



THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN FILM HISTORY

Tom Mix 1937 Cord



Tom Mix's background as a cowboy, ranch hand, law enforcement officer and circus performer ultimately led him to the silver screen, and by the 1920s, Mix was arguably America's most beloved action hero. His passion for fast cars was well known, and on October 12, 1940, Mix died behind the wheel of his 1937 Cord 812 supercharged phaeton, killed by excessive speed, a washed-out bridge and an unsecured metal suitcase, which struck the former action star in the head, fracturing his skull and breaking his neck.

At a time when the average U.S. salary was less than \$1,500 per year, Mix was earning as much as \$10,000 per week, but when "talkies" replaced silent films at the end of the 1920s, his popularity waned. A later series of disappointing business ventures consumed much of his once-impressive net worth, but in 1937 Mix had no trouble justifying the purchase of a brand-new, Gordon Buehrig-designed Cord 812 supercharged phaeton. Equipped with a forced-induction 288.6-cu.in. Lycoming V-8 engine rated at 170 horsepower, the front-wheel-drive Cord also utilized a four-speed pre-selector gearbox. As delivered, Mix's car was one of three Cord 812 phaeton models to include a factory-installed rear tire mount, with the other two going to Al Jolson and Barbara Stanwyck.



The stunning 1937 Cord model 812 supercharged phaeton is an extraordinarily beautiful car. The 810 and 812 production was a total of 2,900 cars over an 18-month period. Of these, 612 were Phaetons and only 196 were supercharged. The 812 super charged Cord justifies the word "superlative".



The rear tire mount was hardly the only custom touch on Mix's Cord. A flamboyant man, known for his flashy costumes, Mix wanted a car that reflected his personality. Up front, Mix fitted a Trippe senior model spotlight, useful for illuminating the road ahead during high-speed night driving. Bumper guards, front bumper flag poles (also useful for

locating the front corners of the car) and a grille protector were added, and Mix had hand-tooled leather stone guards fitted to the rear fenders.



The side of the Cord's hood sported the actor's initials, while the front of the hood carried a pair of medallions presented to Mix by the King of Denmark.

Inside, the Cord was no less elaborate. The steering wheel's horn button carried Mix's surname, as well as the brand for his ranch, and located directly below the steering column was a hand-tooled leather holster for his signature Smith and Wesson .357 Magnum revolver. Even the accelerator pedal was customized for Mix, featuring a metal cup to hold the heel of his cowboy boot, riveted to an embossed leather pad bearing the actor's initials. See more at:



<http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/2013/11/25/tom-mixs-restored-cord-812-to-appear-at-arizona-concours-delegance/?refer=news#sthash.y5NH8Un9.dpuf>

The Creation of the Tom Mix Cord

Errett Lobban Cord was the consummate salesman. By the early 1920's he had become the top seller of moon cars in Chicago and subsequently rescued the floundering Auburn Automobile Company in Auburn, Indiana. In 1926, having acquired Duesenberg as a luxury brand in the growing Auburn empire, he decided to launch a niche car he would name for himself. Cord began production of the Cord 810 in 1936 with front wheel drive, its engine was a V8 from Lycoming, another company Cord had purchased. The four speed electric to pre shift transmission was ingenious.

Notes: The body was designed by Gordon Buehrig with retractable headlight design that would create a standard by which cars are judged today. It was an instant sensation at the November 1935 New York Auto Show. The 1937 Cords designated 812 were little changed cosmetically from 1936 models, except for the supercharged engine option. Cord's experience with Duesenberg made it relatively simple to add a Schwitzer-Cummins centrifugal supercharger.

The 288.6CU inch V8 engine produces 170BHP. It has a single Stromberg carburetor, 4 speed pre-selector transmission, 4 wheel hydraulic drum brakes, independent front suspension, front wheel drive and roll out headlights.

Mix's Cord was acquired by Bob White of Scottsdale, Arizona, in 2010. White has since funded a thorough restoration of the car, and its tear-down revealed that no former owner (including the Imperial Palace Auto Collection in Las Vegas) had ever properly repaired the damage caused by Mix's 1940 accident. Enlisting the help of Cord White returned the 812 supercharged phaeton to a condition the car was in on the day that Mix lost his life behind the wheel.

Bob has written a book about the restoration. *The Tom Mix Cord: Saga of a Western Film Star's Classic Motorcar*, tells the story of this classic car from personalization to wreckage to restoration. Well documented at every stage, this book offers a look at Tom Mix's unique history in the film industry, circus, and his love affair with a 1937 Super Charged Cord that has won nearly thirty awards. Available on line or in the Museum.



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