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HERE COMES THE ROAD RUNNER!

Of all the American muscle cars of the late sixties, this one stood out for its explosive combination of economy and power. Made to be driven at lightning speed, the 1970 Plymouth Road Runner was given a new lease of life thanks to the *Fast & Furious* franchise, becoming a key vehicle in the third, sixth and seventh movies in the series.

With his characteristic "beep-beep", in the cartoon show the lovable Road Runner delighted generations of children as he thwarted the unlucky Coyote's efforts to catch him time and time again. His name and his characteristic sound were incorporated into the fabulous Plymouth Road Runner, one of the most emblematic vehicles in the *Fast & Furious* movies.

THE BIRTH OF THE ROAD RUNNER

In the second half of the 1960s, the popular division of Chrysler, which already had a high-performance car, the Plymouth GTX, began studying the possibility of launching an inexpensive, powerful sports car. The story goes that the general manager of Plymouth, Bob Anderson, got the idea of building an inexpensive fast car from Brock Yates, the editor of the specialist magazine *Car and Driver*. The idea was that, for about 3,000 dollars, the customer could drive away in a car capable of covering 400 meters in under 14 seconds, at an average speed of 169 km/h. What a challenge!

The popular designer Jack Smith was given the job of creating the look this vehicle would have. It was built on the same B platform as the GTX model, simplifying its interior to lighten the load as much as possible. Then, it was given the Chrysler 6.3 L B-383 V8 engine, providing 335 hp. For a little more, it was also possible to choose the 7 L Hemi V8 425 hp engine.

Luckily the name Road Runner was chosen, because before that the possibility of calling it the Plymouth La Mancha had been considered, as a tribute to the then popular Broadway musical *Man of La Mancha*, inspired by Miguel de Cervantes' famous *Don Quixote*.

The look achieved with the Road Runner was unmistakeable: it was born to race. And also to win. That's why

With its elegant sports styling, the 1970 Plymouth Road Runner became one of the most popular cars in the *Fast & Furious* saga.

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FLORENCE FELMAN

In the world of the cinema, the set decorator is the person in charge of making or supplying each of the elements that appear in a film set. For example, the furniture or pictures in a house, or the traffic lights and waste paper bins in a street. Florence Fellman earned the job of decorating the streets and sets of The Fast and the Furious. Married to the production designer Waldemar Kalinowski, Florence managed to make an important name for herself in Hollywood. "Our work consists in creating a story that the audience can perceive in just a few seconds," she used to say. The disturbing sets in the thriller *Internal Affairs* (1990), the decadent motels in *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), and the lively dance floors in *Dance With Me* (1998) were some of her creations. It goes without saying that her work with Rob Cohen in *The Fast and the Furious* was crucial as to a great extent it established the look that would subsequently be kept throughout the franchise.

it caused an authentic commotion among fans when it appeared in the epilogue of *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*. After young driver Sean Boswell was crowned the new champion of the Tokyo street races, he was challenged by another driver: none other than Dominic Toretto. "You know this ain't no ten-second race," Boswell tells him, to let him know that the rules are different in Tokyo. Dom isn't fazed and, with a smile, he says, "I've got nothing but time," before making the engine of his Road Runner roar.

It was a brief moment, but it is one of the most-remembered clips in the history of *Fast & Furious*.

THE SUPERBIRD TAKES FLIGHT

The launch of the new Plymouth model and its great acceptance surprised the entire industry somewhat, but the competition took no time in reacting: Dodge came up with its Super Bee and Ford produced the Torino Cobra. Plymouth, for its part, did not want to make too many modifications to the 1969 Road Runner. Besides the two-door coupé there was another soft-top version, which did not arouse too much enthusiasm. Conversely, the genuine coupé was named car of the year by *Motor Trend* magazine.

In 1970 there was an important new development. Plymouth wished to present a variation of the Road Runner in NASCAR as a racing car. Based on the same chassis, some obvious changes were introduced in the design, such as the incorporation of a striking 1.5 cm rear spoiler, with a picture of the Road Runner on its sides, and the engine was modified to reach a top speed of 240 km/h. This racing car was known as the 1970 Plymouth Superbird. Due to the famous competition's rules, which forced makers to create a road-going version of the racing cars, the striking vehicle was also driven on the roads of the United States. Only 1,920 units were sold, and the surviving ones have become highly prized collector's items. Dennis McCarthy, in charge of coordinating the cars for *Fast & Furious*, knows all about this: he had a really hard time finding several models of the Road Runner for the franchise. "I really wanted to work with one because it is a car with incredible aerodynamics."

