

# CONSOLE YOURSELF...

## With One of Mustang Pony Cars' Personalized Consoles

Story and Photos by Dale Amy

**E**arly consoles—if your Mustang had one at all—could be rather flimsy, plasticky affairs, which, due to their utilitarian role, were subject to much wear and tear. It really wasn't until the '68 Shelybs came along that the Pony got what we might think of as a modern-style console, with an ergonomic elbow-height armrest atop a sizeable storage bin. This stylish and functional '68 GT350 and GT500 design also benefitted from more substantial construction—their vertical side panels were of ¼-inch plywood instead of plastic—making them about the nicest consoles to ever nestle between a set of early Mustang buckets. And now you can have a personalized version of this console tailored for your '64½-'68 project, whether it's a fastback, convertible, or coupe. Versions for '69 and '70 cars are on their way, too.

Credit for this great product line goes to Mustang Pony Cars Inc. (we'll shorten that to MPC, 'cause we're lazy) which saw a need for high-quality, but affordable, replacements or upgrades for original consoles that were deteriorating rapidly and were expensive to buy—if you could find one at all. MPC's owner, Peter Faulk, is, first and foremost, a Mustang enthusiast who was moved to create a prototype custom console back in 2000, patterned after a '68 Shelby original. Since then he has hand-built hundreds of personalized variants for everything from the "factory" '67 GT500E Eleanor continuation cars to one for a customer with a rare '68 bench-seat Mustang. And we'll soon put him to work crafting one for Editor Houlihan's "Generation Gap" '68 project too.

The development of MPC's consoles began with Peter buying two original '68 Shelby

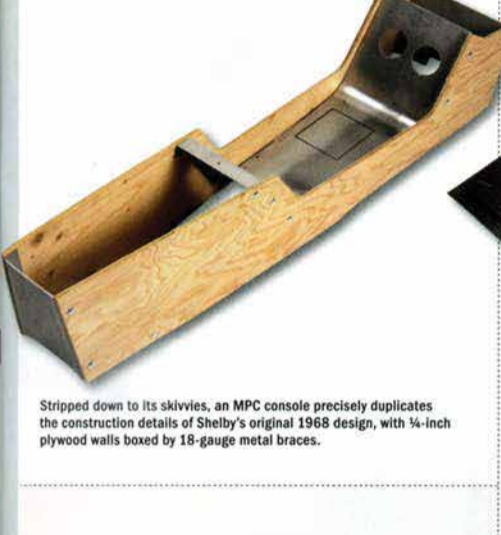
examples, one from a fastback, the other from a convertible (which differs in its side-panel-to-floor contours because of a convertible's floorpan reinforcement.) He disassembled these down to their basic components, then sourced hardware and/or raw materials to faithfully replicate them. This was a time-consuming venture, but Peter was determined to do it right.

As an example of his persistence, he eventually was able to track down the original supplier of Shelby's armrest lid hinges and that same company now manufactures his hinges. But he also noted a few areas on the original consoles that could be improved upon from a materials or assembly standpoint, and incorporated those improvements on his own creations, as our photos and captions will detail. Priced between \$695 and

▲ This is but one of a multitude of '68 Shelby-style console variants hand-crafted by Mustang Pony Cars Inc. of London, Ontario, Canada—and not just for '67-'68 Mustangs either. As we'll see, you can have one personalized for your own '65 through '70 ride.

\$795, MPC's consoles are officially Shelby-licensed and can be personalized in a number of ways such as color, configuration of the "belly pan" and back panel, upholstery materials, and, if desired, embroidered or de-bossed logos or artwork on the armrest lid. As noted, versions are currently available for model years '65 through '68, and '69/'70 variants should be ready sometime this year.

Whether you're looking for a stock-style replacement for your own '68 Shelby or are wanting to customize the cockpit of any other Mustang or Shelby project, be it fastback, convertible, or coupe, Mustang Pony Cars Inc. can custom-configure a console to meet your needs and tastes. MPC's "standard" console variants can also be ordered through Branda Performance, Classic Recreations, or Revved Automotive Concepts.



Stripped down to its skivvies, an MPC console precisely duplicates the construction details of Shelby's original 1968 design, with ¼-inch plywood walls boxed by 18-gauge metal braces.



