



SHO TIME

MSRP: \$39,200 · PRICE AS TESTED: \$46,075

The first Taurus SHO was a stealthy sport sedan; a muscular variant of the popular, midsize Ford four door. Taurus moved up in size and scale in 2010. The former middleweight champ was recast as a full-size car.

Ford's Flagship SHO made the move too, and so the latest, sporting Taurus is also the largest ever built. The differences between Taurus SHO's past and present have something to do with size, and a lot to do with technology.

Like the mainline Taurus models, SHO is offered strictly as a four-door sedan. All SHO's are all-wheel-drive with standard electronic stability control, so this is not a car that will have to hibernate in a northeast winter. And in any season, technology adds to driver confidence, with torque vectoring control and curve control. The former feature places a slight amount of braking force on the front, inside wheel when accelerating out of a corner for improved handling. The latter slows the car if you're carrying too much speed into a turn. Electronic, power-assisted steering has a solid heft, adding enough boost to aid low-speed maneuvering, yet staying tight at higher speeds. Taurus SHO weighs in at a beefy 4,343 lb., yet the combination of a tuned suspension and electronic assists make it feel not small, but smaller and maneuverable.

One driveline combination is offered for Taurus SHO: a 3.5 liter EcoBoost V-6, matched with a six-speed automatic transmission. EcoBoost is Ford's branding for a series of engines that employ direct injection and turbocharging. The 3.5 is the largest and most powerful of the EcoBoost line. It generates 365 horsepower @ 5,500 rpm, and 350 lb. ft. of torque @ 1,500 rpm. The engine produces enough thrust to manage a sub six-second time from standstill to 60 mph. The power flow is smooth, not peaky, so acceleration is there for the asking at basically any engine speed. EPA fuel economy ratings are 17 city 25 highway. These are middling



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numbers, but my experience after logging 750 miles in a recent test drive is that you can expect better than that.

Overall, I averaged 26 mpg's on a mix of driving split about 50 percent highway cruising, 20 percent stop and go and 30 percent mixed, town and country. On straight Mass Pike and I-495 stretches, I posted 28 mpg's, at keeping-up-with-traffic speeds. The moral is that your mileage may exceed the estimates, provided that you leave your lead foot at home.

SHO-specific styling cues on the inside include a leather-wrapped steering wheel, and leather-trimmed sport seats with embroidered graphics. Woven aluminum trim and adjustable aluminum pedals provide unique contrast. MyFord Touch — the company's electronics interface and SYNC — Ford's voice-activated communications and enter-

tainment control system — have been tweaked for 2013 to improve functionality. The driver can check system information on the eight inch display atop the center stack, as well as in a pair of 4.2-inch color screens nestled on either side of the speedometer. You can also access this system via voice activation, or the five-way toggle switches on the steering wheel. While improved relative to past versions, the driver should still plan on spending some study time to minimize distractions while driving.

Speaking of touch, the HVAC system is controlled by touch pad buttons mounted low on the center stack. The buttons are a small target to zero in on while driving, and tough to hit accurately — especially with a winter gloved hand. Upsizing would also help the font size of the temperature readouts on the main display.

SHO's sport seats are multi-adjustable (10-way power) to suit most any size driver. Six-footers

can fit behind like size people in front, with some negotiation on the amount of seat-back recline. Those large of foot may find shoe space in back to be tight. Though the opening is rather narrow, the SHO's trunk holds a generous, 20.1 cubic feet of cargo.

The SHO's steeply slanted back window and tall tail limit the driver's straight back view. Technology lends a hand in the form of the rear view camera (standard), and blind spot monitoring with cross traffic alert (optional). All of these features are quite useful in keeping track of what you can't see. The cross traffic alert is especially good at giving you a head's-up on cars coming into range from unseen angles — in parking lots, for instance.

Enthusiast drivers may be interested in the available, SHO Performance Package (\$1,995). This includes 20-inch rims with summer performance tires, a heated, suede-like steering wheel, sport tuned suspension, beefed up cooling capacity and brakes, special calibration for the electronic power steering, 3.16:1 final drive ratio for improved off-the-line power, and a track mode to switch off the stability control.

The first generation SHO's were so low profile as to be camouflaged. The latest versions are still low key, but easier to spot. A black mesh grille framed by Xenon headlights, special, side badging, black mirrors and those model-specific rims are a few, visual cues for SHO spotters.

Far from window dressing, SHO expands on the latest edition Taurus with a well-balanced blend of performance enhancers and useful electronics. Big and brimming with technology, it's a suitable Flagship for Ford's sedan lineup.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for the past 20 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 135 calendars. Read Dan's recent reviews on line anytime at www.timesunion.com/cars.

