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TEST DRIVE

Gilding the Filly 2016 Ford Mustang GT California Special

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

One year removed from a complete redesign, Mustang returns for 2016 with a handful of new appearance packages, an expanded list of color choices and the debut of Ford's latest infotainment system. In addition, a pair of high performance Shelby models have been reintroduced to the lineup. Mustangs currently come in 10 flavors, with a barn-wide price range: \$24,645 - \$63,095. The stable includes fastback hardtops in V-6, EcoBoost, EcoBoost Premium,

2016 Ford Mustang GT California Special
MSRP: \$24,645 (V6) · \$36,395 (GT Premium)
As Tested: \$43,865

GT, GT Premium, Shelby GT 350 and GT 350R trim. A trio of convertibles round out the offerings, in V6, EcoBoost Premium and GT Premium versions. Two of the three fresh appearance groups for 2016 are offered on GT models, and my GT Premium test car was wearing one of them (the \$1,995 California Special package) as well as a new, extra cost hue (Ruby Red metallic (\$395). The Cali option includes 19-inch black aluminum rims, unique seat, door and dash trim, special rear spoiler, front splitter, black trim, model-specific stripes and trim. The original California Specials were a one-year (1968), state-specific collection of cosmetics. It was a fine look, with a blackout grille, fake side scoops and fan tail spoiler fitted with Shelby taillights. More



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GOIN' BACK TO CALI. After undergoing a complete redesign last year, the Ford Mustang returns with several new appearance packages, including this 2016 GT California Special, harking back to the state-specific editions from 1968.

recently, Ford has taken to offering a collection of trim under the same name, offered on Mustangs sold anywhere in the good ol' U.S. of A. The trim package these days is less unique than the originals and the volume of cars bearing the California Special tag has made the name less special. But there's no denying that the new generation GT, in Ruby Red metallic, is an eye-catching ride. Twice during my test drive week, I returned to the car in a parking lot to find someone circling the car, taking in the sights. This does not happen with the average car. Like its closest competitor Camaro, this generation of Mustang offers a wide range of engine choices. The menu includes a V-6 (300 horsepower, 280 lb.-ft. of torque), turbo four (310 h.p., 320 lb.-ft. of torque), and V-8 (435 h.p. and 400 lb.-ft. of torque). All can be had

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with a six-speed standard or six-speed automatic transmission (\$1,195). GT means V-8, which means Ford's 5.0-liter. It's a highlight of the car. A fine, muscle car motor, responsive and entertaining, with class competitive 0-60 times in the sub-five second range. The predicted fuel economy is sub-par (16/25, with V-8/auto, I averaged 16), and that too is class competitive. However, there are other engines in the Mustang menu with better mileage, if that's a priority. And in any event, complaints about mpg's tend to be low, when gas prices are likewise. The Track Apps package that's standard on all models provides performance metrics readouts on the 4.2-inch message center screen on the instrument panel. Since a number of GT buyers are expected to visit their local

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