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'We've got no
desire to upset
current owners'

Gerry McGovern



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FIVE-CAR TEST



Every Mustang driven

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WHAT'S QUICKEST?



12,563bhp drag races

Cars vs bikes (and a giant truck)

HORSE OF YEARS SH



THE HOW

As the new Mustang hits the UK, this time with right-hand drive and official backing, **Richard Webber** checks out the five previous iterations of the galloping Ford

PHOTOGRAPHY LUC LACEY

"A steed for every need." That's how Ford described the 11 drivetrain combinations available by the Mustang's fifth birthday in 1969. By then, more than two million examples of the pioneering pony car had been sold – a landmark it took Land Rover 57 years to reach with the Series Land Rover and Defender. Today, as the right-hand-drive, officially imported sixth-generation model arrives, sales are nearing the 10 million mark.

Yet the galloping 'Stang has barely created a tremor in the UK. There have been official imports before – even right-hookers, as we'll see – but most of us fill the space between the legendary first-gen car and the outgoing model with little more than a fog of vague recollection.

Today, we're joining the dots all the way from 1964 to 2014. We have each of the five generations of Ford Mustang on hand – all privately owned, and all V8s, naturally. Now, there are online tracts dedicated to the minutiae of model years and variants should you wish to explore them. Instead, we're going to sketch the outline of each car before shading in with first-hand driving impressions. So let the 40-pot cubefest begin... →



WITH THANKS TO THE MUSTANG OWNERS CLUB OF GREAT BRITAIN (MOCGB.NET)

'CLASSIC' (1964-1973)

THIS IS GENESIS, the car that created a formula to last 50 years: sporting bodywork over a compact chassis (by American standards, at least), front engine, rear drive and live rear axle. Although notchback (read two-door saloon) and convertible bodies were available, as were straight sixes, it was the combination of fastback coupé styling and V8 power that best matched the Mustang's performance pretensions and elevated it above the Ford Falcon upon which it was based.

Cue Tony Pook's breathtaking, Signal Flare Red 1966 Fastback in GT trim. Although first-gen Mustangs were available through a UK concessionaire, Pook bought his last year fresh from Arizona following a thorough restoration. The Mustang was created with tinkering in mind, and Pook's car features a transplanted engine, the original 210bhp, 289cu in (4727cc) small-block overhead-valve 'Windsor' V8 having been replaced by a 230bhp, 302cu in (4942cc) version of the same

that runs a four-barrel Edelbrock carb.

Installed in the largely original interior, I drink in the distinctive layout, finish and details: twin-cowl dashboard with wooden inserts, thin-rimmed wheel embellished with mother-of-pearl, chromed switches and compressed speedo font.

The V8 fires into a steady idle and begins to bellow as I pull away. More pedal pressure and the bellow deepens then gains a growling overbub – a softer soundtrack than Frank Bullitt's

big-block 6.4-litre 390 GT's snarling wall of sound, but classier, too. The car isn't especially quick (think 8.5sec to 60mph), but the powertrain's noise, keen throttle response and top-end poke prove extremely addictive.

The ride is loping but stable and isn't the limiting factor when cornering. That falls to the delayed action of the over-assisted recirculating ball steering that's further hampered by an understeer habit, as nearly 60% of the car's 1400kg burdens the front axle.



Original Mustang has an unmistakable 1960s feel inside



This Classic Mustang has a 302 V8; Wilcox's Ghia-trimmed Mustang II is period plush



MUSTANG II (1974-1978)

THE WHITE CAR here is the black sheep among our group. A spluttering economy, rising oil prices and tightened emissions regulations blighted the pony car sector and the Mustang had to adapt to survive. The original car had stretched to 4763mm by its final iteration and had once forged more than 500bhp (in 1969's 7.0-litre Boss 429 special). Something smaller and cleaner was needed.

