

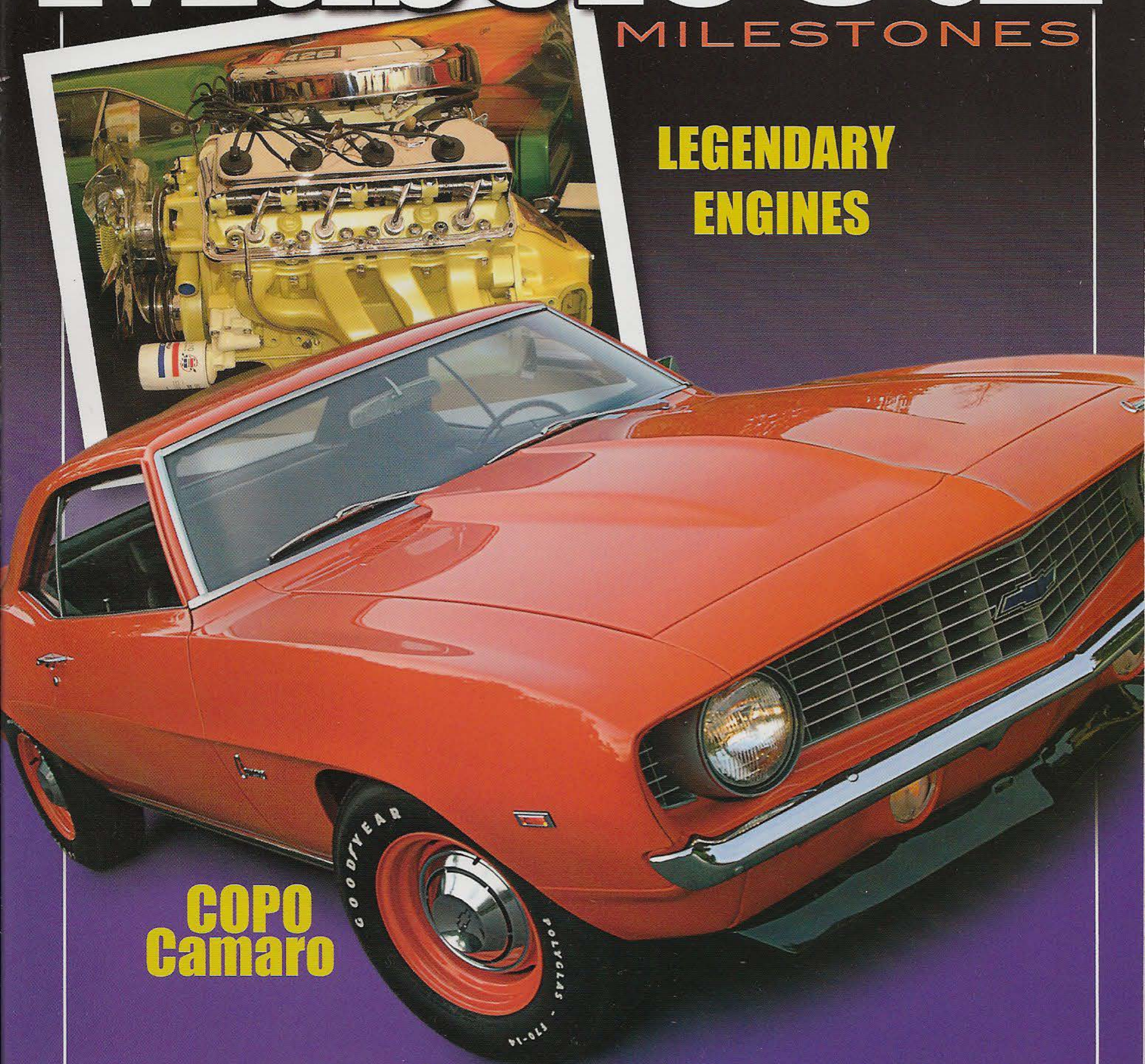
Top 10 Engines

COLLECTOR'S EDITION

MuscleCar

MILESTONES

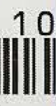
**LEGENDARY
ENGINES**



**COPO
Camaro**

- > Pro Wrestler Goldberg's Collection
- > Shelby's \$5.5 m Super Snake
- > "King of Hi-Performance"

