

FORD SHELBY GT500 GOES TOPLESS: CONVERTIBLE VERSION ADDED TO SVT LINE-UP FOR 2007

- Most powerful factory-built Ford Mustang convertible in history
- Unique cloth top features material found on much more expensive, exotic cars
- Supercharged 5.4-liter V-8 produces over 450-horsepower
- Hits showrooms in summer 2006

The Ford Shelby GT500, one of the most anticipated and powerful cars coming in 2006, just got hotter with the announcement that a convertible version will join Ford's line-up. With more than 450-horsepower on tap from its supercharged 5.4L V-8 engine, the Shelby GT500 convertible will be the most powerful factory-built Ford Mustang convertible in history.

Carroll Shelby, the legend behind the original Shelby Mustangs, joined the Ford SVT engineering team early in the program to put his stamp of approval on the convertible version and had nothing but praise for the effort.

“Convertibles often go against the pursuit of high-performance, but not this GT500,” said Shelby . “This GT500 convertible can go up against the best of them, and hold its own. It's stiff, it's fast, and I'm looking forward to cruising mine up and down the roads of Texas .”

Driving enthusiasts know all too well that the vastly increased weight and reduced structural integrity of some drop tops over their hard top derivatives sometimes force manufacturers to restrict performance capability. Often it's a matter of a detuned engine or a softened suspension – that one must suffer for the sake of drivability or durability in convertible models.

The good news is that the same 450-plus horsepower V-8 engine powers the GT500 coupe and convertible. And with the convertible's added weight kept to a bare minimum, fewer suspension modifications are needed, meaning the handling you experience driving the convertible will be far closer to that of the coupe than ever before.

In designing the Shelby GT500 convertible, Ford SVT engineers were able to start with the same solid chassis structure that benefits the 2005 Mustang convertible. Ford engineers designed the coupe and convertible simultaneously, yielding a convertible with twice the torsional stiffness of the previous generation.

Considering where the convertible would require the most strength and how commonality with the coupe could be integrated into the car's basic structure, engineers added strength into both models by designing body joints and rocker panels, for instance, which help solidify the convertible without excessive bracing.

As a result, the GT500 convertible is less than 125 pounds heavier than the coupe. This enabled engineers to use the same suspension geometry, with chassis modifications limited to only slightly softer spring rates, sway bars, and damper tuning to fit the convertible's character.

SHELBY GT500'S SUPERCHARGED 5.4-LITER DOHC V-8 PRODUCES OVER 450 HP

Just as the original Shelby GT500 was the “step up” to big-block power from the GT350, the new Ford Shelby Cobra GT500 convertible steps up to Ford's 5.4-liter “MOD” V-8. The result? The GT500 convertible is the most powerful factory convertible Mustang ever. Its supercharged 5.4-liter, 32-valve V-8 evolves from SVT's experience with supercharging the “MOD” engine to deliver more than 450 horsepower and 450 foot-pounds of torque.

EXCLUSIVE CLOTH TOP IMPROVES APPEARANCE AND PERFORMANCE

The Shelby GT500 convertible features a unique cloth convertible top, replacing the vinyl top of the Mustang GT convertible. The GT500 will be only the second Mustang to feature a cloth top, first introduced on the 2003 SVT Mustang Cobra.

The cloth is similar to that used for high-end, exotic sports cars, providing an elegant visual upgrade to the GT500 convertible. In addition, the thicker fabric is not only more durable than vinyl, but creates a much tauter top resulting in a very quiet interior while driving with the top up.

For top-down driving, the Mustang's convertible "floating" five-bow power top with z-fold construction tucks nicely into the boot, providing a more finished, tidy, top-down appearance.

The snake is back – Legendary looks with SVT function

The Shelby GT500 convertible combines the dramatic design genes of the all-new Mustang with Carroll Shelby's legendary performance image to create an SVT Mustang that broadens the power brand's design approach and appeal.

"The restrained, performance-oriented SVT design theme has become instantly recognizable to enthusiasts," says Doug Gaffka, design director, Ford SVT. "The GT500 takes a huge leap forward by combining the modern Mustang muscle car with the classic Shelby performance look to expand SVT's reach to a much bigger audience."

While the GT500 coupe's exterior is punctuated by the classic Shelby LeMans-style stripes that race along the car from nose to tail, the convertible will be more subtle with just the side stripes along the rocker reading "GT500".

The Shelby design elements alone are enough to tell the GT500 story but are not the only visual cues that set this Mustang apart. The reworked front fascia features a functional air splitter and the unique hood has heat-extraction ducts, combining to provide improved airflow and aerodynamics. Revised headlamp insets offer a more aggressive look and result in symmetrical upper and lower grilles with large air openings, creating a visual connection to vintage Shelby Mustangs.

The unique rear fascia features strakes inspired by the Ford GT's integrated rear airflow diffuser, and a rear spoiler reminiscent of a classic GT500. To mark the collaboration of two Mustang performance icons, the GT500 features Shelby and SVT badging.

Continuing the snake logo tradition of previous SVT Mustang Cobras, and late-model Shelby Mustangs, the fenders each feature an updated design of the Cobra. For the first time on any SVT Mustang, the front grille features an off-center snake in place of the standard running horse. "GT500" is emblazoned inside the side rocker stripes, and the name "SHELBY" is prominently featured across the rear deck. The SVT logo can be seen on the wheel center caps, a signature SVT location, as well as on the doorsill plates. To top it off, the "gas cap" medallion between the taillights reads "Shelby GT500" centered on the Cobra image.

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