This time, the little Ford Pinto provided the underpinnings, shrinking the Mustang to 4445mm. During its first year, engines were limited to an almost unbelievably meek 88bhp four-pot and a 105bhp version of the 2.8-litre Cologne V6 later seen in the Mk3 Capri.

Yet it was a forecourt success, tripling sales to 386,000 in 1974. The 302 V8 returned in 1975, making just 122bhp. So equipped is Tony Wilcox's notchback Mustang II Ghia.

Ghia spec includes the part-vinyl roof and a plump, cosy burgundy boudoir of an interior that's mainly trimmed in velour and adventurously textured plastics. The big surprise is a starboard-mounted tiller, an official conversion supplied via Ford's imports office in Mayfair. The Mustang II remained the only sanctioned right-hand-drive UK model until 2015.

Underpowered or not, it's still a V8, rumbling at idle. It chugs endearingly under load and offers unexpected perkiness above 3000rpm, although progress remains stately. The primary ride is (almost) as forgiving as the plush upholstery, but sharper bumps resonate. The steering is far more responsive than in the '66 but spookily light in constant-radius cornering.

This 'Stang kept the nameplate alive during a difficult period and deserves recognition for that.

'FOX BODY' (1979-1993)

THESE WERE STILL uncertain times, but upon the Fox platform (which supported myriad Fords, Mercurys and Lincolns) the Mustang was slowly and tentatively ushered back into performance territory. Facelifts in 1983 and 1987 modernised its design inside and out, rear leaf springs were at last dropped in favour of coils and a five-speed manual gearbox emerged.

Don Hardy works at Ford's Dagenham engine plant and is a Fox hunter of the legal kind, owning several and co-founding the 'Fox Doctors' owners club. By the time his 1987 car was built, carburettors had been dropped altogether, and his High Output V8 (still the venerable 302) makes a decent 225bhp. Drop-tops were reintroduced after their Series II absence, but Hardy's is one of a few tin-top GTs adapted by coachbuilder American Sunroof Corporation into two-seat convertibles designed to court Mercedes-Benz



Hardy's 'Fox' Mustang is a converted GT

SL fans with a bodykit, fared-in roof mechanism and lashings of hide to embellish the two-tone plastic interior.

Despite the oddly high seating position that brushes my head against a roof cross member, the Fox has a lower, sportier stance than the Mustang II. The speed goes up to only 85mph, but contemporary tests put the car's top speed at just under 150mph, with 0-60mph taking 6.4sec. It's tractable from below 2500rpm, meaning kickdown isn't essential for overtaking, yet some of the '66 Fastback's bellowing urgency is revived in the Fox's 4000-5000rpm sweet spot. The steering is much improved, too – not quick, but consistent and with some feel – and although the ride remains soft with occasional jitters, body control is far neater than before. It's a driving experience that's easily recognisable as a Mustang's.

In the light of the 2015 Mustang's entry-level 2.3-litre Ecoboost engine, an apposite side note to the Fox's story is the 1984 limited-run, twin-spoilered SVO, which used a turbocharged version of the Mustang II's 2.3 to make 175bhp with the help of an IMSA racing-bred intercooler. The SVO impressed at the time with its combination of performance, composure and understeer-curbing set-up.

Ford Mustang | Retrospective



It's tractable from below 2500rpm,
yet there's some bellowing urgency
in the 4000-5000rpm sweet spot



SN95 AND 'NEW EDGE' (1994-2004)

THE FOX PLATFORM was heavily modified rather than replaced for the SN95-generation car (introducing range-wide all-disc brakes in the process) but it was the end of the line for the small-block Windsor V8, retired in 1995 after three decades of Mustang service. Although the SN95's 302 produced a still-conservative 215bhp, there was a final flourish for the Windsor in the stroked 300bhp 5.8-litre SVT Cobra R road-going racer.

