



2011 MUSTANG 3.7 MCA EDITION

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The 2011 Mustang will long be honored for the year that Ford pulled out all the stops and gave it all new state-of-the-art hardware under the hood. This milestone year will sit in the display case alongside 1996 when the modular V8s made their debut. It will share the hall of fame with the late 1980s when the 5.0 got fuel injection and a roller cam.

But 2011 is a much bigger step in the evolution because not only did the 5.0 DOHC Coyote V8 engine make its debut in the Mustang GT, but the base V6 Mustang received an engine with bragging rights for the first time in the pony car's history.

The new 3.7 liter DOHC V6 has all the high-tech pedigree fodder, like dual variable cam timing, port fuel injection, and a healthy 305hp. Add this to a standard 6-speed manual transmission or an optional 6-speed automatic and you have a world-class powertrain in a car you can still buy for around \$20,000, if you shop it right.

We had the opportunity to test a new 2011 Mustang V6 MCA Edition for a week, giving us the chance to live in the car day to day and really get a good feel for the special edition. In our daily log book

notes there are a lot of comments about the gas mileage, which Ford hammers home pretty good in their marketing.

We saw an instant average of 31-34 mpg cruising on the freeways. Around town it came down to about 23 mpg. Both results are exactly what Ford states on the window sticker. This is all good when you consider this is a Mustang with 305hp on tap.

And that power is there when you want it, too. Our test car had the optional 6-speed automatic, which shifts well on its own. And unlike Ford automatic transmissions of the past, this one shifts smooth but deliberate on acceleration. When you floor it, the gears knock down fast giving you full steam ahead as expected. The only surprise was that it does not provide a true manual mode. This is odd given the car's sporting nature.

Luckily our test car was equipped with the larger 18-inch wheels and performance tires. This was especially pleasant when we took the MCA Edition up into the twisty roads of Apache Trail in the mountains East of Phoenix, Arizona. It handles exceptionally well for a base Mustang, essentially as a GT with a little less weight on the front wheels.

It was quite tossable and the electric power steering rack provides a highly

precise feel and accuracy when carving the curves. It has a good feel that makes it fun to drive—definitely not the numbed-out rental-grade drive of the old Mustang V6.

The interior was equipped with leather seating and a few trim upgrades as the MCA Edition Mustang is based on the premium coupe. It has that retro look that Mustang owners love in all directions but the controls and features are up to date. While the 2010 and 2011 Mustangs have a vastly improved interior, there are still some details that seem like afterthoughts and some pieces have stray patterns or colors that don't fit in with the rest of the show. In the big picture it is still the nicest Mustang interior of all time.

After a week in the car we did begin to wish for a bit more sound deadening. The 3.7 liter V6 has been tuned to a





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sporty note, which is good. It is the best sounding Mustang V6 ever, which is good. But, there is still enough thrashing and mechanical noise under the hood that could be toned down a bit when you really drive it fast.

Another big plus for the 2011 Mustang V6 is that Ford fitted it with dual exhaust. While it may not seem like a big deal it really adds to the car's street cred in a visual way. After all, if a Camry or Accord V6 has dual exhaust tips, should not a Mustang? About time we say and they look good. If Ford takes the next big step and gives the Mustang V6 the same fascia as a V8 model then we will finally have a base Mustang that doesn't look like the lesser one.

Overall we had a great time with the 2011 Mustang MCA Edition. It has come a long way from the base models of the past. Our tester however was optioned out and priced at about \$30,995, which is a pretty hefty sum and would almost make most people think about stepping up to a Mustang GT. But if good gas mileage and lower insurance rates are what you are after you now have a premium Mustang with teeth. **MT**

