

# Beauty for the Beast

GIVING OUR HIGH-POWERED NEW EDGE PROJECT A STRIKING NEW LOOK By KJ Jones Photos by KJ Jones and courtesy of Ford Auto Body



Our primary aim is to cover all aspects of the Mustang hobby, but we admit to often focusing more on the performance side of 'Stangbanging (think of it as channeling our inner Uncle Joe), and not giving products and procedures that improve a Pony's appearance their just deserves. The truth of the matter is that there are more ways to hop up a Mustang's appearance than methods of improving a Pony's mechanical prowess. And, like the changes that help make bigger steam, the budget spectrum for

▲ With nearly 20 years experience, Danny Quezada is Ford Auto Body's lead man with the spray gun. Danny prepped and laid the wetness (clearcoat is being applied in this photo) on our '02 Mustang GT's new Mach 2 hood and other appearance pieces from MrBodyKit.com.

Mustang makeovers is as broad as your imagination and wallet allow.

Switching out the stock running gear with an aftermarket wheels-and-tires pack-

age is somewhat comparable to adding a cold-air induction system to a Mustang's engine. It's an entry-level mod that makes an immediate visual impact and doesn't

**HORSE SENSE:** "It don't gotta be pretty—all it has to do is run hard!" That statement of colloquial wisdom comes from your Tech Editor's automotive idol, Uncle Joe Williams. He instilled in me the importance of making sure a Pony has big-time horsepower before focusing on sleek paint, blinding wheels, and other no-fast accessories. While we agree with Joe to an extent, we do acknowledge that Unc's values are a tad more old-school, especially for those who dream of some day having their ride appear in the pages of *5.0 Mustang & Super Fords*.

# '99-'04 APPEARANCE UPGRADES



▲ This is the official before photo of our '02 guinea pig. With the exception of AmericanMuscle.com's 17-inch FR500 replica wheels, Nitto rubber, and a lowered stance, our 'Stang's appearance is far from menacing. With the factory pieces heavily hazed from years of sun exposure (headlights) and failing clearcoat (faux scoops and rear spoiler), it was time to make changes.



▲ For '99-'04 GT owners, this is what the underside of your Pony's faux hoodscoop and rear spoiler look like. Unless either of these parts have damage of some sort, there's really no reason to take them off. We removed our scoop and spoiler after initially planning to simply repaint and clearcoat each piece. Obviously, the strong urge to replace them got the best of us.



▲ Does your New Edge Mustang have a cracked windshield cowl that you can't account for? We have no idea how this damage developed in our Mustang's cowl. We were told by other 'Stangbangers that it's just one of those inexplicable "they all do that" occurrences for '99-'04 Mustangs. We really hope one day someone discovers a true reason why.



▲ MrBodyKit.com's fiberglass Mach 2 ram-air hood (PN 99HOOD-MA2; \$349.99) is the centerpiece of our Mustang's makeover. The hood is 30 pounds lighter than the factory bonnet and features fully functional extractor-style vents, from which hot underhood air is vented. MrBodyKit.com offers many different hood choices for '99-'04 and all-other-year Mustangs. We mocked the new hood in place and installed hoodpins before taking the 'Stang to FAB. Check out Tech Inspection in the August '11 issue, p.152, for more details on that project.



▲ This is our Mustang's replacement lower side-scoop (right) and its upper-scoop counterpart. The urethane pieces are available as a package from MrBodyKit.com (PN 12710 and 12720; \$299.99) and are considerably wider than the OEM parts (lower). When installed together, the package will enhance our 'Stang's profile. We chose to have Ford Auto Body install the scoops and all of the other upgrade pieces after they're painted, but the scoops and such can be self-installed using the strong, two-sided tape that is supplied and a buddy or two to provide helping hands.