US \$4.99 / CAN \$6.50



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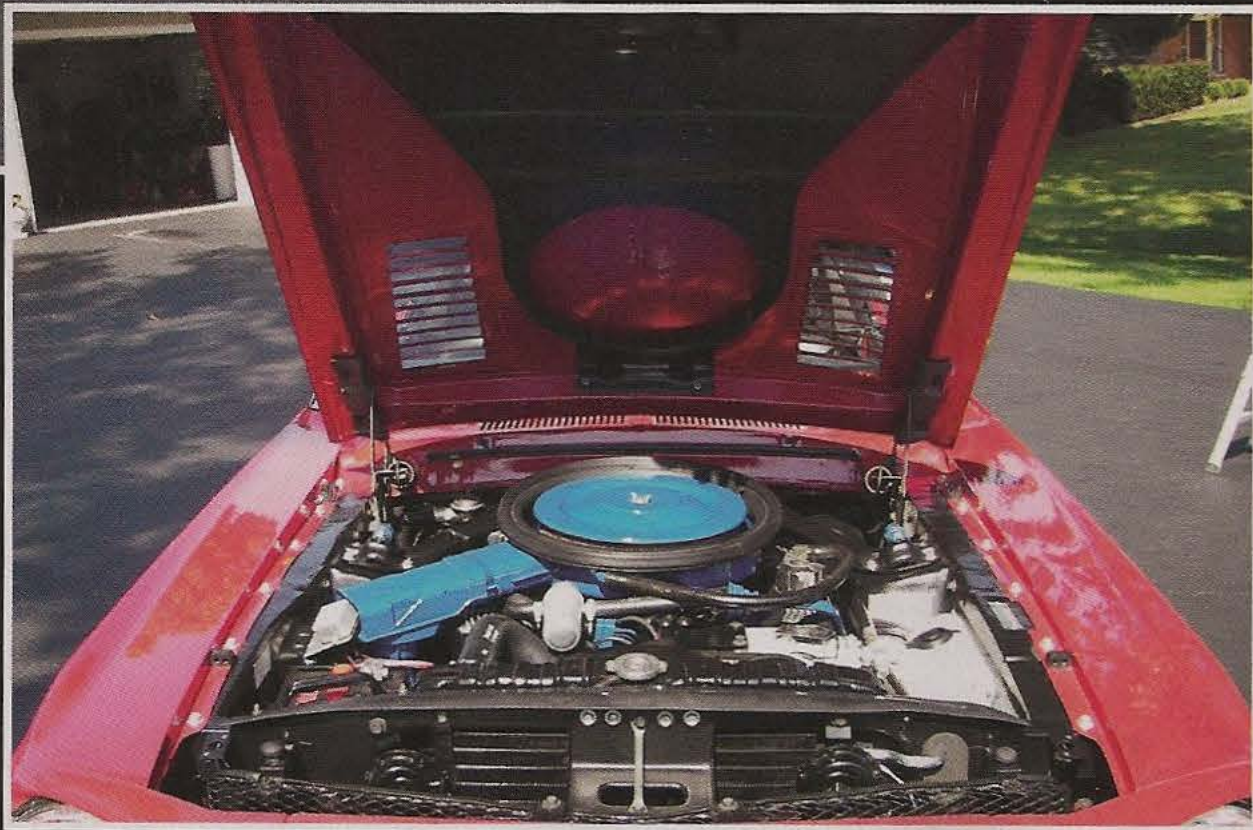
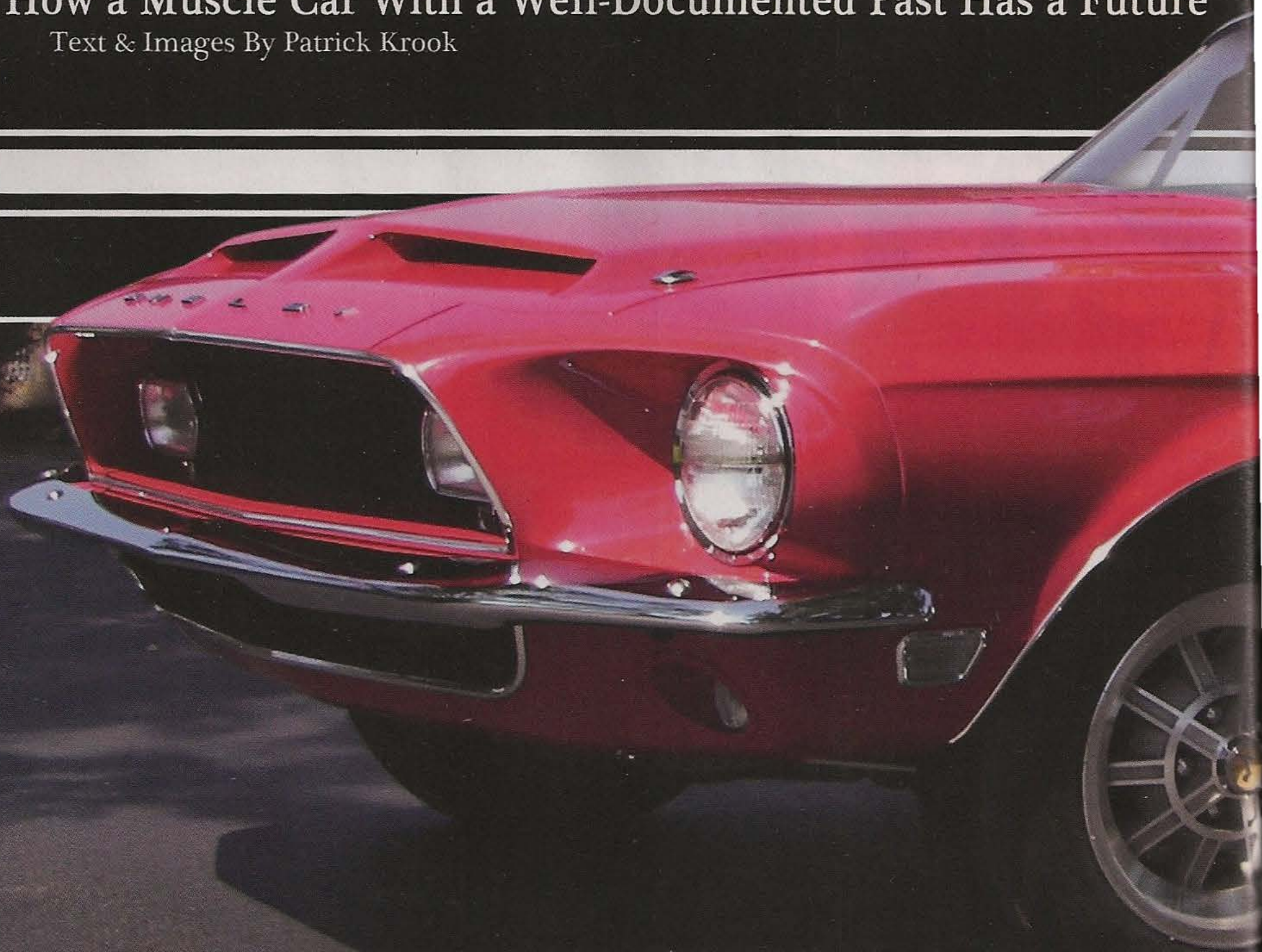


