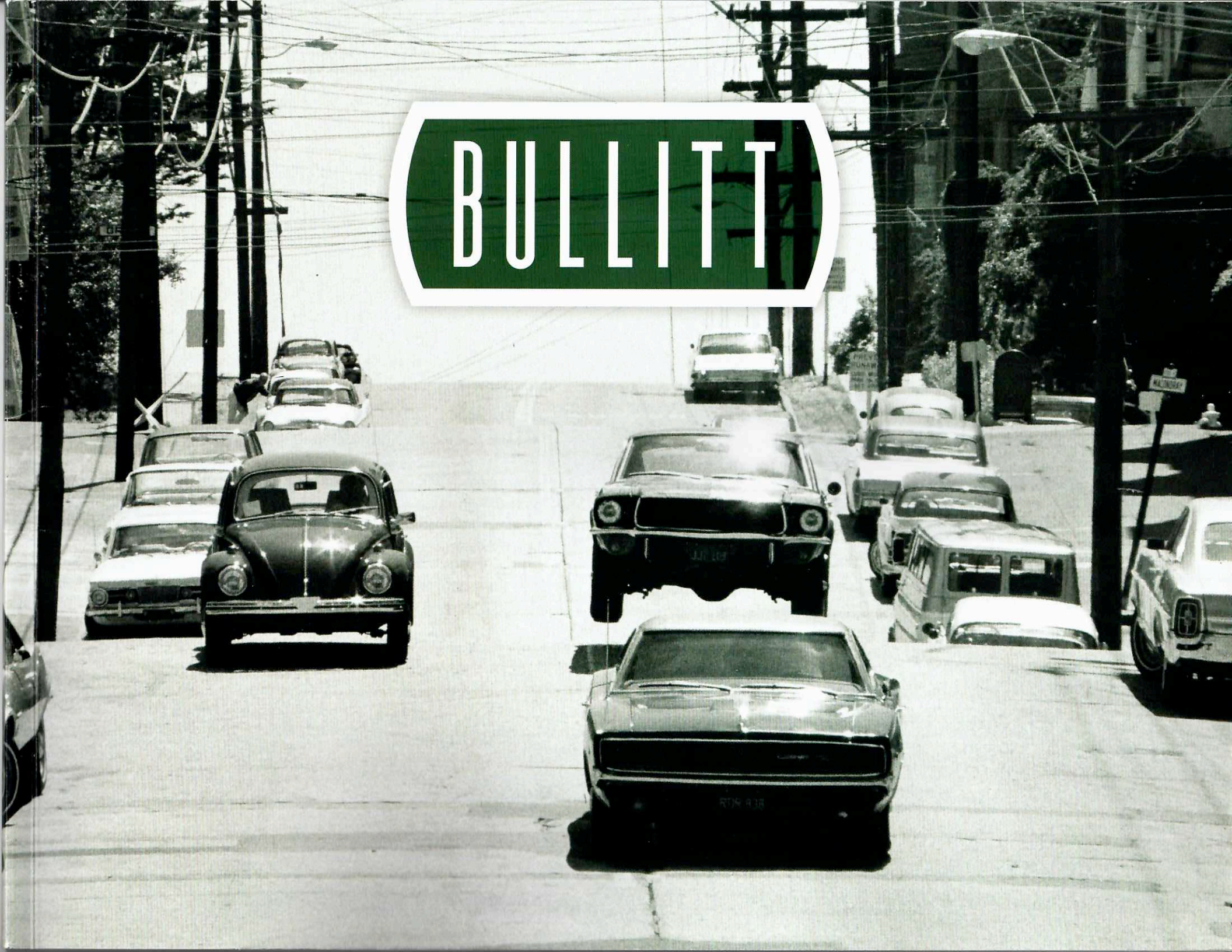


# BULLITT







Story by Kellen Olshefski • Photos by David Newhardt

On the cover:  
Steve McQueen "Launch" on the set of Bullitt. San Francisco, California, 1968

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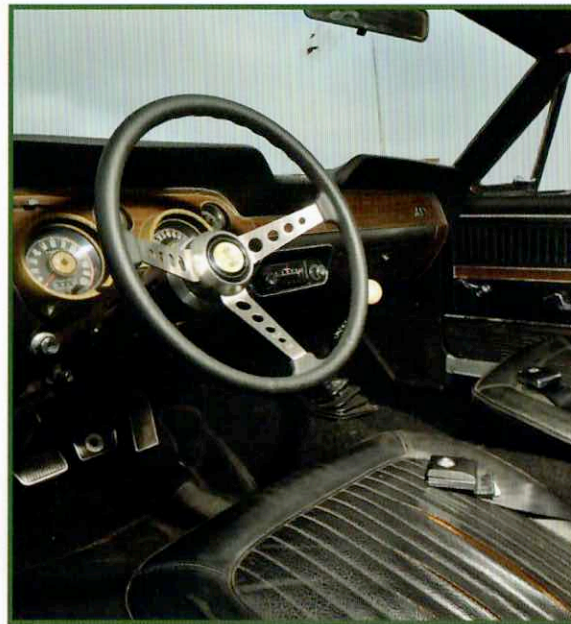




