

UNSTOPPABLE

PONY EXPRESS

The Ford Mustang has been a veritable performance car icon for many generations of enthusiasts. The story started in the mid-1960s and is still going strong today...



The Ford Mustang was never meant to be a high-priced exotic. 'Affordable performance' has always been its mantra...



Edition 8 of a special series by
APOLLO TYRES LTD.



The Mustang Mach I was none too refined or powerful, but sold well because of its evocative styling and performance image

The Ford Mustang is a pillar of American automotive folklore – probably one of the first cars that offered great style and performance, at a price that the masses could actually afford. Unlike some Italian supercars, the Mustang was never a handbuilt ‘exotic,’ sharing parts with mundane Ford Falcons, Fairlanes and Galaxies. It was meant to be very affordable, right from day one. And yet, the Mustang managed to capture hearts and minds all over the world for more than four decades, and continues to do so today.

The Mustang was made for 1960s baby-boomers in America, who wanted style and sporty performance from their cars. While concept Mustangs started doing the rounds from 1962 onwards, the first production Mustang was shown in New York in April 1964 – and compared to other American cars available at the time, it was gorgeously sleek.

The Mustang was initially offered as either a notchback coupe or convertible, and was fitted with double-wishbone/coil spring suspension at the front, and leaf springs at the back! The front grille featured the now-iconic running horse, and engine choices were a 2.8-litre, 102PS straight-six, a 3.3-litre, 117PS straight-six, and a 4.3-litre, 165PS V8. Later, a 4.7-litre, 223PS V8, and a 273PS K-code, high-performance V8 were also offered. A three-speed manual transmission was standard with every engine except the 273PS unit, which was available only with the four-speed manual that was optional on other models. A ‘Cruise-O-Matic’ three-speed automatic transmission was also available as an option. Drum brakes were fitted all around, on all models.

Ford sold an amazing 126,538 Mustangs during 1964 and more than four times that number in 1965! Then, Ford decided to go racing with the Mustang, which is where Carroll Shelby came in. Shelby saw the potential to slay Chevrolet Corvettes with the Mustang, and proceeded to modify 100 2+2 Mustangs equipped with the K-code engine into Shelby GT 350 models. Big disc brakes, lowered suspension, bigger wheels and wider rubber – these Shelby cars were

as fast and furious as it got in those days!

By 1967, Chevrolet started making the Camaro, Pontiac, the Firebird, Plymouth, the redesigned Barracuda, and Mercury, the Cougar. The Mustang had competition and Ford responded with a revamped Mustang. New styling and new, more powerful engines were offered, with a range-topping 6.4-litre V8 that made 320PS. The Mustang was a winner all over again, and Ford continued to sell as many cars as they could possibly churn out from their factories.

By the early-1970s, the first signs of impending trouble were showing. The 1971 Mustang was big, heavy and not very good looking – sales slowed down. Tighter emissions norms meant that engines were retuned and power outputs started dropping. Ford introduced the Mustang II in the mid-1970s, which was small and underpowered. It did not handle well and was poorly put together. The Mustang was going down, and its cause wasn’t helped by the OPEC fuel embargo of 1973 and the appearance of smaller and cheaper Japanese imports.



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Never wary of progress, never skeptical about success,
Never scared of challenges, never tired of trying,
Every step of the way we travel with our customers
On the “unstoppable” journey to success.

Even though a V8 engine made its way back into the Mustang lineup for 1975, it made less than 125PS. A ‘Cobra II’ package was offered, which included fancy cosmetics and paintjob, but not much else besides. An all-new Mustang then made an appearance in 1979, with better suspension and better build quality, but only marginally better engines. Fuel injection was introduced in 1986 and a 5.0-litre, 230PS engine was offered in the Mustang lineup.

The car soldiered on stoically through the early 1990s, before the seventh-generation Mustang was launched in 1994. Engine choices were pared down to just two, and a 5.0-litre, 220PS V8 was top-of-the-line stuff. Ford still managed to sell 123,198 Mustangs during 1994.

The eighth-generation Mustang came in in 1999, with revised styling and 35th anniversary badges on their front fenders. Both, the V6 and the V8 engines were suitably revised and a Cobra version was also offered. A special ‘Bullitt’ edition Mustang GT coupe was also offered in 2001, which evoked memories of the 1968 Mustang driven by Steve McQueen in the 1968 hit film, Bullitt.

The current-generation Mustang came in 2005, and shares its platform with the Ford Thunderbird and Lincoln LS. Styling pays homage to Mustangs of the past, and yes, the car still looks good as ever and goes just as hard. As long as there are fans of American muscle car, the Pony Express will continue to run...!



This Mustang Coupe from the mid-1960s was a great, great sales success for Ford, with the comany barely being able to keep up with demand! Every car buyer in America wanted one of these at one time



A Mustang Fastback from 1965. Cool, radical styling, a range of sporty engines and cheap to buy and run - this was a living example of the great American dream



Another Mustang Fastback from the 1960s, fitted with a big-block V8. It would guzzle petrol, and readily smoke its tyres off the line...