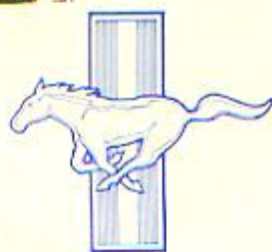


Road & Track Owner Survey



MUSTANG



The sporting image conceals a reliable workhorse

FOR AMERICANS, THE Mustang is a standard . . . perhaps the standard car for people under 40 years old. Introduced in summer 1964, it caught the American public's fancy as no new model since the war has—and caught the other American carmakers asleep at the switch. Today Lee Iacocca is president of Ford, undoubtedly because of the Mustang more than anything else, and its imitators are rife: Camaro, Firebird, Barracuda, Challenger, Javelin, Ford's own higher-class Cougar and the European version, the Capri. In 1971 the Mustang's fortunes are in decline, partly because of all the competition, partly because of an ill national economy and partly because the theme has been worked to death. But it is one of the automotive phenomena of our time.

For R&T readers, the Mustang seems to be the compromise car: the car to buy when one can't afford the desired Porsche, the alternative when one wants a 2-seater but needs a family car, the car to retreat to when the little sports cars have proved unduly temperamental or their dealers too scarce, or the first step away from the lumbering American sedan. When we asked the respondents why they chose Mustang we got comments like "Dealership within close proximity, I had a 1957 Porsche and the closest dealer is 95 miles away" or "I use it in my business and needed a small, nimble car with good styling." And when we asked them if they

would buy another of the same make we often got "Yes—but I still have a secret hankering to go back to a Jag" or "No. For what the Mustang is, it's great and has given me fine service for two years. But it's not the kind of car I enjoy driving and I'm buying a Porsche shortly." When taken point-by-point, the answers to "Why did you buy this make and model?" read much like those for most of the imports we've surveyed: 51% of the owners said they bought a Mustang for its styling, 21% for its "performance" (meaning acceleration mainly), 20% for its size (small by American standards), 19% for its handling (good handling expected because of the compact size), 15% for its reasonable price, and 10% each for its expected reliability and economy.

The Cars, Their Use & Maintenance

OUR RESPONDENTS owned 50 1967 models, 42 1968s and 44 1969s; there were not enough examples with sufficient miles on their odometers to qualify for inclusion of 1970s in the survey. Average mileage on the 1967s was 33,400, on the 1968s 22,600 and on the 1969s 15,200; the "oldest" car in the survey was a 1967 with 61,000 miles. So this group of cars was not a particularly high-mileage one, and we decided against including 1965-1966 models because they are so different from today's Mustang. Average annual mileage for all models was 14,800 miles.

As we expected, the Mustangs are used mainly for daily transportation; in fact the 92% reporting this use seemed surprisingly small. Seventy-two percent take their Mustangs on extended journeys as well; 19% participate in rallies and 8% in slaloms. Among the various makes R&T has surveyed to date—13 imports and the Corvette—Mustang drivers are the easiest-driving of the lot with 50% saying they drive "moderately" (the highest such percentage so far) and only 5% saying they drive "very hard" (the lowest figure, shared with Jaguar E-type and MGB). This ties in well with the distribution of engine and transmission options on the cars surveyed; for all three years the most popular engine was the lowest-powered, hydraulic-lifter V-8—in 1967 and 1968 the 289 of 200 or 195 bhp and in 1969 the 302 of 220 bhp—and fitment of automatic transmission ran 2-to-1 over the 4-speed manual though the latter gained ground in 1969. Small V-8s with 4V carburetors were the next most popular engine option, with the 351 replacing 289s and 302s for that slot in 1969; 6-cylinder engines outnumbered the really big 390s, 427s and 428s. There was one Cobra-modified 289 and there was not a single 289/271-bhp job in the bunch.

We were interested to see whether Mustang owners are more or less fastidious about routine maintenance than those who drive sporty imported machinery. They're only slightly less so, we find; 64% of them follow the manufacturer's suggested maintenance schedule closely (vs 65% for the sporty imports) and 22% follow it partly (vs 26% for the imports). There's a definite pattern of skepticism about today's long-mileage intervals between oil changes among owners in our surveys; for the imports about 10% of the owners change oil more often than the maker suggests. But for the two American makes surveyed, the figure is higher; 31% of the Mustang owners take this precaution and 33% of the Corvette drivers do. Interesting, and we can't explain why.

