

INSIDE LINE

Follow-Up Test: 2006 Ford Mustang Shelby GT-H

Media Player



2006 Ford Mustang Picture

This is what we imagine it would look like if traction control (TCS) could be disabled. |
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Push the button

Wild mustangs once ran free across the plains of this great country until man came up with the idea to saddle and domesticate them. The 2006 Ford Mustang Shelby GT-H story is that of a pony car escaping to freedom, only to realize it's still wearing a saddle.

After 40 years, Hertz and Shelby team up again to bring the Mustang GT-H experience to renters at select Hertz locations. At \$300/day (not including premium fuel) the Shelby received a lackluster reception by the public, so prices were lowered. We rented one outside of Los Angeles International Airport at its current \$129/day rate.

What's great about the GT-H is that it's nearly identical to the upcoming [2007 Shelby GT](#). The only exceptions: the cowl-inducted-style hood of the Hertz is replaced by a forward-facing hood scoop, P235/55ZR17 tires are upgraded to 18-inchers and unlike the five-speed automatic-only rent-a-racer, the '07 variant offers a five-speed manual transmission.

First things first

We must have walked past 10 other black and gold GT-Hs in the lot before arriving at ours, the on-site manager standing beside it. Every Shelby receives a special checkout/in to ensure a list of signature parts survives each loan unmolested. The most notable box on the checklist is "traction control off switch — should be inoperable."

Such paranoia on behalf of Hertz is understandable and dates back to 1966, when the now celebrated Shelby GT350H Mustangs entered the rental fleet. Hertz colors (black and gold) date back to the company's birth in the 1920s, although its historical significance seems minor in comparison to that of the car itself. Rental return tales surrounding the GT350H are legendary and range from the remnants of number decals left on doors to cars with cutouts in the floor from recently removed roll cages to those returning with completely different engines. This explains why small details of the '06, like strategically placed engine ties, exist to ward off thievery and make signs of tampering easily detectable.

Four decades later, those stories of abuse have only enhanced the desirability of the GT350H Mustangs. Only 1,000 were built and now each is a highly coveted collector car worth six figures. Whether the market will be as enthusiastic about the 500 GT-H Mustangs Ford and Shelby are piecing together will be fun to watch.

Smoke 'em if you've got 'em

Out of the driveway, stop at the light, push the traction control (TCS) button — nothing. Pull to the side of the road. About 20 seconds and a persuasive pocket knife later we're holding the TCS button and the paper clip-looking mischief-deterrent that was lodged behind it. Reinstall. Push the button — TCS off. This pony is free of its saddle.

From here things get a bit cloudy — Pirelli cloudy. A cacophony of chirps, wails, peels and squeals pours from the back tires, painting black stripes through intersections with ease thanks to an upgraded 3.55 rear axle. The GT-H shares its axle ratio with the manual-trans GT, whereas autos typically sport a 3.31.

Under the hood the Shelby packs a 90mm cold air intake kit, performance oil filter and engine computer recalibration, courtesy of Ford Racing. In fact, with the exception of some bitchin' cosmetic alterations, all parts necessary to build your own GT-H from a stock GT are available online from Ford Racing: Power Upgrade Package (\$889), Handling Package (\$1,149), rear race brake pads (\$410) and a performance X-pipe (\$139).

With 325 horsepower and 330 pound-feet of torque, the GT-H boasts a moderate 25-hp, 10-lb-ft improvement over a stock 4.6-liter GT. Stomp the pedal to hear its performance muffler and X-pipe vibrate eardrums emphatically as the car surges from zero to 60 in 5.6 seconds and completes the quarter-mile in 13.9 seconds at 101.1 mph. That's one-tenth faster to 60 mph than our manual-trans [long-term Mustang GT](#) and four-tenths ahead of its 14.3-second quarter-mile time.

New shocks, sway bars, shorter springs and strut tower brace deliver a sporty feel, but this new suspension is stupidly stiff and offers a ride unsuitable for public roads. Any significant bump in the road introduces the driver's dome to the car's dome in a painful reminder of the laws of physics. At only 3,000 miles our test car was showing signs of a hard life.

With wheels and tires identical to those of our long-term Mustang, we expected the new suspension to noticeably improve handling numbers on the GT-H. But the Hertz recorded 0.82g around the skid pad and a 64.4-mph speed through the slalom. Like the acceleration runs, we executed each handling test with the car's TCS engaged because that's how the car comes from Hertz. With it off, we expect it would have outmaneuvered our long-term GT, which recorded a 65.2-mph slalom speed with its TCS disengaged.

The addition of racing rear brake pads stops the GT-H from 60 mph in 128 feet, which is only 5 feet shorter than our long-term Mustang. As expected, minor improvements from GT to GT-H yield only minor performance gains — but man, does it sound awesome.

