

CAN SPECIAL EDITION STANGS SPARK A COLLECTOR STAMPEDE?

By John M. Clor

It's been four years now since Ford Racing had launched its Ford Performance Group enthusiast outreach program, and I'm happy to report that we're seeing more and more initiatives within the company aimed at interacting with Ford enthusiasts. Ford's reborn marketing operation clearly understands the competitive advantage of having an army of loyalists who, when activated, can serve as influential ambassadors for the Ford brand.

Perhaps a major differentiator for the Ford Performance Group's efforts to connect with fellow enthusiasts is that we're physically "on the ground" at a wide variety of racing and club events across the country, where we interact with customers face-to-face. While I love my job managing www.FordPerformanceGroup.com and providing content for the web site, I also enjoy my role serving as the liaison between the company and the various vehicle clubs that our program actively promotes.

As you might imagine, juggling all those club relationships involves lots of phone calls and emails—but equally important (and certainly much more fun) is the work I get to do "in-person," attending club events, guest-speaking at club meetings and banquets, or conducting "meet-and-greets" at car shows across the country. Like you, I love going to Mustang and Ford shows because of all the interesting enthusiasts I get to meet and—well, of course, all the interesting Mustangs and Fords I get to see.

After participating in some 20 different Mustang and Ford shows last year, I can tell you that I've seen some very nice cars, with many surprising finds. One thing I can't help but notice is how many folks are attracted to low-volume, special-edition models. It seems everybody wants to have something that stands apart from the rest. I've seen many of my favorites, such as the 1972 Mustang Sprint, and even some special editions that were made "special" by their owners, and not Ford—like the "SVO Mustang Convertible" I spotted at the Show-Me Mustang Club's annual show outside St. Louis, Missouri. (Of course, Ford never built an SVO ragtop, but this car sure looked factory!)

Since writing my Mustang history book a couple of years ago, I'm often asked about limited-run, special-edition Mustangs at shows. On a recent appearance, an owner wanted me to look at his car to settle a dispute with his buddy, who claimed he'd never heard of a special edition called a Stampede.

"I bought this car off a guy who told me it was a limited-run Mustang called the "Stampede Edition," which he said was a lot like the Southern California Special," the owner told me. "I thought he meant just the California Special, but my friend here says he's never heard of either a Stampede Edition or a Southern California Special."

I just grinned as the owner continued, "The guy I got it from said there were only a few thousand Stampede cars built. Is a Stampede a true specialty Mustang, and do you think it will become a collector's item?"

I tried to help out by telling him that yes, I recall the 2006 Stampede Edition Mustangs. From what I remember, just 500 were built—and there were never any plans to build "a few thousand" of them. Secondly, there REALLY WAS another limited-edition Mustang called the 2006 Southern California Special which is NOT to be confused with the 2007 California Special model that was built the following model year.

I explained that the Southern California Special and the Stampede Edition Mustang are so-called "regional" models as they are the result of a specific Ford sales region's district promotions and are not limited-production models put together at the factory and made available to dealers nationwide, like the Shelby GT500 and California Special.

The 2006 Stampede Edition came about when the Ford dealers across Oklahoma and Texas decided to put together an exclusive 500-unit run of specially equipped '06 Mustangs for sale only in their sales region. If you recall your Mustang history, you'll know that both states have marketed special edition Mustangs before—Texas in 1967 with the Blue Bonnet Special and Oklahoma in 1970 with its Sidewinder Special. Like those rare classics, I would surmise that the '06 Stampede Edition has a good shot at becoming a collector's item someday, if you can hang onto it long enough.

The reason for such a model was fairly simple. The Ford marketing strategy manager for the Southwest region at the time had explained it this way: "A lot of customers are looking for something special. Many of them have told us that they want to 'Texas-ize' their vehicles in some way. The Stampede Edition Mustang simply gives them the opportunity to own something unique."



The Stampede Edition Mustang was based on the V-6 Coupe Premium equipped with the Pony Package, featuring 17-inch, painted-aluminum wheels and a pony grille with integrated fog lamps. The Stampede added wide, nine-inch silver racing stripes, exclusive Stampede badging (including a unique Stampede Edition gas cap), chrome pony spinner caps, chrome exhaust tips and a rear spoiler, all for an MSRP of \$22,980, including delivery. Exterior paint colors were limited to just four: Redfire, Vista Blue, Tungsten Grey or Black.

Inside, Stampede Edition Mustangs are authenticated with an engraved, numbered plaque—which is what collectors would be looking for as a future collectible. Included was the Interior Upgrade Package, which added six-way power cloth seats (leather was optional), a leather-wrapped steering wheel and carpeted front floor mats with special brushed-chrome “Mustang” badging. It also included Ford’s unique MyColor™ Instrument Panel Display, which offers up to 125 color backgrounds at the touch of a button. The standard Shaker 500 audio system featured a six-disc CD player, while a Shaker 1000 system was available as an option.

The Stampede program is almost a carbon copy of the one your previous owner was talking about, the Southern California Special. That Ford sales region put together a run of 600 “SCS” badged cars with the same option group as the Stampede. While some may dismiss these cars as little more than a dolled-up V-6 Pony Package car, it did come equipped with the stiffer Mustang GT suspension, and dealers in the L.A. area had been promoting it as a collector’s edition. We’ll just have to wait and see if it comes true.

The Mustang has a long tradition of offering special regional packages such as the Twister and California Special. For 2006, Ford already had a special Texas Edition F-150 and Super Duty, and because Mustang is such a part of the Texas landscape, the regional dealer thought it would be a natural fit.



