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How Ford Celebrated the 10 Millionth Mustang

Quite the milestone.

BY NATE PETROELJE AUG 9, 2018



Mustang number 10,000,000 is a GT convertible painted Wimbledon White, with a V8 and a six-speed manual transmission. The spec pays homage to the first serialized Mustang, VIN 001, produced in March of 1964. That first 'Stang was the same color, body type, and engine type. Back then, the optional V8 fed 164 horsepower to a three-speed manual transmission. Ten million iterations later, the V8 of choice—Ford's monstrous 5.0-liter Coyote—kicks out nearly triple that.

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Ford was kind enough to invite *Road & Track* and a number of other publications to come witness the milestone. I expected the celebration of the number, but was pleasantly struck by a day filled with reminders of what makes the Mustang so enduringly special.

The day began in Dearborn, Michigan, at Ford's global headquarters. Basking in the morning sun were iconic Mustangs like the original Bullitt of movie fame, and the first Mustang ever sold—driven off a Chicago lot two days before the car's global debut at the 1964 New York World's Fair, and still driven by original owner Gail Wise today. Nearly every model-year was represented, from the often-criinged-at Mustang II of the early 1970s to the dime-a-dozen late '90s and early 2000s SN95 generation.

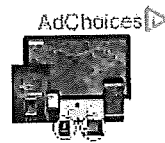
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Gail Wise and her Mustang, the first one ever sold.

FORD

A 1969 Boss 302 and an ultra-rare Boss 429 Mustang sat beside a 1968 Shelby GT500KR, proudly representing the early Mustang's storied motorsports history. Not too far away, a mid-2000s convertible GT with an automatic and big, couch-like seats represented the more cruising-oriented side of the pony car.

Right from the get-go, the Mustang was both a road-trip hero and a perfect candidate to become a highly competitive race car. Sixty-plus years on, this is still the case. Today's Mustang can be had as a track-pounding maniac or as a calm, comfy daily driver. It helped create the genre of cars that is arguably the nearest and dearest to America's heart—the pony car—and it still helps define that space today.

But this wasn't meant to simply be a parking-lot party at Ford headquarters. A pony-car parade was convened, with State Police escort, running all the way from Global HQ to the Flat Rock plant some 30 minutes south.

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FORD

Arriving at the plant, our cavalcade was greeted by workers wielding their phones and beaming with pride as they watched the lineage of the icon they spend their days building roll past. I parked the Orange Fury GT convertible I'd been loaned in the guest lot and strolled amidst the gathering crowd of plant workers.

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Wandering through the sea of blue shirts, I caught snippets of conversations. Someone's dad had an old '85 Fox-body that father and son had built together. Another was deep into reciting a spec sheet, explaining exactly how they'd spec theirs someday. Others were recounting the first time drove a Mustang, or simply rode in one. Which one was the best? What year was their dream car? GT or Shelby? Manual or auto? Convertible or coupe? Earnest debates blended together with anecdotes of personal connection to the car. Their passion for the nameplate and their pride in building these cars overflowed.

I bet indifferent Mustang owners are a rare breed.

The actual arrival of number 10,000,000 wasn't exactly momentous. As the car burbled into the lot, everyone turned, phone cameras at the ready. Some cheered as the car rolled by, heading to its spot in a gaggle of 62 Mustangs arranged to spell out "10,000,000" from above. The conversations about Mustangs stopped only briefly, picking right back up as the car passed. Overhead, three P51D Mustangs, hero fighter planes of World War II and partial inspiration for the car's name, flew low in formation.

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FORD

Walking back into the makeshift media center, I thought about the other 9,999,999 Mustangs that were built over the previous 64 years, and what events or circumstances had helped make number 10,000,000 happen.

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The Mustang has been America's best-selling sports car over the last 50 years. That helps. More than 400,000 were sold in the Mustang's first year alone. That helps too.

But what really helped Ford reach the eighth digit is that the Mustang is now available in 146 countries. And while it's always been a home-run in the States, the more remarkable story in these recent years might be the way that the world has embraced this decidedly American machine.

Chatting with Carl Widmann, the Mustang's Chief Engineer, I learned about key decisions in recent years that allowed the sixth-generation Mustang to win the hearts of buyers all over the world. Prior to 2015, there

was no factory-built right-hand drive Mustang available. This severely limited where it could be sold. "There were a few conversion kits, but nothing that was factory-backed," explained Widmann. This wasn't necessarily a big deal in the early days of the Mustang, or even at the turn of this century. But the increasingly global nature of the car industry eventually had Dearborn's eyes looking across oceans.

