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Ford Mustang Mach 1

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS



THIS SPECIALTY MUSTANG IS A KEEPER

BY JOE SAGE

The Ford Mustang lineup can be parsed in great detail or in generalities, and in some ways the two approaches are not all that different.

First are the 2.3-liter four-cylinder turbo models, with 310 to 330 horsepower. Then come the V8s, among which there are performance, heightened performance and super performance V8s. The basic V8 model is the Mustang GT, its 5.0-liter powerplant (also measuring as the classic Ford 302 cubic inches) delivering 460 horsepower, a significant difference in potency from the turbo-fours.

Gone are the days of comparing basic suspension, when only a couple of upper models offered an independent rear (a huge improvement for all but the most fishtailing-burnout-happy types).

Shelby, historically sometimes separate but currently integrated into the Mustang lineup, sits one wide gap above the GT. There is but one model at

this time, the Shelby GT500, with 760 horses from its highly tuned 5.2-liter V8 and with the rest of its mechanicals augmented to handle it.

Pricing for 2021 models ranges from \$27,205 for the base turbo-four to \$36,285 for the base GT (a bit more for premium models and for convertibles when offered) before options or delivery. The jump to Shelby GT500 roughly doubles the base GT, at \$72,900. They're all great offerings, but there is an obvious zone between the GT and Shelby, just begging for something else. Well, quit begging.

Enter the limited edition 2021 Mustang Mach 1.

The Mach 1 accomplishes a lot of things all in one well-executed move—not only a new option in that higher-performance sweet spot, but also bringing back the Mach 1 name, most famous for the 1969-70 original—which set 295 speed and endurance records at Bonneville in its first model

year and earned back-to-back SCCA Manufacturer's Rally Championships in 1969 and 1970 (with other models through the '70s and a brief reprise in 2003-04). It's a smart move in its own right, but also reinforces the heritage behind the Mustang Mach-E electric utility's name, for which many people never had the backstory. With Mach 1 in the stable, the backstory moves right up front again.

The Mustang Mach 1 occupies much the same spot in the lineup as Mustang Bullitt had—though rumored to be coming in a little higher, it bears the same horsepower—as well as Shelby GT350.

Promoted as occupying a space between the GT and the Shelby GT500, it certainly does by price, at a stated \$53,400 (a little different from our sample's sticker base). It also does by power, though nominally barely, at 480 hp. Horses are far from the whole story in this pony car, though.

The new Mach 1 has increased aerodynamics, suspension and handling enhancements, a choice of six-speed manual or 10-speed automatic, and a driver-focused cockpit. The Mach 1 is quickly rec-

ognizable by its specific grille and front fascia, hood and rocker panel stripes (option-deletable) and other accents in low-gloss Magnetic (color) and black, all echoing elements of the original car. The front fascia incorporates a splitter that boosts downforce by 22 percent. The car rides atop subtly staggered 19-inch wheels, rears a half-inch wider.

The Mach 1's specially calibrated 5.0-liter V8 bears Shelby GT350-derived and revised components including its intake manifold, oil filter adapter and engine oil cooler, together increasing engine oil cooling capability by 50 percent.

The Tremec 6-speed manual (from the Shelby GT350) is outfitted with rev-matching—for the first time—and is paired with the GT350's oil cooler system and Mustang GT's twin-disc clutch and short-throw shifter. The optional 10-speed automatic has an upgraded torque converter and enhanced model-specific calibration. (Our sample had the automatic, \$1595 any two-handed two-footed enthusiast will save.) Transmission oil also has enhanced cooling, a 75 percent improvement, and the rear axle has its own cooling system.

An optional Handling Package (\$3750, not on our sample) has inch-wider wheels front and rear,

different wheel lip moldings, a large higher-downforce front splitter, a low-gloss Magnetic swing spoiler with a Gurney flap, and rear tire spats from Shelby GT500.

A variety of striking colors are available (Fighter Jet Gray catches our eye). Ours pulls a heritage color name, Grabber Yellow, applying it to a magical hue tricky to photograph and hard to describe, almost fluorescent in certain light—or in the rain.

