

EQUUS AUTOMOTIVE

The Story Behind the Badge

EQUUS

INTRODUCTION

The Story Behind the Badge

EQUUS was never designed in a boardroom.

It was born from a life spent between continents, factories, political storms, and the deep emotional bond between a man and the machines that represented freedom.

For founder Bassam Abdallah, the car is not just mechanical—it is personal.

A refuge, a compass, and a declaration of identity.

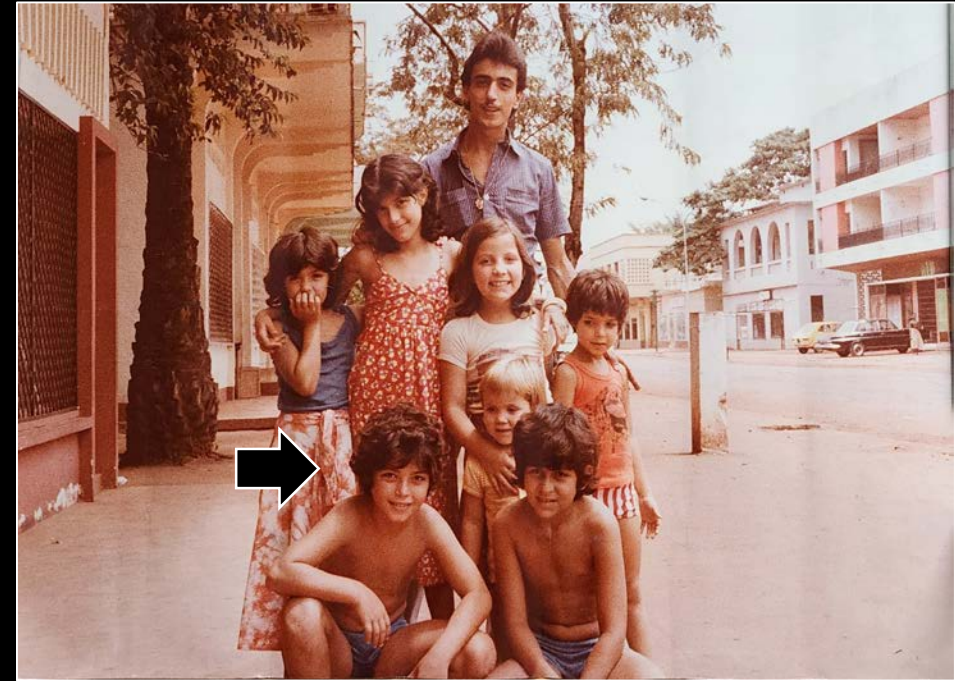
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ROOTS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

The Story Behind the Badge

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Bassam's story begins in Bangui, Central African Republic, in 1970. He grew up above his father's general store, surrounded by African, Lebanese, and French cultures. He attended French school, played with children of every origin, and discovered early that identity can divide
—but passion can unite.



At home, America arrived not through local television, but through hundreds of VHS tapes brought from France: *Starsky & Hutch*, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, *Knight Rider*... and one film that shaped his destiny: *Bullitt*. Steve McQueen. The fastback Mustang.

Freedom on four wheels.

2 THE FIRST RESURRECTION THE MUSTANG BOKASSA The Story Behind the Badge

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As a young man returning from France, Bassam worked in his father's factory by day while restoring American cars by night. One afternoon, deep in the bush, he discovered a **forgotten 1966 Mustang convertible buried under a tree.**



He bought it for \$500.

Inside, the car was filthy and rusted, but the structure was solid.

He later learned it once belonged to **Jean-Bédel Bokassa**, the first and last self-proclaimed Emperor of Central Africa.





3 TRIAL BY FIRE RESILIENCE IN A HOSTILE WORLD

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In the 1990s, his family's business was attacked on national television with false accusations of tax fraud. Assets were seized, and Bassam—barely 21—was pushed into the role of Managing Director.

He survived military coups, interrogations, and political pressure. He negotiated with unions, protected workers, and fought corruption. These experiences built the backbone that later shaped EQUUS: resilience, clarity, and refusal to surrender.

LA VIE

Devant l'escalade de la mutinerie

Centrafrique : l'armée française intervient

Les soldats insurgés réclament la démission d'Ange-Félix Patassé, le président élu. La Légion les a empêchés de prendre la radio.