THE SECOND GENERATION

In 1971 the second generation of the Plymouth Road Runner arrived. Based on the same platform, the designers wanted a more aerodynamic line, besides partly modifying the front and the graphics of the car. The Road Runner was back on the road, but less powerful than its predecessors, because the laws passed that same year for the control of emissions forced them to mount new engines, like the 6.5 L and the 5.6 L. Of course, the style was still captivating. Maybe this was why its sales figures managed to remain really impressive.

The Plymouth Road Runner reappeared in the fourth movie, *Fast & Furious*. On that occasion, the vehicle starred in a short scene with Letty Ortiz behind the wheel. It was significant, however, because later on in the film, the cruel Fenix Calderon, the dangerous lead henchman of drug trafficker Arturo Braga, referred to the car, telling Toretto, "The last time I saw it, it was on fire," thus announcing Letty's probable death. What had happened?

A HAIR-RAISING EXPLOSION

Fans had to wait anxiously until the release of *Fast & Furious 6* to see on the screen what had happened to Letty. Via a flashback, we do indeed see her lose control of her Road Runner and roll over several times. When Letty, badly injured, tries to get out of the vehicle, Calderon shoots at the vehicle's fuel tank and causes a hair-raising explosion. It seems obvious that the car and everything around it has gone up in flames. But … what about Letty? Well, thanks to an unexpected and miraculous twist … she's alive!

If the first Plymouth Road Runner to reappear in the *Fast & Furious* franchise announced the return of Toretto, the destruction of the second one marked the resurrection of Letty Ortiz. The car seems to be a good omen: every time one appears, it's followed by some good news.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE ROAD RUNNER

In real life, the third and last generation of the Plymouth Road Runner lasted from 1976 to 1980, when production ceased for good. In this last stage of its life, the car was redesigned based on the F platform, inspired by the Volaré model. Despite the fact that it continued to be a powerful car, it was losing engine capacity with respect to previous models. Originally, it carried a 5.9 L engine giving 160 hp and had three-speed automatic transmission. Little by little, that magnificent idea of the inexpensive fast car was being watered down.

Although it left the production line in 1980, the Plymouth Road Runner continued to be a reference among American muscle cars for decades. Its popular impact can be measured by its presence in TV series, like The Simpsons, in which Homer remembered driving one of them as a young man; it has also appeared in films as different as the thriller *Payback* (1999) or the animated film *Cars* (2006), although its authentic movie debut came with the *Fast & Furious* franchise.

BACK IN TORETTO'S HANDS

There can be no doubt that the movie in which the Road Runner appeared most spectacularly was *Furious 7*, in which two different sports cars appeared, both of them driven by Dom Toretto.

To justify what we saw at the end of *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*, Dominic goes to Tokyo with the aim of bringing back the body of his pal Han. This is when he meets Sean and challenges him to a race.

Later on, back in Los Angeles, at Han's funeral Dominic recognises Deckard Shaw behind the wheel of a Maserati. The tension shoots up precisely because Toretto holds this mercenary, an expert in explosives, responsible for the death of his friend. Therefore, quick as a flash, Dom jumps inside a new Road Runner and takes off in hot pursuit of Deckard. Finally, both come face to face in their cars and hit the gas, putting both drivers' bravery and cool-headedness to the test. But … these guys are incredible! Neither of them changes course and so both cars crash head on. Stunned by the crash, Dom and Deckard soon face off. The mercenary gains the advantage by showing that he is armed, but he is forced to run away by the sudden appearance of a federal agent. Of course, the unfortunate Road Runner is only fit for the junkyard.



The Plymouth Road Runner first appeared in the saga to great acclaim with Dominic Toretto at the wheel, at the end of *Tokyo Drift* (2006.



