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"1976 **Starsky & Hutch** Ford Gran Torino"

Photos and Information by Doug Stevenson and Kat Porter Story by Bob Mannel

A funny thing happened in the fall of 1975. A Gran Torino became a TV star in the police series "Starsky & Hutch."

At Spelling-Goldberg Productions of 20th Century Fox in Beverly Hills, the fan mail soon poured in with questions such as, "What model is that car? What year is that Torino? Does that Torino have a stick shift or is it automatic? How can I get my hands on a Torino like that?"

Ford could hardly mind all the attention the Torino was receiving, particularly since the show was partly sponsored by Chevrolet and Dodge!



In fact, Ford was delighted. A little known magazine called *Service Life* (Volume 8, Number 2 - March/April 1976), which was produced by the Dealer Publications Public Relations Staff for Ford Parts and Service Division, carried an article by Bill Carroll titled "Torino Steals the Show." In the article, he describes how the Torino came into existence.

"George Grenier, transportation chief for Spelling-Goldberg Productions, said the idea for the Torino's design actually was 'a synthesis of many ideas of production executives.' He elaborated: 'Last summer, Aaron Spelling came to me and said: "George, we need a specialty car for a new series. Do something to one of our cars to make it stand out.'"

"'We use cars from Ford Motor Company's Studio-TV Car Loan Program,' Grenier continued. 'I checked the entire Ford line and spotted a stock Gran Torino that had possibilities. We painted it tomato red, added a wild white stripe and a star was born.

"'Of course, we had to make some modifications to the vehicle for the purpose of stunts performed on the show. The car has mags, oversized tires, air shocks and hijackers on the rear end to cause a severe rake.

"'With a 400 CID engine, it can really accelerate, which is necessary for the many chase scenes.'"

George Grenier then went on to say that two identical Torinos were used. One car had a camera mounted on the roof so viewers could see what "Starsky & Hutch" saw. The other car was for exterior shots.

As the show gained popularity, Ford dealers saw their opportunities. As Bill Carroll reported, "Some Ford dealers had a few Torinos painted red and white, advertised the fact that a 'Starsky and Hutch-type car' would be at the dealership and drew throngs of youngsters."

Then Ford Motor Company got into the act and "ordered a limited production of a similar car - 1,000 units - to be produced at the Chicago Assembly Plant. The car, available for dealer orders, has very similar paint treatment style."

Doug Stevenson's car is one of those one-thousand, limited production cars. He looked for a long time to find one and finally ended his search in August 1993. When he purchased it for \$2,000, it had over 148,000 miles on its original 400 cubic inch engine. The car had been fairly well maintained by not driving in winter, but during summer months had seen regular service.



Doug's car was manufactured on March 17, 1976. For those interested in specifics, here is how Ford described his car's options:

- *351 Cleveland Engine/Corning Englehard 400 Catalytic Converter*
- *Bright Red Paint with Special Application*
- *Vinyl Bench Seats with Black Interior Trim*
- *XPL Type, C-6, Automatic Transmission*
- *Conventional Rear Axle*
- *HR78 x 14/B Radial W/S/W Tires*
- *Sport Steering Wheel*
- *Bumper Protection Group*
- *Manual Air Conditioning*
- *Anti-Theft Package*
- *Complete Tinted Glass*
- *Styled Steel Magnum Wheels*
- *Heavy-Duty Suspension*

However, Doug's car had long departed from being completely original, so he changed a few things to suit his budget and desires, while maintaining the "Starsky & Hutch" look. The interior, already customized with black and red crushed velour was switched to that of a 1973 Gran Torino. As Doug says, "the best that I could come up with that my budget allowed."



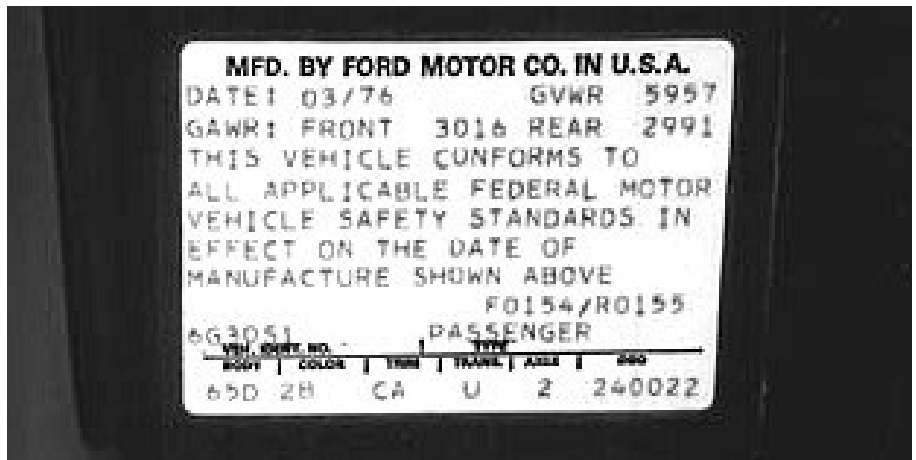
The engine was replaced with a 1974 460 V8, bored .030 over and hopped up with some goodies such as hot cam and Holley 750 cfm. To add some flavor to the authenticity of the car, he included a Motorola 2-way radio control head and a tear drop flashing light. Doug also runs slotted mags rather than the original Magnum 500 wheels, although he is not sure whether every single "Starsky & Hutch" car had the same style wheels.