Un légionnaire français et un soldat centrafricain escortent un groupe de ressortissants étrangers à Bimbo, dans la banlieue de Bangui, vers un hélicoptère de l'armée française. (Photo Simow/FP.)

L'armée française a été « au contact » avec les rebelles de Bangui. L'officier qui rendait compte hier de l'intervention de la Légion, engagée contre les soldats mutins de la capitale centrafricaine, n'a pas voulu aller au-delà de ce

la situation, la France a passé la vitesse supérieure. L'opération Almandin II (Almandin I désignant l'intervention française lors de la mutinerie d'avril dernier) a pris un tour plus offensif.

Dans un premier temps, on

Un premier groupe de 137 Français est arrivé dans la nuit de mardi à mercredi à Paris. Il s'agit essentiellement de femmes, d'enfants en bas âge et de personnes âgées. D'autres devaient être évacués aujourd'hui.

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VENDREDI 24 MAI 1996

L'ÉVÉNEMENT

Un pont aérien est organisé pour évacuer les ressortissants étrangers

La mutinerie en Centrafrique vire à l'émeute antifrançaise

La rébellion des soldats centrafricains réclamant leur solde s'est transformée hier en révolte populaire. Après l'intervention des légionnaires français qui, mercredi, ont repoussé un assaut des mutins contre la radio nationale, plusieurs milliers de manifestants ont envahi hier les rues de Bangui en scandant: «A mort les Français» et en réclamant le départ du président Félix Patassé. Le Centre culturel français de la capitale incendié et les pillages se sont multipliés. Devant la dégradation de la situation, un dispositif a été mis en place pour évacuer, à vendredi, les quelque 1.400 étrangers encore à Bangui.



Mercredi à Bangui, un légionnaire français procède à l'évacuation par hélicoptère des étrangers. Ils étaient encore 1.400 dans la capitale centrafricaine.

Bangui, envoyé spécial

À l'indemnité des affrontements directs entre l'armée française et des militaires centrafricains mutins, il ne faut pas bon être français à Bangui. Hier matin, des milliers de manifestants brandissant des pancartes hostiles à la France et au pouvoir local du président Ange-Félix Patassé ont voulu marcher sur l'ambassade de France. Dispersée par des tirs en l'air des légionnaires français postés à chaque carrefour, le long de l'avenue des Martyrs, l'axe nord-sud qui mène de l'aéroport au centre-ville, la foule a brûlé des drapeaux tricolores avant de saccager le Centre

militaires révoltés. Hier après-midi, en revanche, abstraction faite de rares tirs isolés, la ville a été calme. Timidement, sur les petites pistes sablonneuses à l'intérieur des quartiers, des mobylettes recommencent à circuler. Au sixième jour de la mutinerie, les habitants de Bangui ont pris des risques pour s'approvisionner.

De toute évidence, depuis le combat de mercredi, le rapport de force entre les insurgés et le pouvoir en place, fermement soutenu par la France, s'est renversé. Après avoir claqué la porte des négociations la veille, bien qu'une amnistie totale — en dépit d'un nombre inconnu de morts et de pillages à grande échelle — leur ait été concédée, les in-

leur rupture mercredi, le médiateur de ces tractations, «on ne voit plus très bien ce qui, entre le gouvernement et les mutins, resterait à négocier». En professant leur volonté de reprendre le pouvoir par les armes, et en s'attaquant à la radio nationale en guise d'exécution, les insurgés ont en effet définitivement quitté le terrain des revendications catégorielles en faveur d'une logique d'insurrection. Cette option, du reste, ne faisait déjà plus guère de doute alors que, depuis une première mutinerie en avril, les trois rocs d'arrière de solides avaient été versés, comme promis, à moins dans la capitale.

S'il est vrai que le projet d'un transfert de l'armurerie du Centre à Bangui a suscité et sous le contrôle de la garde prési-

4 FROM ADMIRER TO CREATOR ELEANOR, INDIA & TURIN The Story Behind the Badge

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Back in Paris, Bassam bought a rare Eleanor Mustang built by a former F1 driver. Driving through Montmartre, he saw something magical: people of all backgrounds were united by the car. A universal language.