▲ Selecting a rear wing proved to be more difficult than choosing a hood, as there are a lot of choices in the MrBodyKit.com catalog. We're actually OK with the naked trunk look, but that would require filling the factory spoiler-mount holes and refinishing the entire trunk lid. After an exhaustive elimination process, we decided to go with the clean lines of a tried-and-true S281-style spoiler (PN 99WING-S281; \$198.99) to round out our package. As you'll see when you read further, the spoiler is a bolt-on piece. However, it's highly recommended that you leave the task to a good body shop or customizer who is familiar with some of the tricks for properly applying it.



▲ Our 'Stang's replacement cowl vent assembly is actually a factory Ford part. However, as a part that hasn't been in circulation since 2004, you're hard-pressed to actually find one in stock at your Ford dealership's parts department. For those who need one, fret not, as this piece (PN LRS-02228C; \$219.99) is on the shelf at Latemodel Restoration Supply.



▲ With the car and pieces delivered to Ford Auto Body, Danny starts the makeover by assessing each of the pieces being installed. A body man's fingers actually are his most-important tools, as they transmit the presence of imperfections in a Mustang's body panels as well as in replacement parts. The Mach 2 hood and other parts passed Danny's inspection with flying colors. The entire set is of excellent quality and should require only standard prep work before they are painted.



▲ Our web-watchers may have seen this image already, as it was used in your tech editor's blog section to highlight this report. All of the parts are baked in this spray booth/oven at FAB before any chemicals or finishes are applied. Baking the parts (170 degrees for 20 minutes) helps lift oils and contaminants from the material, making it "porous" and better able to accept sealer and paint.



▲ This group of Sikkens automotive finishing products is used in Stage 1 of Danny's prep/paint process. The primary objective in this step is to achieve maximum cleanliness on all of the parts, which starts with actually scuffing the smoothness and then using surface cleaners to remove dirt, contaminants, and oil.

hit the war chest all-too hard, especially when you select one of the many affordable, ready-to-bolt-on packages from AmericanMuscle.com.

The same project/cost parallels hold true when other changes are made to a 'Stang's exterior or interior. The amount you'll spend depends on how elaborate you go with your upgrades. Ideas for modifying a 'Stang's looks typically are found in magazines, on the Internet, at car shows, and, as you can imagine, definitely on the street. Of course, your personal thoughts on how you want your Mustang to look are the most-important variables to consider when you're ready to make appearance upgrades. Inside and especially outside, we're big fans of the clean approach, in which mods are tastefully done and don't completely transform a Pony into something that looks like it starred in one of *The Fast and the Furious* movies.

We recently found ourselves at the appearance crossroads with our '02 Mustang GT project car. The ProCharged Pony's hood and rear wing were victims of failing (peeling) clearcoat, which had us weighing the cost of refinishing those parts or taking the big leap and giving our 9-year-old Mustang's body a subtle beauty makeover. Many of you may be facing this same dilemma—you want something "new," but you aren't in a position to drive off in a brand-new whip.

Making appearance changes certainly is a great way of achieving a sense of newness for your Pony. In some instances, it's a case of aligning a 'Stang's appearance with its actual speedy demeanor. For example, our '02 project GT puts out 650 hp at the tires. However, despite being lowered and sitting on 17-inch, FR500-style wheels, the Mustang's appearance was unassuming. Its visage would not lead a person to think there was much power lurking under its hood.

While we've had a good run with the sleeper persona, it's now time for our supercharged 'Stang to visually say, "Yeah, I'm fast!" It will do so via a new hood, spoiler, window/body scoop package, and incidental accessories from our friends at



# '99-'04 APPEARANCE UPGRADES



▲ Things start to get more serious in Stage 2 of the renovation effort. This suite of materials (adhesion promoter, hardener, Elast-O-Actif, and primer) is used once all the parts are clean and ready for paint. The Elast-O-Actif is designed to help paint cover and adhere to urethane-type pieces that are flexible, like our new scoops and rear spoiler, and especially on Mustangs' bumper covers.

▶ Without paint, our 'Stang's new body parts would be nothing. Ford Auto Body uses Sikkens water-based finishes for all of its collision repair and custom painting. As you'll read a bit further in this report, there's a procedure for selecting the right color.



