



American Muscle Cars: A Full-Throttle History

Darwin Holmstrom , Tom Glatch (Photographs)

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This is *the* muscle car history to own—a richly illustrated chronicle of America's greatest high-performance cars, told from their 1960s beginning through the present day!

In the 1960s, three incendiary ingredients--developing V-8 engine technology, a culture consumed by the need for speed, and 75 million baby boomers entering the auto market—exploded in the form of the factory muscle car. The resulting vehicles, brutal machines unlike any the world had seen before or will ever see again, defined the sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll generation.

American Muscle Cars chronicles this tumultuous period of American history through the primary tool Americans use to define themselves: their automobiles. From the street-racing hot rod culture that emerged following World War II through the new breed of muscle cars still emerging from Detroit today, this book brings to life the history of the American muscle car.

When Pontiac's chief engineer, John Z. DeLorean, and his team bolted a big-inch engine into the division's intermediate chassis, they immediately invented the classic muscle car. In those 20 minutes it took Bill Collins and Russ Gee to bolt a 389 ci V-8 engine into a Tempest chassis they created the prototype for Pontiac's GTO—and changed the course of automotive history. From that moment on, American performance cars would never be the same.

American Muscle Cars tells the story of the most desirable cars ever to come out of Detroit. It's a story of flat-out insanity told at full throttle and illustrated with beautiful photography.

American Muscle Cars: A Full-Throttle History Details

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From Reader Review American Muscle Cars: A Full-Throttle History for online ebook

Amy Marbach says

I have been chomping at the proverbial bit to get my hands on this latest Motorbooks book, American Muscle Cars: A Full-Throttle History since the publisher sent me a list of books I might be interested in. While I love and can appreciate a lovely sporty Ferrari or Lamborghini to me there is nothing more iconic, more representative of the word “car,” and nothing that will make me whip my head around faster to get another look than American muscle cars. In my “fantasy” car collection, you know, the one in my head with the cars I would love to afford to own but can not because of money, space, time and well mostly money, American muscle cars are the most prevalent cars in that car collection.

American Muscle Cars: A Full-Throttle History is just what the title states- a chronological history of the American muscle cars from its infancy in the early 1960 through the cars coming out of Chevy, Dodge and Ford today as told by author Darwin Holmstrom and photographer Tom Glatch. But really the book is so much more. It's a song to the era that born the machine.

“When John Z. DeLorean and his cadre of enthusiastic miscreants took it upon themselves to bolt Pontiac division's hottest engine into a mid-sized chassis, disobeying orders from the top of General Motors' food chain, they created something that should never have been and will never be again: the muscle car.” Darwin Holmstrom, introduction, American Muscle Car: A Full Throttle History.

(And in case you have any doubts that John Z. DeLorean mentioned in the quote above is the creator of the DeLorean motor company, more commonly known as the company that made what many people call the “Back To The Future” car.)

Anyway, as I was saying, Motorbooks always puts out the most beautiful books filled with beautiful car photography and this one is no different in that respect- the pages are filled with beautiful drool-inducing color and black and white photos of classic American muscle. However it's the actual writing in this one that caught my eye first. It contains rich text that delves into the cars while keeping a firm pulse on the society and culture that they were born from and into. I could just string together quote after quote but at the risk of turning my review of the book into a book report I will refrain. From the introduction of American Muscle Cars: A Full-Throttle History to the end of the book it's filled with not just car history and statistics but historical and cultural information providing readers with the cultural context for the creation of the muscle car- information that is not just relevant to the popularity of the American muscle car but that the car was a product of the a culture yearning for a need for speed and acceleration mixed with a rebel yell for freedom:

“When young men returned from the European and Pacific theaters of World War II, they came back restless, burning for something that polite society could not provide. They came back with a need for speed. Testosterone-fueled daredevil driving fed a need for excitement in young men who dodged death overseas.” Darwin Holmstrom, pg 10, American Muscle Car: A Full Throttle History.

The book starts by explaining the what why and how of exactly makes a muscle car a muscle car (quick hint: speed gained from lighter weight cars with powerful performance engines). This book ignores nothing when it comes to the cars, even diving into the street rod racing culture that soon developed into NHRA as well as giving a short nod to NASCAR's influence in helping drive development of the performance V-8 in

street “stock” cars- especially in the early 1960s when Super Duty Pontiacs dominated the premiere racing series.