All "Starsky & Hutch" Gran Torinos carried a special tag in the engine compartment on the right side along the passenger cowl.

The PS-122 code is [sometimes] here as well as the full DSO number - in this case, 240022.



Note the door tag also carries the same unique DSO number - 240022.



According to Doug, the black stripe covering the red and white (arrow) was not factory stock. Instead, Ford painted the white and then applied the red paint over it.



Doug has done considerable research on these cars and has talked to other "Starsky & Hutch" Gran Torino owners. Here is what he has learned so far:

- All were built on a 1976 Gran Torino platform, not Torino or Brougham.
- Production started in March 1976.
- Dual color keyed racing mirrors and deluxe bumper group (front & rear guards and moldings) were part of the package along with the special paint. Also any other option that was available on a Gran Torino could be ordered.
- 351 V8s were standard, while 400 & 460 V8s were optional.
- The white stripe was put on the car before the red. In other words, the red paint overlaps the white, instead of the stripe being painted on the car.
- Paint code used for the red was 2B (Bright Red).

- All carried a 0022 DSO number after the actual 2-digit DSO [Canadian cars had 8000 instead of 0022]
- [Some] carried a PS 122 special ID code on the data plate in the engine compartment near the passenger windshield. [All have the data plate with the car's DSO ending in 0022]. This code is also on the build sheet.

Fortunately, several build sheets have survived to confirm that last item. A very fine example comes from Kat Porter's "Starsky & Hutch" Gran Torino featured on the front cover. Note the special '2B' paint code and special order code of '0022'. The DSO number in block 29 & 30 is '52'. Combined, the DSO number on the data plate would read '520022'. Doug's car carries a DSO of '240022' while a third known "Starsky & Hutch" Gran Torino has the number '430022'.

PASSENGER				EX-BODY				DATA PLATE		WHEELS		WINDSHIELD	
YEAR	LINE	UNIT	SEAL	TOYS	PAINT	LOWER	UPPER	DSO	PRO	SPD	TYPE	SIZE	DATE
1971	F650	221	878		2B			52	00	22			24E

If that is not convincing, then the 'STARSKY AND HUTCH UNIT PS 122' at the bottom says it all.

REMARKS (THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION SUPERSEDES EQUIPMENT REQUESTED ABOVE)

STARSKY AND HUTCH UNIT PS 122

More Photos from the 1996 Fairlaner Article
"1976 **Starsky & Hutch** Gran Torinos"
Photos by Doug Stevenson



A mandatory option on the "Starsky & Hutch" cars was the bumper protection group. (vertical bars on the bumper).

The bumper protection package also included the rear bumper vertical bars.



The open grille style was a continuation of the theme begun with the 1973 Torino, but looked much like the 1975 design.

The taillights were very attractive and wrapped around the fender for side viewing.





The white stripe was very bold. Painted first, the red overlapped the white. The black border [on this car] is non-stock.

The Torino rear emblem was installed over the gas door. Doug did not believe this was the proper insignia.



Doug added a touch of nostalgia by including a Motorola radio and red bubble light in case the bad guys got ornery!

While his engine compartment originally held a 400 cubic inch V8, Doug upgraded that to a 460 Monster.





News Release

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February 9, 1976

A production version of the flashy red Ford Gran Torino used by television detectives Starsky and Hutch as a chase car in the popular Wednesday night television series is going to be offered by U.S. Ford dealers.

"The Starsky/Hutch vehicle has that performance car look, and it's exciting a lot of young people," said Douglas T. McClure, Ford Division merchandising manager. "We're delighted that we can make the car available to the general public, even on a limited production basis. It's a colorful addition to our dealerships' showrooms, and a lot of youths are going to have a lot of fun owning and driving it."

The Starsky/Hutch Gran Torino is a bright red two-door hardtop with a white vector paint stripe on each side. A 351 CID V-8 engine is standard with the special production model. Dual racing mirrors and a deluxe bumper group are required as optional equipment.

Ford will produce only about 1,000 of the special versions of the mid-sized car. All of them will be built at Ford's Chicago (Ill.) Assembly Plant. Orders are being accepted now at Ford dealerships. Production begins in March.

The Starsky/Hutch car will be one of Ford Division's spotlight vehicles at the Chicago Auto Show, February 20-29. The division also will display its new customized vans and many of its regular production cars and trucks at the auto show.