

The Mustang Bullitt: Rebirth of a Tribute

In the world of automotive design and marketing, Ford's J Mays, (global vice president of design) has a proven track record with finding inspiration of the past. He was, after all, instrumental in the creation of Volkswagen's New Beetle a few years back, and he was also a force (along with Ford's chief designer Doug Gaffka) in the last Mustang Bullitt, the limited-run car that appeared in 2001, and sold just under 6,000 units. It should be no surprise, then, that for the 40th anniversary of the popular Steve McQueen tour de force, Mays is once again looking backward in order to push Ford forward with the recently released 2008 Ford Mustang Bullitt.

{flv}2008MustangBullitt{/flv}

The 2008 Bullitt is as cosmetically similar to the original 1968 car used in the movie as is possible with modern car making. Its exterior paint comes in "Dark Highland Green," which is almost identical to the original Highland Green paint used on the car driven by McQueen, and basic black. Like the car in the film, the rest of the exterior styling is minimal - Ford's even taken away the well-known rearing horse logo, as well as the scoops and spoilers seen on more conventional mustangs. Instead, the only badging is the word "Bullitt" emblazoned across a graphic rendering of a gun sight on the deck lid's faux gas cap.

As well, there's a black mesh grille with a satin aluminum accent strip - and the 3-inch exhaust tips seen on the Mustang GT have been replaced with 3.5-inch chrome tips. Speaking of exhaust, even the sound of this car is part of Ford's "second tribute" (their phrase) to the 1968 movie: they based the exhaust note on a digitally mastered DVD print of the film.

Under the hood of the Mustang Bullitt, there's a 4.6 liter, 315 horsepower V-8 engine that offers 325 pounds-feet of torque at 4,250 rpm, and a boosted redline rpm of 6,500 that allows a top speed of 151 mph (we don't recommend trying this on surface streets, or at all). The transmission is a Tremec five-speed manual. Ford's racing division had some input in the 2008 Bullitt as well - not only does it have a modified suspension and chassis, but it's also got a cold-air intake that helps it achieve that boosted torque and horsepower.

Inside the Bullitt, satin aluminum is present again, providing a nice counterpoint to dark charcoal leather seats in the otherwise understated cabin. Optional features include Sirius Satellite Radio, a Shaker 1000 audio system, an active anti-theft system, wheel locking kits, ambient lighting, and HID head lamps.

Ford is limiting production and new car prices on the 2008 Bullitt to 7,700 cars, which is a more-than-adequate tribute to the movie, the memory of Steve McQueen, who died of lung cancer in 1980, and the vision of J Mays.