

Mustang – Every red-blooded kid's lust-mobile (including me!)

In the early 1960's the Ford Motor Company was in real financial trouble following three years of gigantic losses thanks to the public's unacceptance of the Edsel model which was produced between 1957 and 1960. The company lost \$350 million (US) on the enterprise (equivalent to \$2.8 billion today).

A long-term Ford employee named Lee Iacocca had worked his way up the corporate ladder since joining the firm in 1946, and was made vice-president by Henry Ford II in 1960. He was tasked with getting the company back on its feet, and soon had the design department providing sketches of vehicles considered suitable for production. One idea involved a sporty looking two-seater coupe that took Iacocca's eye, however he sent the drawings back with the admonition that it must have a rear seat to appeal to the family man with a couple of kids.

The result was to become the now-iconic Mustang (originally named after the wartime fighter plane), and production was scheduled to begin in early 1964. The car was introduced to the public at the New York World's Fair in April, 1964 to rapturous applause, and dealers across America were besieged with orders. Ford anticipated selling 100,000 examples in the first year – they shifted 400,000. Lee Iacocca was hailed as the "Father of the Mustang" and the saviour of Ford's finances!

It was a relatively cheap exercise to produce as the original Mustang was primarily based on the American Falcon sedan mechanicals with a new body. Unfortunately that idea didn't flow over to Australia, where our Ford Falcon had a life of its own – eventually topping out with the amazing Falcon GT over several generations. As the Mustang began to be used for racing in the USA and became the subject of many tweaks by performance modifiers, several Australian hot-shot drivers of the 60s imported their own Mustangs which soon dominated Aussie "tin-top" racing. The likes of Ian Geoghegan, Bob Jane and Allan Moffat were kings of the track.



Moffat Mustang



Geoghegan Mustang

Mustang Magic (page 2)

My longing for one of my own was a mere dream in the 1960s and 70s with a family and a mortgage taking care of most of my earnings as a typesetter in the printing industry – besides, the vehicle was never offered in right-hand drive configuration, so countries like Australia missed out. The early examples you see here with right-hand drive were imports that have been converted (sometimes in a very shonky manner).

When Ford Australia announced the cessation of manufacturing here in 2015 to the dismay of legions of loyal customers, the one consolation was the statement that the Mustang would finally be offered in a properly engineered and factory built right-hand drive version. Although into my seventh decade, the passion still burnt brightly, so I hot-footed it up to my local Ford dealer and placed my order for a 5-litre V8 GT in race red! An automatic gearbox was specified as a consolation to an ageing left leg!

My car was to be one of the 2000 “launch allocation” shipment to Australia in 2015, but Ford grossly underestimated the demand from Australian fans – that initial 2000 cars being sold out within a couple of weeks, necessitating order books be closed by the end of March 2015. My car eventually made it to Australia in June, 2016. The anticipation of those 15 months was greater than the 9 months’ wait for my son to arrive in 1973!

The Mustang has now passed its 9th year in my possession (where have those years gone?) and with merely 44,000km on the clock, it still gives me a thrill every time I hit the “start” button and hear that wonderful V8 burble as the 5-litre springs into life. There have been no problems with the car at all over those nine years. - Andrew Yeend



Mustang pick-up day (20-6-2016)



The big unveiling



Control central



On the grid at Bathurst