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The opening pages of

1971 Ford Mustang Boss 351 Cleveland Restoration Guide

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1971 Ford Mustang Boss 351 Restoration Guide

MODEL YEAR 1971

The fastest factory Mustang of 1971: factory-correct restoration reference for the Boss 351 — the 351 Cleveland 4V, Ram Air, VIN and data-plate decoding, casting numbers, authentication, and the restoration sequence.

Key Specifications at a Glance

Engine	351 Cleveland 4V — 351 cid, 4.00 x 3.50 in, solid-lifter cam
Output	330 hp @ 5,400 rpm; 370 lb-ft @ 4,000 rpm; Autolite 4300D 4V
VIN code	1F02Rxxxxxx — R = Boss 351; Dearborn only
Gearbox	Ford Toploader 4-speed, Hurst shifter — no automatic
Axle	9-in Traction-Lok, 3.91:1 standard
Built	1,806 cars — one year only

Every specification in this guide was verified against published references before printing. Where sources disagree — notably on the compression ratio — the text says so plainly. Use correct jack stands, disconnect the battery before electrical work, and never get under a car supported only by a jack. High-compression engines demand high-octane fuel and careful ignition timing.

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How to use this guide. Chapters 1 and 2 give you the history that drives collector value. Chapter 3 explains exactly what makes this variant different from every other Mustang of its year. The technical chapters are written to be used at the car: decoding tags, checking castings, and planning the restoration in the right order. Keep a notebook with this guide and verify every number against the car in front of you.

1. Ford at the End of the Muscle Era

By 1971 the forces that would kill the classic muscle car were all in motion: insurance surcharges punishing high-performance cars, emissions standards tightening year by year, and unleaded low-octane fuel on the horizon. Ford's response, characteristically, was to build the fastest Mustang it had ever offered — the Boss 351 — in the very model year the era began to close. Where the Boss 302 had been a homologation special built for a racing rulebook, the Boss 351 was simpler and more honest: the biggest, hottest Cleveland V8 Ford would put in a Mustang, standard with everything the performance buyer wanted and nothing they didn't.

The Boss 351 arrived as the Boss 302 departed. Ford's factory racing programs were winding down at the end of 1970 — there would be no 1971 Boss 302 — but the 351 Cleveland, introduced for 1970, gave Ford a new performance foundation. The Boss 351 took the Cleveland 4V to its ultimate factory expression: solid lifters, four-bolt mains, a 750-CFM-class carburetor, and factory ratings of 330 horsepower and 370 lb-ft of torque. Period road tests found it quicker than the Boss 302 it replaced and quicker than the 429 Cobra Jet: one published test recorded 0–60 mph in 5.8 seconds and the quarter-mile in 13.8 seconds at 104 mph.

2. The Big 1971 Mustang

The 1971 Mustang was the third major redesign: the longest, widest, and heaviest Mustang yet, restyled on a lengthened and widened platform for the new decade. The fastback became the SportsRoof with a dramatic long-deck, short-hood profile; the convertible and hardtop continued. Styling was polarizing then and remains so — but the Boss 351's stance, scoops, and stripes made it the most purposeful-looking Mustang of the year.

The Boss 351 was a rare sight in the 1971 lineup: 1,806 built, all at Dearborn, all SportsRoofs, all four-speeds. The Boss 351's standard equipment list reads like a performance buyer's wish list made factory policy: Ram Air induction, competition suspension, staggered rear shocks, power front disc brakes, the 3.91 Traction-Lok axle, F60-15 tires, the Hurst-shifted Toploader, and the full Boss appearance treatment. Base price was about \$4,124.