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A STRONG APPRECIATION

LIFELONG MUSCLECAR NUTS BUILD A CUSTOM CLASSIC




By Steve Baur • Photography by Isaac Mion

It would seem that most muscle car enthusiasts grew up during the '60s and '70s, when the first wave of Detroit muscle was busy selling four-speed this, and big block that. In wanting to remember those times, many restore these cars to their original condition. However, *Modified Mustangs & Fords* readers know that we can make these cars much better, while keeping the classic lines and authoritative exhaust notes that made them so distinct in the first place, and Scott and Laura Taylor are two such individuals.

"I got my license in 1966, when muscle cars were taking off," recalls Scott. "We've always had muscle cars throughout our life. This '68 was a retirement project for me, as I just retired. My wife, Laura, wanted a car, and she liked the Eleanor fascias and body style." With that, Scott began looking for a

'67-'68 fastback, and located one in Southern California.

"The '68 A-code Mustang was being driven by an 18-year-old high school senior who was reluctantly selling the car to support his future college education," says Scott. The car showed well, so they made the purchase and drove it 450 miles to their home in Sacramento.

Once Scott began to look into the car further, he found out it was originally from the Midwest, and a thick, goopy coating of rust proofing was hiding a bit of history. Not only did it cover up all of the body panel numbers, but it also covered up a great deal of previous bodywork. Realizing this was going to be a big job, Scott called upon David Henry of Henry's Hot Rods in Shingle Springs, California.

It was determined that everything from the firewall forward had been replaced, and as Scott had plans for an extreme powerplant, he

didn't want to take any chances with framersails that may not be up to the task. David Henry's first suggestion was to put an Art Morrison Max G Muscle Car frame under the car, as it would be more than capable of supporting the underhood firepower, as well as providing the handling capabilities that Scott sought.

With that decision, Ron Pepper of Pepper Fabrications broke out the oxy/acetylene torch and cut out the entire bottom of the Mustang unibody. The Max G chassis was CAD-engineered to accept the FE engine specifications, tire and wheel size, front and rear suspension components, and braking requirements. The '2x4 beam frame' is mandrel-bent, and includes passages for the side exhaust and the driveshaft. This allows one to lower the ride height, thus improving the center of gravity. With the RideTech suspension system, Scott tells us that he can drop the Pony within a scant 2 inches of the pavement.

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SCOTT AND LAURA TAYLOR'S '68 MUSTANG FASTBACK

Pepper Fabrications then put hammer and saw to metal and melded the Mustang body with the Max G chassis. The floors, trunk, firewall, wheelwells, inner and outer fender panels, engine mounts, transmission crossmember, rollbar, and radiator support were all custom fabricated.

Once the Mustang was whole again, the bodywork could commence and the project would resume looking like a Mustang. This included fitting the Eleanor body kit, the side exhaust, and the side pillar gas cap. Henry and Pepper also fabricated the side-opening hood hinges and hood-release pins, and hid all of their handwork beneath the inner fender panels. Advanced Composite Engineering in Temecula, California, fabricated the custom carbon-fiber hood, which Scott tells us saved 42 pounds over the fiberglass piece that he was originally going to use.

Once all of the body components were properly fiberglassed to the metal, Rodd White, Troy Costa, and the crew at Gold River Auto Body in Rancho Cordova, California, were employed with the task of laying on the color and custom striping.

"Rodd and Troy are perfectionists and wanted everything flawless," says Scott. "They purchased a stock GT decal side stripe kit, and had it reproduced in vinyl, but in its reverse image, which enabled them to mask off the stripes and then paint them on the car."

Scott knew the car was going to be black, but the stripe color was a bit of a conundrum. White and Costa tried a number of color combinations before PPG's Candy Apple Red sprayed over silver metallic offered just the right contrast. It's a unique combination that really sets the visual tone of the exterior.

As you might imagine, the inside of this Mustang is equally modified beyond stock. Rene Comejo and Ben Lizardo of Acme Tops and Turbos were enlisted to equip the cabin with the latest in lighting, sound, and seating. The original dash now hosts Classic Instruments billet Shelby signature 200-mph gauges and brushed aluminum panels, while the upper and lower consoles contain additional Auto Meter Phantom gauges, an Eclipse head unit, Electric Life window switches and door locks, the RideTech control module, as well as the obligatory nitrous arming switch.

The factory plastic wheel gave way to a Moto Lita woodgrain steering wheel that twists a Flaming River polished stainless steel tilt column, and while the Shelby signature series leather seats were virtual bolt-ins, most all of the interior panels are either hand fabricated or modified versions of the stock pieces by Victor Chavez.

At the beginning of this project, Scott already had an idea of what he would use to propel this Pony, and he contacted Tom Lucas at FE Specialties (Sacramento, California) to solidify his plan.

"Tom had worked on our daughter's S-code '67 Mustang, and we wanted him to build an engine for this car that would make it unique, but stay within the original Shelby era and school of thought," says Scott. "We told him to build an engine that he would build for himself if this were his car. Since Tom is a

dedicated Cobra fanatic, he decided to go back to Carroll Shelby's roots and build an all-aluminum 427 that would produce more than 700 horsepower—enough to keep my wife happy and the rest of the family in the rearview mirror."

Lucas began by machining the 427 FE block using torque plates, and then bored the cylinders 0.050-inch over stock to 4.280 inches.