THE DODGE BRAND IN AUSTRALIA

The Australian market, influenced for many years by American models, gradually evolved towards producing its own cars over several decades, before opening up to every brand in the world as a result of globalisation. The Dodge brand was present in the local market in different periods until 2016.

The Dodge Phoenix, seen in the picture with a right-hand steering wheel so that it could be driven on the left, was the Dodge brand's first model to be marketed in Australia.

Chrysler Australia was created in 1951, when the American company acquired one of the brand's Australian distributors. Local production started in a small way, supplemented by imports from the USA. The best-known were the Dodge Kingsway and the Dodge Coronet.

From 1960 onwards, the Chrysler Group developed several models in Australia. They included the Chrysler Royal and the Dodge Phoenix, which survived until 1973. The Valiant, originally a Plymouth model that had a long history in the country, was built in many versions including sports and Utility Vehicle (UTE) styles.

Chrysler Australia's parent company worked closely with Mitsubishi Motors after they acquired a 15 percent interest in the company in 1971, with the result that Chrysler Australia began building the Mitsubishi-designed Chrysler Valiant Galant. From 1994, Chrysler imported the Jeep Cherokee, then expanded the range to include the Chrysler Neon, Grand Cherokee, Jeep Commander, PT Cruiser, Crossfire, 300C, Voyager and Dodge Caliber. The seven-seat crossover Dodge Journey was the last Chrysler to be manufactured in Australia, with production ending in 2016.

Chrysler Australia, officially FCA (Fiat Chrysler Automobiles) Australia, is the official Chrysler subsidiary in that country, operating as distributor of Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Abarth, Alfa Romeo and Fiat vehicles.



ASSEMBLING THE EXHAUST PIPE (II)

In these session you will go back to working on the exhaust pipe. In particular, you will be installing the rear components.

Editor's note: The parts shown here may differ slightly from the parts supplied with this issue. This does not affect the quality or the assembly instructions in any way.

PIECES FOR THIS STAGE





















33A Rear left exhaust pipe (piece 1)
33B Rear left exhaust pipe (piece 2)
33C Left tail pipe
33D Right tail pipe
33E Mount bracket 1 for rear exhaust pipe (x 2)
33F Mount bracket 2 for rear exhaust pipe (x 2)
33G Rear right exhaust pipe (piece 1)
33H Rear right exhaust pipe (piece 2)
AP Screws 1,7 × 4 mm, (x14)*
LM Screws 1,7 × 3 mm, (x3)*

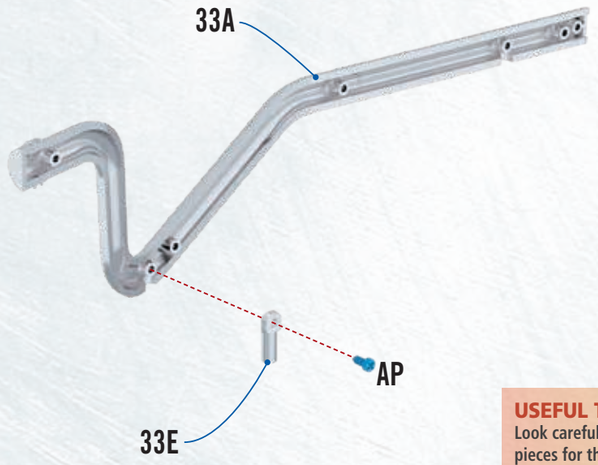
* Some of the parts are spares.

ASSEMBLY AREA



EXHAUST PIPE

Assembling the exhaust pipe (II)

