

At last, spring is springing. There's no better way to exorcise winter's apathy than by dropping your top and carving through your favorite piece of countryside. Our SpringFILE cars cluster in the middle of the convertible spectrum: no great performance, but tolerable insurance premiums, a major distraction from open motoring pleasure.

Ford Mustang Convertible

Domestic Satisfaction



BILL DELANEY PHOTOS

It's a slice of Americana at its finest: a turquoise Mustang convertible, top down, cruising in the California sun. Add a winding road, sunglasses, good music, an appreciative traveling companion, and you've got the makings for a pleasant afternoon. The destination itself doesn't matter. The Mustang V6 convertible satisfies your desire for affordable, top-down motoring.

For the 1994 model year, Ford offered

Mustang's first major redesign in 15 years. Ford wanted to retain the car's classic styling cues and rear-wheel-drive system, and at the same time keep a lid on potential sticker shock. It also wanted to offer its customers a greater range of a choice.

Previous Mustang convertibles offered only the bland four-cylinder or V8. Now, customers can choose from among a base V6, or from two V8s—a 215-hp GT version or a 240-hp Cobra.

In addition to three decades of heritage, part of the Mustang's appeal stems from its relative affordability. The '93 LX convertible was priced at \$17,650. The base '95 model starts at \$20,995. But in that three-grand increase, buyers get a better-designed and -executed car with an additional two cylinders and dual airbags. The Mustang convertible with a V8 starts at \$22,795.

The 145-hp V6 '95 model we tested costs \$23,710, and includes a \$1,550 preferred equipment package—a/c, speed control, 15-inch wheels, cargo net, keyless entry, power

Facts

Manufacturer's Data

Ford Motor Co.
The American Road
Dearborn, MI 48121
1-800-241-FORD
United States
4308 dealers
Customer Assistance telephone number:
1-800-241-FORD
Country of Origin: United States
Number of dealers: 4308

Pricing

Base: \$20,995
As tested: \$23,235
Rebates: No national plan
Destination charge: \$475
What Owners Paid: : \$22,000—
26,535; \$24,041 avg.

Voices

Owners

This car was my 35th anniversary present—exactly what I wanted! This is a spectacular vehicle, lots of get up and go and great eye appeal. One look at the new Mustang is all that was necessary.

Pat Morgart
Ormond Beach, Fla.

I hope this car has good resale value when my wife tires of it! I think it would be a much more enjoyable car if it were as spacious on the inside as my 1966 Mustang convertible. The top is very easy to operate.

Kenneth Griese
Columbia, S.C.

I've had five Mustangs and this is the best one yet. I like the classic '60s styling and the very solid body structure. The Mach 460 sound system is awesome. For the money, this car is hard to beat. It even beats the 325i convertible I owned.

Tom Walton
San Diego

The Canary Yellow body with a black top attracts attention like no car I've ever owned. Everywhere I go, people acknowledge the Mustang, whether the top is up or down. This attention can get scary to the point at which I am hesitant to leave the car unattended for fear of



The Mustang has an efficient dash despite minuscule radio buttons. The exterior evokes Mustang history. The V6 makes 145 hp and a throaty exhaust note.

driver's seat and a premium sound system.

At the track, the Mustang's 0-60 time of 9.63 seconds is half a second slower than the Celica ragtop we tested and therefore, about a second-and-a-half slower than a typical, mid-priced sporty coupe. But it is a convertible, which entails extra weight to accompany the top. And some of the laggard performance in the car we tested is attributable to a four-speed automatic.

In real-world driving, the car is not as sluggish. It accelerates briskly on freeway entrances, and downshifts readily for passing. The pushrod V6 needs only 1600 rpm to cruise at 70 mph, and provides a nice, medium-toned exhaust growl. Wind and road noises are minimal, and improvements in the body structure are obvious; the new Mustang convertible doesn't shake, rattle and roll like the old ones.

This solid body remains in spite of the car's convertible status. Cowl shake is

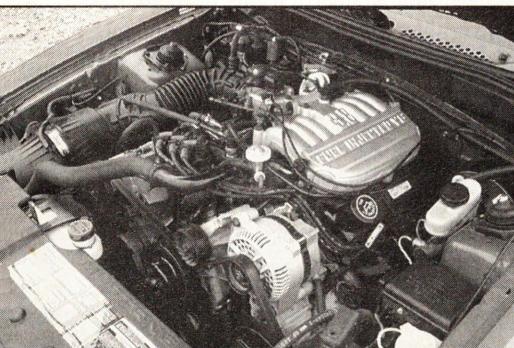
noticeable but not intrusive, and certainly much less than before. The electric top fits precisely and comes down easily with the standard two-clamps-and-a-button process.

