

Where Were You in '64

by Carrol Harris Loder

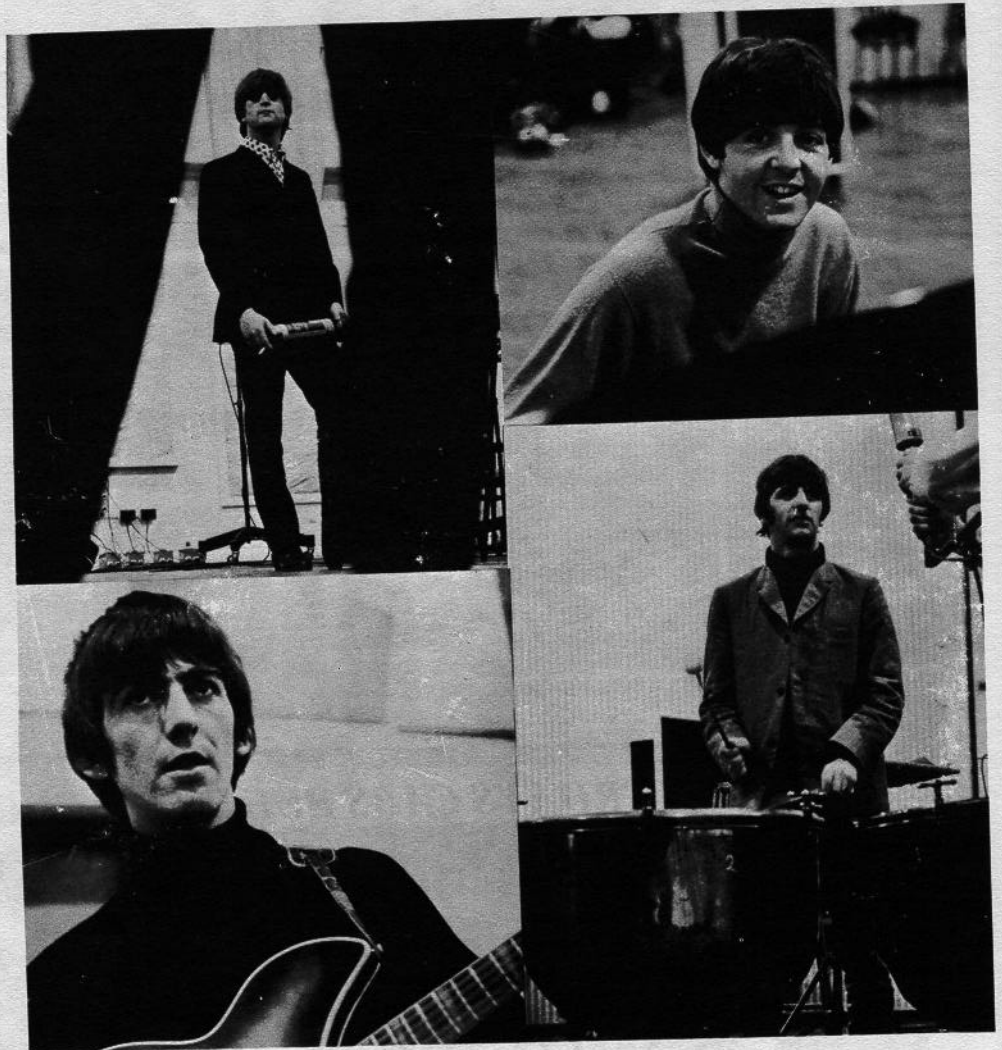
We are a generation of nostalgia lovers. We love looking back to the "Good 'Ole Days." I was in one of those little gift shops recently and read a clever quotation saying, "Nostalgia is being able to look to the past and come away with good memories!" Now, won't you take a little trip with me down Memory Lane? Where were you in '64?

In February, 1964, a new music group appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* that was to change the beat forever. I suffered terribly from "Beatlemania," as many other teen-agers, after seeing John, Paul, George, and Ringo on television for the first time. Not only did the Beatles' music influence the United States but their long hair became the envy of teen boys everywhere. Barbers went crazy!

Discotheque was a new word in our vocabulary — we later shortened it to Disco. These were places where a disc jockey played primarily rock and roll music (full blast) and people danced all the latest dances; the Frug, the Go-Go, the Swim, and the Monkey were just a few. If you were in Paris you went to New Jimmy's; London, Annabel's; New York, Shepherd's; or Los Angeles, Whiskey a Go-Go.

Barry Goldwater from Arizona suffered one of the worst defeats for President against Lyndon Johnson since Alf Landon. One of the main issues was whether or not to escalate the war in Viet Nam. Protests, calling this an immoral war, began breaking out on college campus's across the country.

