

The Mustang — 25 Years And Counting

Few could have dreamed that the sporty little car first unveiled at the New York Worlds' Fair in April of 1964 would become one of the automotive industry's enduring legends.

But now, 25 years later, the Ford Mustang remains one of the most popular production cars ever conceived.

Mustang lovers across the country will attend scores of events this month to commemorate the birth of the pony car, and the party will go on throughout the summer and fall.

Auto industry experts have no firm explanation for the tremendous popularity of the Ford Mustang, but Time Magazine noted in December of 1980, "one reason may be nostalgia. When the first Mustang was unveiled ... a Ford flack said that its name was chosen because it sounded 'American as all hell.' Lyndon Johnson had just pushed through tax cuts, the dark days of Viet Nam were still far over the horizon, and the post-World War II baby boom made people under 25 almost as numerous as their elders. Press pundits began calling them 'the Mustang generation.'"

Rule Change Voted For Modified Class

Members of the Board of Directors of the Mustang Club of America, meeting in Marietta, GA, March 14, approved a change in the 1989-90 judging rules for the Modified Class.

Effective with MCA's first national show of 1989 in Pensacola, FL., trailered vehicles will be permitted to enter all Modified Classes. Prior to the change, all trailered vehicles were automatically classified "radical" for purposes of judging in the Modified Class.

MCA President Charles Hampton told the members of the board that numerous complaints from Modified Class participants had been received following the rules changes approved in Atlanta last December.

Hampton noted that those who participate in the Modified Class at MCA shows had been urged to attend the Atlanta meeting and assist with the revisions of Modified Rules but had not attended the session.

"I'm sorry those interested in the rules changes for the Modified Class did not choose to participate in the judges' meeting in Atlanta. I think it is important that anyone interested in our judging rules attend and participate in the revision process when meetings are held for that purpose."

Now that the "Mustang Generation" has reached maturity, those racy little cars that sold for as little as \$2,368 in 1964 are coveted as collector's items and rare ponies sell for as much as 20 times the original sticker price, or more.

Not even Lee Iacocca, the Mustang's chief progenitor, expected the Mustang to be the most popular new car of the decade. But the first weekend the Mustang went on sale, four million people visited Ford showrooms and over the next two years the company built 1.28 million of the ponies.

Automotive writer Wallace A. Wyss observed several years ago that Ford actually "made the car better than it planned. Detroit expects the average auto buyer to trade in a car after three years, but there are plenty of people still driving their '65 Mustang with 200,000 miles or more on the clock."

Many other Mustangs — from the first 1964½'s right on up into this decade — have been painstakingly restored to showroom condition by dedicated owners, thousands of whom are members of the Mustang Club of America.

Detroit has a reputation for being incapable of keeping its hands off a winner, though, and many observers say the classic Mustang died after 1968 — of obesity. Ford gradually fattened the car, boosting its size and adding to its weight. Sales slowed after 1971, prompting Iacocca to confess, "The original Mustang buyer is still there, still wanting a good little car. We walked away from the market."

Iacocca, of course, later walked away from Ford to become chief executive officer of Chrysler.

But the Ford Mustang that grew out of his efforts in the early 1960's won't soon fade away.

As for the future of America's most popular sports car, Ford Motor Company remains basically non-committal.

But no matter what the next decade brings, the past 25 years have established the Mustang as a tradition, and more. The car itself has become a symbol of an entire generation of Americans.



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