

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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# Born on the 4th of July

More of what makes a Mustang a Mustang

By Joe Sage



## SHELBY GT500 LOGBOOK

- Striped seats are a cool touch, although ribbing makes them look wrinkly. Bubbles in side rearview mirrors are welcome, though these don't show much of the side.
- Power. Have to eeeeeease it into first and get it into second pretty much immediately.
- Sirius satellite window sticker, Sync®/Microsoft badge on console, touchscreen... kind of an anomaly, compared with the spirit and soul of the car. Seems like it should be a two-knob-radio car. But while this is a classic concept, the modern updates are fundamental, useful and desirable.
- Current Mustang rear styling's "pinched" look detracts from this car's muscle.
- The suspension was so firm in town, we weren't sure we'd want to drive it any distance. But it's so powerful that every time you accelerate 10-50 or drive 100 feet, first-second gear, you wish you *were* going a long distance, so you could really open it up.
- HVAC controls are a mix: SYNC visual interface plus knobs, with limited control over the scenario. Passenger is getting blast-furnaced by the vents, and we're trying to turn those down without much luck.
- Other dead-of-summer issues: a basically flat metal panel stares the passenger in the face from the dash, while the driver faces three reflective silver metal areas on the steering wheel which, on an oven-mitt-hot day, can be a repeated hand-burner while turning the wheel.
- A curious crowd of qualified gearheads generally admired the car till they lifted the hood, having to hold it up as it's unsprung, for which they express dismay at \$55,000. They comment that some engine and audio parts look cheap. But they liked the period look overall (which to them was '80s) and liked the lighted SVT on the door sill.
- In traffic, we're not trying any heroics, but nobody wants to mess with this car; we can't even merge normally. A Camaro from a surface street to the freeway was going out of his way not to contest, which is unusual during a hot car's street time.—JS

Following the lineage of the Shelby name can be a challenge. If you'd like to sift through the AC, AC Cobra, Cobra, Shelby Cobra, Daytona, Shelby Daytona Cobra Coupe, Mustang, Shelby Mustang and just Shelby names, you can read a few shelves' worth of books, research online for quite awhile or largely go with the flow. Any which way, when you see the Shelby name, the Cobra badge or an authentic set of stripes on the vehicle otherwise known as the Mustang, you know you have something special.

But there's still room for confusion. Sometimes the Shelby name appears when the company currently known as Shelby American manufactures a car, sometimes when they modify a car, and sometimes when they carefully license their name and/or their engineering to the likes of Ford. The third is the case with the Ford Shelby GT500®, the car we have driven here, built by the Ford Special Vehicle Team (SVT). But in the marketplace at the same time is the Shelby GT350. The current GT350 is built by Shelby American, but not entirely. For that, you buy and provide your own Ford Mustang GT, and they do the rest (while approximately dou-

bling—or more—your investment).

Shelby American has produced several cars carrying the Shelby GT500 name over the past several years: the Shelby GT500 Special Edition, from 2007-09, the Shelby GT500 Super Snake Edition, also 2007-09 and updated in 2010. Any further confusion is avoided currently by Shelby itself going to its GT350 for 2011.

So the current Shelby GT500 is built by Ford, born in Dearborn and manufactured in Romeo, Michigan. And it's a killer. Let's check out what the Ford factory can do with this lineage.

### The build

The engine in the new Ford Shelby GT500 is an all-aluminum supercharged 5.4-liter V8, generating 550 hp and 510 lb-ft of torque. The transmission is a Tremec TR6060 6-speed manual. Brakes are four-wheel power disc with ABS, electronic force distribution and traction control: Brembo four-piston 14-inches in front and 11.8-inch two-pistons in the rear.

The Ford Shelby GT500 has an aluminum hood, to help keep its weight to

KEEP RIGHT >>





The Ford Shelby GT500 is available as both a coupe and a convertible. The convertible is priced \$5000 (\$53,645 base) and weighs only 179 pounds more than the coupe.

