

Mustang, History of a Love Affair

Part VII of a Series

by
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The Mustang was to be introduced to the public on April 17, 1964; some three years after the planning of the car began. The long lead time required in the automotive industry, from conception of a car to public introduction day, is a measure of how essential it is to determine the needs of the market several years in advance.

The Mustang's special preview for the press, four days before introduction day, was made against the striking setting of the Ford Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. The press showing proved to be a history-making debut, and reaction was uniformly enthusiastic.

Following the showing of the car, 124 reporters were paired off in Mustangs and given a set of road rally instructions that took them 750 miles to Detroit. The original enthusiasm aroused by the showing in the Ford Pavilion was increased by the driving experience on the highways, and was subsequently expressed in warm terms in the written reports of the correspondents. *Time* and *Newsweek* carried simultaneous cover stories. *Life*, *Look*, *Esquire*, *US News & World Report* and other top-flight publications carried editorial spreads. The press as a whole was unusually generous in praise of the Mustang.

Another history-making "first" took place on the night of April 16. For the first time in TV experience, a major automotive manufacturer presented simultaneous programs on three major television networks. Mustang's image was projected into 29 million homes during prime viewing time.

The next day, Mustang announcement ads ran in more than 2,600 newspapers in approximately 2,200 markets. The ads were, in effect, special invitations to the buyers for whom the car had been created. In newspapers, in women's pages, in 24 of the top nationally-circulated magazines, these invitations were extended to young people, young marrieds, sophisticates, older groups still young at heart, and the millions of families with two or more cars. A marketing program was planned for each of these types of buyers.

To generate mass enthusiasm, it was considered vital to expose the car quickly to as many people as possible. Since the entire public could not come to the car, the car was taken to the public. City dwellers saw Mustangs at more than 70 high-traffic metropolitan locations throughout the United States. Air travelers saw Mustangs in 15 major airport terminals from New York to San Francisco. People on the go on the road saw Mustangs racing toward them from billboards in more than 170 important markets. The suggested retail price was prominently featured on the boards, as it was in all introductory Mustang advertising, in order to position the new car immediately within the automotive market.



To gain further swift exposure, various types of promotional tie-ins were executed. One hundred Holiday Inns displayed Mustangs in their lobbies or near their main entrances. Four top TV shows used Mustangs as prizes on their programs. Many other companies used the car as prizes on their promotional campaigns, adding to the pulling power of their promotions, and simultaneously adding to the car's public exposure.

On the day of public introduction, dealer showrooms sparkled with a gala atmosphere stimulated by special Mustang pictures, wall posters and window trim. The theme was simple and forceful: the "unexpected." Potential buyers were pleased by the Mustang's sporty flair and intrigued by its unexpectedly low price.

