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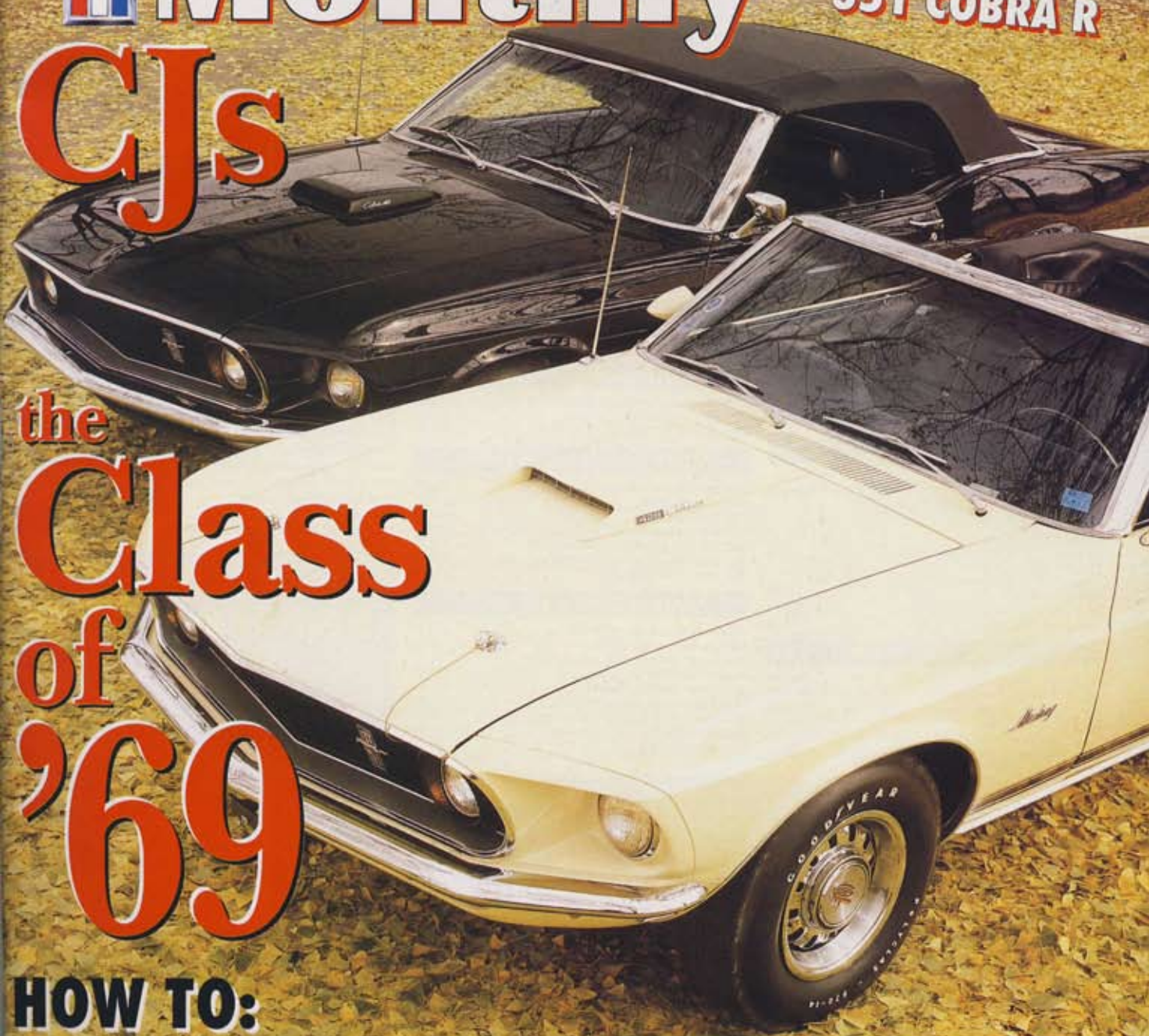
# Resto Parts Guide

# Mustang Monthly

# CJs

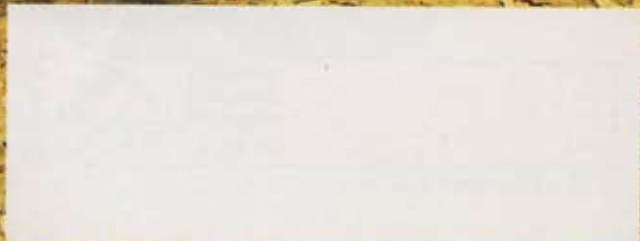
# the Class of '69

351 COBRA R



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- MACH 1 TRIM
- 8-INCH UPGRADE
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Class of '69



