

1966

Showers with year of existence, help the 1966 birthright? Precious don't fix it" reasoning, cosmetic makeovers. body remained



however, in keeping with the concept of offering customers the ability to customize their own Mustang, the options list was broadened from 50 variations in the previous year to 70 in 1966.

superlatives during its first what could management do to Mustang further assert its little! Using "If it ain't broke, the 1966 underwent mostly The stamped, sheetmetal essentially the same,

The roof line remained unchanged on the hard top and fastback. The convertible's five-ply vinyl laminated canvas tops were structurally reinforced and came in only two colors -- black and white -- a tan option being eliminated. A dealer furnished alternative for convertible owners was a removable roof that converted the rag top into a snug hardtop. An optional convertible power top, priced at \$52.95, replaced manual roof raising and lowering.

The selection of exterior colors was broadened to include such exotic shades as Medium Palomino Metallic, Signalflare Red, Emberglo and Medium Sage Gold Metallic, to cite a few.

The honeycomb grille gave way to a blacked-out, extruded egg crate design with the horizontal strips chromed. The chrome bars positioning the galloping steed emblem were removed, leaving it to float suspended in its corral at the grille's center (except in the GT Equipment Group option where the horizontal strips remained black). A bright metal lip was added to the front of the hood with FORD spelled across the hood's leading edge in large, widely-spaced bright letters.

The simulated air scoop ahead of the rear wheels took on a look of functionality with the addition of three chrome "spires" or windsplits extending forward of the scoop ornament's blacked-out center. This feature was deleted on GTs, 2+2s and luxury models.

Rocker panel moldings, available only on 1965's 2+2, became standard on 1966 models. An accent paint stripe along the rocker panel was another option but the simulated air scoop ornaments were eliminated. Front fender-mounted emblems or badges came in a variety of configurations -- the galloping horse over the vertical tri-colored bars followed by the word MUSTANG; the same signage with "2+2" identity for fastbacks; a bright-metal, shallow "V" under a "289" (cubic inch displacement) for V-8 engines, or the same pattern with the words "HIGH PERFORMANCE" (271hp) on a checkered background stamped above the V and 289. Dealers could add a Cobra medallion above the latter when a Cobra high-performance kit had been added to the basic power package.

The black, ceramic center was eliminated from the 1966's gas cap, FORD MUSTANG was again stamped along the edge around the tri-color bar and pony emblem, with a

stylized "GT" replacing the horse on those particular models. Also at the rear, backup lights became standard equipment on all models.

The all-chrome wheels were redesigned from 13 to 14 inches, painted black, given a bright trim ring to imply an all-chrome assembly with a thermal-embossed insignia capping the hub. Plastic, slotted, full-disc wheel covers came in four designs and whitewall tires were an option in either rayon or premium nylon.

For the interior, the mixture of colors and upholstery patterns were enlarged. Perhaps the most conspicuous change was the all new five-dial instrument package that replaced the cheaper Falcon-style bezel. The new units used gauges rather than warning lights. Crash pads are slightly restyled, padded visors became standard as did four-way emergency flashers. Steering column and steering wheel were color-keyed to the car's instrument panel. A deluxe, walnut grained steering wheel, studded with 18 recessed dots and 12 circular holes cut into the three brushed-metal spokes, were an option for all 1966 body styles and interiors. AM, AM/FM and AM/ 8-track stereo tape system radios were factory options as were a Rally-Pac clock/tachometer combination, under dash air conditioning and push-button release seat belts.

The Interior Decor package, AKA the "Pony," Luxury or Deluxe Interior, included padded door panels with arm rest; pistol grip door handles; simulated walnut trim on the instrument panel and glove compartment; courtesy/warning lights in the door, and bright trim on the foot pedals, among other things. The embossed herd of running ponies insert on seatbacks were carried over from 1965 in the luxury package.

The standard engine continued to be the 200ci, 6-cylinder with three-speed manual transmission, but the larger power plants were available were three variations of the basic 289 cubic inch, V-8 block. The "Challenger V-8" was a 200hp, two-barrel carburetor, hydraulic valve equipped engine; the "Challenger Special V-8" boasted a four-barrel carb requiring premium fuel and rated at 225hp; and the high performance, "COBRA V-8" 271hp or "K," was the 289ci small block engine with increased compression ratio, manual choke, four-barrel carb, performance camshaft, dual-point distributor and dual exhausts. As in 1965, all engines were painted Ford blue.

In all, five transmissions were available with the non-synchronized, three-speed manual remaining the standard offering. High performance V-8s came with Ford as well as Borg Warner four-speed manuals and a Cruise-O-Matic was optional with any engine choice including the 271hp V-8.

1966's suspensions were identical to the 1965. High Performance models (optional on all other V-8s) featured a Special Handling Package that included larger shock absorbers; a larger front stabilizer bar; increased steering ratio, and increased front and rear spring rates. The 271hp received a nine-inch rear axle ring gear and larger housing while other V-8s came equipped with an eight-inch ring gear. Limited-slip was also optional on the V-8s.

