

INSIDE LINE

First Drive: 2007 Ford Mustang Shelby GT

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2007 Ford Mustang Shelby GT Picture

On the proving grounds we repeatedly tossed this newest pony car into sharp corners for the sheer joy of throwing the tail out and reeling it back in. | September 29, 2009 | Ford Motor Company

Another pony joins the Shelby stampede

If there's one thing Ford has learned in recent months, it's the magic that comes with combining the words "Mustang" and "Shelby." Throw in the harsh reality that Ford needs all the magic it can conjure these days, and you have the makings of yet another Shelby Mustang. Following closely (some might say too closely) on the heels of the [Shelby GT500](#) and Shelby GT-H, this latest hot-rod pony is simply dubbed "Shelby GT" and is, for the most part, a retail version of [the GT-H rental car offered through select Hertz agencies](#).

Inside Line recently piloted the 2007 Shelby GT at Ford's proving grounds in Dearborn, Michigan, and while we'd have preferred a full-fledged road test, our limited seat time did confirm that Carroll Shelby still has some compelling tricks up his sleeve.

"GT" plus "Ford Racing" equals "Shelby GT"

Shelby Automobiles, based in Las Vegas, begins with a stock Mustang GT and adds a Ford Racing Power Pack and Handling Pack to each car. The Power Pack consists of a 90-millimeter cold-air intake, reworked engine calibration, upgraded exhaust flow (via a new X-pipe) and a shorter rear axle ratio (3.55 versus the GT's 3.31). And while the rental GT-H comes in automatic form only, the Shelby GT can be had with a slushbox or a five-speed manual transmission featuring a Hurst short-throw shifter.

The Handling Pack consists of shorter springs, stiffer dampers and an upgraded front antiroll bar. The shorter springs drop the car 1.5 inches, which is unfortunate in the sense that it makes seeing these upgraded parts — all of them painted a shimmering shade of Ford Blue — even harder to see unless you have access to a vehicle lift. A front strut-tower brace and P235/55ZR18 tires complete the Shelby GT's handling upgrades.

Once again, Carroll leaves his mark

While both the Power Pack and Handling Pack are available to anyone willing to visit the Ford Racing catalog (or Web site), the Shelby GT's styling modifications are not so easily replicated. They begin with a pair of silver Le Mans racing stripes painted over either a white or black coupe (no convertible versions are planned). Additional "Shelby GT" side stripes connect the 18-inch chrome wheels and run underneath unique side scoops (just ahead of the rear wheelwells). A lower front fascia with a brushed-aluminum grille — minus foglights — sits below a Cobra-inspired, non-functional hood scoop. Perhaps our favorite exterior design cue is the "SHELBY" spelled out across the trunk lid in individual, classic-font letters, just as it appeared on the 1968 GT500 KR.

The Shelby theme continues inside with "Shelby GT" floor mats, doorsill plates and an authentication plate above the center stack featuring a CSX number (a matching CSX numbered tag is located in the engine compartment).

Classic design cues, modern performance

While the Shelby badging clearly identifies who put this Mustang together, our favorite interior component has to be the Hurst shifter, both for its classic chrome-and-cue-ball look as well as its powerful, purposeful feel. It's this sort of shifter action, along with the Shelby GT's baritone exhaust warble and immediate throttle response, that truly evokes the muscle car era from which the Shelby legend springs. The real difference comes with 40 years of progress, meaning you now can enjoy those traits plus inspired steering feel and predictable at-the-limit handling. On the proving grounds we repeatedly tossed this newest pony car into sharp corners for the sheer joy of throwing the tail out and reeling it back in.

A Way Forward by looking back?

Beyond its obvious performance and image-building characteristics, the Shelby GT is an example of what Ford is calling its "Go Fast" decision-making progress. What this essentially boils down to is removing the traditional corporate barriers that inhibit flexible and nimble product development. Or, as Mark Fields put it, "We need to cut through the bureaucratic bull." No joke — you can hear him use these exact words at www.fordboldmoves.com, where a series of Web-based documentaries are portraying Ford's efforts to find "The Way Forward."

Of course, some might argue that building a new car inspired by a 40-year-old car doesn't seem like "forward" thinking. But Ford's desire to offer "a steed for every need" means the company is recognizing the increased fragmentation of the marketplace while simultaneously answering it with highly specialized, limited-production vehicles. If Toyota can sell dealer-customized Scions to the youth of America, why shouldn't Ford provide a series of Mustangs that range in price from \$19,995 (V6 Coupe) to \$45,755 (Shelby GT500 convertible)?

This Shelby GT version of the Mustang will cost approximately \$35,000 and go on sale at the beginning of 2007. If you still believe in that "Mustang" and "Shelby" magic, but you don't want to spend Porsche Boxster-like money, Ford's got a new steed to meet your need.

Edmunds attended a manufacturer-sponsored event, to which selected members of the press were invited, to facilitate this report.

Speed Read

First Impressions

Turning the Shelby rental Mustang into a production model makes one thing clear: This ain't no rental car.

Featured Specs

- 325 horsepower
- 0-60 in 5.0 seconds
- \$35,000

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