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# THE MARTI REPORT

## FORD FRAUD: BUYER BEWARE



It's everywhere! It will strike you at any time! No one is safe!

Sound like the latest commercial to convince you that you need insurance, a pill, or a new mattress?

In this article, I want to heighten your awareness of how prevalent fraud is in the Mustang hobby. I've witnessed people spend over \$150,000 for a Mustang that is completely bogus. I've seen articles in club magazines pushing phony cars. Right now, there are Mustangs for sale on eBay just waiting for the unsuspecting dupe to have his money pried loose from his wallet.

Some of you caught what's wrong with the Ford

emblem above, but there are some who didn't. That's how fraud works. Some people catch on, but others get duped. The seller needs only one victim. If you're the dupee, you're likely to be angry. Let's keep that from happening. Forewarned is forearmed.

First, educate yourself, or hire an expert. There are numerous resources available to you. The best is to join a club of like-minded people. You can also search various Mustang forums on the Internet. Magazines like the one you're reading here contain background history and pictures that give an idea of what was standard for a given body style and year. Books about Mustangs number in the hundreds. Hiring a professional appraiser creates legal accountability and protects you if you get burned.

Second, when you find a Mustang of interest, compare the serial number on the title with the official serial number on the car — don't take the seller's word for it. At the end of the article, I'll give you a link so you can get pictures of what an official VIN (Vehicle Identification Number, also known as a serial number) looks like. Again, check the serial number. I'm not wasting valuable ink repeating myself; you can't believe how important this step is. Better than one out of 20 serial numbers we are given to run Marti Reports on come

back bad! If you Google “Mustang title problem,” you’ll see hundreds of thousands of entries.

Third, make sure the serial number matches up to the car itself. “Huh?” you’re wondering. I just came across a situation in which a ’73 Mach 1 was for sale. Trouble was, the VIN was 3F02xxxxxxx. “How can that be?” Indeed, how can that be? Here are four ways: Part of the front end was replaced; the dashpad was replaced; an assembly line mistake occurred; or it’s actually not a Mach 1.

Mustangs had serial numbers stamped into the inner fender aprons. Those fender aprons were replaced periodically due to a front-end collision or rust issues. With the replacement of the metal often came the (unfortunate) replacement of the serial number. For ’71-’73 Mustangs, the serial number was riveted to the dashpad. Replace the pad and the serial number goes with it. Oops! When these cars were being produced, there wasn’t much in the way of quality control. Mistakes in stamping serial numbers were common (again, the link at the end of the article will provide more evidence of this). It’s easy to take a fastback Mustang, buy some Mach 1 decals, slap them on the car, and call it a Mach 1. That doesn’t make it so.

What’s a person to do? Your expertise, or that of a friend, should be in direct proportion to the amount of money you will be spending. Don’t go it alone if you’re spending tens of thousands of dollars. If it’s a ’67-or-later model, there’s an inexpensive assurance plan

available. Buy a Marti Report and see if the car matches up with the report. If it doesn’t, have the seller explain it to you. But don’t believe stories about his uncle having worked at the assembly plant and coming in on the weekend to specially equip the car. That didn’t happen. The report will reflect how the car left the assembly line. You determine whether any changes will diminish the value of the vehicle. And buy the Marti Report before you buy the car. Don’t be like the soldier being told by the centurion, “It’s pillage, then burn!”



If you’re looking at a ’65 or ’66 Mustang, there isn’t any independent information available about the car. This has created a special class of Mustangs for fraud. You will need to follow good, common-sense rules. And if you don’t have the expertise, get some. After verifying a match of the serial number on the title with the stampings on the fender aprons, look for out-of-the-ordinary deviations that could affect the value of the car. If someone put aftermarket wheels on, that’s easy to undo. But if they tubbed the rear wheelwells, you have major costs to think about. If you get stories about how rare the car is or that it has a unique history, ask for paperwork for proof.

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**CONTACTS**

Steve Collins - Show Chairman  
scboss351@comcast.net  
904.838.9615

Terry Gossell - Registrar  
tlgmach69@bellsouth.net  
904.695.9241

Diane Norris - President  
mustang675@clearwire.net  
904.742.9254

Jacksonville Mustang Club  
website: [jmcmustang.net](http://jmcmustang.net)

**EVENTS**

**FRIDAY MAY 20**  
Registration 8am - 5pm  
Classification 8am - 5pm  
Vendor Setup 8am - 5pm

**SATURDAY MAY 21**  
Registration 8am - 10am  
Classification 8am - 10am  
Judging 12pm - 5pm

Cruise to Downtown  
The Jacksonville Landing  
6pm - Midnight  
Restaurants & Live Music