In 2008, Bassam met the renowned automotive journalist **Gautam Sen** at the Paris Motor Show. Sen later published a successful feature article about Bassam's Eleanor Mustang in *Auto India* magazine titled "Potboiler" (see attached article).

<https://www.maharajah-of-the-road.info/>

Gautam Sen then introduced Bassam to **Tom Tjaarda**, who soon became a close friend and collaborator. He also later introduced Bassam to **Thierry Chalmet**, who would become a future friend and creative partner.



Tom Tjaarda and the "BOKASSA" in India

In India, he discovered a passionate underground car culture.

In Turin, he met design legend Tom Tjaarda—the mind behind the Ferrari 365 California Spyder and De Tomaso Pantera.

They became close friends and sketched two concepts: Equus Tom1 and Tom2.

The first spark of a new brand identity.



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THE SHELBY COLLECTION

A CIRCLE COMPLETES ITSELF

The Story Behind the Badge

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Claude Dubois was a Belgian racing driver from the 1960s and one of Shelby's closest European collaborators. He held the official license to build and distribute Shelby Mustangs in Europe under the name Shelby Europa.

Through Claude Dubois, Bassam met Carroll Shelby in Los Angeles in 2008. He brought Shelby a gold miniature of the Tom1. The meeting lasted hours. Shelby said the car "had soul."



Bassam and Carroll SHELBY in 2010





Then came the revelation: Shelby had lived for years in Central Africa in the 1970s—on the same streets where Bassam grew up.

Shelby even remembered driving a green Triumph through Bangui, which Bassam had seen as a child.

Fate had drawn their paths together long before EQUUS existed.