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**I**n 1968, "Bullitt" cemented itself as the pivotal moment in the history of car chase scenes, doing what none had ever done before and setting the standard for all that would follow, earning it the badge of honor that it carries today as the single greatest car chase scene in history. This Highland Green 1968 Ford Mustang GT—the hero car driven by the "King of Cool," Steve McQueen, in the iconic 1968 film "Bullitt"—is the one that started that enduring legacy. Hidden away for decades until its reveal to the public in 2018, this star of the silver screen is now slated to cross the auction block at no reserve at the world's largest collector car auction this January at Mecum Kissimmee 2020.


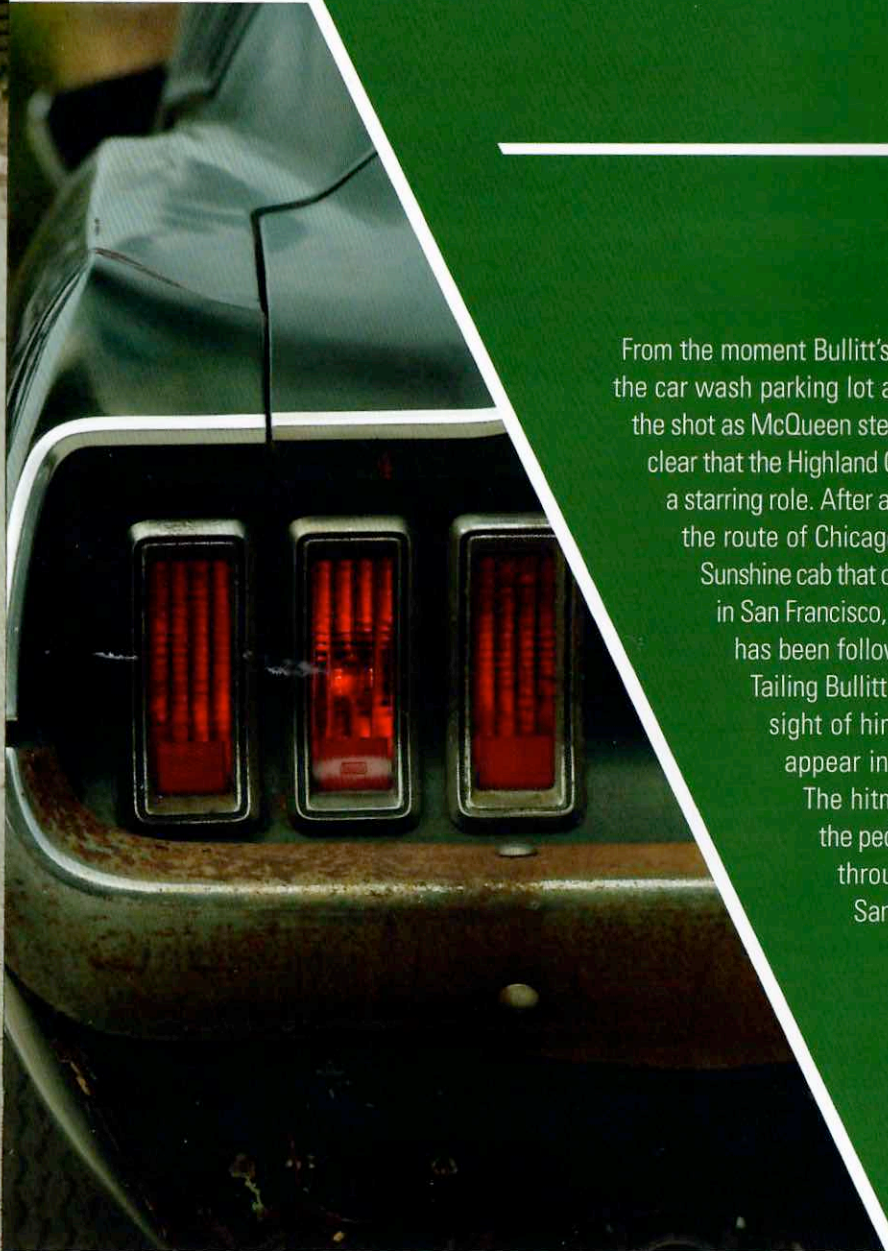
The iconic 1968 film "Bullitt" featured what most experts consider to be the first modern-day car chase scene, one that was executed with such innovation and finesse that it became the standard for all that followed.