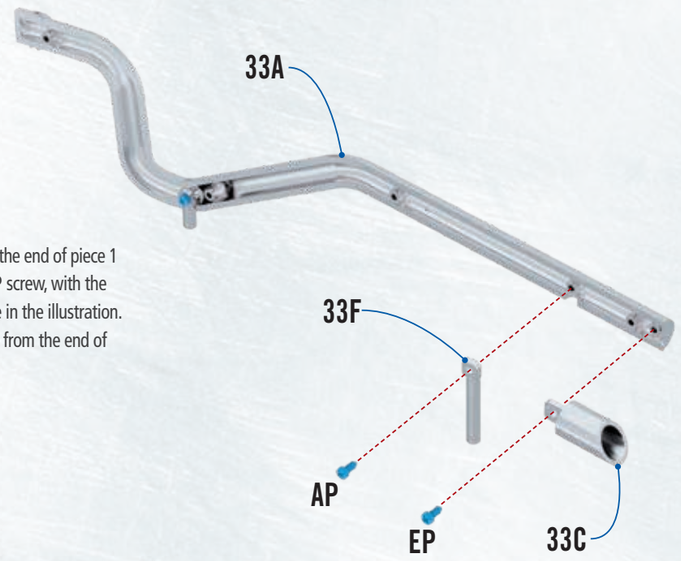


33.1 **START** assembling the rear components of the exhaust pipe by taking one of the two mount brackets 1 **33E** and, as shown in the illustration, aligning the eyelet with the hole in piece 1 of the exhaust pipe **33A**(look at the illustration to identify the correct piece). Secure the pieces with an **AP** screw. ◄

USEFUL TIP
Look carefully at the photograph on page 129 to identify the different pieces for the rear section of the exhaust pipe. The main differences between the pieces are the bends in the pipes and the position of the holes.



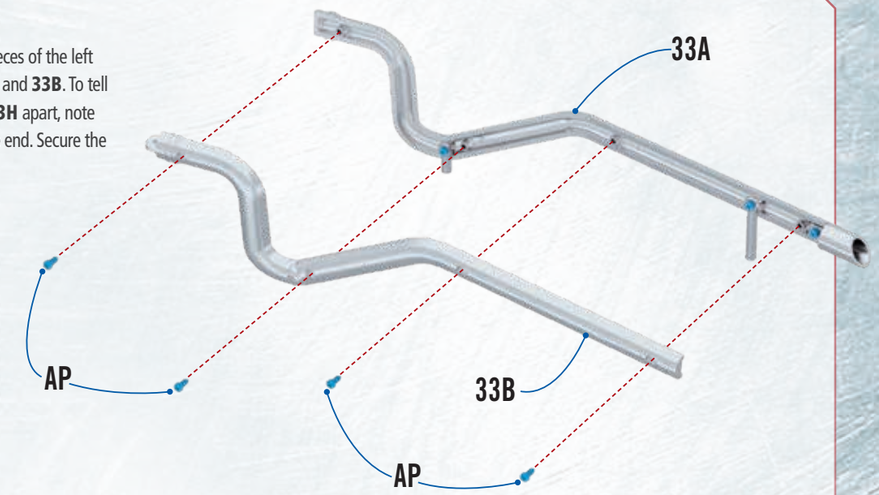


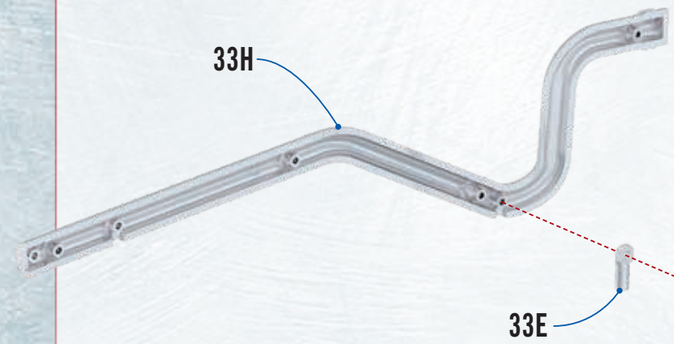


33.2 **ATTACH** the left tail pipe **33C** to the end of piece 1 of the exhaust pipe **33A** with an **EP** screw, with the pieces facing the same way as those in the illustration. Attach one of the mount brackets 2 **33F** to the third hole from the end of the exhaust pipe. Secure with an **AP** screw. ►

USEFUL TIP
It is easy to tell the two tail pipes apart. The left tail pipe 33C bears the letter "L", and the right tail pipe 33D bears the letter "R".

