

IEMC MUSTANG



'Stang of The Month: Mike Wright's '66 Shelby

In college I owned a 1966 G.T. fastback, with a hipo 289 engine. One night a couple of budding young criminals stole, striped and burnt the car. Luckily, as one can imagine, the two were the swiftest bunnies in the pack and they were arrested very shortly after the act. I was able to get back most of the parts but unfortunately the body was beyond repair.

Since then I had always been very impressed with and, would love to have owned a G.T. 350. So, I started looking into the possibilities of finding one that was in the price range of my meager college kid's budget. Since there was not an over abundance of Shelby Mustangs in Montana, I contacted a friend of mine in Seattle and asked him if he could find one in a little larger population center. He was a bit of a car nut with, a number of connections and within a week he had found a couple of '66 G.T. 350's and a '65 for me to look at .

I flew out to Seattle and looked at the cars he found. The first one he showed me was a black and gold Hertz car, with only about 30,000 miles on it, however it appeared the mileage had occurred a quarter of a mile at a time. The next one he showed me was the '65, which was in much better shape, but after negotiating, it was still about \$400 more than I could afford. The 3rd one he showed me was a blue '66 with white stripes and in excellent condition. The owner let us take it for a test drive and this was my first introduction to a Shelby.

We drove it down to a freeway entrance ramp which was on rather steep grade. I stepped on the brakes to slow down and nothing happened. As my anxiety level sky rocketed I applied increasingly more pressure on the brakes and finally the car came to a stop. At this point I had white knuckles, a death grip on the steering wheel and was sweating profusely. After a short drive on the freeway we headed back, noticing that steering the car at lower speeds was a little a kin

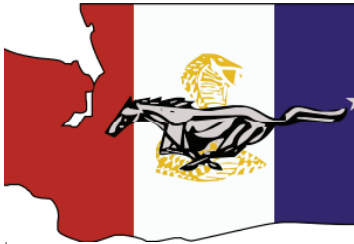


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to wheeling a broad sword. When we got back to the owners address, he was mentioning all the improvements and upgrades he had made to the car, including repainting it and putting in new breaks at which point I had to ask, "you put in new breaks", he smiled and commented, "you've never driven a Shelby before, have you?". I had to admit that this was my maiden voyage. He went on to explain that it came with semi-metallic racing breaks and a reduced steering ratio, which took some getting used to. Even with these draw backs, I really liked the car and the price wasn't too much more than what the insurance settlement had given me, so I purchased the car.

When I got back to Montana I started to learn a lot more about the '66 G.T.350s. First, the car came with a cervo c-four transmission and a duel chambered master cylinder and did not have the 715 Holly carburetor which was my understanding was stock on the '65 and '66 Shelby Mustangs. I had heard that the automatic and duel chambered master cylinders were primarily equipment on the Hertz cars. This was 1971 and at that time there were horror stories about "Rent-a-Racers" being brought back to the company with small holes in the rear floor boards, where roll bars had been attached (roll bars were required on most race tracks) and therefore these were cars that were to be avoided. However it was my understanding that all these cars were black with gold stripes and had the designation of G.T. 350H on the rocker panels. Since I had a leak in the top of the gas tank and I replaced it. At that time I noticed that there was blue paint on the rim where the gas tank was attached to the body of the car, therefore I felt confident that the car was originally blue and, in my mind, not a Hertz car.



After driving the car for about a year on Montana roads and picking up a number of rock chips I decided to repaint the car. In sanding and prepping the car for painting I discovered evidence of gold striping around the insides of the wheel wells. By this time I had joined the Shelby Owners Association, so I called them and they informed me that I was wrong, there approximately 55 blue Hertz cars manufactured. They were even able to tell me that the car was rented out of San Francisco and had a couple unique features, such as; over ride traction bars and an emergency brake warning light in the passenger's compartment.

When I repainted the car I installed the original gold stripes, but my Shelby ignorance again reared its ugly head. I knew the stripes on the white cars were guardsmen blue, so I thought that was the correct shade for the main color on the cars. Although I noticed that the shade was a noticeably darker blue than it had been, I chocked this up to faded paint. Later it pointed out to me that the stock shade was sapphire blue.

Over the years I have made a number of changes to the car only to find out later that the changes were not correct. In 2005 the car was again repainted, engine rebuilt and balanced and the interior restored. This time I learned from my past mistakes and researched everything I could to make sure it was stock, right down to the break warning decal above the ash try on Hertz cars. Hopefully I have finally corrected all my past screw ups.

- Mike Wright