Longer, faster and more action packed than anything before it, the 10-minute car chase scene—featuring McQueen as Lt. Frank Bullitt chasing a black Dodge Charger while behind the wheel of this 1968 Ford Mustang GT—was the first to use cameras in a way that put the audience right inside the cars and alongside the actors. Throughout some of the most intense scenes of the famous car chase, McQueen could be seen right there, full screen, clutching the wheel of this very car as he expertly piloted it through the bustling and steep streets of San Francisco. This style of filming would become the standard for car chase scene success, serving as a blueprint for the films that followed, like "Gone in 60 Seconds," "The French Connection," "The Blues Brothers," "Smokey and the Bandit," "Vanishing Point" and plenty more. And with the way the final cut turned out, it's no wonder why.

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From the moment Bullitt's 1968 Mustang GT pulls into the car wash parking lot and takes center stage, filling the shot as McQueen steps out from the driver's seat, it's clear that the Highland Green Mustang is about to take on a starring role. After a jaunt around San Francisco tracing the route of Chicago mobster Johnny Ross in the same Sunshine cab that originally picked Ross up when he arrived in San Francisco, Bullitt notices the black Charger R/T that has been following him upon his return to his Mustang. Tailing Bullitt from the car wash, the hitmen quickly lose sight of him, only for the Highland Green Mustang to appear in their rearview mirror a few moments later. The hitmen fasten their seatbelts, the driver smashes the pedal to the floor and takes a hard left, and the chase through the steep, seemingly mountainous streets of San Francisco is on.


















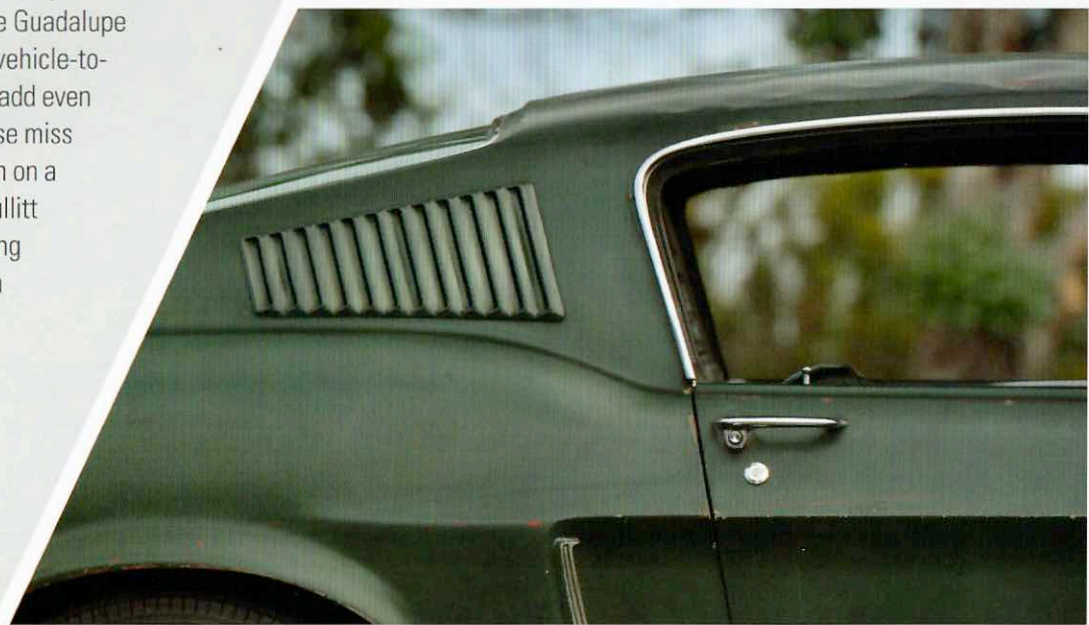




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The cars take off, whipping through corners and literally taking flight at times while cresting hills. At one point, Bullitt overshoots a right turn, with McQueen himself squealing the Mustang in reverse with his head out the window, slamming it into drive and smoking the tires as he once again tears off after the pair of hitmen—McQueen had actually overshoot the turn on purpose so that the cameras could see him behind the wheel of the Mustang, and that epic moment looked and sounded so cool on film that it's said he insisted it had to make the movie's final cut. The high-speed chase continues first along Marina Boulevard and then south of the city onto the Guadalupe Canyon Parkway, where shotgun blasts and vehicle-to-vehicle contact at speeds in excess of 100 MPH add even more excitement to the chase scene. When a close miss with a motorcyclist—Stunt Coordinator Carey Loftin on a BSA, with McQueen piloting the Mustang—sends Bullitt spinning off the side of the road, it doesn't take him long to recover and rejoin the chase, which soon ends with a fiery explosion as the two hitmen lose control and launch their Charger into a roadside filling station, ultimately leading to their grisly demise.

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And throughout the majority of this 10-minute long, high-octane, adrenaline-pumping chase scene, the only music used was that of the back and forth beastly roars of the two vehicles' engines and the shrieking sounds of burning rubber on pavement—that's all that was needed.