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SEMA 2008

FIRST PUBLIC REVELATION

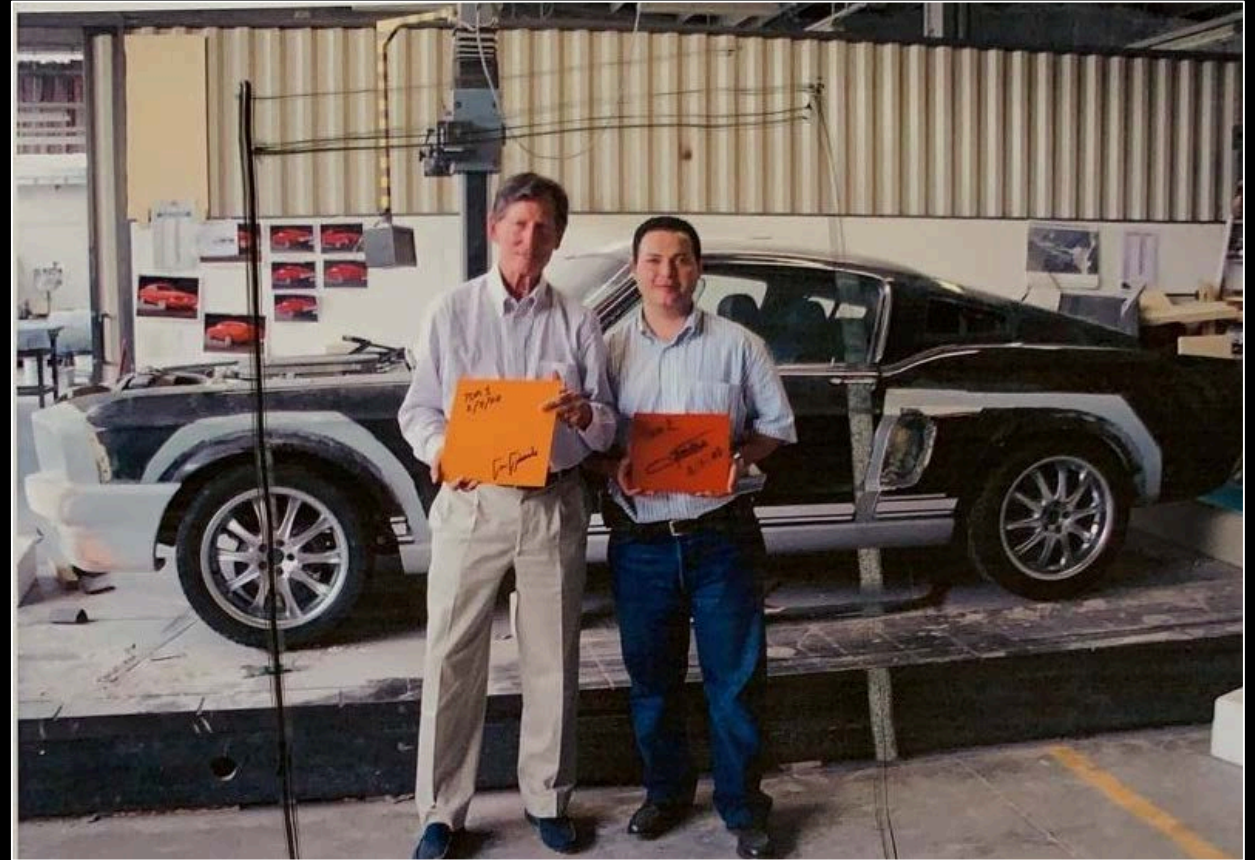
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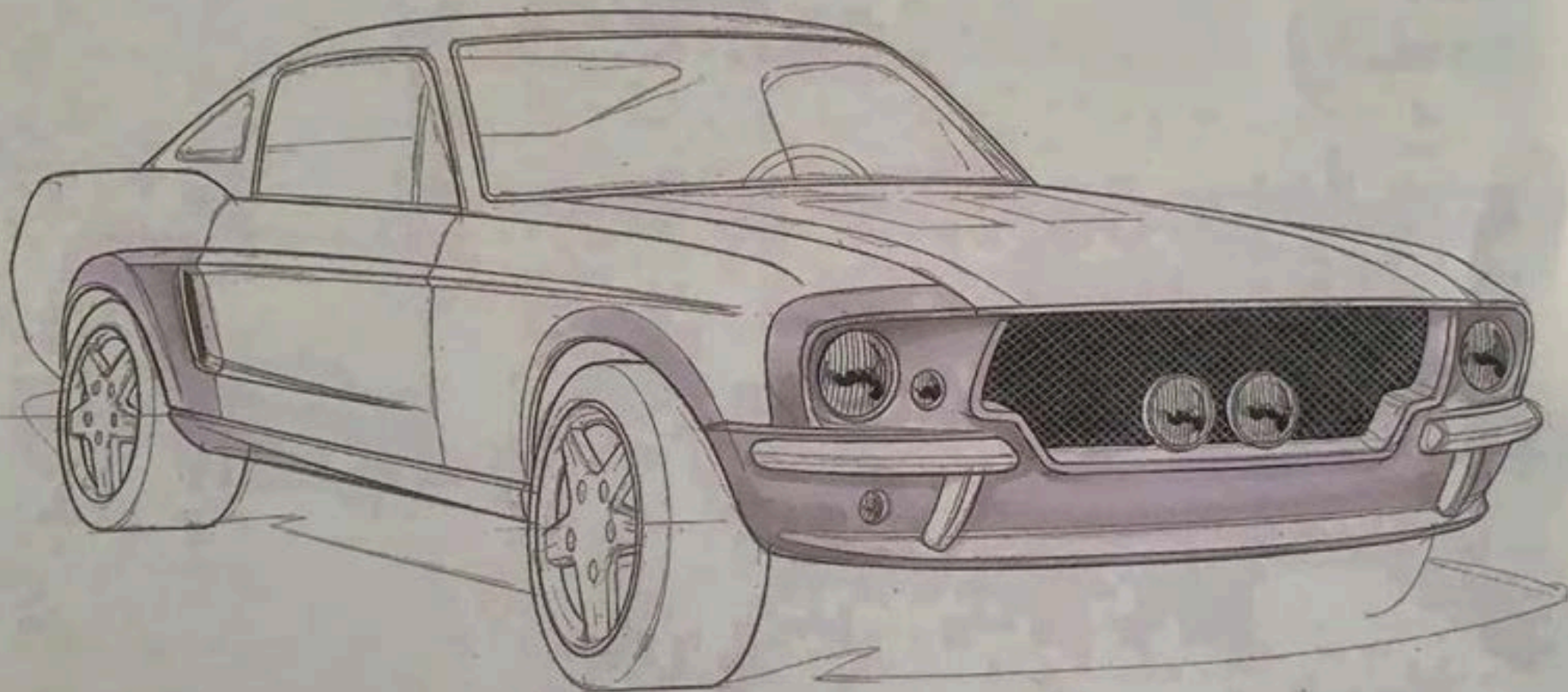
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Early in 2008, Bassam and Tom Tjaarda developed the Equus Tom1 prototype in collaboration with a local Italian prototyping company in Turin.



