

[INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINES](#)[VEHICLES](#)**2023 10 Best Engines & Propulsion Systems**

Ford earns kudos for bringing one more V-8 blast to the party without resorting to turbos or superchargers.

**Drew Winter**, Contributing Editor

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3 Min Read



Displacement (cc):
5,038

Block/head material:
aluminum/aluminum

Horsepower (SAE net):
500 @ 7,250 rpm

Torque:
418 lb.-ft. (567 Nm)
@ 4,900 rpm

Specific output:
99 hp/L

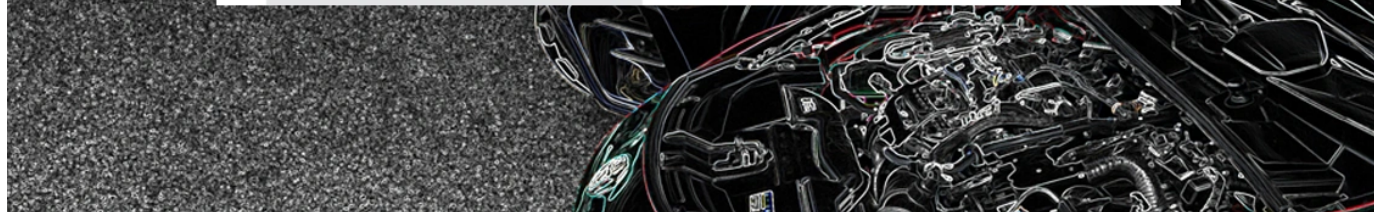
Bore x stroke (mm):
93 x 92.7

Compression ratio:
12:1

EPA city/highway:
14/22 mpg
(16.8-10.7 L/100 km)

Engine assembly site:
Essex (Windsor, ON)
Engine Plant

Application tested:
'24 Ford Mustang Dark
Horse



delivers, thanks to electronic wizardry and inspired engineering.

Ford earns Wards 10 Best Engines & Propulsion Systems honors for a brutally powerful V-8 that is versatile, sophisticated and affordable enough to keep the V-8 muscle car flame burning for hardcore track and street performance enthusiasts.

A special team of Ford engineers and designers worked for more than three years to create the Mustang Dark Horse, which has a wide range of capabilities.

Besides racing on a track, you can drive the Dark Horse through multiple on-road user experiences filled with glorious sounds, creamy torque and priceless muscle-car nostalgia.

All that horsepower and 418 lb.-ft. (567 Nm) of torque have never been easier to manage, with four drive modes and four exhaust settings that can be controlled independently.

“Gobs of power and torque yet very manageable driver. A blast whether rowing through the gears or just cruising the freeway with an occasional punch of the throttle,” says judge Dave Zoia.

Wards jurors all loved the TREMEC 6-speed manual gearbox with a 3D-printed titanium shift ball, but a 10-speed automatic is available (and delivers faster track times).

“Rev-matching on downshifts adds aural delight along with true performance value,” says judge Bob Gritzinger.

In “quiet” exhaust mode the Dark Horse will not wake up the neighborhood in the morning, but it sounds truly ferocious in the fourth choice: track mode.

“The exhaust sounds are great. If you get tired of them you bought the wrong car,” adds judge Zoia.

The high-revving Gen-4 Coyote engine technologies include dual-throttle body intakes – think of it as a fuel-injected version of an old-school technology like dual 4-barrel carbs – along with piston connecting rods first introduced in the 760-hp Ford Performance Mustang Shelby GT500 and strengthened camshafts.

powerful as Ford's earlier larger-displacement supercharged V-8s without pushing the car's price into the stratosphere.



Ford Mustang Dark Horse engine

“Ford engineers tuned this to perfection to provide a monster dose of power and torque across the range, all managed through a thoroughly enjoyable short-throw manual shifter,” says judge Gritzinger.

The Dark Horse starts at \$61,000 including the gas-guzzler tax. That is a lot of engine for the price and a

bargain for a car that can go 0-60 mph (97 km/h) in less than four seconds (with automatic transmission) and has a top speed of 165 mph (266 km/h).

“On the other hand, the Dark Horse is a real bargain for a car that can go 0-60 mph (97 km/h) in less than four seconds (with automatic transmission) and has a top speed of 165 mph (266 km/h).”

The 2023 winners will be honored during the Wards 10 Best Engines & Propulsion Systems award ceremony Oct. 18 on day two of AutoTech: Electrification at the Fort Pontchartrain Hotel in Detroit. Learn more about the event and book your ticket by visiting <https://bit.ly/3REayqc>

All credentialed media are welcome and qualify for free admittance to both the awards ceremony and AutoTech: Electrification Oct. 17-18.



Ford Mustang Dark Horse exterior

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About the Author



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Drew Winter is a former longtime editor and analyst for Wards. He writes about a wide range of topics including emerging cockpit technology, new materials and supply chain business strategies. He also serves as a judge in both the Wards 10 Best Engines and Propulsion Systems awards and t...

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