## A Tale of Two Ragtops

The best of times — muscular styling, abundant horsepower, and Woodward Avenue boulevard battles. The worst of times — Vietnam, civil unrest, and the Generation Gap. In 1969, polar extremes became the rule rather than the exception. Whether you enjoyed or despised that year a quarter century ago, all must agree that it was a time of dynamic change and tumultuous events.

The Class of '69, as defined by America's automakers, was certainly the peak of the musclecar era. While Ford was producing Cobra Jet- and Boss-powered Mustangs, General Motors, Chrysler, and American Motors were countering with potent powertrains of their own.

In addition to the mega-inch FE engine options Ford offered in the Mustang line-up, an abundance of option packages could be added to nearly any Mustang. However, the performance image leaders in the '69 Mustang line-up were the Mach 1, Boss 302, Boss 429, Shelby GT-350, and GT-500.

*These Cobra Jet-powered convertibles represent rarity but at two opposing extremes of option content.*

article by Jerry Pitt  
photographs by Roy D. Query

Still, there were wise buyers who realized that the performance Mustang line-up need not allow image to dictate production. This handful of performance Mustang enthusiasts opted for "something different" fitted with the mighty 428 CJ.

Some believe that the Class of '69 was entirely populated with prom queen Mach 1s and heroic Boss 'Nines. While these are definitely desirable in their own right, they have received more than their fare share of hoopla. That's why we celebrate

the wallflowers who also populated the class of '69. The rare Cobra Jet-powered Mustangs that follow may have been runner-ups in buyer popularity, but today they are among the rarest and most desirable Mustangs ever produced.

We'll begin with this pair of CJ convertibles owned by Rick and Jacque Parker of Columbus, Ohio. Of course there's much to like about any Cobra Jet Mustang, but what intrigues Rick about these CJ convertibles is that "while there are many rare Mustangs, what's particularly appealing about these convertibles is that they were never intended to be one-of-a-kinds. They were instead, regular production cars that are rare today because only a handful of individuals had the foresight to order the Cobra Jet engine in a convertible." Unlike Hi-Pos, Bosses, and even today's 5.0 Cobra Mustangs, the buyer could mix and match the parts to create their own one-of-a-kind.

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## Runner-Up

When it comes to content, the Parkers' non-Ram-Air, Q-code 428 CJ Mustang GT convertible is every bit as desirable as any Mach 1. Unfortunately, its popularity in 1969 was limited due to the fact that few knew about, or ordered, such

a vehicle. Much like the talented, yet relatively unknown, contestant in a high-school popularity contest, a GT convertible received less attention than the ballyhooed Mach 1s and Bosses.

This Meadowlark Yellow ragtop's exclusivity begins with its GT badging — the

1969 model year would be the swan song of the GT option. Total 1969 GT production according to Jim Smart's *GT/Mach 1 Guide* was 5,396 units for all body styles and all five available V8 engines. Compared to the SportsRoof-only Mach 1s (of which 72,458 were built), GTs were obviously overlooked by Mustang dealers and buyers. Considering rarity alone, any '69 GT is worth a second look, but a CJ GT is not only rare, but desirable as well. Unfortunately, exact production figures for CJ convertibles are not known — one can only guess just how rare this particular car really is.

As mentioned previously, the performance image FE-powered Mustang was the Mach 1. However, the same engines offered in the new Mustang model could be installed along with the GT Equipment Group. Standard in the GTs was the H-code 351-2V producing 250 horsepower. Four optional V8s included the M-code 351-4V rated at 290 horsepower, the S-code 390-4V with its 320 horsepower, and either the Q-code non-Ram-Air 428 CJ and the Ram-Air, R-code 428 Cobra Jet, both of which were rated at 335 horsepower.

Other GT/Mach 1 similarities might include the optional Knitted Vinyl Sports Interior which was standard in the Mach 1. Unlike the Mach 1, the GT could be ordered

with the standard Mustang interior or the more luxurious Interior Decor Group or Interior Decor Group Deluxe (denoting woodgrain appointments). Appearing in this car are Comfortweave buckets with headrests. An interesting note is that front disc brakes and dual-trumpet exhaust tips were now additional options to the GT unlike in years' past. The same held true for the Mach 1, as front drum brakes were standard.

