
New Ford Shelby GT500 Launched at the 2009 NAIAS

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Strictly speaking, the latest performance version of Ford's facelifted Mustang is simply a 'GT500', rather than a 'KR'. However, making full use of engineering lessons learnt from the outgoing 40th anniversary edition Shelby GT500KR, the new car is the fastest GT500 yet.

Available as both coupé and convertible, the 2010 model year GT500 is powered by a supercharged and intercooled 5.4-litre dual overhead cam V8. Redlined at 6250rpm, Ford says this is "expected to produce 540 horsepower and 510 foot-pounds of torque". The power is transmitted to the - still rigid - rear axle via a 6-speed manual transmission. Ford has lowered the final drive from 3.31:1 to 3.55:1, thus improving the acceleration, while raising the ratios on 5th and 6th gear to allow more relaxed cruising and - don't knock it... - "better highway fuel efficiency".

Much work on NVH (noise, vibration and harshness) has meant that the latest GT500 should sound good from the outside, give its occupants the authentic supercharged-V8 roar, and yet make the cabin a more civilised place to travel in.



“You still hear the supercharger but not so that it’s intrusive,” said Kerry Baldori, chief functional engineer for Ford SVT. “It’s the same with the exhaust. You want people to know you’re driving something special, but you don’t want an exhaust note that overpowers the whole interior.

“We spent a lot of time getting the right sound quality out of the exhaust so you get that nice, crisp Shelby sound outside and a pleasant sound inside the cabin. It’s a nice balance; one isn’t overpowering the other.”

The design team has freshened the exterior of the car by adding a small tail spoiler and incorporating a smoother, domed bonnet with integrated air-exit, front splitter and wide radiator ‘mouth’, said to be in the style of the 1960s 427 Cobra.

The coupé runs on 19in alloy wheels with Goodyear F1 Supercar tyres, while the convertible makes do with 18s. Inside, Ford has crafted a higher quality driving environment than before, with real aluminium on the dash and Alcantara inserts on the sports seats.



Nostalgia aficionados – to whom this car is directly marketed – will like the white gearknob with its racing-stripes motif.

In anticipation of its use on the track, the Dearborn engineers have incorporated a stability control system, AdvanceTrac, with several settings. The default 'on' mode is for everyday driving. 'Sport' mode is for those wanting to enjoy track days in the Shelby GT500 while, for hardcore drifters, the system can also be turned completely off - although the ABS and other active safety systems remain in place.



The 2010 Shelby GT500 will be in US dealer showrooms in Spring 2009.

Text: Steve Wakefield

Photos/Video: Newspress/Ford

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