FORD

The choice to build both left- and right-hand drive variants of the Mustang, and the decision to engineer the car to meet safety and legal requirements in Europe and other global markets, meant that the Mustang could finally reach fans worldwide.

With this decision came engineering challenges. It wasn't just as simple as swapping the location of the steering wheel. Widmann explained that the 2015-2017 export Mustangs differed visually from their domestic counterparts. These differences increased manufacturing complexity and hampered Ford's efforts to get them to market all over the world. They

sold well, but opportunities to improve were realized with the Mustang's most recent facelift in 2018.

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The 2018 refresh streamlined these issues, creating what Widmann called an "Integrated Global Car." Left- and right-hand drive versions of the facelifted Mustang met rigorous safety standards all over the world, and streamlined production in Flat Rock meant that Ford could more readily deliver on the Mustang dreams of buyers in these new markets.

FORD

It's working. Since that 2015 decision to sell the Mustang globally, Ford has exported roughly half a million examples. In 2017, more than one-third of new Mustangs were sold outside the US. Mustang is now the second best-selling nameplate for Ford worldwide, trailing only the Ranger.

Today, the 10,000,000th Ford Mustang rolled into the light. It's not the first Ford to reach that milestone: Both the Model T and F-150 have surpassed eight-digit production. Those Fords are revered, and they played pivotal roles in making the auto industry what it is today. But today, the Mustang conjures something else. It's America's sports car, now loved the world over.

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Ford has now made 10 million Mustangs: Here is a history of the iconic, best-selling sports car

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2018 Ruby Red Mustang GT Coupe.

Source: Ford

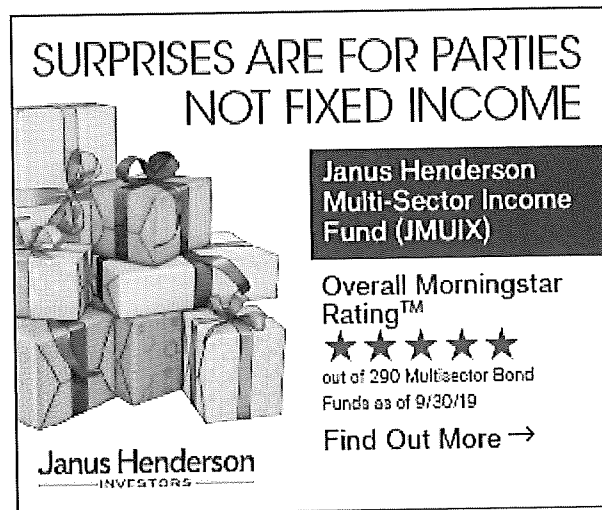
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Ford is announcing on Wednesday that it has made its 10 millionth Mustang, the best-selling two-door sports car that has been in continuous production since it was first introduced 54 years ago.

On Thursday, the second-largest U.S. automaker will unveil its new Nascar Mustang, which will replace the Fusion sedan Ford is phasing out of U.S. production.



