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TEST DRIVE

Sound Judgement

2017 Ford Shelby GT350

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

The link between speed and sound in automobiles isn't an absolute. Some cars can be exceptionally fast, but not especially fun to listen to. A shrieking pack of Formula One cars, for example, sounds to me like a chorus of angry dentist drills.

Even cars packing big cubic inches can manage to sound small. The Dodge Viper comes to mind in this regard. I've driven a number of them over the years and, for all their might (600+ h.p.), the exhaust note of the V-10 idling through side pipes was never noteworthy. Happily for their owners, that ceased to be the case, when properly throttled. Somewhere above 2,500 rpm, the Viper's motor sonically mugs the exhaust system, emitting a barrel-chested bellow that befits its brawn.

All this is by way of background when I say that the Shelby GT350 is among the very finest sounding examples of the modern muscle car era. One reason why



MUSCLE WITH HUSTLE. The 2017 Ford Shelby GT350 uses Ford's 5.2L (315 cu.-in.) "Voodoo" engine (left), a bored and stroked version of Ford's 5.0L block, which bring the muscle car from 0 to 60 in 4.2-4.6 seconds.

2017 Ford Shelby GT350
MSRP: \$54,295 · As Tested: \$59,970

this matters is simple practicality. The GT350 is — even when equipped with all the accessories that racers would normally toss to save weight — fast enough to be fun on a race track. But even the most zealous of Car Guys can't get to a track day very often. And if you value your license, you can't be stupid enough to



go crazy with your car on public roads.

So how do you spend all that time between track laps? Listening to your car's exhaust, if it's this one. Actually the Shelby's exhaust note is adjustable. Though the car starts with a bit of bark, it defaults to a nice, mellow tone, suitable for short-shifting your way out the neighborhood on a sleepy, Sunday morning. Flip the switch to Sport when you clear the congestion and the baffles are lifted, filing the edges off the car's rumble, and adding some burble and pop when you back out of the throttle.

While all this sound stuff is subjective, power is easy to pin down. The Shelby GT350 uses Ford's 5.2L (315 cu.-in.) "Voodoo" engine; a bored and stroked version of Ford's 5.0L block, with a flat-plane crankshaft (a la Ferrari). The 32-valve, DOHC V-8 has an aluminum block

and heads, and is naturally aspirated (port fuel injection). The motor musters 526 horsepower @ 7,500 rpm, along with 429 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,750 rpm.

Depending on whose stopwatch you watch, the steed speeds from 0-60 in 4.2-4.6 seconds. (The GT350R is even more elemental than the GT350, and several ticks faster to 60). The power rolls out steadily, without the peaky punch of a turbo boost, and the torque is such that on a reasonably tight track, you won't be doing much shifting.

Not that shifting is a bad thing, mind you. The car is only offered with a six-speed manual (Tremec 3160). Shifter throws are short and crisp going up or down through the gears. Burly motors generally mean stiff clutches, so the lightness of the pedal throw in the Shelby comes as a pleasant surprise.

The Shelby GT350 is among the very finest sounding examples of the modern muscle car era.

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