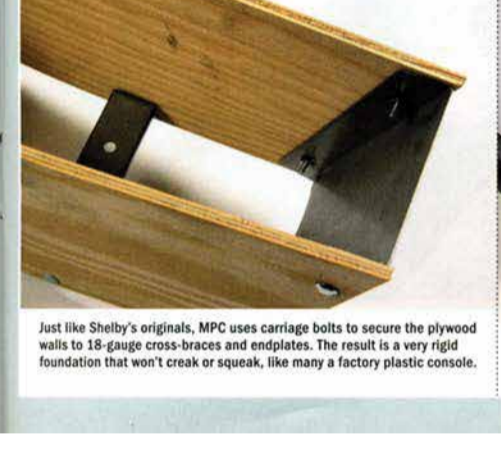
MPC's console storage bin is an ABS vacuum molding, and can be had in either its natural finish or lined with a felt flocking like the originals. The console's metal "belly pan" is shipped flat to MPC, pre-drilled and with or without laser-cut gauge and tranny-shifter openings. For utter consistency, the flat pans are then jig-formed at MPC to the proper shape. Depending on customer preference, these pans can be either vinyl-coated steel (like Shelby's originals), or brushed aluminum.



Shown here upside down, you can see that the bases of the plywood walls are individually cut to match the contours of the Mustang floorpan, which vary between fastback (or coupe) and convertible body styles due to the ragtops' factory floorpan reinforcement. MPC used original Shelby consoles to clone the pattern for these plywood elements.



No cheap plastic latches here. MPC uses original-style metal pins and latch clips to hold down the front of the armrest pad/storage cover.



Just like Shelby's originals, MPC uses carriage bolts to secure the plywood walls to 18-gauge cross-braces and endplates. The result is a very rigid foundation that won't creak or squeak, like many a factory plastic console.



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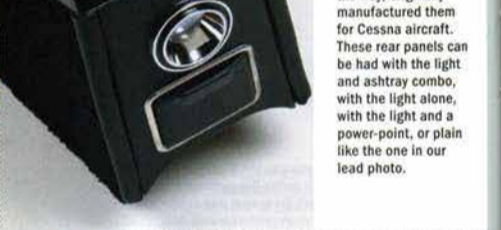
One area where MPC boss, Peter Faulk, thought the original needed improvement was on the top outboard edges of the console, which were hard and somewhat brittle. So he contracted a company to make up foam rubber extrusions with channels so they wrap around the plywood edges.



This variant has a "wood grain" vinyl-covered steel belly pan, along with the de-bossed snake emblem on the armrest—just like the originals. In comparing this to the console in our lead photo, you'll notice this one also has a courtesy light and ashtray on its rear panel.



These extrusions are then skinned in vinyl (or leather) upholstery, making for soft, pliable edges on the console—much easier on the legs. The sides of the consoles are normally finished with carpet as shown here, but you can have them skinned in vinyl or leather, if preferred.



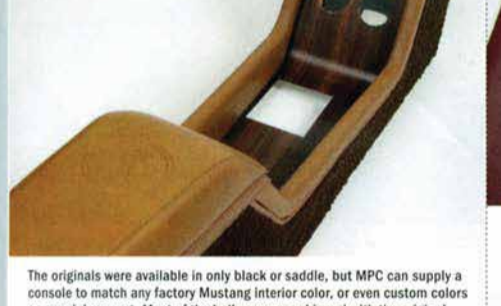
MPC sources the ashtrays from Shelby's original supplier—which, by the way, originally manufactured them for Cessna aircraft. These rear panels can be had with the light and ashtray combo, with the light alone, with the light and a power-point, or plain like the one in our lead photo.



Like Shelby's originals, the upholstery is stapled to the inside face of the plywood, but thanks to advances in modern adhesives, Peter also glues the vinyl or leather in place. This is another example of the careful hand assembly of MPC's consoles; and they're all done by Peter in his own building, not in some offshore sweatshop. Note that this one has a seatbelt buckle clip screwed in place.



The consoles can be ordered with these Shelby-style seatbelt buckle clips. But note that these clips are dimensioned for Shelby buckles, which differed in dimensions from regular '68 Mustang buckles.