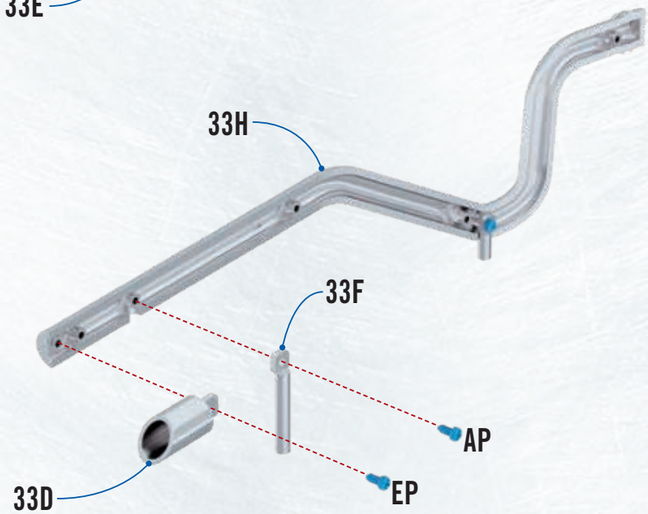
33.3 **JOIN** the two pieces of the left exhaust pipe **33A** and **33B**. To tell pieces **33B** and **33H** apart, note that the first has holes and a tab on the end. Secure the pieces with four **AP** screws. ►



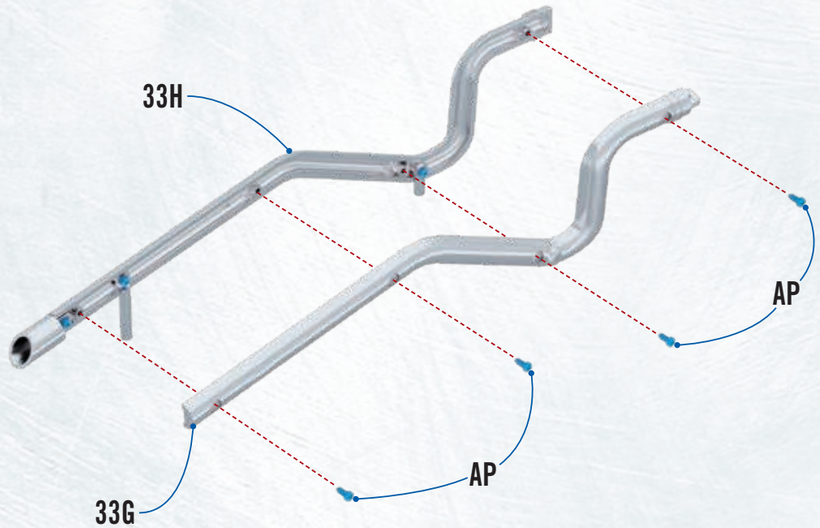


33.4 **NOW** you can assemble the right side components of the rear section of the exhaust pipe. Align the second mount bracket 1 **33E** with the hole in piece 2 of the rear right exhaust pipe **33H** (look at the illustration to identify the correct piece). Then secure with an **AP** screw. ◄

33.5 **USING** an **EP** screw, join the right tail pipe **33D** and the end of piece 2 of the exhaust pipe **33H**. Attach the second mount bracket 2 **33F** to the third hole in the exhaust pipe with an **AP** screw. ►



Assembling the exhaust pipe (II)



33.6 **CAREFULLY** join pieces 1 and 2 of the rear right exhaust pipe (**33H** and **33G**), ensuring the mounting holes are perfectly aligned. Use four **AP** screws to secure the pieces in question. ▲

STAGE 33 FINAL RESULT



You have now finished assembling the rear components of the exhaust pipe. Put the piece in a safe place until you are ready to install it on your model.

LET'S GET OUR HANDS DIRTY!



When tuning an engine, theoretical knowledge is not enough. We need to know how to put the theory into practice, following all the correct procedures, even those that seem trivial. Very often, the tiny details can have an enormous impact on the final performance.

Working on an engine might look simple, but it only seems that way. Sometimes it is the smallest things - and knowing how to do them correctly - that can deliver success or failure. Automotive engines are not all the same, either. Obviously, they will vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. But other factors, like age, and how they have been treated in the past, may demand skills based on knowledge and experience. It is often easier to work on an old engine than on a more modern one, where the high technological content of the motor often means that very sophisticated procedures need to be

Sometimes reading manuals and articles is not enough. In reality, you have to put into practice some "tricks of the trade" that only the most experienced mechanics can teach us.

