Properly

2005 Chrysler 300C HEMI Hurst Edition by Performance West Group

COMPONENT DESCRIPTION AND MANUFACTURER

WHEELS

Manufacturer: Oasis Alloy Wheels
Type: 2 Piece Forged
Size: 22x10

TIRES

Manufacturer: Toyo
Model: Proxes S/T
Size: 285/35R22

DISC BRAKE UPGRADES

Manufacturer: Stainless Steel Brakes Corp
Calipers: Tri Power 3 Piston
Rotors: 13.5-inch Drilled and Slotted Rotors

ENGINE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Manufacturer: Kenne Bell Inc.
Model: Optimizer II

CAT BACK EXHAUST SYSTEM

Manufacturer: MagnaFlow

BILLET END CAP EXHAUST TIPS

Manufacturer: Cone Engineering
Size: 4"

LOWERED SPRINGS

Manufacturer: Eibach
Amount of reduced ride height: 40mm (1.5-inch)

SWAY BARS

Manufacturer: Hotchkis Performance

SPARK PLUGS

Manufacturer: Denso Model: Iridium

BODY CUSTOM PAINT

Manufacturer: House of Kolor
Color: Silver White Pearl
Accent Color: Hurst Gold Pearl

CUSTOM PAINT

Applied By: Mike Face Custom Paint

PINSTRIPING

Applied By: 'Lil Louie

CUSTOM GRILLE

Manufacturer: B-Cool Billets

WINDOW TINTING

Manufacturer and Installer: Johnson Window Films

LICENSE PLATE FRAME

Supplier: Summit Racing

VEHICLE COVER

Manufacturer: Covercraft Industries

INTERIOR

CUSTOM LEATHER INTERIOR

Manufacturer: Katzkin Leather

HURST EDITION MONOGRAMMED CARPET MATS

Manufacturer: Designer Mat

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE CHRYSLER 300C HURST EDITION:

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placed at around \$45,000, the 300C Hurst Edition will have no problem finding a group of buyers that will be happy to be driving a contemporary interpretation of a true automotive icon. Go for it Chrysler!