"We originally wanted the motor to run on pump gas, but after simulating some horsepower numbers, we felt the additional compression would make the motor more responsive, and of course, produce more power, so we opted for the 12.4:1 Ross custom pistons," recalls Scott. The final stroke length of the Scat billet crank set the total displacement at 490 ci.

Even though the chassis was designed





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to fit the FE engine, an interference issue arose with regard to the front oil sump configuration. The rack-and-pinion steering setup made a front oil sump configuration impossible, so Lucas opted for a dry sump system from Aviaid. The system begins with a custom, low-profile, 3-inch sump oil pan with internal baffling and a windage screen. From there, the four-stage Series I dry sump pump with remote filter adapter is powered by a Gilmer belt-drive system attached to the crankshaft. The Aviaid oil storage tank is a 6-inch, 8-quart oil reservoir that is now hiding under the passenger side fender well.

Once engine assembly was complete, the massive FE was sent to Rex Hutchison's dyno facility in Elk Grove, California, for testing. Break-in procedures were completed and then the fine tuning began. Without the 200hp NOS Pro Shot fogger nitrous, the stout FE engine offered up 705 hp at 6,300 rpm, 639 lb-ft of torque at 5,000 rpm.

Keeping the engine chilled out is a custom aluminum radiator from American Pastimes. Equipped with two 12-inch puller fans, the system keeps the FE engine from cooking itself whether at a stoplight or an autocross.

Ron Pepper performed the final assembly, and upon completion, the vehicle known as Naja 427 came to life. Naja, as it turns out, is the genus of venomous elapid snakes which consists of 21 generally accepted species, the most recognized and most widespread of which is the Cobra. While it may sound like someone reaching for individuality, the terminology comes natural to Scott, who was supervisor of the nutrition laboratories for the department of animal sciences at the University of California.

Brakes: Wilwood disc, SL6 six-piston calipers, 13-inch vented rotors
Rear: Wilwood disc, SL6 six-piston calipers, 13-inch vented rotors
Wilwood aluminum triple master cylinder pedal assembly with balance bar to accurately set brake pedal bias

WHEELS
Front: BF Goodrich g-Force KDWS T/A P245/45ZR17
Rear: BF Goodrich g-Force KDWS T/A P285/40ZR17

TIRES
Front: BF Goodrich g-Force KDWS T/A P245/45ZR17
Rear: BF Goodrich g-Force KDWS T/A P285/40ZR17

INTERIOR
All interior and trunk panels custom fabricated and covered with black leather. Classic Instruments Carroll Shelby 200-mph edition gauges, Electric Life window switches and door locks, RideTech airbag control module, nitrous arming switch, Moto Lita woodgrain steering wheel, Flaming River polished stainless steel tilt column, Shelby signature series leather seats, Eclipse G30200 head unit, Boston Acoustics GT24 900-watt and GT40 490-watt amplifiers, Boston Acoustics G310-44 subwoofers, SL95 coaxials, and Pro60 component speakers, Vintage Air HVAC

EXTERIOR
Extensively modified body, Eleanor-style fender flares, upper and lower side scoops, trunk lid, and front fascia. Advanced Composite Engineering carbon-fiber hood with side-opening mechanism, PPG Black basecoat with Candy Apple Red over silver metal flake, Super Snake and GT side stripes

THE DETAILS
Scott and Laura Taylor's '68 Mustang Fastback

ENGINE
Shelby 427 FE aluminum block
4.280-inch bore
4.250-inch stroke
490 ci, 12.4:1 compression ratio, built by Tom Lucas at FE Specialties (Sacramento, CA)
Ross Pistons, Scat Billet Crankshaft, and H-beam connecting rods
Edelbrock aluminum heads
FE Specialties Stage III port job, four-angle valve job
Ferro 2.25-inch intake valves, 1.75-inch exhaust valves
Crower valvesprings, locks, and retainers
Siger Erson rocker arm assemblies, Smith Brothers push rods
Crower custom roller camshaft, Milodon gear drive
Aviaid 8-quart dry-sump oiling system with

Gilmer belt-drive
Tunnel Wedge 2x4 intake manifold, plumbed with an NOS Pro Shot fogger nitrous system by Mike Thermos of Nitrous Supply
Two Road Demon Junior 725-cfm carburetors
Billet Specialties True Trac drive system
705 hp at 6,300 rpm, 639 lb-ft of torque at 5,000 rpm using Sunoco 110-octane fuel

TRANSMISSION
Tremec TKO-600 five-speed manual
McCloud aluminum flywheel and clutch assembly
Tilton hydraulic throw out bearing
Lakewood bell housing

REAR END
Ford 9-inch housing
Strange Engineering 3.73 gears
Ford Trac-Lok third member with 35-spline induction hardened axles

EXHAUST
Performance Welding Racing Headers 2-inch stainless steel headers, merge collectors
Stainless Works smooth tube mufflers
3-inch stainless side-exit exhaust
V-band connections
All components titanium-coated by Perfect-It Powder Coating and Sandblasting

SUSPENSION
Front: Art Morrison Max G frame, mandrel-bent 2x4 steel with passages for the side exhaust and driveshaft for lower center of gravity and ride height, tubular upper and lower control arms, RideTech Ride Pro system, Thomas compressor with a 2-gallon tank, four-way solenoids, AGR power assisted modified Mustang II rack-and-pinion system
Rear: Art Morrison tubular upper and lower control arms and Panhard bar, RideTech Ride Pro system