

Preproductions from my collection



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In this issue's PrePro's section, I am featuring models that were never released from the TV Series **Viper**. Below is a page from the 1994 Tyco Matchbox Dealer's Catalog. This would have been a nice set.....



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sulHb6x6lDw>

Here is a **YouTube** link to the original commercial for the TV Series **Viper**!



Pictured below are the preproductions of the Morphed Viper and Dodge Stealth. These are from my collection. I just obtained the yellow Viper after a long 17 year search. As you can see, it was well worth the wait!! For the next part of this article I asked our 6th Ambassador, **Chuck Wiersma** to show us his Viper Series Collection. Please read his wonderful story about the history of these models. His collection is second to none!!! Thank you Chuck!!!



Above is a lemon yellow Morphed Viper. It has a dark blue interior and a pink riveted base without text. Below is the earlier version of the Dodge Stealth in black and a grey interior with the wider body that Dodge didn't approve of.



History

Here is Chucks story.....

In the 1990's, Tyco Matchbox worked with the Chrysler Corporation to develop several die cast models. These models were affiliated with a US television show called Viper. Two models made it to a short run preproduction phase before being cancelled. The third model also made it to a short turn preproduction phase only to be cancelled, salvaged as another model, and then recreated from scratch only to be cancelled for the Viper series but eventually issued in the regular MB 1-75 line.

The Viper television show was about a top secret task force of the US Federal government using a super tech vehicle in the form of a Dodge Viper. The car in its "street form" was a Dodge Viper RT/10. The vehicle could morph into the "Defender" which featured armaments and gadgets that were used to defeat the bad guys. A black 1991 Dodge Stealth was also used intermittently in several episodes of the show. The show first premiered on the NBC network in the USA in 1994 but was cancelled in its first season. The show was later syndicated from 1996 to 1999.

The star of the show was the Viper Defender or Morphed Viper. The model is the MB 265 or **Viper Morphed** as it is called on its base. Like most Matchbox designed models of the day, the sample was first made in resin and then cast in metal. Some slight alterations were made to the model between the earlier resin stage and later metal stage including less pronounced details on the hood, a smaller circle cast on the roof, a larger grille, larger exhausts and taillights on the rear, as well as a reinforced wing on the rear. Overall, the models appear very similar.



Side by side, unpainted MB 265 Morphed Viper on left and painted resin MB 265 Morphed Viper on right.

The metal preproduction samples were made in two liveries, one in regular silver and the other with “battle damaged” deco. Both samples appear as factory finished models with fully engraved bases, interiors, windows, and full tampa deco liveries. The models are fully assembled and riveted. Both models have grey plastic interiors, tinted windows, black plastic bases, red taillight trim, black trim on the rear section, and white tampa headlights. The models were manufactured with a metal strip in the base, a production standard at the time for many Matchbox models, to give the vehicle a suspension feel. The wing was cast to the body and the wheels were a chrome six spoke spiral. The bases were engraved with Made in Thailand, Matchbox Int’l Ltd, 1994 copyright, and 1:60 as scale.



Morphed Viper battle damage on left, Morphed Viper no battle damage on right.



Note tampa detailing around exhaust, on taillights, and on headlights.

One surprise - the model has a right hand steering wheel! Was an interior from another model used on these development models? The gearshift is also on the right side of the center console. As the model was never released to the public, when samples can be found they usually demand a premium price.

The second model designed in connection with the television show was the MB 264 Dodge Stealth R/T Turbo. This model has a bit more history behind it. The Dodge Stealth, like the Morphed Viper, made it through the resin design stage all the way to metal stage and eventually to a limited preproduction run before being cancelled. It has two known design liveries. The first in all black with tampa trim on the fog lights, turn signals, and taillights. The second with a black and green leopard stripe and no other tampa trim. Models sport black interiors, tinted windows, six spoke spiral wheels with chrome hubs, and black plastic bases. Like the Morphed Viper, sample preproduction models had fully engraved bases, riveted bodies, and complete tampa deco. The bases were engraved with Made in Thailand, Matchbox Int'l Ltd, 1994 copyright, and 1:60 as scale.



Group shot of the MB 264 Dodge Stealth (from left to right) Green and Black leopard stripes, all black livery, and two unpainted first shot castings with blue interiors, white plastic un-engraved bases, and clear windows.

According to die cast legend, Dodge did not approve the Dodge Stealth model as it appeared too “thick” or “fat”. The Tyco Matchbox team went back to the drawing board and started to redesign the model with a sleeker profile. However, the redesign never made it past the resin stage of development. Interestingly enough, the redesigned model was decorated with the same two liveries as on the original MB 264 die cast model, all black or black and green leopard stripe. The redesigned resin model included additional detailing on the hood, sides, and rear of the model. Unfortunately neither model was ever released to the public.



Dodge Stealth original MB 264 on left and redesign resin on right.



Dodge Stealth original MB 264 on left and redesign resin on right. Notice the redesigned model appears sleeker.



Dodge Stealth original MB 264 on left and redesign resin on right. Notice same deco designs used on both.



Group shot of the second Dodge Stealth model in various stages of development. Note green and black leopard stripes and all black models.

The third model affiliated with the show has a history all its own going back before the Viper TV show. The MB 227 Dodge Viper RT/10 model was originally designed in the early 1990's had a lower profile and featured a wraparound windshield, closed front grille, and bump out lights on the rear license plate.



The unreleased MB 227 Viper in metal on the left and resin on the right.

The only tampa trim on the model was on the headlights. The wheels were Goodyear Eagle racing slicks and the rivetted black base had a 1990 copyright with scale of 1:58. Despite the fact that this model made it all the way to the metal stage, it was not approved by Dodge for release. In order to salvage the investment in the design and tooling, the model was modified into the MB 227 **Sunburner**. Heavy modifications were made to the model especially in the grille, hood, and side areas to change it to the generic Sunburner casting.



The original metal MB 227 Viper RT/10 on the left, the MB 227 Sunburner in the middle, and later released MB 260 Viper RT/10 on the right



The original metal MB 227 Viper RT/10 on the left, the MB 227 Sunburner in the middle, and released MB 260 Viper RT/10 on the right

Now four years later, during the development of the MB 265 Morphed Viper and the MB 264 Dodge Stealth, the development of Dodge Viper RT/10 is undertaken once again. This project is started from scratch and the vehicle is developed as a wholly new model. The casting number is assigned MB 260 and it has no relation to the previous MB 227 casting. The model has a higher profile, does not feature a wrap-around windshield, has new body detailing, and sports six spoke spiral wheels. All parts are new: body, windshield, interior and base.



This pic compares the unreleased 1990 MB 227 Viper RT/10 (left) and an unpainted MB 260 Viper RT/10 (right).



Notice the difference in height profile between the unreleased original MB 227 (left) and released MB 260 (right).