



Alan Faulkner & his 2008 Shelby GT

The restorer of muscle cars and the model that celebrates his love of hot rods

I bought my first muscle car when I was 19. While my friends were down the pub getting drunk, I was driving a 1966 289 Mustang! American cars were readily available when I was young. We used to get *Exchange and Mart* on a Thursday for 20p and it was full of every kind of muscle car you could think of; they were plentiful in this country and affordable in the late '70s for an ordinary working lad just starting out.

Everything gravitated around London's Chelsea cruise at the time – we used to go down there on a Saturday night and it was just brilliant. There was a guy who had a 1970 GT500 that I was just in awe of, and it started my love affair with Shelbys. I'd never seen performance like it.

I was trained in the aircraft industry and that taught me a lot about attention to detail and getting things right. If you do a design drawing on an aircraft you need to make sure everything's accurate, because the guy on the shop floor will follow it exactly. If an aeroplane fell out of the sky and it was your part that failed, you'd have a couple of military policemen turning up at your door!

I spent four years designing at Aston Martin, joining during its 'new beginning' in 1986. I worked on updating the Lagonda, scaling up a

quarter-scale model in the old-fashioned way. But Aston badly needed a new model to take it forwards as the V8 didn't meet any safety or emissions legislation. I was part of a small team of guys who worked on a completely new car that Aston could sell in every country – the Virage.

It just didn't have enough development time spent on it, and it got a right hammering from the press. They had no idea how small our team was, how tight the budget was or just what a big leap it was to have a car that was legal all over the world.

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I then started my restoration company [www.dragonwheelsrestorations.co.uk] with a concours job on John DeLorean's Corvette, with which we won a lot of competitions. I enjoyed it, but I wanted to go back into Shelbys.

Why do I like them so much? Carroll Shelby. For me he was the ultimate hot-rodder. He got something, found a bigger engine, and produced something great from it. I never met him; I had an opportunity and I bloody missed



Above: airbag lid is signed by Carroll Shelby, Jack Sears and Jack Roush

it! I'm very good friends with Jack Sears, the Cobra racer from the 1960s and the first BTCC champion, and he's my direct link to Carroll, so I guess it's as good as. God, can Jack drive, even in his 80s!

Shelby stopped working with Ford in 1970 but they wanted him involved with the new Mustang. So he started up a facility in Las Vegas and started hand-building these GTs in 2006, just like he did in the beginning. He'd get a stock Mustang from Ford and alter the bodywork, suspension, engine and axle.

That direct link with his work is what attracted me to this car. The GT500 is a more powerful car and everyone knows it, but it's mass produced by Ford. Hand-built cars have foibles; no two are the same and that's what gives them such personality. The only thing I wanted was a bit more go, so I fitted a Roush supercharger to it, pushing it up to 450bhp and 400lb ft of torque. I've never measured its performance, but it's quick enough to get you busted, and that's all I need to know!

Carroll Shelby would sign anything you wanted if you made a donation to his heart trust, so I sent him my airbag cover. I also got Jack to scribble on it then when I had my supercharger fitted, I wrote to Jack Roush in America and he agreed to sign it too. So that lid's got more air miles than my car!