

Drop-top Mustang turns heads

By **NEIL MOORE**
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In "Gotta Have It" green, with Mustang Club of America striping and billet-style front grille, this V6-powered Mustang Convertible turned more heads than vehicles costing several times the price.

But no matter what exterior mods were applied to this car— be it spoilers, lowered fascia, side scoops, whatever— it never held a candle to Ford's first efforts.

Which was why so many Mustang fans welcomed its retro return for the 2005 model year.

I won't delve into the numerous styling tweaks, new engines, etc. that have occurred since its 40th birthday, but will simply add that the current generation, which blends late 1960's styling

with today's driver tech, now includes the best looking, best performing models to date.

One of these was my tester for the week, the V6 'Premium' Convertible.

Premium trim is the only way you can order the Mustang droptop with V6 engine, making it the least expensive convertible option at \$32,499, not including special incentives at time of writing. Other convertibles include the GT with 5.0-litre V8 (420 hp, 390 lb/ft) and the Shelby GT500 with 5.8-litre

supercharged V8 (662 hp, 631 lb/ft). All that brawn is nice, but I was just fine tooling around town with Ford's 3.7-litre V6 under the hood. Sure, it can't match its siblings on any performance metric— in particular the asphalt-ripping Shelby— but with a nice burble coming off its wide-bore dual exhausts, I felt in no way shortchanged.

You can order the V6 Mustang with six-speed auto, but mine thankfully came with the standard-equipped six-speed manual. Its short-throw shifter is a joy to work, and the clutch has a nice, smooth takeup that gets you off the lights without drama.

I've heard some complaints that this V6 feels a bit sluggish due to the vehicle's 1,647 kg (3,630-lb) curb weight and tall 2.73 final drive ratio.

These are key considerations for racing, but a moot point for a vehicle that's more about cruising. If you want a track-ready Mustang, there are several models and mods to choose from.

That being said, the launch supplied by this engine should satisfy most drivers, in particular when using the manual gearbox. I'll add, however, that if you want to pass on the highway, be prepared to drop from sixth to fourth gear for any kind of acceleration.

What impressed me far more than

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