

The first Mustang's success was in part due to its equal appeal in six-cylinder "secretary's car" or V8 muscle car configurations, with neither detracting from the other's image. The old six-cylinder didn't cut it as an aspirational choice, though. If you wished you had a V8 but had a six, you could only wish.

Well, the days of a six-cylinder Mustang are all but over, though the appeal of a broad range remains. The big news is that a potent new 2.3-liter EcoBoost four provides more of a choice than a compromise. There is still a six-cylinder Mustang, though it has ten fewer horses than the EcoBoost four (this is the first car to offer four-, six- and eight-cylinder engines all with at least 300 horsepower, at 310, 300 and 435, respectively).

We had driven preproduction versions of the new sixth-gen Mustang in both EcoBoost four and 5.0L V8 GT versions when Ford brought them to us in Arizona last fall. We've also taken both for runs at competitive events in Texas and Wisconsin. This was our first full week with any.

We are big fans of a manual transmission—

two hands, two feet and every power decision determined by your own immediate will. We are not fans of every six (or more)-speed, as many can be physically too close together for a clear pattern. This one is smooth, solid, sure and clean.

From inside the cockpit, the new Mustang delivers that long pony car hood from its earliest days—like being at the helm of a locomotive.

The dash includes a "Mustang, since 1964" badge, aluminum and carbon fiber-ish insets, and a Shaker logo by its audio system—decent sound, but the real show as always comes when you roll down your windows. The EcoBoost has a nice exhaust throat, not like a V8, of course, but it would never be mistaken for a rice-burning tuner car.

Even cruising along in third gear, you can feel your oats. With its tight power curve and 30-plus-MPG fuel economy, the gains of EcoBoost versus V8 can balance the trade-offs. In more competitive instances, such as a routine freeway ramp faceoff, the four-cylinder can reveal the limits of its power. For just about any other situation, you will find the four-cylinder is plenty sufficient, far

more adequate than the sixes used to be, though this will never be a V8 supercar.

The Mustang now has independent rear suspension, much better for precision handling, but less fun for slide-your-ass-out muscle car moves. Your tires will probably last longer, though.

Nitpicks? The heated/cooled perforated leather Recaro seats are sexy, though ingress/egress is difficult and they are a tight fit. The ignition button is in a tough location, too tightly packed with the shifter and parking brake. That parking brake often did not fully release without a concerted effort. There is so much travel in the clutch pedal, we had trouble getting the seat to a position where this was not either too close or too far for a full arc.

In looking back, we agree with our own quick take from last fall: the Mustang GT, with its 5.0-liter V8, delivers a more traditional muscle car experience, with its meaty growl and ample power, while the showpiece EcoBoost four has its own lean and mean power curve and 21st century tech sound effects and feel. Either is a winner. ■

Eco pony power

By Joe Sage



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.3L EcoBoost TI-VCT inline-4
TRANSMISSION	6-speed manual
POWER/TORQUE	310 hp / 320 lb-ft
BRAKES	13.9"x32mm vented 46mm 4-piston front 13.0"x20mm vented 45mm single-piston rear
TURNING CIRCLE (19-IN WHEELS)	37.8 ft
WHEELBASE	107.1 in
LENGTH	188.3 in
HEADROOM	37.6 in
PASSENGER VOLUME	84.5 cu ft
CARGO VOLUME	13.5 cu ft
WEIGHT	3532 lb
MPG	22/31/26 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE \$29,300

INCLUDED:	Long features list, with keyless entry, Sync with MyFord Touch, heated/cooled seats, dual-zone auto climate, rear camera and more.
AUDIO:	Shaker Pro 12-speaker HD system1795
ENHANCED SECURITY:	Active anti-theft system and wheel locking kit395
ECOBOOST PERFORMANCE PACKAGE:	255/40R19 tires, 19" painted ebony black wheels, rear spoiler delete, 3.55 limited slip rear axle, premier trim and clear accent group1995
REVERSE PARK ASSIST:295
ADAPTIVE CRUISE CONTROL:1195
RECARO LEATHER SEATS:1595
VOICE-ACTIVATED NAV SYSTEM:795
DESTINATION CHARGE:825

TOTAL \$38,585

To our eye, this Mustang's Oxford White paint over black wheels adds up to a relatively dull look. Some black wheels make a car look as though it has had its teeth knocked out. The aluminum-ringed black wheels on the Apollo Mustang at right make all the difference. And a paint order in perhaps Competition Orange, Race Red or Triple Yellow could probably add 100 visual horsepower to the EcoBoost four.



Special mission

Ford design and engineering teams started with a stock 2015 5.0-liter V8 Mustang GT for the Apollo Edition, marking their eighth straight year of building a one-off, aviation-inspired Ford Mustang to benefit Experimental Aircraft Association youth education programs at a charity auction during AirVenture Oshkosh.

The exterior features special non-production glossy pure white and pure black paint, carbon fiber front splitter, rear diffuser, rocker moldings and accents, plus LED underbody lighting to symbolize atmospheric re-entry.

Under its skin are a Ford Performance supercharger and shifter, X-pipe with side and rear exhaust, sport-tuned suspension, six-piston Brembo brakes and custom Forgiato 21-inch performance wheels. The build produces 627 hp and 540 lb-ft of torque.

Strap in and start the countdown.

The Apollo theme brings an exclusive interior, with performance gauges, modified instrument cluster, unique sill plates and embroidered elements in seats, trim panels and floor mats.

The Apollo Edition Ford Mustang raised \$230,000 at the Gathering of Eagles charity event on July 23.

All proceeds from the sale of the car will benefit EAA youth education programs, including the Young Eagles, which has provided free introductory flights to more than 1.9 million young people since 1992, helping grow the next generation of aviators.

The Apollo Edition Mustang has now joined seven other unique Mustangs created by Ford every year since 2008, all donated in support of EAA youth education. Ford vehicles donated at EAA AirVenture events have collectively raised approximately \$3 million. ■