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CONCOURS-QUALITY 101

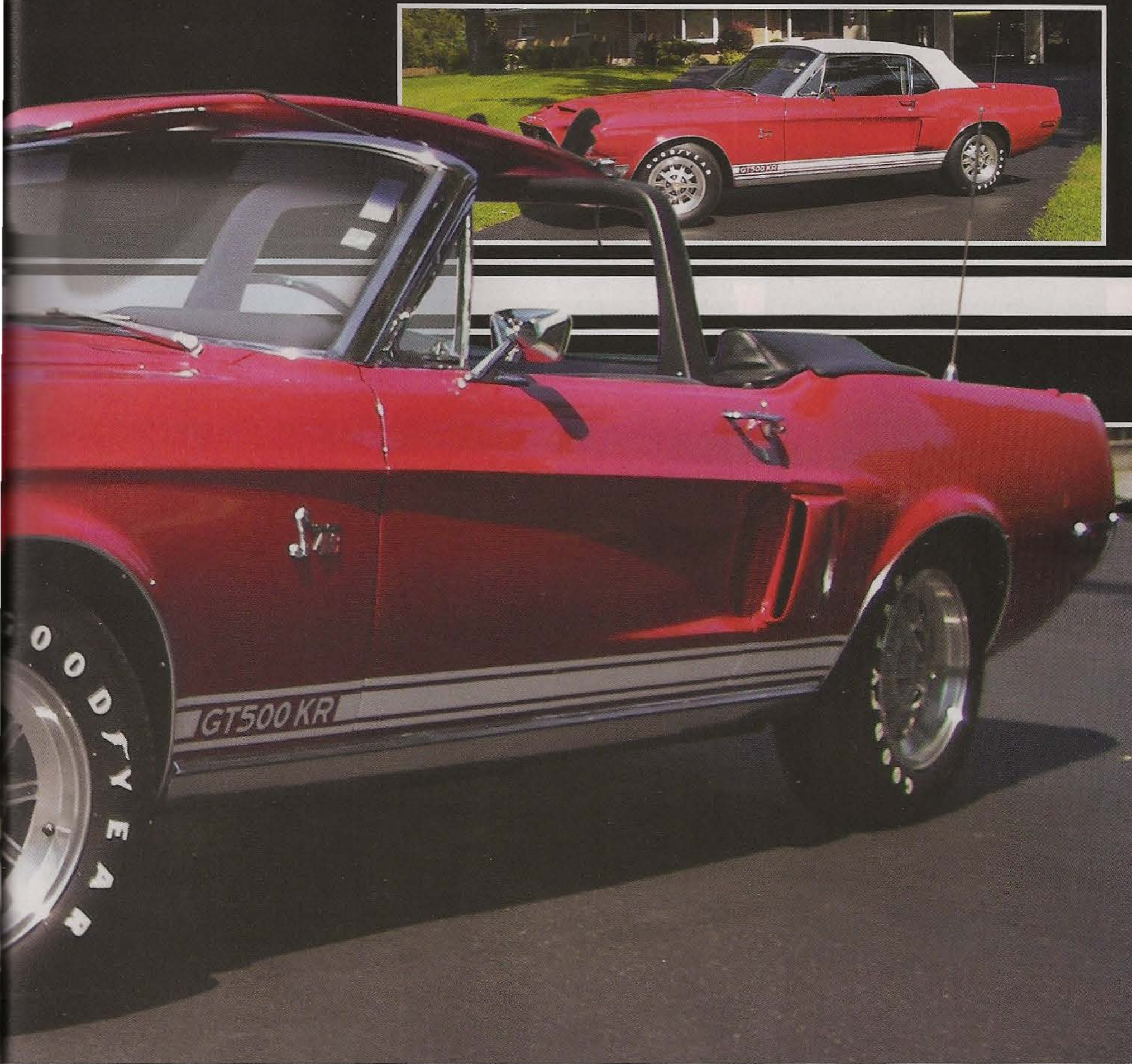
How a Muscle Car With a Well-Documented Past Has a Future