From the outset of the movie's production, Director Peter Yates and McQueen called for an "automotive action scene" that would be absolutely realistic in every way, the pair opposed to using camera speed-ups and anything that didn't involve real drivers behind the wheels of real cars. Of course, to achieve this goal, Warner Bros. sourced two Highland Green 1968 Mustang GT390 Fastbacks from Ford with back-to-back serial numbers, both with 390/325 HP big-block V-8s and 4-speed transmissions. Race car driver and constructor Max Balchowsky—a close



and trusted friend of McQueen who had stood up as McQueen's best man in his wedding—was then specifically requested by McQueen for the modification of the two Mustangs to ensure that they could hold up to the rigorous driving they were about to endure at the hands of McQueen, Bud Ekins, who did most of the jump scenes, and Loftin, who side-towed the black Charger alongside the Mustang in the final moments of the scene before releasing it to fly off the road into the gas station. The cars' suspensions and pickup points were beefed up, Koni adjustable shocks were installed and numerous camera mounts—both inside and out—were added to support the lightweight Arriflex cameras that would provide moviegoers with a car chase scene like they had never seen before.

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As McQueen considered the car itself to be a character, not just another prop, he was particular about the look and feel of the car, having all of the badging and backup lights removed, various chrome elements painted black or Highland Green, and swapping the stock wheels for gray American Racing Torq Thrust wheels to make the car look a bit meaner, more befitting of the rugged Lt. Frank Bullitt. The Mustang's grille was blacked out, and the paint was scuffed to give it more of an authentic, road-tested look. Meanwhile, the engine was modified for speed and sound, creating the iconic symphony in the background of the chase scene. While the Mustangs' stock exhaust systems retained their glasspacks, the transverse mufflers were replaced with straight pipes, allowing the thunderous growl of the 390 CI Ford V-8 to project even more; as for the engine, cylinder heads were modified, the carburetor was reset and an electronic ignition system was added. To accommodate those Arriflex cameras that captured the revolutionary chase scene that truly rivaled modern virtual reality, three metal tubes were welded beneath the rockers, perpendicular to the car's center line for the camera mounts, and holes were cut into the trunk to allow cords to run from the generator to the cameras and lights.











Following its movie debut, the 1968 Mustang GT hero car—this car—was sold to Robert Ross, a Warner Bros. employee who used it as a commuter, documented by the Warner Bros. parking sticker on the bottom right corner of the windshield. The other Mustang stunt car was deemed unrepairable and reportedly scrapped. The hero car then found its way to New Jersey and into the hands of Detective Frank Marranca, who bought the car in 1970 with confirmation from Warner Bros. that certified the Mustang had indeed been purchased for use in the movie. As Marranca's family grew, he eventually put the hero car up for sale. The ad in the October 1974 issue of "Road & Track" simply read, "1968 'Bullitt' MUSTANG driven by McQueen in the movie...Can be documented. Best offer."

DETECTIVE FRANK MARRANCA WITH  
THE BULLITT MUSTANG IN 1972



*Photo Courtesy of Frank Marranca*









MRS. KIERNAN AND "GATSBY"



The late Robert Kiernan of Madison, New Jersey, had always wanted a 1968 Mustang fastback, and after seeing the ad, he picked up the hero car for \$6,000. While McQueen himself made numerous attempts to reacquire the vehicle from Robert, even offering to help him find a similar Mustang, Robert had already fallen in love with it and respectfully declined all offers. In its early years with the Kiernan family, the Mustang was used as a daily driver by Robert's wife, who taught at a nearby school, but when the car's clutch went out in 1980, it was moved into the garage with just 65,000 miles on the odometer. In the years that followed, the car would move several

times, first to Cincinnati with the family in 1984, and then to a friend's home in Kentucky when the family moved to Florida in 1994. A year later, the Mustang rejoined the family when the Kiernans moved to their new farm in Nashville.

And that's where it sat up until 2001, when Ford's introduction of a Bullitt Mustang GT inspired the then-retired Robert and his son, Sean Kiernan, to start putting some work into the car—not enough to alter the history, but just enough to make it drivable once again. However, after work began on the Mustang, Robert was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and work stalled. When Ford introduced a

second Bullitt edition in 2008, the pair was once again inspired to have the engine rebuilt, but once again, life got in the way; as Robert's Parkinson's worsened, maintaining the farm and horses became a more important task for Sean.

Sadly, Robert would never see the Mustang reach completion, as he passed rather suddenly in 2014. With his father's death, Sean found renewed purpose in the mission they had started years before, and he went on to complete the work and return the Bullitt Mustang to roadworthy condition, unveiling it to the general public alongside Ford's third Bullitt Edition Mustang at the Detroit Auto Show in early 2018.

