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the COBRA lives!
Out of the ashes:
Autokraft AC MK IV

Cobra-History Books/Videos Buyer’s Guide

Shop Tour:
The Autokraft Factory
Inside Autokraft, Ltd.

This weathered building is the birthplace of the Autokraft MK IV Cobra. Inside the walls of this 25,000 sq. ft. building the Cobra is resurrected. Located on the grounds of the old Brooklands race track, Autokraft, Ltd., employs 40 craftsmen who build the Cobra. A few of them were involved in the original project when they were employed by AC.

There once was a racetrack located about 40 miles north east of London called Brooklands. This track not only played host to many historic races, it was also used as a jumping off point for our planes on D-Day. The super long straightaways made for perfect runways to launch an assault on Europe.

The track is now closed and has been for years. The sounds and smells of race machinery are only memories and the high bank turns are now covered in weeds and shrubs. It seems to be an appropriate place for Autokraft, Ltd. (Unit 815, Brooklands Industrial Park, Weybridge, Surrey, England) to be located. This now-quiet track is the birthplace of the resurrected Cobra.

From the outside of the weathered brick and wood building there is little, if any, indication of what goes on inside the 25,000 sq. ft. shop.

Less than a decade ago, Brian Angliss began Autokraft, Ltd. At that time, the shop was involved in high quality, frame-up restorations of various marques. Angliss then began manufacturing replacement parts for Cobras and he developed quite a reputation as a Cobra restorer. The Autokraft shop soon becomes the premier restoration shop for Cobras in the UK and Europe.

It is now 1982 and Angliss begins building complete cars. Being the perfectionist he is, he buys many of the wood bucks, or forms, that were originally used by AC Cars to form the aluminum bodies. He also purchases the original frame jig they used to build the ladder-type frames. Not only does Angliss use original tooling, he manages to talk many of the original craftsmen out of retirement and puts them to work. Luckily for us, the California distributor of the AC MK IV, Ralph Riskin (1344 Welby Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90069) knows how to use a camera and snapped a few pictures of the interior of the shop. This is a rare sight for anyone since Angliss is so secretive, he makes Howard Hughes look like an extrovert.

A true craft, working with aluminum requires patience, skill, and a dedication to the task. A rear section is getting the finishing touches by one of the workers. Rather than grinding them down, the welds are hammered flat; this adds strength. In the background you can see another tail section. If you look closely, you can see how each of the aluminum panels was rolled and formed to create the piece. When completed, you'll be able to see the weld but you won't be able to feel it because it is so smooth.

A partial view of the final assembly area. Here, the frames have been painted and the chassis are slowly going together.

PLACED SEEMINGLY HELTER SKELTER, VARIOUS NOSE AND TAIL SECTIONS AWAIT THE FINAL ASSEMBLY AREA.
Although the layman may not see it, there are imperfections in the body and these two Gents are responsible for making sure the aluminum body is smooth as, ahem, glass. And we don't mean fiberglass.

Out behind the Autokraft shop is a treasure trove of discarded Cobras. Here a discarded 289 frame gets swallowed up by Mother Nature. Needless to say, it makes for one heck of a trellis.

In the body assembly area there is no real assembly line. The men work where they can and although there may be a method to their madness, it is unseen to the casual observer.

Cobras, Cobras everywhere. The paint booths are to the left and no less than 12 cars await the final touches.
The Cobra: Resurrected by Autokraft

By Michael Baranowski

Well, do you think the Autokraft Cobra is the real McCoy or merely a well crafted replica? The one thing you can be darn sure of is thin. We have no intention of making your mind up for you. When you take a look at the Autokraft Cobra, or more correctly the Autokraft AC MKIV, and all the intrigue surrounding it, it may indeed appear to be both at the same time. If you're confused, join the ever-expanding club. When you try to get a comment from the three parties involved: Carroll Shelby, the Ford Motor Co., and Brian Angliss owner of Autokraft, as to what the car really is you'll get three greatly different answers. Shelby is of the opinion that the car is a blatant rip-off and he says as much elsewhere in these pages. He considers the car a replica and wants Autokraft to stop using the Cobra name. The Ford Motor Co. feels the car is a resurrected version of the Shelby-fathered Cobra. Last but most certainly not least, Brian Angliss feels the car is the real item. Yes, there are a few facts that support Angliss and seem to justify his real McCoy claim. He has indeed assembled all of the elements that went into building the original car, with the exception of the engine of course. In today's world the 427 has about a snowball's chance of being successfully restored.

PHOTOGRAPHY: MICHAEL BARANOWSKI
 MODELS: ROBYN LYNN KAYE (LEFT)
 KATHERINE ST. JOHN (RIGHT)
A brand new 302 cu. in. V8 powers the Autokraft car. This is the same engine found under the hood of the '85 Mustang except for the headers and roller cam.

A clue to the true heritage of the car can be found at the fuel filler neck.

The low back seats are covered in Connolly leather. The leather treatment is carried over to the dash and door panels.

The two examples of Autokraft Cobras we show are the pride and joy of Ralph Riskin and was one of the very first imported. Jim Mapson took delivery of his '86 in January of '86 after waiting more than 1 1/2 years for delivery. The car bears chassis number 1060 and was the very first California-smogged car delivered. A die-hard racer of vintage Cobras, Mapson has spent more time at the wheel of his 289 than most folks spend at the wheel of their street car. The only two modifications Jim made was to add the Halibrand knock-offs and to lower the spring perches, and ride, 1 1/2 inches. Jim also opted for the hood scoop which makes up it of the option list.