The originals were available in only black or saddle, but MPC can supply a console to match any factory Mustang interior color, or even custom colors on special request. Most of the belly pans are shipped with the original-style 2½-inch gauges holes, though you can order it without. Peter can also supply them laser-cut for a double-DIN stereo, for example, or with other holes or cutouts on special request. Same goes for shifter cutouts: you can have one pre-cut for a factory automatic, as shown, for a factory manual gearbox, or with no opening, so you can cut one yourself for, say, a Tremec five-speed or six-speed application.



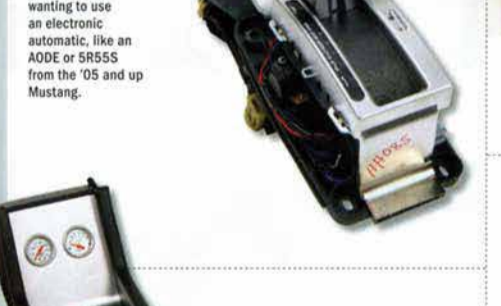
Here are some examples of the types of armrest logos available. The two on the left are de-bossed using metal dies and are therefore available only in limited styles. The three examples on the right are embroidered—a much more flexible process, permitting MPC to stitch logos either from its existing collection, or using customer-supplied artwork.



Lately, Peter has even started cutting some belly pans for an S197-style shifter, for those wanting to use an electronic automatic, like an AODE or SR555 from the '05 and up Mustang.



A range and palette of materials provide additional customization options. Vinyl is the standard material for the armrests, but MPC can also stitch these up in leather (even using customer-supplied hides), or in a carbon-fiber-look woven pattern.



Here's a version like the ones MPC made for the GT500E Eleanor cars of a few years back, having an embroidered logo on the armrest.



We've all seen '68 Shelby consoles with armrests permanently dented or misshapen by the weight of a driver's elbow, so Peter decided to upgrade the density of foam used in his MPC armrest/lid assemblies. This is just another example of the thought that has gone into these consoles.



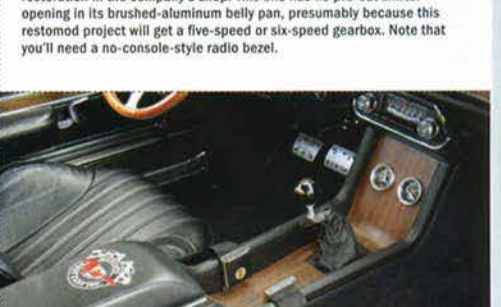
We mentioned that MPC's hinges come from Shelby's original supplier. Here, Peter is spot-welding one to a console's rear panel. Again, this is all done by hand, one at a time.



Check out one of MPC's consoles positioned in a convertible undergoing restoration in the company's shop. This one has no pre-cut shifter opening in its brushed-aluminum belly pan, presumably because this restomod project will get a five-speed or six-speed gearbox. Note that you'll need a no-console-style radio bezel.



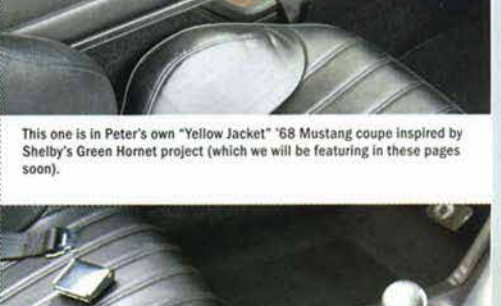
Peter even had a special jig made up to bend the hinges in such a way that the console lid/armrest assembly has a complete range of motion when opened. This type of old-school attention to detail is uncommon these days, to say the least.



This one is in Peter's own "Yellow Jacket" '68 Mustang coupe inspired by Shelby's Green Hornet project (which we will be featuring in these pages soon).



Peter is currently finalizing an optional configuration that will allow a Lokar-style floor-mounted center hand-brake fitment, without impacting the storage capacity of the console. These should be available by the time you read this.



And one last example skinned in the available carbon-fiber-weave look. And yes, if you have a stock '68 Shelby console in need of some TLC, Mustang Pony Cars Inc. can do that too. Go on, you know you want one.