Customer interest in those special editions prompted Ford to bring back another name from Mustang’s special edition past with the introduction of the 2007 Mustang GT/CS—or “California Special.” The GT/CS was originally a limited-production 1968 Mustang coupe fitted with Shelby Mustang dress-up pieces and sold only through dealerships in California. It was available with any engine, and either with or without the GT option.

The 2007 Mustang GT/California Special entered the market as a full, stand-alone option package that was available for order or purchase in Ford dealerships across the country. Much like the 1968 GT/CS that offered Mustang buyers more aggressive styling that was “inspired by the original Shelby GT,” the ‘07 California Special also drew some cues from the ‘07 Shelby GT500. What’s more, special editions like the Stampede and GT/CS offer the kind of exclusivity that has been such a big draw to Mustang collectors over the years.

The mention of the “Twister” refers to a special edition Mustang ordered up for dealers in the Kansas City District Sales Office back in 1970. For that promotion, a total of 96 consecutively numbered Mach 1’s painted Grabber Orange were produced and turned into “Twister Specials,” complete



with large, spinning “tornado” graphics on the quarter panels. Ford repeated the idea again in 1985, when a run of 90 specially equipped Mustang GTs were offered as the “Twister II”—with both hardtops and convertible versions available in four colors.

While the Indy 500 Pace Car replicas are classified as special edition Mustangs (1964½, 1979, and 1994 SVT Cobra versions), likely the first true “regional” car was the 1966 High Country Special, which was a promotion offered by the Denver District Sales Office. A total of 333 High Country cars were built in three special colors, Timberline Green, Columbine Blue, and Aspen Gold, and sold only in Colorado, Wyoming, and parts of Nebraska.



Also offered in 1966 were a couple of other specials, the Anniversary Gold Mustang and the Sprint 200—both connected to Mustang production reaching the 1-million mark by the car’s second anniversary. It’s estimated that less than 50 Anniversary Gold cars were built—all on March 29, 1966, at The San Jose, California, assembly plant and all with special-order

gold paint and black "Pony" interiors. But when it comes to the Sprint 200 cars—promoted as the "Millionth Mustang Success Celebration Editions"—historians would agree that they were as much a way to push sales of the 200-cubic-inch six-cylinder engine as they were to celebrate anything.



For 1967, some half-dozen special-edition Mustangs were in production. The Denver region's High Country Special returned, and Ford offered a Sports Sprint package on any bodystyle for a limited time. New colors, an exterior appearance package, and a louvered hood helped set the Sprint cars apart from the pack, as well as a chrome-plated "Sprint" air cleaner—an idea borrowed from the Sprint 200 Mustang the year before.

In what could be considered the forerunner of the 2006 Stampede Edition, Texas snapped up a run of '67 Sports Sprint hardtops with standard blue interiors, had them painted "Blue Bonnet" blue, added Texas-shaped "Lone Star Limited" medallions to the fenders and sold them through the Dallas Sales District as Blue Bonnet Specials.

There were still others that year, such as the Stallion Mustang (an ultra-rare dealer special out of Toronto, Canada), and the Indy Pacesetter Special (not officially affiliated with the 500 but sold out of the Indianapolis District to commemorate the '67 race). By the end of the year, the Denver District also put together a Ski Country Special for hardtops and fastbacks, complete with luggage and ski racks, a limited-slip axle, and a pair of snow tires.

While many people believe the 1968 California Special is the granddaddy of all limited-edition Mustangs, you can now see that it actually was just one in a long line of specials the nameplate has spawned over the past four decades. And while it's true the '68 GT/CS was also the basis for the High Country Special that year, other promotions in other districts brought



a myriad of other lesser-known special editions across the country, such as the Gold Nugget Special out of the Seattle District, the Red Bird (or Cardinal) Special out of the Virginia / North Carolina region, the Sunshine Special out of Florida, and the 1969 Mustang Limited Edition 600 out of Philadelphia.

The Oklahoma Sales District got into the act in 1970 with its own four-barrel 351 V-8 Sportsroof model called the Sidewinder Special. It came in a variety of colors and featured a stripe kit with Sidewinder snake decals that looked like a rattlesnake version of Ford's wheeled Cobra logo.

It's likely you know of several other special-edition Mustangs not mentioned here. But can you name the one that actually came out of Detroit itself? Here's a hint: More than a decade ago, the Metro Detroit Ford Dealers commissioned ASC (American Sunroof Corp.) to produce a run of 58 specially equipped Mustang GTs, all white with Shelby-esque Razor Blue stripes, side scoops, hood pins, unique 17-inch aluminum rims, and SVO side exhaust. If you guessed the 1997 Woodward Dream Cruise Mustang, consider yourself a Mustang special edition expert! (I actually got to drive one of them for the Woodward Dream Cruise, but had to return it to Roy O'Brien Ford in St. Clair Shores, Michigan, who had a buyer waiting for it when I was done.)

As far as owning a Stampede Edition Mustang goes, I'd have only one thing to say: Don't ever buy a car only if you think it will be collectible some day—buy it because you like it. If it becomes worth more later on because of its limited-edition status, well, that's a good reason to like it even more.

***Editor's Note:** Veteran automotive journalist John Clor has owned, raced, worked on, or written about Fords and Mustangs for nearly 30 years. After a 15-year career at The Detroit News, John shifted to automotive journalism with stints at AutoWeek and later Edmunds.com. He joined the Ford Special Vehicle Team in 1995 and spent the better part of the next decade working on SVT communications, PR, and Marketing. Today, he manages the www.FordPerformanceGroup.com enthusiast outreach program for Ford Racing, and is also a columnist for Mustang Trader magazine, editor of SVT Enthusiast magazine, and author of the hardcover history book, Mustang Dynasty. A member of several Ford-based car-clubs, John is the proud owner of three '70s-era Mustangs, including one that he calls "a long-term project."*

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