Text & Images By Patrick Krook



In keeping with the title of the magazine you're holding in your hands, we'd like to highlight a significant difference among car collectors: there are muscle car fans, and then there are milestone enthusiasts. What do we mean by that?

Well, the latter group love muscle cars not only for what we remember them to be, but also for exactly what they were when brand new. These "milestoners" are the wizards that know the correct spec, number, code, and detail for every nut, bolt, and doodad that is original



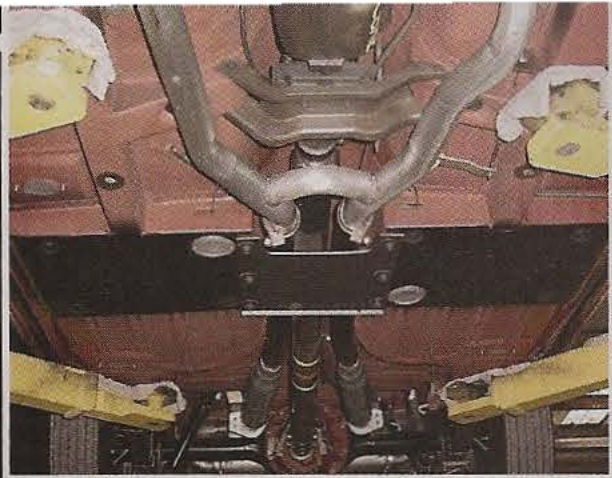
and correct for that particular year, make, and model of muscle car. If you have been in the hobby of any length of time, you probably know of one such oracle, Bob Gaines, Shelby American Automobile Club (SAAC) Concours Judge and noted Shelby authority. What follows is an general overview (a detailed discussion would require a whole book on the subject) about what it takes to restore a muscle car, such as the 1968 Shelby GT500 KR convertible shown here, to concours specifications.

It might be easy for some muscle-

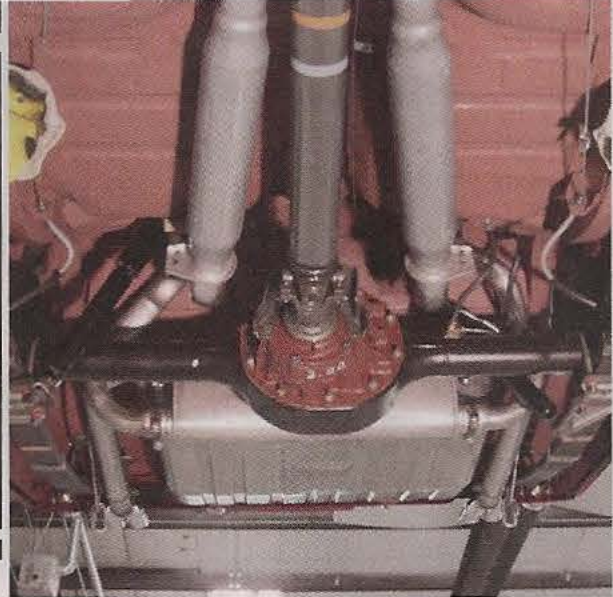
car enthusiasts to dismiss concours restorations as "full-scale models" of cars that are meant to be driven, not just sitting idle. Many car guys wince at the sight of a high-performance icon strapped to a trailer. Yet that same group will later crowd around her to settle long-standing disputes over what is correct and what is not. Concours enthusiasts play a vital role, recapturing the essence of what a muscle car actually was like when she first graced a showroom floor. Driving is a secondary pleasure. This crowd gets their satisfaction by

keeping the bloodlines of these rare breeds pure; by preserving precisely how these cars were delivered new from the factory.

