



The Chrysler 300 gets an 'S' model for 2012. The 300S, as tested, gets a black chrome grille and black accents in the headlight bezels, along with standard 20-inch rims, giving the model more street presence. Well-bolstered Radar Red leather bucket seats give the Chrysler 300S a sporty look.

New Chrysler 300S refines American muscle

By **NEIL MOORE**
Carguide Magazine
Metroland Media Group

It was big, bold and rather beastly.

And when it hit dealer showrooms in 1955, the original Chrysler 300 was also one of the most powerful cars available to the general public.

With Chrysler's 'Firepower' hemi V8 under the hood, delivering an unprecedented 300 hp from 331 cubic inches and two four-barrel carburetors, the first-generation 300 significantly raised the bar for performance coupes of the day.

It was an encouraging start for this legendary car, and there were several good model changes to follow. But time wore on and it became a bloated monster in the early '70s, and eventually hit rock bottom as a rebadged Cordoba.

Even Corinthian leather couldn't save this dog, which was thankfully put out of its misery around 1979 — the last of the 300s for a couple of decades.

The car's comeback in 1999 was with the company's 'cab forward' LH platform, and for the first time front-wheel-drive. Its 3.5-litre V6 wasn't bad (250 hp and 250 lb/ft of torque), but the styling, at least in my mind, became quickly dated.

And later in its cycle, with word of a return to a Hemi V8-powered rear driver, I felt that its exit couldn't come soon enough.

Fast-forward to 2005, and the big, chunky look of the new 300 made a bold entry to the full-size segment. It sported a large grille opening, big wheels, short front and rear overhangs and a noticeably high beltline (with narrow side windows), giving the car an almost sinister appearance.

I won't delve into the engineering minutiae, but little was shared with its previous generation. Performance wasn't bad with the standard-equipped

See NEW, pg. 6

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