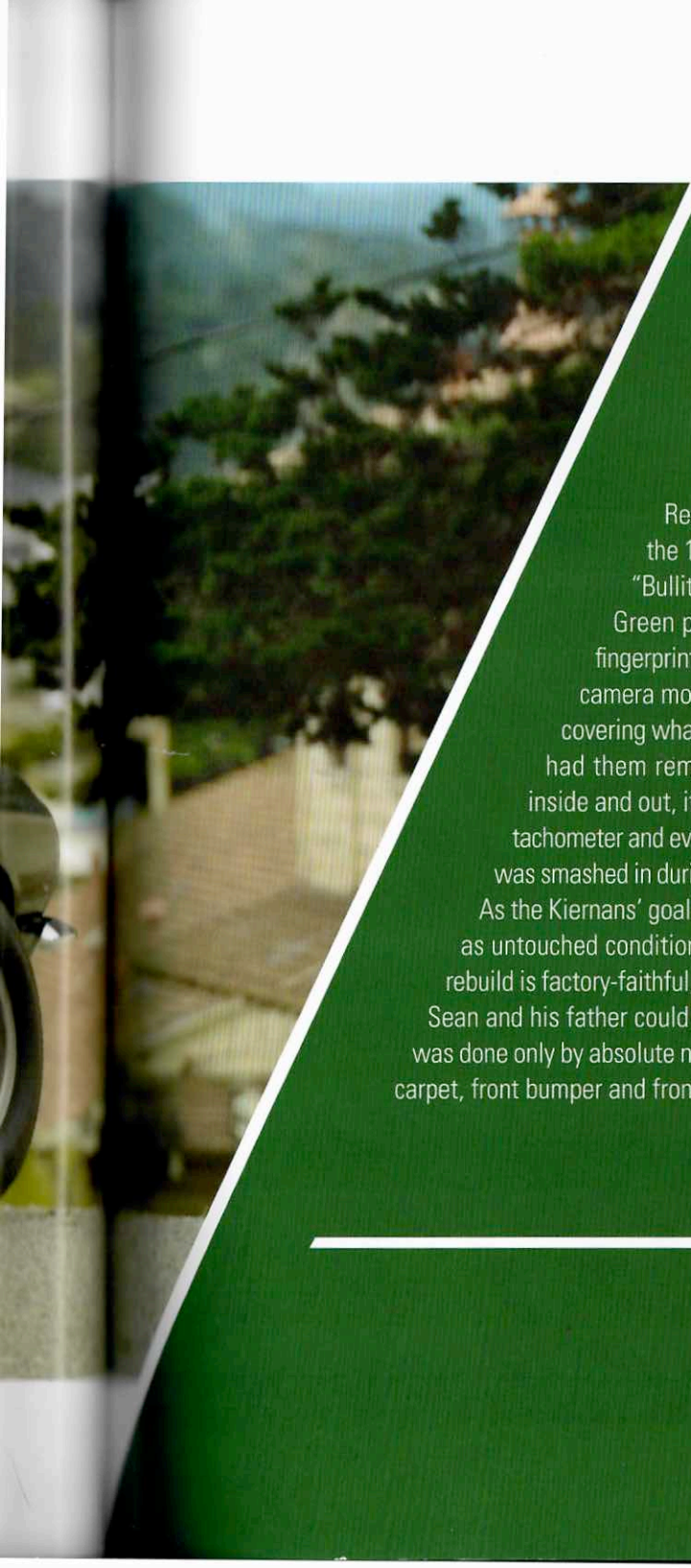












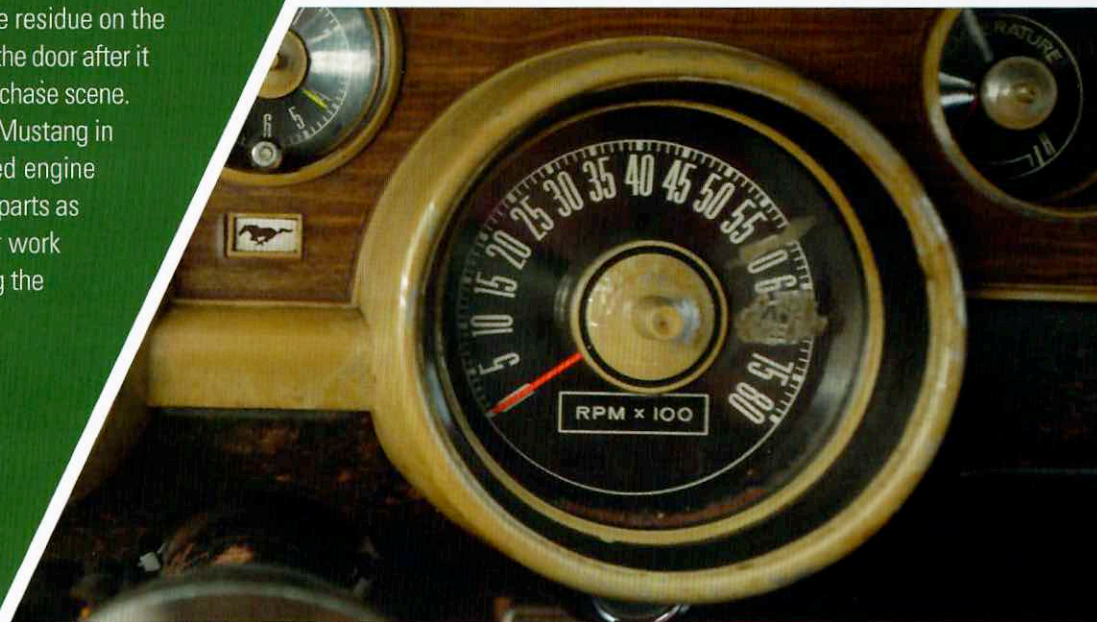
Registered as the 21st car in the National Historic Vehicle Register and presenting in highly original condition, this is the 1968 Ford Mustang GT hero car from the iconic 1968 film "Bullitt" starring Steve McQueen. In addition to its Highland Green paintwork, the Bullitt Mustang retains many of the fingerprints from its time in front of the camera, including the camera mounts welded to the rockers, the welded patches covering what used to be the backup lights before McQueen had them removed, modifications for camera gear both inside and out, its custom exhaust, adhesive residue on the tachometer and even the Bondo used to repair the door after it was smashed in during the final moments of the chase scene. As the Kiernans' goal all along was to retain the Mustang in as untouched condition as possible, the completed engine rebuild is factory-faithful, featuring as many original parts as Sean and his father could conceivably use, and other work was done only by absolute necessity, including replacing the carpet, front bumper and front valance.

1968 Ford Mustang Fastback (Bullitt - '559)



**NATIONAL  
HISTORIC VEHICLE  
REGISTER NO. 21**

United States Department of the Interior  
Historic American Engineering Record No. TN-53