▲ Clearcoat rounds out the quartet of levels in the new-parts prep/paint process. It's important to note that FAB also adds Elast-O-Actif during this Stage to further ensure the paint and clearcoat don't crack under light contact.



▲ Danny and Frank Ocela perform the first stage/clean all of the new parts.

▶ Check out the oil swirl in this water. The separated oil is a direct byproduct of the extensive cleaning our parts were given with the Sikkens prep products. Painting over contaminants like this is a guarantee that your paint job won't look anywhere close to OEM, so that's why using professionals is a good idea if you really want a stellar finish.



▲ If you're hell-bent on doing everything yourself (and we're not saying it's impossible), keep in mind you'll need an ample supply of sandpapers and sanding pads of various grits. Fiberglass is an interesting material that requires quite a bit of pre- and post-paint sanding work.



▲ Once the hood is clean, Danny sands each side using a high-speed palm sander with fine-grit paper.



▲ We mentioned earlier that color selection isn't as easy as saying, "My car is black." For color-matching reference, Ford Auto Body (and most good body shops) uses groups of swatch plates that sometimes have hundreds of variations of a particular body color. Swatches are held up alongside the 'Stang's body near the area where new parts are being installed, to ensure that the new finish blends correctly with the car's original paint.



▲ Mixing paint is literally at a scientific level nowadays, which ensures color-matching is spot-on. Danny references a guide that details exactly how much paint, hardener, and such must be added to the mixture to cover various areas or parts.



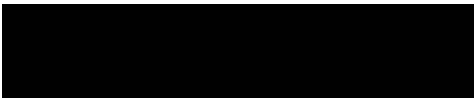
▲ All of our pieces receive two coats of paint. Body-color black is the primary color, but Danny is also applying matte black in all the "insert" areas of the hood and scoops.



▲ The Mach 2 ram-air hood is attached to a painter's rack that allows Danny to cover every inch of both sides with fresh black paint. The hood remains on this rack for clearcoat and to dry before being moved to the FAB installation department.



▲ Hector Jimenez leads Ford Auto Body's installation group and is responsible for installing the freshly painted hood and other MrBodyKit.com pieces. While the hood's fitment is excellent, we're adding a set of CDC hood struts to the package, which brings about a need for a little trial-and-error to ensure alignment and fitment are right (when the hood is closed).



▲ The 'Stang's original sidescoops are removed by simply prying them away from the rear quarter-panels using a small screwdriver and a light touch.



▲ All of the scoops and rear spoiler were pre-fit before they were painted and didn't require any trimming or modification. When applying the painted scoops, Hector uses yellow grease pencil to index exactly where the parts are placed over the rear-quarter windows and lower quarter panel.



▲ All of the body additions (scoop/spoiler) are typically installed using two-sided tape. Up front, we're going to suggest that relying solely on tape to keep parts adhered to your Mustang's surface isn't the best idea. We've seen parts uprooted by pressure washers or even high track speeds. Ford Auto Body uses an adhesive substance from 3M that is designed specifically for this purpose. Hector preps each piece with an adhesive-enhancing agent, and then lays down a thorough bead of adhesive on all of them.



▲ Drying time for the 3M bonding agent is 24 hours. All of the tape is necessary for holding our scoops in place while the glue sets up.





# '99-'04 APPEARANCE UPGRADES



▲ The Saleen S281 spoiler receives the exact-same fitment procedures as the sidescoops, with one important exception—it is a two-person job that requires being absolutely certain the spoiler is in its correct mounting location before it's placed down on the decklid.



▲ Buffing all of the newly installed parts is the final step of our Mustang's body beautification. The high-speed buffing pad and compound bring pop out of Danny's fresh paintwork, and further blends the 'Stang's new and original shades of black.



▲ The upper scoops obviously eliminate a New Edge Pony's rear-quarter windows, but when matched with matching pieces down low, a cool wide-body effect is achieved on the rear quarter-panels.



▲ The Mach 2 ram-air hood obviously is the highest-profile component in our body-upgrade package, and it definitely adds a statement of sinister that supports our project car's radical performance. Behind-the-wheel visibility is not really an issue with this hood, as it only rises 2.5 inches above the height of a stock piece.



