

THESE BABY MOPARS HAVE HAD a tough time of it over the years. Based on the L-body, the Charger evolved from the Plymouth Horizon/Dodge Omni twins in 1982, first being a 'performance' package on the Dodge O24 coupe. The Dodge Shelby variant emerged in 1983 with the normally-aspirated 2.2-litre transverse four motor. It was a good-looking vehicle with its extra spoilers and two-tone paint, but not much of a mover. Come the '85 model year a turbocharger was bolted onto the engine and performance was now greatly enhanced with 0-60mph in 7.4 seconds and a terminal speed of 124mph. These vehicles were produced until 1987 when the Dodge Daytona took the limelight and the Charger was dropped from the line-up.

Of course, bearing the names not only of one of the most cherished muscle cars of the Sixties, but also of one of the most highly-respected race car builders of all time, most people scoffed at the little front-wheel drive hatchback when it was launched. They probably stopped scoffing when they got their doors blown off at the traffic lights, or when the little hatch dusted them down on a twisty country road, though. Maybe that's why GLHS supposedly stands for Goes Like Hell Shelby-style! Still, even today the New-Wave Eighties import-fighter is an underrated performer with daily-driver practicality. Some people know this already, though. People like Glenn Newcombe.

'I purchased the first Charger back in November 2004, a silver over black Shelby with 85,000 miles on the clock, which my wife Clare found for sale on eBay,' says Glenn. 'Knowing exactly what the vehicle was and its limited production run, she wasted no time in bringing it to my attention. I wanted a second car as a reliable daily driver, but wasn't keen on a run-of-the-mill Astra or Escort. After contacting the owner in Southampton for the finer details, she bid on the vehicle and come the deadline found we were the winners.'

'Five days later I hitched a trailer to Clare's Cherokee and headed east with my brother Warren to collect the vehicle, arriving at Southampton in the dark. After a look around the vehicle and a quick drive I was more than happy with my purchase. Once safely back home with a new battery installed, the car started on the first turn of the ignition. Although not in perfect condition - the alloys need recoating, and the paint's blooming in places - the Charger certainly gets the looks and approving nods, and is a head-turner wherever it goes. After a clutch replacement, and an alternator that wasn't charging (luckily the car came with a spare in the boot), the car has remained a reliable and solid daily-driver.'

'Now fully infected with the L-Body bug I was keen to find more informa-

1987 Dodge Shelby Charger, 1987 Dodge Shelby Charger GLHS Glenn Newcombe, Helston, Cornwall



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tion on these vehicles. I located a rarer 1987 Shelby GLHS (number 693) for sale on eBay in Portsmouth that failed to reach its reserve. The Shelby GLHS was a limited run of 1000 vehicles bought by the legendary Carroll Shelby, sprayed black, fitted with new Centurion alloys, an intercooler and numerous other performance enhancements to the 2.2 engine, along with adjustable Koni shocks, Momo steering wheel and gear knob. The horsepower was now rated at 175hp although it's rumoured that Carroll Shelby admitted that the non-Californian cars had 245hp, 100 more than the standard Turbo. Performance was now 6.5 seconds to 60mph with a top end of 135mph. Each vehicle has a numbered plaque on the right-hand side of the dash bearing Carroll Shelby's signature.

'After a year of ownership the MoT loomed on my Charger and fearing the worst I learned that the GLHS was still for sale although not on eBay, and my very understanding wife asked if

I wanted the vehicle. Looking back it was a crazy question but why look any gift-pony in the mouth?

'Two days later I was back on the A30 eastbound to Portsmouth, Clare and our two-and-a-half-year-old daughter Maria in tow. The vehicle was found to be immaculate, and I had no hesitation in handing over my wife's hard-earned cash. The only thing missing was the GLHS decal on the nosecone above the grille, and slight tape damage, also on the nosecone. Having been imported from Pennsylvania in 1991 the vehicle had only covered 29,000 miles, 8000 since it landed on our shores. The car came with the original bill of sale, US title, most MoT certificates and all the original Shelby warranty and information cards. I drove the car back to Cornwall in the dark. The car felt solid, tight and was a ball to drive, noticeably faster than my first one and with a big helping of torque steer. A full safety inspection by Carrs of Truro, my local Chrysler/Jeep dealer, confirmed that the vehicle was mechanically solid as well as a good looker.

'The black and silver Charger failed the MoT, but after a small bit of welding, and some new brake hoses imported from RockAuto.com in Indianapolis, it was back on the road again. However the GLHS is now my daily driver, and my original vehicle is now up for sale to fund my wife's need for a classic 1970 Boss or Mach 1 Mustang.' ■

it may be a transverse four-pot, but it can give healthy small-block power

