

SHOPPING WITH COLIN

1968 Shelby GT350

COLOR MAKES THE CAR. BY COLIN COMER

I've read a million used-car ads, and I still enjoy the crappy ones most. They often lead to great cars. Take this gem from the Shelby club forum: "WT-5185 Special Orange GT350. Complete. May trade up/down on Hi-Po Fords." That's it. No name, no contact info, no photos—and no response to my inquiry.

Bummer. In the world of Shelbys, the 1968 Special Paint cars are precious. Out of 4450 1968 Shelbys, only 159 were Special Paint cars, and all but 15 were WT-6066 Special Yellow. Only three were finished in WT-5185 Special Orange, two of which are GT500KR fastbacks. While a '68 GT350 is arguably unremarkable, especially compared with the more focused 1965–1967 cars, this one was different.

DOCUMENTATION >> First rule of buying a Shelby: Make sure it's real. The Shelby American Auto Club's registry lists almost every one made. Marti Auto Works has original Ford production records for 1967–1993. Don't pay the Shelby premium for something that isn't a Shelby.

MECHANICALS >> Few engines are more robust than a 302 V-8 with a hydraulic camshaft. Worst case, a top-notch rebuild is \$10,000. Mustang front suspensions wear out, so budget \$2000 for new components—it's the difference between a car that scares you and one you love to drive.

RUST >> There's a reason the Mustang was on Bondo cans. I'm a big fan of original sheetmetal—if a car's fenders, floor, and doors were replaced, what are you buying? Note that front-fender aprons are where the Ford VINs are stamped. Lose those, it's an issue.



PARTS >> Original '68 Shelby parts are scarce and spendy. Fiberglass panels—nose, hood, trunk—are unique; most have been damaged. Repros can be spotted by a trained eye and hurt value. The hubcaps are 1968-only and run \$2000 for a restored set. Other valuable bits: shoulder harnesses and Lucas fog lamps.

VALUE >> \$60,000 for a good car, up to \$85,000 for original and perfect. Four-speed cars bring more, as do good colors.

VERDICT >> I wouldn't hop on a plane for just any 1968 GT350. The car showed up on eBay a few weeks later with an equally terse description, but this time with photos. It isn't perfect, but it is one of one. I love the color, and that plus three pedals made me throw out the price guides and bring it home for myself. Persistence, and crappy ads, can pave the way to cool stuff.



BUY



PASS

Contributing Editor Colin Comer is a vintage-car dealer and racer from Milwaukee. He checks in from the road on a regular basis.

The Thing You Thought You Knew

Transmission vs. Transaxle

BECAUSE
"MAGIC BOX O' GEARS"
WON'T WORK
FOR FANCY DINNERS.

General term. Found in almost every car, even a single-speed EV. Sits somewhere between the power source and wheels, reducing or multiplying torque. Sometimes you shift it, sometimes it shifts itself. Aliases: gearbox (if it has gears and isn't a CVT), tranny.

More specific. A tranny that also contains a differential, sending power directly to the wheels via external shafts. Found in most front-drive cars, most mid- and rear-engine cars, modern Corvettes, and other applications for packaging or weight-distribution reasons.

THE CHEAT: All transaxles are transmissions. But not vice versa.