▲ Here is the rear section of our upgraded Pony. Fitment in the OEM location is another reason why we selected the S281 tail instead of others, which require drilling new or additional holes in the decklid for installation. This wing provides a clean, low line and when properly installed, looks like it belongs on this car.



▲ A new cowl definitely cleans up the 'Stang's nose area. You don't realize how bad a cracked piece looks until it's replaced with a new one.



▲ A set of four new boots is the final piece of our makeover puzzle, and once again we've selected an affordable package from the vast assortment of offerings from AmericanMuscle.com. One of the cool things about this process is that the entire set is now shipped in individual boxes, with tires already mounted and balanced on the new wheels. Our change is from black 17-inch FR500-style wheels (w/NT05 Nitto rubber), to four machine-finished, 18-inch '10 GT500-style wheels—18x10-inch, with 305/35-18 Nitto NT555Rs for the rear, and 18x9-inch front wheels dressed in 275/35-18 NT555s.



▲ Jumping up 1 inch in wheel diameter, the bigger Nittos fill the Mustangs wheelwells much better than their 17-inch siblings.



▲ Classy, clean AmericanMuscle.com center caps add a nice finishing touch to our new wheel set.



▲ Once all four new wheels are installed, only slight suspension adjustments were necessary for re-establishing a killer stance for our project Pony. If lowering your car substantially is your intention, do yourself a favor and invest in Eastwood's fender roller (PN 31158; \$269.99). With the 305-18 Nittos out back, the tires won't just rub—they'll scrape against the rear fenders' inner lips if the back end stands at 27 inches (the starting point of cool for New Edge stances) or lower, whenever you hit bumps, make turns, and so on. A final detailing, which includes putting a shine on the new tires, closes out the project effort, as well as an official public debut at the 26th Annual Fabulous Fords Forever show at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, California.



▲ Even though it was completed with only days to spare, our '02 Mustang GT was ready in time to represent 5.0 Mustang & Super Fords at Fabulous Fords Forever. We placed our made-over Mustang in front of the magazine's display booth at the show, and were pleased by all of the compliments and questions the upgrades generated. Body modifications, while totally subjective and at the discretion of a Pony's owner, definitely will get your 'Stang noticed. When done properly by professionals like Danny and Hector at Ford Auto Body, they're the type of upgrades that ultimately earn Mustangs exposure in the mags.

MrBodyKit.com, and a step up to 18-inch running gear, with '10 Shelby GT500-style wheels and Nitto 555 tires (305/35 rear, 275/35 front) from AmericanMuscle.com's ready-to-mount collection.

Reviewing the product options and putting together a cool dress-up package is as simple as dialing up websites. However, preparing everything for installation is a bit more involved. When you want aftermarket body parts to fit and look like they're meant to be on your Pony—pieces like the MrBodyKit.com Mach 2 hood (PN 99HOOD-MA2; \$349.99), upper/lower sidescoops (PN 12710 and 12720; \$299.99), and Saleen S281 rear wing (PN 99WING-S281; \$199.99) we're using—you want them to look as good as they can, and that usually means going with a pro installer.

Unfortunately, our level of expertise is lacking when it comes to body and paint work. With this being the case, we called on the crew at Ford Auto Body in Van Nuys, California, to detail how to properly get this job done. Repairing accident-damaged Ponies is FAB's specialty. However, as the behind-the-scenes team responsible for nearly all of Galpin Auto Sports' modified Mustangs (some of which have appeared on the cover of this magazine), they're intimately familiar with the custom side of body and paintwork.

Trust us, there's a lot more to the install process than simply spending a Saturday with a case of beer and a few rattle cans of paint to get it done, which is why we strongly suggest you get with a pro shop like FAB (in Southern California) or your local auto-body shop once you receive all of your cosmetic hotness.

Follow along with our photos and captions as we take you through our project Mustang's physical transformation. **5.0**

## SOURCES

### **AMERICANMUSCLE.COM**

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### **THE EASTWOOD COMPANY**

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