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California Dreamin'

2009 Ford Mustang GT California Special

I dislike American cars. To be more specific, I dislike the concept of the muscle car: massive engines producing largely inefficient power figures, massive proportions, and the inability to turn anything more than a gently sweeping corner. Engineering wise, muscle cars had very little innovation, in my opinion.

When my editor sent me on an assignment to feature the one and only modern day Mustang in Bangladesh, I figured I would be standing by my stance on the pseudo-retro muscle car business. He saw it as an opportunity to change it. Would I change my mind? If any car could, it would probably be the successor to the crowning moment of Ford's glittering past.

Yasir M. Faisal wanted a car that would stand out in Dhaka. Seeing a distinct lack of American iron on



Dhaka's streets, and having been fascinated with the legacy and almost 60 years of heritage that the Mustang badge offered, he knew what he wanted to get. It couldn't be any regular Mustang though, and his search for a car led him to the Mustang GT California Special, a convertible special edition built to commemorate the success of the original 1968California Mustang.

Brought in from UAE, the Mustang was originally black. Thinking it would disappear in Dhaka traffic (despite its large proportions and iconic design),Yasir decided it needed new paint. Settling for a metallic gold-yellow with black stripes, the end result is definitely a head turner. In fact, while Tasdid was shooting the thuggishly beautiful car in the searing



afternoon sun, Yasir and I stepped back and watched as every passing car slowed down going past it, passengers gaping at it from a distance. Sitting in the left hand side of a modern but retro-styled cabin, Yasir says he feels like a celebrity while driving it.

Roof down, the car soaks in the sun in true Californian fashion. Sitting on the tarmac, the Mustang's handsome, sun drenched features reflected everything in sight, and gave off a vibe that spelled out "P-O-W-E-R".

A ride along on the empty roads of Baridhara dictated those letters to the car's occupants. Equipped with a torque converter automatic, the Mustang is surprisingly easy to bring up to speed. Just step on the right pedal, and the throaty burble from the 4.6 liter V8 thickens into a full blown roar. The front end rises up marginally, trying to lift itself up to meet the sky, and the car surges forward effortlessly without the drama of a lighter car. With the soft-top up, the wind rushes in between the thin gaps, making the whole ordeal a frenzy of sound, speed and power. It's quite the rush.

When I ask Yasir about the handling, he cracks into a sheepish smile. "Its difficult, driving this thing in traffic. If you're not careful it can break traction very easily, and its best to take the corners as slowly as possible. I've never had any close calls with this car, but you can tell when driving it."

As far as modifications go, other than a K&N air intake, a Borla exhaust and bigger brakes, the Mustang is pretty much stock otherwise. Handling modifications are on the cards, unless Yasir goes abroad for higher studies before any more work can be done on the car. The wheels are from a Shelby GT, and look the part in contrast with the paintjob.

Have I been convinced? Well, in terms of straight line speed from a standing start, few cars can come close to the torque delivery of a big American V8. It also has the presence and charisma expected of such an iconic marque. However, I'd take a tuned STi or Evolution any day, while paying due respect to the legacy of the Mustang.

WORDS: SHAER REAZ

PHOTOS: TASDID CHOWDHURY

Galloping

through the years



First generation (1964–1973)
The original. A cult classic pony-car, immortalized through appearances in films, games, and everything in between. It revolutionized the cheap sports-car market in the US, and was an essential part of the American Dream in the 60's, and still fetches a hefty premium on classic car auctions.



Third generation (1979–1993)
While it wasn't exactly a legendary machine, the third gen Mustang worked its way back into the good books of car enthusiasts with a few interesting engine options in the lineup. Good looks for the Fox body Mustang and its 5.0 liter V8 made it a popular choice for drag racers.



Second generation (1974–1978)
The disappointment. After the massive success of the first generation, the second generation was such a commercial failure that hardly anyone knows what it looks like. The 70's oil crisis hit American manufacturers hard, and they all struggled with the concept of small sports cars. A large blemish on back pages of a fantastic marque.



Fifth generation (2005–2014)
Probably the most successful Mustang model since the original. The modern Mustang aped the '64 Mustang, as a wave of retro-styled muscle cars

Fourth generation (1994–2004)
The fourth generation Mustang had demure looks and the sleek body style made it a popular choice for parents looking for high-school graduation gifts. It had decent performance, and in Cobra R form, it was blisteringly fast, a proper return for the Mustang badge.



Sixth generation (2015-)
There's a new Mustang coming out, and its all new. Modernizing the Mustang involves major changes to the archaic suspension setups and smaller but more powerful engines. Ford's engineering expertise is being fueled into the development of the latest, and possibly greatest Mustang, and seeing what Ford has been working on in recent years, it all looks very promising. Plus, just look at it. People will throng to the dealerships just for the looks.



SHIFT ZONE

Gasoline Power

Bangladesh is all about alternative fuel. Compressed Natural Gas powers most of the four-wheeled mobility here, and we see its benefits: cheap cost and environmentally friendlier than octane. The car enthusiasts here religiously avoid CNG, and we get that as well.

Which is why you need to let your hair down and partake in some hooliganism once in a while, contribute to global warming a little bit. Don't get us wrong, we like fuel efficiency and the conservation of Planet Earth, but that won't put us off appreciating the gas-guzzling, ozone layer hole maker that is an all American V8. We give you the Mustang GT. Enjoy.

-Shaer Reaz, Sub-editor, Shift.



Our Facebook page saw activity reach into the red zone, probably because we posted pictures of so many red things. A rain soaked Toyota AE111 Levin made an appearance, as did a red and black Harrier, the sufferer of many a abuse thrown at it for its ungainly colour scheme.

There was a bit of trolling, as well. We spotted a "Mustang", driving people wild with guesses as to the whereabouts of it. Sadly, the fans were disappointed by the posterior shot, without the square jawed grace of the actual car. We compensated by posting a shot of the actual California Special GT you see featured today.

Come join the fun on our official Facebook page!



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New Car Updates

2014 Toyota GT86 TRD Pack
Toyota Racing Development, Toyota's in-house car tweaking division, have laid their magic touch on the new halo car for the small RWD sports car segment, the GT86. However, the performance figures remain the same as the standard car, most of the changes coming in the exterior department. Two unique paint options (pearl white and GT86 black), a more aggressive bodykit, larger 18 inch TF6 wheels and a quad exhaust flanking a large rear diffuser round off the list of changes to the limited edition model (only 250 will be officially produced).



2014 Nissan X-trail
The X-trail soft-roader is an important car in Nissan's lineup, having a good reputation as a capable, reliable compact SUV. The all-new 2015 X-trail makes a drastic departure from the boxy shape of the previous generations, instead opting for a clean, muscular yet sleek design more in tune with today's SUVs. Laden with tech, the X-trail comes with sub-2 liter engines which fulfil the fuel efficiency needs and meet the power requirements as well. The grey market in Bangladesh might see quite a few of these coming in, providing an alternative to the Harriers and RAV4s.



2015 Dodge Challenger SRT Hellcat
6.2-liter supercharged HEMI Hellcat V8 engine. 707 horsepower, 650 lb-ft of torque. Those numbers make the Challenger SRT Hellcat the most powerful Dodge production model ever, as well as the most powerful factory built muscle car. The transmission is a beefed up TorqueFlite eight speed automatic to handle all that power. It also looks the part, and lives up to the Hellcat name, with a glaring front end promising to dig its vicious claws into the muscle car battle between Ford, Dodge and Chevrolet.

