



BY JAN TEGLER

# ANONIMO

meets

**S**helby and Cobra. The two names are recognized around the world. Utter them independently or together and automotive enthusiasts from Fresno to Firenze know immediately who and what you are talking about. The Cobra is an iconic American sports car. Carroll Shelby, the father of the Cobra, is an American icon. Now, with the announcement of an agreement between Shelby Automobiles Inc. and Anonimo Firenze, you can use Shelby, Cobra and Anonimo in the same sentence.

Anonimo and Shelby have teamed together to produce the Anonimo Shelby Mark II SE – a series of limited edition timepieces that pay tribute to the man, the brand and the car that became

# SHELBY

A watchmaker with Italian roots pays tribute to the American racers who upset Ferrari forty years ago

synonymous with American automotive performance. Further, the Mark II SE represents an ironic twist on a defining chapter in the history of Shelby.

## Cobra v. Ferrari

To appreciate the appeal of these watches it's necessary to take a trip back in time to the days when Carroll Shelby ranked among the planet's best racing drivers and Ferrari ruled the world of production sports cars. Shelby and Fer-

rari were about to clash in an epic battle now known as the Cobra-Ferrari Wars.

In June 1959, Carroll Shelby and Ray Salvadori co-drove an Aston Martin DBR1/300 to victory in the world's most famous endurance race, the 24 Hours of Le Mans. It was the pinnacle of a driving career that had begun for Shelby in 1952. About the time the talented Texan started racing, Ferrari created a two-door sports coupe called the 250S. It was the



Caption

predecessor to a long and wildly successful line of long and short-wheelbase GT cars that would come to define Ferrari as a manufacturer. By 1959, 250 GT variants were winning at racetracks all over Europe, setting the stage for Ferrari dominance in international GT sports car racing for years to come.

Carroll Shelby's days as a racing driver were numbered however. Little more than a year after his Le Mans victory he was forced

to retire from racing with chronic heart disease. But the setback didn't quell Shelby's ambition or his taste for competition. In 1961 he seized an opportunity to pursue a long held dream – the creation of his own sports car.

#### American sports car

In 1962, Shelby was running the "Shelby School of High Performance Driving," but the idea of

creating an American high performance sports car that could challenge the Corvette was uppermost in his mind. What he envisioned was a variation on an already well known theme – marry the handling prowess of a European sports car with the brute power of an American V8. →



Caption

Shelby contacted a number of British sports car makers with a proposal to build 100 hybrids to qualify the cars for production sports car racing. In 1961, Charles Hurlock, the owner of AC Cars, maker of the famed Ace roadster, responded favorably. The same month, Shelby learned of a suitable engine – Ford’s new lightweight 221 cubic-inch small block.

Ford offered Shelby a 260-cubic-inch version of the engine, and development of the new car got underway at AC in England and Shelby-American in California. By early 1962 Shelby had a prototype with a 325-horsepower 260 V8 on the road and a new name for the hybrid – the Cobra. The car amazed journalists with its explosive acceleration and all-around performance. After it appeared at the 1962 New York Auto Show Ford dealers began ordering Cobras and Shelby-American put a legend into production.

Success on the street was not

Carroll Shelby’s only goal however. Racing was his passion and by 1963, 289-powered Mk II Cobras were tearing up race tracks across America, dominating their number one American foe, the Chevrolet Corvette. In fact, the Cobra’s supremacy on-track was so great that through 1963 and 1964 Shelby’s fire-breather owned production sports car racing in America with wins at every significant race and track in the country.

### The Coupe

Overseas it was a different story however. Ferrari’s awesome GTO reigned supreme. He was determined to take on Ferrari in Europe and beat them at their own game. The battleground would be the FIA World GT Championship. Shelby’s weapon: the Cobra Daytona Coupe, designed by Peter Brock. It was a visually stunning race car with a deadly effectiveness. At the Sebring 12 Hours in March 1964 the Daytona Coupe was victorious, winning the GT

class of the famed race.

The Cobra-Ferrari Wars were on.

The two manufacturers battled throughout the eleven-race 1964 season for supremacy. By the tenth race of the season, Cobra Roadsters and Daytona Coupes had racked up an impressive record of finishes. Enzo Ferrari could see the writing on the wall. The Daytona Coupe in particular was faster than his beloved GTO.

The Monza 1000 KM was the eleventh round of the season. With the Shelby and Ferrari nearly even on championship points and all the momentum (and outright speed) in Shelby’s corner, the race was suddenly cancelled by the organizers. Enzo Ferrari was behind the cancellation. He knew that if the race went forward Shelby would win the championship.

He had persuaded the Italian organizers to scratch the race and Ferrari took the 1964 FIA World GT Championship.