A 3.8-litre Essex V6 anchored the range, but the GT's engine bay was filled with a 16-valve SOHC version of Ford's new modular 4.6-litre V8. Initially no more powerful than the 302, its output rose to 260bhp for the 1999 facelift that also sharpened the

exterior to fit Ford's global 'New Edge' design language.

After a 30-year canter, the Mustang finally broke into a gallop again in 2003. The New Edge SVT Cobra – the first (and until 2015 the only) Mustang with independent rear suspension – produced 390bhp using a supercharged 32-valve DOHC version of the 4.6 V8 to hit 60mph in 4.6sec. The Mach 1 badge, introduced in 1969, was revived to sit below it, bringing us to Kevin Mortimer-Hampson's car.

Its extrovert exterior is countered by a conservative cabin: plastic-heavy but functional, with gentle nods to early Mustangs. Upon ignition, the 'shaker' air scoop justifies its name, quaking atop a naturally aspirated 32-valve

4.6 that makes 305bhp in stock form but more like 360bhp here, thanks to intake and exhaust upgrades and a custom remap. The engine note is higher-pitched than the small block's but still aggressive, and the exhaust tone is moreishly thunderous. From 2800rpm, there's real clout, too.

Although the suspension is factory-lowered, the ride is extremely comfortable, yet the accompanying dive and roll are stable. A chunky aftermarket short-shift kit requires little articulation between five manual ratios but takes two deliberate movements, and the over-light steering doesn't reassure. But the Mach 1 proves a barnstorming cruiser, and great fun for it.



Each has an idiosyncratic character that reinterpreted the Mustang spirit for its time



BADGE ENGINEERING

BEFORE THE 'Mustang' name was signed off, 'Avanti', 'Allegro', 'Torino' and 'Cougar' were all considered, the last even being realised into a feline badge on late pre-production cars. Although other horse emblems were considered, the winning sketch came from Phil Clark, designer of the Mk1 Capri. In some applications, patriotic red, white and blue bars were added and a 'corral' border was applied on the grille to enclose the horse. In 1963 modeller Charles Keresztes revised Clark's design in clay before finalising it in a wooden sculpture, and the badge has barely changed since.



S197 (2005-2014)

IT WAS BACK to the future when the next Mustang was previewed at the 2003 Detroit motor show; the GT concept traced the silhouette of the original Fastback and borrowed plenty of exterior and interior details. The S197 production model retained most of that atop Ford's D2C platform, which was related to the Jaguar S-Type's. New front suspension was influenced by the Mondeo, yet the modified rear axle remained solid.

But the new car was also more than 150mm longer and wider than the original and around 300kg heavier. Indeed, Patrick Howson's 2005 car makes the '66 Fastback look delicate and petite. Although a V6 engine and convertible body were available, like most S197s imported to the UK, Howson's is a GT coupé featuring a 300bhp 24-valve version of the 4.6 V8 equipped with variable valve timing.

By European yardsticks, it's not sophisticated, but the S197 is a far slicker proposition than any of its forebears in both quality and dynamics, from the upgraded interior finishes to the well-weighted, progressive steering

and vastly improved body control. There's even a heightened appetite for cornering, partly due to a front-end mass that's closer to 50% than 60%.

The five-speed auto 'box doesn't get the best from the V8 and the screaming aftermarket exhaust isn't quite equalled by the engine's performance; 4000rpm is needed before it really starts to heave. (For full fireworks, see the 653bhp supercharged 5.8-litre GT500 from 2013.) But this is still a 5.2sec-to-60mph car and the most complete Mustang so far.

A 2010 makeover was followed by the introduction of the new Coyote version of the modular V8 – a 5.0-litre, 32-valve DOHC unit good for 412bhp. And it's this engine and the S197's retro design ethos that form the building blocks of the 2015 Mustang.

It has been a treat to drive these diverse cars, each one an idiosyncratic character that reinterpreted the Mustang spirit for its time. For our time, there's independent rear suspension, right-hand drive and official UK sales. We could be the luckiest ones yet. **A**

