



ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Mike Cross and his 1985 black Saleen

Text and Photos by
Dave Stribling

Some cars don't have to be used and abused all their life. A few lucky cars, like Mike Cross' 1985 Saleen Hatchback, start out life good and stay that way.

Mike happens to be the owner of an auto detailing shop in Newberry Park, Calif. In 1985 he was looking for a new mode of transportation when he discovered that Galpin Ford in Van Nuys had

a new, black Saleen Mustang sitting on the showroom floor. Being one for cars slightly off the beaten path, Mike decided to check out the car and see if it was for him.

Saleen number '85-0116 was as Mike had expected, with its 210 horsepower 4 barrel V8 engine, 5-speed transmission and 3.08 rear axle gear. Air conditioning, power windows and door locks, rear defrost and a Kenwood sound system helped make the car a pleasant place to live while on the California highway system. The Racecraft Suspension includes specific rate springs, Bilstein shocks and a set of Fulda tires to round out the complete performance package. Satisfied that this was the direction he should take, Mike became the owner of 116 in late '85.

Soon after the purchase of the car, Mike discovered that the original tires were not wearing well, and switched to a set of 225/50VR16 Yokohamas. The Kenwood stereo also had some problems, so it was back to the

dealer who replaced it with the latest Pioneer offering from Saleen. Mike added a little performance to the package with a K&N air filter and a set of underdrive pulleys for the motor. Back at the detailing shop, Mike laid down a custom tint to the windows to help advertise for one of his expertise. Other than that, the car is as delivered.

Being the owner of a detail shop, Mike kept the black beauty in top shape as an advertisement for his trade. Mike drove the car daily for the first two years, but too many people and too much potential for serious damage forced Mike to park the car. The last 3 years have only seen 200 miles placed on the odometer, bringing the grand total up to 16,000 miles. The plans are to keep this future collectible in that same pattern, using it only for pleasure drives.

So you see, not all great cars must have a rags to riches story. For Mike Cross, attention to detail is the key to long term success.



More than just a performance package, Saleen Mustangs feature dress up items like this custom shift knob.



Saleen Solution

Text by Adams Hudson

Steve Saleen has been compared to Carroll Shelby, and thus, Saleen Mustangs to the Shelby Mustangs. Regardless of the similarities that may crop up in a surface discussion, the differences from a value oriented perspective (my job, remember?) are incalculable. People have asked me at least 12 dozen times if I thought that Saleens will be valued alongside Shelbys, and here in the pages of FBG, you'll get the answer after I vent some more.

The difference is time. The difference is chemistry. The difference is a million and one variables that don't fit into the same equation. Case in point. There are people knocking out impressionist paintings in China. These artworks, and I've seen color photos, are remarkable. You'd swear you were looking at the works of Manet, or Cassat, or equally impressive handiwork. Even if you know it's a copy, you know that the painter is fantastically gifted. World class talent. Yet you and I will probably never know their names. The only reason these folks aren't wildly famous is that they were not born in France during the mid-19th century

and drinking Absinthe with a bunch of weirdos. Different time, different chemistry, and that's why we can't "cross-compare" Shelbys and Saleens. Any attempt to determine if the Saleens (which are "new" cars) will become as desirable as Shelbys (which are quite "old" cars) is pure voodoo. Whew. I feel better, kind of like a shot of Techroline.

Steve Saleen makes incredibly impressive cars. We know that — and most importantly for their future value — the record books know that. He has built one of the most successful Ford-based racers in recent years. His name is alongside the likes of Carroll Shelby, who also made a pretty special Ford-based racer. They each have made cars built around this success and the Mustang. And I do feel comfortable taking the relationship to each era's respective Mustangs and pulling in data from that source to come up with a fair evaluation for today.

The numbers tell us that there is a distinct time line relationship in value between early Mustangs and Shelbys now. For the same condition '66 Fastback GT K-code compared to a '66 Shelby, the values run about 2.2:1. We can take some of the information we have on Saleen sales and asking

prices to factor their worth over same-year GT 5.0s, which is approximately 1.6:1. (This is the fairest most accurate comparison I know how to make and if you differ, please call Larry Bloemker at home on weekends. He loves interactive readership. He told me.)