It leaves no model or manufacturer out- explaining not just what made that car unique but delves into each car’s development and progression through the muscle car era. The book also features a beautifully illustrated, multiple page pull-out that contains not just an illustrated timeline road map of muscle car milestones on one side but the back side showcases illustrations of the iconic models of muscle cars by the major manufacturers of GM, Ford and Chrysler.

After diving into what the book describes as the performance car market dark ages started by the EPA’s movement from leaded to unleaded gas which lead to the death of the American muscle car, it goes into the rebirth of the muscle car in the mid 1980’s with the shared competition between Ford and Chevy to bring their traditional pony cars back into “acceptable” horsepower levels which propelled Pontiac and then later Dodge to enter back into what many are calling the “new” muscle car market which is now populated by the new new Camaros, Mustangs, and Chargers (and Challengers).

This is probably the most complete book about the American Muscle car that I have seen. And like other previous Motorbooks I have reviewed the pictures are not only stunning but help tell the story of the American Muscle Car in a way that makes this book the best book about muscle cars I have seen.

This book can best be summed up by the last paragraph of it’s introduction:

“One would think the muscle car, something that should have never existed in the first place, would have become a forgotten relic of the past, but something strange happened—they became lust objects. Today we have faster, better handling, more comfortable, safer cars. We have cars that can run through the quartermile 50 percent quicker than cars of the classic era, that will run circles around a classic muscle car on a road course, and do all this while coddling the driver in all the luxury of a five-star hotel suite. These are wonderful cars, but they’re not the same. They don’t raise their middle fingers in a rousing salute to authority the way real muscle cars do. Real muscle cars don’t have 19 airbags. Real muscle cars don’t have traction control. Real muscle cars don’t even have power steering or air conditioning. Real muscle cars don’t run every driver input through a committee of computers before obliging said driver. Real muscle cars have big engines for people with big enough clackers to use them, and that’s about it.” Darwin Homstrom, *American Muscle Cars: A Full-Throttle History*

Physical details about this stunning book: it’s a stunning 9.75 by 12 inch hard cover book that has 260 color and 55 black and white photos gracing it’s 224 pages.

Author Darwin Holmstrom has written, co-written or contributed to over thirty books ranging from motorcycles and muscle cars to Gibson Les Paul guitars. He is also the senior editor for Motorbooks, an imprint of the Quarto publishing group.

Photographer Tom Glatch has contributed to hundreds of stories and photographs to major car collector, Corvette, Mustang, muscle car, and Mopar magazines. He and his wife have also contributed to books by other Motorbooks authors and to the the Motorbooks’ Corvette calendars.

Igor Ljubuncic says

As I was reading this book, a song kept playing in the back of my mind:

Credence Clearwater Revival - Fortunate Son

Now that it's playing in the back of YOUR mind, here's the review:

This is a no-nonsense book for car lovers - power, torque, tech lingo, beautiful photos. I expected it to be just a gallery, but it turned out to be a lovely essay on history, the political struggles in the GM management, the partisan efforts behind Pontiac's first muscle car, the wild ideas versus bureaucracy, the self-ban on displacement and power and the innovative ways companies worked around those, the mental and cultural shift of the American public and how the muscle car came to represent the carefree spirit of the 60s - before the Vietnam War and a different kind of revolution.

Above all though, this is a book on muscle cars and how they evolved. In essence, muscle cars were designed to run the 1/4 mile spring with lots of smoke and noise, and this remained the core idea. Things were added and removed, but a proper muscle car had to be hard to tame, hard to drive through corners, and powered by a big V8 - and the bigger the better.

There were lots of legendary cars created in this era - and they survive because they represent the purity of idea. Take the HEMI engine - 500 HP in the mid-60s - that's like 3,000 HP today. It does not matter that the execution was crude and unsophisticated compared to the European models. What the fans wanted was crude and unsophisticated power. And that naive, stick-it-to-the-establishment middle-finger attitude still remains, and it's one of the things that define and imbue the muscle car.

Anyway, if you like your vehicles and the tech details around engine parts, carburetors, shifters, gear transmission ratios, suspension, 0-60 figures and alike, this book is a perfect treat. If you believe cars are a mode of transportation from A to B, this might not be the best read.

For me, it's a perfect, simple 5/5 - like muscle cars.

The life mission of buying an old, well-preserved one remains, though.

Igor