The first public step for EQUUS was a restomod prototype designed by Tom Tjaarda and shown at SEMA 2008 in Las Vegas. Tjaarda was present, standing proudly beside the car.





The reaction was immediate—media, designers, and industry veterans were drawn to the modern-classic proportions. The Equus Tom1 received the Dunlop Trophy for Best Car of Show.

SEMA proved the public's hunger for timeless design reborn through modern engineering.

EQUUS needed to go further.



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ATLANTA 2009-2012

JV WITH PANOS GROUP

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In February 2009, EQUUS Automotive and the **Panoz Auto Development Company (PADC)** announced a collaboration to develop the next evolution of the project.

After visiting the Panoz facilities in Braselton, Georgia, Danny Panoz and Bassam Abdallah formalized the partnership to combine Italian design with American engineering expertise. Together, they developed technical foundations that would later contribute to the Bass770.

To commemorate the Maharajah project, the prototype from this phase was named **EQUUS MR (Maharajah of the Road)**.

During this period, Bassam gifted Danny Panoz a hand-crafted gold model of the EQUUS MR — and received a PADC DPM Mustang in return, which would later become the EQUUS DPM.





Working with French designer Thierry Chalmet and a team of elite American high-performance engineers led by Tom Wallace, Bassam developed what would become the **Equus Bass770 — a modern interpretation of the classic American fastback.**

Tom Wallace, an American automotive icon and former Corvette Chief Engineer at General Motors, brought world-class engineering leadership to the project. In Corvette's history, only two engineers have also been real race-car drivers—Zora Arkus-Duntov and Tom Wallace. With a Mechanical Engineering degree from Kettering University and decades at GM, Wallace became Vehicle Line Executive for Performance Cars, serving as Chief Engineer from 2005 to 2008.

A renowned team builder, he **unified engineering, design, manufacturing, and marketing** to create one of the most capable Corvettes ever built:

the 2009 ZR1, a 638 hp, 200+ mph masterpiece.

His leadership and vision were instrumental in shaping the engineering foundations of the Bass770.



Bassam, Tom Wallace & Thierry Chalmet in 2010.

Under the combined talent of Chalmet, Wallace, and Bassam, the Bass770 emerged as a luxury-performance GT with a supercharged V8, an aluminum structure, and magnetic ride technology—blending vintage American soul with modern engineering discipline.

The genesis of the Bass770 was built on a clear vision: to create the first modern “Luxury Muscle Car,” an avant-garde retro-design concept that reinterpreted the heritage of American muscle cars without ever falling into replica territory. The Bass770 had to capture the soul, proportions, and emotion of that golden era, while offering the sophistication, refinement, and visual presence of contemporary luxury. This unique combination — Vintage + Luxury + Performance — became the signature DNA of EQUUS.





The Bass770 quickly became an icon in its segment and profoundly influenced the restomod world, which began shifting toward higher standards and ambitions comparable to OEM manufacturers. It helped redefine the perception of the muscle car: powerful and impressive on the outside, but finally noble and refined on the inside. An Emirati enthusiast once summarized this evolution perfectly when he told Bassam: "In an American muscle car, I always felt like a king from the outside... but poor on the inside." The Bass770 changed that.

After the Panoz collaboration, EQUUS moved to Detroit to transform the concept into a **fully engineered modern GT**.





MOTOR CITY-DETROIT 2012

THE BIRTH OF A MODERN LEGEND

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The EQUUS team then moved to Detroit—Motor City—to be closer to suppliers and apply the engineering experience gained from Italy (2008) and the Panoz program (2009–2012). In Detroit, EQUUS collaborated with local engineers with strong OEM backgrounds to refine and industrialize the Bass770.

At the **North American International Auto Show (NAIAS)**, EQUUS stunned the industry. Displayed in the underground hall—far from the main OEM floors—the Bass770 became the event's unexpected star. Crowds surged. Engineers from major brands came down to see “the mysterious luxury muscle GT.”

“At the peak of the show, more than 300,000 visitors tried to access our website simultaneously, causing the site to crash.”