Ford cites the Mach 1's new underbelly pan—extending 20 inches farther back than on a Mustang GT Performance Pack—as its most aerodynamically important upgrade, smoothing and increasing airflow under the front of the car, with large underwing features to increase downforce. Airfoils in the brake cooling ramps—another first in a Mustang—also improve downforce and assist brake cooling flow.

Also pulling from both GT and Shelby, underpinning upgrades on Mach 1 include the latest Magnetic Ride calibration, stiffer steering I-shaft, new EPAS calibration, stiffer sway bars and front springs, a brake booster from Mustang GT Performance Pack Level 2, 9.5- and 10-inch split fitment wheels with

(cont'd)



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Flat Rock, Michigan
ENGINE	Windsor Essex Engine Plant
BUILD	unitized welded steel body w alum hood and front fenders
ENGINE	302 cu.in (5.0L) V8 dual port FI, 32v DOHC, alum/alum, twin indep var cam timing, cast alum blockheads w plasma transfer wire arc cyl liners, cast alum pistons, forged steel rods, forged steel cross-plane crankshaft, composite shell-welded intake, tubular stainless steel headers
HP/TORQUE	480 hp / 420 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	12.0:1
DRIVETRAIN	RWD
TRANSMISSION	Tremec TR-3160 6-spd manual standard; (ours w optional rev-matching 10-spd SelectShift automatic)
TOP SPEED	na for auto / 166 mph manual
SUSPENSION	F: dbl-ball-joint ind MacPherson strut & tubular 32mm stblzr bar; R: integral-link indep w coils, solid 21.7mm stblzr bar, mono-tube dampers
STEERING	elec pwr-assist rack & pinion w pull-drift compensation & active nibble control, 3-mode (normal-comfort-sport)
BRAKES	four-wheel power disc, 4-sensor 4-channel ABS, AdvanceTrac ESC; F: 352x32mm vented, 4-piston 46mm fixed alum caliper; R: 320x25mm vented, single-piston 45mm floating alum calipers (Performance Pkg Brembo upgrade avail)
WHEELS	F: 19x9.5; R: 19x10
TIRES	F: 255/40R19; R: 275/40R19 summer
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	188.5 / 107.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	(18"/19" A/S tires) 37.8 ft (20" A/S tires) 40.0 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	37.6 / 34.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	45.1 / 29.0 in
CARGO CAPACITY	13.5 cu.ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	na
WEIGHT	3913 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	prem 91 octane / 16 gal
MPG	15/23/18 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$51,720
GRABBER YELLOW PAINT	n/c
EQUIP GROUP 700A	alum pedals, cloth heated/cooled front seats, heated steering wheel, driver's seat memory, premier trim w color accent/stitching group.....1595
10-SPD AUTOMATIC	incl 3.55 Torsen limited-slip rear axle, leather shift knob, paddle shifters, remote start.....1595
WHEELS	19" magnetic-painted alum.....395
MACH 1 ELITE PKG	B&O 12-spkr audio, AM/FM/HD/CD, enhanced security pkg.....1295
VOICE-ACTIVATED TOUCHSCREEN NAV	595
GAS GUZZLER TAX	1000
DESTINATION CHARGE	1195
TOTAL	\$59,390

Note: comparing our Monroney sticker with an online build shows several price increases and some of our included items now optional at cost.



MACH 1

Michelin PS4 tires, a rear subframe with stiffer bushings and a rear toe-link from Shelby GT500.

We gave the Mach 1 plenty of wheel time during a very wild weather week with record rainfall—including plenty of time around town, a visit to a well-timed Arizona East Valley Mustang Club get-together during a torrential downpour, and a run up I-17 into the high plains in mixed weather.

The car's layout is a good mix of premium tech fitment and refreshing simplicity, combining a pair of screens—12.3-inch binnacle and 8-inch center stack—with elements such as stylish and tactile toggle switch controls for startup, traction control defeat, steering modes (comfort, normal, sport), drive modes (track, dragstrip, snow and wet, normal, sport plus), hazard lights and such. Seats and wheel are power for some functions, manual for others, a good metaphor for the general setup. (Our car also had optional cooled seats, as well as easy entry-exit, something we always turn off, which in this case took some serious digging.)

