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REBORN IN T



Edinburgh-based Wild Horses is hoping to do for classic Ford Mustangs what Singer did

Ten years ago, I suffered a textbook never-meet-your-heroes experience with a Mk1 Ford Mustang. I took the keys with boyish excitement but handed them back with deflated relief after a weekend of sluggish progress (enforced by vague handling and a languid drivetrain), bouts of overheating and an exhaust silencer that flung itself free in protest.

Yet still there are few mass-made products, automotive or otherwise, as evocative as a Mk1 Mustang fastback. Which is why one enthusiast sold his Ferrari 599 to commission the gleaming 1965 model you see here, the first car built by Edinburgh-based Wild Horses. Inspired by the Porsche alchemists at Singer, Allan Fearnley, a detailing expert and former helicopter instructor, started the company in 2011 with the aim of giving classic ponies modern usability.

The cars are built to order, and although modular V8s from the

current Mustang can be fitted alongside present-day staples like independent rear suspension, this customer wanted a stronger emphasis on heritage, so a live rear axle remains and there's a period carburettor-fed Windsor V8 stroked from 4.9 to 5.7 litres. The engine was rebuilt in the UK using aluminium heads, electronic ignition and an electric fuel pump and it's cooled by a modern alloy radiator. It produces 424bhp – roughly twice its original output – and drive is sent rearwards via a Tremec five-speed manual 'box (in place of a three-speed auto or four-speed manual) and a modern limited-slip differential.

Once equipped with MacPherson struts, the front end now uses a highly adjustable double wishbone set-up with coilovers, made possible by entirely removing the original towers. Leaf springs are out at the rear, which now employs a four-link live axle with adjustable coilovers,

and rack and pinion steering replaces the recirculating ball. The donor car's unassisted drums have been swapped for modern, ventilated 310mm rotors and four-piston calipers from Wilwood, accommodated within 16-inch alloy wheels that replace 14-inchers.

The front and rear chassis rails have been linked up below the doors, strengthening a notorious flex area, and an underside X-brace, fitted neatly around the custom exhaust, adds stiffness without resorting to a roll cage. The original fuel tank's questionable integrity has been



This Mustang has been tuned to be a stable, respectably quiet high-speed cruiser

HE UK



for 911s. **Richard Webber** drives its first car



Body movements are well controlled, but the live rear axle can cause mid-bend skips



Retrimmed cabin gets extra sound deadening; Auto Meter dials lend a modern touch



UK-rebuilt carb-fed Windsor V8 has been stroked to 5.7 litres and puts out 424bhp

tackled using a race-spec fuel bag within an aluminium skin. The bodywork has also been chemically stripped and reassembled atop sound-deadening materials.

The V8 fires aggressively and then settles into a throaty idle, the skewered-ball gearstick shaking gently in time with the chassis to remind you what's in prospect. A three-point turn unearths close-quarters friendliness. The throttle picks up nicely, the clutch is progressive and even the turning radius is reasonable. Edinburgh's cobbles and potholes give the urban ride a thorough workout. It's firm, but although you feel the bumps, they don't resonate through the body, and scuttle shake is negligible.

A dual-carriageway stint lets us stoke the engine a little, but as the car has less than 1000 miles on the clock and is still in shakedown, there's a 3000rpm curfew. That's a shame because this car's cam profile likes

revs, testified to by a slight low-down lumpiness, but short blasts reveal snappy throttle response and hearty pulling power that's accompanied by the beginnings of a neighbour-baiting scream. A sensible top gear allows us to cruise at a drone-free 2000rpm, wind noise is perfectly tolerable and stability is excellent. There's a nasty intermittent vibration, attributed to the handbrake cable, but it's already on the snagging list. The 'box itself is super-sweet for the most part; there is a wonderfully mechanical feel to its shortish throw, and you can swap cogs quite quickly.

We break off the humdrum A1 and head to East Lothian's A198 coast road, our Route 101 for the afternoon. The road is well surfaced but ripples gently over a sandy base, yet the Mustang retains impressive body control, with none of the wandering floatiness that you might expect. Roll is restrained, too, thanks to lower, stiffer suspension, allowing corners

to be tackled at a decent pace. It's the bends that reveal the live rear axle's shortcomings, though, as mid-corner bumps initiate a little lateral skip. And although the medium-weighted steering is unexpectedly direct, its stability at a cruise is traded against a sensory blackout through the twists. The owner wanted an emphasis on long-distance cruising ability, though, and tweaks to the front suspension settings would surely improve things. The brakes aren't the last word in communication or power but feel significantly more modern than classic, and the temperature gauge remains reassuringly steadfast despite lots of low-speed shuffling for photos.

Aided by the ubiquity of Mk1 Mustangs – a good donor can be sourced for about £13,000 in the US – and parts, this car's price of around £75,000 compares well with other classic modernisations. Although the next Wild Horses Mustang will

benefit from more bespoke parts, Fearnley says his goal with the first was "to create a really good base car that runs well, rides well and is much nicer to use than a classic Mustang". He's done that, and resurrected a hero of mine in the process. **A**

WILD HORSES 1965 FORD MUSTANG FASTBACK

Price	£75,000
0-60mph	5.5sec (est)
Top speed	150mph (est)
Economy	12mpg (est)
CO₂	na
Kerb weight	1250kg (est)
Engine	V8, 5686cc, petrol
Installation	Front, longitudinal, RWD
Power	424bhp at 6000rpm
Torque	426lb ft at 4500rpm
Gearbox	5-spd manual
Fuel tank	76 litres
Wheels	8Jx16in
Tyres	225/50 ZR16