For the first time, **vintage muscle-car design was fused with true luxury craftsmanship.**

EQUUS became a pioneer long before the restomod movement became mainstream. More than a restomod, the Bass770 actually transcended the concept. Instead of starting from an old chassis and updating it, EQUUS chose the opposite approach: **a fully modern platform with contemporary safety, engineering, and reliability — wrapped in the timeless charm and emotional lines of vintage American muscle.** This philosophy positioned the Bass770 far beyond the restomod category and closer to a true, original luxury GT inspired by history rather than constrained by it.

Only a handful of Bass770 units were ultimately hand-built and delivered to Europe, China, and Dubai.

They proved one essential truth: the demand was real, the vision was valid — but high-craftsmanship, low-volume production required a smarter, more agile structure.



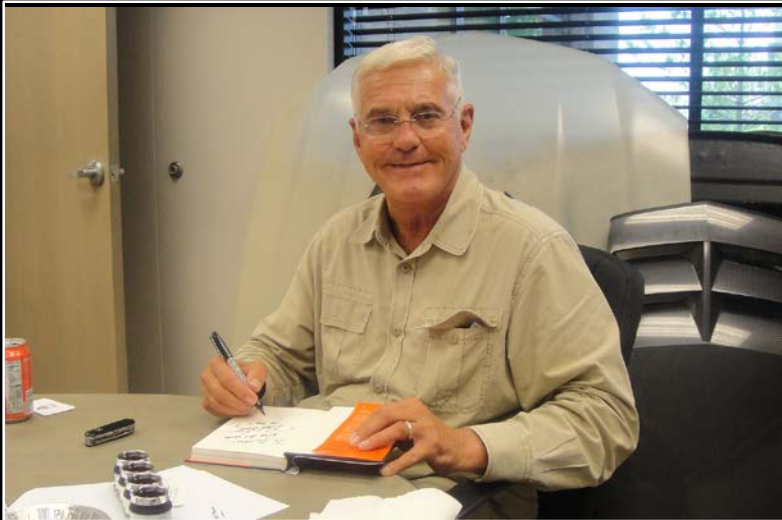
Photo Courtezy : Javier Rodriguez



Bassam & Peter Broke in 2014



Bassam & his dear friend Jamal Hameedi in 2014



Bassam & Bob Lutz in 2012



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FILM, FRIENDSHIP & THE
FIRST EQUUS CINEMATIC STORY
(2013-2016)

