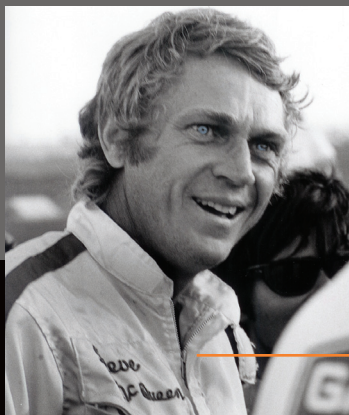


# MCQUEEN'S MACHINES

## *The Cars and Bikes of a Hollywood*

In the 1950s, a group of young actors emerged as post-War Hollywood's first true car guys. They were into automobiles and motorcycles long before it was fashionable or the subject of supposed "reality" television.



The racing bug bit James Dean hard, and it ultimately cost him his life at a far too young age. Paul Newman was into cars from the beginning of his amazing career. Starring in the 1969 film "Winning" helped launch an impressive racing career for Newman as a champion sports car driver and CART/Champ Car team owner. A handsome James Garner used to cruise his Mercury around So Cal burger joints; he went on to star in John Frankenheimer's Grand Prix, and also became an accomplished off-road racer...

### THEN, THERE WAS TERRENCE STEVEN McQUEEN.

By MATT STONE

Executive Editor, *Motor Trend* magazine

The Eyes Have It – Steve McQueen in his racing suit, 1970.

*Motor Trend magazine archive*

Several race cars came and went from McQueen's stable over time, this one being his Cooper T-52 Formula Junior. Notice the ever present cigarette between his lips; this was long before smoking was banned in most racetrack pits.

*Chad McQueen collection*







Another two-wheeled marque that McQueen preferred was Indian. He owned many of them, and it was his favorite street cruiser. *Barbara Minty McQueen Brunsvold*

One of the cars most associated with Steve McQueen is this rare '57 Jaguar XK-SS. He purchased it in the late 50s, sold it to mega collector William F. Harrah, and later purchased it back. It is now a part of the Margie and Robert E. Petersen Collection, and lives at their namesake Petersen Automotive Museum. *Motor Trend*

As an actor and cult hero of intergalactic proportion, Steve McQueen needs no introduction here or anywhere else. From his first bits on Broadway in the '50s to his well-earned place as one of the world's most popular actors, McQueen's star power lived large. Even now, more than 25 years after his untimely passing on November 7, 1980, his legend is intact, his legacy as relevant as ever. But beyond his status on stage and screen, Steve McQueen was a certifiable motorhead.

He helped build a hot rod before he could legally drive. In the service, he hopped up a tank's engine in the hopes of getting it to go faster. As a young acting student, he rode motorcycles through Greenwich Village. He raced sports cars at Del Mar, buggies in Baja, rode motorcycles all over the world, and built entire movies around his love of automobiles and motorsport.

McQueen would street race his rare Jaguar XK-SS through the Hollywood Hills at night, then pack a pickup full of pals and dirt bikes and spend the next day busting trails through the California desert. He entered motorcycle races under the pseudonym "Henry Mushman" so that spectators and the other competitors wouldn't treat him differently than anyone else. Pinstriping pioneer Von Dutch, auto upholstery legend Tony Nancy, motorcycle champion Malcolm Smith, and dirt bike racer/stunt man Bud Ekins were among his inner circle.

The first motorized thing he could call his own was a 1947 Indian motorcycle he bought when he was 17. In 1952, the aspiring actor purchased an MG TC while living in New York. After marrying

Broadway dancer Neile Adams, the McQueens moved to California in 1957, where his career and his passion for cars and racing really took off. Cars came and went in rapid fire succession: a Siata 208S, the above-noted Jaguar, a Corvette, and a '58 Porsche Speedster 1600 Super that he purchased new. With it he tried his hand at racing, winning the first SCCA race he ever entered.

As Steve McQueen's star -- and paychecks -- got bigger, so did his thirst for faster and more expensive hardware. He traded the Porsche for a Lotus XI sports racer, and acquired his first Ferrari, an elegant 1963 250 GT Lusso. Another Corvette. Two more Ferraris, a Mini, and several Porsches, the marque he seemed to have the most affinity for. He had superb taste in cars, and had the interest and the money to drive what he desired.

While McQueen was a talented sports car pilot—he was offered a factory ride with the BMC team in 1962—he was an even better bike racer. He represented the United States in the Interna-

tional Six Day Trials competition in Europe in 1964, and was on a Gold Medal pace until an accident broke his bike so badly he could not continue. But he ran all manner of cross-country and off-road motorcycle races for the rest of his life. He loved riding in the desert, as it gave him a sense of freedom and a much-needed respite from the pressures of Hollywood.

**PINSTRIPING  
PIONEER VON  
DUTCH, AUTO  
UPHOLSTERY  
LEGEND  
TONY NANCY,  
MOTORCYCLE  
CHAMPION  
MALCOLM SMITH,  
AND DIRT BIKE  
RACER/STUNTMAN  
BUD EKINS  
WERE AMONG HIS  
INNER CIRCLE.**

continued on page 18 ➞






**Above left to right:** This 1958 Porsche Speedster 1600 Super is the first car that McQueen bought new, and the first he took racing at SCCA events in 1959. It's still in the family. *Evan Klein.* Wearing a beard and a cowboy hat, beer in hand, McQueen was nearly unrecognizable as Hollywood's highest paid movie star at the time. The truck is a '57 Ford F100. *Barbara Minty McQueen Brunsvold.* McQueen aboard a Honda Elsinore. His other favorite dirt bikes included Triumphs and Husqvarnas. *Chad McQueen collection.* His first car, and MG/TC, on the mean streets of New York. *Chad McQueen collection.* Chad McQueen takes Dad for a ride on his motorcycle on the set of Le Mans in France, 1970. *Chad McQueen collection*

**Below:** A young McQueen at the wheel of his Speedster, wearing a period bowl helmet and aviator goggles, in the late '50s. *Chad McQueen collection*



As his status as an actor grew, so did the influence McQueen had over the content of his films. He often wove cars and motorcycles into those plot lines—with him at the wheel or gripping the handlebars, of course. In the case of 1971's *Le Mans*, racing was the film's reason for being, so hungry was McQueen to make the most realistic

motor-sport movie ever. In preparation for the filming of *Le Mans*, he entered a Porsche 908 in the 12 Hours of Sebring race in 1970, partnered with Peter Revson. The 3.0-liter class car wasn't supposed to be fast enough to compete for the overall win, but larger, faster cars dropped out, while the Porsche kept climbing the leader board. It took no less than a flying Mario Andretti in a Ferrari 512 to beat the McQueen/Revson entry - and then, by less than 25 seconds. Who could forget memorable performances as the Rolls-Royce and dune-buggy driving bank robber, Thomas Crown, in the "Thomas Crown Affair." Or the magical chase scene in 1968's "Bullitt," still considered the best ever filmed?

McQueen owned more than 40 great cars and 200-plus motorcycles throughout his all-too-short life. Together, they would populate a worthy museum. He loved them not for their collectibility or value, but for his appreciation of anything mechanical, and the freedom that comes with machines that can take you anywhere. Beyond his worldly success as an actor, Steve McQueen will forever rank as one of Hollywood's most legitimate car guys. 

MATT STONE is Executive Editor of *Motor Trend* magazine, and the author of *McQueen's Machines: The Cars and Bikes of a Hollywood Icon*, to be published November 1, 2007, by MBI Publishing. [www.motorbooks.com](http://www.motorbooks.com)

