

**'Damn. Fine. Job.'** These three words mean a lot to Studio-G's Mike Milne-Home. They came from the mouth of Carroll Shelby, the man who created the legend that is the AC Cobra.

Milne-Home bumped into Shelby while having breakfast at the hotel he was staying at for this year's Goodwood Revival. Rather than a polite handshake, he was dragged from his cornflakes by the entrepreneurial M-H to be shown what I'm now sitting in: the G350.

Shelby's blessing was the final touch to a project that has brought together two forward thinkers from very different disciplines. Andrew Burrows, proprietor and chief design engineer for the well-respected Gardner Douglas specialist car maker and Mike Milne-Home, designer from styling house Studio-G. Andrew Burrows has long been associated with a very detailed and well-sorted Cobra replica, the Gardner Douglas GD427, and after a few

discussions the pair agreed to try and improve on the iconic design.

'I wanted to create a more feline and sexier version of the legendary Cobra, not only to help differentiate the Gardner Douglas' product from others but also to appeal to a growing female market,' Milne-Home tells me.

Not a particular fan of the original Cobra, which he found brutish and unrefined, he was inspired by a collection of pictures of a 1954 Ferrari 375MM that he thought utterly beautiful. 'There were many obvious similarities between the two cars but the Ferrari outclassed the AC in its detailing and sheer style.'

But tinkering with an iconic sixties racer is either madness or pure folly. Does it work as a modern interpretation? Opinion and a healthy order book would suggest that it does.

The car is a subtle – but important – variant from your average AC Cobra replica, and it's

certainly no kit. Say that within earshot of the pair and they'll box your ears in. 'It's limited to 50 editions, and we're trying to get away from this whole kit-car stigma which seems to be around. Although we do manufacture self-assembly kits, we're building this one ourselves to ensure that quality control remains of the highest standard,' Burrows corrects me.

I do what most self-respecting journalists would do at this point: I climb in the car and shut my gob. Sure enough, it's the quality aspect that hits you on first impressions. The G350 is built on a spaceframe chassis and semi-monocoque composite bodyshell. This makes it stiff but light. In fact the chassis is so rigid you can corner at speeds that would make a biker blink. Couple that with that a power-to-weight ratio that rivals a Caterham 7 and you've got a recipe for a lot of fun.

Brakes are two-pot calipers from Ford and



## GARDNER DOUGLAS STUDIO-G G350

Love it or loath it, this twist on the usual Cobra replica theme can't be ignored

Words and photography: David Corfield





**Clockwise from left**  
Cobra styling with a twist;  
neat dash; GM V8 engine  
gives the appropriate  
performance; interior is well  
built and smoother-edged  
than a true Cobra's.



**SPECIFICATION**

**Gardner  
Douglas/  
Studio-G C350  
Roadster**

**Engine.**  
GM L56 all-aluminium  
5.7-litre V8

**Power**  
350bhp @ 6500rpm

**Transmission**  
Five-speed

**Suspension**  
Bespoke double  
wishbones front  
and rear

**Brakes**  
Vented discs all round

**Weight**  
1050kg

**Performance**  
Top speed: 160mph  
0-60mph: 4 secs

**Price**  
POA



‘The car is a subtle – but important – variant from your average AC Cobra replica, and it’s certainly no kit. Say that within earshot of the pair and they’ll box your ears in’

are non-servo assisted so there’s loads of pedal feel, while steering is traditional rack and pinion without assistance – which makes for a direct and involving driving experience.

On the road the car’s manners are good. The car squats under violent acceleration allowing the nose to lift, which makes steering fun. But the driving position is comfortable, the dials are clear and easy to read and, surrounded by leather and carefully crafted aluminium toggle switches, the whole experience is very organic.

The car makes a statement from every angle, and perhaps the most obvious one (and certainly the biggest departure from classic Cobra copies of old) is the beautifully sculpted windscreen and those Mercedes SLR-esque head restraints. Although wipers haven’t been fitted yet (the car is in pre-production awaiting

SVA testing) and mirrors haven’t been fixed onto the sides, it’s clean, uncluttered and well sorted.

It’s these subtleties that distinguish Studio-G. A company that has a house style extending to not just cars, but watches, chairs, leather goods and clothing, the Cobra was seen as the perfect next stage in an ever-expanding lifestyle range.

‘My design cues come from the 1950s, the era I was born in,’ explains Milne-Home. ‘We had it so right back then. And then the Americans came and took design another great leap forward and left us behind.’

It’s good to see a great Anglo-American product from the 1960s receive a post-modern update. As Shelby said himself – and as I’m about to now: Damn. Fine. Job.

Studio-G 01483 722900, [www.studio-g.co.uk](http://www.studio-g.co.uk) [www.gdcars.com](http://www.gdcars.com)

**ORIGIN OF  
THE SPECIES:  
THE COBRA**

When AC Cars lost the source for the six-cylinder Bristol engine for its two-seater roadster, Carroll Shelby airmailed a letter of proposal to the company to keep building the chassis for a special Shelby sports car to be powered by an American V8.

Charles Hurlock, owner of AC Cars, returned Shelby’s letter, stating he would be interested in Shelby’s plan as long as a suitable engine replacement could be found in the States. That same month, Shelby found out about the new Ford small-block V8.

The first 260 Roadster was air freighted on February 2, 1962, to Shelby’s shop in Southern California. Shortly afterwards Shelby had a dream revealing to him the name Cobra appearing on the front of his car.

So, a 260 bhp V8 and Borg-Warner gearbox were installed into the AC and the Cobra was born. The rest, as they say...