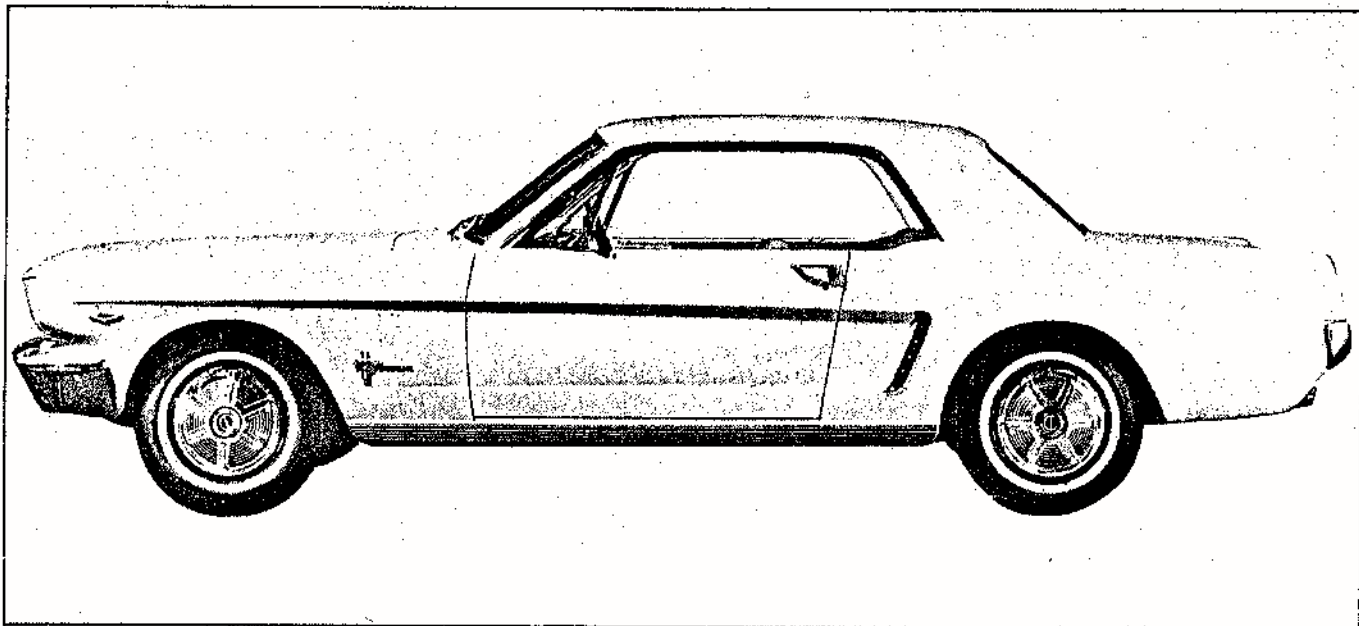
There was immediate evidence that the marketing concepts behind the Mustang were directly on target. The first weekend the Mustang went on sale, four million people visited Ford showrooms. At various dealerships throughout the nation some startling incidents took place. A San Francisco truck driver, apparently thrown into a trance by the sight of the car, could not take his eyes away and drove his truck straight through the showroom window. A Chicago dealer had to lock the doors of the Mustangs in his showroom because so many people were trying to crowd into the cars at once they were in danger of injuring themselves. A Pittsburgh dealer with a Mustang up on a wash rack could not get the car down because of the crowd of people pressing below.

One of the most emotional of all reactions occurred at a dealership where fifteen competing customers tried to bid on the same Mustang. The successful buyer insisted on sleeping in his new car, ". . . so they won't sell it out from under me before my check clears in the morning." And this from a rejuvenated Texas bachelor of 44 in a letter to Ford: "Man, this pony is the greatest. A widow with 7000 acres came 60 miles so I could take her riding in it. I thought the jig was up for me. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

The favorable reaction to Introduction Day carried over and was strongly sustained. Within four months more than

100,000 Mustangs had been sold, and the car had taken its place among the top five automobiles in sales volume. The market that had been looking for a specialized car had found it.

Research of data from "Mustang Guide", by Bill Stone, published by the Benson Printing Co, 1965; and "The Mustang Story" by the Ford Motor Company, Educational Affairs Department, number 5.



FIRST MUSTANG PRODUCTION MODEL—1964

MAY 27, 28, 29, 1983

INAUGURAL MEMORIAL DAY

MUSTANG SHOW AND SWAP MEET
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

SPONSORED BY
SCENIC CITY REGIONAL MUSTANG CLUB

1967 MUSTANG CONVERTIBLE TO BE GIVEN AWAY
(Proceeds to Shriners Crippled Children Hospital)

\$2,000 IN PRIZE MONEY TO BE GIVEN

1st Place \$50.00

\$200 each Best Convertible, Coupe, Fastback, Shelby-Boss and Modified

Headquarters:

THE READ HOUSE
827 BROAD
CHATTANOOGA, TN 37402
1-800-251-6443
1-800-572-7304 (TN ONLY)

Show Site:

JAYCEE FAIRGROUNDS
AMNICOLA HWY. 58 S.
CHATTANOOGA, TN

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