**SUNDAY MAY 22**  
Show Hours 8am - 3pm  
Judging 8am - 12pm  
Awards Ceremony

**HOTELS**

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1.800.2crowne, \$85  
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Airport, 904.741.1122, \$80  
Best Western, 877.574.2464, \$74  
Spring Hills Suites,  
904.741.8002, \$89

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Pony Car Corral \$30  
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**CAR CLASSES**

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Daily Driven (Division VI)  
Modified (Division VII)  
Specialty (Division VIII)  
(Saleen, Roush, Cobra, Shelby)  
Retired (Division IXA)  
Conservator (Division IXB)  
Popular Vote (Division X)  
Display Only (Division XI)



**Register today! Visit [jmcmustang.net](http://jmcmustang.net) or call 904.838.9615**

DESCRIPTION	ODDS*	IMPLICATIONS
SERIAL NUMBER ON TITLE IS WRONG	1 IN 25	EVER TRIED EXPLAINING SOMETHING TO A DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES AGENT?
MUSTANG IS BEING MISREPRESENTED	1 IN 10	OVERPAYMENT; FRAUD
CAR HAS BEEN ALTERED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM FACTORY DELIVERY (PAINT COLOR CHANGE, ETC.)	1 IN 5	EMBARRASSMENT; LOSS OF VALUE WHEN TIME FOR RESALE; FRAUD; DISAPPOINTMENT
SERIAL NUMBER YOU ARE GIVEN IS INCORRECT	1 IN 15	OVERPAYMENT; EMBARRASSMENT; FRAUD; DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES IN THE FUTURE

\* These odds are based on tens of thousands of sales histories we have been involved with.

Their word doesn't mean anything. Anyone can spin a "good" story. I hear about them every week.

Have you ever seen a '68 427 Mustang for sale? They are a true one-of-zero car. They're out there for sale. But there are many more subtle frauds being perpetrated every day.

Here's one example of a common misconception: For the 1968 and 1969 model years, Ford had a spring-time promotion known as "Rainbow of Colors." Hundreds of Mustangs were painted in 13 special paint colors and given various promotional names like "Eastertime Coral" or "Powerful Purple." Whereas these Mustangs are certainly unique, they do not command a higher price in the marketplace. Still, some people who put them up for sale try to create an impression that they are worth a great deal more than a standard Mustang. Terms like "rare," "valuable," and "don't miss this one" are common in the ads that are placed for these Mustangs, accompanied by an ex-

aggeration of the value. A story like this gets told so much it becomes accepted as part of Mustang lore, but the only person who benefits is a seller to an uninformed buyer. There are hundreds of similar stories.

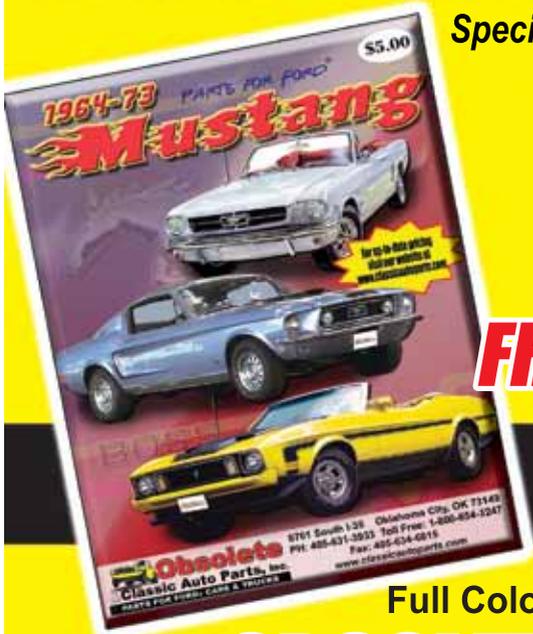
Oh, and the picture of the VIN tag shown is a fake. The "W" in the VIN tag would stand for a 427 engine. Trouble is, they were only installed in Cougars for the 1968 model year. Whether outright fraud through phony tags or just phony claims of rarity, cheating is prevalent in the hobby. Don't be deceived.

Trust your instincts, not your emotions. If the story sounds too good, if the price seems too low, pay attention. Someone is trying to watch out for you. Don't try to save a few dollars avoiding getting outside help only to lose thousands of dollars because you were in over your head. You want to have a good Mustang experience. We here at *Mustang Magazine* want that for you, too.

For pictures and more in-depth information, visit [www.martiauto.com/fraud](http://www.martiauto.com/fraud). **M**

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