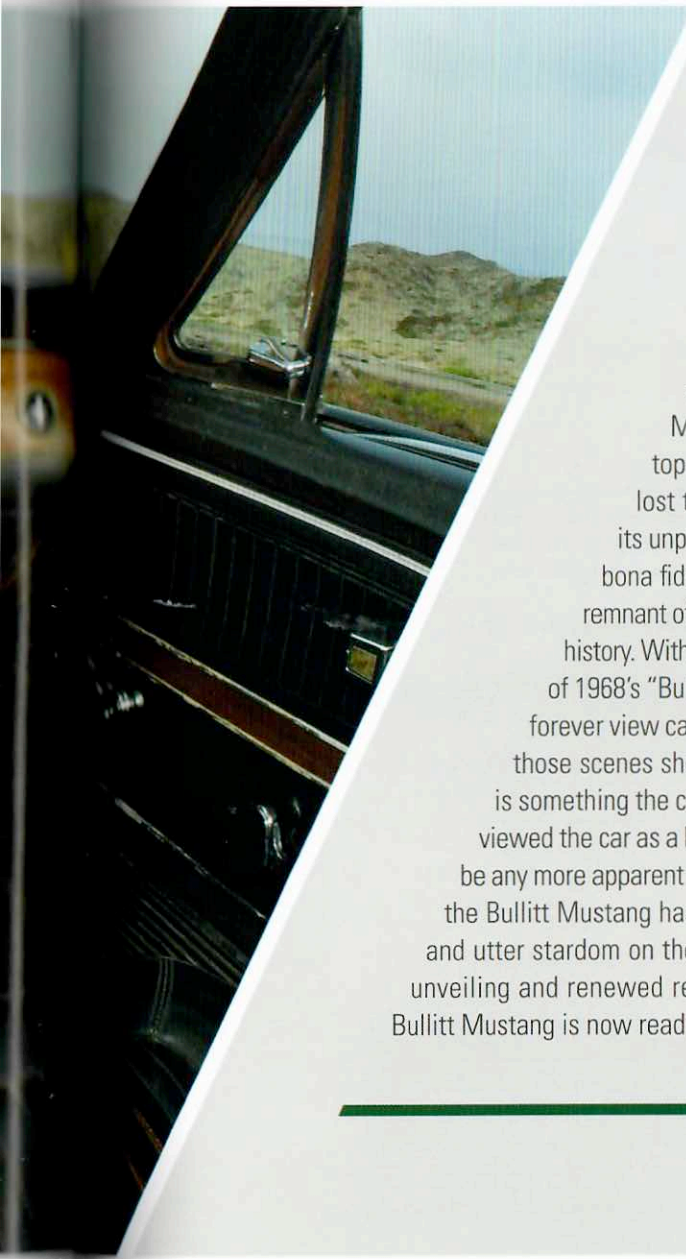








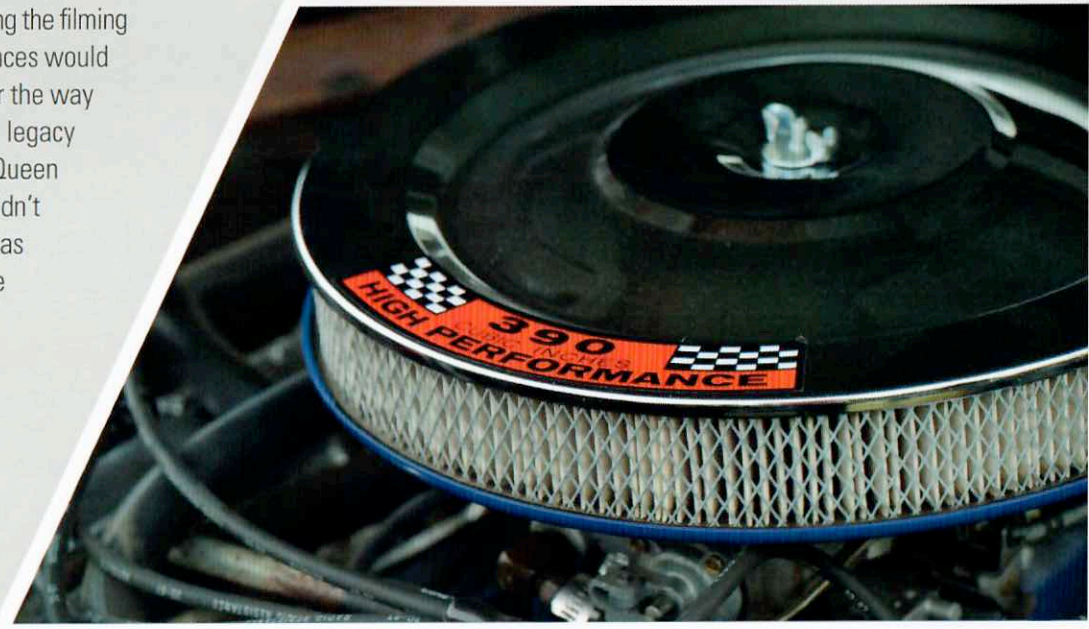
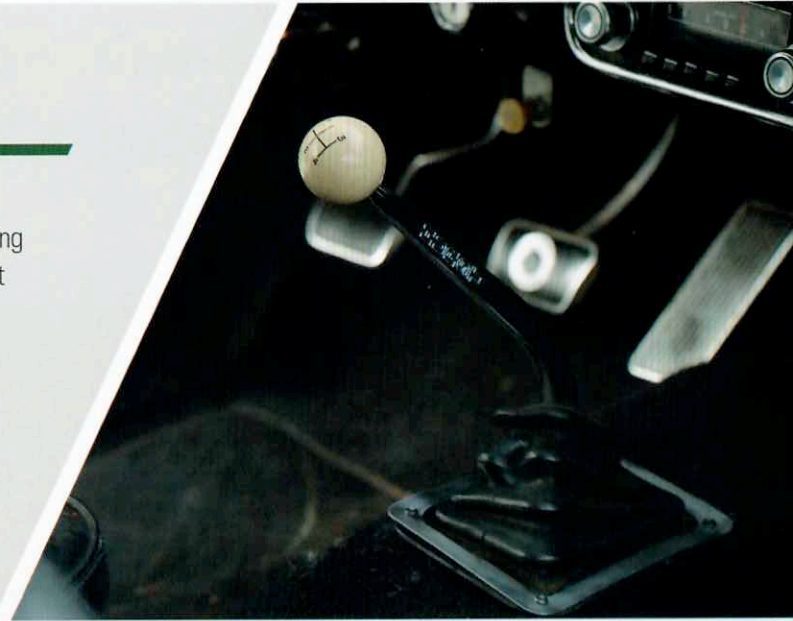




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There are few cars that have reached a truly awe-inspiring level of rarity and collectability, but the list of cars that has transcended that level to reach near mythical status as fine art pieces and pop culture icons—artifacts of automotive history—is nearly non-existent. The Bullitt Mustang is a car that extends far beyond being just another top-notch collector car. It's a car that was once thought lost to the passage of time, and with its reemergence, its unparalleled cultural significance has solidified it as a bona fide piece of pop-culture art and as an undeniable remnant of an incredible moment in movie and automotive history. With McQueen behind the wheel during the filming of 1968's "Bullitt," it redefined the way audiences would forever view car chases, creating a blueprint for the way those scenes should be shot, and that enduring legacy is something the car will forever carry with it. McQueen viewed the car as a key character in itself, and it couldn't be any more apparent today that his view was correct, as the Bullitt Mustang has once again achieved complete and utter stardom on the public stage. With its public unveiling and renewed reputation for greatness, the Bullitt Mustang is now ready for its next starring role.