Ford Service

IN A WORD, Ford service isn't good. But we knew that, and even Henry Ford II—in his remarkable candor—has ad-

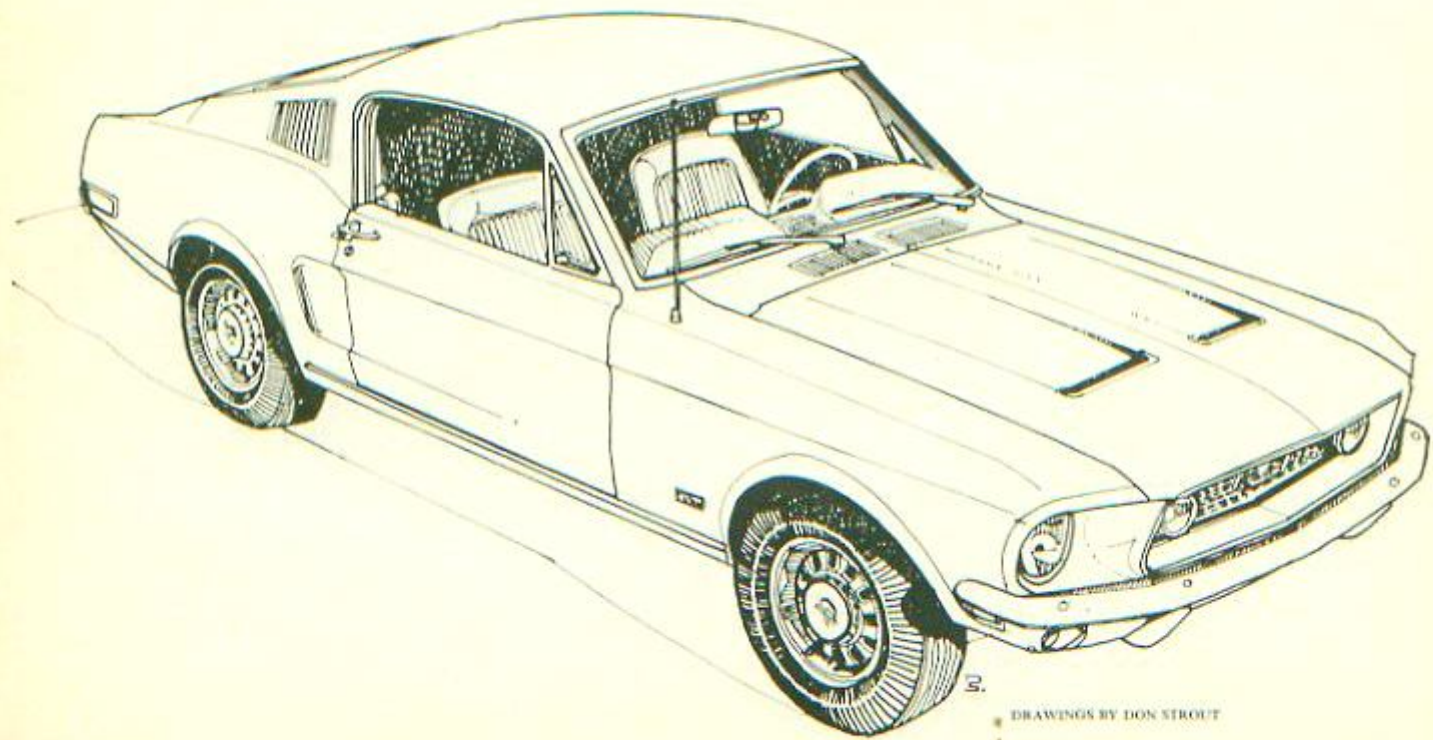
mitted it, speaking for the entire domestic industry. Sure enough, Ford service rates almost to the percentage point with Chevrolet's and well below the average for all makes surveyed (nine imported sports or GT cars, four imported sedan series and the two domestics):

	Avg. 15			Best	Worst
	Ford	Chevrolet	Makes		
"Good" rating	32%	32%	46%	62%	31%
"Fair" rating	29%	28%	26%	26%	20%
"Poor" rating	30%	32%	24%	12%	32%

For those makes whose percentages of owners rating dealers do not total 100, there is a proportion of owners who had no opinion of their dealer or dealers. Some typical comments on Ford service: "The warranty is worthless" (Ford and other makers have reverted to 12-month, 12,000-mile warranties) . . . "gives me heartburn" . . . "overburdened." On the other hand, only 2% mentioned that service was too expensive and we've had a higher occurrence of this comment with imported makes. But it seems owners would rather pay more and get better service.

