

Roll back about 50 years, when pickups were pretty much all the same, a single cab and separate 8-foot box on ladder frame as default, while engines, drivetrains, tow and load capacities offered variables. Then came the compacts, first from Asia—a shorter cab-box-frame build, usually atop one powertrain.

It didn't take too many years for Detroit to start producing compact pickups and for the compacts to diversify such things as cabs and bed lengths, then finally drivetrain, most now 4x4. It also did not take long for the compacts to start growing into midsize range, some becoming beefier, if not bigger, than prior full-size trucks. Reasons for the upsizing run from crash protection requirements to perceived market demands and response.

Ongoing variations of build, style, power and format have given us a pickup marketplace with such diversity that it exposed a neglected niche—the smaller truck. This has worked totally to Ford Maverick's benefit—or perhaps Maverick itself created the effect that has turned the page, creat-

ing what could be called an alt-pickup—without the traditional cab-and-box-on-frame build.

Then another opportunity emerged. Partly because of healthy sales, with the format now established and proven, partly because its build offers its own flexibilities, and partly because product planners, designers and engineers still like to do cool things, Maverick itself has diversified, first with beefier builds echoing the full-size F-Series and midsize Ranger.

Now Maverick leapfrogs the rest with its new Lobo build—a factory truck with the dual person-as of street rod and autocross runner. Lobo is the brainchild of Maverick designer Josh Blundo, who joined the Dearborn team in 2019. Intrigued by Detroit's lowrider and street performance culture, he sketched what he thought could be done to bring this Ford's new small pickup into this realm. Response to a concept version shown at SEMA in 2021 earned it the green light from Ford.

The production Maverick Lobo is lowered a half inch in front, 1.12 in the rear, with the roof 0.8 inch

lower). Lobo opts for the higher-powered 2-liter EcoBoost engine, replacing its 8-speed automatic with a 7-speed direct shift, all atop road-tuned suspension and shocks, with reduced stability controls when in Lobo Mode for the track.

This simple little truck is chock-full of details and style points that are distinctively its own. Its interior strikes us as equal parts ranch and tech, a perfect combination for the brand and mission.

As a pickup, Maverick Lobo is easier to load and unload than an SUV or even a bigger pickup. The tailgate is simple, lightweight and manual, perfect on a smaller truck, no waiting for a damped power tailgate to do its thing. We moved a 400-lb load of boxes, noting that wheel housings extend to the front wall, avoiding awkward trap spots. A toothy bed coating kept everything in place in motion.

The powertrain has a nice, throaty rumble during acceleration, and its 7-speed direct shift is so smooth and hesitation-free through turns, hills and lane changes, its paddles and drive modes weren't needed, as power has plenty of headroom, given



Ford apparently knows they have a hit on their hands with the Maverick Lobo, as shortly after our week with it, they announced an F-150 Lobo, a 400-hp package for STX that follows much the same street-savvy formula, but with its own big truck personality. We'll have more on this once it rolls our way.

the truck's light weight. (We did play with modes at one point and found the algorithm's mix of dictated gears and its own overrides just distracting.) On a familiar boulevard with a brutal double rain trough, brp! brp!, this cruised right over them. It's one tough little performance truck. An errant driver also gave us a hard brake test, which it aced.

The only operational downside we experienced was with neck-snapping panic braking while backing into parking, multiple times. Reluctantly, we finally turned this off, but with more time would hope to keep it functional but set for significantly less.

We drove the Lobo enough for two tank top-offs during our week, but the readout said 20.3 mpg,

right on the money for its city rating, which comprised most of our drive time. (The 30 mpg highway rating makes us hope for a road trip sometime.)

Comparing today's wide variety of pickups is a lesson in distraction, kind of like comparing friends—they don't all have to be the same, to each be great in their own right. You will always have a good time when you go out with this one.

This particular build of this small pickup is not aimed at towing horses, building houses, working oil fields or off-roading. But what it is *not* is not part of the story. What it *is* is lots of fun, with a big dose of utility thrown in. And the more utilitarian builds might only wish they could look this slick. ■

Street smart, road-ready

BY JOE SAGE



What do you call the Blue Oval when it's black? As far as the one front and center on the Maverick Lobo, we'd call it way cool.

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....	Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico
BUILD	.....	unibody SuperCrew pickup, high-strength steel frame, mild steel body
ENGINE	.....	2.0L EcoBoost 4-cyl GTDI
HP/TORQUE	.....	238 hp / 275 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....	10.8:1
TRANSMISSION	.....	(Lobo) 7-spd Quick Shift
DRIVETRAIN	.....	AWD
SUSPENSION	.....	F: indep MacPherson strut-type w coils, twin-tube hydraulic gas shocks, stblzr bars, alum lower control arm, steel subframe, cast knuckle; R: indep multi-link trailing arm w monotube hydraulic gas dampers w hydraulic rebound stop, coils, stblzr bar, steel subframe, cast knuckle
STEERING	.....	electronic pwr-asst
BRAKES	.....	4-wheel disc, regen braking; (Lobo) upgraded two-piston front, larger rotor, higher friction pads
WHEELS	.....	(Lobo) 19x7.5 turbofan-style black painted aluminum
TIRES	.....	(Lobo) 225/55 R19
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....	(Lobo) 200.9 / 121.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....	(Lobo) 7.3 in
AXLE DIFF TO GROUND (F/R)	.....	( " ) 9.5 / 8.7 in
APPR/DEP/BRKOVER	.....	(Lobo) 19.0 / 19.2 / 16.9°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....	40 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....	40.2 / 39.6 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....	(at accel pedal) 42.8 / 36.9 in
BED LENGTH	.....	(top / floor) 53.1 / 54.4 in
BED WIDTH AT WHEEL HOUSE	.....	42.6 in
EXPOSED CARGO WIDTH	.....	53.3 in
UNDERSEAT STORAGE (REAR)	.....	2.6 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....	3563-3731 lb
GVWR	.....	(Lobo) 4970 lb
MAX PAYLOAD	.....	(Lobo) 1045 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....	2000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....	prem unl / 16.5 gal
MPG	.....	21/30/24 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....	\$40,750
LOBO (EQUIP GROUP 702A)	.....	incl
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....	1595
TOTAL	.....	\$42,345
(sticker base price varies from consumer pricing below; check with dealer for latest)		

2025 FORD MAVERICK LINEUP

2.5L Hybrid / CVT	.....	FWD	.....	AWD
XL	.....	\$28,145	.....	\$30,365
XLT	.....	30,645	.....	32,865
XLT 2.5L w FX4 Off-Road Pkg	.....		.....	33,665
Lariat	.....	--	.....	38,440
2.0L EcoBoost / 8-spd auto	.....		.....	AWD
XL	.....	\$28,270	.....
XLT	.....	30,770	.....
XLT 2.0EB w FX4 Off-Road Pkg	.....	33,460	.....
Lariat	.....	40,090	.....
Tremor	.....	40,995	.....
2.0L EcoBoost / 7-spd QuickShift	.....		.....	AWD
Lobo	.....		.....	35,930

(You will note some inconsistencies e.g. in whether prices go up or down from one engine to the other. There appear to be variances in other packages, options or details that go hand-in-hand with the engine change in some cases, but, as always, check with your dealer for the latest and most accurate information.)