

## DRIVEN: FORD MUSTANG GT PREMIUM

After a spell with Ford's 51-year-old pony, the 2015 Mustang GT leaves a fitting thought in mind: thoroughbred

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On the same early May weekend that American Pharoah won the 2015 edition of the famed Kentucky Derby, we had the keys to the 2015 edition of Ford's famed Mustang - the most thoroughbred iteration of its iconic 51-year-old pony car yet.

Now producing 435 horsepower and 542 Nm of torque from its 5.0 litre V8, the GT has the eight-cylinder character and power you expect from a Mustang. But if forced to choose just one adjective to describe the new model, we would call it "refined".

It retains the classic long-bonnet, compact greenhouse and sloping rear end the fastback Mustang is known for, but introduces updates including a racier roofline which flows artfully into a more rounded tail. Sheet metal is stretched tightly from front to back, highlighting curves and creases around the wheel wells and flanks. It's still muscle-car-chic, but emits an overall elegance.



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Not limited to the exterior, refinement continues within. The cabin will be familiar to those who have driven the more recent generations of Mustang, but decreased clutter and higher quality materials improve the formula. Ford's "Sync" with "MyFord Touch" (voice and touch-sensitive) infotainment system is better than previous versions, without sacrificing the tactile, analogue buttons to keep those with an affinity for hands-on controls happy.

A line of toggle switches below the central display screen governs traction control, steering weight and throttle mapping/suspension modes (normal, sport, track, snow/wet), working in unison with the GT's "Track Apps". Accessible via a message screen in the centre of the instrument cluster, "Track Apps" allow one to engage launch control and view the more technical of informations pertinent to your driving, namely acceleration times and lateral/longitudinal G-forces.

Those metrics and our GT Premium's optional Recaro sport seats come in handy when tossing this new *Stang'* into a corner. After five decades of loyalty to the solid rear axle suspension it was born with, the new car adopts an integral-link independent rear. The difference is immediately apparent, transforming the Mustang from a straight-line brute with a modest ability to corner into a confident dancer, able to keep its front and rear ends moving in harmony.



Steering feel is likewise improved from an electrically-assisted system we finally approve of. Turn-in is crisp with the unit providing more feedback than those proliferating elsewhere. The gearbox is better as well. The six-speed manual transmission in our tester demonstrated good clutch/shifter harmony with short throws, smooth operation and little wind-up in lower gears.

"Go to the whip" through the first three gears and 100 km/h arrives in 4.8 seconds. Reaching 161 km/h takes just 10.4 seconds. The GT's powerband is as flat and expansive as Churchill Downs (site of the Kentucky Derby) with easy access to torque in any gear.

The latest Mustang is composed at full-gallop in a way previous examples have not, dispatching corners in a far more nimble, entertaining manner than before. However, nearing its limits the coupe does start to get flustered, something attributable to the one area where improvement could still be made - weight. At 1,728 kilograms, this horse could benefit from a diet, improving all aspects of its performance including braking.





Brake feel is good and performance is strong on the street but we suspect fade would arise quickly on-track. Fortunately for the track-minded, Ford offers a performance package for the GT combining upgraded brakes, tires and suspension-bracing.

On sale in Europe for the first time in its history, this is the best modern Mustang we've ever piloted - an easy to live with, capable machine that is as much grand touring coupe as it is a muscle car. A true thoroughbred.



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