While Ferrari had under-



Caption

handedly preserved the 1964 GT crown, Shelby had won the war. In fact, so spooked was the Scuderia that they announced they would not compete in GT competition the following year. With no real competition, Shelby won the GT Championship in 1965.

### The new watches

It's the passion behind the Cobra-Ferrari wars and the wider world of Shelby that the Shelby Mark II SEs from Anonimo seek to reflect.

Never before has there been a fine mechanical watch to represent all that is Shelby. While this is surprising, the story behind the coming together of the Anonimo and Shelby is even more remarkable.

In 2004, a famous Italian sports car manufacturer approached Anonimo. No, it wasn't Ferrari. It was another maker known as much for avant-garde design and as outright performance.

The two companies had several months of discussions before the relationship came to an end.

Scott Moskowitz, the president of Anonimo Firenze USA, was part of those conversations and came away disappointed.

"It became apparent that our values and their values didn't mesh," he reports.

On the positive side, the contact made with Anonimo by the Italian automaker was inspiring.

"We'd never been a company to go out looking for relationships based on expanding our brand," Moskowitz stresses. "They had come to me based on having seen our competency and relationships that had been established between other watch makers and auto manufacturers."

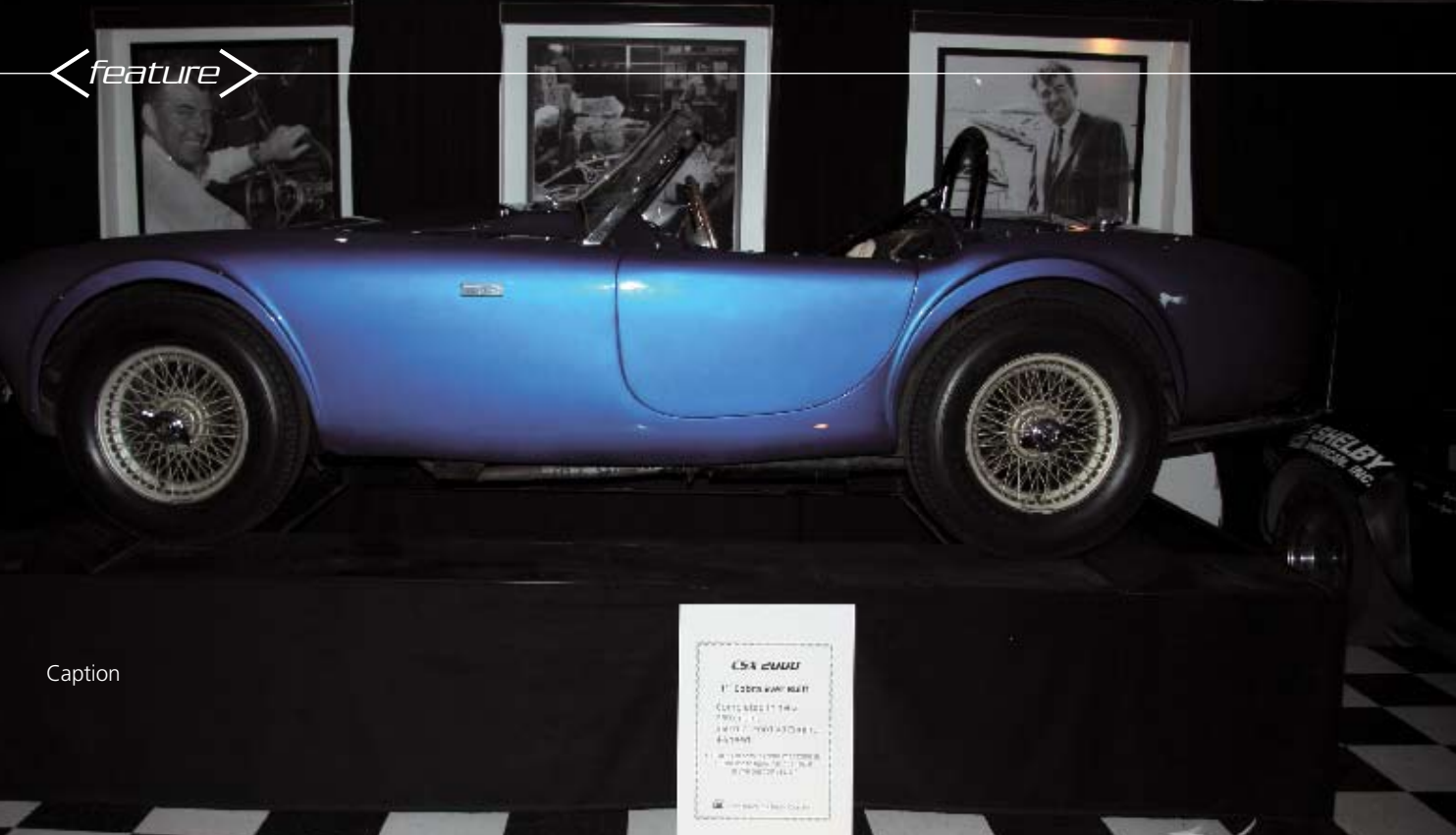
While Anonimo was not actively seeking relationships, opportunity seemed to be seeking them. Moskowitz happened upon Shelby almost accidentally.