While the '69 GT was less visually dynamic than its Mach 1 and Boss siblings, there were distinguishable items that made up the '69 GT Equipment Group. These included '65-'67-style triple racing stripes lacking GT nomenclature, a pop-open gas cap with the GT emblem affixed to a "cogged" center, a pair of hood pins and lanyards, carryover '68 Styled Steel wheels with GT center caps, and dual exhaust with any one of the four optional 4V V8s. From these additions, it would seem that most any other Mustang option could be added to the GT, but that was not always the case.

Not only was 1969 a banner year for options, it was a banner year for option limitations. Consider the purchaser who desired a GT hardtop fitted with the Interior Decor Group Deluxe woodgrain appointments. Since 1969 was the first year of the hardtop-specific Grandé option package, purchasers desiring a GT hardtop with luxurious appointments were limited by Ford to purchase the value-packaged and luxury appointed Grandés. As such, GT hardtops fitted with the Interior Decor Group Deluxe options that include woodgrain appointments, passenger-side Rally clock, the three-spoke Rim-Blow steering wheel, and remote-control outside mirror simply don't exist. This Decor Group could only be added to SportsRoof and convertible GTs. GT hardtops do exist, and those out there in CJ form may prove to be rarer than convertible and SportsRoof CJ GTs.

As for underpinnings, the GT Equipment Group included standard 14x6 Styled Steel wheels fitted with E70x14 white sidewall tires. Most performance oriented buyers



stepped up to purchase the Special Handling Package which included upgraded front and rear springs, heavy-duty shocks, and a larger diameter front anti-roll bar. In the event the car was a big-block, these items were prerequisite additions. Items automatically added to a Cobra Jet Mustang were an R-servo'd, cast-iron tailshaft C-6, a nodular nine-inch center section and 31 spline axles.

The acquisition of the already restored CJ convertible is quite a story, as Rick traded a GT-500 KR convertible for the CJ owned by Ron McAfee, a CJ owner of the highest esteem in his own right. It seemed Ron had an affinity toward Shelby Mustangs and Rick a penchant for rare Cobra Jets. Rick offered up a rare CJ itself, and a deal was hammered out. The concours-correct restoration was accomplished by McAfee and Semo Mustang of Gordonville, Missouri. According to Jeff Sneathen of Semo Mustang, this Metuchen, New Jersey-built GT is among what is certain to be less than 50 Cobra Jet-powered Mustang convertibles built in 1969. Beyond that 50, all other CJ convertibles went to A.



O. Smith for convertible GT 500 production. Of the 50 believed to be built, Jeff knows the whereabouts of approximately 15.

Such a noteworthy car requires a special restoration, and few reproduction parts are found on the 48,000-mile ragtop which sees street use approximately once a month and relatively few car shows per year. Complete detailing includes the undercarriage and properly detailed correct lower A-arms. Under the hood, the correct 428 engine with C80E cylinder heads is fitted with fully detailed emission components and correct date-coded components. Finally, a fitting reward to an overlooked beauty from the Class of '69.



In essence, the Parkers' R-code '69 convertible is, in many ways very similar to its Q-code garage-mate. The only difference beyond the lack of options and Ram-Air hood scoop can be described in one word, attitude.

With its Raven Black exterior, small diameter hubcaps, and plain Jane appearance, the ominous ragtop should probably star in a Stephen King epic in which the villain driver terrorizes Texas panhandle F-M routes. A more likely role that the car has played in would be that of impounded vehicle—the result of being the first apprehended as the police stormed a group of less-than-legal boulevard contestants.

Obviously the original purchaser of this

car had something in mind when ordering it through Stokes Ford of Decatur, Alabama. While it's black topcoat may seem stealth in appearance, the wider F70x14 tires and Cobra Jet shaker scoop would, in an instant, tell of the car's bad boy instincts. It basically says "you can have your pretty-boy Mach 1 to drive, I'll have it for lunch!"

