



MUSCLE CARS



MAKE A COMEBACK

American Muscle Cars Reclaim Katy Roads

Written By Don Armstrong

Listening to your dad reminisce about his late 60's hot rod doesn't have to be another one of those in-front-of-the-fireplace stories you're tired of listening to. Now it can be a story you can experience with your kids. In this edition of Katy Magazine, we'll look at the rebirth of iconic namesakes from the American muscle car era.

Chevrolet Camaro

After a seven-year absence from Chevy showrooms, the 2010 Camaro returns with a stunning new design and gobs of power. The new Camaro's bodywork takes its cues from the first generation model (1967-1969) with a squared-off nose, open-mouth grille, short roofline, and accentuated rear haunches.

Although the car's interior design may be inspired by its predecessor, it is anything but the plain-Jane decor of that era. The dual, rectangular instrument pods are trimmed in silver and bookend a centrally located information display. Seating is comfortable, but don't expect much head or legroom in the back buckets. There are five trim levels available. The LS, 1LT, and 2LT come with the

300-horsepower V-6, while the 1SS and 2SS get the tire-smoking, 6.2-liter V-8 that delivers a whopping 426-HP when connected to the six-speed manual transmission. An automatic is also available.

The new Camaro rides and handles like a much pricier performer, thanks, in part, to its independent rear suspension. The base LS model is priced to sell starting at \$22,995, while the ground-pounding SS begins at \$30,995.

Ford Mustang Shelby GT 500

Ford Motor Company isn't watching and waiting while the new Camaro goes unchallenged in the horsepower wars. Restyled both inside and out last year, in anticipation of Chevy's version of the pony car, the 2010 Mustang lineup now includes a Shelby GT 500 offering. Named after Texas-born racing and car-builder legend Carroll Shelby, whose company consulted with Ford on the car, today's GT 500 is every bit a street fighter, just like it was when the first one debuted in 1965.



Dodge Challenger

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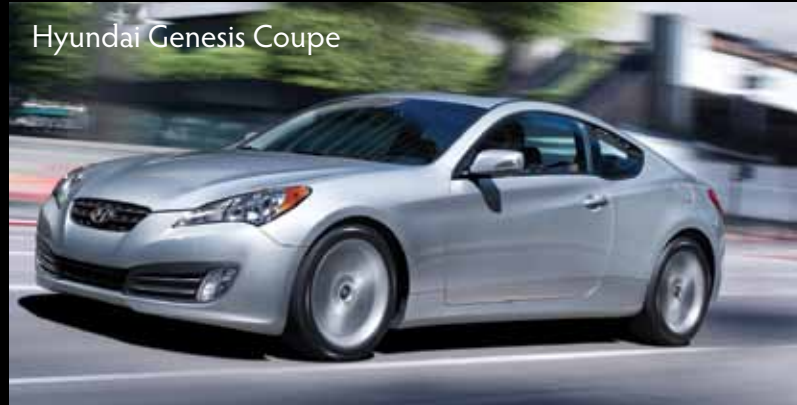
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The heart and soul of the Shelby is its 5.4-liter, 540-HP, supercharged V-8 engine. Coupled to a twin-clutch, six-speed manual transmission, this road rocket boasts a zero to 60 mile-per-hour time of approximately four seconds, while the quarter-mile can be covered in 11.92 seconds. The engine isn't the only enhancement to this specialty Mustang. The GT 500 gets suspension and aerodynamic upgrades, as well as graphics and interior improvements. The base V-6 Mustang lists for \$20,995 while the Shelby GT 500 will set you back \$46,325.

Dodge Challenger

The original Dodge Challenger might have been late to the party by the time it debuted in 1970, but it certainly wasn't lacking in performance when it finally arrived. Parent company Chrysler decided it wasn't going to be late this time around, introducing its muscle boy to the street a couple of years ago.

The 2010 Dodge Challenger SRT8 is the biggest (in size) of the three American contenders, making it a good choice for the Katy dad with little league or soccer duties. Like the Camaro, the Challenger has a rather blunt fascia. The wide, blacked-out grille houses an ominous-looking headlight array. The hood is adorned with fully functioning, twin air scoops. Peeking out from behind the 20-inch alloy wheels are bright red Brembo brake calipers.

What would a performance Dodge be without a Hemi? The Challenger SRT8 boasts a 6.1-liter V-8 that develops a whopping 425-HP. Although a five-speed automatic is standard, you'll want the six-speed manual with the pistol-grip shifter, a throwback to the original 1970 model. The Dodge Challenger SRT8 starts at \$41,230. The entry model V-6 gets going at \$22,735.

Non-American Contenders

Infiniti G37

The coupe offers four-place seating and more luxury and than its sportier two-seat twin, the Nissan 350Z. Here is a great street performer, but with only 327-HP, it can't come close on the power meter. The S Sport model starts at \$37,000.

Hyundai Genesis Coupe

This all-new for 2010 four-place coupe might be the best value for foreign-made competitors. Its sharp looks, excellent quality, and snappy interior will get your blood pumping. The V-6 delivers 306-HP and starts at \$27,500.


BMW 3 Series

With only 300-HP from the twin-turboed inline six-cylinder and a \$42,200 window sticker for the 335i, how can we compare? Simple. Handling, luxury, and quality make this an everyday driver's car with excellent performance attributes. **KM**


DON ARMSTRONG'S knowledge and life-long love affair with motorsports has earned him the reputation of being one of the area's most respected automotive journalists. He's a member of the Texas Auto Writer's Association.

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