The Story Behind the Badge

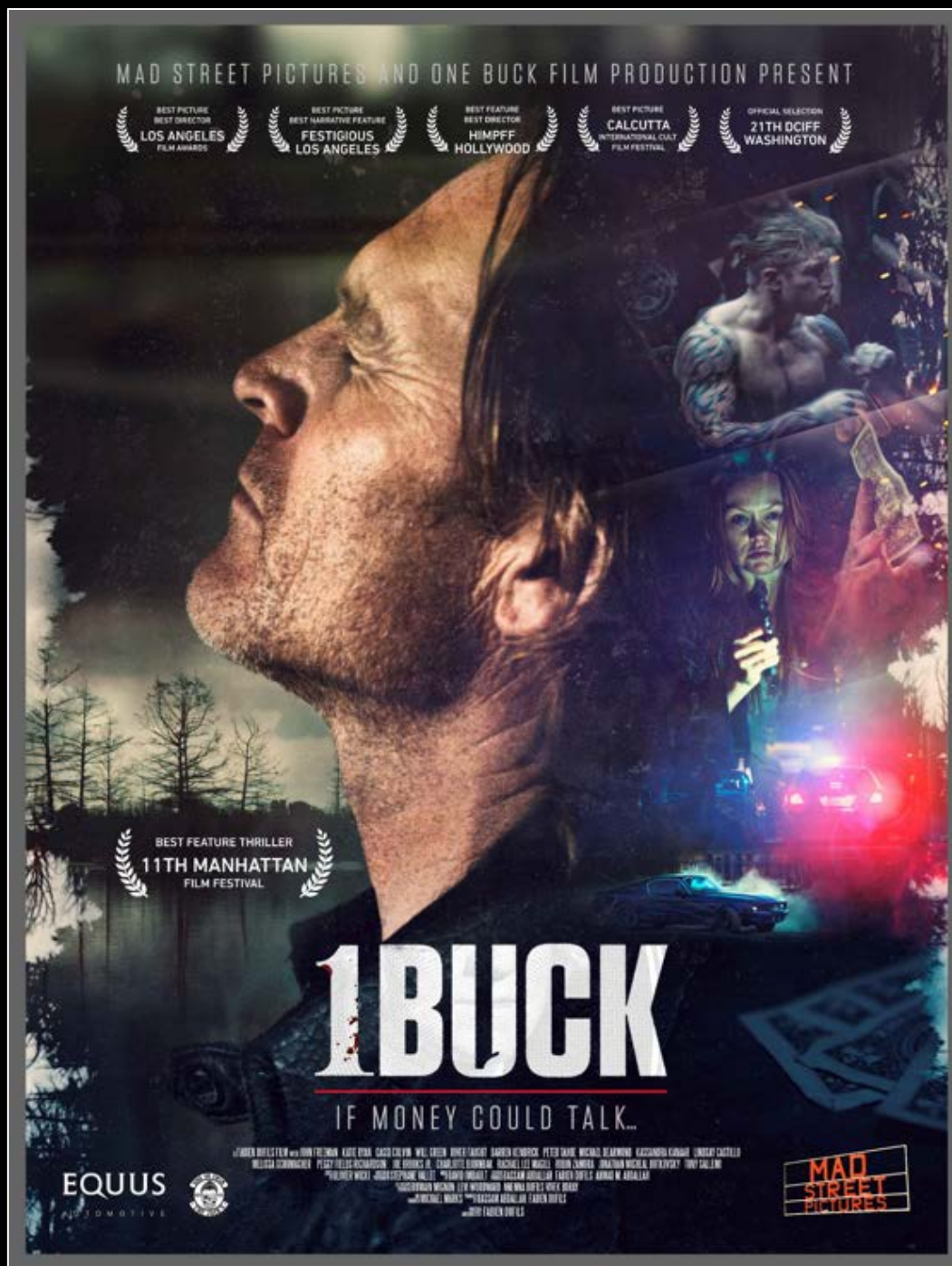
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In 2013, Bassam shot the first official EQUUS Bass770 video with **Fabien Dufils**, a talented French filmmaker known for his dynamic visual style and passion for American cinema. The clip, released in September 2013 to warm up the audience ahead of the 2014 Detroit Auto Show, was a success and helped establish the Bass770's cinematic identity.



A strong friendship grew between Bassam and Fabien, leading them to collaborate again in 2016 on their first American thriller, “One Buck,” in which the Bass770 appears on screen. Fabien’s creative vision and long-standing support have since made him a key contributor to the storytelling of the EQUUS brand.

Bass770 Video (2013): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJ1Y3b65lJo>
One Buck – Official Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ME7jvalEns4>





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2018

TOP MARQUE AUTO SHOW

EQUUS THROWBACK

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In 2018, EQUUS Automotive exhibited the Throwback model at the Top Marques Monaco show—a Corvette C7-based design study. The concept was well received, attracting strong interest. Surprisingly, many visitors asked about the Bass770, confirming its growing reputation as a modern legend.

“The Throwback confirmed that EQUUS still had strong brand recognition despite years of low activity.”





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2019 – 2020

ECONOMIC SHOCK &

GLOBAL CRISIS

The Story Behind the Badge

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Between 2018 and 2019, Bassam's main export business in West Africa was severely affected by a sudden government-imposed border closure that lasted more than a year and disrupted over 70% of regional trade routes. When COVID-19 struck in 2020, the combined impact caused the business to collapse, forcing Bassam to restart from zero.

This period marked one of the most difficult chapters of his career — but also strengthened the resilience and clarity that define EQUUS today.

During this crisis, Michael Sharif played a decisive role. Having known Bassam since his arrival in Detroit in 2012, Mike had been a close friend and trusted legal advisor from the very beginning. He officially joined EQUUS in 2017 as CLO, and when the economic collapse struck in 2020, he intervened both personally and financially to keep the brand alive. Without his support and loyalty during that period, EQUUS might not exist today.

After surviving the crisis, EQUUS gradually rebuilt momentum through digital design programs and conceptual vehicles.