"It was a fluke that those discussions had ended and that I was traveling somewhere and happened to pick up a USA Today and in it was an article about

Shelby," he explains. "It described how a woman, Amy Boylan, had come from Mattel as their former head of licensing not only to take over the licensing of Carroll Shelby and his brand, but to become CEO of the company overall. It touched on the success they were having with the Shelby GT-H, which is the Shelby Mustang made to be rented by Hertz (reprising the original of the late 1960s). I ripped out the article and put it in my briefcase and the next day I called Shelby."

After contacting the renowned performance purveyor, Moskowitz flew to Los Angeles to show the company CEO Anonimo's line of timepieces. Boylan was enamored with the quality and creativity she saw and four months later Anonimo became the exclusive mechanical watch licensee for Shelby Automobiles, Inc.

Anonimo Firenze USA's CEO has a flair for recognizing opportunity and forming relationships with special meaning. He was



Caption

the driver behind the partnership and though it will undoubtedly be good for business (the initial limited edition watches are expected to sell out quickly), the pairing is more than one of dollars and cents. Moskowitz has a passion for Shelby and looks forward to driving one himself soon as the owner of a new Shelby GT.

### Italian Irony

Anonimo's American leader also appreciates the history behind Shelby and its similarity to his own company.

"To look at how the Cobra had been conceived and gained prominence, do battle on the race-track and achieve the fame it has today was like looking in a pool of water with the reflection looking back at us. They build chassis and we build cases. They have re-

lationships with engine and drivetrain suppliers like we have direct relationships with movement companies. And Carroll Shelby and (Anonimo-founder) Federico Massacesi? They're two peas out of a pod," adds Moskowitz.

"Carroll Shelby has obviously been very successful but the money never drove him. It was the passion he had, the challenge of what he was doing, his desire to kick butt. You look at Federico, he's very similar."

It's a parallel recognized by Shelby Automobiles' vice president of operations, Gary Patterson. He heads the team responsible for producing Shelby's modern Mustangs and continuation Cobras. The enthusiasm for and limited edition nature of the hand-assembled continuation Cobra-series (approximately fifty aluminum-

bodied and 100 with fiberglass bodies) and the timepieces crafted by Anonimo's Florentine artisans are analogous.

"The guy that wants the car with the best components is the guy that wants the watch with the best components," he says. "We've partnered with Anonimo for that very reason. The Cobras are still very much hand assembled cars. We still source parts from England, which is of course where we got parts from in the 1960s. But we've upgraded the brakes and the Hime joints and upper and lower control arms. We have better materials for those components and the chassis. But the car really keeps much of its original design and flavor."

Likewise, the new watches, called Shelby Mark II SE (special edition), are based on Anonimo's



Cronoscopio Mark II and commemorate the Cobra Mk II. They stand for all of the creativity bound up in the Shelby name. From the legendary Shelby racing stripes (in silver and gold), checkerboard subdials and Shelby Cobra emblem on their dials to their unique finely crafted cases, the Mark II SEs are a handsome blending of Shelby and Anonimo says Scott Moskowitz.

“We wanted a bold statement, something as bold as the Shelby brand. But we also wanted to stay within the design parameters of what our watch is. When you look at a Shelby car, you’ll see that its racing stripes are straight. When you look at our dial, you’ll

see a little curve at the edges of the stripes because we wanted to blend them into the curvature of the watch,” he adds.

In step with Anonimo’s practice of omitting its name from its watches (hence its credo “the watch is about its wearer”) you have an opportunity to make the watch look the way you want it to look. In addition to the silver or gold stripe dials, the Mark II SEs come with three optional Kodiak leather straps – black with off-white stitching, black with silver stitching and red with black stitching. Just 500 of each version will be produced but Moskowitz promises there will be

a third and possibly fourth edition dial to come.

Released at the end of August, the Anonimo Shelby Mark II SE is a watch both Shelby and Anonimo take pride in. And, as Scott Moskowitz notes, the union of an iconic American brand and a modern Italian upholder of Florentine watchmaking tradition provides a wonderful irony.

“Think about the Cobra-Ferrari wars. When Shelby was trying to beat Ferrari, you had an American upstart going up against an Italian icon. Now, forty years later, we’re a maker with Italian roots paying tribute to the American racers who upset Ferrari.” ☺