

# FORD MUSTANG

By Jim Mc Cauley

A million selling milestone for any manufacturer is something to celebrate, but to reach the magic million is just 18 months establishes the product as a retail icon. In Ford's case, the original Mustang, launched in 1965 became a runaway success that morphed into legend as the decades - and upgrades – progressed. Now the 6th generation of the model has landed on Europe's shores and in the case of our western isles in right hand drive form as well.

Even for those with little automotive interest, the car has enthralled cinema goers in hit movie after hit movie, and has challenged the design team to maintain both the relationship to and respect for



the original. Job done. It doesn't require a walk around the car to ascertain its provenance. Its form is unmistakable Mustang from the eager-to-go balance of the long bonnet and short tail to its bulging wings demanding just that little bit more width to accommodate the generous width of rubber attaching it to the tarmac.

Test choices were from the first consignment of right hand drive models to arrive in the UK with both the 5.0 litre V8 and the 2.3 litre EcoBoost cars available to drive.

As 70% of pre-launch orders are for the 5.0 litre car, this was the obvious first choice with the sound of the V8 just short of burbling the 'Stars and Stripes'. There is no mistaking the car's US heritage, and on-road the power was surprisingly manageable with the rear end keeping its cool despite rolling out on brand new tyres. There is a sense of power in the car, not only because of its 416hp, but also because of its size and driver's positioning at the control end of the long bonnet.

Driving at normal road speeds, power is leisurely delivered through the 6-speed manual gearbox and with the dominance of the exhaust burble there is the occasional glance to check gear choice. Ride is firm as expected, and although there are several changes to the European cars, including suspension set-up, the rear axle in particular was generally unsettled with a sharp staccato response. But there is a strong feeling of heritage in the car and with a 0-62 mph sprint in less than 5 seconds it easily nudges itself into supercar territory without the associated crippling price tag.

To handle a range of driving conditions there is a four-way choice of preferences which includes Normal, Sport+, Track and Snow/Wet. These modify the electronic stability control, throttle response and steering weight, with shift patterns also adjusted in the case of automatic cars.

For those who wish to use the car for track days, Track Apps are available which measure acceleration and braking times while Launch Control and Line Lock-to spin and heat the rear tyres-are available on the V8.

Moving down in horsepower to the 317HP of the 2.3 litre EcoBoost was anticipated to be an anti-climax after the V8. But far from it. On-road performance is not far removed from that of the V8 with 0-62mph achieved in 5.8 seconds, and as the car is significantly lighter it is more agile and with a more settled ride than the 5.0 litre.



Careful orchestration of the exhaust still provides a teasing note, and in a back to back drive the EcoBoost, for me, provided the more satisfying drive. Yes, both cars are fast and both handle very competently, but the smaller engine impressed – maybe because of a little more right foot involvement to keep the revs where you want them as opposed to the dominant torque of the V8, but there is also a significant difference in purchase and running costs.

Price-wise, the V8 has to be seen as a bargain for anyone in the market for a 2-door, 4-seater coupé. The basic GT fastback is listed at £34,995 with comparable German and Japanese competitors spiralling to much greater heights. On a one-day test session, I recorded 23.3mpg for the car, bettering the official 20.9mpg. For road tax purposes, the 6-speed manual has a CO2 emissions of



299gms/km, putting it in Band M for annual payment of £1,100. Against this, the EcoBoost 2.3 litre is listed at £30,995 and has a CO2 emissions of 179gms/km, putting it in a substantially lower Band I for annual road tax of just £350. In the one-day test I recorded 28.5mpg as opposed to the official figure of 35.3mpg. Insurance groupings are much closer with the V8 Fastback in Group 43E and the EcoBoost Fastback in Group 41E. But in either case running costs must be considered against the purchase cost and it is there that

enthusiasts will make their decision. All right hand drive models are upgraded to European specification to cope with higher driving speeds and are built at Ford's Flat Rock Plant in Michigan. Standard equipment includes 19-inch wheels, automatic xenon headlights, dual-zone climate control, LED tail lights, rear diffuser, Bluetooth connectivity and 8-inch colour infotainment screen.

The car is also available with a 6-speed automatic transmission while both engines are also offered in convertible bodystyles, costing £34,495 and £38,495 respectively.

(Driven March 2016)