The dashboard is classic twin-hood Mustang, and the instrument panel includes a number plate, as the Mach 1 is promoted as a limited edition (though what those limits may be is yet unknown).

Though few people buy a performance V8 for its fuel economy, Mach 1 is rated 15 MPG city, 23



highway and 18 combined. While we don't generally dwell on such things, a ready readout told us it arrived with an average of 18, as promised.

From style to performance, the Mach 1 hits a desirable balance—just over the top, but not way over the top, a great approach in a world with so many versions of overkill. It has just enough style points to make it distinctive and sharp (and again, you can fine-tune this to taste, for example by going with or without the prominent striping).

Similarly, the drivetrain is great right off the shelf—plenty of feel-good you can hear and indeed feel—with more headroom via drive modes or just via the throttle as is. The exhaust note is strong and satisfying, but still seems adequately neighborhood-friendly, at least around our performance-oriented neck of the woods.

Parking lot speed bumps are tough on most any vehicle we drive, other than the best big pickups, utilities and off-roaders, but compared with most, the Mach 1 surprised us with a rear axle that was about as comfortable as the front, all the more surprising given its pony car format, where the rear half of the car is only a third of it, so to speak.

Put it all together, and the Mach 1's price point seems just right—or, in fact, in typical Mustang fashion, a bargain for all this car delivers.

The Mach 1's perfect balance of showiness and subtlety was clear as we joined the East Valley Mustang Club in Mesa. In a parking lot full of over-the-top models and modifications, this new factory build still had a commanding presence. The Club had been excited to have a look at it, though it was absolutely pouring, so almost everybody was inside having a lengthy breakfast get-together.

Equally significant was our drive over to Mesa and back in these storm conditions, something we might have avoided had we not had a calendar

specific. Forget any live axle fishtailing of the old days—the Mach 1's combination of sophisticated suspension, front and rear, and those Michelin PS4 deep channel performance tires had us tracking as true as if we had all-wheel drive.

Good news on that front, though—best of both worlds—as even the stable and planted independent rear suspension, as in any great performance vehicle, does not remove front-engine-rear-drive responsiveness, thrills and good times when applied sportingly.

Our final day brought threatening clouds and a bit of spit, but basically dry roads—good for a few hours' drive north into the high plains between Black Canyon and Flagstaff, a chance to experience the Mach 1's commanding power, control and well-connected road feel (and a chance to grab an always great meal at Rock Springs Café).

We had no particular logbook entries on the whole run, which to us is proof that hands on the wheel and feet on the pedals added up to a satisfying and engaging drive the whole way.

Perfectly suited to town, open road or track, strong and capable in wet or dry, the Mach 1 is a standout all-purpose performance car. As they say this is a limited edition, you might do well to go check dealer inventory right now. ■



Mach 1

Next gen racing pony

Ford has unveiled its all new 2022 NASCAR Next Gen Mustang, ready to compete in the NASCAR Cup Series starting in the 2022 season.

The new car, under development for two years, is completely different from its predecessor, redesigned from the ground up. Unlike past versions with the exterior being the only noticeable change, the 2022 model has the future in mind, incorporating flexibility for additional technological advances likely to follow, such as a hybrid or electric powertrain.

The new NASCAR Mustang more closely mirrors its Mustang production counterpart, incorporating much of the same architecture seen in production cars, including rack-and-pinion steering, independent rear suspension, 18-inch tires (with aluminum forged wheels), and a symmetrical exte-



rior shell. The race car now has a wider stance, with its tail and smaller greenhouse volume more closely resembling the production Mustang.

Development of the new car took place at both Ford's Dearborn Development Center in Michigan and the Ford Performance Technical Center in Concord, North Carolina, where Ford's NASCAR scale model and aero teams are located.

Extensive development continues on full-motion simulators at the technical center, where both

racing and production car work takes place.

Mustang came to the NASCAR Cup Series in 2019 and has won at least 10 races in each of its first two years, including a season-high 18 victories in 2020 that helped Ford win the manufacturers' championship.

The NASCAR Next Gen Mustang will make its competition debut on February 20, 2022, during the 64th annual Daytona 500 at Daytona International Speedway. ■