Concours show-winning cars command prices at the pinnacle of the market. The reason is simple: the time and money spent to peel away some 40 years of use and abuse is monumental. The expertise, craftsmanship, and new old stock (NOS) parts essential for completing this feat are in equally rare supply. The fact that these period-true vehicles are the most correct examples and



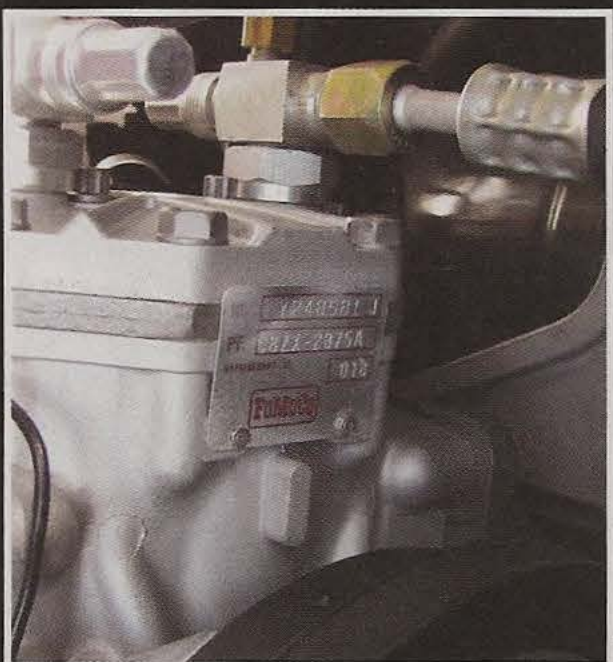
The underbody is typically where we separate the men from the boys in the restoration world. This is a view of the underbody out of fresh restoration, before being "Pre-Judged." A Division I would have drip marks dried into the entire undercarriage and a light overspray of body color over it. Even gorgeously clean, the underbody and suspension had several corrections made before she went on to win Division II Gold.



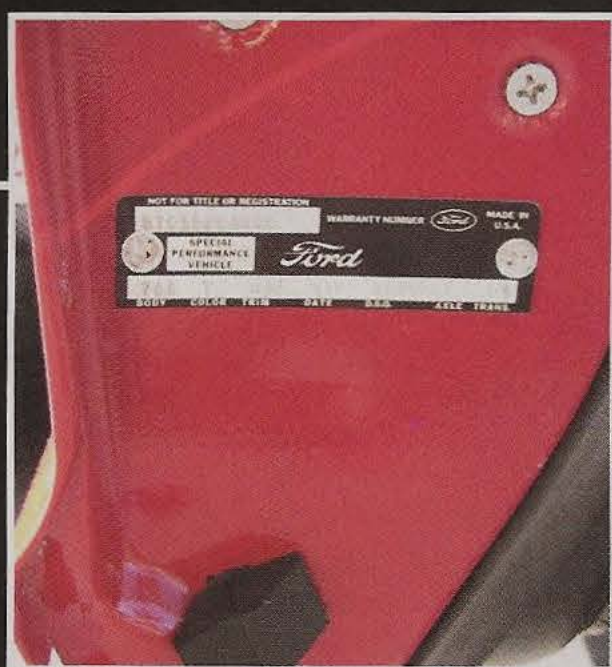
There are several details unique to the one-year-only KR model. The four-speed KR in particular used staggered shocks in the rear, so they retained the black shocks used on Mustang in the back and blue adjustable Gabriel shocks on the front. Most other Shelby models used the blue Gabriels on all four corners.



Here we can see the stamped-steel muffler codes just by looking under the rear valance. Those numbers should really read on the other side of the muffler. Concours restorers install the mufflers backwards so that judges may read the numbers easier. It is nice to see a genuine Ford muffler being used, coded for a GT350 or 500. KR had their own code. That muffler is amongst the hardest to find. When one is located, it will find a place right here.



A sharp eye will also notice the reproduction A/C hose near the top of the photo, acting as a placeholder until fresh high-pressure hoses are rebuilt using original fittings.



Even the average buyer would spot this item, a shiny new reproduction trim tag. The original is kept in a safe place and shown to the judges to avoid a point deduction.



In concours restoration, every screw counts and you can't always trust what was on the car before you start. See the body-colored screw right above the dealer prep notice? It should be the same shape as the gold pan-head screws found on either side.

often the most desirable known to exist is what makes them a good investment.