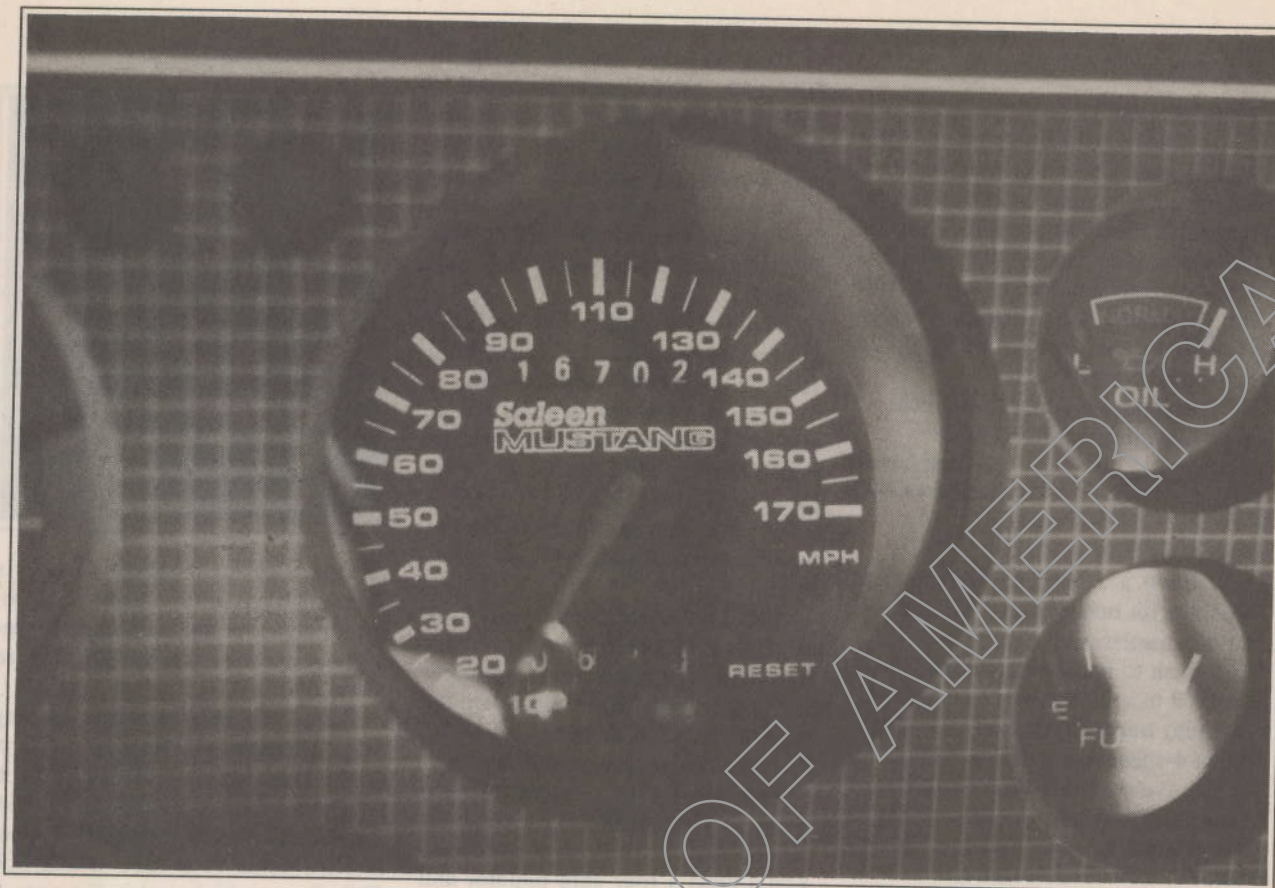
Even though my value guide runs up to the 1989 model year, I personally feel that if anything, the advent of the new Cobra Mustang has damaged the current offering of "Specialized" Mustangs. But the Saleen has been with us for (could it be) nearly ten years, so its base is a bit more defined than some others. I feel they will depreciate at a lesser rate than their production counterparts over time, but the ultimate determination of their future value is up to you in the marketplace.

The benefits for the potential Saleen buyer are many. You get name, style, performance, handling, and rarity. With every purchase you get the panache of racing history thrown in for free. All of this figures prominently into any car of collectible worthiness, and the Saleen is certainly no exception.



	1	2	3	4	5
1984					insufficient data available
1985	8,000	7,000	6,100	5,000	4,000
1986	9,250	8,100	7,250	5,900	4,500
1987	10,950	9,700	8,800	7,000	5,250
1988	12,300	11,000	10,200	8,000	6,000
1989	13,900	12,950	12,000	9,250	6,750
1989 SSC	17,500	16,250	15,500	12,000	8,000

(add 30% for convertibles)



All the right parts

The '84-'85 Saleen Mustangs

Text by Dave Stribling
Photo by FBG Staff

We should all know by heart the story of the Texas chicken farmer who built the cars that beat Ferrari and brought the Ford Motor Company some of its brightest moments. After scoring big with his own car, Ford asked the racer to design a performance oriented version of their new sports car to rev up sales and to back it up with racing victories. The Shelby Mustangs soon followed in the Cobra's footsteps and did everything Ford had hoped.