The only other option is a pair of stripes. When the cars arrive here in the States, they'll have the same 300+ hp, 302 cu. in. V8 that came in the 1985 Mustang. This will be bolted into a tubular steel ladder frame that has been assembled on jig identical to the originals. The only real difference between the Mustang and Autokraft engine is the fact the Autokraft V8 wears a pair of aluminum valve covers inscribed with "Powered by Ford."

Since overheating was a problem with the originals, Autokraft has installed a thermostatically controlled fan just forward of the radiator to aid cooling chores. Hanging off the back side of the 5.0 liter engine is a 5-speed Borg-Warner T-5 tranny filled with evenly spaced ratios. The final drive ratio in the Salisbury rear end is 3.56:1.

The front suspension utilizes unequal length a-arms and Spax shocks. Large 11.65 diameter vented Girling disc brakes are fit at the four corners and they do an admirable job of braking the VB50 Good year wrapped Halibrands to a rapid halt.

The body for this car is hand formed from 16-gauge aluminum on some of the original bucks. Each body will take about 200 man hours to complete and with the exception of a slightly longer nose, the skin is a spot-on duplicate of the original make. To prevent rocks from flying up inside the wheel wells and pummeling the underside of the body, fiberglass inner fenders have been installed to act as shields.

When you slide into the Connolly leather-covered seats you find a more spacious interior than the originals. The passenger compartment is slightly longer and wider which gives you things like footroom which 427s never had. Interior heat was also a problem with '65s and thanks to shielding in special areas, the only heat you'll feel is when you turn it on yourself. The doors and dash also wear the soft leather and instrumentation is provided by Smith's gauges. Interestingly enough, the tach has no redline indicated which leads you to believe Autokraft feels folks will be driving the car know what they are doing. The steering column is adjustable for the driver although hand tools are required. There is a spot on the dash for a radio although Jim is hesitant to install one. It's his opinion the roar of the engine is music enough. Hopefully, most people will agree.

Does the Autokraft Cobra sound like a car you'd like in your garage? You bet it does and you can drive yours home for a mere $41,000.00. Just be prepared to answer questions constantly and be prepared to take a stand on whether or not it's a replica or the real thing. The only thing that will probably be agreed upon is the fact it is a beautiful, and beautifully crafted, piece of machinery.
The new relationship between Ford Motor Company and Autokraft of England has received quite a bit of publicity in the automotive press lately. It appears that a new Cobra has been born, or resurrected as the fac- tory puts it, and that it has yet to be explained. The story is explained as the start terms of the agreement. The only way to know those would be to have a copy of the agreement in hand or, speak with a person involved in hammering out the actual deal. We did the latter when we spoke with John Clinard, Marketing Manager of Ford's Special Vehicles Operations Group. John was one of fourteen individuals involved with the deal-making. The other three were Edsel Ford, Michael Kranefuss head of SVO, and Brian Angliss owner of Autokraft. John recently spoke with us via the phone and relayed the details as far as Ford is concerned.

The story opens in December of 1982. Brian Angliss is selling his engineered Cobra's through a small dealer ship in Chicago. As the cars are then manufactured, they are complete with engine and transmission. Angliss also happens to be an England's premier Cobra restorers and he's ready like his replicas to be authentic. To help in the redistribution of the cars, the Ford Motor Company will accept a Ford driver, Angliss contacts Jack Roosh of Roosh Engineering in Livonia, Michigan. Roosh had been with the Ford factory but had yet to be contacted about anything. In redesigning the engine bay, Roosh increases power to 350 HP+ and £50,000 per car. The cars are now sold through the dealerships and Angliss and Roosh enter into a (tempo- rary) agreement. Angliss will supply the cars to Roosh who will install the engines and handle distribution however, Roosh soon learned that the Ford was not happy with the deal and decide he can't handle the responsibility of running the Ford factory Trans-Am race team and build Cobras at the same time. The two reach an amicable parting of the ways. Roosh nonetheless engineered a meeting of SVO between Ford, Kranefuss, and Clinard. Out of this meeting comes the resurrected Cobra.

The details.

The Ford Motor Company will become a sub-contractor of 5.0 liter engines (302 cu. in.) and transmission to Autokraft. They will make a five year license to the E. P. C. Division and they will earn a Ford warranty. It will then become Autokraft's responsibility to issue their own warranty. They have and, surprise, they're identical. By the way, Ford was also a sub-contractor to Shelby American when the first Cobras rolled off the line.

The finished cars will be sold through Ford dealerships although it is up to the individual dealerships to negotiate with Autokraft. They will also be serviceable at those same dealerships. Ford prefers that the factory have a hands-off attitude of this aspect.

There will not be recognition of serial numbers for a number of reasons. The first and foremost being that the NHTSA now requires a 17 digit number on new cars.

About the Cobra names.

The cars are now imported to the United States, they wear only the AC logo. They are entitled to since they received a valid license, except any license on the AC logo from AC. Interestingly enough, Angliss recently bought a controlling interest in AC cars. The namecobra has been given to Angliss and Autokraft for a length of time rather than just car. The cars are now sold through Ford in Europe under the AC name and wear the appropriate nameplates. One or two products are quality questionable. Once the products has been approved here in the US, the cars will be sold here as AC Cobras, again with the appropriate nameplates.

It is also true that once that happens, the Ford Motor Company will unleash some unknown new versions of new cars. The name Cobra simply want to be used for the investment. And they fully intend to.

The conclusion.

It appears that Brian Angliss has come as close as any individual in resurrecting the Cobra. With the exception of Shelby, Angliss has reassembled the original players in this play and the Cobra truly does seem destined to roll on the street again. How well it will be re-.evaluated? Only time can tell.