



NEW MOD-MOTOR OFFERINGS GIVE RESTO-RODS A MODERN OPTION

By John M. Clor

**D**on't you love it when you hear people on the fringe of the Mustang hobby make statements about today's Mustang club lifestyle as if they know what they're talking about? I usually sit back for a while and let these would-be automotive experts spout off about what they didn't like about a Mustang show they attended a while back, or that Mustang shows and clubs are all about the same—or worse, hearing about what they think is “right” and what is “wrong” about somebody else's Mustang. Before I jump in and try to set them straight, I first explain to them that the real truth lies in knowledge, and that knowledge comes from experience ... and that they have neither!

As car show veterans know, each Mustang event has its own unique set of circumstances that allows us to pick our favorites from the hundreds of Mustang-related activities planned each year all across North America. Often it has to do simply with the time of year or location, but sometimes it boils down to the venue itself, the cars, or the people involved. Of course, there are folks who like to complain about everything, but I've found that most people who grumble about how a show is run have never volunteered to work one!

I often like to ask my 20-something sons and their friends to go to a Mustang show with me—but some of the college-aged kids they hang out with have a stereotypical image of Mustang shows that is likely rooted in another era but just doesn't fit with today's reality.

“I'd go with you, but I like the new Mustangs,” the kids would say, “and those shows are just a bunch of older guys sitting in lawn chairs behind rows and rows of old Mustangs!”

While that made me laugh (as I'm becoming one of those “older guys,” and I happen to really enjoy seeing “rows and rows of old Mustangs”)—it also made me realize that these kids are really out of touch with what is going on in the Mustang hobby today. We all know that over the past several years, the SN95 and especially the S197 Mustangs are beginning to dominate the show car fields at most Mustang events. You don't need a team of researchers or a pile of surveys to figure that out—you just need eyeballs!

I've also found it interesting to field questions from attendees who have a genuine interest in knowing more about their favorite Mustang, yet haven't considered joining a club. They'll say they're not big on paying dues or going to events—yet they'll waste hundreds of dollars and countless hours making a bad decision on fixing up or modifying their car when they could have benefited from the knowledge and experience of fellow club members! One good bit of advice can be worth a lifetime of membership dues!

But if there's one single thing I cannot tolerate, it's self-proclaimed Mustang fans who look down their nose at another person's Mustang because of the year, model, condition, modification, or personalization. We all have our own likes and dislikes and are certainly entitled to our personal tastes. But the true beauty of both the Ford Mustang and the Mustang community itself is that's there's a “Steed for Every Need.” The vast diversity of the Mustangs you get to see at any given event is exactly what makes the shows so special. It used to be that only survivor cars were deemed worthy of respect, then it was the 100-point concours restored or even the over-restored. At one time, second-generation Mustangs weren't welcomed at all, with clubs and parts suppliers recognizing only 1965-'73, and '79-present. At one point, even Fox Body owners suffered segregation at events.

But once the SN95 Mustangs took hold and enthusiasts embraced specialty models like SVT Cobras, the Bullitt and new Mach 1s, the dynamics of Mustang clubs and car shows all started to change. By the time the S197 came along for 2005, modern Mustangs were leaving a larger and larger footprint at each and every event. Many owners teamed their classic with a new Mustang and now bring both to shows, while still others rely on the collectible status of new GTs or Shelby GT500s and KRs as their main entry into a club.

With the additional exposure to modern Mustang technology, we're now seeing a newfound appreciation of Resto-Rods, where upgrading older Mustangs with late-model powertrains and componentry gives owners the best of both worlds—classic Mustang looks with modern Ford performance. The old days of buying a vintage Mustang and working to restore it to “better than new” began with collecting all original, NOS and reproduction parts to get the job done. But now, upgrades of nearly every vehicle system are available and worthy of your consideration if you plan to actually drive and enjoy your classic Mustang out on the road—beginning with the heart of your car: the engine.

One of the cornerstones of the Ford Racing Performance Parts business is the selection of warranted FRPP crate motors. Of course, the pushrod 302/351 Windsor small-blocks prove to be the most popular choices when it comes to upgrading your Mustang project with a new crate engine. Whether it's a performance-built 302 or 351, a Stroker 347 cubic-incher with aluminum heads or even the super-strong Boss-302-block family of crate engines that feature 4-bolt mains, you just can't lose with this kind of quality.

But as more owners become familiar with new Mustangs and their modular family 4.6- and 5.4-liter powertrains, mod-motors are showing up in the Ford Racing catalog and, consequently, in more vintage Mustangs. What you might not know is that the choices are equally varied and smart. Ford Racing has everything from 350-horse 4.6-liter 3-valve, to the 4.6-liter DOHC Short and Long blocks—stout enough for any horsepower level. Plus you can opt for the same super-charged 5.4-liter V-8 that powers the SVT Mustang or move up to the Big One—the 5.4-liter 4-valve Romeo 605—with 605 horses right from the factory! Better still, FRPP makes it easy by offering Controls Packs (including the proper PCM and wiring harness) for every application. Check them out for yourself next time you're online by visiting [www.fordracingparts.com/modular\\_madness/default.asp](http://www.fordracingparts.com/modular_madness/default.asp)

For me, whether it's a nicely restored original or a masterfully re-engineered Resto-Rod—I can appreciate them all. And that goes for First-Gens, Mustang II's and Fox Bodies. And yes, a stock, modded or customized SN95 or S197 deserves my love, too! For those so-called “purists” who may frown upon “Resto-Rod” Mustangs as irreversibly modifying an original, I'll simply repeat what I said before—that REAL Mustang people should appreciate ANY Mustang, regardless of year, model, condition, modification or personalization. That's the very reason why the Mustang hobby was, is, and will continue to be, the envy of the entire industry!

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