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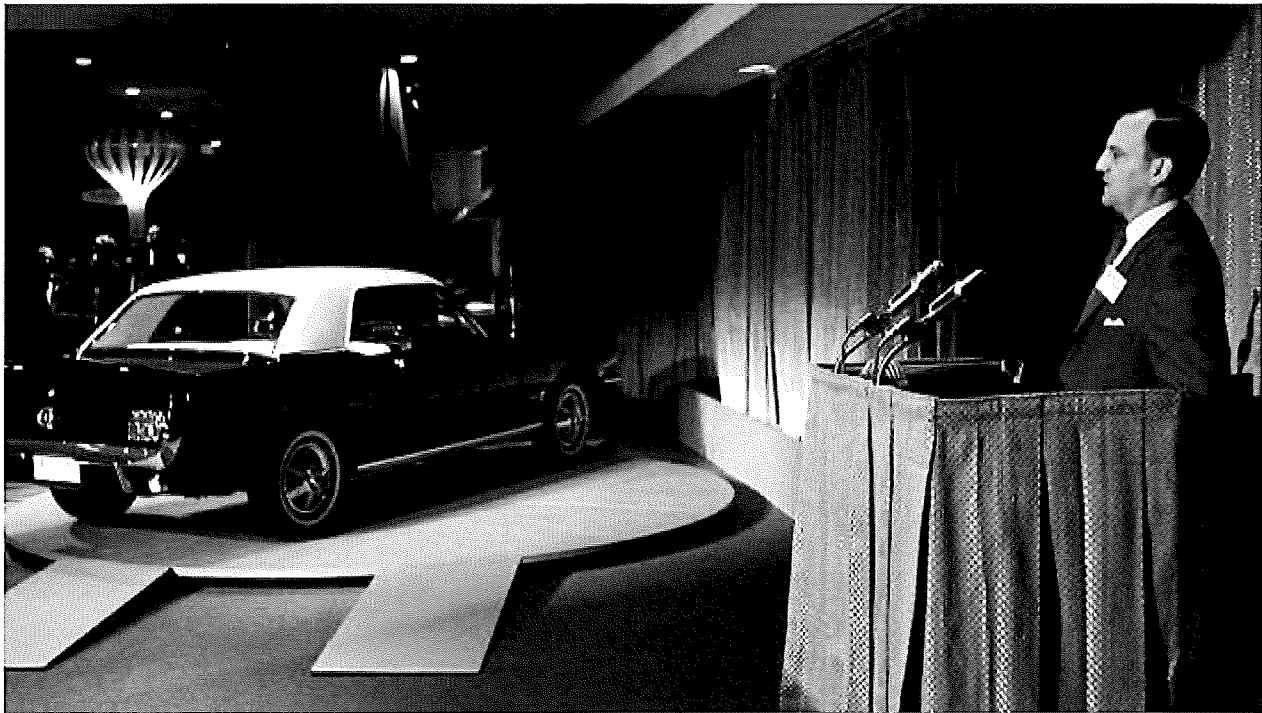
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It all speaks to the enduring influence power of the brand, which some at Ford say has become essential to Ford's identity, even in an era when buyers are turning away from traditional cars. Ford recently raised more than a few eyebrows when it said it was going to stop making most sedans and compact cars. But it's holding on tight to the Mustang.

This is in no small part because Mustang is practically a brand unto its own. It reliably delivers. It has been the best-selling two-door sports car around the world for three years running.

It can be bought for little more than \$20,000, or more than \$50,000. It can be sold to rental car agencies or to racing enthusiasts. It remains one of the

most easily modifiable cars — there is a vast ecosystem of aftermarket parts suppliers and shops that will work on the car.



1964 Worlds Fair Ford Mustang introduction.

Source: Ford

The car debuted at the World's Fair in 1964, the same day it rolled into showrooms. It was a unique vehicle — a fast two-door car that was meant to be affordable. That's essentially the same formula Ford has followed with every generation of Mustang that followed.

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1978 Ford Mustang II King.

Source: Ford

Over the years, Ford has introduced special edition vehicles, including the Boss Mustang and the Mach1 Mustang. The limited editions give engineers and designers a chance to experiment.

1987 Ford Mustang GT convertible.

Source: Ford

The classic Mustang formula has left room for many shapes. One of the most famous is the so-called Fox Body Mustang that Ford used from 1979

to 1993. This design deviated in many ways from the classic Mustangs of previous generations.



1994 Ford Mustang GT coupe.

Source: Ford

In the 1990's, Ford updated the Fox Body design for the car's fourth generation.

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2005 Ford Mustang GT convertible.

Source: Ford

In 2005, Ford decided to return to roots, and designed the new Mustang to look more like the classic Mustangs of the 1960s.

2007 Ford Mustang.

Source: Ford

Ford has kept up the tradition of Carroll Shelby, who was a racer, designer and entrepreneur after whom Ford named the Shelby Mustang. All Shelby Mustangs now are known by the cobra logo found on the front grille of the car, a nod to the original Ford-powered AC Cobra cars Carroll Shelby first developed.

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2015 Ford Mustang.

Source: Ford

In 2015 Ford changed the design again to incorporate elements of the car's heritage with a newfound focus on making the car competitive on the track.

It was the sixth generation of the vehicle and the first year in more than five decades Ford started selling the car outside the U.S. Its move into the international market spurred many of the changes to the vehicle that made it more competitive with track-ready sports cars, such as an independent rear suspension.

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2019 Mustang Bullitt.

Source: Ford

One of the most famous limited-edition versions of the car is the Bullitt Mustang, shown above. The car is named after the 1968 movie "Bullitt," in which the actor Steve McQueen drives a green Mustang. The film features a legendary chase scene involving the Mustang and a Dodge Charger.