When installing an engine, we must make sure that every step has been carried out meticulously. In many cases, the installation of the various parts must be preceded (and followed) by careful checks.

followed. For example, until a few years ago, tightening a bolt was as easy as sticking to the manufacturer's torque settings, and working in a diagonal pattern. Today it is often necessary to consult the workshop manual in detail and meticulously follow the manufacturer's procedures. It is not unusual to discover single-use "Torque to Yield" (TTY) bolts that are torqued beyond their state of elasticity, therefore undergoing plastic deformation causing them to become permanently elongated. Imagine what would happen if such a bolt were used on a connecting rod and broke because it was incorrectly tightened - it would be a real disaster!



All racers and specialists know how costly such errors can be, both in terms of durability and performance. It would not make sense to spend money to buy super-performing special parts and then realise that you are losing engine power because of friction generated by not respecting the correct assembly tolerances. An example could be with some engines with aluminium-alloy sub-bases. It is relatively easy to over-tighten the bolts to the point that you can no longer rotate the crankshaft by hand due to excessive friction. We must not forget all the checks which have to be carried out twice during assembly: this is why, very often, the assembly phases of sophisticated engines take almost twice as long as a standard motor. Now let us take a look together at how to meet various challenges in the workshop.

THE RIGHT WAY ROUND

Most mechanical components have a direction of fitting which must be strictly adhered to. For some components, it is quite apparent. But some people may not realise that even a simple washer could have a specific mounting direction. Another example is sprockets and pulleys, which may have a centre ring that is slightly more protruding on one side than the other. Let's not forget the connecting rods: after putting them on a flat surface, we can quickly notice that the big end is higher on one side than the other. But it is not only asymmetry that determines the direction of assembly. Sometimes it can be indicated, for example, by the presence of a small hole for the passage of oil. What about the piston rings? Knowing that they have a specific assembly direction is essential knowledge. And even if at times they seem perfectly symmetrical, in reality, they are not, even if the inclination is often just a couple of degrees of difference! It is essential to follow the manufacturer's instructions. So be aware of the presence of marks or indications on the part. We do not deny that there may be piston rings that do not have an assembly direction, but they are infrequent… better never to take risks!

TIGHT, YES. BUT NOT TOO TIGHT!

Let us clarify immediately: Most timing components, especially when we talk about performance parts, are disposable. In other words, we should replace them every time they are removed. The same applies to the standard parts like toothed timing belts and Poly-V belts. When just a few euros can guarantee us maximum security, why take the risk?

Speaking of timing belts, let us spend time on the subject, as there are a couple of things to always keep in mind. First, unless the manufacturer has provided otherwise by fitting the engine with an automatic tensioner, their tension must be adjusted to the correct value only at the time of installation, without further modification. They should not vary

The connecting rod screws are made specifically for this type of use, using high-strength materials.



To carry out various operations, such as when we have to loosen or tighten the flywheel bolts, it is often essential to prevent the crankshaft from rotating and immobilise it properly.