Ever since then, individuals have attempted to recreate the magic that was generated over 30 years ago at The Shelby American companies, with very little success. It seems that nobody was getting the complete

package, and it would take someone with all the right moves to make it happen again.

Horsepower started to return to factory musclecars in 1982, and in turn revived enthusiast interest in new performance cars. The time was right for someone to step forward and build a new performance car that was more than just a factory clonemobile. Steve Saleen had been keeping his right foot well exercised on the SCCA road courses around the country, and felt it was time to create his own legendary car. To do the job, he would need all the right parts.

The very first Saleen Mustangs were to focus on handling, since the rules of the game had changed since Shelby built his first Cobra engines. Starting with a hatchback 5.0 Mustang, Steve began by installing his Racecraft Suspension components

that were designed from his work on SCCA race cars. Specific rate springs and Bilstein shocks and struts were added to aid the unibody, and Goodyear Eagle GT 215/60HR15 tires were installed on Hayashi rims.

The external appearance of the cars directly benefitted from the Trans Am cars with the addition of a rear spoiler for maximum downforce, one piece front end spoiler and side spats. A set of headlight covers smoothed out the factory lines, and special three tone graphics further separated the cars from its stock counterparts. The side 5.0 emblem was a Saleen emblem right next to the stock Mustang logo. A Saleen sunshield was also added to the appearance package.

There isn't much to do to the engine bay of a car that will hopefully carry a full warranty and not cost

Better Late (Model) Than Never

Finding specialty late model parts can be harder than some people think

Text by Larry Bloemker
Photos by FBG Staff

On the surface, it would seem that finding the parts you need for a late model collectible car would be an easier task than hunting down vintage OEM goodies for something built two or three decades ago.

Unfortunately, there are many auto enthusiasts who can tell tales of fruitless searches for parts that were made less than 10 years ago. The auto industry is not what it used to be, and I'm not talking about the lack of big-block power in sporty two door cars.

Today, auto companies run tighter ships than ever before. They supply parts on an as-needed basis. If you have to wait a week for the dealer to get parts for your late '80s Taurus, just think about the chances of having a decent parts supply for something as exotic as an SVO.

No, late model restorations suffer because of tighter supply lines and the lack of strong aftermarket support.

Given the fact that a car like a Saleen Mustang came from a specialty manufacturer that plays David to Ford's Goliath, the picture doesn't get any brighter.

All, however, is not lost. And it is fellow auto enthusiasts (who else?) that can come to the late model restorers rescue. In fact, a late model owner may be more dependent on the help of fellow enthusiasts than the guys that worship Ford's efforts from the late '60s.

There certainly are places for Saleen owners needing parts to turn to, but they are rather limited.

First on this list is, of course, Saleen itself. Jimmy Moore of Saleen Performance told us that there are indeed some parts left for the early cars. "Some of the '85 body kits were made of fiberglass and those molds have been destroyed, but the '86 kits will work on the '85s," he said.

As far as interior parts go, "some of the interior parts have been discontinued because the suppliers have gone out of business, but we can

come pretty close with replacements," Moore said.

If pretty close isn't what you have in mind for your early Saleen, then you have your detective work cut out for you. The most practical place to start your search would be with like-minded enthusiasts. The Saleen Registry can get you in touch with fellow Saleen lovers so you can network until your heart is content and your garage is full of the parts you need.

Other sources may be late model parts suppliers that specialize in catering to unique late model owner's needs. Jim Dingell of Mustang Dynamics stocks parts for unique late models including Special Service Mustangs (the cop cars), SVOs and early Saleens.

We've included phone numbers to help aid you in your search. It may take more time and effort than many people realize, but restoring your early Saleen can give you the satisfaction of knowing that you have an early, unique example of late model Mustang performance.



Saleen Performance 3080
29th St. Long Beach, CA
90806 (310) 595-5964

Saleen Owners and
Enthusiasts Club PO Box
1079 Sterling VA 22170
John McCauley Pres. (703)
444-2535

Saleen Registry PO Box 59
RFD#1 Charlemont MA
01339 (413) 625 6445

Mustang Dynamics 13204
Jasper Road Fairfax, VA
22033 (703) 818-9892