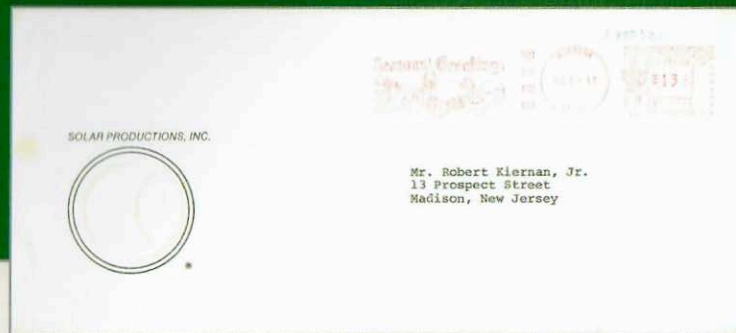
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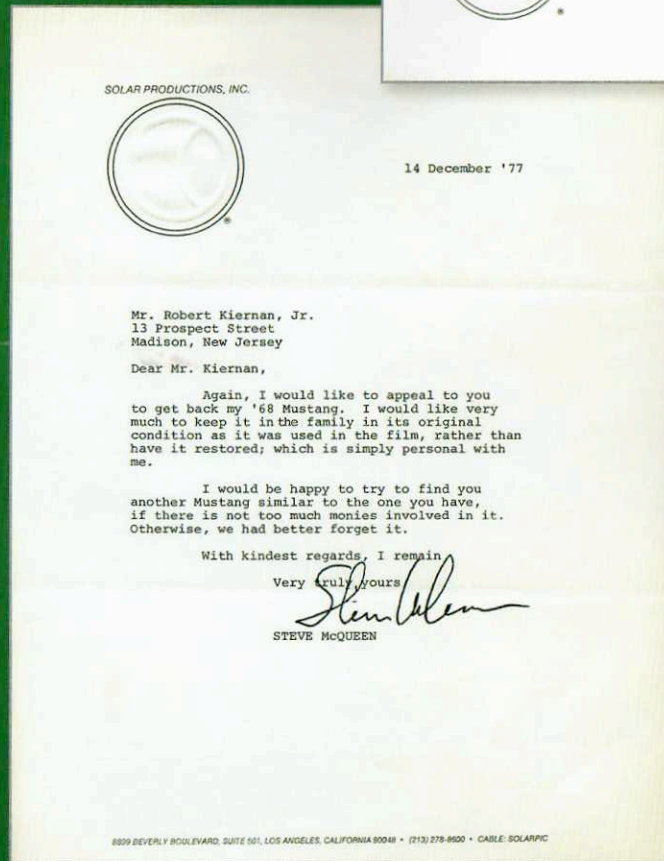






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ROSS ROBERT MASON		11269 ACAMA ST		N HOLLYWOOD		CALIF		1900 3	
AD754549		TA 8164390							

California registration from 1968 in Robert Ross' name (second owner)



Letter from Steve McQueen to Robert Kiernan attempting to purchase the "Bullitt" Mustang

NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES		VEHICLE REGISTRATION	
2413893		YOUR LICENSES VALIDATED - 90	
NAME: ROBERT L. KIERNAN JR.		VEHICLE CHASSIS NO. 100A241550	
STREET: 13 PROSPECT ST.		CITY AND STATE: MADISON NJ	
MAKE: FORD		MODEL: MUSTANG	
YEAR: 1968		TYPE: 2 DR	
EXPIRATION DATE: 3-30-78		REGISTRATION FEE: \$12.50	
SALES TAX: \$17.00		TOTAL: \$29.50	

THIS VEHICLE MUST BE INSPECTED DURING THE MONTH AND YEAR INDICATED ON YOUR CURRENT INSPECTION STICKER.

LIV APR 1 1978

New Jersey registration from 1978 in Robert Kiernan's name

STATE OF NEW JERSEY INSURANCE IDENTIFICATION CARD	
182 Hartford Fire Insurance Company 181 Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company 184 Hartford Casualty Insurance Company 242 New York Underwriters Insurance Company 243 Twin City Fire Insurance Company	
Robert L. Kiernan 13 Prospect Street Madison, NJ 07940	
377-5250	
Policy Number: 100A241550 Effective Date: 3-30-78 Expiration Date: 3-30-79	
1968 Ford 8R025125559	

New Jersey insurance card from 1978 in Robert Kiernan's name

JAN 31 80		8901P2	
STATE OF NEW JERSEY		DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES	
DATE OF REG: JAN 11 79		X9	
PASSENGER VEHICLE REGISTRATION			
ROBERT L. KIERNAN JR. 13 PROSPECT ST MADISON NJ			
FOR 68 GN 2 2 \$125559			

New Jersey registration from 1979 in Robert Kiernan's name







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