

RIDE A WILD HORSE

I suppose to have an article about a Ford in the Buick News really makes it a four-letter word, however most of us would admit that the car chase in Bullitt was a pretty exciting thing in our younger days. Some of the Buick people on the rally mentioned that they have Mustangs as well so perhaps this will be of some interest to them. My husband Alan informs me that Steve McQueen did do some of the driving, Steve being a super-doooper racing driver himself however he wasn't quite good enough and a stunt driver did do most of the driving. Alan maintains the Charger RT would have had it all over the Mustang anyway, being a 440 cu in, 375 hp Magnum engine and outclassing the 'Stang.



The Bullitt 68 Mustang Fastback GT

This article comes from The Bulletin magazine, and is written by Joshua Gliddon. Its interesting to see an American car featured at last instead of the usual European or Asian write-ups. Whenever you mention Buicks to some people, they ask "Are Buicks still being made?" Such is the zero coverage from newspapers and magazines in Australia regarding American cars.

"Gearheads love the 1968 movie *Bullitt*. There is the famous run through San Francisco, there's Steve McQueen and there's the Mustang he drives in one of the cinema's greatest chases. If you look carefully as McQueen guns the throttle, you'll see the car's rear axle hopping up and down like an angry bee in a bottle. This is called axle tramp and in the Mustang's case, its because it used a simple rear suspension that didn't do a great job of keeping everything in contact with the ground.

Ford has just released a new Stang that, after generations of increasingly bloated and irrelevant models (including one that went on sale here a couple of years ago to widespread indifference), looks almost the same as those seminal late 1960s cars. It has also got something else - aside from a selection of six and eight-cylinder engines - in common with the original: a live rear axle.

This is almost unheard of in a modern car. Virtually every new vehicle on the market, especially those that are rear drive like the Mustang, use independent suspension all around. This means that each wheel can move up and down in response to the road without forcing its axle mate to move in concert. The result is better handling and ride.



The 2005 Pony

Ford justifies the live arrangement by saying that an independent system would have been too expensive (in the US, the car starts at just under \$US19,000), and besides, the engineers say they've put a lot of effort into properly locating the axle. More importantly, the car looks the part - and it is looks, not technology that sells sports coupes. Most drivers probably wouldn't notice or even care that their Mustang uses axle technology that dates from World War II. To a great extent it really doesn't matter. Live axles can and do work well and not everything that is old is necessarily bad, even in cars.

The real question is whether we'll get to find out for ourselves whether its any good. At the moment it doesn't look like Ford has any plans to import the new Mustang which is too bad. Holden's Monaro, an obvious rival, is a lovely car, but it didn't have Steve McQueen, and every gearhead dreams of being Steve McQueen. Even if they won't admit it."

L Haime (WA Buicks).