

DRIVING IMPRESSIONS: THE NEW GT350



Text by Steve McCarley
©Photos by Tom Corcoran

In 1965, I had absolutely the fastest Shelby GT350 Mustang in the neighborhood, no, the city, maybe the state. OK, so it did have handlebars, a banana seat, pedals, and a coaster brake. At least it had the requisite stripe and decal. I was a racer, a team driver, and I drove (OK, rode) a Shelby.

Back then, the Shelby marquee was just establishing itself and the Mustang was a brand new car. But, I knew a winner. I never missed a racing session of the "Wide World of Sports" on Saturday afternoon. Shoot, I was fast AND smart. Oh yeah, and Elvis drove Shelbys. Good enough for him, cool enough for a 10 year old.

Today I have no clue where that old bicycle has gotten off too, "Wide World of Sports" has been replaced by the NASCAR Channel (Speedvision), Elvis has died or maybe moved to Argentina, and I'm a bunch of years to the good as well.

The good news—the Shelby GT350 is not only still with us, but kicking butt in a George Jetton meets Carroll Shelby sort of way. I'm talking new, brand new Shelby GT350.

Those original Shelbys were a bit rough around the edges; fast, stiff, hot, and a bit of a handful if you were not Ken Miles or Jerry Titus. Comparing today's Shelby to them might equate

to saying the United States went to the moon with the Apollo Program, but I bet the current Columbia astronauts probably don't want to give it a go.

Now, the new Shelby GT350 saddles you up in comfortable leather seating, has creature comforts like air conditioning, heating, carpet, power door-locks and windows, power steering, power brakes, and cruise control. Add to that, a simply great stereo!

All are equipped with brakes that stop on a dime and engines that go. Killer bodywork stands it, and you, out from the crowd. The original-style stripes and colors help you remember the heritage but not the old headaches.

Suspension capable of laps at Daytona Speedway or Daytona Beach make you a driving hero. As I said, the brakes actually stop the car with authority. Really cool wheels and tires add to the overall package.

And at the heart is FORD's new 5.0 engine, in either naturally aspirated or supercharged versions. For me, at the track I like the naturally aspirated version. But out on the street, nothing beats a supercharger.

Look at the pictures. Check out the details. Maybe, come out to a track-day and ride with me or Gary Patterson. I can promise you will get out smiling, wanting to add another car to your Mustang stable ... a Shelby GT350.

