

Heavy CHEVYS

Fast FORDS

Hot DODGES

POPULAR CARS

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STREET FIGHTERS



SALEEN
MUSTANG . . .
GT 350 of
the '80s?

CHEVY
ALUMINUM
BIG-BLOCK
BUILD UP!

ROAD
TEST:

Buick's Turbo V 6 GN



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THE

Saleen

MUSTANG

THE SAME CONCEPT USED BY CARROLL SHELBY TWENTY YEARS AGO

BY JERRY DEXTER

It seems like it was just last issue (it was!) that I was lamenting about the lack of exciting cars being built in Detroit, and the fact that the V8-powered Mustangs weren't being set up to handle like the SVOs. In my mind, I was reminiscing about the good old days back when Carroll Shelby was building his GT 350s. Well, guess what? While I wasn't watching, a gentleman by the name of Steve Saleen, was putting together a Mustang package that would make ol' Carroll envious.

Saleen has an arrangement with Ford similar to what Shelby had back in the mid-'60s. A Mustang is special ordered from the factory, and is further modified at the Saleen facility in La Habra, California. Their offices

are in Burbank and you can reach them at Saleen Autosport, 313 North Lake Street, Burbank, CA 91502, (213) 849-1017.

Ford starts with a "basic" Mustang LX, adds a few off-the-shelf suspension parts, installs the GT seats, and drops in the 210-horsepower V8 five-speed powertrain combination. The rest of the changes are made at Saleen's "mini-factory."

The mechanical changes, though not as interesting to look at as the appearance changes, are what really sets this car apart. The powertrain is left totally stock—none of the warranties are voided by the conversion—but, the suspension was worked over radically. Specific rate front and rear coil springs replace the Ford units, as do new specially valved Bilstein shocks and struts (front and rear). Other chassis improvements

include an additional crossmember and urethane sway bar bushings in front. These components, combined with Hayashi 16-inch wheels and Fulda tires, comprise what they call the "Racecraft" high performance tuned suspension.

Appearance has been improved a number of different ways. Internally, the instrumentation received new faces to include the Saleen logo (the speedo was modified to read mph), the instrument cluster facade was given a hi-tech look, and the shift knob was replaced with a leather-covered number that bears the Saleen logo. A Saleen/Wolf leather-covered steering wheel, a security system, a radar detector, a serialized dash plaque, and an optional Kenwood stereo finish off the interior.

Externally, the Saleen Mustang is a real grabber. The most obvious



changes are the bolt-on air dam, side skirts/fender flares, and the whale tail. They also made a few less obvious changes including painting the side louvers to match the body, and the addition of the graphics and headlight covers. An unusual idea Saleen has is to not only serialize the cars with the dash plaques, each car has its own number painted on the left side headlight recess. The final touch is found under the hood (the only change found here) where they chromed the top of the air cleaner.

We had the car for only a short period of time but it was long enough to know we liked it. It was love at first drive—it handles great! The only criticisms were the size of the whale tail and the repetition of the Saleen logo and name. When told that the tail was there because it works, not just to look good, that criticism was forgotten; and the Saleen logo appears only a couple of more times than the Shelby logo did on his Mustangs.

At last Ford has an all-around performance machine to compete with the IROC-Z Camaro, even though the production is limited. If you want one of these and your local Ford dealer thinks you're talking Greek when you inquire about them, give Steve Saleen a call at the aforementioned number. Obtaining one of these cars may not be the easiest automotive purchase you will make, but if you like blowing off Camaros it's a must. 