At the heart of the beast is the 550-hp 5.4-liter all-aluminum V8, bearing the signatures of its proud SVT builders.

3820 lbs., good for performance and for front/rear weight distribution (56/44), plus helpful in achieving its surprisingly decent 15/23 mpg city/highway fuel rating (earning it no gas guzzler tax).

Front suspension is independent MacPherson strut with 34mm stabilizer bar, while the rear retains a solid axle, three-link with coil springs, Panhard rod, 34mm



Sousa on the car's impressive sound system, as the fireworks went off on the 4th.

There are, of course, three fundamental tasks for any vehicle to perform: go, turn and stop. As you would expect, the Ford Shelby GT500 can "go" in spades. There are quite a few machines with over 500 hp these days, but with its weight maintained well under two tons, it has the power. And the brakes seem to be more than capable of handling it. As for turning, there are really no surprises, either. The aluminum engine helps with front/rear balance, but it's still somewhat nose-

COMPARISON (COUPES)	ENGINE	HP	TORQUE	EPA	WEIGHT	BASE PRICE
FORD SHELBY GT500	5.4L alum V8	550	510	15/23	3820	\$48,645
FORD MUSTANG GT (manual)	5.0L alum V8	412	390	17/26	3605	\$29,645
SHELBY GT350 Supercharged	5.0L alum V8	513	na	<sup>2</sup> na	<sup>3</sup> 3605+	*\$33,995
SHELBY GT350 (nat-aspirated)	5.0L alum V8	430	na	<sup>2</sup> na	<sup>3</sup> 3605+	*\$26,995

\*Shelby prices are in addition to cost of donor Mustang GT, i.e. add about \$30k for coupe.  
<sup>2</sup>GT350 is a prototype and has not been EPA tested yet. <sup>3</sup>Add-on weights vary with options but are negligible.

stabilizer bar and twin-tube gas shocks.

Our test Shelby GT500 had a base sticker price of \$48,645. With two option packages and destination charge, it was out the door at \$55,330. One option package—electronics—we'd have mixed feelings about including: some of its technology seems out of step with the heart of the beast. But it's useful. The other package—SVT Performance—seems all but essential, to the point it's almost silly to have it be an add-on. The SVT package includes upgraded tires (265/40R19 front and 285/35R20 rear), upgraded aluminum wheels in those mixed sizes, a 3.73 limited slip rear axle, and the combination of racing stripes, side stripes and rear spoiler that make the car look like what it is.

### The drive

The good news for us was: this all-American car came to us for a week that included the 4th of July. The bad news was: not only is that a weekend full of drunks and police all over the roads, but the vehicle came with a mileage cap, as it's fairly rare and its duty was being spread thin between both Arizona and Colorado. There had been some discussion whether we'd take this car on a previously-tentatively-scheduled road trip. Not happening.

So no holiday weekend on the high country highways, no burning it up the Beeline to Payson, but we did get to run it through its paces around the Valley. And we did get to crank up some John Philip

heavy, and the solid rear axle will always contribute its own special attributes to high-powered turns and uneven surfaces (and especially the combination of the two). Though a lot of people keep a close eye on each new Mustang, to see whether it will ever gain an independent rear suspension, when we come down to it, we acknowledge once again that the live axle and the big V8 are all part of what makes a Mustang a Mustang. You can accelerate and corner a Ferrari or Audi quattro one way, but the Shelby GT500 deserves to have this all-out behavior. It would be missing something any other way.

### The choice

How do you decide which is the more legitimate Shelby Mustang: the one made by Ford, clearly the outfit in charge of everything Mustang? or the one made by Shelby, clearly the root of all things Shelby? As each licenses the respective rights of the other, from the other, both are completely legitimate.

Or might you be plenty happy with a showroom-stock Mustang GT?

You're back to subjective points of style and brand emotion, or practical points of price, features, weight, power and so on. Power is part practical and part emotion.

Good luck. We can tell you this much: putting the pedal to the metal in Ford's Shelby GT500 did not leave us lacking for power per dollar, in this discussion it's second only to the Mustang GT. ■