Ford GT-500

Source: Ford Motor Company

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Ford said it also plans to release the Shelby GT500 Mustang in 2019, which is intended to compete with other high-powered American sports cars, such as the Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 and the Dodge Challenger Hellcat.

2018 Kona Blue Mustang.

Source: Ford

Earlier this year, Ford CEO Jim Hackett said the company will eventually phase out sedans and compact cars. Ford Mustang was one of only two conventional cars the company will continue to sell once the transition is complete. That's because the Mustang has such a strong following and is so deeply intertwined with Ford's identity, said Ford marketing manager Jason Mase.

"It's kind of the soul of the company," he said.



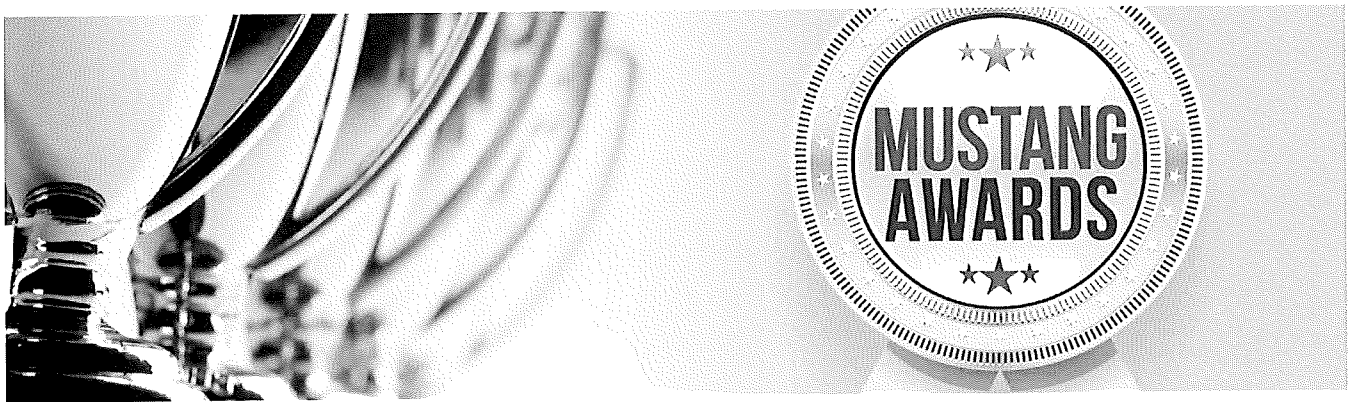
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MUSTANG AWARDS THROUGH THE YEARS

Last Updated October 15, 2019

Few cars in the fast-paced, high-stakes automotive world make it to middle age, but the icons always survive. In terms of American car culture, there is perhaps no car more ubiquitous than the Ford Mustang. It is the definition of pony car. It is a Hollywood icon, a status symbol and the ultimate expression of the American attitude.

Here we stand, celebrating the Mustang's 50th birthday with a brand new model that promises to be as beautiful, innovative and game-changing as the original 1964½ that was introduced to the world at the New York World's Fair. So to celebrate this anniversary, let's take a look at some of the Ford Mustang's awards and accomplishments through the years. You'll find it's no wonder the Ford Mustang is one of the most celebrated cars in history.

THE “PONY CAR” THAT STARTED IT ALL

Perhaps its most important accomplishment isn't an official award or recognition by any publication or organization, but rather the coining of a powerful phrase in the automotive industry. The Ford Mustang literally created an entire automotive segment, which came to be known as the “Pony Car,” an obvious nod to the Mustang itself.

The Mustang proved so successful that other automakers scrambled to create competition for it. Since Lee Lacocca aimed his 2+2 coupe at the small, agile coupes being sent to America from the European manufacturers, he had no existing competition at home in Detroit.

The advantage the Mustang held over its European competition was affordability. The “big fun, little package” combination, paired with the extensive customization options — which were also a first for the American car market — catapulted the Mustang to success beyond Ford's wildest imagination. The sub-\$2,400 base price helped move the millionth Mustang just 18 months after its debut.

