

Gianluca Sposito

Duets

Iconic Cars and Movies



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GIANLUCA SPOSITO

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Visio Series

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Introduction

Automobiles and cinema are two pillars of modernity that, since their inception, have intertwined their paths, influencing each other and shaping collective imagination. It is no coincidence that both inventions revolutionized the 20th century: automobiles transformed the way we experience space and time, while cinema redefined our perception of reality and storytelling.

Throughout film history, numerous movies have drawn vital energy from the soul of an automobile, giving the plot deeper meaning and representing the historical context as an emblem of reality reflected in an unmistakable status symbol. Far from being an encyclopedia, this volume is the result of carefully curated choices—not with the presumption of exhaustiveness but with the intention of highlighting how, much like screenplays, costumes, set design, and directing, the presence of an automobile can make a difference in a film or television series.

Since the early post-war years, cars have appeared on the big screen to depict the life of an Italy undergoing profound transformation. Films like *Il sorpasso* (1962), directed by Dino Risi, use the automobile not only as a means of transportation but as a true character embodying the spirit of the time. The Lancia Aurelia B24 driven by Vittorio Gassman becomes a symbol of freedom and carefree living while also representing the contradictions of a rapidly changing country. In the United States, however, car culture found in cinema a powerful ally in solidifying the myth of the open road and speed. Films like *Bullitt* (1968) made models like the Ford Mustang famous, turning them into protagonists of breathtaking chase scenes that left a mark on film history. These movies not only highlight the performance of the cars but elevate them to cultural icons—symbols of an era and a lifestyle.

We cannot forget the *James Bond* saga, where the Aston Martin DB5 becomes an extension of the secret agent himself, with its sophisticated gadgets and elegant design. Introduced for the first time in *Goldfinger* (1964), this car has become synonymous with luxury and technology, embodying the image of the British gentleman in the service of Her Majesty.

In cinema, automobiles are not merely inanimate objects; they often play an active role in storytelling. In *Christine* (1983), directed by John Carpenter and based on the novel by Stephen King, a 1958 Plymouth Fury literally comes to life, becoming a jealous and malevolent entity. Here, the car is not just a means of transport but a full-fledged character, with its own will and the ability to influence events. The same occurs in *Duel* (1971) by Steven Spielberg, where a faceless, nameless truck turns into a menacing entity—an unstoppable, ominous force.

Even in television, automobiles have played leading roles. Series like *Knight Rider* (1982–1986) feature KITT, a Pontiac Firebird Trans Am equipped with artificial intelligence, capable of interacting with its environment and the protagonist. In this case, the car becomes an indispensable partner—a technological ally that enriches the narrative and captivates audiences with its extraordinary abilities.

However, not all cars in movies result from narrative choices; cinema is also a vast advertising showcase, and automotive product placement has played a crucial role in shaping the image of certain models. While in the early decades of cinema, the selection of cars was often based on availability on set, from the 1960s onward, car manufacturers began directly investing to ensure their models appeared in blockbuster films.

The most emblematic case is that of *James Bond* and Aston Martin: while the DB5 in *Goldfinger* was chosen for its allure and performance, in subsequent films, the collaboration between the production and the British brand became a well-established strategy, featuring increasingly exclusive models designed specifically for the franchise. Another significant example is the Ford Mustang in *Bullitt*: the legendary chase scene with Steve McQueen helped cement the car's sporty image to the point that Ford released multiple special editions inspired by the film.

At times, however, cinema has had an unexpected impact on cars. The DeLorean DMC-12 in *Back to the Future* (1985) was not chosen due to a commercial deal but because its futuristic design perfectly suited the story. Ironically, the film immortalized a car that, in reality, had not enjoyed great commercial success. From the 2000s onward, product placement has pushed boundaries even further: the *Fast & Furious* franchise turned cinema into a veritable showcase for brands like Dodge, Nissan, and Mitsubishi, taking the concept of “movie cars” to an unprecedented level.

The fascination with automobiles extends beyond cinema and television, with deep roots in literature. From Jules Verne's novels, which anticipated technological marvels like flying cars, to the works of J.G. Ballard, which explore the obsessive relationship between humans and machines, literature has

often reflected on the nature of automobiles as symbols of freedom, progress, and sometimes danger. *Crash* (1973) by Ballard, in particular, examines the fetishistic and disturbing nature of cars, evoking a connection between eroticism, violence, and technology that continues to captivate audiences today.

From a sociological and psychological perspective, the automobile is much more than just a means of transportation. Owning a car often signifies asserting one's social status, expressing one's personality, and projecting an image of oneself to others. The phenomenon of muscle cars in the 1960s, the rise of SUVs as symbols of power and security, the timeless appeal of classic cars—all demonstrate how automobiles serve as extensions of personal identity. From a psychoanalytic standpoint, the desire for car ownership and control can be interpreted as an expression of the need for autonomy and self-assertion. Meanwhile, Marshall McLuhan, in his studies on technology, described means of transport as extensions of the human body. In this view, the car becomes a technological prosthesis—an extension of our mobility and our ability to interact with space.

Each chapter of this volume could be explored in greater depth, forming a standalone work. However, the goal is not to create an encyclopedic catalog but to provide an overview of the most significant intersections between automobiles and cinema, illustrating how they have mutually influenced each other's evolution. If you believe there are errors or omissions, do not hesitate to write to me—dialogue with enthusiasts is essential to continuously enriching and improving this work, which today begins its journey of growth and development, thanks also to the passion and expertise of its readers. Another important *duet* that I deeply value.

READING NOTES

This volume presents, in alphabetical order, the major automobile manufacturers along with dedicated sections highlighting the most iconic models featured in films and television series.

The adjusted car prices have been calculated based on purchasing power variations, using data from ISTAT and Il Sole 24 Ore. Any price estimates mentioned in this volume are purely indicative, reflecting average values recorded at major auctions in recent years. The classic car market is constantly evolving, and valuations may fluctuate over time depending on multiple factors, including the condition of the vehicle, its rarity, and market demand.

To enhance the reading experience, this book includes QR codes that provide access to additional multimedia content. A QR code is a two-dimensional barcode that, when scanned with the camera of a smartphone, tablet, or computer, automatically redirects to external links. Thanks to this technology, readers can further explore information about the cars and films mentioned by accessing behind-the-scenes videos, trailers, images, interviews, articles, and detailed fact sheets.



The presence of this symbol within a box indicates that scanning the QR code will provide direct access to a related video.

This interactive system allows for a more immersive and engaging experience, transforming reading into a multimedia journey through the world of automobiles and cinema.

To make the most of this feature:

1. Open your device's camera and scan the QR code.
2. If your device supports automatic QR code reading, a clickable link will appear.
3. Alternatively, you can use a free QR code scanner app available in digital stores.

The main multimedia content accessible via QR codes includes:



IMDb (Internet Movie Database): A film database providing detailed information about movies, actors, directors, and production trivia.



IMCDB (Internet Movie Cars Database): An archive that catalogs all automobiles featured in films and TV series.



YouTube: Videos of iconic scenes, chase sequences, test drives of classic models, and in-depth analyses of cinematic vehicles.



**A thrilling journey through cinema's most iconic cars
and the films that turned them into legends**



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