The rest of the equation has to do with balance. The V6 is lighter than the eight, and doesn't force excessive nosedive on hard braking or quick cornering. On our 490-foot slalom run, the car reacted more quickly than the nose-heavy GT (AW, June 6). The tires stayed planted through tight turns. With a live axle rear suspension, severe bumps tend to unsettle the car, though it's still much easier to maintain control than in previous generations.

The steering isn't overly assisted; it's tight and responsive, and feels like you're in a real sports car. The brakes are good (stopping from 60 mph in a respectable 140 feet), and the suspension is sporty without being overly harsh.

One final item worth noting: Readers report that for insurance purposes, the V6 Mustang doesn't merit a "sports car" rating, and thus the extra cost that comes with such cars is avoidable in a Mustang.

Sure, it may lack something in the excitement category. But the Mustang's attributes more than make up for it. For those who desire a domestic convertible, the V6 Mustang is worth considering. It's a solid, no-frills, fun ragtop. ■



theft. The car is an absolute hoot to be in and to drive. My gas mileage is consistently about 18 miles per gallon. The car's traction in snow really leaves a lot to be desired, but next year I'll put snow tires on for the winter.

*T. Sandor
Buffalo, N.Y.*

This Mustang convertible is fantastic. The fit and finish are terrific. There are no leaks, rattles or squeaks. The only thing the car needs is back lights in the door controls (windows and locks).

*W.F. Ghigo
Allen Park, Mich.*

Others

The base Mustang performed particularly well on long trips, where a quiet, low-revving engine, heavy flywheel, and relatively serene ride on smooth pavement made the car a good tourer. The revamped structure is acoustically well-damped. Avoid bumpy roads because the car has rather poor rebound damping, and produces a lot of unnecessary pitch and float... In truth, the Mustang's shortcomings are largely relative to a driver's expectations.

Car and Driver

The Mustang doesn't feel as sporty as its rear-drive pony car competitors. The base

Numbers

Standing-Start Acceleration

0-60 mph	9.6 sec
0-quarter mile	82 mph, 17.2 sec

Braking

60-0	140 ft
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Fuel Economy

EPA city	19 mpg
EPA hwy	29 mpg
EPA combined	23 mpg
AW overall	19.0 mpg
Corrected for odometer error of 0.5%	

Best Numbers

0-60 mph	8.3 sec (manual, C and D)
SS 1/4-mile	16.5 sec (manual, C and D)
60-0	140 ft (AW)
Skidpad	0.77g (manual, C and D)

Engine

Front-longitudinal, 3.8-liter/232-cid V6	
Horsepower	145 @ 4000 rpm
Torque (lb ft)	215 @ 2500 rpm
Compression ratio	9.0:1
Valve train	Pushrod, two valves per cylinder
Fuel delivery	Electronic injection

Drivetrain

Rear-wheel-drive	
Transmission	Four-speed automatic
Final drive ratio	2.73:1

Brakes

F/R	Power discs, ABS
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Wheels and Tires

Aluminum, 205/65R-15 BSW All-Season	
Performance	

Suspension

Front	MacPherson strut, coil springs, gas-pressurized hydraulic shocks, antiroll bar
Rear	Upper and lower control arms, solid axle, coil springs, gas-pressurized hydraulic shocks, antiroll bar

Dimensions

Wheelbase (in)	101.3
Length/width (in)	181.5/71.8
Test weight (lb)	3257

Capacities

Fuel (gal)	15.4
Cargo (cu ft)	8.5 (trunk)

3.8-liter V6 feels sluggish on takeoff, and it nosedives severely during braking. Front seats provide adequate support but little comfort. Adults won't be comfortable in the rear. Except for the radio, the controls are well-designed.

Consumer Reports

The strikingly redesigned Ford Mustang has been in high sales gear since it hit dealer showrooms, and the 1995 model promises to keep that popularity cruising right along. Convertibles account for one out of three 1994 orders, and that pace is expected to continue.

Ford press information