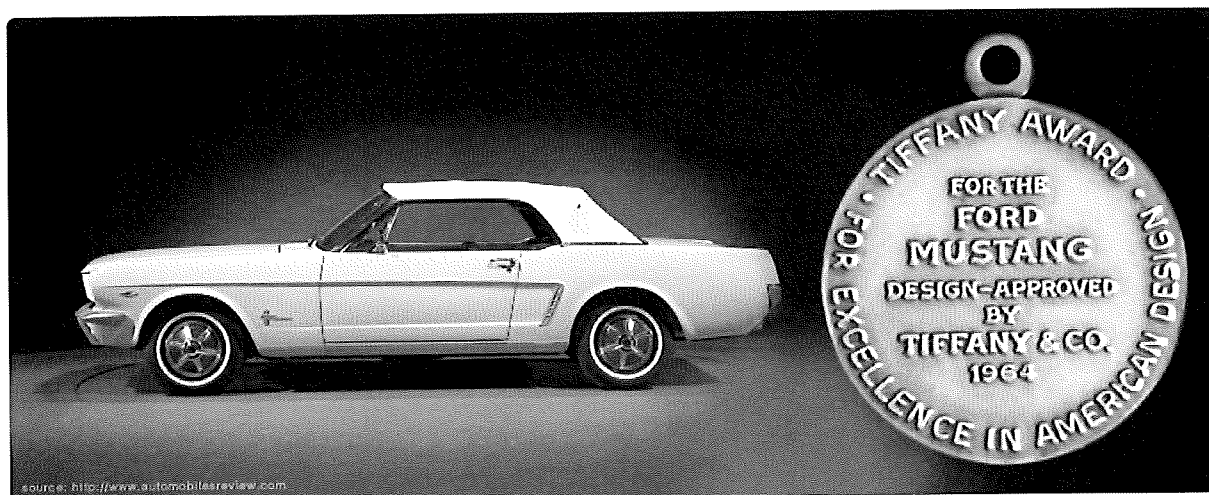
THE LONGEST-LASTING ORIGINAL

Soon General Motors had its Camaro, AMC had the Javelin, and Chrysler introduced the Dodge Challenger — all by 1970. With a Pony Car for everyone being produced domestically on the cheap, American roads were seeing fewer Alfa Romeos and MGs. The pony car class is defined by smaller coupes with great handling and enough power for an enjoyable back-road jaunt.

The Mustang and Camaro have enjoyed a very spirited rivalry over the years. Modern pony cars, such as the Hyundai Genesis coupe, have also joined the fray to grab a piece of this lucrative market segment.

It should be noted that the Mustang is the only car from the original “pony car” class to have remained in uninterrupted production over the five decades since its introduction. And while the muscle car era came and went, the Pony Car lives on. The dimensions of the cars may have changed, but the spirit remains.

TIFFANY GOLD MEDAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN AMERICAN DESIGN



Several sources of Mustang history tout winning the Tiffany Gold Medal Award among the original 1964½ Mustang’s accomplishments, citing the fact that the Mustang was the first automobile to win such a prestigious award. So while

researching for this piece, we wanted to see who some of the other recipients were over the years, and we were flummoxed when we could come up with absolutely none.

Finally, we found an explanation, thanks to Robert A. Fria in his book *Mustang Genesis: The Creation of the Pony Car*. Henry Ford II, then chairman and CEO of the Ford Motor Company, worked with the famed jeweler to create this award out of thin air. He wanted to add to the publicity punch of the Mustang's launch at the World's Fair.

After "appropriate fees" were negotiated, Ford was presented with this award on April 13, four days before the official introduction of the Mustang itself. He believed that a car this beautiful deserved an award for the work its designers did, and — from our perspective — it's hard to argue with him on that point.

PRESS ACCOLADES

- *Car and Driver* 10 Best Award 8 times (expect a 9th?)

One of the most prestigious and respected awards in American automotive journalism, *Car and Driver's* 10 Best list has provided the car world with a definitive ruling on the best vehicles within reach of the average car-buyer in this country. In *Car and Driver's* own words:

For a full week each fall, we lock the office, turn off our phones and engage in the most comprehensive and focused driving in the car-evaluation business. Editors flog a dozen cars a day on the street and the track to determine everything from turn-in fidelity to the quality of a seat latch. What emerges is the fullest picture extant of the best cars on the market for under \$80,000.

While that price threshold has certainly changed over the years, the process has not. And eight times since they have been handing out these awards, the Ford Mustang has made the list, including three straight years at the beginning of the most recent generation, from 2011 to 2013.