The IX Winter Olympics were held in Innsbruck, Austria. The United States walked away in great embarrassment only bringing home one gold medal by R. McDermott in the 500 meter speed skating. Their total medals were six out of all the events. But they vowed to make a come-back in the XVIII Summer Olympics in Tokyo, Japan, and they kept their promise. The U.S. team



THE BEATLES

finished first in gold medal achievements with a total of 36 and second in over-all medals with a total of 90.

You nostalgia movie lovers might remember that classic, bawdy film which swept the '64 Academy Awards collecting four Oscars including best film, *Tom Jones*. Other important movies being awarded were *How the West Was Won*, *Cleopatra*, and *Irma la Douce*. Sean Connery, a relatively unknown actor, starred as that wonderful spy 007 in *Dr. No*. Carroll Baker became many men's fantasy girl after her starring roll in *The Carpetbaggers*. And Jullie Andrews captured the wide screen with her film debut in *Mary Poppins*. Domestic box office returns were on the upswing for the first time in nearly a decade and a half.

How many of you remember what television was offering? Huntley and Brinkley were reporting the news. Dick Van Dyke and Mary Tyler Moore were keeping us laughing in a delightful situation comedy. *The Defenders* brought the drama of law into our living rooms. *The Danny Kaye Show* was given an Emmy for the best variety show.

Or maybe you were lucky enough to be at the New York World's Fair in April of 1964 to see the unveiling of the new American sports car, the Ford Mustang. This new and innovative car was comprised of some of the Falcon's components, but was endowed with an unusually broad range of engines, transmissions, and other options. Oddly enough instead of the usual confrontation between engineers and

designers, they frighteningly agreed. A drawing which was finished in September of 1962 was almost exactly the same as the finished product that was introduced a year-and-a-half later. It was fun to order a new Mustang because of the many options such as power steering, power brakes, air-conditioning, rear seat speaker, sports console, padded sun visors, and a vinyl-covered roof just to name a few. It was a relatively low priced version of European sports designs both in appearance and performance.

Lee Iacocca, then director of the Ford Division, took on the Mustang as his special project. It became his love, his obsession from conception. He was part of every decision from original design, to name, to marketing. An invitational press conference was held in the



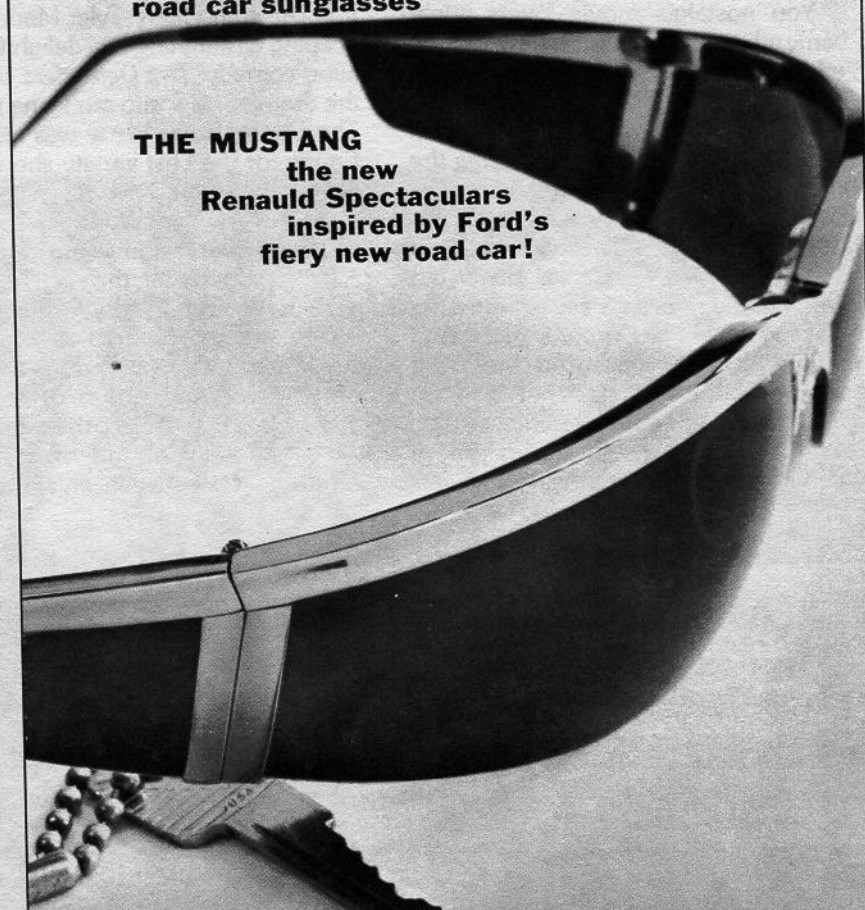
fall of 1963 to give a briefing of this new American sports car to soon be on the market. Mr. Iacocca, himself, gave part of the presentation expressing an uncanny enthusiasm for "his" Mustang. This new car was marketed to appeal to the youth oriented society being constantly portrayed on television, films, magazines, and mass advertisements. The car was not only for the young but for those who wanted to "feel" young and part of the "Now Generation." The base price, being around \$2000, brought car lovers from all walks of life to their nearest Ford dealer. But the "decision makers" of Ford still had not realized what a tremendous impact this Mustang would have on the general public.