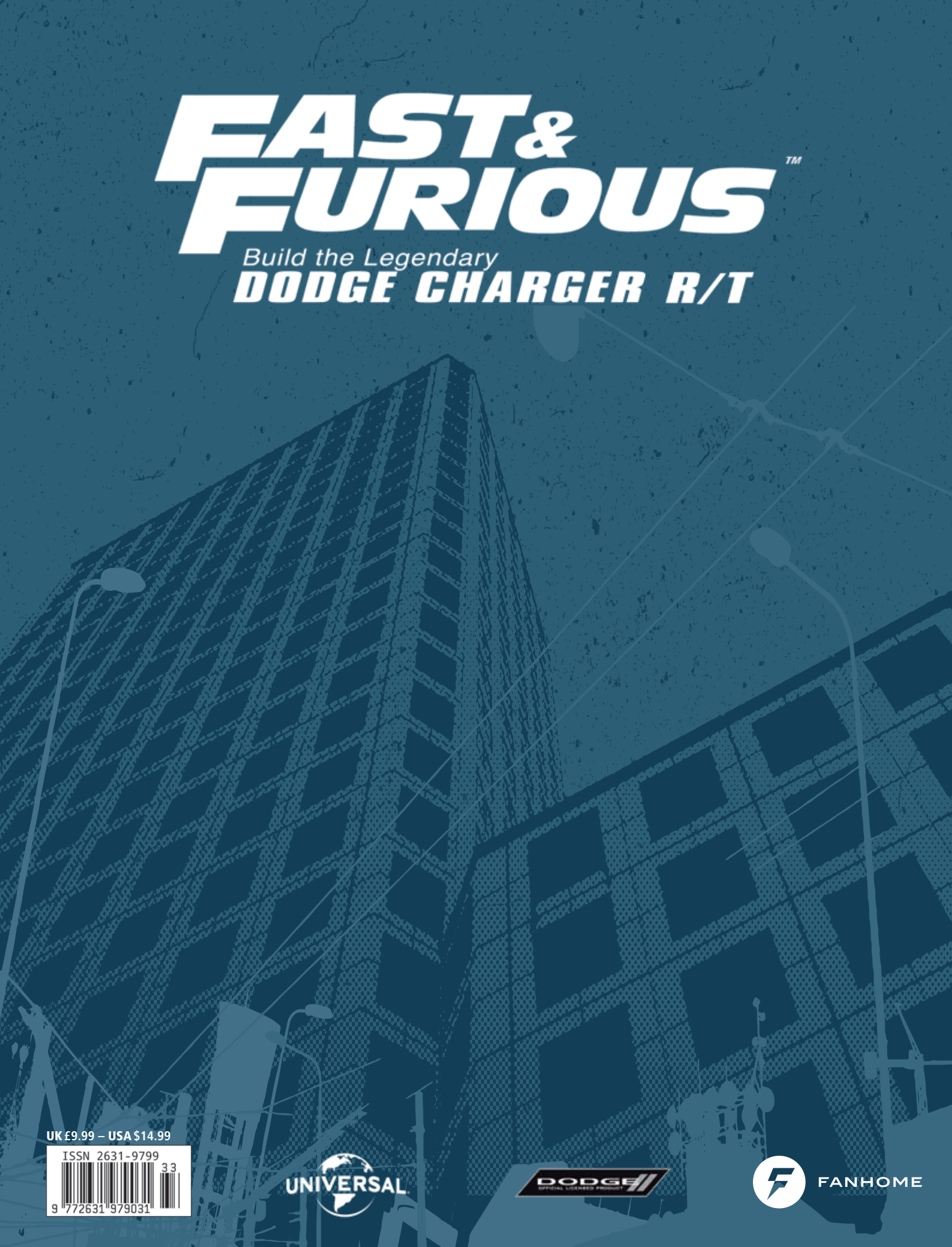
significantly during operation, since the resistant inserts are theoretically inflexible and there are no joints that can wear. In fact, the risks that can affect their reliability and durability all happen in the installation phase. In other words, when they are being handled by us! In fact, it is absolutely essential to avoid twisting or subjecting them to excessive bending, as there is a minimum radius below which you should not go. And, of course, it is essential to avoid any contact with oil, petrol or grease. And not only chemical compounds should be avoided: our hands can also be dangerous. When handling a belt, they must be spotlessly clean! If we are working on a racing or high-performance engine, we must remember that we will have to replace the belts much more often than for a standard car. It is also advisable to replace the tensioner.

Spare parts also need some care

If you are an engine enthusiast, you will almost certainly have a small stock of spare parts in your workshop or garage. You might have bought some new components and cannot wait to fit them at the first opportunity. Or perhaps you have some hard-to-find parts for cars that are no longer in production. You might have found them online or at an end-of-series sale. All you need is to find a suitable place to keep them. A fundamental rule: in the case of steel and cast iron components, it is vital to protect them from corrosion. The air in the environment often contains a considerable amount of water, in the form of atmospheric humidity. Remember that even a small amount of rust on the working surfaces can be enough to damage the parts in question. Therefore, they must be properly protected. Most manufacturers apply a waxy substance or an oily film to their products' mechanical parts and use special waxed paper wrappers or hermetically sealed plastic bags. And if we don't have the original protection, maybe it is because we bought them from a private individual? No worries - there are products (very often in a spray version) that can form a thin protective film on metal surfaces. Alternatively, we can use a thin layer of grease and insert the parts into plastic bags that are closed and sealed.

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