

50 YEARS OF BULLITT

FROM MCQUEEN TO THE NEW MILLENNIUM BY SUE MEAD

Steve McQueen established a Hollywood standard for high-action car chase scenes when he raced a 1968 Mustang GT Fastback in the classic film *Bullitt*. The movie not only raised the bar for fast-action driving at the time, it's a standard that still stands today. In addition, it spawned a cult of auto and cinematography aficionados and a legion of stories. Ford recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of the iconic film by returning to the streets of San Francisco to help launch the new 2019 Mustang Bullitt. This is the third Limited Edition Bullitt and, for me, the third time I have driven the newest iteration of the emblematic automotive icon.

Memorable from my first edition Mustang Bullitt drive in 2001 was the route in the Russian Hill area, along the steep and hilly streets used for the movie's chase scene. I turned over motoring duties to colleague, friend and famed racer Denise McCluggage, who drove at brisk speeds along the course, while reminiscing about a short dating career with the legendary film star. She even shared a few tales with McQueen's son Chad, on hand to champion the new model.

The second edition Bullitt, in 2008, sent our

cadre of auto testers on the same route; many hoped for a personal re-creation of not only the fast-action chase but moments where the special-edition Mustang became air-bound over the hilly rises. Perhaps a few achieved this feat (I am sworn to secrecy!).

And that, perhaps, is why the drive route for the newest version took our group along a tamer stretch of roadways south of the city through coastal mountains with tight and twisty hills and vales that serpentine inland and slip back to the Pacific. The course provided ample opportunity to evaluate the star car's newest endowments and flair. Plus, there was a new story about the school teacher who drove the original *Bullitt* movie car to teach third grade—and the "special find" of that car (see sidebar).

Just as cool, unfettered and fastback sleek as the original Dark Highland Green Mustang GT, the new Limited Edition Bullitt is powered by an upgraded performance-tuned 5.0-liter V8 engine that has all the horsepower and torque needed to thrill everyday enthusiasts and, for those with racer hearts and talents, the top speed of 163 mph—an 8-mph increase over Ford's latest Mustang GT—can

be tried out best at a raceway, with the electronics to satisfy and support boy (and girl) racers, rather than on the pavement of the Golden Gate City.

One of my favorite features is the six-speed manual tranny with rev matching, and the gear shifter's white cue ball shift knob in a nod to heritage. But the icon's true touchstone its delicious sound that comes from the active valve performance exhaust system, along with 87mm throttle bodies, the powertrain control module calibration and the specially-retuned black NitroPlate exhaust tips that bring a delightful burble. A new open-air induction system, Shelby GT350 intake manifold and a larger radiator optimize performance, while a Torsen limited-slip differential and a larger rear anti-roll bar kept it planted when I pushed through tight corners.

Standard equipment inside includes a heated leather steering wheel and 12-inch all-digital LCD instrument cluster, identical in function to the cluster introduced on the 2018 Mustang, but with a unique Bullitt welcome screen that starts with an image of the car, rather than the standard pony. The leather-trimmed interior features unique green ac-

cent stitching on the dashboard, door panels, center console and seats. Ebony Black leather-trimmed Recaro seats with unique green accent stitching are optional.

Additional factory-installed options include a MagneRide semi-active suspension system for optimized driving performance, as well as a Bullitt Electronics Package which includes navigation, a new B&O PLAY premium sound system by HARMAN, Blind Spot Information System with cross-traffic alert, and memory functionality for driver's seat, mirrors and ambient lighting.

The new model is an amalgam of Mustang GT Premium and Performance Package content into a unique sports car that maintains the original Bullitt's understated persona—except for the sound! Other features paying tribute to McQueen's ride are subtle chrome accents around a unique black honeycomb grille and side windows, classic five-spoke heritage 19-inch aluminum wheels, and red-painted Brembo brake calipers with larger rotors that provided measured stopping power.

If you don't want to match the classic Dark Highland Green paint scheme of the movie car, Shadow Black is a stealthy alternative color choice. Notable is the minimal badging inside and out: only a circular Bullitt logo emblem on the rear center faux gas cap serves as a shout-out. "With zero stripes, spoilers or badges, it doesn't need to shout," said Mustang chief designer Darrell Behmer. "It's just cool, like Steve McQueen." ■

2019 FORD MUSTANG BULLITT

ENGINEexclusive Bullitt-tuned 5.0L Ti-VCT V8
 DRIVETRAINRWD
 HP/TORQUE(w prem fuel) 480 hp / 420 lb-ft
 TRANSMISSION6-speed manual w rev matching
 TOP SPEED163 mph

BASE PRICE\$46,595

INCLUDED: Dark Highland Green or Shadow Black paint; ebony leather trim interior w green stitching; Equipment Group 500A incl Bullitt interior accents, 19-in 5-spoke Heritage wheels, 12-in LCD digital instrument cluster w MyColor, heated steering wheel; minimalist Bullitt styling features incl circular faux gas cap w Bullitt logo and subtle chrome accents around front grille and side windows; 19-in torque thrust design machined-face aluminum wheels w high-gloss black pockets; custom black honeycomb grille; GT Performance Package aero splitter, open air induction system and Shelby GT350 intake manifold w 87mm throttle body and performance powertrain control module calibration; GT Performance Package suspension, performance front springs, six-piston red Brembo front brakes w larger rotors; staggered Michelin Pilot summer performance radials, electric line lock/launch control, TORSEN limited-slip differential for optimum track performance; standard active valve performance exhaust w NitroPlate black exhaust tips; fully-customizable 12-in digital LCD instrument cluster w Bullitt car image on start-up; MyMode feature to save favorite exhaust, steering and drive settings; upgraded 6-speed manual transmission w rev matching and iconic white cue ball shift knob.

DESTINATION CHARGE995

BULLITT MUSTANG TOTAL\$47,590

W ALL OPTIONS:

BULLITT ELECTRONICS PACKAGE: Harman Kardon B&O Play premium audio incl CD, HD radio, subwoofer in trunk; 3-setting driver's seat memory, mirrors and ambient lighting; voice-activated touchscreen nav; blind spot info and cross-traffic alert2100

MAGNERIDE DAMPING SYSTEM1695

RECARO SEATS: Ebony Recaro leather front seats w green accent stitching1595

DESTINATION CHARGE995

TOTAL WITH ALL OPTIONS\$52,980



HISTORY ECHOES ITSELF

In what is believed to be the first time that the original hero car has been in San Francisco since the movie *Bullitt* was filmed back in 1968, Sean and Samantha Kiernan brought their 1968 Mustang GT Fastback to participate in the media event. Once believed lost forever, the unrestored vehicle has been making the rounds this year, having recently been at the Festival of Speed in Goodwood, United Kingdom in July, and appearing at the Woodward Dream Cruise in Michigan in August.

Sean inherited the *Bullitt* Mustang in 2014 from his late father Robert, who had purchased the car in 1974. Before its retirement and subsequent restoration, Sean's mother, Robbie, drove that same Mustang to teach the third grade at their parish Catholic school. "The car didn't impress me much back then. I was just eight, and it was old and uncomfortable," said Sean's sister, Kelly Cotton, in an interview with the *Detroit Free Press*.

"We carpooled, and Mom would pick us up from Girl Scouts. You heard that car before you saw it. And there were holes in the floorboard on the passenger side where the camera mount was used for the movie. I could watch down at the road as we drove along."

"Steve McQueen wanted it, but the family turned him down," said Samantha, who enjoys riding with Sean in the original, but loves the newest model as well. She and Sean will be taking delivery of a new Bullitt soon—with VIN#2! ■