Like the Q-code convertible, this car has a high school equivalent, too. Imagine it as the class-cutting, cigarette-smoking rebel that everyone wrote off as a future loser. Typically cars devoid of option content are in low demand only a few years later and as a result have low resale values. In that fashion, the option list on this car is about as short as one could get. According to the deal-

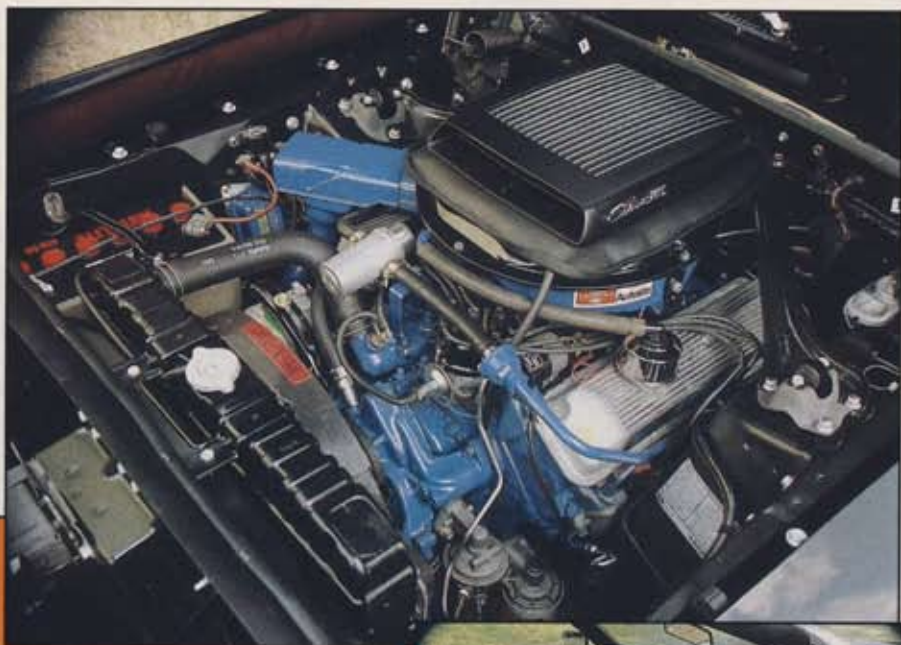
er invoice, beyond the base Mustang convertible (MSRP \$2954, which included a floor-mounted shifter, vinyl bucket seats, dual headlamps, color-keyed carpeting, and push-button seat belts) the only options added were the 428 cid four-barrel V8 engine with Ram Air (MSRP \$420.96), glass backlite (MSRP \$38.86), black power top (MSRP \$52.95), Select Shift Cruise-O-Matic automatic transmission (MSRP \$222.08), F70x14 raised white letter tires (\$127.63), AM radio (MSRP \$61.40), and Competition Suspension (MSRP \$30.64). As such, for a MSRP of under \$4000, a lucky buyer had a no-frills convertible with one duty in mind: dealing out humility to would-be competitors.

# THE BEAST



Unfortunately, those who might have predicted the car to be a "future loser" were for the most part correct. When Rick came across the bare unibody in Florida in January of 1991, it was in less-than-desirable shape. However, after studying the VIN codes and data plate, this one-time loser was ready to go into rehab. Rick knew how rare a Mustang it was, and spent a lot of time imagining what it would look like once restored to concours condition.

Once the shell was in central Ohio, it was



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stripped and placed in red oxide primer. It was in the pre-stripping timespan that Rick documented factory markings and used his knowledge of '69 Cobra Jets to make it factory correct. Rick handled most of the work himself, including cleaning, detailing, and handling the refinishing of parts.

As for the engine, Rick built the 428 retaining the stock bore and fitted replacement internals. When it came down to the body work, Rick turned to Velocity Graphics to handle the application of the PPG/Ditzler Deltron topcoat.

The goal in this restoration was to refrain from using any reproduction parts. That means big bucks were spent for the original "no-size" Goodyear Polyglas F70x14 tires, correct dated wheels, the new-old-stock small diameter hubcaps, original convertible top boot and even the January 1969-dated front parking lamp bulbs. All that effort paid off as it took a Gold award at the 30th Anniversary Mustang Celebration at Charlotte.

It's rehabilitation that made this Cobra Jet a standout again, but the attitude remains. Hear the rush of air as it enters the shaker and the snarl of the resonated exhaust. It's that attitude and appearance that tells of this Cobra Jet's true nature. 