Car and Driver lauded the Mustang's combination of power, handling and every-day practicality, as well as its identity as the purest incarnation of the ideals that built Motown — big, fast machines that propel us down the open road and on toward the horizon of our own American dreams.

It is still early, but we might expect another 10 Best win for the 2015 Mustang, considering how effusive *Car and Driver's* editors have been with their praise in their short time with the 2015 Mustang EcoBoost.

- *Motor Trend* Car of the Year in 1974 and 1994

In 1974, Ford introduced the first completely new redesign of the Mustang, dubbed the Mustang II. In response to the oil shortages that threatened America's car culture, Ford vowed to trim the Mustang that had gotten bigger and heavier throughout the natural evolution in the first generation's product cycle. The result was a Mustang that was based on the Ford Pinto, but still managed to remain uniquely a Mustang.

The Mustang II made impressive gains in fuel economy, which was about as important to car owners in 1974 as it is today. It was the right car for its time, and the automotive press met its release with enthusiasm. Though some have argued that the honor hasn't stood the test of time, no one can take away the fact that *Motor Trend* named the Mustang II its Car of the Year for 1974.

Skipping over the Fox Body Mustang, *Motor Trend* once again named the restyled 1994 SN95 Mustang its Car of the Year. The 1994 model brought the exterior styling back to the basics after the Fox body model had embraced some of the popular '80s designs that permeated the industry — but it wasn't very "Mustang". Between the styling and the technological advances, *Motor Trend* decided it was worth acknowledging the Mustang's place in the American car market:

Model for model, the '94 Ford Mustang is once again a car to be coveted. It gallops across the landscape with the vigor of a quarter horse. This sprinter is, in its own way, as important as the first pony-car was. Thus, the new Mustang has earned the '94 Motor Trend Car of the Year title... Viewed from both an industry and buyer's perspective, we weighed technological advancement, value, and performance to determine the one standout car for '94. The Ford Mustang is that car.

Can the Mustang continue its 20-year trend with *Motor Trend's* most coveted award? Check out [the original article from 1994](#) and be sure to look at the photo gallery showing the Jenner and Rambo designs that didn't pan out (thank goodness).

- 2005 Best New Sports/Performance Car and overall Car of the Year by Automobile Journalist Association of Canada

The 5th generation Mustang was introduced for the 2005 Model year, sharpening some of the lines of the exterior styling to recall the late-'60s fastback designs. New motors brought the base model up above 200hp and the GT above 300 hp. Improved handling and aerodynamics made for a serious performance machine.

So serious, in fact, that the Automobile Journalist Association of Canada honored the 2005 Mustang as the Best New Sports/Performance Car and Car of the Year



PERFORMANCE MILESTONES

In 2011, Ford's brand new V-6 engine enabled the Mustang to make history as the first production vehicle with 300+ hp to achieve an EPA rating of 30+ mpg — in this case, 31 mpg highway. So impressive was this engine that it actually made more horsepower than the 4.6L V-8 Ford had ushered out the door that year.

Given the ever-increasing emphasis on fuel economy and the American thirst for power that will never be extinguished, this achievement did not go unnoticed. With the introduction of the 2.3L EcoBoost Mustang, Ford now has two separate engine options for the Mustang that boast competitive power and above average fuel economy numbers for its class.

The 2013-2014 Shelby GT500 also set a performance record. Thanks to the use of supercharging technology, the GT500 boasts a power output of 662 hp. As a result, this 5.8L V-8 was officially recognized as the most powerful production V-8 engine ever. Capable of 631 lb-ft of torque and more than 200 mph, while

boasting impressive handling — something that couldn't always be said about the Mustang — the Shelby GT500 was a force to be reckoned with in the sports car world. Ford hasn't officially announced plans for a Shelby version of the 2015 Mustang, but rumors swirl that Ford will be looking to reclaim the V-8 output crown back from Dodge, whose recent Challenger Hellcat trumped the GT500's 662 hp.