When asked for some specifics about restoring this Shelby, Gaines answered the question with a question, "How do you intend to use the car? If you restore the car to bone stock as factory delivered, it becomes extremely difficult to maintain. In order to keep her in show form, you can never drive her. That is what we call in SAAC and Division I car."

How about a more real-world approach? "If you plan on driving her at all, the bare metal pieces that would discolor or begin to oxidize can be finished in such a way that makes them a bit easier to maintain and possible to drive if you detail it right after each outing."

Typically, the money spent in an "over-the-top" restoration that brings a car into better-than-new condition costs as much as an OE-correct restoration. It is in the details and the knowledge it takes to get those details correct the first time that distinguishes a Division I car (restored to stock specifications as it would be delivered from the dealer to the first owner) from a Division II car.

A Division I restoration uses only original restored or NOS parts that were correct for the assembly line and not service part variations. All metal and part finishes are to be as they came off the assembly line: bare metal, zinc phosphate-plus-oil, silver cadmium, gold zinc dichromate, etc. Body paint is restored with orange peel, paint drips, and runs in the places that were commonly seen in the recesses of these assembly-line built cars.

Division II cars will have the same build quality to stock specifications as Division I, but correct reproduction parts may be substituted for original (belts, hoses, tires, batteries etc.), bare metal and plated parts may be painted with the appropriate bare metal or plated-color appearing paint. In Division II, a tire of the same exact size and from the same manufacturer is a no-points deduction. Mustang Club of America (MCA) trailered concours is similar to SAAC

DIV II and MCA Thoroughbred is similar to SAAC DIV I.

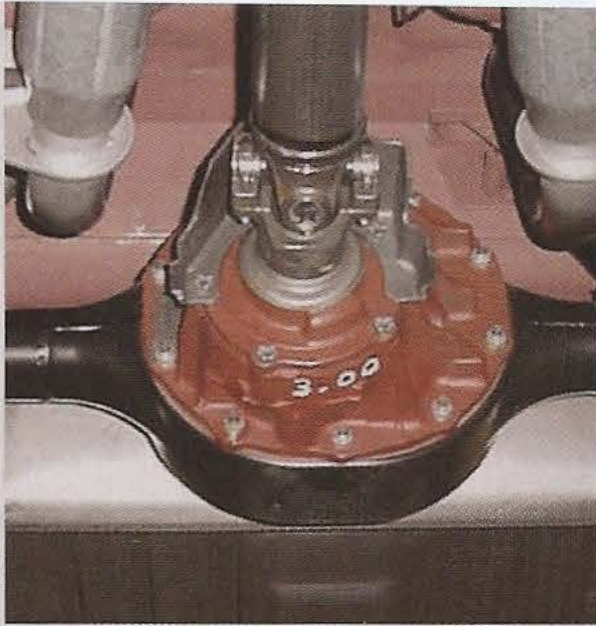
The 1968 Shelby GT 500KR shown here is a four-speed convertible equipped with A/C, and is owned by Dennis Neva of McHenry, Illinois. He originally bought the car in 1982 to drag race it. "That was a stupid idea," Neva admits. "Because it is so rare, I wanted to bring the car into as nice a condition as I could and still be able to drive it down the street every once in a while." So, Dennis restored his car to Division II standards, winning Concours Gold a few times along the way.

Bob Gaines offered some succinct advice when deciding to take a car a concours level: "Cars with a well-documented past have a future." The reason is obvious—if you begin with a well-preserved example that has a thorough history, you start with original parts, and any odd variations that fall outside the accepted standard can be verified as correct by the car's own documentation. Conversely, if you don't have the documentation to back it up, any variation in the build that is outside the accepted norm means a points deduction.

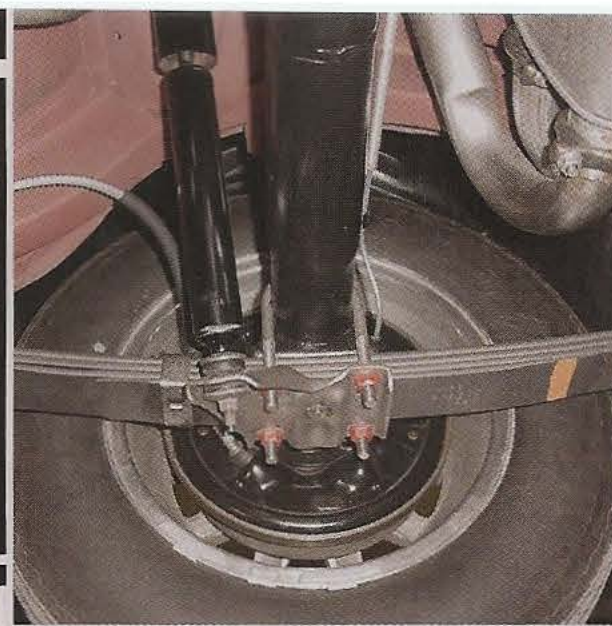
When restoring a muscle car, "Pick a direction and stick to it," Gaines advises. Most folks start out with the idea of "freshening up" a good-quality driver, only to switch gears mid-shift. You'll likely end up redoing a lot of the work you already have done. Concours detail is not just a collection of NOS parts; it's also about emulating how the factory painted and assembled the car.