MORE SPECIALS

The Gran Turismo options, delivered late in the 1965 model year, were hugely successful. Available as an add-on for all three body styles, over 15,000 units were equipped and sold with the special features in 1965. The package's verve and dash appealed to the racing psyche and the competitive success of the GT racing cars and the Shelby GT 350s lent a degree of charisma; so much so that nearly 30,000, again in all body styles, were snapped up in 1966.

Aside from the special GT emblems, five-dial instrument panel, and gas cap covers referenced earlier, the performance and appearance option offered a chrome air cleaner; fog lamps mounted in the grille that retained the horizontal and vertical bars; an accent stripe above the rocker panel with the word MUSTANG in individual raised letters to the rear of the front wheel well; wire-style wheel covers; low-restriction dual exhaust system; chrome flared tail pipe extensions (trumpets) through the rear valance; front disc brakes; heavy duty suspension; bucket seats, even a personalized name plate. GT Mustangs mounted either factory installed 225hp or 271hp. 289ci V-8 engines and a fully synchronized three-speed manual transmission. A four-speed manual or 3-speed automatic was a further optional extra.

The 1966 Shelby GT350s underwent a minor metamorphosis, primarily to cut production costs; to increase sales ensuring a degree of profitability; and to eliminate those less attractive features found on the 1965 models.

For openers, the fastback's air extractor louvers were replaced by a Plexiglas window. Functional rear quarter panels air scoops were added for brake cooling; the noisy side exhausts system were moved to exit beneath the rear bumper and used conventional mufflers (already required in New Jersey, Florida and California); all-tape side stripe was narrower and placed higher on the side above the rocker panels; the GT 350 Cobra gas cap continued into the '66 model year; the 350 nameplate remained near the right rear taillight; the running horse inside its chrome corral gave way to the horse and tri-color emblem placed on the driver's side of the front grille, and the fiberglass hood underside received steel reinforcement. The integral air scoop carried over into the '66s as were the racing-style hood pins (although a few cars were equipped with steel hoods and conventional locking mechanisms), and buyers' choices of color were expanded beyond Wimbledon White to Candyapple Red, Sapphire Blue, Ivy Green and Raven Black. The Cobra's trademark blue LeMans racing stripes matched the side stripe but were also available in white complementing the other four body colors.

The Shelby's interior remained basic black. A 9000 rpm tach was placed atop the dash, the steering wheel was the optional deluxe Mustang walnut model with a GT 350 center cap, and as an aftermarket item, a competition roll bar was designed to be welded directly onto the frame.

To reduce fabrication costs, the lowering of the front A-frame arms was discontinued; the battery was relocated from the trunk to under the front hood; the spare tire moved from the rear interior to the trunk and fold-down rear seats were installed in most models. Over-ride traction bars were replaced with easier-to-install under-rider units.

Moving from the standard items column to the options list were the Detroit Locker rear axle and the Koni shocks. Heavy duty Ford shocks replaced the latter; an automatic transmission was offered as an option and, when ordered, came with an Autolite 595cfm carburetor rather than a Holley.

The High Performance 289ci engine remained the standard power plant, fitted again with COBRA finned aluminum valve covers; aluminum intake manifold; high-capacity oil pan and Tri-Y headers. The standard transmission was the Borg Warner T-10 close ratio as was a nine-inch rear end with open-type differential. For the performance parts aftermarket, Shelby-American also featured racing radiator, dual 4-V High Riser Induction Kits with two 460cfm carburetors, linkage and air cleaner. While supplies lasted, the standard wheel was 1965's 15-inch, five-spoke Cragar magnesium. It was replaced by 14-inch Magnum 500 wheels painted gray with black centers and GT350 hub caps. Options included a 14-inch chrome Magnum 500 and a new 14-inch, 10-spoke aluminum unit with the GT 350 center cap. A special order option was a Paxton Supercharger package that boosted power by 46 percent, but retailing at \$670, it found few buyers.

The production run for 1966 Shelby 350s was 2,380, units, including six convertibles. In a special arrangement with the Hertz Rent-A-Car Company, 936 GT350s were built as rental cars. Most incorporated the company's corporate colors -- black with gold side and racing stripes.

SUMMING UP '66

Early in the 1966 model year, Ford produced the one-millionth Mustang (in March), less than 24 months after the car's introduction. The event was commemorated with a "Limited Edition Mustang" -- a six-cylinder standard platform dressed with special wire wheel covers, side accent stripe and rocker panel molding, chromed air cleaner, center console and special engine decal.

To meet consumer demand, three Ford plants -- Dearborn, Mich.; San Jose, Calif., and Metuchen, NJ -- were working full tilt.

Production figures for 1966 reveal 27,809 standard and 7,889 luxury fastbacks were manufactured; as were 422,416 standard, 55,938 luxury and 21,397 hardtops with bench seats, and, 56,409 standard, 12,520 luxury and 3,190 convertibles with bench seats. In all, 607,568 units.

In 1966, the basic 2+2 fastback retailed for \$2,607.07; the hardtop for \$2,416.18, and the convertible at \$2,652.86.

In two and one-half years -- 30 months -- from its unveiling at the New York World's Fair on April 17, 1964 through end of model year 1966, over two and one-quarter million Mustangs were gracing America's roads. Quite an entry in anyone's order book.