RACING PEDIGREE

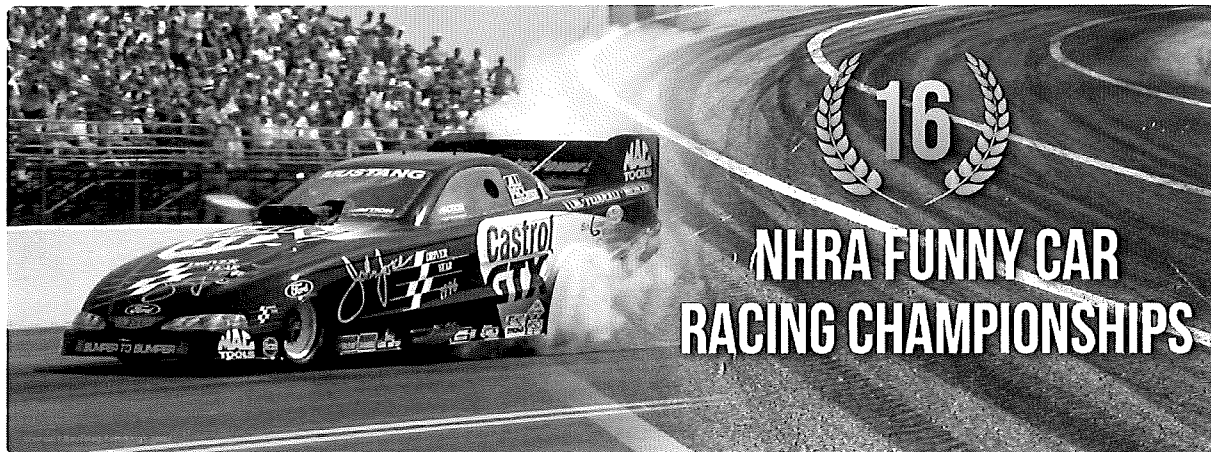
From day one, the Mustang was a born racer. Lee Iacocca made sure his new car would be able to back up its sporty looks with respectable performance. The Mustang was selected as the pace car for the 1964 Indianapolis 500. This original Mustang grabbed first and second place in the Tour de France international rally in 1964. The Mustang also found success in the NHRAs drag racing competitions in 1965, winning the class with a car driven by Bill Lawton.

Carroll Shelby is a legendary name in Mustang lore. Carroll's story started with the work he did on the 1965 Mustang to produce the car that would officially be known as the GT350. This car was designed to enter the SCCA B Production class, and it is fair to say that the GT350 dominated the circuit, taking home national championships in 1965, 1966 and 1967. Perhaps the most exciting part for the average car-buyer was that for a cool \$4,311 you could own your very own GT350, just like the ones on the track.

SCCA created a new series called the Trans-American Sedan Championship in 1966. Shelby had to create a new variation on the fastback design to qualify for this series, but Ford took the inaugural manufacturer's title in 1966 and again in the following year. In 1970, during the height of the Pony Car Wars, the Boss 302 Mustangs, driven by Parnelli Jones and George Follmer, secured Ford's third championship by a single point over Chevrolet, gaining bragging rights during the golden age of the muscle car.

In 1969, three Mustang variations were taken to Bonneville, where they combined to set an incredible 295 verified records.

Ford has also taken a few victories in the Daytona 24 Hours and the IMSA, running in the GTO class in each case. A Mustang took the 1984 and 1985 GTO class titles for IMSA. At Daytona, John Jones won the 1985 driver's championship in a Mustang, while Ford won its first manufacturer's championship — thanks in part to three wins by Lyn St. James, the first woman to win in the series.



THE FORD MUSTANG'S LEGACY

Lee Iacocca envisioned a car that could be everything to everyone, and the first 50 years of the Mustang have ensured that his vision came true. With the top down, the Mustang has proven to be an enormously popular country cruiser, appealing to those who prefer style over substance. The GT, with its mammoth V-8 engine, has always provided the kind of performance craved by the leaden-foot.

In 1965, Ford ushered in the era of the personalized car. We take it for granted now, but building a car that was “designed to be designed by you” was a first. In 1965, the notion of choosing from a list of options for your car was light years away from Henry Ford’s infamous, “Any customer can have a car painted any color he wants so long as it is black.”

The Mustang’s greatness has been recognized by the public and the industry alike, earning awards and honors over the years, in addition to the numerous victories earned in the racing world over the years. Its image in American culture is unmatched by any other automobile. Frank Bullitt wouldn’t have looked nearly as cool if he had been evading the bad guys in a Corvette. Few cars have experienced this kind of success over a half a century, and if the latest generation is any indication, the next 50 years will be every bit as impressive.

MUSTANG AWARDS THROUGH THE YEARS

Have you ever wondered what awards the Ford Mustang has won? If so then check out this CJs article that takes a look back at some of the awards and accomplishments the Ford Mustang has achieved over the past 50 years.

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