Most restoration shops do not have the expertise to do a concours restoration. Instead of paying the shop for the learning curve, Gaines emphasizes being smart about the project.

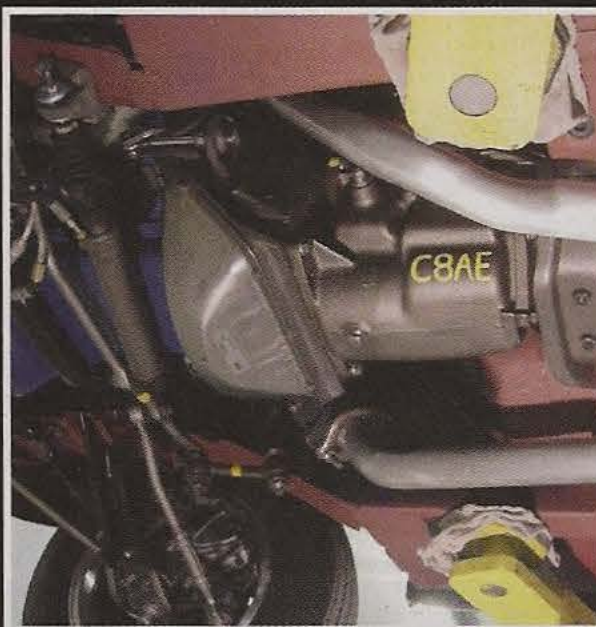
"Don't just leave it at the restoration shop and expect to pick up a Division I concours winner," he notes. "Be involved in the process and research as much as you can." He adds that you are better off in the long run by putting in the time and effort.



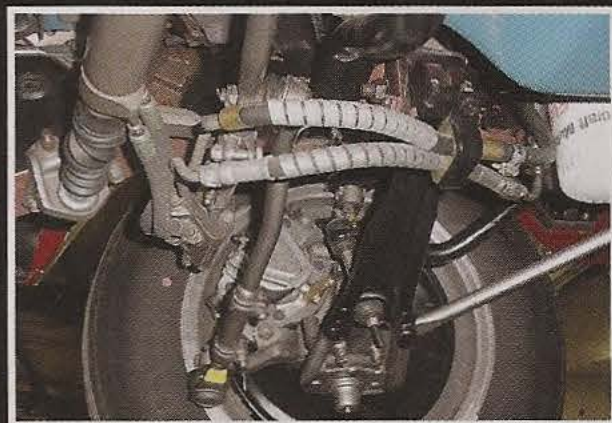
The "3.00" written in white refers to final-drive ratio. The four-speed KR was normally delivered with a 3.50:1 rear axle ratio. Points would be deducted if the owner did not have good documentation with the car to back up the variation on the axle marking from the accepted standard.



The paper band found on the axle was missing at the time of this photo. An exact reproduction of the original is being made. Notice the "safety red" coloration on the spring clamping nuts. This was done on several places on the car to indicate a safety hazard if the fastener were removed.



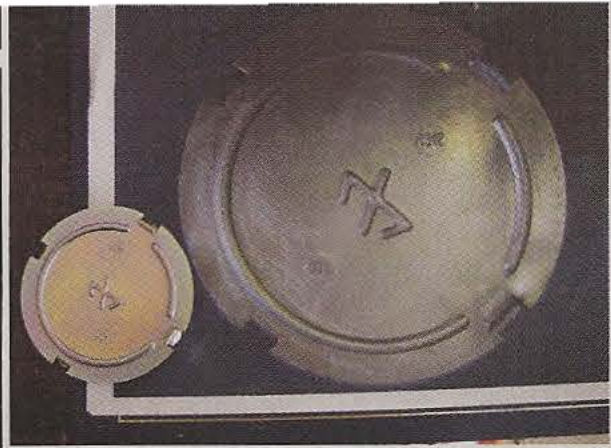
Sometimes concours correct is about what isn't there. This is a very nice NOS transmission inspection cover. The inspection sticker is from the 1980s, though, so points would be deducted if it were on the car at show time.