April 17, 1964 marked the official day of introduction. Lee Iacocca and a picture of the new Mustang appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine that same week. Ford took 22,000 orders that first day. Immediately dealers had a problem with supply and demand. In 1964 alone Ford produced 196,388 Mustangs and this still wasn't enough to fill the back orders for most dealers. The Mustang became the top selling compact car in only six weeks on the market.

It was now time for some extensive buyer research to be done. The car was not totally limited to the youth, but statistics proved that people between the ages of twenty and thirty-four purchased most of the first Mustangs. Over 40% of the buyers were in the \$5000 to \$10,000 income bracket proving the low cost incentive was a must in effective marketing. Interestingly enough some other facts started to emerge about the 1964 consumer. Over half of the buyers had some college education, almost two-thirds were married, and 53% of Mustang trade-ins were non-Ford products. The Mustang appeared at the right time in history. Many of the buyers wanted a sports car but could not afford a two seater foreign job; but they could afford and justify an American made four seater that looked like a sports car, drove like a sports car, felt like a sports car, but was financially feasible. President Johnson had just announced a cut in income taxes which meant more take home pay in everyone's pocket. The time was euphoric!

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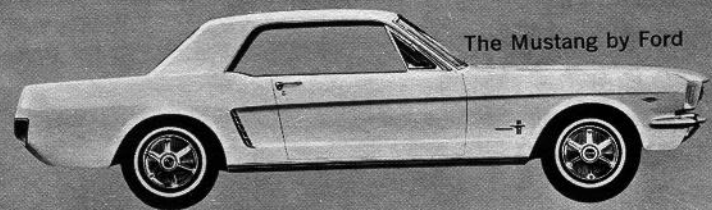
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Spectaculars — sunglasses by Renauld



The Mustang by Ford

Of course many started capitalizing on the tremendous popularity of the car. T-shirts, sunglasses, pants, hats, cuff links, key chains, boots, and

sneakers were all being sold under the name of Mustang. Mustang clubs were popping up all across the nation. They

numbered as many as 400 at one time. "Mustangers" were fun-loving people who drove Mustangs." It was exciting. Gymkhanas, slaloms, autocrosses, rallies, hill climbs, and many other events were sponsored all across the country for Mustang lovers.

The very first Ford Mustang ever sold now resides in a museum in Dearborn, Michigan. This white convertible with black interior was placed on a revolving pedestal at the Henry Ford Museum under the strict care and supervision of transportation curator Randy Mason in one of the world's largest public automobile displays. "The museum's car rolled off the Dearborn assembly line March 9, 1964, as the first of 418,812 Mustangs sold in the first 12 months of production, a worldwide record for a newly introduced car." The first owner was Stanley Tucker. Tucker was an airline pilot from Canada. The car was "donated" to the museum several years later in return for a new Ford Mustang. Les Newcomer, the technician in charge of restoration, found that the body had been spray painted by hand several times, its headlights did not match, the odometer read 10,633 miles, and several dents were found in the hood. Its original cost was approximately \$2,500. If a buyer put one-third of the money down with a three-year loan at the going interest rate in 1964 of 10%, the monthly payments would have been around \$50. Nostalgia once again; I wish I had one of those beauties in my garage today.

The 1964 Mustang, brand new on the market, was selected to be the pace car at the internationally famous Indianapolis 500 car race. But the honor received with the most pride was the Industrial Design Institute Award. It had been accomplished — this special project. The 1964 and a half Mustang was more than off and running, it was galloping on to the automobile scene.

I bet you can guess where I was in 1964; drooling in the showroom of my local Ford dealer and trying to talk my father into buying a Mustang.

Information for this article was found in *Britannica Book of the Year, 1965* and *Mustang, The Complete History of America's Pioneer Ponycar*.



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