



Left: A Ford GT40 (right) and a Ferrari 365 compete at Le Mans on June 19, 1966. Below: Christian Bale (left) and Matt Damon in *Ford v Ferrari*.

Photo Finish

How the team behind *Ford v Ferrari*, about 1966's epic 24 Hours of Le Mans race, got the starring cars ready for their close-up. *by Brett Berk*

THE NEW MOVIE *Ford v Ferrari* (in theaters November 15) features Christian Bale and Matt Damon, but the real stars are the cars. The film revisits one of the fiercest rivalries in motorsport history: the thwarted efforts by Ford to purchase Ferrari and its racing team in the early 1960s and Ford's subsequent decision to launch its own team, recruiting legendary automotive designer Carroll Shelby and spending lavishly to create an entry that could beat the Italians.

The result of this investment was the GT40, an aerodynamic racer with a low profile and a honking American V-8 engine. Ford's GT40s went on to sweep the first, second, and third places at the 24

Hours of Le Mans endurance race in 1966. They then won that race for the next three years, the only American cars to win in the event's 96-year history.

With this storied pedigree, and only 133 produced, GT40s are now worth between \$3 million and \$6 million. That's far too valuable to purchase or borrow one for a shoot, given the risks and rigors of filming. "If you're going to spin them around and slide them," says North Carolina car collector Rob Kauffman, who owns the 1966 Le Mans-winning GT40, "you probably don't want an original."

The director, James Mangold, was opposed to excessive digital manipulation because of the way it disjoins reality. "It's hard to convey a sense of time-travel, backwards, through artificial means," says Robert Andrew Johnson, the film's vehicle art director, who also designed the largely digital spaceships in *Avatar*. Johnson and his team of experts ended up assembling about 60 cars for the shoot, mostly replicas of Fords, Ferraris, and Porsches, outfitting them with reliable engines (they used Chevy LS7s) and doctoring them to make the cars appear more historically accurate.

The job also involved seeking out the

unknown. "The cars' exteriors are very well documented," down to the dings and traces of brake dust, says Johnson. "But no one was taking photographs of the interiors." He managed to acquire shots of a GT40 interior from the shop that restored Kauffman's car, and was able to create period-correct components and logos. He crafted ersatz elements for the engine compartment, such as air intakes and carburetors made from aluminum shoebox lids. He was even able to recreate stick-on Dymo labels on the dashboard as they were in the race. "There was a button for the car horn, but the guys at Shelby had put *horny*—they added a *y* to it. So we put that in," he says.

The Ferrari interiors were a different story. No photos of the cars' cockpits were available. "The person I contacted at a restoration shop said, 'If you want info on the Ferrari you should just talk to Ralph.'" When Johnson asked for contact information, he was told that the owner was hard to reach. "It was Ralph Lauren." Indeed, the designer was not available. Johnson shrugged. "You sometimes have to spin the wheel, cover your eyes, and put your finger down on what your best guess is."

