



THE SALEEN MUSTANG

Cheaper than the GT, and more interesting . . .

By Wallace Wyss

Steve Saleen is a former Formula Atlantic and current IMSA GTO racer who, like Carroll Shelby before him, is applying his racing experience toward refining the Mustang.

The result is the Saleen Mustang, even more refined than what Ford produces.

Saleen used as his model the 302 cu. in. Mustang GT which Ford introduced in 1982.

The Mustang GT has enjoyed a certain amount of popularity because it packs a lot of power for the price — \$12,000 on the average.

But it still was not a truly satisfying car — having some rough edges — and Ford has improved it year by year. In 1984 Ford brought out a second "performance" Mustang, the turbocharged four-cylinder SVO. It had 4-wheel discs and many other refinements but, at \$17,000, found few takers.

Nobody wanted to pay \$5000 more for a blown Ford four when they could get a V8 with more durability for the smaller price.

Steve Saleen also believed in the V8, only his concept was to modify the lower-cost Mustang LX to make it, in effect, a better Mustang GT than the Mustang GT. So far, he has built 70 cars, most going to Ford dealers who wanted to offer something different.

The exterior modifications catch the eye first: a deep front spoiler and a horizontal rear wing, both of which are functional. Then there are fiberglass "spats" smoothing out the body's airflow somewhat. The wheels are aluminum, size 15" x 7" and are shod with Goodyear Eagles "Gatorback" tires, sized 225.60VR15. These tires are the same type used on the 1984 and '85 Corvette. Saleen doesn't go to four

wheel discs like the SVO (which would greatly increase the cost) but does improve the braking by going to Tilton metallic pads for the front discs.

The front anti-roll bar was increased to a much larger 1.31" diameter and Saleen added a rear bar, .79" in diameter. To eliminate chassis flex, he added an additional front crossmember. The result of these changes is a more neutral handling car than the stock Mustang.

Saleen replaced the stock steering wheel with a smaller one made by Wolf and covered with black leather.

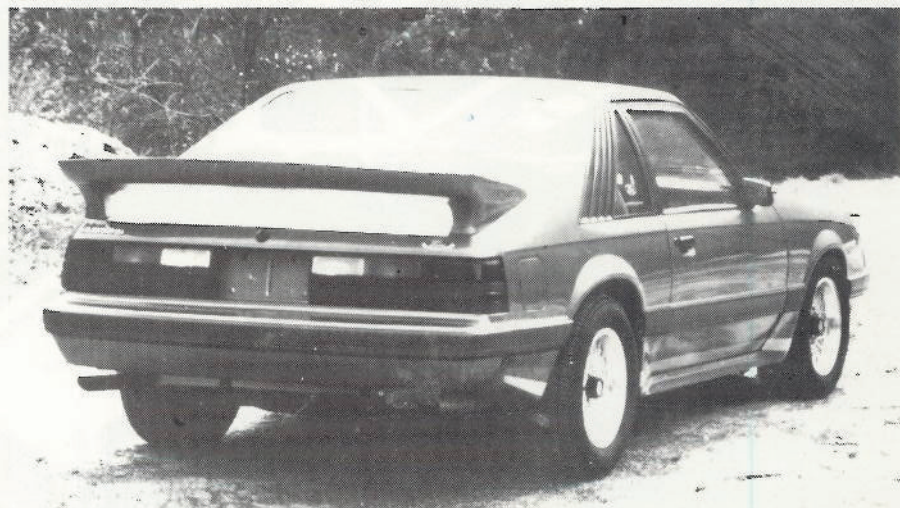
Other items in the Saleen package include transparent headlight covers to smooth out the aerodynamics; a 170 mph speedometer, an electronic tach, and assorted stripes, louvers

and chrome trim.

To foil thieves, an ultrasonic burglar alarm is available, while the driver can foil police radar traps by selecting the Escort radar detector — one of the best on the market.

What's it like to drive the Saleen Mustang? Well, first of all, you are surprised if you haven't driven a Ford lately. This one has lots of power. The engine has a Holley four-barrel carburetor — a rarity when most auto-makers are going to fuel injection. It also has a roller cam — an old hot-rodder's trick up-dated by Ford. It allows them to run a mild cam and yet still enjoy high revs.

The shifter is a heavy-duty T-5 manual 5-speed with 305 lb.-ft. torque capacity. It moves easily from gear to gear, being very



saleen mustang

"short throw". The close-ratio gearing is I: 2.95; II: 1.94; III: 1.34; IV: 1.00 and V: 0.63.

The ride, thanks to the six Bilstein gas strut and shock absorber combination, can best be described as "supple", the car having enough resistance to minor bumps to absorb them, but still not punish you with a rock-hard ride as in the 1985 Pontiac Firebird Trans-Am.

Because the Saleen uses the LX Mustang as a base, and the LX uses the GT dashboard, it has a neat look to the interior with an 8000 rpm tach, the Saleen 170 mph speedo and gauges for oil pressure, water temperature and voltage.

The appeal of the Saleen Mustang, then, lies in the fact that it gives you more for less. The Mustang LX costs less than the Mustang GT so that gives Saleen some room to add some genuinely useful items instead of cosmetic gingerbread.

Saleen is now working on a convertible version though it is expected it have more body flex than the coupe. The entire Saleen package costs \$4195 — depending, of course, on whether you want every conceivable option.

The owner of this charcoal gray Saleen Mustang is Alan Bolte of Santa Monica, Calif.,

whose more usual mount has been a 1965 Shelby GT 350 R-type Mustang, which he vintage races.

It is fitting that Bolte drives a Shelby because essentially Saleen is trying to work the Shelby magic all over again, with Bolte acting as a consultant. Saleen's plans include an R-type (race model) version to compete in the SCCA's Showroom Stock category.

Interested parties can contact Bolte for information at Saleen Motorsports, 313 N. Lake St., Burbank, California.

MUSTANG



The All-American Auto

COVER CAR

1969 Mustang Fastback finished in Indian Fire Poly Red Metallic.
Engine & Drivetrain: 1971 Boss 351 balanced and blueprinted with SPS rod bolts, 11.3:1 Jahns pistons, ported and polished heads, Manley stainless steel valves, and a Weiland tunnel ram with dual Holley Dominators. Transmission is a 1970 C-6 automatic with a full manual valve body and a Fairbanks 3500 RPM converter. Rear end is a narrowed 9" with a 4.88 locker in an "N" housing.

Suspension: Coil over rear shocks with ladder bars and Competition Engineering wheelie bars. Centerline wheels, 15x3½" front with Shell tires, and 15x14 rear with Mickey Thompson 15"x33" tires.

Interior: Complete aluminum interior with enlarged wheel tubs and black upholstery.

Owner: Rick Northrup - Chapin, Illinois

Photos: Doug Auer