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EQUUS 4X4

E-CONCEPT (2021-2022)

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LESSONS LEARNED
A SHARPER STRATEGY

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EQUUS remained active through concept projects like the Throwback and the Equus 4x4 digital design. These kept the spirit alive.

The new strategy:

- fewer cars, built better.
- leaner operations.
- modern prototyping.
- outsourced carbon and technical components.
- final assembly under strict EQUUS control.

A brand built on emotion—supported by disciplined execution.

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THE NEXT CHAPTER

THE EQUUS BASSTT500

The Story Behind the Badge

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The **next evolution** is the **Equus BassTT500** and **BassCT500**, both designed with **Thierry Chalmet**.

All-carbon, limited-series, GT architecture. **A machine built not for volume—but for legacy.**

Full-scale VR and digital engineering allow the team to refine the car before the first physical prototype is made.

All EQUUS models — including the Bass770, the BassTT500 and the CT500 — are protected by official registered design patents, ensuring the originality and intellectual property of the brand's automotive creations.

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WHY EQUUS EXISTS

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In an automotive world driven by algorithms and mass production, EQUUS stands apart in a time when machines are losing their soul. **We create cars with identity, emotion, and timeless purpose — built for those who choose character over conformity.**

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EQUUS TEAM TODAY

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Michael Sharif – Board Chair, CLO

Michael is Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Legal Officer of EQUUS Automotive. As international business professional, lawyer and advocate, experienced in Intellectual property and corporate practices and governance, Michael served global automotive clients and cutting-edge companies in the transportation, energy, and consumer markets.

Bassam Abdallah – Founder & President

Visionary behind EQUUS. Responsible for brand direction and automotive development.

Thierry Chalmet – Head of Design

Car lover since childhood, as a passionate teenager, Thierry Chalmet decided to develop skills in automotive creation mixing engineering and design. Today, Thierry Chalmet is a design manager with a global know-how to combine esthetics, technology and marketing features. Moreover Mr. Chalmet is a digital expert of the creative process with the capacity to turn dreams into reality. Mr. Chalmet is very successful in managing artistic ideas, playing with digital processes and 3D-model translation using numerical tools, virtual reality and prototypes to provide mature automotive products with industrial quality. 15 years in automotive studio and 10 years of independent consultant bring as much opportunities to participate and lead various vehicles projects starting from small to luxury cars including cargo-van, pick-up and sports car through Indian, European and American constructors or alternative programs. He collaborated with Peugeot/Citroen/Opel/Mia electric/Tata/Jdm/Heulier/Chang'an and EQUUS Automotive on the Bass770.

Fabien Dufils – Media & Marketing

Fabien Dufils is a French director based in Europe and the U.S., known for storytelling across film, advertising, and music. He began his career filming within the French Army, honing his craft in high-pressure, real-world environments. As a documentary camera operator, he worked for major broadcasters and traveled to 60+ countries capturing human-driven stories. He later transitioned into commercials and music videos, collaborating with global brands and public figures. Fabien has directed three feature films: *One Buck, No Dance*, *No Life*, and *Implanted*. He has created over 200 music videos for artists such as David Guetta, Bob Sinclar, Damso, and Ninho. Since moving to New York in 2008, he has blended European artistic depth with American cinematic energy. His work spans diverse formats, unified by emotional resonance, visual precision, and cultural sensitivity. He lives between Europe and the U.S., drawing inspiration from a multicultural life with his family. With 30+ years behind the camera, he combines technical mastery with a commitment to powerful human storytelling.

Karim Naceur – MEA Regional Representative

Based in Dubai, Karim serves as EQUUS Automotive's Regional Representative for the Middle East & Africa. A seasoned producer and business developer, he has spent over two decades working with global brands, agencies and talents across Europe and the MENA region. He now focuses on building the EQUUS presence in the Gulf, bridging the brand with collectors, investors and automotive enthusiasts who share a taste for rare, character-driven machines.

Javier Rodríguez – Automotive Advisor

A seasoned automotive executive with 30+ years' experience with McLaren, Bentley, Aston Martin, Fisker, Dodge, and Hummer. Expert in low-volume vehicle development and OEM/startup collaboration, guiding EQUUS with operational discipline and global insight.

THE STORY CONTINUES...

The legacy of EQUUS is still being written—one car, one believer, one chapter of freedom at a time.

EQUUS



35 Years later, The "BOKASSA" today, South of France 2024.