Division II cars are allowed to have their suspension components painted to prevent corrosion. Division I cars are not allowed to—bare metal remains bare metal. If this were a Division I style restoration you would see more contrast between the light shade steering adjuster sleeve and the darker hardened steel of the bands on the steering link. The same can be said for cast-iron brake caliper and heat-treated spindle.



The white oil filter in the first photograph is correct for big-block Mustangs without A/C. The blue filter in the second photo is correct oil filter for a car with A/C. A/C cars used a different filter boss that makes the first filter hang too low to the ground. The price of being concours correct in this case is \$400 for an NOS example of the shorter filter.



Notice the gold body plugs on black strut boxes. These covered the access holes used to mount the seats to the floor pan. These plugs found their way to many a service bay floor, never to be reinstalled, so finding original examples is next to impossible. Most restorations don't have them. The concours hobbyist can and does spend thousands to have the tooling recreated for such a piece, and hundreds of dollars to have them reproduced in a small quantity. The reason? Bragging rights.



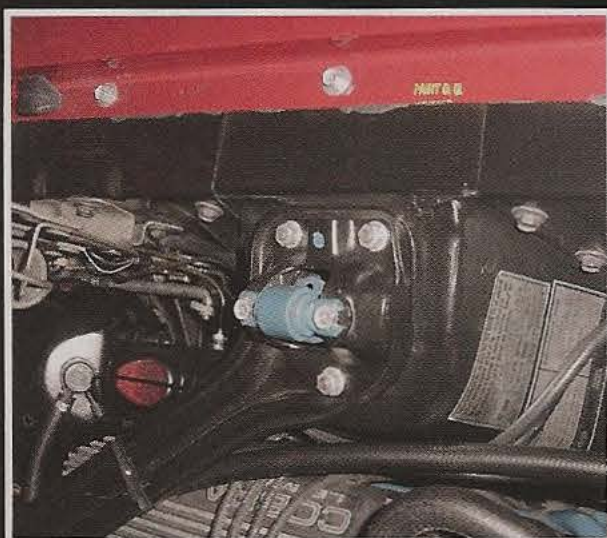
The wiring harness runs right over the mounting bracket for the A/C condenser on all big-block A/C Mustangs and Shelbys. The black plastic bracket cover that protects the harness from chafing against the raw steel is seldom found on original cars and reproductions aren't available, yet. So, what do you do? If you are restoring to concours quality, you search high and low for a surviving sample and spend \$1,500 having a dozen or so sets of them recreated.



In 1968 the Shelby convertible sported a large roll bar with D-rings said to be included to hold a surf board. Since this was the only four-speed KR with A/C to be sold in the Midwest, we seriously doubt the roll bar ever did "hang ten," but it is nice to show how the rings were used.



Here's a concours-quality interior—crisp, clean and ready for inspection. What self-respecting muscle-car enthusiast wouldn't want to smell that original aroma and feel the textures of the trim and upholstery?



Some concours corrections are very simple. The plug wires on the left-side bank fire sequentially and must not run parallel. For better performance and more points left on the judging sheet, switch wire 5 and 7 so they cross over one another. This fix is both easy and free.



Some things that don't look original may very well be. The white scotch-lock splice into the wiring harness was a modification made during the transformation from Mustang to Shelby to tie into the up-fitted Stewart-Warner oil-pressure sensor.



The air chamber on the fiberglass hood was originally mounted using an orange/red RTV compound no longer produced. The bead of a similar substance was used here. The sloppy, oozing effect is a correct detail. In the upper right-hand corner there is a special rivet used to fasten the chamber at the front corner, and also requires its own tool to install. One can easily spend hundreds of dollars to recreate a factory-delivered detail like this.



Fiberglass fit and finish 40 years ago wasn't what it is today, so they called the seams where the 'glass head- and taillight buckets mate to the metal. The gaps on this restored car are much tighter than when she first left AO Smith, but Neva still used caulking because that is factory correct.

For instance, Dennis Neva went so far in his research that he ended up having various clips and knock-outs recreated from fresh tooling. He went digging for the truth, and once discovered, created an accurate part where almost no original examples existed before. Learning what Dennis spent to recreate some of these detail pieces can make a \$5,000 military toilet seat seem like a bargain. No one said the pursuit of Concours Gold comes without dropping some serious coin.

That is the thrill of this side of the hobby. It is equal parts Indiana Jones and Harry Houdini, along with a big dollop of Daniel Webster's penchant for detailed definitions thrown in for good measure. If you want to get into this concours side of things, before you do a restoration, volunteer at concours shows, work with the judges, and become one yourself. Begin the adventure is by picking up a factory assembly manual. That will tell you 90 percent of what you need to know. The knowledge gleaned from those pages, along with conversations shared between other club judges, will stay with you long after your car is complete. After all, that is how Bob Gaines got his start, and look where it took him! **MCM**