Best & Worst Features

WHAT DO Mustang owners like best about their ponycars? And least? This one is fun. The No. 1 best feature among the owners is handling, with 30% of the owners saying so. But 35% of the owners said that handling, ride or suspension was the *worst* feature of the car. How do we reconcile this? Well, it seems a bit like the VW survey, in which handling was in both the best and worst feature lists. Compared to larger, more cumbersome cars, the Mustang is agile and easy to handle around town. To many people this is what "handling" means. To others—a larger proportion, thankfully, in our survey—there is more to it than that and the Mustang's severe limitations become clearly apparent. Its chassis is typically American in that not much money has been spent on it by the maker. It's particularly deficient in the rear end, where simple leaf springs are re-



DRAWINGS BY DON STROUT

MUSTANG



quired to locate a live axle that, with V-8 engines, must transmit a lot of torque. Styling has dictated a low body which restricts wheel space and hence suspension travel. And finally, the car—especially with the larger engines—is quite nose-heavy. These factors have conspired to make Mustangs hard-riding, prone to suspension bottoming and eager to spin their rear tires on wet pavement. So any driver who attempts to cover ground quickly at high speeds and/or on pavement that isn't smooth discovers that the Mustang isn't cut out for it.

But to the other best features. Pretty much the same things occur here that showed up in the "reasons for buying" column: performance, mentioned by 23% of the owners; economy, 23%; reliability, 18%; styling, 12%; size, 10%.

The other "worst" features were quality control (29%, with things like rattles, squeaks and knobs falling off occurring most frequently); the standard drum brakes, considered inadequate by 12% of the owners; the paint, 9%; and limited rearward vision, 8%.

Problem Areas & Component Life

THIS is where we expected the Mustang to excel. As things turn out it's no runaway star, but it is above average. Only three problems occurred for more than 10% of the owners and one of those (a front end that wouldn't hold alignment) was corrected in the 1970 models, we understand. Four problems plagued 5-10% of the owners, one of which (the starter) was also supposedly corrected on the 1970 model. There was a rash of water pump trouble on 1967s. Dissatisfaction with brakes and shock absorbers are likely to continue as long as drum brakes and the typical American short-lived shocks are standard, but in including these two items in the trouble list we attempted to exclude the normal wearouts. Average life for the brakes was 29,000

front (disc or drum), 32,000 rear; for the shocks a mere 21,000 miles!

Spark plugs last an average of 11,500 miles; there were no significant deviations from this except for the "hot" engines such as 428s, and there weren't enough of these to assure us a correct average. Tires averaged 18,000 miles before replacement, but the average for the old bias wide ovals, introduced in 1967, was only 14,000. Fourteen percent of the owners had fitted radial tires and all of them were glad they had.

A total of 17% of the Mustang owners experienced no trouble at all. This is very good as our surveys go and has been exceeded by only two other makes, both having great reputations for quality of manufacture. According to our Mustang owners we can't accuse the Mustang of being a "quality car," but it certainly does appear to be a reliable one. Compare it to some other makes with reputations for reliability:

	Number of Problem Areas Experienced By		
	Over 10% of Owners	5-10% of Owners	Trouble-free Cars
Mustang	3	6	17%
Volkswagen	2	3	35%
Volvo	4	6	10%
Mercedes-Benz	1	2	27%

THAT SUMMARIZES the Mustang as covered by this survey: a reliable workhorse, durable in most of its major components, with a sporty image. The highest-powered Mustangs are something else, with dragstrip performance and very good handling on smooth, dry roads; but to the owners who responded to our questionnaires the Mustang is appealing mainly for its practicality combined with sporty styling. That's the way we see it too.



SUMMARY: FORD MUSTANG 1967-1968-1969 OWNER SURVEY

New or Used?
 Bought new.....80%
 Bought used.....20%

Mileages
 Avg. miles on
 1967s.....33,400
 1968s.....22,600
 1969s.....15,200

How owners feel about Ford service
 Rated "Good".....32%
 Rated "Fair".....29%
 Rated "Poor".....30%
 No opinion.....9%

About Driving Habits
 Drivers who said they drove "Moderately".....50%
 Drivers who said they drove "Hard".....45%
 Drivers who said they drove "Very Hard".....5%

Problem Areas Mentioned by more than 10% of the owners
 Front-end alignment (1967 & 1968)
 Carburetor
 Instruments

Mentioned by 5-10% of the owners
 Brakes
 Shock absorbers
 Starter (1967 & 1968)
 Differential
 Clutch
 Water pump
 Owners reporting no troubles.....17%

How many current Mustang owners would buy another?
 Would.....70%
 Would not.....28%
 Undecided.....2%

Five Best Features
 Handling
 Performance
 Economy
 Reliability
 Styling

Five Worst Features
 Handling
 Quality control
 Brakes
 Paint
 Rear vision