The party's over

Back in front of the Hertz parking lot it takes all of two minutes to reinstall the clip behind the TCS button — we even exchange smiles with a passing Hertz mechanic in the middle of our installation.

Shortly after pulling inside the lot, a manager arrives to inspect the car. The first thing he does is reach inside, turn the

key and press the redisedabled TCS button. When it passes inspection he turns and says, "That's good. So, how did it run?" The only logical response is to bite our tongue and say, "Just fine."

Edmunds rented this vehicle for the purposes of evaluation.

Speed Read

Featured Specs

- "Permanent" traction control
- Power upgrade package
- Handling package
- Performance X-Pipe

What Works

Aggressive styling, throaty exhaust note, wheelspin 'til the cows come home.

What Needs Work

Sporty suspension is creaky and too firm for long highway drives, disabling traction control is a minor inconvenience.

Bottom Line

The GT-H is just a paper clip away from the smoky burnouts and general rubber-burning mayhem for which it was built.

Specs & Performance

Vehicle

Model year	2006
Make	Ford
Model	Shelby Hertz Mustang
Style	GT-H (4.6L 8cyl 5A)
Base MSRP	Rented for \$129/day from Hertz
As-tested MSRP	Not for sale

Drivetrain

Drive type	rear-wheel drive
Engine type	V8
Displacement (cc/cu-in)	4.6
Horsepower (hp @ rpm)	325 @ 5750
Torque (lb-ft @ rpm)	330 @ 4500
Transmission type	5-speed Automatic

Chassis

Suspension, front	Independent, MacPherson Struts, Coil Springs, and Stabilizer Bar
Suspension, rear	Solid Axle, Coil Springs, Lower Control Arms, and Stabilizer Bar
Steering type	power steering
Tire brand	Pirelli
Tire model	Pzero Nero
Tire size, front	P235/55ZR17
Tire size, rear	P235/55ZR17
Brakes, front	front ventilated disc - rear ventilated disc

Track Test Results

0-45 mph (sec.)	3.7
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0-60 mph (sec.)	5.6
0-75 mph (sec.)	7.9
1/4-mile (sec. @ mph)	13.9 @ 101.1
Braking, 30-0 mph (ft.)	33
60-0 mph (ft.)	128
Slalom, 6 x 100 ft. (mph)	64.4
Skid pad, 200-ft. diameter (lateral g)	0.82
Sound level @ idle (dB)	55.9
@ Full throttle (dB)	86.8
@ 70 mph cruise (dB)	67.8

Test Driver Ratings & Comments

Acceleration comments	Traction control will allow some brake torque-induced wheelspin. The best run was using this technique. The car sounds awesome going through the first three gears.
Braking rating	Average
Braking comments	Brakes always feel overburdened in Mustangs. These numbers reflect that fact.
Handling rating	Good
Handling comments	Awful tire chattering understeer at limit. Refuses to do much else with traction/stability control engaged. Traction control does not allow for any wheelspin in turns rather only minimal spin when the car is pointing straight. This car is built to survive rental fleet duty.

Testing Conditions

Elevation (ft.)	421
Temperature (°F)	89.9
Wind (mph, direction)	3.0

Fuel Consumption

EPA fuel economy (mpg)	N/A City N/A Highway
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Edmunds observed (mpg)	16.1 (combined)
Fuel tank capacity (U.S. gal.)	16.0

Dimensions & Capacities

Curb weight, mfr. claim (lbs.)	Not Available
Length (in.)	187.6 in
Width (in.)	74.0 in
Height (in.)	54.5 in
Wheelbase (in.)	107.1 in
Legroom, front (in.)	42.7 in
Legroom, rear (in.)	31.0 in
Headroom, front (in.)	38.6 in
Headroom, rear (in.)	35.0 in
Seating capacity	4
Cargo volume (cu-ft)	12.3
Max. cargo volume, seats folded (cu-ft)	N/A

Warranty

Bumper-to-bumper	Not Available
Powertrain	Not Available
Corrosion	Not Available
Roadside assistance	Not Available
Free scheduled maintenance	Not Available

Safety

Front airbags	Standard
Side airbags	Not Available
Head airbags	Not Available
Antilock brakes	4-wheel ABS
Electronic brake enhancements	electronic brakeforce distribution
Traction control	Standard (permanently engaged)
Stability control	Not Available

Rollover protection	Not Available
Emergency assistance system	Not Available
NHTSA crash test, driver	5 Star
NHTSA crash test, passenger	5 Star
NHTSA crash test, side front	4 Star
NHTSA crash test, side rear	Not Tested
NHTSA rollover resistance	5 Star

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